

Genocide—

A Modern Crime

By

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“ONE of the great mistakes of 1918 was to spare the civil life of the enemy countries, for it is necessary for us Germans to be always at least double the numbers of the peoples of the contiguous countries. We are therefore obliged to destroy at least a third of their inhabitants. The only means is organized underfeeding which in this case is better than machine guns.”

The speaker was Marshal von Rundstedt addressing the Reich War Academy in Berlin in 1943. He was only aping the Fuehrer who had said, “Natural instincts bid all living human beings not merely conquer their enemies but also destroy them. In former days it was the victor’s prerogative to destroy tribes, entire peoples.”

Hitler was right. The crime of the Reich in wantonly and deliberately wiping out whole peoples is not utterly new in the world. It is only new in the civilized world as we have come to think of it. It is so new in the traditions of civilized man that he has no name for it.

It is for this reason that I took the liberty of inventing the word, “genocide.” The term is from the Greek word *genos* meaning tribe or race and the Latin *cide* meaning killing. Genocide tragically enough must take its place in the dictionary of the future beside other tragic words like homicide and infanticide. As Von Rundstedt has suggested the term does not necessarily signify mass killings although it may mean that. More often it refers to a coordinated plan aimed at destruction of the essential foundations of the life of na-

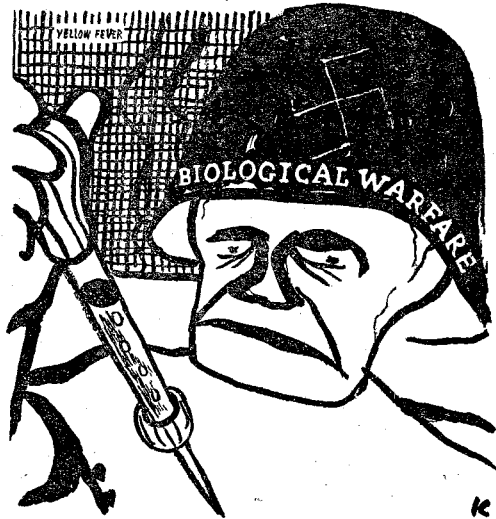
International premeditated murder, as planned and practiced against the peoples of Europe by Hitler, must be brought within the scope and jurisdiction of future international law. This is a major problem facing the coming world.

tional groups so that these groups wither and die like plants that have suffered a blight. The end may be accomplished by the forced disintegration of political and social institutions, of the culture of the people, of their language, their national feelings and their religion. It may be accomplished by wiping out all basis of personal security, liberty, health and dignity. When these means fail the machine gun can always be utilized as a last resort. Genocide is directed against a national group as an entity and the attack on individuals is only secondary to the annihilation of the national group to which they belong.

Such terms as “denationalization” or “Germanization” which have been used till now do not adequately convey the full force of the new phenomenon of genocide. They signify only the substitution of the national pattern of the oppressor for the original national pattern but not the destruction of the biological and physical structure of the oppressed group.

Philosophy of Genocide

GERMANY has transformed an ancient barbarity into a principle of government by dignifying genocide as a sacred purpose of the German people. National Socialism is the doctrine of the biological superiority of the German people. Long before the war nazi leaders were unblushingly announc-



ing to the world and propagandizing to the Germans themselves the program of genocide they had elaborated. Like Hitler and Von Rundstedt, the official nazi philosopher Alfred Rosenberg declared "History and the mission of the future no longer mean the struggle of class against class, the struggle of church dogma against dogma, but the clash between blood and blood, race and race, people and people." As the German war machine placed more and more defeated nations under the full control of nazi authorities, their civilian populations found themselves exposed to the bloodthirsty and methodical application of the German program of genocide.

A hierarchy of racial values determined the ultimate fate of the many peoples that fell under German domination. Jews were to be completely annihilated. The Poles, the Slovenes, the Czechs, the Russians, and all other inferior Slav peoples were to be kept on the lowest social levels. Those felt to be related by blood, the Dutch, the Norwegian, the Alsatians, etc., were to have the alternatives of entering the German community by espousing "Germanism" or of sharing the fate of the inferior peoples.

Techniques of Genocide

All aspects of nationhood were exposed to the attacks of the genocidal policy.

POLITICAL. The political cohesion of the conquered countries was intended to be weakened by dividing them into more or less self-contained and hermetically enclosed zones, as in the

four zones of France, the ten zones of Yugoslavia, the five zones of Greece; by partitioning their territories to create puppet states, like Croatia and Slovakia; by detaching territory for incorporation in the Greater Reich, as was done with western Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxembourg, Slovenia. Artificial boundaries were created to prevent communication and mutual assistance by the national groups involved.

In the incorporated areas of western Poland, Luxembourg, Alsace-Lorraine, Eupen, Malmedy, Moresnet, local administrations were replaced by German administrative organization. The legal system was recast on the German model. Special Commissioners for the strengthening of Germanism, attached to each administration, coordinated the activities designed to foster and promote Germanism. They were assisted by local inhabitants of German origin. These, duly registered and accredited, served as a nucleus of Germanism and enjoyed special privileges in respect to food rations, employment, and position.

National allegiances were impaired by creating puppet governments, as in Greece, Norway and France, and by supporting national Nazi parties. Where the people, such as the Poles, could not achieve the dignity of embracing Germanism, they were expelled from the area and their territory (western Poland) was to be Germanized by colonization.

SOCIAL. The social structure of a nation is vital to its national development. Therefore the German occupant endeavored to bring about changes that weakened national spiritual resources. The focal point of this attack has been the intelligentsia, because this group largely provides leadership. In Poland and Slovenia the intellectuals and the clergy were to a large extent either murdered or removed for forced labor in Germany. Intellectuals and resisters of all occupied countries were marked for execution. Even among the blood-related Dutch some 23,000 were killed, the greater number of them being leading members of their communities.

CULTURAL. The Germans sought to obliterate every reminder of former cultural patterns. In the incorporated areas the local language, place names, personal names, public signs and

inscriptions were supplanted by German equivalents. German was to be the language of the courts, of the schools, of the government and of the street. In Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg, French was not even permitted as a language to be studied in primary schools. The function of the schools was to preserve and strengthen nazism. Attendance at a German school was compulsory through the primary grades and three years of secondary school.

In Poland, although Poles could receive vocational training, they were denied any liberal arts training since that might stimulate independent national thinking. To prohibit artistic expression of a national culture, rigid controls were established. Not only were the radio, the press, and the cinema closely supervised, but every painter, musician, architect, sculptor, writer, actor and theatrical producer required a license to continue his artistic activities.

RELIGIOUS. Wherever religion represented a vital influence in the national life, the spiritual power of the Church was undermined by various means. In Luxembourg children over 14 were protected by law against criticism if they should renounce their religious affiliations for membership in nazi youth organizations. In the puppet state of Croatia an independent, but German-dominated Orthodox Church was created for Serbs, in order to destroy forever the spiritual ties with the Patriarch at Belgrade. With the special violence and thoroughness reserved for Poles and Jews, Polish church property was pillaged and despoiled and the clergy subjected to constant persecution.

MORAL. Hand in hand with the undermining of religious influence went devices for the moral debasement of national groups. Pornographic publications and movies were foisted upon the Poles. Alcohol was kept cheap although food became increasingly dear, and peasants were legally bound to accept spirits for agricultural produce. Although under Polish law gambling houses had been prohibited, German authorities not only permitted them to come into existence, but relaxed the otherwise severe curfew law.

ECONOMIC. The genocidal purpose of destroying or degrading the economic foundations of national

groups was to lower the standards of living and to sharpen the struggle for existence, that no energies might remain for a cultural or national life. Jews were immediately deprived of the elemental means of existence, by expropriation and by forbidding them the right to work. Polish property in western incorporated Poland was confiscated and Poles denied licenses to practice trades or handicrafts, thus reserving trade to the Germans. The Post Office Savings Bank in western Poland taken over by the occupying authorities, assured the financial superiority of Germans by repaying deposits only to certificated Germans. In Slovenia the financial cooperatives and agricultural associations were liquidated. Among the blood-related peoples (Luxembourgers, Alsations) the acceptance of Germanism was the criterion by which participation in the economic life was determined.

BIOLOGICAL. The genocidal policy was far-sighted as well as immediate in its objectives. On the one hand an increase in the birth rate, legitimate or illegitimate, was encouraged within Germany and among Volksdeutsche in the occupied countries. Subsidies were offered for children begotten by German military men by women of related blood such as Dutch and Norwegian. On the other hand, every means to decrease the birth rate among "racial inferiors" was used. Millions of war prisoners and forced laborers from all the conquered countries of Europe were kept from contact with their wives. Poles



in incorporated Poland met obstacles in trying to marry among themselves. Chronic undernourishment, deliberately created by the occupant, tended not only to discourage the birth rate but also to an increase in infant mortality. Coming generations in Europe were thus planned to be predominantly of German blood, capable of overwhelming all other races by sheer numbers.

PHYSICAL.

The most direct and drastic of the techniques of genocide is simply murder. It may be the slow and scientific murder by mass starvation or the swift but no less scientific murder by mass extermination in gas chambers, wholesale executions or exposure to disease and exhaustion. Food rations of all territory under German domination were established on racial principles, ranging in 1943 from 93 per cent of its pre-war diet for the German inhabitants to 20 per cent of its pre-war diet for the Jewish population. A carefully graduated scale allowed protein rations of 97 per cent to Germans, 95 per cent to the Dutch, 71 per cent to the French, 38 per cent to the Greeks and 20 per cent to the Jews. For fats, where there was the greatest shortage, the rations were 77 per cent to the Germans, 65 per cent to the Dutch, 40 per cent to the French and 0.32 per cent to the Jews.

Specific vitamin deficiencies were created on a scientific basis.

The rise in the death rate among the various groups reflects this feeding program. The death rate in the Netherlands was 10 per thousand; Belgium 14 per thousand; Bohemia and Moravia 13.4 per thousand. The mortality in Warsaw was 2,160 Aryans in September 1941 as compared to 800 in September 1938, and for the Jews in Warsaw 7,000 in September 1941 as against 306 in September 1938.

Such elementary necessities of life as warm clothing, blankets and firewood in winter were either withheld or requisitioned from Poles and Jews. Beginning with the winter of 1940-1941 the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto received no fuel at all. Even God's clean air was denied—the Jews in the overcrowded ghettos were forbidden the use of public parks. The authoritative report of the War Refugee Board published in November 1944, and the overwhelming new evidence that appears daily of the

brutal mass killings that have taken place in such notorious "death camps" as Mайданек and Oswiecim are sufficient indication of the scope of the German program.

In Birkenau alone between April 1942 and April 1944 approximately 1,765,000 Jews were gassed. Some 5,600,000 Jews and around 2,000,000 Poles have been murdered or died as a result of the extermination policies. Whole communities have been exterminated. It is estimated, for instance, that of the 140,000 Dutch Jews who lived in the Netherlands before occupation, only some 7,000 now survive, the rest being transferred to Poland for slaughter.

International Implications

WHY should genocide be recognized as an international problem? Why not treat it as an internal problem of every country, if committed in time of peace, or as a problem between belligerents, if committed in time of war?

The practices of genocide anywhere affect the vital interests of all civilized people. Its consequences can neither be isolated nor localized. Tolerating genocide is an admission of the principle that one national group has the right to attack another because of its supposed racial superiority. This principle invites an expansion of such practices beyond the borders of the offending state, and that means wars of aggression.

The disease of criminality if left unchecked is contagious. Minorities of one sort or another exist in all countries, protected by the constitutional order of the state. If persecution of any minority by any country is tolerated anywhere, the very moral and legal foundations of constitutional government may be shaken.

International trade depends upon confidence in the ability of individuals participating in the interchange of goods to fulfill their obligations. Arbitrary and wholesale confiscations of the properties and economic rights of whole groups of citizens of one state deprives them of the possibilities of discharging their obligations to citizens of other states, who thereby are penalized.

A source of international friction is created by unilateral withdrawal of citizen

rights and even by expulsion of whole minority groups to other countries. The expulsions of law-abiding residents from Germany before this war has created friction with the neighboring countries to which these people were expelled. Moreover mass persecutions force mass flight. Thus the normal migration between countries assumes pathological dimensions.

Our whole cultural heritage is a product of the contributions of all peoples. We can best understand this when we realize how impoverished our culture would be if the so-called inferior peoples doomed by Germany, such as the Jews, had not been permitted to create the Bible or to give birth to an Einstein, a Spinoza; if the Poles had not had the opportunity to give to the world a Copernicus, a Chopin, a Curie, the Czechs a Huss, and a Dvorak; the Greeks a Plato and a Socrates; the Russians, a Tolstoy and a Shostakovich.

Safeguards and Remedies

THE significance of a policy of genocide to the world order and to human culture is so great as to make it imperative that a system of safeguards be devised. The principle of the international protection of minorities was proclaimed by post-Versailles minority treaties. These treaties, however, were inadequate because they were limited to a few newly created countries. They were established mainly with the aim of protecting political and civil rights, rather than the biological structure of the groups involved; the machinery of enforcement of such political rights was as incomplete as that of the League of Nations.

Under such conditions the genocide policy begun by Germany on its own Jewish citizens in 1933 was considered as an internal problem which the German state, as a sovereign power, should handle without interference by other states.

Although the Hague Regulations were concerned with the protection of civilians under control of military occupants, they did not foresee all the ingenious and scientific methods developed by Germany in this war.

Genocide is too disastrous a phenomenon to be left to fragmentary regulation. There must be an adequate mechanism for inter-

national cooperation in the punishment of the offenders. The crime of genocide includes the following elements. The intent of the offenders is to destroy or degrade an entire national, religious or racial group by attacking the individual members of that group. This attack is a serious threat either to life, liberty, health, economic existence or to all of them. The offenders may be representatives of the state or of organized political or social groups.

Liability should be fixed upon individuals both as to those who give orders and to those who execute these orders. The offender should be precluded from invoking as his defense the plea that he had been acting under the law of his country, since acts of genocide should be declared contrary to international law and morality. Since the consequences of genocide are international in their implications the repression of genocide should be internationalized. The culprit should be liable not only in the country in which the crime was committed, but in the country where he might be apprehended. The country where he is found may itself try him or extradite him. Since a country which makes a policy of genocide cannot be trusted to try its own offenders, such offenders should be subject to trial by an international court. Eventually, there should be established a special chamber for international crimes within the framework of the existing International Tribunal of Justice.

The crime of genocide should be incorporated into the penal codes of all states by international treaty, giving them a legal basis upon which they could act.

It is also proposed that the Hague Regulations be modified to extend to captive nations the controls provided for the treatment of war prisoners by the Convention of July 1929. Attempts to rescue or alleviate the suffering of captive nations have been hampered by lack of accurate information.

Germany has reminded us that our science and our civilization have not expunged barbarism from the human animal. They have merely armed it with more efficient instruments. We must call upon the resources of all our social and legal institutions to protect our civilization against the onslaught of this wanton barbarism in generations to come.