

August 2011

Editor's Introduction

Herb Hirsch

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp>

Recommended Citation

Hirsch, Herb (2011) "Editor's Introduction," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2: Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol6/iss2/3>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Editor's Introduction

Volume 6, issue 2 is a general issue that contains an eclectic mix of articles which cover a broad range of topics directly related to the prevention and understanding of genocide in the modern era and testify to the diversity and strength of the field of genocide studies.

The first selection by Stephen Burgess, Professor at the US Air War College, examines the proposal to create an African Standby Force to intervene when genocide threatens on the continent. Burgess points out that African leaders approved the formation of the African Standby Force (ASF) and “signed off on the promise that the ASF would be prepared by 2010 to intervene to stop genocide.” He notes that the leaders of the various countries have failed to come close to meeting the 2010 deadline and that this “calls into question the credibility of ... concepts such as the ‘African Renaissance’ and ‘African solutions for African Problems.’” He concludes by noting, “Challenging timetables may prod African governments to develop their militaries, but they also lead to unrealistic expectations and suboptimal performance, such as the AU missions in Darfur and Somalia.”

The second selection, “Healing Psychosocial Trauma in the Midst of Truth Commissions: The Case of *Gacaca* in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” by Regine King, PhD candidate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, argues that while truth commissions “emphasize the dimensions of truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in practice, they are often challenged to fulfill the mandate of healing psychosocial traumas through these dimensions in countries that suffer not only from the traumatic experience of wars and genocide, but also from the multiple psychosocial issues that result from these forms of mass violence.” She examines the role of *gacaca*, “a form of truth commission that was introduced in post-genocide Rwanda in 2002,” and argues that relying only on *gacaca* to heal psychosocial trauma underestimates “the depth of suffering that the genocide created both at the individual and collective levels in Rwandan communities.” She suggests that other models should be adopted to supplement *gacaca*.

The third article, “From Bloodless Revolution to Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacres of 1909,” by Bedross Der Matossian, Assistant Professor of Modern Middle East History in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska/Lincoln, examines the historiography of the Adana Massacres of 1909. He notes that there are two diverging views. According to Matossian, “While some Turkish scholars deny the involvement of the local government officials in the massacres by putting all of the blame on the Armenians who revolted as part of a conspiracy to establish a kingdom in Cilicia, some Armenian scholars, whose work is overshadowed by the Armenian genocide, accuse the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of acting behind the scenes to destroy the Armenian economic infrastructure in Adana in order to curb any future political and economic development in the area.” This article “contends that the Adana Massacres should be viewed as part of the revolutionary process which led to the erosion of social and political stability in the region” and which intensified the violence perpetrated against “the vulnerable Armenian population of Adana.”

The fourth contribution to volume 6, issue 2, “Did *Newsnight* Miss the Story? A Survey of How the BBC’s ‘Flagship Political Current Affairs Program’ Reported Genocide and War in Rwanda between April and July 1994,” is one of the few examinations of the role played by the media in exposing or ignoring an ongoing genocide. In this article, Georgina Holmes, a scholar of international relations theory and the media, notes that in 1994 the BBC program *Newsnight* was one of the few “within which representatives of the British government, opposition parties, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organizations could comment on British foreign policy.” Holmes analyzes *Newsnight* reporting between 6 April 1994 and 30 September 1994, with a particular focus on reporting until 31 July 1994, and concludes that “despite a stack of media evidence that genocide was taking place, no representatives of the British government or opposition parties were interviewed on the role of the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and signatory of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.” Instead, she notes, the discussion focused on the shortcomings of the UN bureaucracy and were characterized by a refusal to use the word “genocide.” She concludes that *Newsnight* missed the story and “failed to hold British politicians to account.”

The final article, “George Steiner and the War against the Jews: A Study in Misrepresentation,” by Roger Smith, Professor Emeritus of government at the College of William and Mary, examines the work of George Steiner, the “pre-eminent literary critic of the past fifty years.” Smith argues that Steiner’s “work on the Holocaust is misleading in its interpretations, explanations, and implications.” Smith notes that part of Steiner’s view stems from the fact that he was worried “that the Jews brought their near destruction upon themselves: that they invented the practice of genocide, had invented the idea of a ‘chosen people,’ had through Moses, Jesus, and Marx created such moral demands upon ordinary human beings that the tension became unbearable and resulted in a revolt against the tyranny of conscience and perfection.” Smith notes that Steiner’s brilliant use of language—he calls it “dazzling prose”—can overwhelm “critical thought and lead one away from a factual understanding of the origins and consequences of the Holocaust.” Smith seeks to correct that and direct the reader to the shortcomings in Steiner’s work as it applies to the Holocaust.

In conclusion, volume 6, issue 2 contains a variety of articles on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. We think, and hope that readers agree, that this issue helps to enhance our understanding of the causes of genocide and ways to prevent it. Our next issue, volume 6, issue 3 will be another special issue: *60 Years after Ratification of the Genocide Convention: Critical Reflections on the State and Future of Genocide Studies*.

Herb Hirsch
GSP Co-editor