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**DENYING GENOCIDE:
FROM ARMENIA TO BOSNIA**

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**DENYING GENOCIDE FROM
ARMENIA TO BOSNIA ;**

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today on a question of continued timeliness as well as of historical import. Genocide in this century is virtually always a state crime – not a collective outburst, a riot, or communal violence. And it is carefully planned for its effects. Eight years ago, Dr. Slobodan Lang of the Helsinki Watch Committee in Zagreb, observed that genocide has become the most successful crime of this century. Unlike a military occupation or colonial enterprise, its results cannot be undone.

Why, some may ask, should we care about recognizing genocide in the past when we have seen so much genocide and so many crimes against humanity in the last decade? Why not concentrate on what is happening today? Santayana's frequently recalled dictum is often cited: that those who do not remember will repeat the past. But the past never recurs just the same way; further, we may remember and repeat, sometimes reversing roles. Some say we should remember and acknowledge the victims and their descendants to reaffirm their experience and humanity. This is important, but there are other self-interested reasons to consider. We need to remember first to know who we are and have been, and to confirm our commitment to finding the truth. We need to recognize what we (in the largest sense of the word) have done to realize what we can do. Further, recognizing the past can enable us to respond to the present in a more informed way.

In this context, I will show that the Armenian

genocide in particular is not only important as an antecedent and model for the Holocaust, but also has great bearing on understanding what happened in Bosnia and Rwanda in the last decade.

Denial can take many forms: failure to recognize an event as genocide at the time, and/or denial later. We often explain denial, whether by an individual or a group, by an inability to face responsibility for guilt. Usually, states deny or suppress the bad things they have done. Seldom do they have collective amnesia regarding the good things they have done, showing humanitarian and altruistic concerns. In the case of the United Kingdom and the Armenian genocide, the UK seems to have forgotten what it did at the time to recognize, publicize and bring to justice the perpetrators of the Armenian massacres – which they then termed crimes against humanity.

The Definition of Genocide

The term genocide first appeared in 1944 (Lemkin 1944); crimes of genocide were subsumed under crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg Trials of 1946. The Genocide Convention was passed by the UN General Assembly in 1948 and became international law in 1951.

Let us begin by exploring what is genocide in international law, how can we detect it and what methods are used to discredit or deny particular cases. Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide states,

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group

as such: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Observation of genocide has been muddled in the last decade by the concept of ethnic cleansing, formerly known as expulsion or transfer. In some cases, expulsion is an alternative to genocide, such as the German drive to force Jews to emigrate from Germany before 1941. In other cases, expulsion is a step toward genocide, such as the German expulsions of Jews from small towns in Poland to major urban ghettos after 1939. In some cases, expulsion under conditions of terror, rape, and deprivation of food, water, and shelter, *is* genocide, as in the Armenian genocide of 1915.

Because we do not have an adequate word in English for perpetrators of genocide, I often use the French term *genocidaires*. When *genocidaires* practice genocide “in part,” this also can cause great numbers to flee when borders are open, as was the case in the former Yugoslavia. There “ethnic cleansing” was often accompanied by genocide in part; such genocidal massacres are best exemplified in Srebrenica where male Bosnians were killed with virtually no chance of escape. Further, there was torture and systematic rape – which constitutes genocide by (in the words of the Convention) “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” and “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole

or in part..." even when the victims are not killed. The Akayezu decision by the International Criminal Tribunal for War Crimes in Rwanda in September 1998 included rape in this context as an act of genocide (James C. McKinley, Jr., *New York Times*, 3 September 1998).

Genocides often occur during war – e.g. the Armenian genocide during World War I and the Holocaust of Jews and Gypsies during World War II. But this should not be confused with civilian war dead. War does not cause genocide; it masks it, justifies the release of aggression and cruelty, provides a cover for the perpetrators, promises immunity from sanctions, and enables the perpetrators to deny their responsibility by accusations against the victims. Unlike war crimes, genocide serves no purpose in gaining military objectives; it is often pursued despite its drain on state military capabilities.

In order to identify genocides, I have devised a paradigm to detect genocide which includes several necessary and sufficient conditions:

- 1) There is a sustained attack or continuity of attacks by the perpetrator to physically destroy group members (this may include massacre, imposed starvation or disease-producing conditions, poisoning of air, water, or food supplies);
- 2) The perpetrator is a collective or organized actor or commander of organized actors;
- 3) Victims are selected because they are members of a collectivity;
- 4) The victims are defenseless or are killed regardless of their surrender or resistance; and
- 5) The destruction of group members is

undertaken with intent to kill – i.e. murder is sanctioned by the perpetrator. In short, the deaths cannot be explained as accidental outcomes. There is evidence of repetition of destruction by design or as a foreseeable outcome. There is evidence of orders or authorization or *prima facie* evidence that the pattern of acts and personnel involved show that the authorities had to plan, organize, or are cognizant of a pattern of destruction. There are no sanctions against agents responsible for murder. (These last two points were important in the recent trial of Deborah Lipstadt in the case brought by David Irving).

Denial of Genocide

Because genocide is usually a crime of state, it is in the interest of states using genocide to deny it if they can. If these deeds have not been tried and convicted by an international court, it is easier to deny them.

The reasons perpetrator states deny past genocides may be related to their concepts of national identity which stem from genocidal acts. Taner Akçam, a Turkish social scientist, notes that “the formation of the Turkish national identity played a decisive role not only in the decision to commit genocide but also in the current denial and tabooing of it” (Akçam 1997, 350). He adds,

I would characterize amnesia as a social disease in Turkey.... A discussion of the Armenian Genocide could reveal that this Turkish state was

not a result of a war fought against the imperial powers, but, on the contrary, a product of the war against the Greek and Armenian minorities. It could show that a significant part of the National Forces consisted either of murderers who directly participated in the Armenian Genocide or of thieves who had become rich by plundering Armenian possessions (Akçam 1997, 361, 367).

Foreign policy elites in allied states also often view their state as having an interest in denying their client's genocide in order to demonstrate their loyalty – e.g. the US and UK vis-à-vis Turkey.

There are several alternate framing devices and rhetorical and numerical tricks which past and present perpetrators, and their defenders, can use to confuse public opinion. The first is presenting an alternate framework: most often used is “feuding neighbors” (Gamson 1995, 9) or “ancient hatreds,” and civil war. If it happens in Africa, we label it tribal conflict, based on our prejudice that tribes are irrational entities unlike ethnic groups. According to this framework, all sides are irreconcilable and implicated and the perpetrators were just trying to defend their side. One variant of this is that anything they might have done was in self-defense. Another is that “we did it to them before they could do it to us” – preemptive genocide, one might say.

Then there is the numbers game; comparing the numbers of the victims of the perpetrator in war to the victims of genocide of the minority. We might call this an aggregative strategy: bury the dead and bury guilt. The numbers game avoids examination of intent, equating the random civilian victims of bombing (such as World War II bombing which

produced victims in London and Birmingham as well as Berlin and Dresden) with the victims purposely taken from their homes and deported to Auschwitz to be gassed. It also avoids looking at the denominator of the equation which would enable you to compare the percent of the group killed. For example, if 8,000 members of a victimized group of 10,000 persons were killed intentionally, 80 percent would be victims. But if 10,000 members of a victimizer group out of 100,000 were killed randomly, 10 percent would be dead. The apologists for the victimizers could truthfully say that their 10,000 dead exceeded the 8,000 of the other group. Another way of putting this is that victims were of all religions or of all ethnic groups, aggregating the dead.

The Why Question

But why and how does genocide occur? To show this, I will briefly review my explanation which was first proposed to understand the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, and later expanded.

The first precondition – a necessary but not a sufficient condition – is the exclusion of the victim from the universe of obligation of the collective conscience of the dominant group (Durkheim rev. in Fein 1977, Ch. 1). This is reinforced by an ideology of exclusion, defining the victim as an alien or an enemy – for example, the Aryan myth or the pan-Turanian myth which claimed that only Aryans or only Turkic people could live in a given space. Such groups are then viewed by the dominant group as people who do not belong, to whom nothing is owed, who do not have to be accounted for, and to whom one need not account. Most often in the Twentieth century such ideologies are a rationalization of the

aim of an elite seeking to create a “pure” or homogenous ethnic state – i.e. one people, one state. Everyone who does not fit in must be eliminated either by expulsion or genocide.

Secondly, there is a problem attributed to the victim or an opportunity seen to be impeded by the victim. Often this is connected to a problem of legitimacy or solidarity – a fundamental disagreement over who rules and who belongs. The victims may be seen as a real or symbolic threat. Sometimes the victims rebel or do not accept their place and the perpetrators choose to eliminate them rather than share power with them. Sometimes the threat is symbolic, as was the “Jewish threat” in Germany, even though the Jews were loyal to Germany, making no claims except to be equal citizens, and were not a material, political or military threat. The Jewish threat was a product of centuries of Christian and racial anti-Semitism and fantasy which led to the Nazi redefinition of the Jews in Germany as non-human enemies.

Finally, there is the lack of internal checks or external checks on the perpetrator. Dictatorships and totalitarian states lack internal checks. There is a calculus on the part of the perpetrators that they can get away with it. War generally provides immunity from oversight and intervention by hostile powers. Further, major powers have committed genocide or overlooked genocides and genocidal massacres by their client states in the past. The knowledge by the *genocidaires* that there have been no sanctions against previous users of genocide reinforces their readiness to commit genocide.

Both the Ottoman Empire and pre-Nazi Germany could be regarded as failed states which had lost wars and parts of their territory. Such situations have been the context in the Twentieth century in which resentment against relatively successful minorities could be elaborated in nationalist and

exclusivist ideologies (Melson 1992). Before the Twentieth century, the future victims had been defined outside the religiously-sanctioned universe of obligation. They were people who did not count, to whom rulers need not account. They could be subject to collective accusations and collective violence. But there were differences in their history and status.

The Victims

The Armenians were *dhimmis*, non-Muslims and tolerated infidels, as were Jews and other Christians in the Ottoman Empire. They were afforded religious freedom with social subordination. Yet they were living in their homeland. Within the Ottoman Empire until 1909, religious groups were organized in *millets* which were internally self-governing. There was no common citizenship. While the Armenians had been known as the “*Royal millet*,” and were relatively successful as professionals and administrators of the Empire, their loyalty began to be suspect as Armenian nationalist and revolutionary movements arose in the late Nineteenth century. In response both to local rebellions and nonviolent protest, the Sultan instigated massacres of Armenians (mostly executed by local Kurds) in the last decade of the Nineteenth century. Western powers protested Ottoman treatment of the Christians many times, but they never followed up protests with deeds. This ineffectual repeated foreign intervention stirred Ottoman hostility toward the Armenians but did not protect them.

The Jews were outside the Christian universe of obligation, treated as *deicides* and recurrently accused of non-existent crimes such as ritual murders, poisoning of wells, desecration of the host, etc. They were dispersed, living in diaspora across Europe and the mid-East, having been expelled

from Spain and Portugal in the late Fifteenth century. With the Enlightenment, there was a movement in Europe to grant Jews citizenship. Germany had been united late in the Nineteenth century and Jews were granted civil equality in Germany later (1862-1871) than in western Europe; but in the Nineteenth century, they were still excluded from many sectors – the civil service, universities, and the professional military. In the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, German Jews achieved higher levels of education than non-Jewish Germans which led to higher levels of participation in the professions and commerce.

Neither Armenians nor Jews were seen as assimilable by the dominant group. Although some prominent Jews converted to Christianity in the Nineteenth century, this path proved less effective as more took it. The theory of racial anti-Semitism which spread in the late Nineteenth century decreed that Jews were different and dangerous by race impeding their acceptance.

The Perpetrators and the Process of Genocide

In both the Ottoman Empire and Nazi Germany, the state was taken over by a genocidal dictatorship with its own security apparatus which mobilized state bureaucracies. Although these dictatorships also had their own channels of communications and special forces, the state remained central to the annihilation of the victims. The take-over of the state preceded the Ottoman genocide by merely three years, but it was eight years before the German genocide. This was a period of high visibility of Jewish persecution and discrimination.

The First World War presented the ruling triumvirate or *Jemiyet* in the Ottoman Empire an opportunity to be free

from allied protests and diplomatic interventions.¹ Did the Allies (who were enemies of Germany and the Ottomans) observe what was going on? How did they recognize or define it? How did they respond?

The massacre of the Armenians began by the segregation of males, disarmament, slaughter of Armenians in the army, the arrest and disappearance of 1,000 Armenian leaders in Constantinople, and continued with the deportation of the women, children and elderly from the villages. This led to their death by dehydration, starvation, heat, torture and rape, as well as direct killing by the military, released prisoners, and local Kurds. Conversion and forced marriage was sometimes an option for women to save themselves.

The deportations and massacres of Christians (as they were first presented) and later the Armenian massacres (as they were then called) were prominently featured in *The New York Times* (Kloian 1988) before they were reported in *The Times* (London). *The Times* on 30 September 1915 headlined the following: “Wholesale Murder in Armenia – Exterminating A Race – Talaat Bey’s Treachery.” In all, it published 113 articles about Armenians (also under “Outrages, Turkish”) in 1915 and 1916. Reports came from foreign correspondents, diplomats, missionaries, educators, travelers and other observers and, on occasion, from Turks themselves. While no legal term or concept of genocide existed, it was clear to these observers that these were “horrors,” as they often put it, and crimes. Words such as “atrocities,” “extinction,” “extermination,” and “perished” were reiterated. On May 24 1915, when the first reports had reached the West, the Allied Powers declared: ‘In view of this new crime of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments make known publicly... that they will hold all members of the Turkish

Government, as well as those officials who have participated in these massacres, personally responsible” (Hovannisian 1986, 30-31).

In 1916, the British Foreign Office published a 684 page “Blue Book” authored by James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*. It compiled, and its analysis was based on, reports by refugees, missionaries, diplomats, Red Cross and relief workers, and foreign educators and correspondents. It estimated that two-thirds of the 1.8 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were annihilated or deported to the desert. The report enables us to follow the pattern of expulsion and massacres based on varied sources of evidence (Bryce and Toynbee, 1916).

Evidence of intent is gleaned not just from the pattern on the ground but from statements of Turkish officials to protesting diplomats. Both the Allies, the United States (neutral in 1915) and the Ottoman Empire’s partner, Germany, protested against Ottoman policies. The British Blue Book noted an interview with Talaat Bey (one of the ruling triumvirate) in 1916 in the *Berliner Tageblatt*: “We have been reproached for making no distinction between the innocent Armenians and the guilty; but that was utterly impossible, in view of the fact that *those who were innocent today might be guilty tomorrow*” (Bryce and Toynbee 1916, 633, italics in the original). US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau protested in Constantinople to Talaat (who also assured him that their policy was to eliminate all Armenians).

Germany began by first denying the massacres, but then protested to the Turks because both German fortunes in war and their reputation were declining. In December 1915, the third German Ambassador, Count Wolf-Metternich, sought to

get the Turkish government to issue a statement disassociating Germany from the Turks' crimes in order to repudiate allegations abroad that Germany had instigated them. The Count wrote to the German Chancellor on 7 December 1915: "The rumour was spread about that the Germans desired to see Armenians massacred. I have employed extremely sharp language. Protests are useless and the Turkish assertions that no further deportations will take place are worthless...." And in June 1916, Wolf-Metternich wrote,

I have discussed with Talaat Bey and Halil Bey the deportation of the Armenian workers from the Amanus stretch. [The] deportation hampers the conduct of the war.... No one any longer has the power to control the many-headed hydra of the Committee, to control the chauvinism and fanaticism.... "Turkification" means to expel or kill everything non-Turkish (Trumpener cited in Fein 1979, 16-17).

This reminds us of how Germany sacrificed military and economic rationality to use its resources to annihilate Jews in World War II.

Documents show that the exemption of most of the Armenians of Smyrna and Constantinople from deportation was due to the intervention of German General Liman von Sanders, then Commander-in-Chief of the Ottoman Fifth Army, in order, he said, to secure and protect military interests undermined by the deportations (Dadrian 1994, 33-34).

Reports of the Turkish "outrages" led to the outrage of Lloyd George, Arthur J. Balfour, and Lord Curzon. In April 1919, Bass writes, an Ottoman court – created under massive

British pressure – had before it some of the most important leaders from the wartime Ottoman government.... They were there to stand trial for war crimes [against British soldiers] and for the 1915 genocide of about a million Armenians” (Bass 2000, 106). The trials ultimately backfired, eliciting a nationalist backlash. After Ataturk’s successful insurgency and seizure of British soldiers as hostages, the British Cabinet reluctantly agreed to a swap, exchanging the British prisoners for all the remaining Turkish prisoners.

Bass concludes that the forgetting of the Constantinople trials has been closely linked to the forgetting of the Armenian genocide. Unlike Germany, which made a relatively clean break with its dark past, Ataturk’s Republic has never confronted the deeds of 1915 or distanced itself adequately from them” (2000, 144). Indeed, Turkey’s denial (until recently) of Kurdish rights to express their identity is related to its dogma that Turkey is one nation without ethnic or religious division, forgetting how it became that way.

However, the trials by the Ottoman Court Martial in May and June 1919 led to significant findings. On 5 July 1919, the court found the top leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (*Itahad*) guilty of the organization of the crime of massacre” against the Armenians and condemned four leaders to death in absentia. The Tribunal confirmed that the purpose behind the deportations, the destruction of the deportees, was established by documents signed by the defendants and declared that the murder of innocent people could not be justified as a reprisal against acts of sabotage allegedly committed by Armenians elsewhere – i.e. the defense argument (Dadrian 1989, 308). But most of those sentenced to death were not in Ottoman custody, having escaped to Germany.

Talaat and three other *Itahad* leaders were

assassinated by Armenians abroad. The action of the killer of Talaat, Soghomon Tehlirian, was defended in a German court on the grounds of “temporary insanity brought about by a vision of his murdered mother” and exonerated by a German jury after Professor Lepsius brought out official Ottoman documents proving Talaat and other leaders ordered the massacre (Montgomery 1921).

Besides punishment, the Allies faced the question of protection and compensation for the Armenians. The United States, Britain, and France had pledged to grant self-determination to the Armenians. But they did not, their cohesion and will shattered when the US retreated to isolationism. At the same time, the new Turkish state led by Mustafa Kemal began an aggressive campaign against Armenia, which had to renounce claims to former Turkish Armenia, cede parts of Russian Armenia, and accept incorporation into the Soviet Union. The Treaty of Sèvres (1920) which had guaranteed Armenian independence, nullified forced conversions, and promised recovery of family members and the property of the Armenians, was abandoned as the Allies and Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The latter promised normalization of relations with Turkey and did not mention the Armenians (Hovannisian 1986, 32-37). Not only were the Armenian rights to restitution denied, their memories were publicly denied. For over 50 years, Turkey and Turkish state funded organizations have denied there was an Armenian genocide.

The Armenian genocide was more than a precedent for what could be done in World War II. It was an example of what could be done with impunity, and it resonated in the memories of Germany soldiers, officials, and civilians who were in World War I. Hitler is reported to have said on 22

August 1939, in orders to his chief commander in Poland to kill masses of Poles in order to resettle Germans, only thus shall we gain the living space [*Lebensraum*] that we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians? The world believes in success alone” (Lochner 1942). This projected mass killing of Poles aroused protests among army leaders, leading to Hitler countermanding his original orders. But the annihilation of Jews by SS, Army, and Order Police aroused no similar protests during the war.

Germans had been taught that they owed allegiance to people of their blood, *Volk*, which excluded the Jews.

While the Germans belonged to the Aryan race, whose supremacy to the Slav and nonwhite races the [Nazis] unhesitatingly asserted, the Jews... were nonhuman; bloodsuckers, lice, parasites, fleas, bacilli. The hidden agenda seems an obvious implication from the definition of the problem itself; these are organisms to be squashed or exterminated by chemical means. The murderous design was made plain... in a speech in May 1923 when he [Hitler] declared: “The Jews are undoubtedly a race but not human. They cannot be human in the sense of being an image of God, the Eternal. The Jews are an image of the devil. Jewry means the racial tuberculosis of the nations” (Fein 1979, 20; Aronsfeld 1975, 22).

Between 1933 and 1939, Nazi policy also focused on the biological transformation of Germans into the idealized Aryan race. The eugenic theory adapted by the Nazi state which mandated sterilization of persons deemed unfit to

reproduce was based on genetic theories widely endorsed by American as well as German scientists, doctors, and psychiatrists before 1933. The Nazi state escalated from sterilization to murder in 1939 in order to eliminate the "unfit," labeled "useless eaters," and transform the German people. The gassing of German children transported by the busload to special extermination centers was halted by Hitler's edict in response to church protests (representing much public alarm). But authorized murders continued by less visible means, such as starvation and the injection of poisons. The subsequent gassing of German Jews was never stopped; scarcely any Germans noted their absence and protested their deportation.

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These categorical murders proved to be the organization and technical prototype for genocide and subsequent murders. The same staff that developed the gas chambers for the special killing centers in Germany developed the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Raphael Lemkin (1944) and other scholars have shown how the German strategy led to genocide in Poland – selective genocide rather than a totalistic genocide – by reducing the masses of Poles to sub-literacy, lowering population growth, physical resettlement and racial selection, malnutrition, large collective executions, kidnapping of children, and internment and killing in Auschwitz of political prisoners, priests and segments of the intelligentsia. This led to the death by 1945 of about 10 percent of the Polish population exclusive of Polish Jews; 98 percent of Polish Jews were killed (Fein 1979, 55). Similar percentages of other Slavic peoples were also killed (Wytwycky 1980). The first train of boxed victims of the Holocaust were the Jews. After the Jews came the Gypsies or Roma, a people stigmatized as pariahs, enslaved, hunted, and expelled, since their arrival to

Europe from India centuries earlier.

Yet Jews were not immediately recognized by the Allies as collective victims despite much information. I initially thought this was in part related to the scant information in 1941 on the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres which began with the invasion of the Soviet Union (Fein 1979). But more recent research shows this was not the case. For there were reports of the massacres of Jews on the eastern front beginning in 1941. Breitman observes that “British intelligence analysts could determine in late 1941 that Nazi Germany was systematically slaughtering Jews” (Breitman 1998, 10) from the cryptanalysts reports of the German Order Police, later known as “ultra.” Breitman adds,

On September 12, 1941... the SIS [Secret Intelligence Service] staff explained that future briefings for the Prime Minister would not contain such material: “The fact that the Police are killing all Jews that fall into their hands should by now be sufficiently well appreciated. It is not therefore proposed to continue reporting these butcheries specially, unless so requested.” This comment referred to Nazi treatment of Jews only in the conquered territories of the Soviet Union, not in all of Nazi-dominated Europe. Thus, almost three months before the start of operations in the first extermination camp and more than four months before the Wannsee Conference, British intelligence had a basic grasp of Nazi intentions toward Jews in the Soviet territories (Breitman 1998, 96-97).

News of the German execution of the “Final Solution” was understated, its scope and organization only appreciated by the public in the US in 1945, when reporters saw the camps opened up (Lipstadt 1986). Great Britain and the United States first suppressed and then generally did not publicize news of the annihilation of the Jews (Lipstadt 1986, Breitman 1998). According to Tony Kushner, *The Manchester Guardian* was a singular exception in Britain “which continued to provide by far the most comprehensive coverage of the persecutions in the democratic world outside the Jewish press” (Kushner 1994, 137). There was a reluctance of leaders and newspapers in both the US and UK to recognize that the Jews were categorical victims as Jews. Such officials felt that their publics would not identify with Jews, nor would the German audiences they might try to sway. In the US and UK, governments also showed no commitment to destruction of the camps or lifesaving operations – i.e. rescue and deterrence of deportations. Enhancing the visibility of the victims might cause them to change their refugee policy and, in the case of the UK, their foreign policy of restricting Jewish emigration to Palestine. Diminishing recognition as well as denial of genocide is functional for leaders not wanting to act.

There were several ways such recognition could be obscured. Mass murder of Jews was often conflated in reporting with other killings and deportations of nationals. In the US and UK, many government officials, writers and editors did not want to recognize the Jews as special victims and universalized the victims as political or members of particular nationalities. But the BBC did broadcast specific news and warnings, such as BBC reports in June 1942 by the Polish-Government-in-Exile, of Jewish massacres in Poland. However, some Europeans, including people in German-

occupied territories, doubted the credibility of such reports because the radio audience recalled false British reports of atrocities in World War I (Fein 1979, 169). The Allies did promise postwar retribution for war crimes, but in their first declaration in January 1942 they omitted mention of the Jews. However, the reports of systematic extermination could no longer be denied by late 1942, prompting the Allies to recognize publicly on 17 December 1942 that the extermination of the Jews was a crime whose perpetrators “shall not escape retribution” (Fein 1979, 169).

The Nuremberg trials in 1946 convicted representatives of leading German military, industry, and government organizations of crimes against humanity, among other crimes. This was a critical event making denial of the annihilation of the Jews unsupportable. Although there are still deniers, generally they are on the academic and political margins and identified with racist and extremist movements.

Genocide Denial and Awareness, 1945-1995

The aftermath of the Holocaust differed from that of the Armenian genocide in several important respects: its judgment, restitution and recognition of Israel, affording some of the victims nationhood. This was not due to a preference for the victims – indeed the British and the Americans had empathized with the Armenians as Christians but many before the war did not empathize with the Jews, viewing their persecution as their own fault.

The successful post-World War II international trials, contrasting with the unsuccessful World War I Turkish trials, occurred for several reasons. First, the Allies had demanded unconditional surrender and occupied Germany. Second, the

Soviet Union and most European States had suffered from German war crimes on their soil. And third, an international trial was necessary to go beyond different means of redress suggested by the US, UK and USSR. But *realpolitik* tempered the persistence of the western Allies in de-Nazification and prosecutions. As the Cold War divided east and west, the US and Great Britain decided to seek German cooperation; the Allies therefore stopped international prosecutions and many mid-level Nazi bureaucrats and academics remained in government and the university. Yet, subsequent trials by the occupying powers and national trials in occupied countries and in Germany created an indelible record of guilt even though many perpetrators were never indicted, living openly with impunity in Germany and other countries.

While denial became impossible for the German mainstream political elite, denial by the Japanese of wartime crimes against humanity in Asia remains the norm. Such denial prevails in part because of the faults of post-war trials but also because of lack of pressure for recognition and restitution from other Asian states after World War II. China, in which most of the victims lived, was preoccupied with civil war and later transition to the Peoples Republic of China. Remembrance in Japan is largely restricted to crimes against the Japanese – i.e. Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Buruma 1994). By contrast, Germany was impelled to recognize Israel and to make restitution in order to rehabilitate itself in Europe, propelling painful negotiations between Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion which succeeded despite significant opposition on both sides.

Recognition and world condemnation of the Holocaust led to a nonviolent revolution in international law, the criminalization of genocide (1951) – whether in times of war or

peace, in whole or in part – and the establishment of new standards of human rights (such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights); prevalent means of repression and exploitation were outlawed (for example, the International Covenants on Torture and Apartheid). Yet there was a huge gap between the norm and practice on the ground. The outcry “never Again” has become cant, as genocide and mass killings recurred again and again and again. According to Harff and Gurr (2001), there have been 36 episodes in which regimes targeted ethnic, religious, racial or political groups between 1955 and 1998; at least 14 states have committed genocide – sometimes repeatedly – since 1945.² Public recognition of genocide in the post-World War II era has been very variable, mediated by western media which scarcely cover sub-Saharan Africa (except for South Africa) or rural hinterlands in other regions. Evidence of genocide has often been discredited, denied and labelled by alternate framing devices: “feuding neighbors,” civil war, tribal warfare, ethnic conflict.³

This framing, largely advanced by a conservative political elite, led the west, between 1992 and 1995, to substitute a peace-making strategy for stopping genocide in the former Yugoslavia, in which the negotiators (Vance and Owen), backed by Europe, held all parties equally culpable. The United Nations did set up an international tribunal to deal with war crimes and genocide in the former Yugoslavia in 1993 – the first such international tribunal since Nuremberg in 1946 – but did not intervene militarily until 1995, after the genocidal massacre in Srebrenica.

In Yugoslavia, recognition of events in Bosnia as genocide was impeded by assimilating the perpetrators’ framing of such events as “ethnic cleansing.” The use of the Holocaust as a metaphor, or simple analogy for genocide, was

sometimes used to obstruct the perception that these deeds were genocidal. This was illustrated in an interview with then US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on 18 May 1993 (reported by Elaine Sciolono, *New York Times*, 19 May 1993):

Mr. Christopher said Bosnia was a “morass” of deep hatreds...where “there are atrocities on all sides.” His clear message was that the Muslims in Bosnia are not the Jews of World War II Europe, and that if there is no victim, then there is no moral imperative for the United States to intercede. It's somewhat different from the Holocaust,” Mr. Christopher told Representative Gary L. Ackerman, the New York Democrat, who asked whether “ethnic cleansing” wasn't the same as genocide. It's been easy to analogize this to the Holocaust, but I never heard of any genocide by the Jews against the German people.”

Several characteristics of genocide in the former Yugoslavia distinguished it from the Holocaust. First, the intent was primarily instrumental – to drive the victims out in order to retain political control – rather than to fulfill an ideological end. Second, the majority of victims were dispossessed and expelled rather than murdered (i.e. genocide in part). Third, the victims could be depicted as implicated victims, provoking cognitive dissonance in comparison to the Jews as innocent victims. It is hard now to recall that at the time the Jews were not seen as innocent victims by either the perpetrators or many bystanders but as doing something to deserve punishment. Finally, the systematic use of rape and sexual degradation

(staged as rituals of abasement) which was characteristic of Bosnia – and many other genocides – did not occur among German perpetrators during the Holocaust because of the Nazi theory of blood and sexual pollution. Thus, use of the Holocaust as a paradigm of genocide has led to denial of genocide in Bosnia and elsewhere.

Sometimes, the use of the Holocaust as an archetype or icon of genocide is purposely used in comparison to deny the Ottoman genocide as in the following remarks made by the Ambassador of Turkey to the US in 1986:

The record of Nazi slaughter is unambiguous. Others should not be permitted to take advantage of the sympathy and understanding for the victims of the Holocaust. Equating that genocide with events of 1915, whose characterization is a matter of serious dispute, dilutes the moral force that recollection of the Holocaust should generate for us all (*Washington Post*, 26 April 1983 reported in Smith 1986, 28).

From a heuristic or social scientific perspective, the use of the Holocaust as the only model or image of genocide obscures other models that might be more revealing in specific situations. In some ways, Melson (1994) noted, the ends and means of genocide in Bosnia recalled the earlier genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire rather than the Holocaust. Besides the use of expulsions and deportations leading to death, there was the widespread use of rape as a tool to torture, to humiliate, to drive out, to destroy the family and to create unwanted children of the oppressor's group. Melson observed,

Two major similarities between the Armenian genocide and the partial genocide occurring in Bosnia should be apparent. Like the Young Turks, the Serbian, and to some extent the Croat, nationalists are also dreaming of a large state that would include their peoples and exclude other ethnic and national groups. Like the Armenians, the Muslims, an ethnoreligious community making claims to land, are being massacred and driven out by Serb and Croat nationalist movements that seek to incorporate their lands and “cleanse” the area of their presence and to destroy their culture (Melson 1994).

In April 1994, the west avoided recognition and intervention against a genocide in Africa that was most similar to the annihilation of the Armenians and Jews in totality of aim and death toll – about 70 percent of the targeted group, Rwandan Tutsis, were killed. The *genocidaires* in Rwanda, instigated by “Hutu Power” ideologues, demanded and got mass participation, with peasants using simple weapons and farm tools. The pace of killing rivaled that of the Holocaust – over 500,000 persons slain in 99 days. While hundreds of thousands were being killed, the US State Department representative refused to say the “G” word in response to reporters’ questions but stated there were “acts of genocide.” The refusal of the United Nations to intervene in order to support the disarming of the *genocidaires* in January 1994, Belgium’s pull-out of her UNAMIR forces once they were attacked, the refusal of the United States to help fund an expanded peacekeeping operation in April or May, the refusal of the United Nations Security Council to recognize the

situation as genocide, and the aid and active support in hiding the *genocidaires* by France, has prompted widespread shame and embarrassment in the west. This led to self-investigations in Belgium, France, the United Nations and by western aid organizations. Such sentiments seemed to have prompted President Clinton's declaration of regrets in Kigali in 1998 which characteristically evaded taking personal responsibility.

Western states still prefer to promise post-war retribution rather than to promptly recognize and intervene to stop genocide. The failure to prevent or stop genocide is functionally related to the failure to recognize it. Many people have noted that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which became law in 1951, had two aims: punishment *and* prevention. Yet, while we are on the road to punish genocide, through the establishment of an International Criminal Court, little has been done to prevent it. This is both a political and economic failure, an economic black hole because of the immense costs tolerating genocide has generated, estimated in the case of Rwanda to be four to twenty times the cost of stopping it earlier (Fein 2000). Besides the economic cost to the international community, there is the price in continued hostility, inter-group fear and conflict, further human rights abuses, economic devastation, and regional aggression and regional destabilization as is illustrated in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Conclusion

Genocide has been repeated in many situations, superficially very different, because it works to transform populations and can usually be practiced with impunity. Bertold Brecht once said, following the unsuccessful East German revolt in 1953

when the government complained that the people were unworthy, “let’s change the people!” *Genocidaires* try to do just that: to change the people to fit their own political formula of who they can govern. Several genocide scholars and others have noted the warning signs of impending genocide. Today, we are at a singular historical juncture – maybe a turning point. Politicians need to know that their publics are behind them in seeking to deter and stop genocide. One step to do so is to be honest about the past: to commemorate genocides and address the role of western (and other) governments in enabling genocides.

Great Britain could retrieve its own history by recognizing the Armenian massacres as genocide. It could also join the mainstream of western European opinion in doing this. In the last six months, the European Parliament has asked the Government of Turkey to publicly recognize the Armenian genocide, the French Senate and Italian Parliament have recognized the Armenian genocide, and the Pope has affirmed its significance as a “prelude to the horrors which followed... deliberately organized campaigns of extermination that have ended the lives of millions of believers.” Truth can liberate even if painful. Turkey will ultimately expand its own freedom of expression and enhance its democracy by examining its own past, understanding that it can not dictate fictional historical dogmas to its allies. But that is their decision; allies do not have to agree on everything. You now have the opportunity not only to acknowledge the past but to consider its bearing on the future. It is up to the British public of all faiths and origins to say that enough is enough: truth cannot be denied without consequences.

NOTES

1. It meant the opportunity, as Djemal Pasha, the Governor of Constantinople, put it in 1913, to “free ourselves through the World War from all conventions, which meant so many attacks on our independence...” (cited in Fein 1979, 13-14). He went on to say that “we had determined on radical reform” but does not say that the radical reform was to eliminate the Armenian problem by eliminating the Armenians.

2. These genocides cited by Harff and Gurr and documented by human rights organizations, include Tibet (1959), Indonesia (1965-66) and East Timor (1975-1980), the Ache in Paraguay (1968-73), Equatorial Guinea (1969-79), East Pakistan (1971), Uganda (1972-79), Cambodia (1975-79), Hutus in Burundi (1972, 1993), Mayan Indians in Guatemala (1981-83), Ba'hai in Iran (1981-), southerners and Nubians in Sudan (1983-), Kurds in Iraq (1987-88), Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia (1992-95), and Tutsis in Rwanda (1994).

3. Gamson observed in 1994 that “this framing of the Bosnian conflict resonates with a broader *realpolitik*. The United States and other countries must recognize the limits of their power and preserve it for the protection of vital national interests. If the war in Bosnia is a morass of deep hatred where atrocities occur on all sides, then there is no moral imperative for other countries to intervene. The *feuding neighbors* frame legitimates inaction and reinterprets the meaning of early warning signs. Furthermore, the less one knows and understands about a given conflict, the more plausible and even-handed the *feuding neighbors* frame appears to be” (1995, 9).

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Errata

Page 9, line 14:

“Royal millet” should be “loyal millet”

Page 13, line 12 (line 3 of quote) should read:

Amanus stretch which deportation hampers the

Page 13, line 15 (line 6 of quote) should read:

Committee, to control the chauvinism and the

Page 13, last line, insert quotation marks:

1919,” Bass writes, “an Ottoman court – created under massive

Page 14, line 10, insert quotation mark:

Bass concludes that “the forgetting of the

Page 14, line 22, insert quotation mark:

Progress (*Itahad*) guilty of “the organization of the crime of

Page 16, line 2, insert quotation mark:

masses of Poles in order to resettle Germans, “Only thus shall we

Page 22, line 7, capitalise:

“never Again” should be “Never Again”

Page 23, line 15 (line 11 of quote), insert quotation mark:

same as genocide. “It’s been easy to analogize this