

Holocaust and Genocide Today

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The Holocaust cannot be approached as a series of events without context, or contexts. There are a number of such contexts, and they are essential of a global character; in a sense, they are vertical and horizontal. By vertical I mean the historical depth – Jewish history; history of the relations between Jews and non-Jews throughout history, including anti-Semitism; European history; German history, and so on. By horizontal I mean the fact that there is an impact of the Holocaust in Latin America, in North America, in China and Japan, in South Africa, and elsewhere. One of the contexts is that of genocide. It seems obvious that the Holocaust was a form of genocide, and therefore has to be related to other – many – events of that kind.

In December, 1948, the UN adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Since then, a number of genocides have taken place, and one, in Darfur, is taking place now. According to the American sociologist and political scientist Rudolph J. Rummel, some 169 million civilians and unarmed POWs were murdered by governments or other political groups between 1900 and 1987 – the dates were chosen arbitrarily. By comparison, 34 million soldiers were killed during that period, which included the two world wars. Of the 169 civilians killed, 38 million died in genocides, as defined by the Convention, and close to six million of these were Jews who lost their lives in the Holocaust; and all this does not include Rwanda, Bosnia, Congo, or Darfur, all of which happened after 1987. We are dealing with a major issue for all of humanity. Views about what exactly constitutes genocide are varied and contradictory. When the term ‘genocide’ was coined – by a refugee Polish-Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin, in New York, probably in 1943, it was based on the realization that Jews and Poles were then being murdered by National Socialist Germany. The annihilation of the Poles was partial, as the Germans wanted to use them as slave labor; the murder of the Jews was to be total – every person they defined as being Jewish and whom they could find was to be killed – and that is reflected in the Convention which talks about the intent to annihilate an ethnic, national, racial or religious group, as such, in part or whole. Let me say immediately that the wording of the Convention is

problematic. It talks about racial groups, and in the context of 1948 that made sense. But we know that there are no races: we all are descended from a group of homo sapiens that dwelt in East Africa some 150,000 years ago. This has been proven by DNA analyses. Whether we are Australian aborigines, African pygmies, Harvard students, Einstein, Hitler, Stalin, Obama or Hu-jin-tao, you or I, we all come from the same place. Differences in color or body shape are secondary or tertiary mutations, and very minor. There are many more differences between different kinds of cats or dogs than there are between humans. We are one race; but of course, there is racism, based on a social construct that reflects social, economic and political attitudes or ideologies and, mainly, power struggles. In my view, the inclusion of the term 'racial groups' in a UN document is problematic, because it may be interpreted as somehow legitimizing an artificial division of humanity into separate so-called races, implying a difference in worth or value.

It is important also to take note that there is a vast difference between the annihilation of a group as such in part or totally. If the intent is to annihilate a group as such in part, then there is a hope that the group will revive and recoup its losses. If the annihilation is total, there is no such hope. The inclusion of both situations in the Convention is, again, a problem.

The Convention lists five types of action that define genocide: killing members of the group, causing physical and/or mental harm to the group, creating conditions of life that make the survival of the group impossible, preventing births, and kidnapping children. But if the process of annihilation is total, as with the Jews during the Holocaust, and the Germans intended to kill all the women, then what meaning does the phrase 'prevention of births' have? If all the children are killed, how can you kidnap them? And does shoving people into gas chambers create conditions of life that make survival impossible? The phrasing of all this was the result of horse-trading between the West and the Soviet Union in 1948, and leaves much to be desired. But the most crucial fault of the Convention lies in the fact that it does not really say what should be done if something is recognized as being a genocide. All the Convention says is that it then should be referred to the UN and its Security Council. Well, good luck. Not a single case, since 1945, has been dealt with on the basis of the Convention. The reason is fairly clear: whenever one

of the five veto Powers, or an influential group of states (ASEAN, Arab League, etc.), wishes not to react because of real or perceived economic or political interests, nothing is done. Only when no major interests are at stake, the UN will intervene and prevent a genocide or a conflict that may develop into a genocide. In Kenya, for example, where a violent inter-ethnic conflict threatened to turn into mass murder that might have deteriorated into a genocidal situation, there are no major economic or political interests of any Powers involved. Therefore, Kofi Anan could be sent there to mediate, and the mediation succeeded. Or in Macedonia, where a very dangerous simmering conflict between Albanians and Macedonians threatened to turn into mass murder, UN intervention succeeded because none of the Powers was interested in Macedonia. On the other hand, no effective UN intervention in Darfur is possible unless China, which has major oil concessions in the Sudan, agrees, or unless the rebels become strong enough to force the government into serious negotiations.

Today, most academics will argue that one has to add to the Convention what is known as politicide, that is the annihilation of political or social groups as such, whether these groups exist in reality or are virtual groups, such as the kulaks, the so-called rich peasants, millions of whom were killed or starved to death under Stalin.

There is no realistic possibility of to change or amend the Convention. With 193 member states, it is impossible to arrive at an agreed change. Is the Convention then useless? No, I do not think so. It hangs over possible or actual perpetrators like a sword of Damocles, threatening them with action on behalf of the UN, and although this has not happened until now, it might happen in the future. There is also another, very positive element in the Convention: in Article II it says that incitement to genocide is part of the punishable crime of genocide. Mahmoud Ahmadinajad threatened Israel with extinction, and this clearly amounts to incitement to genocide, whether or not the threat is actualized, and nothing has been done about it. But the threat of a charge on the grounds of incitement exists, and that is important.

It is important to differentiate between conflict and genocide. Conflict is a confrontation between two or more sides, none of which has sufficient power to conquer and/or annihilate the other or others, or cannot use the power it has for one reason or another. By contrast, a genocidal situation, whether it fulfills the requirements of the

Convention or not, arises when one party is overwhelmingly powerful, and the targeted victim is nearly or totally powerless. Thus, the Kashmir problem is a conflict, not a genocidal event; and in Sri Lanka, even if the government entirely subdues the Tamil separatists, there is no real danger of a genocide, even though political oppression and a resulting possible guerilla threat are distinct possibilities. The same applies to the Middle East, where the Palestinians cannot overcome Israel with terrorism or rockets, nor can Israel annihilate the Palestinian population; it remains a bloody and difficult conflict, but not a genocide. Conflicts can be solved either by compromise, as a result of negotiations or arbitration, or by the intervention of an outside force, or by the exhaustion of the contending parties, leading to a settlement, or by a victory of one side that will not escalate into mass murder, as I have just noted with regard to Sri Lanka. But a conflict can degenerate into a genocide or a genocidal situation, if it remains unsolved, and one of the sides acquires enough power and motivation to annihilate a target population. Conversely, a genocide can deescalate into a conflict; thus, in Darfur, if the rebels attain sufficient clout to pose an insurmountable obstacle to the intention of the Sudanese government and their Janjaweed allies to destroy the black farming tribes, and specifically the Fur, Masa'alit, Zaghawa and Tanjur, then there is a real possibility that negotiations may lead to a compromise. Equally, if the Sudanese government should find itself in a difficult international situation, for a number of political and economic reasons, the genocidal situation could deescalate into a conflict that may be settled by a negotiated arrangement.

We are facing genocidal situations all over the globe, and a detailed risk assessment that was produced in the US talks about 46 places in the world where mass murder or genocidal situations could develop, some more plausible than others. But, people will ask, if you want to deal, in 2009, with genocide, why start with the Holocaust, and not with Darfur, the Congo, or Rwanda? Was the genocide of the Jews which we call the Holocaust, in some ways different from the other tragedies? Was it not parallel? In my view, it was both. I used to call the Holocaust 'unique', but a number of years ago I abandoned the term 'uniqueness' to describe the genocide of the Jews, and have been using, in fact I coined, a very cumbersome word, 'unprecedentedness', instead. Why is 'uniqueness' inappropriate? Mainly for two reasons. One, that 'uniqueness' might imply

that the Holocaust is a one-time event that cannot be repeated; but if that is so, there is hardly any point dealing with it, as there is no danger of its recurrence. However that implication is untrue: the genocide of the Jews was engineered and executed by humans for human reasons, and anything done by humans can be repeated – not in exactly the same way, to be sure, but in very similar ways. Two, it might also imply that it was decreed by some God, or Satan, that is, by a transcendental force, in which case Hitler and the perpetrators generally would have been the executors of a Divine or Satanic will, and could not be held responsible, as they were not free actors. That indeed is the position of Jewish ultra-orthodox thinkers, such as the late Rabbi Shneerson, the Chabad (a Hassidic sect) leader, and some Christian ones, too, for instance some evangelical preachers. To view Hitler as the emissary of a transcendental power is not everyone's cup of tea. And yet, these thinkers generally do not accept the idea of lack of responsibility of the perpetrators and argue, rather illogically, I would think, that there is free will and humans can choose between good and evil, and that the perpetrators chose evil. On the other hand, again, they say that nothing can happen without the Almighty's will, which leads to the conclusion that, indeed, the guilt lies with the Almighty, not with the perpetrators. If one rejects that view, and concludes that the Holocaust, and therefore all other genocides as well, was the work of humans, not of transcendental factors, then it was not unique.

Obviously, the Holocaust was a genocide, and it therefore not only can, but must, be compared with other genocidal events of a similar nature or quality. The main parallel between it and other genocides is the fact of mass murder, which is rather obvious. Another, central, parallel, lies in the suffering of the victims, which is always the same. There are no gradations of suffering, and there are no better murders or better tortures or better rapes, etc., than others. The suffering of the victims is always the same, and from that point of view there is no difference between Jews, Poles, Roma ('Gypsies'), Russians, Darfurians, Tutsi, or anyone else.

Another parallel, I would suggest, is that perpetrators of genocides or mass atrocities will always use the best means at their disposal to realize their project: in the genocide of the Armenians in World War I – which is still being denied by official Turkey - the Ottoman Turks used railways, machine-guns, specially recruited murder

units, a fairly efficient bureaucracy which had been developed with the help of French, German, and Austrian advisers, and a mass army. The Germans, in World War II, used railways, special units, modern weaponry, an excellent bureaucracy, brilliant propaganda, and a very powerful army. They used gas, because they had it; the Ottomans did not use it, because they did not have it. As far as the Holocaust is concerned, though, one has to add that there is one element in the genocide of the Jews that is unprecedented even in the methods adopted: for the first time in human history, an industry was established that produced something that had never been produced before, namely corpses. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Chelmno, live Jews went in at one end, and corpses came out at the other end. There is therefore a caveat regarding the means employed in genocide, and the Holocaust stands out as something entirely new in this regard.

I would argue further, that I do not know of any element in genocides other than the Holocaust that are not repeated in yet other genocides; but that there are elements in the genocide of the Jews that are without a precedent in human history, as far as I know. If the Holocaust was unprecedented, then it is clear that it was a precedent, and that these elements can be repeated, although never exactly and never in the same way. What are these elements?

One, the totality: there is no precedent, it would seem, to a state-organized mass murder of members of a targeted group, in which every single person identified as a member of that group (i.e. identified as a Jew) by the perpetrator – not self-defined – was sought out, registered, marked, dispossessed, humiliated, terrorized, concentrated, transported, and killed. This applied to every single person defined as a Jew who was caught, without a single exception. Those who survived because they were used as forced laborers, did so only because the Germans decided that they should live, temporarily, so their labor could be utilized for the victory of a regime that was totally committed to killing them when their labor was no longer needed, or when they had been brought to a state where they could no longer work. In the German Reich, outside of the conquered areas of Europe, so-called half-Jews were in most, not all, cases left alive because there was a disagreement among the bureaucrats whether the fact that they were half-Germans should save them from death. Most bureaucrats involved thought that such half-Jews

should be sterilized, so their half-Jewish blood would not enter the German blood stream. Because they could not arrive at an agreement among themselves, most German half-Jews survived. In occupied Europe, in most cases, so-called half-Jews were killed. In Germany, most persons with one Jewish grandparent were considered Germans. Outside of the German Reich area, the decision what to do with them was mostly left to the local German authorities. The annihilation was intended to be as total as possible.

The second element is that of universality: there is no precedent, I suggest, to a universally conceived genocide. Thus, the Ottomans did not bother about the Armenians in Jerusalem, because that was not Turkish ethnic territory. Hutu Power wanted to 'cleanse' Rwanda of Tutsis, but there were apparently no plans to kill all Tutsis everywhere (although after the Rwandan genocide there were Hutu attempts to kill Tutsi-related groups in Eastern Congo). On the other hand, the National Socialist regime in Germany intended to deal with the Jews everywhere 'the way we deal with them here in Germany', as Hitler told the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin el-Husseini, on November 28, 1941, to quote just one clear statement – and there were more. This genocidal universalism developed in stages, of course, and had, as stated above, no known precedent.

The third element was an ideology that was based not on any pragmatic, economic, political, military, or other consideration, but on what Marxists would call pure ideological superstructure. By comparison, the Armenian genocide was the answer to Turkish military and political defeats in the Balkans, resulting in a dream of a new Turkic empire stretching from the Dardanelles to Kazakhstan replacing the old, collapsing one; added to that was the justified fear of a Russian invasion supported by Armenians that would destroy the Turkish state altogether. There was also the intent to replace a successful urban Armenian middle class with ethnic Turks. These were political, military, and economic, in other words pragmatic, considerations, which were then dressed up in an ideology that justified the mass murder. Another example is the present situation in Darfur. The basic reasons for the genocidal situation there are economic and political. A long history of neglect by outside rulers, British at first and then Sudanese from the Nile region preceded the present disaster. Darfur is a huge region where water comes only from yearly rains and floods, not rivers, and where the desert has

been encroaching on arable land for at least a hundred years. The lands that black farmers of tribes that once ruled Darfur occupy are being coveted by nomadic Bedouins, who are supported by the central government in Khartoum. In addition, rich finds of oil in the South of Sudan are producing a very large income, and the black farmers of Darfur wanted a share of it. China owns most of these oil concessions, and therefore supports the government from whom they acquired them, against the rebels in Darfur, thus supporting the genocide that is taking place. These are basically pragmatic factors, but there is an ideology that was developed in the 1970ies by a Bedouin intellectual of a tribe, the Salamat, which straddles the border of Darfur and Chad; the man's name was Ahmed Acyl Aghbash. He died in an accident in 1982, but his ideology took root among the perpetrators, the Janjaweed militias. It argues that the Arab Bedouins of Darfur and Chad are the descendants of the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, the Bani Quraish, and that they therefore have the right to dispossess, drive away and kill the Blacks, whom he called slaves; the Bedouins should control the whole area between the Nile and Lake Chad. The ideology is clearly a superstructure designed to justify a policy whose real motives are economic, social and political.

Take any other genocide and you will find similar pragmatic bases, on which of course ideologies were then built as rationalizations. There were no such pragmatic elements with the Nazis. German Jews did not control German economy – pace various Marxist writers. Only one major industrial establishment, the AEG, the major German electrical company, was owned by a Jewish family, the Rathenaus, and there was one Jew among some one hundred members of the boards of the five major German banks. Jews were mostly middle class, lower middle class, members of free professions, and craftsmen; there was an upper middle class, mostly of merchants, and some rich people owned a number of major consumer stores. But Jews were not an organized group in any meaningful sense; their country-wide organization, the Reichsvertretung, was founded in September, 1933, eight months after the Nazi accession to power, as a result of Nazi pressure, not before. There had in fact never been an organized German Jewry before the Nazis. They had no territory, and had no political, never mind military, power, or presence. There was one Jewish politician, Walther Rathenau, the head of the family I just mentioned, who was the only Jewish minister in any German government before the

Nazis came to power, and he was murdered by right-wing German nationalists. The reasons, then, for the persecution of the Jews bore no relation to reality; they were of the nature of nightmares: the imagined international Jewish conspiracy to control the world (a mirror-image of the Nazi desire to do so), the supposed corruption of German blood and society and culture by the Jews (when in fact the Jews, who were loyal German citizens, contributed, as individuals, very considerably to German culture), the blood libel (the accusation that Jews killed non-Jewish children to bake their matzot [Passover bread]), and so on. I know no other case in past history where mass murder was committed for no apparent pragmatic reason at all. Some historians seem to think that the Jews were murdered in order to get their property. But that is demonstrably wrong: in many cases they were murdered after they had been deprived of their property, and the fit among them could have been used for slave labor. The looting was done in the process that led to the murder or after the Jews had been murdered, and was not the reason for the murder.

The non-pragmatic nature of the genocide can be shown in, literally, hundreds of cases. Thus, for instance, Lodz, the second largest city in prewar Poland, had the last ghetto on former Polish territory in the spring of 1944, because its workshops, run basically as slave labor places, produced some 9% of the Wehrmacht's requirements for clothing and boots. In early 1944, the local Nazi bureaucrats were opposed to the liquidation of the ghetto, partly because of the usefulness of the ghetto for the German Army, and also because they themselves had enriched themselves at the expense of the Jews, and if the ghetto was annihilated they might have to serve in the army – not a very inviting prospect. But the ghetto was annihilated at Himmler's orders, explicit orders explicitly arguing against any economic pragmatism. The ideology held sway, and no economic arguments were admitted. Is that capitalistic? Cost-effective? Rational? There is no known precedent for a genocide committed because of nightmarish fantasies.

Fourth, the racist Nazi ideology was something utterly revolutionary. Communism, originally (before it became the rationalization for Russian imperialism), wanted to replace one social class by another – something we have known from past history, e.g. the French Revolution. Nations have replaced nations, empires have replaced empires, religions have superseded other religions. But 'races'? Never before. And, of

course, there are no races, as stated already. The National Socialist revolution was, I would argue, the only really revolutionary attempt in the twentieth century, bar none, and it was of course without any precedent. A new hierarchy was to rule the world, a hierarchy at the head of which would be the Nordic peoples of the Aryan race. The Nordic peoples were, apart from the Germans, the Scandinavians, the English, the Dutch and the Flemish, none of whom proved to be enthusiastic about their being part of the master race. Nordic rule over the world would be shared with, for instance, Japanese allies (who are not exactly Nordic Aryans, which created some ideological problems), and everyone else would be underneath that. No Jews would be there, because they would all have been killed by then. Blacks, who were considered somewhere between monkeys and humans, would be treated nicely, as animals, because Nazis were always kind to animals, as long as they did not pretend to be humans. In a distorted way, National Socialist racism was a quasi-religious view: there was a God, a Messiah, namely the Fuehrer, and a holy people or holy race, and there was a Satan. The Satanic Jew was taken from a de-christianized Christian antisemitism. And, naturally, Satan had to be fought, defeated, and killed. Any precedents for that in human history? I would suggest – no.

Finally, fifth, the Jews: their culture provides one of the background elements to the emergence of what is wrongly termed ‘Western Civilization’. The Nazis rebelled against that, against the Enlightenment, as well as against Christianity, because it was a Jewish invention (they were right on that one). They wanted to do away with customary morality, because that was a Jewish invention, too, placed into the heads of people by Christianity. They wanted to do away with liberalism, conservative and liberal democracy, social democracy, parliamentarianism – all of which they understood to be the legacy of, or transmitted by, the French Revolution. But the legacy of the French Revolution rests on Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem (aesthetics, literature, law and order of the Greeks and the Romans, and the ethics of the Jewish prophets); Romans and Athenians today speak other languages, pray to other gods, and write literature that has no direct connection to the sources. But the Jews were and are still here, they spoke and speak the same language. There is the argument, of course, that their language had been dormant for millennia, but that argument is faulty, because while Hebrew was not used to

buy bread or conduct daily discourse, it was the common written language of Jews, and each and every literate male Jew knew it. Correspondence was conducted almost exclusively in Hebrew, for over two thousand years. Literary works, both prose and poetry, were written in the language, and read, because, as I said, every literate Jew knew it. Jewish traditions, though developed and changed over time, whether they were or are religious (a minority), or not (a majority), are direct, continuous cultural (not necessarily biological) descendants of the original ones. The Jews' contemporary culture, and their literature, is indecipherable without relating it to their ancient texts. A violent, brutal, exterminatory attack on the legacy of the French Revolution involved, almost necessarily and certainly logically, an attack on the only surviving remnant of the original sources from which Western Civilization developed. The ethics of the Jewish prophets stood in stark contradiction to the Social Darwinist ideas behind the Nazi revolution – basically, an ideology that said that the stronger 'races', or peoples, had not only the right but the duty to rule the world and do away with the weaker ones, even to annihilate them.

The Holocaust, then, was unprecedented, a fact of tremendous importance to anyone who wants to fight the self-destructive tendencies in human society. It also means that it was a precedent, and indeed, in Rwanda the first point, totality of annihilation, was repeated: all Rwandan Tutsis were to be killed. I suspect that the most important Hutu Power ideologue, Ferdinand Nahimana, now in jail, may have heard something about the Nazi annihilation of the Jews when he studied philosophy and history in Europe. I cannot prove it, but it might be worth investigating.

The Jewish specificity and the universal implications of the Holocaust are two sides of the same coin. Every genocide is specific, so that specificity, paradoxically, and in the case of the Holocaust Jewish specificity, becomes a universal trait. This universal characteristic has to be set into a context: we are the only predatory mammals that kill each other in large numbers, in mass atrocities some of which we label genocides, because they are the most extreme form of this, unfortunately, very human behavior. And the most extreme form of genocide, to date, was the genocide of the Jews, not because of the suffering of the victims, not because of the numbers of people that perished, and not because of the percentage of the dead in relation to the total number of Jews in the world. It is the extreme case because of the points mentioned above, and perhaps a few others. It

is that realization of the unprecedented character of the Holocaust, vague as it is, that has made the Holocaust, in the eyes of an increasing number of humans and their societies (e.g. the UN), the paradigmatic genocide, because it is the most extreme form of an illness that afflicts humanity. In November, 2005, the UN passed a unanimous resolution to memorialize the Holocaust yearly, on January 27, the date that in 1945 Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army. The Iranian delegation absented itself from the General Assembly, therefore the resolution was unanimous. But the resolution also provided for a mandate to the UN to educate people about the Holocaust, as the paradigmatic genocide, all over the globe. Some efforts have been made in this direction, and there have been some heroic efforts of a few dedicated people. The main thing is that the principle has been made clear.

My conclusion would be that the Holocaust is at the center of any study or consideration of genocide, because of its paradigmatic nature; it is also the starting point of any serious attempt at preventing such mass atrocities. When one starts from the extreme case – again, not because the suffering is any different, but because of the other factors involved – one must become committed to an effort to stop or prevent ongoing and future genocides, because they are manifestations of the same human illness which caused the Holocaust. One has to add: mass murder committed by humans against humans is not inhuman – I wish it were – but, unfortunately, very human indeed. The slogan ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ is fatally faulted. Mass murder is an aspect of humanity that we have to fight, not something external to us. One has to deal with Darfur, Zimbabwe, Eastern Congo, Southern Sudan, Burma, and a number of other places in an increasingly crowded, small, world. The main lesson one can draw from the Holocaust is that one has to fight genocide.

If this analysis is correct, then a major question arises: can genocides be prevented? On the face of it, the prospects are far from rosy. When we look at human behavior from its beginnings, we can see that genocides or genocide-like behavior characterizes the human race from its inception and, arguably, before it. Humans are predatory mammals, like tigers or bears. They hunt and kill in order to live. But as humans are weak predators, and do not have the teeth of tigers or the claws of bears, they have to hunt in herds, in groups, in order to live. This is a basic instinct of humans. It is of

course unlikely that, after hearing or reading this, you will go out into the streets and hunt antelopes; instead, you will go into a supermarket and buy meat or fish (with the exception of the few vegetarians among us). The methods have changed, but not the basic instincts. We hunt in groups, and that means that we are herd animals. Here and there, an individual can try and exist on his or her own, but generally this does not work, so that an idealistic universalism that says – I do not belong to any national, ethnic, or social group, I am just a human being, is simply totally delusionary. If we do not belong to one group, we belong to another, whether we like it or not. But we are also territorial predators, because we need a territory within which we can find our means of sustenance. Our ancestors used the territory to hunt; we use it to establish major industries which then try to penetrate other territories as best they can. Basically, it is the same process. When another human group then tries to enter into our territory, whether that territory is real or whether it exists only in our mind, we have, it seems, four options: we can absorb them, because they may strengthen us; we may enslave them, because we don't want to do certain jobs or because we can use their labor for our benefit; we can tell them to get out, which they sometimes do and sometimes do not; or we can kill them. When we do that by killing large numbers of them, we today call it genocide. Humans have been doing that for many thousands of years, as anyone who knows anything about ancient history, for example, knows. The destruction of Carthage by the Romans, or of the island of Melos by the Athenians, or the annihilation of the Midianites according to chapter 31 in the fourth book of Moses, or the annihilation of enemies in the Indian Vedas, are but a tiny sample of what we are capable of.

But if this is true, then genocide is the result of general human inclination or instinct. How then can we fight it?

Fortunately, the killing instinct, called Thanatos by some important psychologists, is balanced by another instinct, called Libido by Freud, who interpreted it in much too sexual terms. It derives from the same source as the killing instinct. We are, after all, not only hunters, but also collectors. We eat fruit of the earth – vegetables – and fruit of the trees. We also eat grass. Grain comes from certain types of grass. They grow buds that we grind into flour, and eat. We therefore are grass and fruit eaters, and we need collective efforts to do so. It is that collective effort that makes us create societies that

develop social structures that, in their turn, makes our survival possible. Societies cannot exist if they only serve as a platform for a struggle of everyone against everyone else. We humans have therefore developed attitudes and emotions of sympathy, of love, of collaboration, of mutual care, of family , clan, and tribal cohesion, and even of readiness to sacrifice ourselves, not only for the good of the society's survival, but also for the rescue of individuals who may be total strangers. Unconsciously, we know that the person we rescued will be beholden to us and may help us just as we helped him or her. We develop what we call morality in order to justify what we do, and create laws and regulations to support this social structure. We also use the laws that we create in order to try and domesticate our destructive instincts. We are inclined, by our nature, to kill, so, in order to fight our inclinations, we develop laws against murder. If we were not inclined to murder, we would not have laws against it. However, but killing is permitted if it is useful for society. Murder is forbidden killing. Equally, if we were not inclined to take things that belong to others, in other words to steal, we would not need laws against theft. If murder is forbidden killing, then killing is permitted murder, and when societies fight over territory and power, killing becomes a virtue, as every soldier knows.

We have two conflicting sets of instinctual behavior that develop into cultural attitudes: the destructive, killing, instinct, and the life-affirming, altruistic, one. We therefore **can** fight the murderous instinct within us, by emphasizing and consciously furthering the life-affirming one. It is possible to fight genocide and mass murder generally; but it is extremely difficult.

Let me return to contemporary politics. To fight for genocide prevention it is important to see what the difficulties are, and they are indeed tremendous. We witness efforts by well-meaning preachers – from Desmond Tutu, through Elie Wiesel, the Pope, some rabbis, some Moslem clerics, writers, musicians, and so on, to create public awareness and recruit masses to support moves against genocide, for instance in Darfur. These are important and worthwhile efforts, and they may create a major constituency for political moves in the right direction. But sermonizing does not make that much of a difference, and much of what these good people preach has become or is turning into so many clichés. What we need more than anything else is a series of moves that are mainly political. Academics can make a difference there, because governments today, especially

of course in democratic or semi-democratic regimes, turn to think-tanks to help them master the increasingly complicated reality with which they have to grapple. Admittedly, many of these think-tanks are more tanks than think, but some of them are of great importance. There has to be a combination of pressure and advice in relation to governments and the political world. The number of politicians on the one hand, and governmental bureaucrats on the other hand, that are aware of the existential need to face the dangers of conflicts and genocidal dangers, is growing. That goodwill has to be addressed and utilized, and academics should work in tandem with anyone in the world of politics, the media, and the bureaucracy, that understands and is willing to act.

We still do not understand enough about the developments that lead to genocides. We need more statistical research of the present situations, and content research of present and past instances of genocides and genocidal threats, and that is something academics are trained to do. In fact, there are already formal and informal groups, whether organized in NGOs or not, that fulfill these needs at least partly, and they have to be supported. Risk assessments of genocidal dangers have been and are being made, some governments have been approached and are being approached. It is a slow process, and it will take time, and no one can say whether we have enough time, or whether time is running out faster than we can fight these dangers. Political analyses have been and are being made as well. The economic issues are central to all this. More experts on economic problems are needed to deal with the impact of the economy on threats of conflict, mass murder, and genocide, and vice versa. Ideally, all these efforts should be collected and united, or at least coordinated. The institutional rivalry between NGOs that deal with the same issues from similar perspectives are a major problem, because a more or less united front of NGOs would make a great difference.

In the end, the major issue has to be faced; the real world is a world of conflicting interests of major powers, medium powers, and groups of states that combine for various reasons. The present impasse at the Security Council of the United Nations, which are Nations alright, but hardly united, makes real progress difficult, if not impossible. Pressure from the member states has to be organized to at least attempt to change this; and that is extremely difficult. In addition, there is a parallel world of ideology that influences the world of jostling power interests, and occasionally it is the ideology that

determines the economy and politics, and not the other way round, as Marxists would have it. The current surge of radical Islam that engages in denial of facts, past and present, is part of a historic reality of radical ideological movements, religious or quasi-religious, which has developed over the past hundred years or so. Bolshevism, National Socialism, and radical Islam are of course different from each other in many respects, but there are also important parallels. All three are exclusivist ideologies, religious or quasi-religious, which aimed or aim at controlling the whole world, explicitly. All three aver or averred that the only way to achieve this aim is by the use of indiscriminate force, annihilating real or perceived enemies totally. All three are, essentially, anti-nationalistic, and thus oppose the trend that developed in modernity of establishing independent or at least autonomous units based on ethnicity or nationality. National Socialism moved from extreme German nationalism to the concept of a Germanic unity of the Nordic peoples of the Aryan race, the Nordic peoples consisting of Germans, Scandinavians, English, Dutch and Flemish. All the other nationalities would be subject peoples in one way or another. The Soviets acted on the principle of “socialist in content, national in form”, which in practice meant the supremacy of Russian imperialism, and the subject character of everyone else. Radical Islam, especially in its Sunni version, is explicitly opposed to nationalism, especially Arab nationalism. Thus, Hamas aspires not to a Palestinian national state, but to an Islamic State of Palestine, as part of a world federation of Islamic countries, in which national units are convenient subdivisions of a worldwide Islamic entity. National Socialism and radical Islam are anti-feminist. And all three, in different degrees, are or were anti-Jewish. Nazism wanted to annihilate the Jews, and so does radical Islam. Soviet Bolshevism became grossly antisemitic, especially during the last years of Stalin’s life. And, finally, all three emerged more or less in the same decade of the 20th century: Hitler’s first political statement was made in September, 1919; the Bolshevik revolution occurred in 1917, and Hassan el-Bana founded the Moslem Brotherhood in 1928. In a way, one can see the reemergence of radical religion, whether theistic or not, in a much broader context. Soviet Bolshevism was an atheistic faith which had all the characteristics of radical religion. The same can be said of the Social Darwinistic beliefs of the Nazi elite in a religion of nature. And, of course, radical Islam is a genocidal religious ideology. But one can also see the emergence in the past century

of radical evangelical creeds in the US and other places, and one can see a similar development in Hinduism, and even in Buddhism – in Sri Lanka, for instance, where armed Buddhist monks favor violent policies towards the Tamil minority. Among Jews, a similar development can be observed – the radical religious settlers movement in Israel, which also harbors potential genocidal tendencies, and even non-violent, but very radical and exclusivist religious groups within the ultra-orthodox Hassidic sects are obvious examples. All these are tremendous obstacles to possible international moves against mass murder and genocide, not to mention conflict situations.

Finally, where does the Holocaust fit into the framework of attempts to fight genocidal situations? It is impossible to deal with all genocides, and one has to choose where to start, and what the paradigm is. The Holocaust is an essential starting point for all such attempts, because it was the most extreme form of a general malady. It was extreme, one has to emphasize again, not because its victims suffered more than others – they did not – but because of the unprecedented character of some of its central elements. Any contemporary proposals for social and political action immediately refer to the Holocaust, whether such comparisons or analogies are justified or not – usually they are not. But the Holocaust has become the paradigmatic genocide in the consciousness of friend and foe alike, and therefore any discussion regarding genocide and any action taken will start from there. This does not mean that one should concentrate on the Holocaust only – quite the contrary: comparisons are essential, and anyone dealing with the Holocaust must gain some knowledge about other genocides, and refer to them as best one can. This is true especially in the field of education: studying the Holocaust is a major way, perhaps **the** major way, to enter into that abyss, to use the term of Gitta Sereny (*Into That Abyss*, her book on Franz Stangl, the commander of Treblinka). There is a kind of dialectical tension between the unprecedentedness of the Holocaust which makes it into the paradigm for genocide generally, and the essential need for comparison with all other genocides, which in its turn is the prerequisite for any action to, perhaps, hopefully, reduce its recurrence or even put a stop to it. Whether we approach that goal or not is in our hands.

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