

Genocide

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Popular beliefs, especially when mistaken, are as stubborn as old habits. They never yield to historical data let alone to scientific proof. They have their own common sense. Perhaps because the cutting of the canal connecting popular beliefs, or the beliefs of the ‘general public’, with true historical data and scientific inquiry has to go through the petrified rift between theory and practice throughout human history; a formidable task indeed, which is receiving a new impetus from modern information technology. Arguably that might be the most humane task the info-tech revolution would accomplish, if only driven away from the obscene madness of profiteering at any cost, even at the cost of destroying life on Earth.

Although centuries have passed since the abandonment of geocentric theory by Copernicus and Galileo, we still ‘think’ geocentrically when we say that the sun ‘rises’ every morning. I wonder if there is any scientific metaphor, which can confidently ‘replace’ the poetic metaphor of ‘sunrise’. But if need be – and it is worth a ‘prophecy’ – then only a poet will one day invent and pronounce a new heliocentric metaphor to ‘dethrone’ the ‘old’ ‘sunrise’. And most probably that poet will be a citizen of The Third World where people live through a thousand and one ‘sunsets’ each day of the year, while never abandoning the ‘sunrise of hope’.

Meanwhile people still believe and wrongly so that I.Q. was designed to, and does measure, intelligence; that the atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War Two and hence consolidate an everlasting world peace; that Columbus was a pioneer in discovering America as a New World; that Stalin’s appalling purges were indispensable for the consolidation of socialism in the Soviet Union; that the Nazi ultimate crime, *genocide*, is best defined as *holocaust*; that a world tribunal, at the end of World War One, condemning the genocide of the Armenians during World War

One by the proto-Nazi government of the Young Turks, might have prevented all the subsequent genocides, including the genocide of the Jews...

It's vitally important to remember that at the end of World War Two, the Nuremberg Tribunal did not prevent the appalling and frequent reoccurrence of genocide all through the 20th century, which, alas, has even spilled over into the 21st century.

Furthermore, the genocide of the Armenians was not the first occurrence of that ultimate crime against humanity during the second decade of the 20th century. It is only fair for humanity's sake to remember the genocide of the Congolese of more than ten million victims (the price paid for the plunder by King Leopold of Belgium of Congo's rubber, the black gold of its time), which was still rampant ten years earlier than the genocide of the Armenians of 1915. (K.I.Pilikian, *UNESCO Laureates – N. Hikmet & A. Khatchaturian*, Taderon Press, 2005. Appendix II, *A Century of Genocide*, pp 45-46 – a paper read at Holocaust Memorial Day, London Borough of Camden, on 28th January 2002.)

We should also acknowledge history's tale that Nazism was not a unique phenomenon of 1930s Germany, and that the Jews were not the first victims of genocide of German imperialism. Between 1904 and 1909, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany was, in his turn, competing with Leopold of Belgium by indulging in Germany's own colonial massacres in Namibia, today rightly defined as the genocide of the Nama and the Herero. The latter were named as the *Hottentotte* and defined as the 'bastards of the human race', nay, even mere 'animals' by the Kaiser's proto-Nazi anthropologist Eugen Fischer, whose racist theories were to find their direct references in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It is significant that General Franz Ritter von Eck, who led the Kaiser's colonial army in Africa, later became a kind of 'godfather' of the Nazi party, heading the *Freikorps* of Munich. 'It was under him [von Eck] that I first learned to speak', confessed Hitler, who used to serve Ernst Rom (von Eck's right-hand man) as a *Stormtrupper* lance corporal, mainly to 'finger suspected communists within his organisation' (David Olusoga's programme, 'Genocide and the Second Reich', BBC2 Bristol, MMIV. www.bbc.co.uk/digital).

After World War One, another conscript to von Eck's private army, the *Freikorps*, was Rudolf Höss, later to become the SS Commandant of the extermination camp at Auschwitz. When a teenager, Rudolf Höss had joined the German forces serving in Turkey during the First World War (V. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berghahn Books 1997, p 427). There he learned, as did many of the SS Commandants in their youth, all the tricks and deceits for forced deportations, property confiscations, massacres, and above all the brutality of the 'final solution' – annihilation of the Armenians, decades before the Nazi State Terror engulfed millions of Jews. The Commandant of the Ottoman 4th army, Djemal Pasha, the governor of Syria and Palestine, was reported to have stated, in December 1916, that, 'because of Zionism, Palestine might become a second Armenia' (Saadia E. Weltman, *Germany, Turkey and the Zionist Movement in The Review of Politics*, a quarterly of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana,

April 1961, p 255. From N. M. Gelber, *Harsharat Balfour Vetoldoteha*, Jerusalem 1939, p 180). Thus Djemal was unwittingly acknowledging, in 1916, that the Armenians were massacred mainly in their own ancestral homeland – Armenia. Djemal Pasha was, after all, a member of the top ‘Young Turks’, the diabolic Triumvirate, ‘Talaat-Enver-Djemal’, organising the ultimate crime against humanity – as yet, a nameless crime torturing the wits of Raphael Lemkin.

After the British offensive in 1917, the military authorities of the ‘Young Turks’ ordered the immediate and forceful evacuation of all the Jews from Tel Aviv and Jaffa, and from all the adjoining areas, too. The probability of another genocide enacted by the same ‘Young Turks’, this time upon the Jews, opened the eyes of the allied press which thus charged that, ‘the Turks were preparing a repetition of the Armenian massacres’ (Saadia E. Weltman, op. cit., p 255). That ‘repetition’ had to wait for another world war, World War Two. Despite Commandant Djemal’s wishful thinking, it was not Zionism, but Nazism, that was the cause of the genocide of the Jews. And, it was accomplished not in Palestine, but in Germany and in all the European countries under Nazi occupation.

Rudolf Höss was convicted and executed by the Poles at Auschwitz camp in 1947. The ‘Young Turks’ Interior Minister, Talaat Pasha, was sentenced to death, *in absentia*, as a war criminal, by a Turkish military tribunal in 1919, as were most of his comrades, including Djemal and Enver. Having escaped to Germany, Talaat was gunned down in Berlin, in 1921, by Soghomon Tehlerian, an Armenian, who had survived the genocide but had witnessed the hellish atrocities of the ‘final solution’.

As a gesture of Nazi goodwill, Hitler restored Talaat’s ashes to Turkey in 1942. Kemal Ataturk’s Turkish Republic is now honouring the remains of Talaat, the ‘fallen hero’, on the Hill of Liberty in Istanbul. Perhaps it is hoped, ideally with Nato’s blessing, to enshrine, in the mausoleum, the remains of other ‘Young Turk heroes’ ...

What about the *Holocaust*?

On December 9, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved of the UN Convention on Genocide. Neither the definition nor its five criteria mention the word *holocaust*. Etymologically *holocaust*=*totus crematus*, meaning ‘whole-burnt’. It is intrinsically linked, and historically so, with the act of religious sacrifice – a sacrificial offering which is completely consumed by fire, whereby cleansing from sins and ultimately purification is expected to be attained.

Does Genocide ‘taketh away the sins’ of the murdered community whether massacred, gassed or burnt? Or does it perhaps cleanse the sins of the murderers for the bliss of purification? God forbid.

German Nazis, like their proto-models in Namibia, Congo, Ethiopia’s Italian Fascists, and the ‘Young Turks’, committed the ultimate crime against humanity rightly expressed as *genocide*. With all respect to all concerned, I must say that *holocaust* is an erroneous and misleading coinage of the reality it is hoped to illustrate and define. Most importantly, it is unfair to the millions of victims of

genocide, whether Congolese, Nama, Herero, Armenians, Jews, Kurds, Poles, Serbs, Greeks, Assyrians, Palestinians, Bulgarians, Kosovans, American Indians, Timorese, Cambodians, Rwandans, Darfurians, and alas many others.

Genocides do not start or just happen then and there. Whenever and wherever it happens, genocide is always premeditated, conceptualised, and its execution meticulously organised at the highest governmental levels. Moreover, implementing its execution always demanded a world turbulence characterising each historical epoch.

During centuries of colonial expansions, endemic wars had genocide and slavery as necessary pillars of their strategy for land and raw material conquest. All colonial powers were engaged in it. World opinion, still in its infancy, was no more than a feeble gesture. The epoch of imperialism of the 20th century made World War the 'prerequisite' for any attempt at implementing the execution of genocide as a 'final solution'. World opinion was starting to bite. The United Nations was founded and 'man's inhumanity to man' finally had a name – *genocide* (coined by the linguist, jurist and historian R. Lemkin), and an International Tribunal (Nuremberg) was set up to condemn and punish its perpetrators. But, even after World War Two, another epochal turbulence, the full-fledged Cold War epoch, 'acted' as a 'shock absorber' for horrendous genocides in Cambodia, Indonesia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. Towards the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st, the Cold War finally melted away in the heat of the arrogance of the epoch of Globalisation. The annulment of the Soviet Union notwithstanding, anti-Communism, 'the basic stupidity of the 20th century' (Thomas Mann. In Frances S. Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper*. Granta Books 1999, p51) is still on the pedestal of die-hard religious fundamentalists, secret terrorist organisations and death squads, state terror apologists of the right and left of neo-con and neo-labour politics, while genocide remains on the threshold of rampant conflicts in the east and west, in the north and south of our world.

As a result of a matured anti-war and global public opinion, a World War has virtually lost its economic and demagogic incentive to the giant global market and its super master policeman, the United States. In contrast, localised wars to open up new zones for the global economy to thrive, have become the workshops of political, economic and military uni-polar dominance. Genocide has already become the collateral damage of such a global strategy in the Balkans, Eurasia, Africa and the Middle East.

To help sustain the British alignment to US imperialism, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's apologetic argument is that 'the United States...has the military power to act as the world's policeman... We live in a uni-polar world; the United States has a quarter of the world's wealth, the World's GDP, and it has stronger armed forces than the next 27 countries put together... We will reap a whirlwind if we push the Americans into a unilateralist position.' (Ken Coates, *America's Gulag*, in *The Spokesman* 82, 2004, p 6). We might as well compare the above with George Kennan's Policy Planning Study (PPS) of 1948. Kennan (who headed

the State Department Planning Staff until 1950) argued: ‘We have about 50 per cent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its population. In this situation, our real job in the coming period... is to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we have to dispense with all sentimentality... we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.’ (N. Chomsky, ‘The Evil Empire’, in *New Socialist*, January 1986, p 13. Also in John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World*. Verso 2002, p 98).

With all the paraphernalia of military power and in spite of more than a dozen military engagements all over the world, during the last 57 years the USA has halved its wealth and diminished its population percentage (now *circa* 5%) *vis-à-vis* the world.

Dealing ‘in straight power concepts’ the US soon did. Kennan’s advice back in 1948 is now guiding the post-September 11 ‘so called’ War on Terror strategy. Hence we are now reaping the fruits of that ‘power politics’. The setbacks for human rights and civil liberties are all the ‘logical’ consequences of power politics become Full Spectrum Dominance, camouflaged with transvestite mantras of ‘democratisation’, ‘reconstruction’ and even ‘human rights’! Hence Full Spectrum Dominance is also, I think, a sign of a gigantic, yet pathetic and megalomaniac act of desperation, not only to hold back such enormous loss of ‘disparity’ wealth in the coming decades, but to regain that loss by plundering Eurasia’s wealth. Brzezinsky advised in his *Grand Chessboard* of 1997, hoping to accomplish that task, yet again, with awesome military power. And yet again, it will fail, but, alas, after a prolonged and enormous suffering bequeathed to humanity at large.

The real question remains – what kind of a world are we living in?

For decades, UNESCO has been warning the world that the greatest shame of the current civilisation is that thousands of children die of hunger every single day. Today that number has reached a staggering 14.6 million per annum. In other words, 44,000 children die of hunger each day of the year, and that all year round, and most probably next year too, and the years after, it seems. Can there be any doubt that this is also the unmentioned genocide of humanity, ongoing and an authentic one at that, which surely is the outcome of our own socio-economic and industrial military system, now coined with cynical panache as *globalisation*.

Meanwhile, at least 30 billion dollars is spent every year just to publicise food products, especially those for children’s consumption (*Overfed & Underfed – The Global Epidemic of Malnutrition*. Worldwatch in the US, 2000). Probably, most of these are so-called ‘junk foods’, while more than a billion people are left starving, in a world of plenty as never before.

There must be something deeply wrong, rotten and certainly inhuman in our world today where more than half of its scientists waste their humanity and deform ours in totally destructive enterprises, designed not only to kill but extinguish life on earth. Tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, each averaging at

least twenty times the destructive power of a Hiroshima bomb, are already deployed all around the world. Each member of the human family is ‘granted’ at least five tons of explosives for ‘benign Hara-kiri’ it seems... Meanwhile billions pour into the pockets of the warmongers of modern metropolises. These warlords of Mammon would eventually thrive in an ‘Inorganic Paradise’ – a ‘paradise’ void of universal human rights and sustained by legalised torture; glorification of violence geared towards maximising profit at any cost; xenophobic state terror protected with religious fervour. Thus, genocide is bound to become the collateral damage of its inorganically modernised and sweat-shopped ‘global village’ of hunger and debt.

Unless, of course, humanity at large will ‘rage against the dying’ of its dreams and refuse to become cannon fodder for Mammon and terror, guarding thus its deeds of tolerance and justice, fair share and good care, compassion and conscience – the true wealth of the world, hence the health of nations.

A letter from Kurt Vonnegut to *In These Times*

Dear Editor:

If I may impose on your extraordinary hospitality yet again: I was on Jon Stewart’s *Daily Show* September 13th, and arrived with a compendium of liberal crap I never wanted to hear again, and my responses thereto. But I only had six minutes, and so never got a chance to read them out loud. For whatever they may be worth to you:

‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ Sure. I’ll pay for it. Enjoy!

‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’

Oh, yeah? Anybody trespasses on me, and I’ll cut him a new you-know-what.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Jane Fonda? Give me a break!

‘Love thy enemies.’ Arabs?

‘Blessed are the meek.’ You bet! I love ’em, too. I tell ’em to kiss my ass, and they’ll kiss it.

‘No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and Mammon.’ Mammon, of course, is the god of greed and riches. And the hell I can’t serve both God and Mammon. Look at Pat Robertson! He’s as happy as a hog up to its ears in excrement!

Kurt Vonnegut

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