



THE ISG NEWSLETTER

Number 42
Helen Fein, editor

SUMMER 2009

LEMKIN AWARD CEREMONY ON NOVEMBER 5, 2009

The Raphael Lemkin Award will be granted to the winner of the competition on November 5, 2009 at New York University in the late afternoon. Raphael Lemkin coined the concept of genocide in 1943 and campaigned for the United Nations Genocide Convention which was passed by the UN General Assembly in 1948. The Lemkin Award has been bestowed by the ISG semi-annually since 1999 for the best non-fiction book published in the preceding two years in English that focuses on explanations of genocide, crimes against humanity, state mass killings and gross violations of human rights and strategies to prevent or suppress such violations.

The award conveys a grant of \$500 and travel funds up to \$500 in order to enable the honoree to give a public lecture in New York at a meeting convened by the ISG. The selection is made by an interdisciplinary committee of the ISG.

For further information about the honoree and the award ceremony, see the website of the ISG, www.instituteforthestudyofgenocide.org in September 2009.

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The ISG Newsletter
is published by the
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GENOCIDE
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For More Information on ISG, see our website at:
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FACING HISTORY: DENIAL AND THE TURKISH NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT

Taner Akcam (Clark University)

In September of 2005, Turkish intellectuals who questioned the Turkish state's denial policy on the deportation and killings of Armenians during World War I gathered for a conference in Istanbul. Outside, in the streets, demonstrators also gathered in protest against the conference. One of the placards read: "Not Genocide, but Defense of the Fatherland." Two parallel convictions are at work here, one referring to the past, the other to the present. Both the events of 1915 and the denial policy nine decades later are framed in terms of Turkish national security and self-defense.

In 2009, in a raid against the ultra-nationalist shadowy terror organization Ergenekon, which is composed of mostly army and police officers and bureaucrats, Turkish police confiscated some documents. Among those documents was a file in which the names of five people were listed along with their photos. They were targeted for assassination. My name was among that group. Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk and the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who as you may know was assassinated in January 2007, were two other names. The title of the document, by the way, was "Traitors to National Security" All of the people listed were known for being outspoken on the Armenian Genocide and for asking the Turkish Government to face this historic reality honestly. One can therefore draw the conclusion that to be outspoken about the Armenian Genocide is to be considered a threat, by certain groups, to Turkish national security.

One may understandably ask: why? Before answering this question though I have to add that this is not just the view of the political elite or an ultra-nationalist terror organization. It also underpins legal decision making. In a judgment in 2007 against two Turkish-Armenian journalists Arat Dink, son of assassinated journalist Hrant Dink and Sarkis Seropyan, who received suspended sentences of a year imprisonment, for using the term "genocide", the Turkish court stated that:

"Talk about genocide, both in Turkey and in other countries, unfavourably affects national security and the national interest. The claim of genocide... has become part of and the means of special plans aiming to change the geographic political boundaries of Turkey... and a campaign to demolish its physical and legal structure." The ruling stated further that the Republic of Turkey is under "a hostile diplomatic siege consisting of genocide resolutions... The acceptance of this claim may lead in future centuries to a questioning of the sovereignty rights of the Republic of Turkey over the lands on which it is claimed these events occurred." Due to these national security concerns, the court declared that the claim of genocide in 1915 is not protected speech. To quote, "the use of these freedoms can be limited in accordance with aims such as the protection of national security, of public order, of public security"

The situation is not that different here in the United States: Even though by joint declaration of Congress in September 9, 1975, April 24th was declared a "National Day of Remembrance" for the Armenian Genocide and the President of the United State was authorized and requested to issue a proclamation, since then NONE of the United States Presidents, except Reagan in 1981, has used the term Genocide. The main reason for this attitude is "national security concerns of the United States in the Middle East".

The same argument again is used against the proposals for recognition of the Armenian Genocide on the floor of Congress, which has been brought up almost every year. Both United States presidents and opponents of the resolution for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide have very similar arguments to the Turkish Court's decision above. Indeed it would appear that, as the Court stated, using the term genocide, "unfavourably affects national security and the national interest" of Turkey and United States.

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We have two set of arguments here which are brought up in opposition to one another; “National security” versus morality or in other phraseology “*realists*” versus “*moral fundamentalists*.” The “*realists*” emphasize national security concerns of their country. In Turkey today, any attempt to openly discuss historic wrongs is denounced as a covert move in a master plan to partition the country and is therefore against the “national security of Turkey”. Here in the United States, the “*realists*” consider the acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide by Congress or usage of the term by the President to be “against US strategic interest”. The words you hear so often are “Turkey is a close friend of ours and we should not upset them”; OR “we should not jeopardize our strategic interests in the Middle East because of a moral issue, which occurred in the distant past”. On the other side we have “*fundamentalist moralists*” emphasizing the supremacy of morality against “real interests”.

The point that I want to make here is that pitting “national interest” against “morality” as mutually exclusive is just plain wrong. In fact what I really believe is that any security policy in the Middle East that excludes morality cannot ultimately be a “realistic” policy that will work and that eventually it undermines national security. Indeed, if one knows Turkey and the Middle East, one would easily recognize that history and historical injustices are not just dead issues from the past; the past IS the present in the Middle East. So therefore *morality is a very real issue*, and for *realpolitik* to be successful in the region; moral values, in this instance, the specific one of acknowledging historic wrong doings, must be integrated into a policy of national security.

There is a strong interconnection between security, democracy and facing history in the Middle East. Even a passing glance at the region makes it clear that historical injustices and the persistent denial of these injustices by one or another state or ethnic-religious group is a major

stumbling block, not only for the democratization of the region, but also for the establishment of stable relations between different ethnic and religious groups. My central argument is that a failure to confront history honestly is one of the major reasons for insecurity and instability in the region.

The question that I have struggled to find the answer to is, why is the discussion of historical injustices, something that goes to the heart of human rights perceived as a threat to Turkish national security? I propose that we take the argument about “national security” of Turkey very seriously and try to examine the roots of this mentality and to show the reasons why it must be changed. The mindset that an open discussion of history engenders a security problem originates from the breakup of the Ottoman Empire into nation-states starting in the nineteenth century. From late Ottoman times to the present, there has been a continuous tension between the state’s concern for secure borders and society’s need to come to terms with abuses of human rights. In this history, security and territorial integrity of a crumbling Empire, and human right abuses, can be likened to the two faces of a coin; the two separate faces of the same coin caused the rise of two opposing historical narratives.

Until recently, the dominant narrative has been the story of the partition of the Empire among the Great Powers, which ended with the Empire’s total collapse and disintegration. If you were to review the books in Turkey which recount this narrative you would be hardpressed to find a reference to massacres and genocide during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Instead, Christian communities are painted as the seditious agents of the imperialist Great Powers, continually conspiring against the state.

The other narrative has been developed basically by those ethnic and religious minorities who were subjected to different level of human rights abuses during that period. The

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history of the 19th century is mostly formulated in terms of human rights and the intervention of Great Powers on behalf of the minority groups. It is plain to see the contrast in both positions. In one perspective the Great Powers are portrayed as “evil” and must be criticized for having intervened too much. In the other perspective the Great Powers have been characterized as “positive” or “benign” and are criticized for having not intervened enough.

In this light; Turkish controversies about facing national history, in particular the Armenian Genocide, can be understood, in part, as the deployment of two, apparently contradictory, historical narratives against one another. Whenever the proponents of acknowledgment bring up a history of human-rights abuses, they are confronted with an opposing narrative, that of the decline and breakup of the Ottoman Empire and seditious agents who quickened the process.

Indeed, there have been certain moments in that history where national security and human rights became inseparably intertwined. One such moment came immediately after the First World War, between 1918 and 1923.

When the First World War ended with Ottoman defeat, working out the terms of a peace settlement, the political decision makers of the time grappled with two distinct, yet related issues, the answers to which determined their various relationships and alliances. The first was the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state. The second was the wartime atrocities committed by the ruling Union and Progress party against Ottoman Armenian citizens.

The questions about the first issue were: Should the Ottoman state retain its independence? Should new states be permitted to arise on the territory of the Ottoman state? If so, how should the borders of these new states be defined? The questions regarding the second issue were: What can

be done about the wartime crimes against the Armenians and the perpetrators of these atrocities? How should the perpetrators be punished? These questions related two different set of issues which hadn't been tackled separately and were rather intertwined with each other.

The questions, related to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire led to the formation of two different viewpoints. The Turkish nationalist movement, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal favored continued sovereignty within reduced borders as defined by the 1918 Moudros Ceasefire Treaty. The Allied Powers and ethnic-religious groups such as Greeks, Armenians and, to a lesser degree the Kurds, on the other hand argued for the establishment of new states on both occupied and unoccupied territory of the Ottoman Empire. The successive treaties of Sèvres 1920 and Lausanne 1923 reflected these divergent points of view.

As a result of this fight over territory in the early period of the Republic a general understanding of history in modern Turkey emerged, which can be formulated in the following way: We, the Turks, who see ourselves as the legitimate successors of the Ottoman Empire defended our sole remaining territory against the Armenians, Greeks, and to a lesser extent the Kurds, who were trying to carve up Anatolia into nation-states, with the support of the British, French, and Italians. The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres resolved the question of territory in favor of the non-Turkish nationalities. For the Turks, therefore, Sèvres remains a black mark in history. For the other ethnic-religious groups, however, the significance of Sèvres is quite different. Although it did not fully reflect their demands for territory, the treaty represented an unprecedented historical opportunity to resolve the territorial issue in their favor. Conversely, the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which guaranteed Turkish dominance in Anatolia for the Turks, stands as a milestone and validation

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of their continued national existence. Meanwhile, the other nationalities regard it as a great historical injustice.

Nevertheless both the Sevres and Lausanne treaties were not merely symbols of territorial conflict. These two treaties would symbolize how the injustices committed against Armenians and other Christians during the war, would be addressed. The central question was how would those perpetrators of human rights abuses during the war be punished? Although everyone, including the Turkish nationalists agreed that these crimes should not be left unpunished; there was uncertainty about the scope of the penalty. One group advocated for the trial and punishment of only some first-hand criminals as well as some of the top Union and Progress leaders. Another group advocated for the trials of individual suspects, casting the net as wide as possible, and for the punitive dismemberment of the Ottoman state into new states created on its territory.

The position of the Entente powers was that “the Turks,” as they put it, organized the massacres of other peoples, in particular the Armenians, during the First World War. It was therefore necessary to punish “the Turks” collectively in order to rescue the subject peoples (Arabs as well as Greeks, Armenians, etc.) from Turkish domination. Punishing “the Turks” was to be accomplished in two phases. First, the members of the Ottoman government and other officials were to be tried for the crimes against the religious and ethnic communities. Second, “the Turks” would henceforth inhabit a state that would be rendered as small and as weak as possible. A telegram sent to the Paris Peace Conference on April 3, 1919 (found in British Foreign Office files) by the Assistant High Commissioner of Istanbul, Webb, clearly illustrates this policy:

“In order to punish all of those persons who are guilty of the Armenian horrors, it is necessary to punish the Turks as a group. Therefore, I propose that the punishment be

given on a national level through the partitioning up of the last Turkish Empire, and on a personal level by trying those high officials who are on the list in my possession, and in a manner that would serve as an example for their successors.”

In short, casting the net as widely as possible, the Allied powers advocated for the trials of individual suspects, and for the punitive dismemberment of the Ottoman state into new states created on its territory. So, the main ostensible reason for partitioning Anatolia among various national groups was motivated by the Great Powers’ desire to punish “the Turks” for the barbarous acts they had committed.

How the New Turkish Government Defined the Crimes

What was the attitude of the “Turkish” position relative to the punishments of the criminals? Recall that postwar Turkey was governed from two political centers: Istanbul, the seat of the Ottoman Government, and Ankara, the headquarters of the Turkish Nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal. Both the Istanbul and Ankara governments acknowledged the massacres of Armenians and agreed with the Allies that the perpetrators should be tried and the trials were considered “just and necessary.” However, Ankara and Istanbul vehemently opposed the punitive partition of Anatolia.

This question was one of the central issues when both governments met in October 1919 to call an election of an Ottoman Parliament in accordance with the constitution. They signed five protocols to regulate the process of upcoming elections. The first and third protocols were directly related to the topic at hand. The first protocol declared: “1. Ittihadism – (Party of Union and Progress) [which organized the genocide against the Armenians] or any hint of its reawakening is politically very damaging... 4. It is judicially and politically necessary to punish those

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who committed crimes in connection with the deportation.” In the third Protocol both parties agreed that the fugitive members of “Ittihat,” who were wanted in connection with wartime atrocities, were not to participate in the elections. The protocol described the atrocities as “the evil deeds” of the Union and Progress Party. The perpetrators were defined as persons “who have been sullied by the nefarious acts of the deportation and massacre”. And so their participation in the election was qualified as “contrary to the true interests of the nation.”

The founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, addressing the Parliament on April 24, 1920, called the atrocities a “shameful act.” Now keep in mind, Mustafa Kemal was not a human rights activist or an altruist but a politician. The underlying reason for them to support the punishment of perpetrators of wartime crimes was their expectations from the ongoing Paris Peace conference. The commanders of the British and French occupying forces in Istanbul grabbed every opportunity to remind the “Turks” that if they expected a positive outcome from the Paris Peace talks, action absolutely had to be taken against the perpetrators of the war crimes. So, the Mustafa Kemal led government in Ankara and the administration in Istanbul believed that the war crime trials were the price for obtaining national sovereignty. In a memo written by Mustafa Kemal, in September 1919 to the Istanbul government, this point was underlined in a very clear way; “The punishment of perpetrators, he wrote, “should not stay only on paper. . . but should be carried out, since this would successfully impress the foreign elements.” In exchange for this concession the Turkish leadership expected a more favorable peace settlement without loss of territory.

This strategy failed. In April 1920, the provisions of Sèvres became known, according to which it was proposed to punish “the Turks” for the war-crimes by partitioning the Ottoman territory. In the same month, the Istanbul Court

Martial, which had been established in November 1918 and which was in the process of trying the perpetrators of the Armenian atrocities, now under pressure from Allied powers, began trying almost the entire Turkish national leadership, Mustafa Kemal foremost among them, who were opposed to the partitioning of Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal and around one hundred nationalists were sentenced to death *in absentia*.

When the Turkish nationalists realized that their support for the punishment of war criminals was not going to prevent the partitioning of Anatolia; and was in fact going to lead to their own prosecution and punishment, their attitude changed.

As Mustafa Kemal wrote to Istanbul on August 20, 1920, “[t]he Ottoman Government...continues to hang the children of the homeland on accusations of [having perpetrated] deportation and massacres, which now became totally senseless.” What Kemal meant was that the policy whereby the Ottoman government punished Turks for what they had done to the Christian minorities would make sense only if Turkey received some positive results in terms of a better treaty to secure the Ottoman territories. However, Sèvres had been signed, Ottoman sovereignty was not acknowledged, and Ottoman territories were distributed among different nations. Therefore, Kemal concluded these “senseless” death sentences should be halted.

We can conclude that had the Western forces agreed to territorial integrity in exchange for trials on cases of “crimes against humanity”, we might be talking about a very different history today.

Today, we can say that the Court Martial in Istanbul is a symbol of these two interwoven but distinct strands of Turkish history, “territory and borders” or expressed another way “national security” on the one side, and “human rights,”

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or “facing history and addressing historic wrong doings” on the other. The fact is that the attempt at dismemberment and partition of a state as a form of a punishment for the atrocities committed during the war years and proposed punishment of its nationalist leaders for seeking the territorial integrity of their state created the mindset in Turkey today that views any reference to the historic wrongdoings in the past as an issue of national security.

Need for a New Paradigm

A product of this mindset is therefore a belief that democratization, freedom of thought and speech, open and frank debate about history, acknowledgment of one’s past historical misdeeds, is a threat to national security. Those who invite society to engage in an open examination of the past are therefore labeled “traitors” and made targets of smear campaigns, are dragged into courts and prosecuted under Turkish Criminal Code Article 301 for “insulting Turkishness”. It is this kind of mindset that was behind the murder of Hrant Dink.

Reviewing Turkish history from this perspective reveals four important new perspectives. First, Mustafa Kemal’s condemnation of the Armenian massacres is diametrically opposed to the current official Turkish policy of denial. Kemal’s position during the difficult war years could be a positive starting point for a resolution. To become a truly democratic member of the society of nations, Turkey must confront this “dark chapter” of its history, this “shameful act,” as Mustafa Kemal called the Armenian genocide.

Secondly, until now, the Turkish-Armenian problem has been perceived within the old paradigm which produced these conflicts, namely, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the clash of different ethnic or national groups over lands and boundaries. We have to change this understanding. What we need is a new paradigm and we need to rethink

the Armenian-Turkish conflict. We have to reposition the Armenian-Turkish conflict within the new paradigm of transitional justice, that is, as a part of the democratization effort within existing nation-states. *The conflict should not be regarded as a territorial dispute, but rather as a human rights issue and as a problem of historic injustices that must be rectified in order to establish a just and democratic society.*

Thirdly, the concept of Turkish national security must be revised and changed. The main flaw of this concept is its perception that the promotion of basic democratic rights such as equality under the law, social reform and freedom of speech are a threat to national security. In the past, the emergence of the so called “Armenian question” was the result of Armenian demands for equality and social reform, which arguably would have led to a better Ottoman society. Their demands and the Armenians themselves were considered a security threat which led to them being targeted for massacres and deportations. Today the demand for an honest account of history is being handled in the same way: as a security problem.

The irony is that criminalizing historical inquiries for national security reasons is not only a huge obstacle on the path to democracy, but also is counterproductive and leads directly to real security problems for the country. This “self-fulfilling prophecy” can be shown not only in the Armenian genocide of the past but in the Kurdish problem today. Just as the Armenians and their social and political demands for a more just society were considered a threat in the past, a democratic future for Kurds today is also considered a threat to security. So, instead of solving Kurdish problems by seeking solutions that would lead to a more democratic society, the old, and I would argue, now useless, security concept, has been resurrected and has declared that Kurdish demands are essentially a security problem for the nation.

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As long as Turkey continues to regard moral principles (one of which is facing historic injustice with honesty) and national security as two opposing poles that are mutually exclusive, and refuses to come to terms with the past for national security reasons--indeed, as long as Turkey's national security is defined in opposition to an honest historical reckoning—further problems will be created.

Fourth, the United States should change its policy towards the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the security concept towards Turkey. Its low expectations of Turkey are based on classic colonial patronization. If it's good for the US to admit its past human rights violations, then the same should be demanded of Turkey.

The idea of criminalizing discussion about American slavery or the treatment of Native-Americans because of “security issues” or of maintaining Federal government websites where these historical events are uniformly referred to as “so-called” or “alleged” and filled with openly racist, hate filled propaganda, or of forcing American children to watch films denying that slavery of Africans or subjugation of Native Americans ever took place would be viewed as a sick joke in the US, but American foreign policy makers have had no problems supporting Turkey, a country that has been doing virtually the same consistently over the decades even going so far as to establish a coordination committee among the different ministries in order to coordinate the fight against “so called Armenian genocide lies.”

The US government should recognize that any argument here in the United States that brings up America's national interest as the reason to reject the official acknowledgment of Armenian Genocide will result in supporting these policies in Turkey and supporting those in Turkey who still hunt down intellectuals because they are opposed to this inhumane, racist mindset.

There is a security aspect of the problem also: A non-democratic, authoritarian Turkey creates more of a security problem than it solves when it makes the consistent denial of historical injustices an integral part of its security policy. It is exactly this attitude that delays not only democratization in the region, it also destabilizes relationships in the volatile Middle East. *You cannot solve any problem in the Middle East today without addressing historic wrong doings because history is not something in the past, past is the present in the Middle East.*

You need to understand that one of the main problems in the region is the insecurity felt by different groups towards each other as a result of events that have occurred in history. When you make the persistent denial of these pain-filled acts a part of your security policy this brings with it insecurity towards the other. This is what I call the security dilemma: What one does to enhance one's own security causes a reaction that, in the end, can make one even less secure. Often statesmen do not recognize that this may be a probable outcome: They do not empathize with their neighbours: they are unaware that their own actions can appear threatening. The existing sense of mistrust engendered by the denials is one of the main causes of instability and is an obstacle in creation of security in the region. For this reason, any security concept, any policies of *Real-politik* in and for the region that ignores morality and forgets the addressing of historic wrong doings is doomed to fail in the end.

So, instead of helping those who deny past injustices, and make this denying a part of their security concept US policy should integrate an honest confrontation with history into a policy of national interest in the Middle East.

Lastly, there are some pragmatic reasons why existing US policy regarding Turkey should change: First, there's an ongoing theatrical drama, or perhaps comedy would be a better term, that all the parties engage in every year and that

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has started to grow old. It's time to end this dishonorable playacting. As we know, each time the Administration or Congress has the issue of the Genocide on their table, they don't vote for/against what they think of the events of 1915. Both the Administration and Congress end up denying for one day what they believe the other 364 days of the year. All of the parties involved know very well what US Administration and Congress think on 1915 but Turkey ask them to tell a lie only for one day. I have never understood why the Turkish government extracts so much joy out of making the United States lie for one day. I also find it completely dishonorable. Not only does this lie fail to lead to a resolution, it needlessly locks up the debate. All of the parties involved, arguably using all of their energy and effort, wait for this one day and get completely locked into a single word that may or may not be used by Congress or the President. Placing so much expectation and energy on a specific day and around a single word that may be uttered by the American government creates incredible tension. It builds up into an impenetrable gridlock that impedes any solution. The United States should stop this gridlock that prevents resolution. The time has come for the United States to stop allowing itself to play that role.

If the United States declares what it believes to be the truth and stands behind it, not only will it gain some self-respect on the subject, but it will liberate both Turks and Armenians and itself in the process.

After stating what it believes to be the truth, the US could step away from being a part of the problem and be able to play the role of mediator. That would bring about the realization to the opposing sides that the solution lies within them, not in expending all of their energy trying to get a President to state something or to keep quiet. It would get the Turks and Armenians to focus on direct negotiations between themselves as a way to resolution. The borders between the two countries should immediately be re-

opened, diplomatic relations re-established and a series of meetings planned where all subjects, not just history alone, are discussed and debated. Turkey needs to stop treating the discussion of history as a category of crime. This can only be possible when the US puts an end to this gridlock and is honest with its statements about history.

The problem has another important aspect to it. At a time when Turkey is making an effort to engage in foreign policy mediation between Arabs and Israel and is attempting to be seen as an international team player, it might be an eye opener for Turkey to understand that bullying around and threatening others is not the behavior of an international actor. Turkey cannot continue with the same repressive domestic policies towards its own history and minorities under the guise of national security and cannot threaten other countries in expressing their thoughts on 1915 and at the same time pretend to be a member of democratic countries in the world. An open official acknowledgment by the US government might force Turkey to understand that blackmailing and threatening other states and suppressing and persecuting its own intellectuals do not offer solutions for historical problems and for security.

I believe that we will enter a new era where morality and real politik will not be considered mutually exclusive, if President Obama should put an end to this lingering problem and liberate everybody in the process by an official acknowledgment of genocide.

TURKISH STATE POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Roger Smith (College of William and Mary Emeritus)

There have been many discussions about reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. The problem about reconciliation is that there is a public dimension, what the state is willing to do, and a personal dimension, what individuals are willing to do. In a rare act of justice and reconciliation, Berzan Boti, a Turk, has returned his house and land to the Assyrians, in this case to an Assyrian association, since the original owners had been killed. He said that his conscience bothered him and he knew what justice required. Among the requirements of justice is that one does not harm the interests of others, and that one does not accept the benefits of harm to others. He responded to the latter. Unfortunately, his example has not been followed by others.

On the other hand, the state has taken drastic steps to deny the genocide against the Armenians and other Christians, and has taken it to the public schools, from six year olds all the way to higher levels. For several years, the Ministry of Education has required students (including Armenian ones) to write essays denying the genocide. But recently, the Ministry of Defense has created a video, "Sari Gelin" ("Blonde Bride") that has to be shown in all schools and to all grades. The BBC summarizes the film as follows: "Sari Gelin" presents the Turkish state's case that the Armenians betrayed the benevolent Ottoman Empire during World War I, siding with invading foreign forces and massacring thousands of Turks. The film says that the Armenians were 'relocated' as a result of their actions. There is no mention of the hundreds of thousands who perished or were killed on the long march through the desert."

There was an uproar about the film, with a Turkish father suing the Ministry of Education for forcing his daughter to watch a "racist" and disturbing film. "There are mass graves, bones and skulls in the DVD. They have interviews

with old granddads who inspire confidence and compassion. When they say things like, 'They cut off his head,' that is bound to stay with the children," this according to a Turkish psychologist. The film was officially withdrawn, but many schools report that they are told they must use it.

The word "Armenian" is used many times in the film, always negatively. Armenians and Turks who are concerned with human rights think the film is dangerous and that it will incite hatred. But not everyone agrees; in the BBC report, a Turkish teacher is quote as follows: "We teach children who our enemies are and which countries tried to divide up our territory, but we don't teach them about the Armenians. So I thought the film was good and objective."

Much of the film was about how Armenians killed, and were especially brutal, against the Turks. As one independent newspaper editor said: "You go and kill more than a million Armenians, wipe the traces of Armenians from Anatolia, grab their property, and then show children videos about 'What the Armenians did to us.'"

The BBC account concludes with these words: "The education ministry's statement calls Sari Gelin a balanced, historical account, but the clear message it gives Turkish schoolchildren is that Armenians are traitors and their enemies."

The other issue that should be reported is the "I am Sorry" campaign in Turkey. On December 15, 2008, some two hundred Turkish intellectuals unleashed a statement/petition that has resulted in denunciations by the Prime Minister, assorted nationalists, and many scholars, both within Turkey and elsewhere. The statement (and because it was in Turkish there are slight variations in translation) was as follows:

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“My conscience does not accept the insensitivity shown to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them.”

The response to the statement was varied: The Turkish Prime Minister denounced the statement, various nationalist groups said that it was the act of traitors, and many scholars raised significant questions about some of the basic terms used. In particular the concept of the “Great Catastrophe” was challenged. What does the term mean? Is it a dodge for the term “genocide?”

The argument is being made that “genocide” is an inadequate term to describe what happened in 1915-1917; that there was instead a “Great Catastrophe,” that enveloped all of Anatolia, and to focus on the plight of one people is to miss the larger picture of disaster over a whole region. One Turkish journalist describes the term “genocide” when applied to the Armenian case as, “cold, eerie and distant,” and not encompassing the devastation in Anatolia. It was a “common tragedy of Anatolia.”

Marc Mamigonian (National Association of Armenian Studies and Research) has replied to that argument, making a comparison with the Holocaust:

“Had there been a discourse in German intellectual circles, at any time, to the effect calling what happened a ‘genocide’ was inadequate, too cold, eerie, etc., and which proposed, therefore, to substitute a more “evocative” term to describe “the events of (1933-45) that would include the suffering of the German people and which sought to account for “the common tragedy of Europe” rather than “confining historical understanding of this horrible event” to the annihilation of the Jews.”

“And while German suffering in this period was very real, and the extermination of European Jewry was, unquestionably, a tragedy for Europe as a whole, do you think that such a discourse would gain much traction? Do you think that an effective counter to Holocaust denial would be to enlarge the definition of the Holocaust to make it a “common European tragedy”?”

There is much more to be said: the liberal Turkish intellectuals (many now living in the United States) take the position that 1. the term “genocide” should not be used with regard to the Armenian devastation. Turks are not knowledgeable about the events and can’t adjust to the idea of mass killing by Turks against members of their own society. The use of the term “genocide” would only lead to a defensive reaction. Education over a long period, through civic associations, will be required. And 2.: affirmations of the genocide, especially by governments, are to be discouraged and rejected: they also result in a defensive reaction, and set back a slower, but more effective, civil process of education.

Despite traditions, the inability in Turkey to recognize and welcome pluralism, and the long standing denial of the Armenian Genocide, the fact is that Turkey is changing. It has a long way to go, but its bid for EU membership has had a large impact on its law and social practice, and despite its ruinous restrictions on freedom of speech (article 301, for example, the one that imprisons people for “insulting Turkey”). There are inconsistencies: people are prosecuted for a remark, intellectuals, such as Taner Akcam, are marked by shadowy groups, perhaps with government connections, for assassination, but books on the Armenian Genocide are now available in some cases in Turkish translations (Balakian’s *THE BURNING TIGRIS*, Dadrian and Akcam’s new books of documentary evidence on the war crimes trials after 1918 published in Turkish).

TURKISH STATE POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

And then there is the completely unexpected: on May 23, 2009, during a congress of Turkey's ruling party (Justice and Development Party) held in an area of Turkey that is largely Kurdish, Prime Minister Erdogan criticized Turkey's past and described the Kemalist foundation of the Republic as "fascist" because of the ethnic cleansing of Turkey's Armenian and Greek minorities. "For many years Turkey has been ethnically cleansed of its minorities because of their cultural and ethnic difference with regard to the Turkish identity. This was the result of fascism and we as the Justice and Development Party have been trapped in this wrong political approach and have committed similar errors." His statement may point toward a greater acceptance of minorities within Turkey, but he mentioned ethnic cleansing, not genocide. And he reappointed his defense minister who a few months before had publicly declared that Turkey had only been able to become a great nation-state due to its elimination of ethnic and religious groups from Turkey.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S STATEMENT ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Rouben Adalian (Armenian Assembly of America)

President Barack Obama's April 24 statement commemorating "the 1.5 million Armenians who were... massacred or marched to their death" befuddled many. While once again avoiding the term genocide, it invoked the Armenian historical designation for the event as the "Meds Yeghern" the Great Calamity. To many in Armenia it seemed the U.S. president had used the proper label. According to Turkish officials, the term was too close an acknowledgment. For most people the message was lost in the translation, disappointing many Armenian-Americans who expected the newly-elected president to keep his campaign promises. Others reacted more angrily as Senator Obama had raised those expectations far beyond previous presidential candidates who made more cautious pledges. Obama had been unambiguous about this position. As far back as January 2008 he had stated: "As President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide."

When President Obama visited Turkey in the early part of April, he did not back away from his position. As a matter of fact he delivered a fairly strong message while addressing the Turkish Parliament:

"Human endeavor is by its nature imperfect. History is often tragic, but unresolved, it can be a heavy weight. Each country must work through its past. And reckoning with the past can help us seize a better future. I know there's strong views in this chamber about the terrible events of 1915. And while there's been a good deal of commentary about my views, it's really about how the Turkish and Armenian people deal with the past. And the best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open and constructive."

Over 20 countries, including Canada, Argentina, France, Italy, Poland and Russia, in one form or other have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, as well as a number

of international organizations, among them the European Parliament. Forty-three states in the United States have also issued proclamations or resolutions to the same effect. However, a Congressional resolution or a clear presidential statement setting straight the historical record have eluded the Armenian-American community. Sooner or later the argument of national security is invoked and the original cause necessitating the Armenian community worldwide efforts for acknowledgment gets forgotten in the process. No other government, certainly in modern times, now that the Soviet Union has gone out of existence, has waged an official campaign of denial for so long as that of the Turkish government by its unremitting efforts to sow doubt and confusion about the atrocities committed during World War One.

The United States was far more certain at a time closer to the events. In 1951 in a written statement to the International Court of Justice about the U.N. Genocide Convention, the U.S. noted: "The Roman persecution of the Christians, the Turkish massacres of Armenians, the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis are outstanding examples of the crime of genocide." While in 1981 President Ronald Regan in a proclamation for the Days of Remembrance for the Victims of the Holocaust had spoken of "the genocide of the Armenians."

The question then remains where exactly does the United States stand on the issue. State Department officials have taken to repeating a new mantra that the United States does not deny the events of the 1915. Whether it will affirm them remains to be seen. In the meantime sorting out President Obama's personal views on the Armenian Genocide from the official policies of the United States has become the latest chapter in a continuing saga. Obama did say not that long ago that: "I believe that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence."

THE SHOAH, ANTISEMITISM AND GENOCIDE IN EUROPE

Yehuda Bauer (Hebrew University/Yad Vashem, Jerusalem)

The Shoah or Holocaust, the genocide of the Jews at the hand of National-Socialist Germany and its collaborators, has to be seen in its various contexts. One context is that of Jewish history and civilization, another is that of antisemitism, another is that of European and World history and civilization. There are two other contexts, and they are very important: the context of World War II, and the context of genocide, and they are connected. Obviously, without the war, it is unlikely that there would have been a genocide of the Jews, and the war developments were decisive in the unfolding of the tragedy. Conversely, it is increasingly recognized today that while one has to understand the military, political, economic and social elements as they developed during the period, the hard core, so to speak, of the World War, its center in the sense of its overall cultural and civilizational impact, were the Nazi crimes, and first and foremost the genocide of the Jews. The other context that I am discussing here is that of genocide – again, obviously, the Holocaust was a form of genocide. Thus, a triangle of contexts is discussed, with the Shoah at its center, and World War II and genocide as the necessary backgrounds, without which an understanding of the Shoah will be difficult to achieve.

We rarely ask the question – why did World War II break out; not how, but why? Usually, we deal with how it happened, what preparations were made, who did what and when. It is clear that Nazi Germany initiated the conflict, and few are naïve enough to argue that Germany attacked Poland because of Danzig, the Polish Corridor, or because of the wish to regain the territories lost through the Treaty of Versailles. Why did the German leadership want the war, against the wishes of the German population? The weight of the documentation seems to me to indicate that the drive was purely ideological. The Nazi movement came to power committed to expansion and conquest, based on a

racist ideology. It saw war as the natural state of a healthy human society. It thus rebelled against the legacy of an Enlightenment of which it itself was, if one may use that term, an illegitimate offspring. But for the ordinary German citizen, the first priority was to get out of the terrible economic conditions that prevailed in Germany, and to regain Germany's position as a great power. In this, the Nazis succeeded. Germany's economic recovery was the result, first of all, of the upswing from the depth of the depression, an upswing that had started before the Nazi accession to power; second, the result of massive bribes of the German masses through a rise in pensions and a more questionable rise of real wages, paid for by deficit financing. They could have raised real wages more, but did not do so in order to pay for rearmament. Rearmament brought them to the brink of financial collapse, despite the overall improvement of the economy, and they got out of that when things became really bad, in 1937/8, by robbing Jewish property, which covered some 9% of the state budget, as Götz Aly has shown in his book 'Hitlers Volksstaat'. Faced with great economic obstacles which were the result of the imperatives of their expansionist ideology, their way out was an increasing radicalization, and a race forward into war and conquest. They did not occupy other countries in order to avoid an economic collapse, but they managed to continue to be afloat economically by exploiting the conquered countries as well as their allies mercilessly, and in fact paying for the war by robbing them clean of all possible assets. The first targets of this policy were the Jews. However, robbing the Jews was not the reason for the Holocaust. The annihilation of the Jews, which had been an implicit, not explicit, part of the ideology from the very beginning in any case, was one of the main results, first of all of that ideology, and then the attempt to implement it. **They robbed the Jews first, and then killed them because of antisemitism, which was a central element in the worldview that spurred the regime forward.**

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The other main part of Nazi ideology was expansion. Why were they committed to expansion? Did German economic and social recovery depend on conquest? Hardly. By 1936-8, the economy was, as pointed out above, on its way out of the crisis, unemployment had taken a nose-dive, social stability had been partly achieved, and it was rearmament and war preparations that caused the financial crisis of 1937/8. Germany did not need a war to maintain a solid growth. It did not need to occupy Eastern Europe to get grain or raw materials, as it produced manufactured goods that could easily and profitably be exchanged for the things it needed. It certainly did not need any land. Germany today, a smaller country than in 1937, with a larger population, not only does not need to export any superfluous people, but needs constant immigration to maintain its standard of living. The hunger for land was an ideological postulate, the expansion a chimera, the war materially useless. I repeat: from a rational German perspective, a pointless war, a war produced by ideology, not by pragmatic needs.

Antisemitism was a central component of the ideology that produced that war, with its 35 million or more victims in Europe, resulting in the destruction of much of the continent. Nazi antisemitism was not only the result of a mutation of the Jew-hatred that had permeated Christian (and Moslem) societies for ages, but was also fed by the quasi-religious character of National Socialism, which promised redemption and a Thousand-Year Reich that would be brought about by the Divine Messiah, the Jesus-figure, who had become flesh and blood – Adolf Hitler. The struggle for everlasting happiness would be conducted against Satan and his minions, and Satan was the stereotypical Jew. This was easily understood by the German masses, as it derived from Christian antisemitism, which had never been genocidal, but which had formed the source of the Nazi variety, contrary to the statements of official Catholicism. The way I read it, the desire to force the emigration of Jews from Germany in

the thirties, to Poland in late 1939, to Madagascar in 1940, and the Soviet Arctic in early 1941, and then the genocide itself, were also part of the wish to exorcise the devil from the midst of the Chosen People, namely the Nordic peoples of the Aryan race. The methods, the timing, the stages in which these policies developed, were determined by pragmatic considerations. The aim, however, was entirely non-pragmatic, and as I said, purely ideological. Thus, the existence of ghettos, for instance in Bialystok and Lodz, was very important for the German war machine, and was supported by local Nazi officials. Contrary to all modern capitalistic logic of cost-effectiveness, the ghettos were annihilated by orders from the Berlin center, in pursuance of ideological aims. Examples of this kind are legion.

This non-pragmatic character of the genocide of the Jews is one of the elements that differentiate it from other genocides. Other elements were the totality, that is the desire to annihilate every single Jew defined as such by the Nazis (obviously, no Satan could be left to stay around if the Nazi Chosen People project was to succeed); the universality, namely the idea, developed in stages, that Jews everywhere should be treated the same way that they were being treated in Nazi Europe; and the fact that new methods and new uses for modern technological means to murder millions were produced within a civilized, cultured, society in the center of Europe to do so. The gassing and burning of Jews was not only pragmatically more efficient than killing them into ditches by fire-arms, as was done in the occupied Soviet areas, but was symbolically parallel to the exorcism practiced by the auto-da-fes in the Iberian peninsula hundreds of years before that. In both cases, personifications of Satan were exorcised by fire. Antisemitism, and the desire to conquer and rule, not only Europe, but ultimately, with allies, the whole world, were the two mutually complementary pillars of the Nazi project. Complementary, because the Nazi Good could only triumph if the Jewish Satan was defeated and annihilated.

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Thus, antisemitism was one of the main causes for the death of uncounted non-Jewish victims of World War II and the devastation of large parts of Europe. Again, one can see here a difference between that and other forms of genocide.

In World War II, Nazi Germany wanted to destroy liberalism, democracy, pacifism, socialism, conservatism, Christianity – all those things that we inaccurately call Western civilization. Germany's war was to clear the way for the conquest of Europe as a whole, and then, with allies, of the whole world. A new system of values was to be imposed on humanity, a racist hierarchy, with the Nordic peoples of the Aryan race on top, and everyone else in a hierarchical order under them. No Jews, because all Jews would by then be annihilated. This racist world was a completely new utopia. Mankind has experienced uncounted attempts to substitute one religion for another, destroy one nation or empire by another, or one social class by another. But Nazism was new; the establishment of a racial hierarchy was utterly novel – although we know today that races do not exist, because we all come originally from East Africa, as DNA research has shown. Nazism was therefore a truly revolutionary attempt, possibly the only really revolutionary attempt in the last two hundred years. This revolutionary attempt was directed against 'Western civilization'. The Jews were the symbol of that civilization, because of the moral teachings it had produced. After all, the ideological, religious, basis for modern Western civilization was the Bible, and for Christians it had two parts: the Old and the New Testament, and both were written largely by Jews. **There was logic in the Nazi ideology: if you want to destroy the Western tradition, you start with the annihilation of one of its founders, namely the Jews.**

The direct connection between World War II, the Shoah, and present-day genocidal events and threats is more than obvious. There are repetitions here that hark back to the genocide of the Jews. The Shoah was unprecedented. But it was a precedent, and that precedent is being followed.

The Soviet Union and Consequences of Its Role in Europe

The after-effects of the Shoah and of World War II are very much with us – this is a past that is present, a past that still has a future, and there is a major issue that is beginning to be addressed, but that needs to be explored much more seriously, namely – the comparison between the two totalitarian regimes, National Socialism and Stalinist Communism. The parallels between the two are obvious: a one-party dictatorship with a half-mythical dictator at the top, the existence of a massive terror machine of a well-organized police state, an ideology that became the substitute for an exclusivist religion, and so on. The differences have not been properly explored (and this will not be fulfilled herein). The Soviet Union was a centralized state with a centralized economy with an inbuilt tendency to massive corruption and economic inefficiency. Nazi Germany was a basically polycratic regime, where vassal fiefdoms competed for the attention of the all-powerful dictator, but which was built on a combination of powerful private enterprise and a clever manipulation by central fiscal authorities. Private property, especially that of big industrial, agricultural and banking enterprises, flourished. Inefficiency was the result not of the economic structure, but of the intervention in the economy of an ideology-motivated political dictatorship. During the war, this ideology-driven political inefficiency decisively influenced military planning and execution as well. Nevertheless, both regimes could overcome these deficiencies in the short and medium term by tremendous efforts emanating from the center.

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Stalin has been accused of many acts of politicide according to the research of Barbara Harff. There can hardly be any doubt but that the number of victims of Soviet oppression far surpasses the number of dead in Nazi concentration camps, even if you include the victims of the genocide of the Jews. But there can equally be no doubt that the number of victims of World War II which was initiated, willed, and prosecuted by Nazi Germany, far surpasses the number of victims of the Gulag and the Soviet oppression. The numbers game here, as elsewhere, does not lead us anywhere.

Germany, with the help of many other states, engaged in what the 1948 United Nations Convention called genocide: against the Roma, the Poles and, primarily, totally unpragmatically and purely ideologically, against all Jews. The Soviets did nothing of the kind.

Had the Germans not attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941, after almost two years of a fairly close alliance, would there have been a permanent collusion between the two totalitarianisms? I don't think so. It was quite clear to both elites, that the alliance was temporary, and that sooner or later they would clash. When they did, the Germans almost overwhelmed the Soviet state. Most people think that the alliance forged between the West and the Soviets was an unnatural one in terms of political cultures and far-reaching aims. But in actual fact it was, in many ways, not unnatural that a regime that threatened all of the achievements of 'Western civilization' should be opposed by all of those who, in their different and contradictory ways, wanted to continue that civilization, even in a very distorted form, as the Soviets did. The war was, in the end, won mainly by the Soviets. The West helped by supplying them with crucially important armaments, and its help shortened the war. The invasion of Western Europe contributed markedly to the final victory. But the war was won by the Red Army, which defeated the main German forces, at tremendous cost. The Soviet Union liberated the world from the threat

of another long period of the darkest ages imaginable. This is the perception of recent history prevalent all over Europe, indeed the world, and it determines Western historical memory. It is true even in, say, the Ukraine, where the Germans were originally enthusiastically welcomed by most people, though even there there was an important though unquantifiable pro-Soviet minority as early as 1941. Ukrainians in large numbers participated in the murder of the Jews, volunteered for pro-German police, collaborated with the German administration – but soon deep disenchantment took over. The Germans did not permit any kind of Ukrainian autonomy, treated Ukrainians as lesser beings, and then deported hundreds of thousands of them as forced laborers. The mood changed rapidly.

Both many Ukrainians and many of the peoples in the Baltic states collaborated in the destruction and deportation of the Jews in order to gain autonomy from Germany. But it did not work as they hoped. The further west one went from the real Soviet Union, the greater the enthusiasm for the Soviet liberators. For the Jews, it was even simpler. German rule meant certain death. Soviet rule meant ethnic oppression, and later on antisemitism as well. But the only hope for survival was Soviet victory. All Jewish survivors owed their lives to Soviet victory. After the war, in their majority, these survivors concentrated in displaced persons camps in Central Europe, and were a major factor in the establishment of Israel. The Soviet victory made that possible. The Soviets really did liberate Europe, however problematic that liberation was. Except in the Baltic States, where the perception is different: there, the view is that there were three occupations, and the second Soviet one lasted for decades and was worse than the German one. The choice, it is felt there, was between two totalitarian regimes, but it was thought – mistakenly – that the German variety did not endanger the basic fabric of society in the Baltic states. The Soviet regime, on the other hand, represented, in part at least,

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by Baltic communists, endangered the very existence of the Baltic nationalities, in part also by introducing people from other Soviet nationalities, especially Russians, threatening to overwhelm the local ethnic groups.

Did the Soviets commit genocide, or something approaching that, during their two occupations of the Baltic countries? Let me take the results of the admirable work of the Latvian Historical Commission, that is those parts of the work that I could read in English, as my source. There were close to two million people in Latvia, in 1939, about 75% of whom were ethnic Latvians; the rest were mainly Russians, Germans, and close to 95.000, or about 5%, were Jews. The Soviets repressed and persecuted some 3,000 persons during the first occupation, and deported 15.400 more, together less than 1% of the population. The majority of the deportees survived. But of these 15.400, 11.7% were Jews, so the number of persecuted and deported Jews was more than twice their proportion of the population.

The Soviets did not abolish the Latvian language, and they more often transformed than abolished, local cultural institutions. But they forbade Hebrew, and in time effectively suppressed Yiddish; they dissolved all specifically Jewish institutions, though they did not formally abolish Jewish religious worship. Jewish communities were not transformed, but eradicated. During the second occupation, in the late forties, the Soviets deported 43.000 Latvian citizens. Together with the first wave in 1941, the total amounted to roughly 3.3% of the population. And though the Germans, with local help, had by then murdered almost all Latvian Jews, there were quite a number of Jews even among the deportees of the second wave.

One can hardly talk of an anti-Baltic genocidal wave. If there was anything approaching cultural elimination at Soviet hands, it was that of the Jews, not of the Latvians, although Latvian culture was diminished and attacked.

Latvian historians have also deconstructed the myth about significant Jewish participation in Soviet governmental and police organs. The same picture emerges in the formerly Polish territories of western Belarus and the western Ukraine. There, according to Polish figures, of the roughly 800.000 deportees to Siberia in 1939-1941, 30% were Jews, though Jews were only 10% of the population. All this amounts to oppression and persecution. In addition, in the occupied Baltic areas, because of the relatively higher economic and social standards, there was mass immigration of non-Baltics from inside the Soviet Union. The question is still open whether this was intentional or not; probably it was a mixture of both. All this was very bad, but it was certainly not genocide. Had there been a genocide of the Baltic peoples, there could have been no independence movement that was finally victorious, between 1987 and 1991. It was then that the regime collapsed under its own weight of inefficiency, and political and moral corruption. Apart from the murder of several thousand wandering Roma, the only genocide that happened in the Baltic States was that of the Jews.

Two major problems emerge: one, the collaboration of the majority of Baltic peoples with the Germans, not necessarily because of any sympathy with Germany or with Nazism, but as a result of the political, ethnic and economic situation determined by geography and history. This again resulted in the collaboration of large numbers of them, actively or by silent agreement, in the annihilation of the Jews; and two, and this is the reason for a disconnect between Baltic perceptions of the past and those of the rest of Europe, and indeed the world, namely different perceptions of the historical role of the Soviet Union in the war against Nazi Germany. This is not to be taken lightly. Good and evil are seldom painted in black and white. However, the Nazi regime, with its near-absolute evil, is an exception. Many in the world see World war II as a very central point of historical

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and political reference, and the Shoah as the pivotal event in it. They see the Soviet Union, historically, as a crucial partner, a liberator, though an extremely problematic one, in the rescue of the world from a potential threat to its very existence at Nazi hands. A continued disconnect between the historical consciousness of the Baltic States and that of the rest of the Western world would be a tragedy, mainly for the Baltic peoples themselves.

Conclusions

The conclusions from all this are, first of all, the realization that World War II was conducted by Nazi Germany for mainly ideological reasons; that was the context for the Shoah—the annihilation of the Jews was an end in itself. Second, that parallels, and very considerable differences emerge, between that genocide and other genocides, which still remain to be researched. Three, that this cannot be done without a comparison between Nazi Germany and the Soviet empire. Four, that it was the Soviets who defeated Germany, rescued the remnant of the Jews of Europe, prevented the horror of decades of Nazi rule over large parts of the world, while instituting a totalitarian reign of terror in large parts of the continent. Fifth, that there is a need for a kind of globalization of genocidal research, as shown here in the case of the genocide of the Jews. Without that, we are not likely to understand this and other genocides.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOLOCAUST: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

John T. Pawlikowski (Catholic Theological Union, Chicago)

In dealing with the question of the Catholic Church and the Holocaust we need to keep in mind that institutional Catholicism does not represent the totality of the church. The church, in the words of the II Vatican Council, is also the “people of God.” The record of the church at large, especially at the level of its lay membership, was sometimes considerably better on the response to the Holocaust than the institutional church leadership. Yet it must be noted that among Europe’s Christian population pervasive anti-Jewish theology and outright antisemitism had everything to do with the widespread acquiescence and even collaboration with the Nazi policy of destruction of the Jews. I like to speak of classical Christian anti-Judaism and antisemitism as providing a seedbed for Nazism. Nazi ideologues drew upon classical anti-Jewish church legislation while developing the laws they would use to dispossess Jews of their basic rights and they exploited Catholic-based cultural entities such as the Oberammergau passion play to promote Nazi ideology among the masses. This essay will confine itself to the response of the Catholic leadership. But the reader needs to be aware that this does not necessarily tell the full story.

For a century or so the institutional Catholic Church battled the forces of liberalism and what was termed freemasonry in Europe. This “hundred years war” was rooted in the belief on the part of popes and Vatican officials that fundamental notions of human rights and religious freedom would undermine Catholic moral hegemony in countries where Catholics constituted a majority such as Italy, Austria and Poland. And even in countries such as Germany and France where Catholics did not dominate the political realm, Catholic leadership frequently fought tenaciously against such notions which were labeled as “satanic” in origin. While such opposition on the part of

the papacy, the Vatican and local church leaders did not automatically generate support for genocide and eventually the Holocaust, it certainly weakened any sustained protest against genocidal or near-genocidal actions on the part of governments and eventually against the Holocaust. Moral opposition to genocide and Holocaust is ultimately based in notions of individual human equality. By thrashing notions of such equality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Catholicism contributed, even if indirectly, to prevailing notions of religious and racial superiority that would provide that indispensable seedbed for the Holocaust spoken of earlier in this essay. The failure of Vatican Council I to respond to growing antisemitism as a major social force in Europe is a case in point.

This hundred years war against liberal notions of human dignity and human rights came to an end at the II Vatican Council. After a fierce battle within the Council the bishops endorsed for the first time the importance of notions of human rights and religious liberty. Pope John XXIII made a major contribution to this aboutface through his social encyclical *PACEM IN TERRIS* (1963). If these documents had been available at the time of the Holocaust, they may well have made some difference in the quality of the Catholic response to Hitler’s central attack on the Jews as well as his attack on the Poles, the Roma, the disabled and gay people.

After many years of delay the Vatican released a comprehensive statement on the Holocaust on March 16, 1998. Its principal architect was Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, then President of the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. But Cardinal Cassidy had to submit the text to the Vatican’s doctrinal office headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) as well as to the Vatican Secretariat of State headed by Cardinal Angelo Sodano. The latter in particular mandated changes in the document which would be responsible for future controversy. Perhaps the most important positive

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aspect of the document is that it came with a strongly positive introduction by Pope John Paul II.

In some quarters, mostly Catholic, the document was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. A number of Jewish leaders also saw very positive elements in the document. It clearly acknowledged the Holocaust as an historical fact--Holocaust denial was not an acceptable Catholic option. This has been reiterated by Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Walter Kasper and other Catholic leaders in response to the controversy created by Pope Benedict XVI's lifting the excommunication decree against Bishop Richard Williamson and three of his fellow bishops from the heretical society of St. Pius X. Bishop Williamson clearly has presented himself as a Holocaust denier. So for the present Pope to take the first step in allowing Bishop Williamson back into full communion with the Catholic Church without demanding from him a repudiation of his views on the Holocaust and on Jews in general, and to do it on the eve of the annual Holocaust commemoration in Europe, caused outrage in many European countries among bishops, theologians, priests, lay leaders and even politicians such as Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. The only good aspect to the regrettable controversy caused in large part by inadequate consultation on the part of the Pope was the strong response by so many Catholics against the papal action. Clearly awareness of the Holocaust and its implications had become rooted in the soul of many Christians over the past several decades.

Despite the importance of the positive aspects of the Vatican document on the Holocaust *WE REMEMBER* it has several drawbacks as several respected publications such as *COMMONWEAL* and *THE TABLET* made clear. Most of these criticisms were discussed at a major symposium on the document with Cardinal Cassidy as an active participant held at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago under the auspices of the school's Cardinal Bernardin Center and

the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding in March 1999. (Cf. Judith H. Banki and John T. Pawlikowski, eds., *ETHICS IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST: CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES*. Sheed & Ward, 2001, for the papers from this conference).

WE REMEMBER clearly implicates Catholics at all levels of the Church-- even at the very highest levels, as Cardinal Edward Cassidy has underlined, in the sin of antisemitism. Its main drawbacks in this regard are its failure to tie such antisemitism to the ordinary teachings of the church, particularly in preaching, and to its depiction of the Catholic-Jewish relationship in church art over the centuries. It tends to portray antisemitic Catholics as fringe members of the church, as people who failed to follow authentic church teachings. This is in fact a falsification of the actual historical record. Many national Catholic statements, especially those issued by the German bishops in 1995 and the French bishops in 1997 are far more forthright in this regard.

WE REMEMBER could have, and should have, made it clearer that in speaking about the "wayward sons and daughters" of the church who fell into the sin of antisemitism that they did so because of what they had learned from teachers, theologians (the Church Fathers in particular), and preachers as well as from art work in churches where Jews are depicted as blind and decrepit. yet we know from many studies of antisemitism by scholars, including Catholic scholars such as Edward Flannery and Frederick Schwieterz, that for centuries antisemitism had permeated Catholic education and preaching and the popular culture they generated. The famous facade of the medieval cathedral in Strasbourg, France, with its depiction of the vibrant church represented as a young woman and the bedraggled and blindfolded synagogue present in the guise of a bent-over old woman, is an apt illustration of how deeply antisemitism had embedded itself in church attitudes. *WE REMEMBER* is remiss in not connecting the sinful actions of its members

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relative to the Jews much more directly to the antisemitic perspectives presented them within the tradition of Catholic worship and education. Pope John Paul II's recognition of antisemitism in Christian history in his plea for forgiveness for antisemitism made during his wider liturgy of pardon on the first Sunday of Lent 2000, a plea he repeated in the note he placed in Jerusalem's Western Wall during his historic visit to that city, represented a significant advance on WE REMEMBER.

The second problematic area of WE REMEMBER is its contention that there were no substantive links between Christian anti-Judaism (a hostility towards Jewish religion) and Nazi antisemitism. There is some basis for a distinction between Christian anti-Judaism and Nazi antisemitism. But WE REMEMBER has overdrawn it. Nazi ideology is more than an enhanced version of Christian antisemitism which did not aim directly at the annihilation of Jews but wanted to render them marginal and miserable in human society. While Nazi ideology drew upon sources other than classical antisemitism such as new forms of bio-racism, WE REMEMBER's view that there was no inherent connection between Nazi ideology relative to the Jews and classical Christian antisemitism is basically false, especially at the level of popular opinion during the Nazi era.

Pope Benedict XVI has strongly promoted this notion that Nazism represented an ideological attack on all religion which resulted in massive dehumanization. But in his various speeches to Jewish leaders (e.g. at the Cologne synagogue) and in his remarks during his visit to the Birkenau death camp he speaks of the Holocaust in generic terms and hardly makes mention of Christian culpability. This is likely the result of his strong theological insistence on the purity of the church as such. We see the same pattern again in his responses to the international controversy created by his ill-advised handling of Bishop Williamson and the Society of St. Pius X mentioned above. While he

condemns the Holocaust and all Holocaust denial in the strongest possible language he seems totally unwilling to identify it as a fundamental moral failure on the part of the church. He shows none of the sense of repentance found in the French Catholic Bishops' document of 1997 or Pope John Paul II's statement in 2000.

The final point I would raise about WE REMEMBER concerns its depiction of Pope Pius XII. Most of this material was added to the text at the insistence of Cardinal Angelo Sodano and came from Fr. Peter Gumpel, S.J., the promoter of the canonization of Pius XII. Key Jewish leaders during the Nazi period such as Gerhart Riegner of the World Jewish Congress as well as contemporary Jewish scholars such as Michael Marrus have acknowledged some positive actions, usually through diplomatic channels, by Pius XII. (On Riegner, Cf. his volume NEVER DESPAIR, Ivan R. Dee; on Marrus, cf. "The Vatican and the Holocaust in Historical Context," in Judith H. Banki and John T. Pawlikowski, ETHICS IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST, Sheed & Ward). But key questions remain unresolved. Did he make saving Jews a sufficiently high priority and did he use all available means at his disposal (such as instructing his papal nuncios to make saving Jews a priority) and did he act soon enough. More information is emerging in terms of these questions, some of it positive in terms of his activity. But much documentary evidence still requires thorough scrutiny by respected scholars. The Vatican has tended to promote the still unproven thesis that "Pius XII did absolutely all he could under very trying circumstances." Pius XII's record will get a fair hearing only if those who condemn him without qualification and those who defend him without qualification will step to the sidelines and allow for serious investigation into his conduct during the war. A recent closed consultation between Jewish and Catholic scholars held at Yad Veshem represents a step in the right direction. Postponement of his beatification/

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE HOLOCAUST: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

canonization would also prove quite helpful in terms of this process (thus far Pope Benedict XVI has not signed off on the recommendation for beatification) which will take years to complete and will require full disclosure by the Vatican of any relevant documents it still possesses in its various archives.

Pius XII's and the Vatican's conduct during the Nazi era provides Catholics with extremely valuable reference points as the church confronts difficult new social situations, especially those in which genocide looms as a possibility. Challenges in the last decades to unjust regimes in South Africa, Malawi, the Philippines, Darfur and elsewhere attest to a decided movement away from the public reserve so evident during the papacy of Pius XII. Certainly the framers of WE REMEMBER were in a position to examine that causation in great detail. There now appear clear signs that the church is willing to abandon the so-called "diplomatic model" of the church which prevailed during Pius XII's papacy and which scholars such as Michael Marrus have identified as the central reason for his muted response to the Nazi attack on the Jews. WE REMEMBER could have advanced that process and provided Catholics, and other Christians as well, with the means to ponder how religious institutions should respond when human dignity is under attack in a massive way.

There are other issues that WE REMEMBER could have highlighted with respect to the Holocaust that would contribute to an overarching theology against genocide. The first is the realization that violent religious language greatly contributes to softening a society for genocide. The turnabout in Christian language relative to the Jews after the II Vatican Council represents a remarkable transformation in social imagery that could be a model for other social situations. Religion remains a powerful force in most current societies. If religious language in a given society continues to demean people who do not share the dominant

faith system and even denies them full rights of citizenship it certainly opens the door for physical assault on such groups in terms of social tension. On the contrary, positive language about the "religious other" can serve as a barrier to such assaults.

Religion also has a role to play in insuring that groups in society are not "neutralized" in terms of their fundamental humanity. The Holocaust scholar Henry Friedlander showed some years ago how the neutral language in reporting daily death counts in the Nazi extermination camps had definite parallels with the language used by the United States military in reporting Vietnamese casualties during the Vietnam War. (Cf. Henry Friedlander, "The Manipulation of Language," in Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton, eds., *THE HOLOCAUST: IDEOLOGY, BUREAUCRACY AND GENOCIDE*, Kraus International Publications) Religion must also fight against such "neutralization," even of an enemy. For if neutralization of particular groups in society is allowed a foothold, it exposes these groups to the possibility of more violent attacks which again, in times of social crises, can turn into genocidal or near-genocidal actions against them.

In light of the experience of the Holocaust any authentic notion of the church must make human rights a central component. The vision of the church that must direct post-Holocaust Christian thinking is one that sees the survival of all persons as integral to the survival of the church itself. "Unfortunate expendables," a term coined by Nora Levin, was how some in Catholic leadership viewed the Jews during the Nazi period. Such a term should never again take root in the vocabulary of Catholicism or any other religious community.

IN MEMORIAM ALISON DES FORGES (1942-2009)

Alison Des Forges, historian and human rights researcher, was killed in an airplane crash returning to her home in Buffalo on April 12, 2009.

Alison was the Senior Advisor to Human Rights Watch Africa Division for almost two decades and recipient of the first Lemkin Award in 1999 from the Institute for the Study of Genocide for *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* published by Human Rights Watch and the International Federation of the Rights of Man. She was later awarded a MacArthur Award in 1999.

Alison's death stirred an outpouring of grief and recollections from those who knew her (see Human Rights Watch web site). "Alison's loss is a devastating blow not only to Human Rights Watch but also to the people of Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "She was truly wonderful, the epitome of the human rights activist-principled, dispassionate, committed to the truth and to using the truth to protect ordinary people. She was among the first to highlight the ethnic tensions that led to the genocide, and when it happened and the world stood by and watched, Alison did everything humanly possible to save people. Then she wrote the definitive account. There was no one who knows more and did more to document the genocide and to help bring the perpetrators to justice."

I knew her since 1994 when I interviewed her in my dining room for a working lunch in order to put an interview with her in the ISG monograph, *The Prevention of Genocide: Rwanda and Yugoslavia Reconsidered* (ed. Fein with Brugnola and Spierer, 1994). She may have eaten three ounces of yogurt in between answers to my questions and phone calls to and from various parts of the world regarding cases she was involved with. Since then, I encountered her in many conferences and last had the pleasure of driving her from Worcester, Ma (from a conference at Clark University)

to Cambridge, Ma. We had a continuing conversation over 15 years in trains, cabs, cars, and lobbies.

Alison always knew how to present her case to the world whether she had three, five or thirty minutes. She was subtle and acute and could respond on whatever wavelength her audience could appreciate. She did not suffer fools and hypocrites gladly but knew when and how to confront, ignore, or deflate them depending on what was needed. Thus, she could speak truth to power in whatever way enabled the listener to get it.

Her energy seemed prodigious: I would feel like her a sluggard meeting her at breakfast during a conference; while I slept she had taken a run and dispatched a report to Human Rights Watch by e-mail. Her writings have informed my own continually.

She gave us so much that there is no way to live with our sorrow without pledging inwardly to continue her work: a profound weave of dedication to truth and to saving lives—scholarship and activism.

Helen Fein (Institute for the Study of Genocide)

STOCKHOLM PRIZE FOR RESEARCH ON GENOCIDE

John Hagan, of Northwestern University in Illinois, USA, and Raul Zaffaroni of Argentina, have been awarded the Stockholm Prize in Criminology for field research and criminological theory on the causes of and prevention of genocide. The prize will be awarded at a ceremony in Stockholm City Hall on June 23.

John Hagan pioneered the application of advanced crime measurement techniques to the study of genocide in his work on violence in Darfur and in the Balkans. Using systematic methods of estimating crime volumes from victimization surveys administered in collaboration with the American Bar Foundation and the US State Department, Hagan and his colleagues found substantial undercounting of murders by the State Department and the World Health Organization. Their methods produced evidence of between 200,000 and 400,000 homicides, over four times more than previous estimates.

Hagan's team also showed that there was substantial evidence of racial motivation in the killings and rapes, with little evidence of a strategic response to rebellion as claimed by Sudanese authorities.

Raul Eugenio Zaffaroni pioneered the explanation of genocide on the basis of criminological theory, as well as proposals for the prevention of any mass killings through state power. Analyzing situations as diverse as Argentina's own governmental mass murders, the European Holocaust, slavery and colonial exploitation of workers in lethal conditions, Zaffaroni showed how criminological theory of "techniques of neutralization" observed among juvenile delinquents also fits the rhetorical patterns of governments creating "enemies" as targets for genocide.

Zaffaroni's analysis of the deep causes of genocide encompassed and anticipated later explanations focusing on competition for scarce resources such as water and arable

land. His critique of criminal law as an inadequate means of preventing genocide raises profound questions about the role of the retributive model of international justice in the aftermath of genocide. Zaffaroni's theory points to the likely benefits of "secondary prevention," minimizing the effects of such crimes by repairing harm, restoring families and communities, and developing far more intense therapeutic and conciliatory models to break the cycle of blood feuds and vengeance that can last for centuries.

The Prize will be awarded on June 23, 2009 at a ceremony to be held at Stockholm City Hall in conjunction with the Stockholm Criminology Symposium, which will take place June 22-24.

Contact information for the prize winners:

John Hagan, Northwestern University, Illinois, telephone: +1 847 491 5688, email: j-hagan@northwestern.edu

Hagan is John D. MacArthur Professor of Sociology and Law at Northwestern University and Senior Research Fellow at the American Bar Foundation in Chicago. Further information about his many wide-ranging contributions to criminology, including his 2003 book *Justice in the Balkans: Prosecuting War Crimes in the Hague Tribunal*, may be found at: <http://www.johnhagan.org/>

Raul Eugenio Zaffaroni, telephone: +54 11 4370 4894, email: raulzaffaroni@hotmail.com

Zaffaroni who was appointed one of the six Justices of the Supreme Court of Argentina in 2003, is also Professor Emeritus and former Head of the Department of Criminal Law in the University of Buenos Aires. Further details about his voluminous scholarship in criminology and criminal law can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenio_Ra%C3%BAI_Zaffaroni

STOCKHOLM PRIZE FOR RESEARCH ON GENOCIDE

About the prize:

The Stockholm Prize in Criminology was instituted in 2005 in order to recognize outstanding achievements in the field of criminological research or in the application of research findings by practitioners. The prize is financed by foundations in America, Sweden and Japan. The principal donor is the American Jerry Lee Foundation. The prize winners have been selected by an independent jury comprised of criminologists from Asia, Latin America, North America, Africa, Australia and Europe. The jury is chaired by Professor Jerzy Sarnecki of the University of Stockholm and Professor Lawrence Sherman of the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Cambridge.

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Darfur: Genocide Before Our Eyes

ed. Joyce Apsel. Institute for the Study of Genocide, 3rd ed., 2007. \$20 in the U.S., \$25 in other countries by Global Priority Mail. Essays by Joyce Apsel on “Teaching About Darfur through the perspective of genocide and human rights”; Jerry Fowler, “The Evolution of Conflict and Genocide in Sudan,”; Eric Markusen and Samuel Totten, “Investigating allegations of genocide in Darfur”; Eric Reeves, “Darfur: Genocide before Our Eyes,”; Gregory Stanton, “Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide”; and Jennifer Leaning, “The Human Impact of War in Darfur.” Also contains four maps, glossary, webography of sources on Sudan and the test of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. To order, first contact Joyce Apsel, jaa5@nyu.edu

The Prevention of Genocide: Rwanda and Yugoslavia Reconsidered

(Institute for the Study of Genocide, 1994)

\$10 US / \$15 International (Prepaid, international money orders, U.S. Dollars only)

Ever Again?: Evaluating the United Nations Genocide Convention On its 50th Anniversary. (1998) Essays by noted scholars, journalist and lawyers. \$15 US / \$20 International

Teaching About Genocide: An Interdisciplinary Guidebook with Syllabi for College and University Teachers

New Edition 2002, eds. Joyce Apsel and Helen Fein. Published for the Institute for the Study of Genocide in cooperation with the American Sociological Association. Syllabi by 22 noted teachers (in anthropology, history, international affairs, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, law, religion, sociology) on the Armenian genocide; the Holocaust; genocide and Holocaust; genocide; genocide, human rights and international affairs; essays by the editors; and selected internet websites on genocide. Cost for mailing in the US is \$18 for members of ISG, IAGS and ASA and \$22 for all others; add \$3 for Canada and Mexico and \$6 for other countries. To order, send check in US dollars drawn on a US bank or by credit card (American Express, MasterCard or Visa) to American Sociological Association: by mail (1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005-4701); telephone (202 383 9005, ext. 318), by fax (202 638 0882) or web (www.asanet.org).

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