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Editors' Introduction

This special section focuses on genocide and related mass violence in Latin America. Clearly there is a long history of genocide of indigenous peoples, from the arrival of Columbus and other conquerors to the present day. Perpetrated first by European colonial powers, particularly Spain and Portugal, genocidal activities continued in postcolonial settler states following the revolutions of the nineteenth century. Government shifted from Europe to local Euro-American, as well as in some cases indigenous, elites, who shared economic and thus political power with imperialist international actors—including, in many cases, the United States and some of its large corporations. Human-rights abuses continued. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Cold War-era National Security Doctrine, as well as state-specific tensions and agendas, played out in various Latin American contexts in a new round of repression, genocide, and other forms of mass violence. The Guatemalan Genocide of the 1980s and systematic killings and general military repression under dictatorships in Chile and Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s are perhaps the best-known cases, but others abound.

The goal of this special section is to add to the growing literature on genocide and mass violence in Latin America through scholars working within Latin American societies. The pages that follow contain what the editors believe is a substantive step toward a new understanding of the dynamics of genocide and related mass violence in Latin America, past and present, as well as analyses of the responses from within those societies to their history and the social and institutional forces toward mass violence. This contribution is especially timely, with world attention focused recently on Spain's attempt to try Augusto Pinochet and current trials of alleged perpetrators of mass violence in Argentina. Crucial to efforts at transforming Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, and other affected states and societies is a clear and honest engagement with the human-rights abuses in both the recent and the distant past—an engagement that includes discussions of the complex issues of historical memory: ideas about the ways the past can or should be represented; views on the use of different concepts such as “genocide,” “crimes against humanity,” “civil war,” and “mass violence,” and the consequences for historical memory of using this or that term in a given context; and more. We hope that the articles in this special section will contribute to this process.

No study of genocide in the western hemisphere should begin anywhere but with the attempted annihilation of indigenous peoples that forms the basis of Euro-American states and societies and has been an ongoing project of small and large, weak and powerful settler states from Canada to Argentina. “Discussing Indigenous Genocide in Argentina: Past, Present, and Consequences of Argentinean State Policies toward Native Peoples” by Walter Delrio, Diana Lenton, Marcelo Musante, Mariano Nagy, Alexis Papazian, and Pilar Pérez, presents research findings on the genocide of indigenous peoples of Argentina that has been largely edited out of the Argentine national narrative in a manner similar to that of other American settler states. The historical details in this article alone make it an important contribution to the literature, but the authors' analysis of how these historical details have been

excluded from public understanding of Argentine history and identity represent a tremendous addition. An important accomplishment of the authors is to highlight the role of denial of the Argentine state as the agent of destruction of indigenous peoples in the past as a way of rationalizing the choice not to direct state resources and commitment to help stabilize and reconstitute indigenous groups in the face of debilitating poverty and marginalization in the present. Based on an ignoring of Argentine agency in the past, the contemporary situation is misrepresented as an unfortunate but unavoidable natural progression, rather than as a social problem that can be addressed through public policy and for which the Argentine state and society have ethical and legal responsibility.

To support this rethinking of the destruction of indigenous peoples, Delrio et al. make a compelling case for seeing it as genocidal. Of special interest for those noticing cutting-edge trends in genocide research will be the authors' discussion of the separation of male and female indigenous people as a means of preventing indigenous births and displacing full indigenous progeny with those of mixed race—another illustration of the concept of “life force atrocity” presented by Elisa van Joeden-Forgey in *Genocide Studies and Prevention 5:1* (April 2010). It is also noteworthy that the forcible transfer of indigenous children to European contexts—for instance, as domestic servants—was extensive and systematic in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, predating similar processes in twentieth-century Australia, Canada, and the United States.

For those familiar with the history of US genocide of Native Americans, it is striking to see a parallel process in Argentina, corresponding in terms of time and methods. But what is also noticeable in the Argentine case that is relatively absent from the US context is the prominence of critical condemnations of and speculations about the implications of Argentine treatment of indigenous peoples. Print media outlets as well as political leaders recognized the process for what it was and publicly challenged it. While it is difficult to see how anything could increase our moral repugnance at the commission of genocide, this evidence shows that genocide was carried out by an aware society that operated through conscious choice and with knowledge of the results of those choices—not through the vague “natural” process that Delrio et al. refute. At the same time, this history of resistance to genocide represents an important alternative narrative of Argentine national identity that can provide a basis for reconfiguring that identity today in line with recognition of past harms against indigenous peoples and a commitment to justice, political participation, and support for community reconstitution.

This intervention that places genocide of indigenous people at the center of human-rights discourse with respect to Argentina is crucial at a moment in Argentine history when that history is itself being publicly and critically examined. Whatever the benefits of the current effort to assess ethical and legal responsibility for the mass human-rights abuses of the 1970s and 1980s, if the process of reformulating Argentine national identity in line with genuine respect for human rights—a process that most societies in the western hemisphere, including the United States, have not undergone—ignores genocide of indigenous peoples, the result will simply substitute one falsifying narrative for another. Delrio et al. present analyses both of the current more active denial meeting the growing assertion of genocide as the correct characterization of what indigenous peoples have suffered and of the issue of reparations that is the emerging next step beyond an accurate appraisal of history. Their discussion of the importance of the term “genocide” even in indigenous communities makes an important contribution and opens a new line of thought in ongoing debates about

the proper use and definition of genocide. It is our hope that this important work, as well as other similar studies, will play the role it should in contemporary Argentine national self-reflection and that it will support efforts toward long-term justice and group reconstitution for indigenous peoples in Argentina and beyond. The article's treatment of the role of homogenizing thinking even in the contemporary reparations debate provides important insight into how the conceptual elements of genocide have material consequences even in its long-term aftermath and underline the fact that properly addressing the impact of genocide requires engaging conceptual as well as material harms and forces.

The wealth of historical data and intellectual insight in Delrio et al.'s article includes a very interesting but unstressed detail that will be of great interest to many scholars of genocide. It has now become widely known that the Entente powers used the term "crimes against humanity" in their 1915 statement to the Young Turk perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide, and recent scholarship has found that the term seems to have been used even in the 1890s. Delrio et al. have found a public use of the term to characterize the Pozo del Cuadril massacre of the Ranquel people in Argentina in 1878.

Our second and third articles document systematic and extensive state violence against Argentine citizens by the authoritarian regime of the 1970s and 1980s. Mario Ranalletti's "Denial of the Reality of State Terrorism in Argentina as Recent Past Narrative: A New Case of 'Negationism'?" presents a novel discussion of negation of the historical realities of this mass violence in a backlash movement by apologists for the military regime, whose members are now facing historical as well as legal accountability. These negationists, some of whom belong to a new generation whose view of this period is mediated through historical narrative rather than direct experience, seek to rewrite the history of state violence in Argentina; they have developed a new narrative that presents state violence as a defensive reaction against forces destabilizing Argentina. Militarist nationalism is an assumptive foundation of this new narrative.

Exposing the manipulations of this narrative, which systematically ignores clear evidence of state-initiated oppression and mass violence, is not only important for Argentina but presents a useful model for other cases. This is clear from the approach taken by Ranalletti, who uses the specific French strain of Holocaust negationism and scholarly analysis thereof as a framework to approach the emergent phenomenon in Argentina. While there are differences between the cases, the contextual similarities, including the relationship to socially dominant Catholicism, are substantial. This analysis will at once resonate for those engaged in similar struggles of historical truth against negation that are tied to conflicts over militarization and democratization, such as Turkish negation of the Armenian Genocide and Japanese negation of the Nanjing Massacre and the "comfort women" system, and provide an entry point into the Argentine case. It will also support future comparative work on these cases of negation and the issues of long-term justice and societal rehabilitation that are at stake.

Ranalletti's focus on negation of recent Argentine state violence resonates with Delrio et al.'s excavation of genocide of indigenous peoples and the embedded and normalized denial of that historical reality in Argentina today. Ranalletti's exposure of the very public and explicit attempts to negate historical reality and refashion the Argentine national narrative in line with forces of militarism and violence may help contemporary Argentinians to gain awareness of the subtler forces of denial of indigenous genocides, while Delrio et al.'s focus on the latter may help those who

would otherwise dismiss negation focused on the 1970s and 1980s as a marginal phenomenon to appreciate its potential depth and the danger it poses. These authors have opened up an important line of inquiry, and future research might examine the historical and cultural connections between and the overlapping of these two negationist forces, one publicly contested, the other normalized into invisibility.

As our title suggestions, prevention of genocide and related mass violence is a priority of this journal and of the organizations that sponsor it. As important as it is to develop accurate understandings of historical cases and their ongoing legacies, outstanding justice issues, and so forth, and to present information on and analyses of ongoing cases to support and even spur intervention, prevention is the key to breaking the long and, unfortunately, apparently interminable cycle of genocide in human life. Yet prevention is in many ways the most difficult social and political task, and developing strong scholarship on prevention is equally challenging. Theorists must engage in complex analysis of trends based on past events and the social and political context(s) of cases of concern just to create a basis for their work. This work often requires both speculation about future processes and counterfactual reasoning based on past cases of genocide and past events in the society or societies under direct consideration. It also involves high-stakes judgment calls based on unavoidably insufficient data.

In “The Opposition Front against Compulsory Military Service: The Conscription Debate and Human-Rights Activism in Post-Dictatorship Argentina,” Santiago Garaño takes up the challenge of preventing mass violence in a penetrating and insightful manner that provides a framework for future scholarship. In this article Garaño does three important things. First, he recognizes that conscripting young men coming of age in Argentina into the military up to 1995 really meant applying forces of social construction to mold these young men into militarist and nationalist servants of military-state structures rooted in a long history of mass human-rights violations and violence against Argentine citizens. Integrating young men into the Argentine military meant reproducing a repressive state apparatus and perpetuating human-rights violations. (Lurking behind this treatment is the role of geopolitical powers, especially the United States, in supporting this militarism and nationalism and in forcing onto the western hemisphere itself an international structure in which military conflict and power are the dominant modes of exercise of sovereignty and social cohesion.) Second, he identifies resistance to compulsory military service in Argentina as an important act of prevention of mass violence that sought to break the chain of socialization of young men into the militarist and nationalist Argentine state narrative. Garaño respectfully presents the self-aware resistance of parents who refused military service for their sons as social resistance based in the family—which is quite different from dominant models in North America and Europe, where formal political and community organizations dominate. Third, he focuses attention on a key but often ignored aspect of the militarization of young men: not just an appeal to but the manipulation and molding of their masculinity to integrate it into the nationalist project. In recent decades, ground-breaking feminist and other scholarship has shown how central sexual violence is to war and to one-sided mass violence, particularly genocide, and how closely this violence is tied to the masculinities promoted and imposed by military indoctrination and life. Military cohesion and motivation are in part a function of shared misogyny and acts of violence against women and girls. Following feminist authors who have advocated a change in the socialization of men and boys, especially in a military context, Garaño emphasizes the importance of this change for Argentina.

Garaño's article complements the work of Ranalletti in a meaningful way. It is precisely the negationist recasting of the history of militarist-nationalist human-rights abuse by the Argentine state as a positive social force in defense of human rights that obscures the real intent and meaning of integrating youth into the military: "good citizens" are manipulated into supporting this militarist nationalism for good, even ethical, reasons. The exposure accomplished by these two articles in tandem provides the accurate information that those acting on ethically decent motives need to translate their good intentions into a positive, human-rights-promoting result.

Argentine state violence in the 1970s and 1980s forms the backdrop for both Ranalletti's and Garaño's articles. Some view this violence as genocidal, while others link it to genocide as a closely related form; for them, there is no question that these two articles fall squarely within the purview of *Genocide Studies and Prevention*. But even those who do not recognize this violence as genocidal or as on a continuum with genocide will, we hope, appreciate why we believe these articles have such an important role to play in scholarship on genocide. The first links practices of negation in Argentina to Holocaust negationism—and, by extension, to denials of many other cases of genocide and related mass violence. The second presents an important case of possible genocide-prevention efforts and a model for other projects of genocide prevention. The fact that recent negationism aimed at increased nationalist militarization of Argentina did not prevent the reopening in 2005 of trials of alleged perpetrators of state terror and has not reinvigorated the tradition of state violence today may in part be due to resistance to compulsory military service through the broad anti-militarization movement Garaño describes, among many processes of resistance.

Our first article provides important historical context for this third article as well. While Garaño treats the contemporary struggle over militarism and nationalism in Argentina, which has its origins in part in the nineteenth-century nationalizing project of genocide that is the foundation of the contemporary Argentine state, Delrio et al.'s important work helps us to comprehend how deep the roots of today's militarist nationalism penetrate into the subsoil of Argentine history and identity. Argentine state-sponsored mass violence in recent decades can be seen as the long-term effect of 19th Century genocide.

As is perhaps clear from this introduction, a limitation of this special issue is the focus on Argentina. While not intentional but a function of submissions, it is beneficial in presenting a very complex overall treatment of mass violence in that country. At the same time, we hope that future general issues of *GSP* will work from this important first step and will include work on various states and societies in Latin America—from Guatemala and El Salvador, through Colombia and Brazil, to Uruguay and Chile—from scholars in Latin America.

Daniel Feierstein, Professor of Sociology and Genocide Studies, Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero and Universidad de Buenos Aires

Henry Theriault, Professor of Philosophy, Worcester State College, Massachusetts

Discussing Indigenous Genocide in Argentina: Past, Present, and Consequences of Argentinean State Policies toward Native Peoples

Walter Delrio

CONICET and Universidad de Río Negro

Diana Lenton

CONICET and Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires

Marcelo Musante

Universidad John Kennedy and Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires

Mariano Nagy

Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires

Alexis Papazian

CONICET and Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires

Pilar Pérez

CONICET and Universidad de Río Negro

For a long time the historiographical and anthropological narrative in Argentina contributed to a double assumption that is nowadays strongly grounded in citizens' common sense. On the one hand, the extinction of Indigenous peoples is vaguely dated to a period from the Spanish conquest to the military campaigns known as the "conquest of the desert"; on the other hand, such extinction is simultaneously interpreted as a "natural" process in universal history. Argentine state policies were thus naturalized. It is frequently assumed that this set of natural processes might have left only individual "descendants," in place of political entities. Therefore, modern Argentine society would be the outcome of a European "melting pot" in which the Indigenous component is absent. We postulate that physical elimination, concentration practices, deportation, enslavement, identity cleansing of children, and cultural destruction constitute mechanisms of homogenization that add up to conceptualizing policies toward Indigenous peoples in Argentina as genocide. Ethnic politics following the military campaigns were based on the assumption of the near-"extinction" of those peoples. Federal and provincial governments constructed their policies on the basis of considering Indigenous peoples as "survivors," "the final remains of an ending culture," "the few left," and so on, omitting to name the causes of that supposed extinction. Our focus in this article is on current cultural policies that announce intercultural, plurality, and diversity goals while at the same time aiming to limit the margins of Indian political autonomy. We propose that this genocidal project is linked inextricably to the constitution and organization of the Argentine national state.

Key words: genocide, Argentina, Indigenous peoples, state policies, conquest of the desert

For a long time the historiographical and anthropological narrative in Argentina contributed to state a double assumption that is nowadays strongly grounded in citizens' common sense. On the one hand, the extinction of Indigenous peoples over a period of time is vaguely dated from the Spanish conquest (mid-sixteenth century) to the military campaigns known as "Conquest of the Desert" (1878–1885). On the other hand, such extinction is simultaneously interpreted as a "natural" process in universal history, considering civilization's forward movement over "less civilized" societies. Argentine state policies were thus naturalized. It is frequently assumed that this set of natural processes might have left only single "descendants," in place of political entities. Therefore, modern Argentine society is said to be the outcome of a European "melting pot," in which the Indigenous component is absent.

The political and cultural homogeneity of the country constituted a political goal for the governing class in the nineteenth century. Although Indigenous peoples were not the only focus, the policies implemented with respect to them are paradigmatic and exhibit this trend categorically. In Part 1 below we analyze the military campaigns of 1878–1885, which ended with Indigenous political autonomy, postulating that physical elimination, concentration practices, deportation, enslavement, identity cleansing of children, and cultural destruction constitute mechanisms that add up to conceptualizing this political process as genocide.

The ethnic politics produced by the military occupation were based on the assumption—widely spread in citizens' "common sense" through Argentina's educational policies—of the near-"extinction" of Indigenous peoples. As will be developed in Part 2 below, both federal and provincial governments constructed their policies from a conceptualization of Indigenous peoples as "a few survivors," "the final remains of an ending culture," and so on. On the one hand, this omitted naming the causes of this supposed extinction. On the other hand, these policies of invisibilization enabled various forms of repression such as land expropriations, potential forced labor, and, at the same time, massacres like those at Napalpí (1924) and La Bomba (1947).

An analysis of the constitution of a now public arena of debate on Indigenous genocide is addressed in Part 3. In this debate, the Indigenous peoples' agency challenges the limits of recognition and re-emergence by making visible the genocidal social practices of the past and their symbolic realization through time. Furthermore, these groups denounce not only the original intent of extermination but also the mechanisms of enslavement and expropriation that followed military subjection. The focus is on current cultural policies that announce intercultural, pluralist, and diversity-related goals while at the same time aiming to limit the margins of Indigenous political autonomy.

The genocidal project is inextricably linked to the constitution and organization of the Argentinean national state and to its expansion of land jurisdiction over Indigenous territory by the late nineteenth century. In fact, the military campaigns of occupation on the southern frontier (Pampa and Patagonia, 1878–1885) and on the northern one (Chaco, 1884–1917)¹ were executed with certain continuity of criteria, agencies, and actors. In addition, the realization of these campaigns boosted the political careers of persons and groups and eventually shaped the state's organization. In this way, later Argentineans inherited a state and a society built upon an elimination objective that was aimed, in particular, against the cultural "Other," and as a result the survivors of this genocidal project could be incorporated as a labor force.

1. Argentina's Indigenous Policies as Genocide

The collective research project on which the authors of this article have been working² aims to rebuild the historical process of subjugation and incorporation of Indigenous peoples into the Argentine state. Entangled in the same public debate that we discuss in Part 3, we were pushed to acknowledge the existence of an original intent of elimination that has enabled further normalization policies aimed at the Indigenous peoples of Argentina. This led us to frame the description of the process within a conceptual field that enables us to define it as a genocidal project. Therefore, we decided to read the process through the definition of genocide proclaimed in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) of 1948.³

According to the UNCG, "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.⁴

The sections that follow analyze various facts—and their genocide intent—in the process of the "Conquest of the Desert" as a recurrent pattern in Argentine state policies toward Indigenous peoples between 1878 and 1885.

(a) Killing Members of the Group

"Not a single Indian crosses the Pampas where many tribes used to live."⁵ With these words General Julio A. Roca, by then president of Argentina, highlighted genocide as one of his administration's achievements. As on other occasions, the republic's policies toward Indigenous peoples showed a violent and exterminatory side, related to the aim of emptying strategic territories and replacing the Native population with a European one. Although the national heroes of the War of Independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century had referred to Indigenous peoples as "brothers" or "fellow citizens," these feelings of unity and empathy began to turn, by the late nineteenth century, into expressions of condemnation for their genealogical imperfection and effective policies of land expropriation. Some of the most important theorists of the republic expressed their desire to eliminate the Native population. The "Conquest of the Desert" (Pampa and Patagonia, 1878–1885) and "Campaigns to the Green Desert" (Chaco, 1884–1917) extended through time as a permanent state of war of varying intensity. During these campaigns, the killing of Indigenous people on the "battlefield" or their extermination was a constant possibility as a consequence of the "state of exception"⁶ that enabled the armed forces to execute prisoners and families in the name of the "rights of civilization."⁷ We will go over some cases below.

An example is the slaughter known as "Pozo del Cuadril." In November 1878, in a frontier expansion encouraged by the cattle breeders of the Pampa area, a group belonging to the Ranquel people approached the city of Villa Mercedes, with which they had early social and economic bonds. This group approached to collect their "rations," the outcome of a peace treaty signed with the federal government three months earlier. These "rations" were the compensation negotiated with the state

for the reduction in sheep-herding, hunting, and agricultural land for the tribes. Nonetheless, Colonel Rudecindo Roca, military commander of Rio Cuarto (near Villa Mercedes), betrayed and attacked them, taking many of them prisoner. At least sixty male prisoners were shot dead in a barnyard; the women and children were sent to Tucumán as forced laborers. This incident was reported and debated in the press, especially in *El Pueblo Libre* (Córdoba) and *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), whose editors qualified it as a “crime against humanity.”⁸ *La Nación* emphasized that this was not an isolated event and that impunity for such crimes could become a normal and extended practice during the coming military campaigns. *La Nación* then predicted that victims would not be only the Indigenous warriors but also elders, women, and children.

La Nación's warnings anticipated facts that have been retold within Indigenous narratives across communities in Pampa and Patagonia since the campaigns began. The late Catalina Antilef, a Futahuao resident of Chubut province, remembered her grandmother's life experiences:

Oh, how should I tell you . . . My granny used to say that they escaped from the war, poor thing, she used to cry, she used to mourn when she remembered . . . they were taken to a place where they killed them all, they were from different places, [and] those who escaped came here. May God keep us from living that again.⁹

Such killings, described through collective memory, have frequently appeared in official records as the outcome of ordinary combat. An example is the “battle of Apeleg,” which in fact consisted of a sudden and outrageous attack against an Indigenous camp at sunrise. On February 1883, Commander Nicolás Palacios attacked Chief Inacayal's camp; only two soldiers were killed on the battlefield,¹⁰ while more than 100 Indigenous people, among them women and children, were murdered. The survivors were first marched more than 1,200 km and concentrated in Valcheta, then later deported to Buenos Aires.

(b) Causing Serious Bodily or Mental Harm to Members of the Group

When the military campaigns in Pampa and Patagonia ended (by 1885), all the Indigenous survivors were concentrated under military control. Regardless of whether they had surrendered spontaneously or continued fighting against the army, after their defeat they were enclosed and deprived of access to their former resources.

For adult men, the army was their first destination and probably their last. They were known as “Indigenous auxiliary troops” or “squadrons of Indian friends.” Although these divisions had existed since the colonial period, they grew notoriously during the 1880s, when desertion by *criollo*¹¹ soldiers increased.

In various communities of Pampa and Patagonia, narratives of the “grandparents' times” talk about material and non-material losses (possessions, persons, sacred places, peace, etc.) as well as about displacements toward specific places such as Retiro, Valcheta, and Choele Choel. Some of these places are also mentioned by other sources, such as the memoirs of Salesian priests, the diaries of the region's new inhabitants, and military reports. People were concentrated, for example, at Castro Fort¹² by February 1884, at Chichinales¹³ beginning in 1885, and at Valcheta¹⁴—all in what is now the province of Río Negro.¹⁵ There were also, according to Father Milanesio, more than 20,000 Indians concentrated near the Andes, in the current province of Neuquén.¹⁶

The way the prisoners were treated, and especially the dismembering of families, was a subject of scandal in those days. At the National Congress in 1884, Senator Aristóbulo del Valle stated,

We have taken families from the savages, we have brought them to this center of civilization, where every right seems to be guaranteed, and yet we have not respected for these families any of the rights that belong, not only to civilized men, but to humanity: we have enslaved the men, prostituted the women, we have torn the children away from their mothers, we have sent old men to work as slaves anywhere. In a word, we have turned our backs and broken all the laws that govern the moral actions of men.

Del Valle denounced the fact that every new campaign turned women and children into the spoils of war, and he accused the public opinion of complicity.¹⁷

At the same time, the press periodically reminded the public of the miserable living conditions of the subjugated. A Buenos Aires newspaper described their disgraceful journey:

Here come the Indian prisoners with their families, most of whom were marched here or carried on carts. The desperation, the crying does not stop, children are taken away from their mothers because they are given away as presents in their presence, despite the cries, the screams and the begging that, with their arms aiming at the sky, these Indian women shout. In that human scenery, the Indian men cover their faces, some look down hopelessly, the mother holds her child against her breast, the Indian father steps in front, in despair to protect his family from the progress of civilization.¹⁸

One concentration camp frequently mentioned by the survivors' descendents is Martín García Island, which at least since 1872 was used for the gathering and distribution of Indigenous prisoners. This island, located in the middle of the River Plate, was used as a prison (not only for Indigenous people) until the mid-twentieth century. According to information from official files, it was in 1879 that the major influx of Indigenous prisoners arrived.¹⁹

The elevated death rate, as well as a variety of illnesses suffered by the Natives who were deported to the island, account for physical and mental harm as well as degrading living conditions. It is important to underline that these prisoners were transferred to the island not as criminals—as many other prisoners were—but as “Indigenous people.” It was their social condition, and not any individual reason, that led to their imprisonment.

The deportees were, in many cases, families. Once on the island, they were separated and catalogued according to their sex, age, working capacity, and military competence.²⁰

Parish records are an invaluable source in studying Martín García Island because they include the personal identities of those who were concentrated there or sent to their final destination. For example, from the baptismal records we can deduce that more than 800 Indigenous persons were baptized on the island between January and November 1879. Most of them came from Pampa and Patagonia, and others from Chaco.²¹ Most of the baptisms were performed *in articulo mortis* (at the point of death). The death records show that at least 234 Indigenous prisoners died of smallpox in less than five months. In October 1878, the island's doctor warned the authorities about the condition of 148 newcomers:

undoubtedly they come already infected ... heavy work would only weaken them ... they are weak because they are underfed, the sadness that they carry, the moral despondency, they feel the loss of the desert ... and besides the illnesses spreading, all of this suggests that they will be inoperative at work.²²

The concentration, deportation, and redistribution policies were partly a response to the increasing requests for laborers by provincial elites. In the province of Tucumán, the excessive exploitation of the enslaved workforce, composed of Indians captured in the Pampas and Chaco, merited the intervention of a government bureaucrat in charge of the defense “of the poor and minors.”²³ The provincial historical archives hold the record of the inspection of only one sugar refinery, El Colmenar.²⁴ This inspection documented that Engineer Colombres suggested that he did not know the statutory contract and therefore he did not pay the workers or give them food or dress them properly; that through the translators the inspector learned that most of the Indigenous workers had run away,²⁵ especially the men; that smallpox had killed the rest; that some workers were ill during the inspection; and that women had been beaten up, and at least one of them had died as a result. The inspector observes that the Indian women were dressed “in the outfit they wore in their huts.” Not only had the businessman failed to fulfill his duty, the inspector’s report also suggests that the forced redistribution of Indians was failing to cover its vaunted “civilizational” aim²⁶ (see section (c) below).

This episode suggests at least three things. First, there existed a certain, though erratic, governmental will to regulate and inspect the Indian prisoners’ working conditions. Second, the lack of official communication of the regulations implied the naturalization of slave treatment. Third, although the inspectors announced further inspections, these were not carried out; nor was there any official response to these reports.²⁷

(c) Deliberately Inflicting on the Group Conditions of Life Calculated to Bring About Its Physical Destruction in Whole or in Part

The deportations created conditions of exile and overcrowding in hostile and unknown territory, under newly imposed practices and unsanitary conditions that put deportees at high risk of death from infectious disease. Thus, in addition to practices that severely harmed the physical and mental integrity of the Natives, relocation and concentration also condemned them to probable physical destruction.

Simultaneously, the Indigenous concentration camps of the late nineteenth century aimed to discipline and “prepare” those who were supposed to become part of “civilization,” as well as to send an effective message of totalitarian discipline to society as a whole.²⁸ The conception of the Indigenous population as worthy of condemnation to forced labor followed from their being driven into a state of exception derived from the genocidal plan. This process drew a line between the Indigenous population and the immigrant population, who did not share the same status. The exceptionality of the Natives may even be understood as a disciplinary practice for the immigrants. Nonetheless, our hypothesis is that the inhuman exploitation conditions, the trauma of war and expropriation, defeat, exile, the division of families, and the loss of social and cultural referents caused a much larger number of deaths than the war itself.

On 29 October 1885, the newspaper *La Razón* asked, “How many of the Indians distributed are left in the sugar refineries? Almost none ... Long and sad stories

were told in reference to the Indians that stood among us, until the disappearance of all of them has finished their mourning.”²⁹

Finally, the population that remained in Pampa and Patagonia after the military campaigns of 1878–1885 suffered continual instability with respect to access to the land. The communities that persisted after the campaigns were spatially scattered and surrounded by growing privatized spaces (see Part 2 below). The ban on access to land, combined, up to the present day, with the Indigenous populations’ condition as non-qualified rural laborers, ensured the unlimited enrichment of ranchers and landowners.

(d) Imposing Measures Intended to Prevent Births within the Group

Policies aimed at limiting reproduction within Indigenous groups are evident through several practices. Although some groups within the Catholic Church actively resisted the division of families, the military agency encouraged the separation of men, women, and children as a moral and tactical means of dissuasion and repression. Thus, the army’s first action following the imprisonment of Indigenous groups was to classify and separate the captured persons. Sometimes, some of those persons met again at their destinations, but most never heard of one another again.

Even accepting that gender-based separation was a disciplinary measure, it is important to contextualize the governing generation within the trend of political thought at the end of the century toward social Darwinism and eugenics. There are numerous testimonies on this matter. In previous decades, Charles Darwin had mentioned, in his memoir of his trip through Pampa and Patagonia, that the soldiers of Governor Rosas would rather kill young Indian women because “they have many children.”³⁰ National congressman Manuel Cabral provoked a scandal in 1900 when he stated that “we should take people to mix the Indigenous people and bring to an end the primitive race . . . what we want is to suppress savage peoples from one generation to the next.”³¹

Cabral’s formula leads us to a related subject: forced or induced marriage and its outcome of mixed races.³² Thanks to widespread imagery of white women captured by the Indians, the kidnapping of Indigenous women as trophies of war was concealed or justified as a necessity of war. Alfredo Ebelot, a famous engineer, expressed his disappointment in the lack of military professionalism demonstrated by the fact that Indigenous women and children “accompanied” “White” soldiers. Their presence distanced the National Army from the ideal of a “civilizatory” (European) army.³³

Other witnesses, such as Commander Prado, disguised the rape of women as a legitimate choice:

After [the battle] Colonel Villegas told us: “This is the way I like it. You have behaved as soldiers of the 3rd [Company]. As a reward, you will have 48 hours of rest, and each one of you will receive a horse from the ones taken from the Indians. And regarding the Indian women, see which one wants to live with you.” None of them refused.³⁴

Suffering division from family and community was a common destiny for those young men who were compelled to join the army or the navy during their reproductive years. To mention one example, in June 1879 General Roca, the minister of war, gave the order to “separate 150 Indians from the [Martín García] Island to join the navy . . . you should choose them young and healthy and therefore they should be checked on by a doctor.”³⁵

(e) Forcibly Transferring Children of the Group to Another Group

“She used to tell me everything, she cried, then she started again, my grandmother . . . she was a girl when they took her. The first to come were those who took the children away.” (Catalina Antilef, Futahuao, Chubut)³⁶

The forced transfer of Indigenous children to different sectors of Argentinean society has been a constant, from the military campaigns, as a massive practice with respect to prisoners, until recently, in a far more dispersed but regular fashion.

By the late nineteenth century, there was a great demand for young women and children to work in domestic service for high-society families in Buenos Aires and other cities. For example, the army’s General Inspection and Command received and delivered to Martín García Island numerous requests, such as “an Indigenous family with one woman and two children, a boy and a girl, to be destined to Mister Correctional Judge, Dr. Borres.”³⁷ Similarly, the island’s chief, Donato Alvarez, placed three orders from President Avellaneda: “send three women between ten and twelve and a boy about the same age”; “from the Indians in deposit, eight girls and a boy, the strongest, should be sent. All these creatures . . . healthy and strong,” as well as a female Indian “about twenty years old with a young male child.”³⁸

Claudia Salomín Tarquini points out that in 1891, a priest destined for La Pampa noticed the fear that the Natives felt when they were asked to summon their families. Some years before, such gatherings had been the opportunity to take children away from their parents. When the Franciscan priests reached General Acha in La Pampa, they asked Linconao Cabral to assemble his people to baptize them:

He tried to do it, but he faced some difficulties; those who had to baptize their children feared that the godparents would take them away as it had happened in Sarmiento, years before, taken the children away, which had been a real barbarity. [A few days after] . . . we saw Major Linconao at the head of the Indians, at least 150 of them. It was deeply moving to see so many Indians, the same that years before had been everybody’s terror, presenting themselves humble and peacefully, after they were sure that they would not have their beloved children taken away . . .³⁹

The kidnapping of children was a regular military practice, aimed at weakening the enemy’s strategies. In 1878, *La Nación* described a tragic event when Colonel Olascoaga, “after taking some [Indian] children, let the Indians kill 30 national guards . . . abandoning them to the Indians’ outrage and revenge for finding themselves without their women and children.”⁴⁰ This practice also served to fulfill the aristocratic pretensions of a large sector of civil society who put pressure on the military to get servants—a practice that, among certain social sectors, persists today.

Above all, however, it must be emphasized that the appropriation of children was justified as being for their own good, to take them away from savagery and favor their incorporation into the civilized world. Yet incorporation into “civilization” would not be enough to erase the stigma of having been born as Indigenous people.

In this sense, being an Indian child constituted an indelible mark that not only could not be overthrown, whatever one’s efforts, but also determined, in many cases, a person’s final, inhuman destiny. Patricia Arenas and Jorge Pinedo reconstruct the story of a young female member of the Ache people, Damiana.⁴¹ In 1896, when she was two, her parents’ murderers took her and baptized her; at the age of four, she was handed over to work as a servant while she was studied by Dr. Lehmann-

Nitsche, head of the Museum of La Plata. Because of her rebellious attitude, she was pathologized, criminalized, and sent to a madhouse. After she died of tuberculosis at the age of fourteen, her body was dissected, skinned, and divided in flasks and boxes, which were distributed between the museums of La Plata and Berlin.⁴²

When groups and families were dismembered, individuals were assigned a “Christian” name, either by the Church or by the administrations of concentration camps. For example, the baptism records of Tucumán’s parishes are full of Pampa children who were baptized between 1878 and 1879; while the names of the children are not mentioned, nor their parents’, nor their places of origin, the names of their new “godparents” are. Despite a meticulous search, none of these records allowed the researchers to reconstruct a single lost identity.⁴³

Nowadays, a common topic in the Argentine press and in public opinion is the famine, extreme misery, and premature death in Indigenous communities, especially those in the north of the country. Argentine citizens agree that life for these people is extremely and unfairly tough. In general, it is concluded that those Indigenous groups that have not already disappeared will do so soon. However, it is less usual for the social drama be related to territorial expropriation and the social and cultural disintegration imposed on these peoples by the nation-state.

There is a double process of invisibilization at work, acting on both the history of those who have been the victims of genocide and the history of the nation-state as perpetrator.

2. State Policies: Invisibility and Massacres over the Twentieth Century

Genocide is completed and complemented at the same time by the hegemonic denial of diversity. Argentine indigenous policies—the hostile as well as the disciplinary—have been grounded on the idea of Aboriginal extinction.

Nowadays, although there have been important steps forward in the field of human rights, influenced by the recent judgment of the perpetrators of the last military dictatorship, the state still denies the existence of genocide and the existence of crimes against humanity with respect to Indigenous peoples. In particular, in the legal process initiated as a result of the Napalpí massacre of 1924, the state refuses to acknowledge the Qom people as a specific ethnic group, thus precluding the possibility of recognizing genocide—rolling back advances made on this terrain by civil organizations that support human rights. Moreover, the state’s answer to the Qom’s attorneys suggests that the possibility of treating the massacre as a crime against humanity has also been excluded. At the same time, the government promotes education programs to encourage inter-cultural and bilingual education and tolerance.⁴⁴

This paradox is the result of the symbolic violence that began parallel to the constitution of the national state and its campaigns of military occupation in the late nineteenth century. Most of the initiatives in “favor” of “our Indigenous cultures” are built on the idea of physical extinction, turning these cultures into an addition of folklorized elements. Thus, when Indigenous peoples manifest a will to conduct their own destiny, repression is the norm.

In Part 1 we summarized some cases to sustain our thesis that the policies toward Indigenous peoples supported by the Argentine state during its process of consolidation constitute genocide. In addition, the Argentine elites legitimated these policies in such a way that the subjugation of the Natives and the consolidation of territorial sovereignty were not open to discussion. In this fashion, the descriptions,

topics, and ideas of Natives created in that context have persisted in the Argentine imaginary, even among those who criticize the historical process of subjugation. In this section, therefore, we will analyze the mechanism that enabled a vast majority of the population to incorporate these concepts and descriptions as part of an irrevocable “common sense.”

Through the concept of symbolic realization, the analysis can also be extended to the discourse sphere, that is, to ways of talking about this process.⁴⁵ This enables us to (1) shed light on the historic and actual consequences of a genocidal policy, (2) deconstruct the historical process as part of a “natural” evolution and progress of the Argentine national state, and (3) document how the success of the symbolic realization in the Argentinean case allows the continuity of concrete and material policies to the detriment of Indigenous populations (e.g., eviction of communities, expropriation of ancestral lands, legal resolutions that deny the (pre-)existence of the Indigenous communities) by state and private actors.

One of the key elements of the symbolic realization was, and still is, the education system—consolidated in 1884 by Law 1420.⁴⁶ Despite changes in plans and methodologies over more than 120 years, the system still constructs an image of Argentina as a white and European nation.

In 2006, when the *Nucleos de Aprendizaje Prioritario*, or NAP (the basic learning elements and programs that every national primary and secondary school must provide) were renewed, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology launched as a main priority the need to encourage awareness of cultural diversity “with an inter-cultural point of view that privileges words and space for Indigenous knowledge, values, and cultural production.”⁴⁷ However, a quick analysis of the NAP shows that the Indigenous peoples are confined to the past. In “Societies Through Time,” the chapter that approaches the historical process of the Spanish conquest, the possibility of studying Indigenous peoples across time is mentioned only in a footnote. When NAP documents refer to the nineteenth century, they deal with national organization and the economic system but make no reference to Indigenous peoples. In this way, the NAP reproduces the idea that Indigenous peoples belong to the past or are long extinct. In other words, the NAP does not seem to have modified the idea that the Indigenous peoples are the “ancient Argentineans,” displaced first by a colonial society and then by the massive arrival of European immigrants by the late nineteenth century, and have nothing to do with present times.

The education system, then, has provided a narrative of the Indigenous peoples as if they belonged to a chronological pre-history and so did their relation with the state. The narrative shows not a genocidal process but a “natural” development of history in which the immigrants “naturally” replace this “prehistoric” population. In this sense, there is a second mechanism of symbolic realization: the myth of an immigrant/white nation. The main topic in this narrative Argentinean history is the immigrant experience and the social and economic changes, and even crises, that relate to the immigrant:

Between the final years of the [eighteen-]seventies and the beginning of the eighties, the occupation of the “desert” became a fact, Buenos Aires was federalized, European immigration was encouraged ... the limited population of our country by the late nineteenth century was a limit to economic growth, as it could not provide a sufficient workforce. The arrival of immigrants sorted out this problem.⁴⁸

There is not a single mention of the Indigenous inhabitants, a social subject that has disappeared from the textbooks forever. The Indigenous population is either expelled

or exterminated. The capitalist development of Argentina becomes the great narrative, the “official history,” and the destiny of the Natives is set aside. Neither their role as forced laborers nor as part of the army is exposed. This is where the functional topics of extermination and assimilation are grounded.

On the one hand, the extermination of almost every Native is reproduced even in the discourse of those sectors that consider the “Conquest of the Desert” as genocide; this is also part of the discourse of those who believe that nowadays there are no Indigenous peoples in Argentina. On the other hand, the idea of assimilation—that is, understanding the Natives as peasants, soldiers, national citizens—isolates the process by which the Natives are drawn to this situation.

Part of the mechanism of symbolic realization is the categorization of some Indigenous peoples—precisely those who retain the best levels of physical and cultural vitality and reproduction rates—as essentially “foreigners.” An example is the Mapuche people, who have historically dwelled on both sides of the Andes, today divided between Chile and Argentina. The perception of the Mapuche people as foreigners was a product of the political discourse of the nineteenth century and was used to legitimate the military campaigns.⁴⁹ The same assertion of foreignness is used today to deny land rights to Indigenous people in Patagonia: since the “true Indians” of Patagonia are “known” to be extinct, Indigenous claimants are assumed to be either liars or foreigners, which means they have no right to these lands.

While the official education system has succeeded in cementing the idea of Indigenous peoples’ being relegated to the past, to extinction, or to a folklorized essence, the images accompanying this process have reaffirmed these arguments. For example, after the military campaigns of the nineteenth century, a painting was commissioned from Juan Manuel Blanes, an Uruguayan artist, to celebrate the heroic event. This painting eventually became the image that springs to any Argentine citizen’s mind in connection with the “Conquest of the Desert.” In every successive reproduction of the painting, even that on the 100-peso bill, the image has been cropped further, leaving the army in the center and deliberately excluding the Indigenous people.

These mechanisms of invisibilization, together with a discourse of national homogeneity, had different effects on survivors of the genocide. For those who managed to establish a collective strategy—for instance, regrouping around a chief who had some capacity to deal with the state to request lands—a condition of maintaining that collective was the adoption of the dominant culture and language.⁵⁰ For those who did not get any land from the state, the process of invisibilization was assumed as a strategy—especially from one generation to the next—to avoid discrimination. This process, both imposed and assumed, became worst when land began to be expropriated and fenced. The advance of private property across the twentieth century caused a migratory flux from the fields toward the cities. Along this trajectory the Indigenous population swelled the marginal populations of urban areas, experiencing a new fragmentation and deepening the concealment of their identity.

We must wonder, then, whether every state practice toward the Indigenous population may be considered genocidal, or whether many practices now operating on the subaltern are grounded in genocidal practices, in the context of modernity. In the case of Indigenous peoples, there exists a series of material mechanisms that cannot be considered specifically genocidal but are nonetheless a product of the relations in place from the genocide onward. That is, some of the practices performed by the state, the ways in which it has institutionalized its relations with the Natives,

and, at the same time, the manner in which the latter struggle with, deal with, or make demands against the state's hegemonic practices, are all a product of genocide. The genocide outlines the social spaces that may be occupied by Argentinean society as a whole.⁵¹

Therefore, we cannot conceive of the Argentine state without the Indigenous genocide, and vice versa. And we can analyze neither the Argentine state's policy toward Indigenous communities nor current Indigenous peoples' agency without bearing these origins in mind. In this sense, throughout the twentieth century, even though a policy of "Indigenous assimilation" as part of the citizenry was announced, state policies continued to perceive Indigenous peoples as inferior, as an internal Other—once again anchored to the assumptions of extinction and assimilation. The state tried to discipline a population that, being already marked with exile and (material and symbolic) violence, was ever turning into a potential threat. In fact, a double threat: as a real threat, should they react against the successive attacks (fueled by the imaginary of the savage), and also as a threat to the evidence of an alleged homogeneous nation.

In this sense, it is important to stress two forms of violence in the twentieth century: massacres and land expropriations.

In 1924, during the presidency of Marcelo T. de Alvear (a leader of the UCR party), an Indigenous protest was suppressed by the police of the Chaco National Territory, resulting in the murder of more than 500 Toba and Mocovi people. The killing took place on the lands of Napalpí, a reserve for Indigenous families that was considered a model. This reserve had been founded by the federal state thirteen years before, with the aim of incorporating the Natives into the capitalist production system as workers.⁵²

The overcrowded, unhealthy, and exploitive conditions—working "from sunrise to sunset," as a survivor's daughter expresses it⁵³—as well as the prohibition imposed by the provincial governor, Fernando Centeno, forbidding the Indigenous people to travel to the neighboring provinces of Salta and Jujuy in search of better jobs, the 15 percent discount on crops harvested by Natives, and the constant police persecution, generated a protest movement among the communities of the reserve. In response, the local⁵⁴ and national press referred to the possibility of *malones*—raids—and to the existence of Indigenous murderers and "fanatical religious leaders." At the same time, the landowners and local businessmen put pressure on Governor Centeno to bring the conflict to an end.

On 19 July, at 9:00 a.m., 130 policemen and an airplane from the Chaco Airclub fired from land and air on the Indigenous people who gathered in Napalpí's central square; the survivors were hunted down during the days that followed. The leaders' corpses were displayed in a public square in the nearby town of Quitilipi; the rest of the dead, estimated at over 500, were burned, then buried in common graves.

In October 1947, during the government of Juan D. Perón, another event took place that has been silenced through generations and only recently returned to daylight, since a federal judge is now investigating it under the legal rubric of genocide. At that time, massive layoffs in the sugar refineries of the Argentinean northwest resulted in famine among the communities of the Chaco region. Since their lands had been expropriated, the *chaquense* communities sold their labor to the sugarcane harvest. In Las Lomitas, in the west of the province of Formosa, thousands of Indigenous people gathered around a charismatic priest/healer and a

traditional chief. Although the meeting was peaceful—the Pilagá people only prayed and foraged for food—the Argentinean *criollos*' paranoia dictated that the dispersion and the silencing of the Pilagá became a state affair. The federal government sent the gendarmerie, who shot and bombarded the demonstrators, chasing the survivors through the jungle for more a month and causing the death of a significant proportion of the Pilagá people—estimates of the numbers range from 800 to 2,000 dead.⁵⁵

After the brutal repression suffered by the Pilagá in Las Lomitas, the gendarmerie imprisoned some of the survivors who were trying to escape to Paraguay and transferred them to a state colony in Formosa called Francisco Muñiz. There they were forced to cut wood for the state-owned sawmill and to sow rice, receiving no rewards from the harvest. Their living conditions were miserable, and, in addition, the children were separated from their families and sent to a religious institution.⁵⁶ After several years the state sent a doctor to inspect the Muñiz colony; he certified that the colony's worst problem was famine.⁵⁷

These are just two cases of physical violence by military/police personnel against Indigenous peoples. Today, the narratives of similar cases is repeated across inter-ethnic frontiers. In every case, however, discovering the facts is arduous, as pain and fear nurture the silence, even now, of the survivors of genocide, their descendants, and the witnesses.

The three types of expropriation that are mentioned below acknowledge the continuity and diversity of expulsion mechanisms accomplished by individuals—merchants and businessmen—and large land companies. These agents took advantage of the legal vulnerability in which most Indigenous families were living and extended their fences over their fields. In numerous cases, state bureaucrats responsible for protecting Indigenous families have allied with individuals to evict those families from their lands, as in the present case of the Mariano Epulef community in Río Negro.⁵⁸

Such actions have worsened during recent years. In the province of Chaco, expropriation by private enterprises has modified property maps; according to the provincial statistics, 3,500,000 hectares of public land in 1994 became 650,000 hectares by December 2007. It is important to underline the fact that the Indigenous communities have no property deeds and, in most cases, live on the few public hectares that are left.

A second mechanism of expropriation are evictions promoted by the state under the banner of "inconvenience," as for example in the so-called Boquete Nahuelpan, in the province of Chubut, in 1937. In this case, a community to whom the state had granted lands in 1908 was evicted in favor of more influential members of society, who allegedly had better farming skills. The Indigenous people were, in this case, labeled "Chilean Indians" and were accused of continuing to lead a life of "savagery."⁵⁹

But such evictions are also produced as an outcome of the duality of the state. Such was the case of the Toba (Qom) colony of La Primavera in Formosa. During the 1980s, the province granted 5,000 hectares to the Qom, but the federal government continued to distribute public land to private owners—including lands within the colony. Many Indigenous members of the colony were evicted from their lands.

The third mechanism is related to the quality and quantity of the lands that are eventually conceded to Indigenous communities. Their low productivity imposes limits on the people's means of production as well as on their own reproduction and continuity in the land.

The lands given to Indigenous peoples have geographical and political limits defined by the state that do not respect the productive and cultural needs of the communities—for instance, places for hunting, fishing, and gathering food, or sacred places. In general, they are low-priced lands that nonetheless can be expropriated according to the needs of the market. In fact, the new monoculture economy, based on small workforce needs and extensive soil exploitation, is once again moving the agricultural frontier. Simultaneously, there is a growing number of relocations and evictions of Indigenous communities that yet does not seem to scandalize Argentina's citizens.

3. The Concept of Genocide and the Questioning of the State-Society Relationship

Despite the fact that in the past the academic and juridical communities strongly rejected considering the use of the term “genocide” to refer to Argentine policies toward Indigenous peoples, we can now observe that its use, still full of prejudices, has become widespread. On the one hand, this is the outcome of a leading tendency in international agreements, forums, and documents to condemn the exploitation and subordination suffered by Indigenous peoples in the present. On the other hand, in the local/national arena, it is part of the critical revision of the relationship between state and society that began with the democratic era after the last dictatorship, and results particularly from the struggle of human-rights organizations and Indigenous activists to legitimate Native demands as part of the human-rights agenda. However, there is still a significant gap between acknowledgement and “visibility,” on the one hand, and, on the other, the profound historical revision that would bring up for debate the historical processes that produced the conditions of possibility for a “marginal citizenship” to exist.

Since the socio-economic situation of the Indigenous peoples has been brought to light, the duty to do something about it has been discussed by different agencies and political projects. The idea of society's “moral duty” to the Indigenous population constitutes a debatable ground in which the use of the term “genocide” has central importance. The term enables us to think about the idea of “reparations” and, in connection with this, about the questions “who?” “what?” and “what for?”

The arena in which these discussions take place is constituted, first, by the questioning of the historiographic narrative inscribed in the daily geography of Argentina's citizens (the naming of streets, cities, squares, and statues that celebrate battles, national heroes, and governors associated either with authoritarian regimes or with the oligarchic power constituted by 1880). The “Official history” is identified as the matrix of validation of the crimes against humanity perpetrated during the last dictatorship (1976–1983). The debate on this recent history has fuelled the discussion of the term “genocide.” In addition, discussion of the historical research behind that “official history” led to some other social practices' being named genocidal, among them the subjugation and forced incorporation of Native populations into the nation-state. The debate on monuments and street naming—especially as a consequence of the writer Osvaldo Bayer's public campaign—aims to shed light on the different disciplinary mechanisms imposed on the subaltern classes, many of which originated in the same regime that undertook the Conquest of the Desert. Thus, in this matrix, immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and working class are part of the same group of “victims” of the oligarchic capitalist order.⁶⁰

Second, emerging from some teachers' unions and associations, there is an important reaction against the NAP—mentioned in Part 2—and its exclusion of Native peoples' history from the national history. In this way, these teachers are trying to make visible what it is still absent from the books they have to work with at school.

Third, there have been specific initiatives of solidarity with Indigenous peoples, such as the legal actions taken against the state by groups of lawyers on the cases of the massacres at Napalpí (1924) and La Bomba (1947). The Napalpí Massacre, in particular, has achieved the status of an "epitomizing event";⁶¹ that is, it has become part of a public discussion as the concretion of genocide itself. The risk is, then, that in this case, as well as in the debate surrounding the Roca statues, the debate could potentially close down to an understanding that Napalpí is "the" genocide and that Roca is "the" perpetrator of genocide. Such an outcome would put at risk the main learning that these massacres bring to the present: that they should be inscribed in a major context of nation-building where genocide has been reproduced in history regardless of the political parties in charge of the administration. As an example, the massacres of Napalpí and La Bomba were executed during "popular" and democratic regimes led by different political parties.⁶²

Fourth, within academia there is discussion of the applicability of the concept of genocide. On the one hand, this is the outcome of in-depth research on the historical processes that led to the constitution of the national state, and especially of its disciplinary mechanisms, which disproved the argument that there had been no specific state policy with respect to the Indigenous population. On the other hand, there has been an increase in theoretical and methodological debates that enable us to reflect on the concept of genocide in different contexts and periods. Finally, there has been an important process of revision with respect to academic practice, institutional history, and the constitution of academic disciplines. In particular, the handling of "anthropological collections" has been questioned,⁶³ as has the unauthorized field-work carried out by archeologists and anthropologists in Indigenous communities and the omission of Indigenous history as a subject of study by historians.

Finally, and most importantly, certain inner sectors of Indigenous peoples have, in the last decade, found in the concept of genocide a representative manner of making demands on the state and society. The majority of Indigenous claims and politics have in common a questioning of the historical process of subjugation, because their demands are not delimited within a present conflict but are the accumulation of successive conflicts in their relations with the state.⁶⁴

To date, a social and discursive movement has been working toward the installation of the concept of genocide and the need to revise the hegemonic historiography; at the same time, it has generated a backlash from a set of different actors, however coincident in their arguments. Denial—those who minimize or neglect the social practices described in Part 1—argue the extemporaneousness of the concept of genocide, or of concentration camps or of crimes against humanity, and label the supporters of this "other" history unscientific and proof-less or supportive of "dark" interests or agents (Marxist-Leninists, terrorists, foreigners, romantics, traitors, political agitators, and so on).

Thus, different sectors have reacted to the possibility of accepting the idea of genocide. Although ready to accept that there have been "some mistakes" in the past, they consider that throughout history there have been plenty of such excesses and that no particular social group should present itself as having more right

to change what is now a “collective patrimony.” Thus, proposals to widen our knowledge of our national history are refused in order to sustain a local/national identity.

Finally, as part of this reaction, the concept of genocide has also been incorporated within projects of political integration. In this way, the state—federal or provincial—through its different agencies and offices, has begun to incorporate the use of the term. The state becomes then self-referent as defender of the victims of genocide while emptying the identity of the perpetrator. Indigenous peoples, according to this position, may have been victims of genocide, but the current state bears no responsibility.

From Genocide to Reparation

The concept of genocide has embedded not only the acknowledgment and the acceptance of a multicultural country but also the idea of “reparation,” in both material and symbolic terms. This brings on another discussion about how to understand this “reparation,” because what seems to be the answer to the problem for some actors means the continuity of the “genocide” for others.

To date, politicians’ projects, whether national or provincial, have tried to contain the margins of this possible reparation (using various terms). On the one hand, some sustain the idea of a total extermination and consequently depoliticize the process and the demands. They incorporate the idea of genocide to argue that there are no Indigenous persons left, only mixed-bloods and descendants; therefore “material reparation” is impracticable and, in any case, “unfair” and “arbitrary.”

On the other hand, and in consonance with international changes in discourse, the acknowledgment through the constitutional reform of 1994 of the Natives as “Indigenous peoples” (pre-existing the formation of the state) has been a first symbolic reparation, intended to show how modern and respectful the national society has become. Nonetheless, this “restitution” has collided with the demands of Indigenous activists, who visualize culturally diverse collective subjects with their own voices and agendas and assert that there has not yet been a real restitution that answers their own needs and interests.

This is the basis on which debates and differences are disputed among public agencies, NGOs, and Indigenous organizations. In particular, both public agencies and NGOs begin with the idea of a “common solution” for Indigenous peoples throughout the country, bearing in mind a “common interest.” The Indigenous organizations, on the other hand, argue that it is not possible to come to a solution within the same state logic of “making the differences homogeneous,” because the diverse historical processes by which the various peoples have been led to a homogeneous status of marginal and subaltern citizenship must be taken into consideration.

In other words, the problem consists of establishing *who* defines *what* and, especially, *what for*. Regardless of the terms we choose to describe the process (*genocide*, *respect*, *reparation*, etc.), what is really at stake is the *what for*. At least, many Indigenous organizations maintain that the *what for* still bears the same aim: to facilitate and optimize the mechanisms of domination and expropriation that, under the so-called community of interests, settle the ethnic and class asymmetry into a determined social order.

Reparation as Restitution of Citizenship

The acknowledgment of multiculturalism and the openness toward diversity in the last two decades have built and established social places of detention where individuals set, through active practices, bonds and senses of belonging.⁶⁵ At the same time, they have found limits in the official policies that try to determine their welfare. Today, the concept of genocide is the subject of discussion, although as yet it is strongly resisted as a concept of historical description. In this way, for example, when the National Institute Against Discrimination (INADI) reacted against various expressions of negationism, it passed on a law project to condemn expressions of denial or minimization of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and the genocide by Argentina's last dictatorship but did not even mention the Indigenous genocide.⁶⁶

At the same time, during a school inauguration in Santa Victoria Este—a location in northwest Argentina with a vast Indigenous population—President Cristina Fernández said, “I ask forgiveness of the Indigenous peoples for the underhand discrimination hidden behind our state's inaction,”⁶⁷ and named the place the “backyard of the country's backyard.” The government ceremony was intended to bring closer to a regular citizenship people who have been apparently forgotten by the nation-state in its welfare gifts. However, active state practices that have damaged them for over a century were not mentioned.

Reparation, conceived as “reparation from marginal citizenship,” lies far from an acknowledgment of autonomy and of double citizenship. Its aim is, again, to “give back the condition of equals,” rendering inner differences invisible in order to make visible the citizen's equality—that is, fixing “one” damaged social body. This is the context in which, since 1983, Indigenous rights have become part of the accusations against state violence. However, each time the idea of a separate—or, at least, a more complex and juxtaposed—social body is proposed, similar reactions and mechanisms of denial arise, pushing to reinstate a homogeneous, hegemonic, and discrete model of citizenship.

4. Final Words

The debate around the concept of genocide relating to Argentina's Indigenous policy has enabled a new arena for debate, where new questions arise. It allows us to think about whether new changes in the relationships of subalternity can be researched and to question what has changed or has continued in the structure of power, and in its material and symbolic conditions, around the construction of policies and practices promoted “by” and “for” Indigenous peoples.

Motivated by these questions, however, it is important to acknowledge what this process has caused. First, something has begun to change, in that the idea that the Indians'—now “Indigenous peoples'”—extinction has ceased to be a hegemonic assertion. At least there is a necessity to explain what has actually happened. It may be interpreted either as genocide or through different theoretical answers (e.g., the idea of assimilation and mixing), but now in a context in which the faces of real Indigenous persons have gained presence in the political and public arena. In other words, “General Roca's defenders” must now face the fact that there are Indigenous witnesses and professionals who will contradict their defense.

Second, when using the term “genocide,” there is still the challenge of inscribing it in a wider process related to the construction of a certain social order. That is, there is a tendency to replace the term “massacre” or “excess” with the term “genocide” in reference to events of the past, detaching it from its consequences

in the present as an already-overcome historical period. But if we understand that the social practices carried out against the Indigenous population that we have described here—concentration camps, the separation of families, deportations, killings, massacres, forced labor, redistribution of children, material expropriations, and so on—constituted a genocide, we should also shed light on the fact that these events were not denounced before and ask why they are still so extremely difficult for Argentinean society to accept.

The imposed social order has evidently been “successful,” and therefore the “consequences” of the genocide have become constitutive of the society in which we live. Thus, we need to ask ourselves what has changed, and what has not, in the historiography and in its questioning of the foundations of the state.

Finally, and as long as we are both scholars and also part of civil society, we would like to open the question around the changes that could have been produced in the struggle to control hegemony of representations and self-representations. Have the criteria for authority changed? Is there any openness toward “new public voices”? Who can cast the first word?

Notes

1. The former of these campaigns is known officially and popularly as “the Conquest of the Desert,” and it epitomizes this process from the point of view of the average citizen. Thus, many of our examples will be taken from this campaign, although it was neither the first nor the last such military operation.
2. The project is titled “Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State” and is supported by the University of Buenos Aires. This project is part of the Red de Investigadores sobre Genocidio en la Política Indígena Argentina.
3. Walter Delrio, Diana Lenton, Marcelo Musante, Mariano Nagy, Alexis Papazian, and Gerardo Raschcovsky, “Reflexiones sobre la dinámica genocida en la relación del Estado argentino con los pueblos originarios” (Paper presented at Segundo Encuentro Internacional Análisis de las Prácticas Sociales Genocidas, Buenos Aires, November 2007).
4. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/genocide.htm> (accessed 15 June 2010), art. 2.
5. Julio A. Roca, presidential speech before the Legislative Assembly, 6 May 1884 (National Congress, daily report on sessions). Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are our own.
6. Giorgio Agamben, *Estado de Excepción. Homo sacer II*, trans. Antonio Gimeno Cuspinera (Valencia: Pre-Textos Editorial, 2003).
7. Diana Lenton, “De centauros a protegidos. La construcción del sujeto de la política indigenista Argentina desde los debates parlamentarios (1880–1970)” (PhD diss., Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2005).
8. In Spanish, “*crimen de lesa humanidad.*” *La Nación* 16–17 November 1878; see Lenton, “De centauros a protegidos.”
9. Interview by Ana Ramos and Walter Delrio, February 2006, translated by the authors.
10. A description of these events is narrated in Luis Jorge Fontana, *Viaje de Exploración en la Patagonia Austral* (Buenos Aires: Talleres de la Tribuna Nacional, 1886).
11. Mixed-blood, Creole, or European descendants born in America.
12. At least 300 persons from the Sacamata and Pichaleo tribes were concentrated in this place. José Garofoli, *Datos Biográficos and Excursiones del P. Milanésio*, Archivo Salesiano Inspectoría de Buenos Aires (Salesian central archive of Buenos Aires) [ASIBA], Indígenas 201.2, 74.

13. By 1886 more than 1,000 persons were concentrated when the Salesians Cagliero, Remotti, and Panaro visited the Ñancuche and Sayhueque tribes' prisoners in this location. Garofoli, *Datos Biográficos*, 169; ASIBA, Indígenas C.201.4, doc. 60.
14. Valcheta is one of the most significant cases, both because of the number of people concentrated and because of the numerous references related to it through the *mapuche-tehuelche* narratives in Patagonia. Valcheta is named as a place of concentration, torture, and death. John Daniel Evans, a Welsh settler, mentioned it as a concentration center. Clery A. Evans, *John Daniel Evans, El Molinero: Una historia entre galeses y la Colonia 16 de Octubre* (Trevelin: Impresiones Lahuan, 1994), 92–93.
15. Pilar Pérez, “Represión y resistencia: una aproximación a los campos de concentración en el territorio patagónico a fines del siglo XIX” (Paper presented at II Encuentro Internacional Análisis de las Prácticas Sociales Genocidas, Universidad Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires, 2007).
16. Pedro Giacomini, *Misiones de la Patagonia*, ASIBA, 99.
17. National Congress, *Daily Report on Sessions*, 19 August 1884 [in Spanish].
18. *El Nacional*, 21 January 1879.
19. These conclusions are drawn from an analysis of various sources found in the Archivo General de la Armada (army general archives) [AGA], the Archivo de la Arquidiócesis de Buenos Aires (the archives of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires) [ABAA], and the Archivo General de la Nación (national general archives) [NGA]; see Mariano Nagy and Alexis Papazian, “De la Isla como Campo. Prácticas de disciplinamiento indígena en la Isla Martín García hacia fines s. XIX” (Paper presented at XII Jornadas Interescuelas-Departamentos de Historia, Universidad del Comahue, Bariloche. 2009).
20. AGA, boxes 15272–15287.
21. ABAA, Books 1–3 of Baptism Acts and Book 1 of Death Acts, Martín García’s Chapel, January–May 1879; AGA, boxes 15277, 15278, and 15280.
22. AGA, box 15278, Savino O’Donnell, Surgeon of the Island, 12 October 1878. The doctor’s warnings were given one month before a deadly outbreak of smallpox.
23. Who also assumed responsibility for Indigenous people after the presidential decree of 3 May 1899. Lenton, “De centauros a protegidos.”
24. Enrique Hugo Mases, *Estado y cuestión indígena. El destino final de los indios sometidos en el fin del territorio (1878–1910)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros/Entrepasados, 2002); Eduardo Rosenzvaig, *Historia Social de Tucumán y del azúcar*, vol. 2: *El Ingenio* (San Miguel de Tucumán: Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1986); Diana Lenton and Jorge Sosa, “La expatriación de los pampas y su incorporación forzada en la sociedad tucumana de finales del siglo XIX” (Paper presented at Jornadas de Estudios Indígenas y Coloniales, Universidad de Jujuy, San Salvador de Jujuy, Argentina, November 2009).
25. The press reported sporadic escapes from the sugar plantations. For example, the newspaper *El Argentino* reported that “almost every Indian has run away” from El Colmenar; some days later, the same newspaper stated that “we should be aware of the Indians if they are kept in hunger.” *El Argentino*, 28 January 1879; Lenton and Sosa, “La expatriación de los pampas.”
26. Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Tucumán (AHT), Letter from Francisco del Corro and Evaristo Barrenechea to the Minister of Government, 10 February 1879.
27. Lenton and Sosa, “La expatriación de los pampas.”
28. Walter Delrio, *Memorias de expropiación. Sometimiento e incorporación indígena en la Patagonia (1872–1943)* (Bernal: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2005); Lenton, “De centauros a protegidos.”
29. Lenton and Sosa, “La expatriación de los pampas.” The policy of dismembering families and using forced labor continued into the twentieth century, legitimated by motives of “national interest” as well as by the defense of “civilized society.” Among the first examples is the overexploitation of the Kolla farmers in northwestern Argentina. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, the Kolla had their land expropriated and were compelled to undergo a process of proletarianization in the sugar refineries where

- Patagonian families had previously been. This practice was justified as “the only way to support a national industry in difficult regions.”
30. Charles Darwin, *Un naturalista en el Plata* (1845), trans. Constantino Piquer (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1978), 64.
 31. National Congress, *Daily Report on Sessions*, 1 April 1900.
 32. Lenton, “De centauros a protegidos.”
 33. Alfredo Ebelot, *La pampa. Costumbres argentinas* (1890; reprint, Buenos Aires: Ed. Nueva Dimensión Argentina, 2001).
 34. Manuel Prado, *La guerra al malón* (1907; reprint, Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1960), 95.
 35. AGA, box 15279, 6 March 1879.
 36. Interview by Ana Ramos and Walter Delrio, February 2006.
 37. AGA, box 15279, 14 February 1879.
 38. AGA, box 15279, 27 March 1879.
 39. Chronicle of the mission of Fathers Herrera and Quaranta, General Acha, June 1891, quoted in Claudia Salomón Tarquini, *Indigenas y paisanos en la pampa. Subalternización, ciclos migratorios, integración urbana (1870–1976)* (PhD diss., Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, 2008).
 40. *La Nación*, 17 November 1878.
 41. Patricia Arenas and Jorge Pinedo, “Damiana vuelve a los suyos,” *Página 12*, 20 November 2005, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/9-2639-2005-11-24.html> (accessed 3 February 2010).
 42. Miguel Añon Suarez, Patricio Harrison, and Fernando Pepe, *Identificación y restitución: Colecciones de restos humanos en el Museo de La Plata* (La Plata: Editorial GUIAS, 2008).
 43. Lenton and Sosa, “La expatriación de los pampas.”
 44. See Walter Delrio and Diana Lenton, “¿Qué, para quiénes y según quiénes? Reparaciones, restituciones y negaciones del genocidio en la política indígena del estado argentino” (Paper presented at Latin American Studies Association (LASA) 2009 Congress, Rio de Janeiro, 11–14 June 2009).
 45. Daniel Feierstein, *Seis estudios sobre genocidio. Análisis de las relaciones sociales: otredad, exclusión, exterminio* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 2000). The term “symbolic realization” refers to the rebuilding of a genocidal experience as if it were not such an experience. Thus, not only does it “close the possibility of returning to the existing social relations before the genocide” (ibid., 24), it also inhibits and renders suspect any Indigenous agency, and considers the performances of that agency illegitimate and even fictitious, under the hegemonic discourse that sustains the lack of Native peoples in Argentina.
 46. National Law No. 1420 on Common Education, 1884, <http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/normas/5421.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2010). This legislation was the result of a pedagogical congress held in 1882.
 47. *Núcleos de Aprendizajes Prioritarios (NAP) EGB / Nivel Medio* (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Educación, 2006).
 48. *History UBA 2004* (entrance course for secondary schools), 11.
 49. Axel Lazzari and Diana Lenton, “Araucanization, Nation: A Century Inscribing Indians in the Pampas,” in *Contemporary Perspectives on the Native Peoples of Pampa: Bergin Garvey Series in Anthropology*, ed. Claudia Briones and J.L. Lanata, 33–46 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002).
 50. Delrio, *Memorias de expropiación*.
 51. Lawrence Grossberg, “Power and Daily Life,” in *We gotta get out of this place. Popular conservatism and postmodern culture*, by Lawrence Grossberg, 89–111 (New York: Routledge, 1992); Lawrence Grossberg, “Entre consenso y hegemonía: Notas sobre la forma hegemónica de la política moderna,” *Tabula Rasa* 2 (2004): 49–57.
 52. See Nicolás Iñigo Carrera, *La violencia como potencia económica: Chaco 1870–1940* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de America Latina, 1988); Edgardo Cordeu and Alejandra

- Siffredi, *De la algarroba al algodón: movimientos milenaristas del Chaco Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Juárez Editor, 1971); Hugo Trincheró, *Los Dominios del Demonio. Civilización y Barbarie en las Fronteras de la Nación. El Chaco Central* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 2000).
53. Juan Chico and Mario Fernández, *Napa'lpí, la voz de la sangre* (Resistencia: Subsecretaría de Cultura de la Provincia del Chaco, 2008).
 54. *La Voz del Chaco*, 19 May 1924: "Press release by the Chief of Police: in the Napalpí reservation, about 500 Indians have gathered; they have not yet committed any crime but slaughtering neighbors' animals. They are in a hostile mood; they do not want to listen to the messengers sent to deal with them. They threaten those Indians that work and have not joined them. We have heard that there are about eighty Indians armed with Winchester arms and some others with similar weapons. The rest carry knives and lances. Their attitude makes us assume that they have wider goals, which we try to avoid. Therefore we have asked the government for backup, because we believe that they will back off if they face a stronger force. These Indians have been fueled by one called Machado who names himself as a God."
 55. The Pilagá escape across the jungle assumed tragic proportions when families had to abandon the wounded, sick, or weak who could not keep on running, thus increasing the death toll. One witness reported that for many days they had to walk bent over because the bushes in that area are so low, and that it was difficult to silence children who cried, until they reached the timberline area and could once again run upright. The cruel persecution led families to be involuntarily dismembered, and, as many today regret, they could not even bury their dead. Valeria Mapelman (dir.), *Octubre Pilagá* [documentary film] (Buenos Aires: DVCam, 2010).
 56. Survivor testimonies indicate that these children "never appeared" and that "nobody knows what became of them." Mapelman, *ibid*.
 57. *Ibid*.
 58. Lorena Cañuqueo, Laura Kropff, and Pilar Pérez, "¿Un "ulmenche" en el territorio patagónico del siglo XX? el caso de Mariano Epulef" (Paper presented at 3ras Jornadas de Historia de la Patagonia, Universidad del Comahue, Bariloche, November 2008).
 59. Walter Delrio, "Mecanismos de tribalización en la Patagonia. Desde la gran crisis al primer gobierno peronista," *Memoria Americana. Cuadernos de Etnohistoria* 13 (2006): 209–42; Claudia Briones and Diana Lenton, "Debates parlamentarios y nación: la construcción discursiva de la inclusión/exclusión de los indígenas," *Actas de las III Jornadas de Lingüística Aborigen* (1997): 303–18.
 60. Following this idea, there is a proposal to remove General Roca's monument on the main avenue of Buenos Aires and to replace it with a monument in memory of a Native woman and an immigrant one, both considered victims of Roca's repressive administration.
 61. G. Landsman and S. Ciborski, "Representation and Politics: Contesting Histories of the Iroquois," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 425–47, quoted in Claudia Briones, *La alteridad en el cuarto mundo. Una construcción antropológica de la diferencia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol, 1998), 108.
 62. Indeed, the federal government has argued against considering these two events as genocidal because they occurred during when elected governments were in power, and such governments are supposed to look after the welfare of their citizens. For further information see Red de Investigadores en Genocidio y Política Indígena, *Napalpí y Rincón Bomba: debates sobre el genocidio de los Pueblos Originarios y los límites de la Justicia* (Buenos Aires: GEG, DVD Multimedia, 2008).
 63. See Añon Suarez et al., *Identificación y restitución*, on the collections of the Museum of La Plata. On the influence of national paradigms over alleged academic objectivity see Delrio, *Memorias de expropiación*; Lazzari and Lenton, *Araucanization, Nation*.
 64. Diana Lenton, "El 'aporte antropológico' en un caso de evaluación de 'daño cultural,'" (Paper presented at the VI Congreso Red Latinoamericana de Antropología Jurídica, Bogotá, November 2008); Marcelo Musante, "La construcción del territorio chaqueño

- como parte de un proceso genocida,” *La revista del CCC* 5/6 (2009), <http://www.centrocultural.coop/revista/articulo/111/> (accessed 21 September 2009).
65. Grossberg, “Power and Daily Life.”
66. “This agency works to penalize those who deny, defend or trivialize the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and state terrorism applied by the military dictatorship that devastated our country. . . . With respect to the dynamics that the debate itself will have, criminologists, constitutional experts, human-rights professors, human-rights organizations, and the community organizations involved (Armenian and Jewish) are expected to take part in it.” Tomás Forster, “El INADI presenta un borrador para punir la negación del holocausto,” *Página 12*, 1 March 2009.
67. *Clarín*, 3 March 2009.

Denial of the Reality of State Terrorism in Argentina as Narrative of the Recent Past: A New Case of “Negationism”?¹

Mario Ranalletti

*Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Buenos Aires,
Argentina*

This article applies the concept of negationism—from a French basis—to an analysis of the activities and discourse of groups and individuals who define the state terrorism applied in Argentina between 1975 and 1983 as a “war” against “Marxist subversion,” in defense of “Christian and Occidental Civilization.” By distorting history and systematically denying the reality of state terrorism, Argentine negationists try to disguise the vindication of state terrorism as a fight for the truth and memory. The article is organized in three parts. A brief review of the origins of this concept and of the negationist current in France is followed by a discussion of the differences between the concepts of revisionism and negationism. The gestation and historical evolution of this current are then analyzed and described; for this purpose, the article deals with some of the principal arguments and tactics used by the negationists in their media appearances and street ceremonies: books, magazines, courses, conferences, literary gatherings, so-called study groups, Web sites, demonstrations, and public commemorations, claiming a “complete social memory,” are employed to instill a revision of Argentina’s recent past. Finally, the article deals with the current stage of the evolution of negationist groups.

Key words: negationism, Argentina, state terrorism, historical memory

To Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in memoriam

Introduction

For some, it is only a mental disorder.² For others, like Pierre Vidal-Naquet, we are witnessing a current to which no publicity or relevance should be given, either by criticizing or by arguing against its absurd ideas; with the negationists, there is no debate of ideas but, rather, a political combat, whose center is Holocaust denial.³ According to Henry Rousso, creator of the neologism, negationism is an ideological system disguised as a “true” scientific approach.⁴ Applied to the Argentine context, this concept allows us to define the activity carried out by certain groups and individuals dedicated to manipulating the past for propaganda purposes—means and purposes that they share with local Catholicism and extreme right sectors. In no way or sense do I intend here to establish an analogy, comparison, or parallelism between the Nazi extermination experience and the experience of Argentine state terrorism through this extrapolation.⁵ This extrapolation and use of the concept of

negationism can, however, be justified as a proposal for discussion and as a theoretical exercise.

Either ignored or underestimated by academics, Argentine negationists constitute an amorphous group of political and cultural agitators, organized in a social network whose main activity consists of appearing in public trying to impose and/or question some event of the recent past. These groups or individuals fragment, mutate, regenerate into new groups or NGOs, and blend into society—in particular, into universities, the education system, and the legal system. Although there are no statistics or quantitative data on these individuals, their visibility and number seem to have been increasing since 1983.

This article is organized in three parts. The first section presents a distinction between the concepts of revisionism and negationism, followed by a brief review of the origins of the concept and of the negationist current in France. The second part analyzes and describes the gestation and historical evolution of negationism in Argentina, highlighting their first demonstrations, the characteristics of the people involved in negationist actions, the discursive elements legitimating state terrorism employed to achieve their objectives, and the relation between all of these elements and the historical context in which they occur and develop. The third and final section presents an outlook for the current phase of the negationist venture.

Revisionism Is Not Negationism

Negationists resort to the term “revisionism” in an attempt to contextualize their actions within the scientific field; but the two views are radically different, both in their approaches to the object of study and in the aims that lead the researcher. A revisionist historian, theoretically, seeks to re-examine the past through rational procedures that follow rules and scientific and academic conventions. Revision, in this case, consists of a search whose main objective is for knowledge to progress. It is well known that revisionism has a political side, particularly, within Marxism. On the other hand, the negationist invents the object of study and produces his or her sources, disregarding basic premises of scientific research such as re-reading the existing bibliography, assessing sources, and scientific study of available documentation on the subject of interest. Negationism is limited to distorting available information and knowledge in order to earn the position of truth-possessor in the struggle for hegemony in representing the past.⁶ Negationists do not revise; rather, they invalidate and discredit—with purely ideological arguments—the testimonies of Nazism’s victims and everything that has been discovered through research about the systematic extermination of people, groups, and communities carried out by the Nazis.⁷ Clearly, this is something more than just a “battle of words,” as Valérie Igounet writes.⁸

Normally, the term “revisionist” can have many meanings: “apologist,” “reactionary,” “nationalist” (in the Argentine case). In this article, I take “revisionist” and “revisionism” as synonyms for an attempt to revise the available knowledge on a subject to contribute further information via scientific research. I do not use “revisionist” and “revisionism” as synonyms for “negationist” and “negationism”—a current use in the Anglo-Saxon world. Pierre Vidal-Naquet’s assertion points to the difference between a scientific attitude and an anti-scientific attitude.⁹ It is true that revisionism can be negationism, but my approach in this section aims to differentiate revisionism as a scientific attitude on a historical matter from the assimilation of the terms “revisionism” and “negationism” that dominates studies of these questions in

the Anglo-Saxon world. This distinction is more frequently made within French, Spanish, and Latin American academia.

For so-called revisionists, their main difference from negationism is their rapport with scientific knowledge and its rules. The fundamental principle of all revisionism—and not in the political sense—is the review of available knowledge. For example, revisionism promotes debate to confront ideas, points of view, and approaches and to exchange arguments. A revisionist historian does not discuss facts themselves but, rather, addresses their interpretation. Another fundamental difference lies in the distortion of the available knowledge about a subject. The revisionist does not ignore what he or she already knows about a subject but, rather, tries to modify the current interpretation by refuting this knowledge based on serious and scientific research.

For negationism, on the other hand, the goal is to deny the facts. The negationist tries to use the review of available knowledge on a given topic to deny the reality of the known facts. Thus, negationism constitutes a deliberate lie for political ends, which has nothing to do with interpreting the historical evidence, and which has become an apologia for a criminal political and social regime. The perfect example is Holocaust denial, which negationists claim is a question of “free speech.”

The Origins of Negationism in France

The negationist view arose in the immediate post-World War II period and was initially a reformulation intended to adapt anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Communism to that context. This fabrication had its origins in the publication of *Nuremberg ou la terre promise* by Maurice Bardèche (1909–1998),¹⁰ in which the author, an extreme-right activist, rebelled against the “unfair” justice of the victorious Allied powers and accused them of fabricating the genocide of the Jews in order to mask their own crimes.¹¹ This line of “analysis” was boosted by the diffusion of writings by Paul Rassinier (1906–1967)—ex-pacifist, ex-socialist, and ex-Communist—whom negationists consider the first “revisionist historian.”¹² Rassinier published a work titled *Le mensonge d’Ulysse*, in which he questioned the veracity of ex-deportees’ testimonies about the existence and employment of gas chambers in the Nazi concentration camps. Considered by the experts as negationism’s foundational text,¹³ Rassinier’s book trivializes the matter of the gas chambers: though not stating directly that they did not exist, he minimizes their relevance, questioning the prevailing version of history in order to free Nazism from its exterminating character.

Rejected by every current he had frequented until then, Rassinier became a “divine surprise” for the extreme right. Bardèche, the propagandist Henry Coston (1910–2001), and the magazines *Rivarol* and *Défense de l’Occident* defended and promoted him as the living testimony of “truth,” “denied” and “persecuted” by the victorious powers. This is the tone of what is considered the first period of negationism, which extended from 1948 to 1967. Rassinier’s death in 1967 marked the onset of a new period in the history and evolution of negationism in France; since then, defense of the Palestine cause has become the core of negationist activism, exploited to reintroduce anti-Semitism into public debate.

The beginning of the third stage is determined by the so-called *affaire Faurisson* in 1978. Robert Faurisson, a professor of twentieth-century French literature at Université Lyon II, shocked the academic and media worlds by circulating a letter, addressed to hundreds of figures worldwide, in which he outlined—with “scientific” arguments—his doubts about the purpose attributed to the gas chambers. Initially,

he succeeded in attracting the attention of major French media—*Le Monde*, *Le Canard enchaîné*, *L'Express*, and the radio station Europe 1—but in the debates that followed, Faurisson rose from obscurity to a place in the field of Nazism. The debate abruptly closed, and Faurisson was “rescued” by Bardèche and *Défense de l'Occident*, a publication that embraced with enthusiasm Faurisson’s “revisionist” and “scientifically” supported theses. His main argument alleged that there is no documentation proving that the gas chambers were used to kill people, nor to certify that Hitler ordered the Final Solution. Faurisson concluded that his assertions were “good news” for humanity, which was thereby freed from this opprobrious event.¹⁴ His views prompted widespread condemnation, and he was dismissed from his university post. Following this incident, the focus of attention moved outside France with the organization of an international campaign to defend Faurisson in the name of “freedom of speech,” of which Noam Chomsky was one of the main supporters.¹⁵

All this ideological and media agitation met a favorable reception in some libertarian, extreme-left, and anarchist circles—such as the Anarchist Federation and the bookstore and publishing house La Vieille Taupe—in which anti-Zionism tends to be confused with anti-Semitism and underlies Third World and anti-capitalist perspectives. For these marginal but vocal groups, the negationist attempt to rewrite history is a practical way to channel the repressed anti-Semitism of many of their members.¹⁶ It was during this period that Jean-Marie Le Pen’s extremist National Front, a political party always supportive of and receptive to the negationist view of the world, reached its first peak of popularity in France. The experts consider Faurisson’s intervention responsible for the radicalization¹⁷ and simultaneous stylization of the negationist fundamentals and discourse, relative to the first steps taken by Bardèche and Rassinier.

One of the last events in this chapter of the history of negationism in France was the scandal over the doctorate in history obtained by agronomist Henri Roquès at the University of Nantes in 1985. Roquès obtained his diploma by forging administrative documents and establishing a biased dissertation committee.¹⁸ In his dissertation—and following Faurisson—Roquès introduces himself as a “scientist” who breaks down and refutes the testimony of Kurt Gerstein, an SS officer captured and interrogated by French officers. Gerstein’s statements had been taken, until that moment, as irrefutable proof of the existence and employment of gas chambers in the extermination of people at the hands of the Nazis. Another salient aspect of Roquès’s doctoral dissertation was his complaint—he pointed to his own work as an example—that the “revisionist school” should obtain full admission to the academic historiography. The following year, Roquès’s fraud was discovered, and his diploma was withdrawn—an unprecedented event in the history of French higher education.¹⁹

Argentine Negationism: Characteristics, Origins, and Development

Negationism is a marginal sector of the Argentine political and cultural spectrum. Several different stages can be identified, each having particular characteristics with respect to the people involved, the subjects dealt with, and the political and communicative strategies employed. The shortage of followers is compensated for by the movement’s important involvement in almost every sphere from which indoctrination or propaganda can proceed: the mass media, the justice system, legal advice, public and denominational education, bookstores, the Catholic Church, the army, and the security forces. Books, magazines, courses, lectures, spiritual retreats, literary circles, study groups, Web sites, marches, masses, media interventions, and

public demonstrations in the name of a “complete” memory are some of the tools deployed to convince the audience that researchers’ work on memory and the consequences of state terrorism in fact constitute a campaign to undermine the prestige of the armed forces. Following this syllogistic reasoning, current judicial proceedings against military and security personnel, as well as civilians, for their participation in state terrorism are the result of such a campaign. It is worth mentioning that the theses and interpretations of the negationist movement are diffused far beyond the smaller circle of its activists and adherents.

The core of the negationist line of argument consists in defining the state terrorism applied in Argentina as a supposed war, against “revolutionary” or “subversive” elements. With this distortion of the past—for Argentina, the only war in the twentieth century was the Malvinas/Falklands conflict—negationists seek to exonerate the perpetrators of state terrorism from their crimes and vindicate their actions during the repression of the popular activation²⁰ that the country experienced toward 1975. Following Faurisson’s example, they seek protection in the right to freedom of speech, currently adding a demand—apparently devoid of any particular interest—for completion of memory and information about the recent past. In accordance with these arguments, local negationists seek to establish themselves as the bearers of “another” version of Argentina’s recent history, “true” and different from that supported by human-rights organizations, as well as by two governments (2003–2009), and emerging from several current judicial processes against individuals involved in the application of state terrorism, characterizing the latter version with adjectives such as “false” and “tendentious.”

Another remarkable feature of the Argentine negationist movement is its ability to build networks of solidarity and friendship, which are fundamental for diffusing materials and slogans. In order to achieve this goal, negationists use three main channels: the Internet, radio, and cable television. Currently, they have shown their intention to occupy the public space with direct interventions—such as open demonstrations, commemorations included in a settled calendar, and *escraches*.²¹

The origins of Argentine negationism should be placed toward the end of the last de facto government, although some earlier precedents can be pointed out. The starting point for this way of seeing the recent past in Argentina is the use of the concept of “war” to characterize the present situation. Such an interpretation is not exclusive to negationists, as it has been included in the Argentine political culture since at least 1955.²² The representation of the present as a war implied an erroneous interpretation of the Argentine reality, used to conceal the growth of social inequality, on the one hand, and the proscription and persecution of the majority party, on the other hand, as the causes of the violence that the country was experiencing.

The last de facto government²³ appropriated this interpretation, used it to justify their existence, and built it to a paroxysm by presenting it as the core of their political propaganda.²⁴ The military members of the government took the first steps toward institutionalizing this account of the recent past, structured on the basis of the notion of war, as the report *El terrorismo en la Argentina* (“Terrorism in Argentina”) testifies.²⁵ In this report, which was widely distributed, particularly at the level of public education, the de facto government presented ample journalistic and official information magnifying the growth and combat capacity of several guerrilla organizations in order to support their interpretation of the contemporary situation. This first attempt was reinforced by the intervention of the Argentine Catholic Church’s Episcopal Conference, which, although it defended the idea of

reconciliation among the Argentine people, confirmed that the country had left behind a sort of civil “war,” defined as “the evil of guerilla violence.”²⁶

A short time later, in the context of Argentina’s defeat in the Falklands war²⁷ and with a settled date for elections, the de facto government continued advancing in this direction, announcing the so-called *Final Report of the Military Junta on the War Against Subversion and Terrorism*, which formed the basis for the “National Pacification” law (law no. 22.924, passed in March 1983 and published in the *Official Bulletin* of 27 November 1983). This regulation declared that every possibility of criminal prosecution of individuals who had committed crimes “with terrorist or subversive motivation or purpose, between 25 May 1973 and 17 June 1982” had expired. The benefits provided by this law extended also to “every action of a criminal nature executed on the occasion of or to develop actions aimed at preventing, averting, or ending the said terrorist or subversive activities, whatever its nature or the injured legal rights may have been.”²⁸

This legislation motivated a new intervention by the Catholic Church through the Episcopal Conference Standing Committee. This organization issued a document titled “Path to Reconciliation,” which communicated to citizens the Church’s official position regarding the defeat of the de facto government: this was not the time to revise the recent past but a time of reconciliation for all Argentine people. The term “war” was used in this document, but it referred to the war recently fought to recover the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) from the United Kingdom.

If the military government and the Catholic Church were the first entities to suggest that state terrorism had actually been a war, the first efforts from within Argentine society to follow this path came from a civilian association created in 1979, whose purpose was to pay tribute and commemorate the military and security men who had died in this so-called war against “subversion.” Adopting the name Familiares de Muertos por la Subversión, or FAMUS (“Relatives and friends of the dead by subversion”), this association concentrated on celebrating religious ceremonies and publishing the newsletter *Tributo*. FAMUS, dissolved almost twenty years ago,²⁹ combined negationist propaganda with the vindication of the right to social recognition of the dead, victims of actions conducted by armed organizations during the 1970s. Between 1984 and 1985, negationism began to gain visibility as an opponent group in the dispute over determining the generally accepted account of the past, with its public demonstrations against investigations into the consequences of state terrorism and, in particular, its fierce opposition to the trials of the military juntas that governed the country between 1976 and 1983.³⁰ Subsequently, the “Nunca Más” report, the judgment of the Federal Court concerning former military juntas’ commanders in chief, the “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience” laws, and the presidential pardons of 1999 and 2000 reinforced, in different ways, the explanatory power of characterizing the recent Argentine past as a war.³¹

Incorporating the Memorial Register in the Negationist Fight: The Question of “Complete” Memory

In this way and by these means, the representation of the recent past as a “war” managed to solidly settle within the Argentine society, offering the negationists a context favorable to spreading their theories. The progressive consolidation of a democratic system in Argentina benefited the emergence of debates about the past and about state terrorism, in which the notion of “war” was the strong point in the negationists’ argument. Faced with the progress of judicial investigations into

the consequences of state terrorism, the negationists were compelled to intervene to refute stories and memories that did not subscribe to the notion of “war” as the organizing myth of the recent Argentine past.

Argentine negationism reproduces quite faithfully the French matrix described above. The Argentine negationists’ approach is similar to that of their French counterparts; the local impact of authors such as Bardèche, Rassinier, and Faurisson surpasses that of any other negationist—David Irving excluded. The key here is the strong presence of French intransigent Catholicism, a true driving force of French reactionary thought in Argentina, in Irving’s work. The existence of a niche of extremist activists in this country who also nourish themselves on Mediterranean reactionary thought is one reason for the dominance of the French model on the subject, as shown in the work of Sandra McGee Deutsch, Ronald Dolkart, Cristián Buchrucker, and Daniel Lvovich.³² When faced with voices that conflict with their own view of the world and their own interpretation of the past, negationists first act to discredit those statements by labeling them as inventions or as responses to an implicit or explicit political intent. This was the case in what could be considered the first local negationism event: the publication and media diffusion of the book *La otra campana del “Nunca Más”* (“The other truth of ‘never again’”), written by Miguel Osvaldo Etchecolatz, a former captain in the Buenos Aires Police Department and former director of investigations on that force (1976–1977). In 1997, following the launch of his book at the Buenos Aires Book Fair, Etchecolatz embarked on a campaign to denounce the final CONADEP report,³³ describing it as a “lie” and an invention of the perpetrators of the “subversive war.” Confined to extreme-right bookstores, this book had better luck on public television,³⁴ although its impact created a certain discomfort in the audience and minimized the positive effects expected for the negationist cause.

This was the trend of what could be considered the first moment of a fully constituted negationism, during which those involved in the implementation of state terrorism were themselves the principal agents in campaigns conducted to establish their views about the past within society. With the sanction of presidential pardons³⁵ and the subsequent reactivation of trials and judicial investigations on the consequences of state terrorism, this stage—governed by the direct intervention of perpetrators and by failed attempts to refute the investigations undertaken into the consequence of state terrorism—found its closure. Since 2000, the center of gravity has begun to shift from the invalidation of state terrorism toward a pretended “duty to memory.”

The first sign of this change was apparent in an event that combined the main characteristics of both stages. An official association of retired military personnel, the Argentine Army Military Association, decided to publish a large-scale work in which interventions by those responsible for applying state terrorism were combined with a strong demand for legal registration of those dead as a result of actions by guerrillas in the pantheon of those fallen in the supposed “war.” This book, titled *In Memoriam*, was first published in 1998 and completed by two more volumes; it again uses the notion of war, although introducing what was certainly novel: the idea that the “war” continued and must now be fought on the level of collective memory, as the chosen title clearly indicated.

The Renewal of Negationist Personnel

This modification in both the communicative strategy and the content of Argentine negationist discourse is accompanied by another, also significant, whose con-

sequences and evolution are difficult to measure: a generational renewal in the ranks of negationism, nurturing young professionals to continue what they preach. The inclusion of a new, younger cohort of activists—many of them university educated, and not all of them belonging to the military environment—has given a new boost to negationist activism.

With respect to discourse content, newer groups and propagandists no longer work only on characterizing the 1970s as a “war”; instead they deal with a variety of topics: vindicating and/or comparing the memory of guerrilla actions’ victims with those who suffered under state terrorism; impugning judicial proceedings against military and security personnel; reconstructing a “complete memory,” a search for the historical “truth” to confront state manipulation; organizing campaigns to discredit government officials for their political background; progressively replacing the term “subversion” with the term “terrorism”; and denouncing the political nature of the current version of 1970s history. Probably the most significant factor in this new stage of negationism, with respect to its objectives, is the attempt to include in the national calendar a commemorative day for persons killed by the actions of guerrilla organizations.

The focal point of negationist efforts during the past decade has shifted toward the sphere of memory. Their demand is presented as neutral and legitimate, which is its main attraction for their audience. Thus it could be appreciated in the declaration of principles of one of the “stars” in this new phase of Argentine negationism: the association *Argentinos por la Memoria Completa* (in English, “Argentineans for a Complete Memory”). In the “About Us” section of their Web site, they presented themselves as a “group of young Argentineans” united by a common interest in 1970s Argentine history to connect via the Internet with “citizens throughout the country who feel the necessity of expressing their gratitude to those who fought subversion and terrorism.” Their eruption onto the political scene took place when they published on their Web site a letter written by the former general Reynaldo Benito Bignone, and addressed to “the youth,” in October 2006. In this document, the last president of the “national reorganization process” called on the new generation to become modern “idealists” who—just like the revolutionaries of May 1810—would rise against adversity in order to finish “what we were not able to finish.”³⁶

This association promoted another figure of the “new negationist wave” in Argentina: the lawyer Nicolás Márquez, born in 1975 in Mar del Plata, a city in the province of Buenos Aires. Author of two bestsellers,³⁷ he represents his written work as an “objective” view on the recent past, free of personal ambition. Márquez has taken care to attack the condemnation of state terrorism not only in classic local negationist terms but also by resorting to legal arguments such as impugning Argentina’s accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which legislates on crimes against humanity.

Those groups that promote “complete memory” have attempted to install in the national calendar of celebrations a day for “victim of guerrilla terrorism,” to be observed on 5 October. The chosen date corresponds to the combat between the army and the guerrilla organization Montoneros, which assaulted the 29th Infantry Regiment in the province of Formosa. *Argentinos por la Memoria Completa* called for remembrance of the “dead by subversion,” a practice repeated since 2001. At present, it is the *Centro de Estudios Legales sobre el Terrorismo y sus Víctimas*, or CELTYV (in English, “Center for Legal Studies on Terrorism and Its Victims”),³⁸ that continues the campaign to include the “National Day of the Victims of Terrorism” on the official calendar. Their campaign consists of mass demonstrations

in Plaza San Martín, a central square in the city of Buenos Aires, with both civilian and military speakers: the *leitmotiv* is “know the victims of terrorism.” During the first week of every October, publicists and militants from CELTYV and Memoria Completa participate in political media programs—such as *Hora Clave*, hosted by journalist and university professor Mariano Grondona—to publicize their activities and public demonstrations during that week.³⁹ These campaigns receive important support from *La Nueva Provincia*, the most important daily newspaper in the province of Buenos Aires, whose strategy is to reproduce the political and judicial actions carried out by the associations that seek justice for the victims of state terrorism. CELTYV tries to be the opposite number of the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, or CELS (in English, “Center for Legal and Social Studies”), one of the most important human-rights organizations in Argentina and throughout Latin America.

Another figure who regained visibility in the context of this renewal of Argentine negationism is the journalist Juan Bautista “Tata” Yofre, director of the Secretariat of State Intelligence (SIDE) during Carlos S. Meném’s first administration. A series of books that achieved great sales success, in which Yofre suggests understanding state terrorism as a “low-intensity war” and an unavoidable response to the violence carried out by armed organizations, is the outcome of his pen and of his trajectory through SIDE.⁴⁰ In his books, Yofre constantly highlights the magnitude of the violence carried out by guerrilla groups and stresses that it occurred within a constitutional context; his aim is to exculpate General Juan Perón’s last government and the armed forces with respect to the application of state terrorism as a means to put an end to the political violence experienced in Argentina toward 1976. His argument is—conscious or unconsciously—a restatement of the “theory of the two demons,” which, in Yofre’s case, serves the ends that negationism pursues: according to his reasoning, state terrorism is converted into a sort of sought and deserved punishment.⁴¹

One of the most recent additions to the ranks of negationism is CELTYV (mentioned above), presided over by the lawyer Victoria Villarruel. This entity tries to reproduce the model of its Spanish almost-namesake, the Asociación Víctimas del Terrorismo (“association of victims of terror”), which focuses on the consequences of the actions of the armed Basque group ETA. CELTYV presents its *raison d’être* and its activities as a response to the needs of victims of guerrilla violence during the 1970s; its activities focus on seeking comparability between victims of state terrorism and victims of actions by guerrilla organizations, particularly with respect to legal recognition in pursuit of legal reparations. Along with organizing and sponsoring various commemorative events in honor of those vindicated as their “own” dead, CELTYV provides legal advice and encourages its members to launch lawsuits against the state demanding compensations for the loss of their relatives and friends in what they have defined as the “war against subversion.” The activities of this association corroborate the changes pointed out above: by prioritizing the definition of terrorism, CELTYV restores the *de facto* government’s initial characterization, in its report *El terrorismo en la Argentina*, in assessing repressive state actions.

Another recent arrival to the negationist dispute—also confirming the trend of renewal mentioned above—is Leandro Viotto Romano (b. 1985), a young law student at the Instituto Universitario de la Policía Federal Argentina (University Institute of the Argentine Federal Police) who is linked to national deputy Nora Ginzburg of the Frente por los derechos ciudadanos (a group detached from the RECREAR party).

Advising this legislator on commissions on criminal legislation and internal security, Viotto Romano is the author, among other minor works of the same tone, of the book *Silencio de mudos. La subversión en Argentina (1959–2005) de las armas al poder institucional y político* (in English, “Silence of the Deaf: Subversion in Argentina (1959–2005), from Arms to Institutional and Political Power”). Following a first self-published edition, the book was republished by Dunken and, according to Viotto Romano, has since gone through five more editions. In this case the negationist proposal is radicalized, freed from any demand of memory. According to the back cover of *Silencio de mudos*, the text

debunks the myth of the 30,000 disappeared, unmasks the real violators of human rights, and exposes the current Kirchnerist public servants who, in certain circumstances, did not hesitate to rise up against constitutional governments. Other extreme-left personages such as Hebe de Bonafini and Estela Carlotto are not excluded from the analysis in this book.⁴²

For a partial list of Argentinean negationist Web sites see Table 1.

Table 1: Some Argentine negationist Web sites

Organization	URL
Movimiento por la Verdadera Historia (“Movement for true history”), established in 2008	http://www.verdaderahistoria.com/blog/?paged=2
Asociación de familiares y amigos de los presos políticos de Argentina (“Association of relatives and friends of Argentine political prisoners”), est. 2006	http://afyappa.blogspot.com/
Unión de Promociones (“Union of promotions”), est. 2005	http://www.energyworld.org/UP/
Asociación de Abogados por la Justicia y la Concordia (“Lawyers’ association for justice and concord”), est. 2006	http://www.justiciayconcordia.org/
B1. Vitamina para la memoria de la Guerra en los ’70 (“B1: Vitamin for the memory of the war in the 1970s”), est. 2007	http://b1memoria.blogspot.com/
Comisión de homenaje permanente a los muertos por la subversión (“Permanent commission to honor the dead by subversion”), est. 2006	http://energyworld.org/anita/index.htm
La historia paralela (“Parallel history”), est. 2006	http://www.lahistoriaparalela.com.ar/
La botella al mar (“Message in a bottle”), est. 2000	http://www.labotellaalmar.com.ar/
La caja de Pandora (“Pandora’s box”), date unknown	http://www.lacajadepandoraonline.com/

Some Preliminary Conclusions

Manipulating the past for political purposes is a long tradition in Argentina. Revisionists of all kinds have used this resource to captivate their audiences—in uniform or out of it—particularly in periods of crisis. Nevertheless, what I have here called “Argentine negationism” goes beyond the boundaries of any revisionism. During the stage that Argentina is currently going through, the disputes supported by local negationists are part of their fierce opposition to current efforts at discovering the fate of many detained-disappeared people. Argentine negationism is, in this sense, an attempt to obstruct the job of judging and punishing the perpetrators of state terrorism. To reverse the judicial situation of many military personnel and members of the security forces for their involvement in crimes against humanity is—currently—the ultimate goal of Argentine negationist activism.

“A small but fierce sect,” to adopt a definition by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Argentine negationism also tries to appropriate historical description of the 1970s in order to provide another element that facilitates the exculpation of perpetrators of state terrorism before society. From a macro-structural view, the epiphenomenon that local negationism embodies presents itself as a sample of how Argentine society relates to this past, at the same time traumatic and recent.

For the above-mentioned reasons, I consider that in Argentina, in the case of misrepresentation of the recent past as “war” instead of state terrorism, we cannot speak about “revisionism”; but we can extrapolate the notion of negationism to characterize the groups and individuals who argue that in the 1970s Argentina was waging a war against “communism” and that the government’s crimes against humanity were committed during this war, or that they did not exist (“It is a lie of those defeated in the ‘war’”). These groups are not revisionists; rather, those whom I have called “negationists” do not investigate the past to build their narrative of the recent past but, instead, use all possible means to install their version of history and to deny the reality of state terrorism.

The *revision* of the immediate past implies a job in which historians should become even more involved. The life and work of Pierre Vidal-Naquet constitute an example of how to tackle the question of negationism from within the discipline of history; they also show the professional and political path that we should follow as historians. Whatever the historical and social context may be, manipulation and distortion of the past represents nothing more than a political response to a series of historical problems. Fortunately, the truth is indestructible, in spite of negationists.⁴³

Notes

1. A previous version of this paper was presented at panel no. 76, “Uses of the Past in Argentina: Historiographic Production and Collective Debates over National History (19th and 20th centuries),” of the XII Interschool Conference of History Departments, held at Universidad Nacional del Comahue (San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro) on 28–31 October 2009. I would like to thank Alejandro Cattaruzza for his comments, which helped me to improve this work.
2. Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000); Martine Aubry and Olivier Duhamel, *Petit dictionnaire pour lutter contre l’extrême droite* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995), s.v. “Négationnisme.”
3. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Los asesinos de la memoria*, trans. León Mames (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1994).

4. “The great audience discovers [in 1978] the suspicious means of the ‘revisionists,’ a qualifier they ascribe to themselves with impunity: the revision of history being a traditional method for scientists, herein we prefer the barbarism—less elegant but more appropriate—‘negationism,’ as it is a system of thought, an ideology, and not a scientific, or simply critical, process.” Henry Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy. De 1944 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990), 176. Unless otherwise stated, all English translations are my own.
5. For an in-depth analysis see Daniel Feierstein, *El genocidio como práctica social. Entre el nazismo y la experiencia argentina* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007).
6. Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, 14; Pier Paolo Poggio, *Nazismo y revisionismo histórico* (Barcelona: Ediciones Akal, 2006), 81–95.
7. Pierre Milza, “Le négationnisme en France,” *Relations Internationales* 65 (1991): 9–22.
8. Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France*, 14–5.
9. Vidal-Naquet, *Los asesinos de la memoria* (see note 3 above).
10. Maurice Bardèche, *Nuremberg ou la terre promise* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1948).
11. For reasons of length, I deal here only with the origins and development of negationism in France. This approach must be completed by consideration of its ramifications in North America, Great Britain, Germany, and some Arab countries. Arthur Butz, Germar Rudolf, Ernst Zündel, Ahmed Rami, and David Irving should at least be mentioned as continuers and disseminators of these theses outside France, which are not analyzed here.
12. Rassinier, a high school teacher, was arrested by the Gestapo, deported, and tortured, and was released after a year of imprisonment, almost completely disabled. See Gisèle Sapiro, “Le négationnisme en France,” *Revue de synthèse* (5th ser., 2004): 217–28.
13. Paul Rassinier, *Le Mensonge d’Ulysse. Regard sur la littérature concentrationnaire* (Bourg-en-Bresse, France: Éditions Bressanes, 1950). On Rassinier see Vidal-Naquet, *Los asesinos de la memoria*, 54–60; Florent Brayard, *Comment l’idée vint à M. Rassinier. Naissance du révisionnisme* (Paris, Fayard, 1996); Nadine Fresco, *Fabrication d’un antisémite* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999).
14. Robert Faurisson, “Le ‘problème des chambres à gaz,’” *Défense de l’Occident*, June 1978, 33–9.
15. Vidal-Naquet, *Los asesinos de la memoria*, 92–102.
16. Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France*, 457–88.
17. Nadine Fresco, “Négationnisme,” in *Encyclopædia Universalis* (2004), <http://www.universalis.fr/corpus2-encyclopedie/117/0/C010139/encyclopedie/NEGATIONNISME.htm> (accessed 2 June 2010).
18. The dissertation was removed from the history department of a Parisian university and transferred to the French department in Nantes, where the members of Roquès’s defense committee were not experts in history, were personally related to the candidate, and, in two cases, were extreme-right activists. For further information on the *affaire Roquès* see Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France*, 407–20.
19. For reasons of length, the outline offered here is incomplete. There have since been other incidents that demonstrate the survival of negationism in France. One of the most resonant had its epicenter, once again, at the University of Lyon; this time it was a professor of literature and Japanese culture who supported and encouraged anti-Semitic and negationist research. The French government gave the historian Henry Rousso the task of investigating this case and, based on Rousso’s report, decreed the dismissal of the professor, who was an important member of the National Front.
20. This is an incipient discussion within academia, and, in this article, neither the word “revolution” nor any of its derivations is used to characterize the 1970s in Argentina. Guillermo O’Donnell suggests the category of “popular activation” to define the combination of social protest and armed protest as generators of violence within the framework of a long proscription (1955–1973) of the majority party in Argentina. María José Moyano has reintroduced, expanded, and developed this approach. See Guillermo O’Donnell,

- 1966–1973. *El Estado burocrático autoritario. Triunfos, derrotas y crisis* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1982); María José Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol: Armed Struggle 1969–1979* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
21. Describing a type of demonstration inaugurated by human-rights organizations in Argentina that consists of publicly denouncing a certain person—generally in that person's presence—the word *escrache* comes from the local *argot*, known as *lunfardo*.
 22. Various propagandists for intransigent Catholicism and the extreme right, as well as adherents of traditional political parties, have found in the increasing number of social demonstrations and, particularly, of armed demonstrations a verification of this diagnosis. This interpretation had been assimilated by a large proportion of future perpetrators of state terrorism, who had been trained according to this ideological framework between 1955 and 1976; see Mario Ranalletti, “Contrainsurgencia, catolicismo intransigente y extremismo de derecha en la formación militar argentina. Influencias francesas en los orígenes del terrorismo de Estado (1955–1976),” in *Terrorismo de Estado y genocidio en América Latina*, ed. Daniel Feierstein, 253–84 (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2009). For a study of political violence between 1969 and 1979 see Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol*, ch. 6.
 23. 24 March 1976–10 December 1983.
 24. For examples of this campaign, taken from print and radio media, see Eduardo Blaustein and Martín Zubieta, *Decíamos ayer. La prensa argentina bajo el Proceso* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Colihue, 1998), 76–155.
 25. *El terrorismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Poder Ejecutivo Nacional, 1979–1980).
 26. Conferencia Episcopal Argentina, “Los últimos tiempos,” in *Iglesia y Comunidad Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiana, 1981). This document represents the sixty-second full meeting of the Episcopal Conference, held on 4–9 May 1981. For a better and more complete study of this subject see Horacio Verbitsky, *Doble juego. La Argentina católica y militar* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2006).
 27. 2 April–14 June 1982.
 28. Law no. 22.924, 23 March 1983, art. 1.
 29. In 1991, serious financial problems compelled the organization to cease its operations.
 30. On these historical processes see Carlos Santiago Nino, *Juicio al mal absoluto* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2006); Jaime Malamud Goti, *Terror y justicia en Argentina: Responsabilidad y democracia después de los juicios contra el terrorismo de Estado* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones de la Flor, 2000).
 31. On this subject see Mario Ranalletti, “Apuntes sobre la construcción del relato de la historia argentina reciente en el cine (1983–1989),” *Film-Historia* 8, 1 (1999): 3–16.
 32. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds., *The Argentine Right. Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1983); Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900–1932: The Argentine Patriotic League* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Cristián Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y peronismo. La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial, 1927–1955* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987); Daniel Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara Editor, 2003).
 33. CONADEP is the Spanish acronym for Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons.
 34. One of the most-watched TV programs at the time invited Etchecolatz to present his book on air. In front of him the host seated national deputy Alfredo Bravo, one of the detainee-disappeared.
 35. In 1989–1990, Argentina's then president, Carlos Saúl Menem, announced a series of pardons (a total of ten decrees sanctioned between 7 October 1989 and 30 December 1990) that benefited almost 3,000 people, mostly civilian, military, and security men involved in the application of state terrorism. Decrees 1002, 1003, 1004, and 1005, dated 7 October 1989; Decrees 2741, 2742, and 2743, dated 30 December 1990.

36. Before an investigation program discovered the damaging information that the association's president, Karina Mujica, practiced prostitution, Argentines for a Complete Memory appeared in a more virulent way, including on its homepage a reminder that (retired) commandant Ricardo Miguel Cavallo was "illegally detained in Spain" and that his detention threatened national sovereignty. The homepage stated that the association's efforts were "dedicated to the men and women who during the 1970s wore a uniform to defend the Fatherland. As we have collected the blood of our martyrs to raise the Argentine flag, and because we are committed to our prisoners of war, for them we light today this memory flame—the flame of recognition and pride of a people—the flame that will never fade out" (Argentinos por la Memoria Completa, <http://www.memoriacompleta.com.ar>). Argentinos por la Memoria Completa has since moved to Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=13770870034>, accessed 7 June 2010). For an account of the Mujica affair, see Lorena Basani, "La doble moral, según Rolando Graña," *Clarín*, 20 September 2006.
37. Nicolás Márquez, *La otra parte de la verdad* (2004); Nicolás Vázquez, *La mentira oficial. El setentismo como política de Estado* (2006). Both these books were self-published. They can be found in privileged positions in several bookstores, a sign of a significant sales volume. In 2008 Vázquez published *El Vietnam argentino. La guerrilla marxista en Tucumán*, with a prologue by Rosendo Fraga, Jr. On Márquez's work see Marcos Mayer, "Contradicciones de la Memoria Completa," *Clarín*, 30 December 2006, 3; Germán Ferrari, *Símbolos y fantasmas. Las víctimas de la guerrilla: de la amnistía a la "justicia para todos"* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2009).
38. CELTYV, <http://www.victimasdeargentina.com> (accessed 7 June 2010).
39. Grondona is one of the fiercest defenders of the "completed memory" position, that is, the recognition of the same status for victims of guerrilla violence, characterizing these crimes as crimes "against humanity." In an article for the conservative newspaper *La Nación*, he defends this position based on the case of two sisters whose identity was changed when their parents were murdered by perpetrators of state terrorism and they were "adopted" by a foster family, which meant the denial of their identity over a period of decades. The work of the associations Mothers of May Square and Grandmothers of May Square revealed this crime. When the truth became known, the two sisters had very different reactions: one decided to break with their foster family; but the other did not accept the truth and became a negationist activist. See Mariano Grondona, "Las hermanas Donda," *La Nación*, 7 October 2009, http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1183418 (accessed 4 June 2010).
40. After successfully self-publishing the first edition, Yofre was offered a contract by Random House, while the publishing imprint Sudamericana republished the first volume of his work on the 1970s and published those that followed. The titles are as follows: "Nadie fue." *Crónica, documentos y testimonios de los últimos meses, días y horas de Isabel Perón en el poder* (1st ed., 2006); "Fuimos todos." *Cronología de un fracaso, 1976–1983* (2007); and *Volver a matar. Los archivos ocultos de la "Cámara del terror" (1971–1973)* (2009). Yofre continues the line of argument opened by journalist Carlos Manuel Acuña, although with much more media success, beyond the boundaries of negationists and extreme-right groups.
41. "The theory of the two demons" (in Spanish, *teoría de los dos demonios*) is a political interpretation of the 1970s in Argentina, promoted by the government in 1983–1985 with great success. According to this interpretation, the political violence and state terrorism experienced by the country during those years were the result of a clash between two extremisms ("the two demons")—the military and the guerrillas—in which civil society was not involved.
42. Leandro Viotto Romano, *Silencio de mudos. La subversion en Argentina (1959–2005) de las armas al poder institucional y político* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Dunken, 2005).
43. Vidal-Naquet, *Los asesinos de la memoria*, 13.

The Opposition Front against Compulsory Military Service: The Conscription Debate and Human-Rights Activism in Post-dictatorship Argentina

Santiago Garaño

PhD candidate, Philosophy and Literature School, University of Buenos Aires, Grant holder of the National Scientific and Technical Research Center (CONICET)

Compulsory military service (CMS) was in place in Argentina from 1902 to 1995. Although its abolition was directly linked to the murder of soldier Omar Carrasco, the prosecution of this case of violence should not ignore the pre-existing opposition movement that developed toward the end of the last dictatorship (1976–1983). Within the context of a wider debate on the functioning of conscription, in November 1983 a group of human-rights activists launched the Opposition Front against the CMS (FOSMO). This article examines FOSMO's history, which offers insight into the hypothesis that, under certain historical and political circumstances, human-rights activists can not only contribute to debate but challenge and limit state violence through a series of political and legal strategies. The author analyzes the links (people, arguments, disputes) that FOSMO constructed, first, to question a strongly rooted institution in young men's socialization (and highly significant in the building of masculinity); second, to denounce not the "failures" or "excesses" but the logic of the operation and the values and violent practices that organized it; and, finally, to seek institutional channels to achieve the abolition of this compulsory system.

Key words: compulsory military service, freedom of conscience, human-rights activism

Introduction

Compulsory military service (CMS) was in effect in Argentina from 1902 to 1995.¹ That is, for almost 100 years, young men aged twenty (after 1977, aged eighteen), selected by drawing lots and declared physically and mentally "fit," received a period of military training through the Armed Forces. Although the abolition of CMS was directly linked with the murder of soldier Omar Carrasco (which occurred at a military base in the province of Neuquén on 6 March 1994),² the active prosecution of this case of violence should not obscure the existence of a prior opposition movement that began toward the end of the last dictatorship (1976–1983). In November 1983, in the context of a wider debate on the functioning of conscription, a group of human-rights activists known as the Opposition Front against the CMS (FOSMO) launched its movement. Unlike other means of evading conscription (through legitimate channels involving military personnel), FOSMO became a political organization

that built a series of arguments challenging conscription based on the concept of “freedom of conscience.”³

In this article, I will show how, through the struggle initiated by Eduardo Pimentel (and focusing on FOSMO), the ongoing agenda of the human-rights movement was expanded. In this line of analysis, FOSMO’s history offers insight into the hypothesis that, under certain historical and political circumstances, human-rights activism, through a series of political and legal strategies, can challenge and limit state violence.⁴ I will also show that human-rights organizations are not created or founded but acquire their unique identity through their singular political actions.⁵

“Freedom of Conscience”: A Family Decision

During a press conference on 7 April 1983, Eduardo Pimentel, one of founding members of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH), and his family announced their decision to stop their son Ignacio from complying with the CMS, protecting themselves through the exercise of the *patria potestad*—a parent’s right to custody. The family’s refusal to let their children comply with the CMS was linked to a broader debate at the end of the Malvinas (Falklands) War and the decline of the dictatorial regime: between 1982 and 1983, the continuity of conscription was one of the issues on the APDH’s agenda.

Pimentel said that he had presented a legal document on 2 November 1982 and an annex addressed to the illegitimate president, Reynaldo Bignone, a few weeks afterwards on 13 January 1983. Pimentel pointed out that the legal contradiction between the CMS law, which “involves the child but not the father,” and the idea that *patria potestad* refers to a minor’s “guardian.” He also alleged “religious, moral and political” reasons: “I teach my children in my family not to kill; so I cannot hand my son over to people who will teach him that his duty is to kill the enemy, when the gospel tells us that we have to love them.”⁶

I intend to exercise the right of *patria potestad*, but what obliges me in conscience to act as I do is the right of a responsible parent, and primarily before God and before men, that comes to us in a divine and natural way... Our responsibility as parents obliges us to be coherent and not to contradict ourselves, to bear witness to our faith and our thinking ... How, then, can we combine all due respect for parents and teenage behavior when he or she sees that such respect has not been respected? Deciding to kill a man is a serious problem of conscience. If your parents say, “You shall not kill,” and the state orders you to “kill the enemy,” both of which are imposed on the youth, what comes next?⁷

However, Pimentel said, together with these moral and religious reasons, the legal arguments became an excellent resource to encourage a debate within the judicial system: “It is the first time that a case of this kind has been presented ... My conclusion, based on Article 275 of Velez Sarfield’s code, is different. It explicitly mentions *patria potestad* when deciding whether the child will or will not comply with the CMS.”⁸ After this press conference, Ignacio Pimentel was summoned to the Military District on 18 March, where Colonel Lujan informed him that the commander in chief had ruled that “custody” extended only to volunteers and not to those required to comply with the CMS. In light of this ruling, Ignacio was called to appear for his medical examination and his subsequent enlistment in March. Eduardo explained that when the order came, the entire family made a decision and accompanied Ignacio to the regiment:

When we arrived ... we had a verbal confrontation with a lieutenant colonel ... The point is that after arguing heatedly for about ten minutes, the lieutenant colonel informs me that they will keep Ignacio. Imagine my reaction. I said, "You have all the power to trample on my *patria potestad* and contradict my decision, but I assure you this is very serious and I will not give up my struggle." I left the place and initiated a fast; my wife followed. After two hours, my son called home to announce that he had been exempted "owing to a physical problem." I do not really care about the actual reasons why the ruling military district managed to reach that resolution. The thing is that they have done it; they have respected my authority as a parent.⁹

Faced with this "abnormal" case (the appeal to "custody" and "freedom of conscience"), and to avoid a more serious conflict, the military authorities attempted to use a well-known mechanism to "exempt" Pimentel's son by declaring him "unfit" during the medical examination. Despite the military authorities' decision, Eduardo Pimentel took his case to the prosecutor: "I am conducting a thorough study of the subject with two attorneys to determine the reasons for the opposition [to the CMS]" and, by bringing the issue to a non-military environment, let them be "the judges [who] respond to our questions."¹⁰ In this sense, Pimentel stated, "It is a paradox that the *patria potestad* enables parents to prevent their children from pursuing a military career but is useless when an entire family opposes a young man's conscription."¹¹ Not satisfied with the outcome of his son's case, he launched a movement for "freedom of conscience." The goal was for his son's case to have a multiplier effect—to have a strong political impact rooted in the exercise of freedom of conscience.

This article assumes that the concept of "human rights" is not meaningful enough in the abstract and that how this notion is translated in practice depends on power relations forged in local contexts.¹² That is, while human rights is in theory a self-proclaimed universal value, it is in fact culturally and politically interpreted and can be modified so that its meaning depends on how the concept is politically articulated in specific contexts.¹³ In Argentina, the conformation of the human-rights movement has not only built a series of demands on the systematic violation of human rights during the last dictatorship but also played a central role in defining the term "human rights."¹⁴ During the first years of Argentina's democratic transition, the issue of human rights was intimately tied to the "problem of the disappeared" during the last Argentine military dictatorship.¹⁵

The human-rights movement was a heterogeneous group of social figures that actively encouraged resistance against the state violence, penal persecution, and social condemnation generated during the dictatorship. In this way, the movement actively reported and denounced the conformation of the terrorist state¹⁶—structured by the Doctrine of National Security (DNS)¹⁷—and the kidnappings and disappearances of people as a repressive modality executed clandestinely by the military forces.¹⁸ One of the acts denounced by the human-rights movement was the disappearance of conscripts during the last dictatorship: in 1982, the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) documented the disappearance of more than 100 soldiers conscripted under the CMS. Even though the military authorities explained the absences as off-duty days, "releases," absences without leave, or "away on official business," applying the administrative procedure for cases of "desertion," CELS demonstrated that the missing soldiers had been kidnapped by the military forces and that most of them were still missing.¹⁹

Pimentel, in his struggle to abolish the CMS and to promote freedom of conscience, sought to extend the boundaries of what are socially understood as violations of human rights. Although the complaint was associated with the systematic disappearances of conscripts between 1976 and 1983, Pimentel attempted to expand the universe of issues and problems that the Argentine human-rights agenda had to incorporate, analyze, and legitimize for society in a post-dictatorship context.

His struggle can be understood only within the context of the transition to democracy and the previous experience of the human-rights movement against state terrorism and its crimes. This movement no longer existed, but it gave citizens the tools to challenge state violence, together with a series of political and legal strategies and political experiences to endow it with authority and prestige.

In Argentine human-rights organizations, the figure of the *relative* was central. "Putting forward primordial bonds (initially seen as 'non-political,' as they are their own bonds in the private sphere or the domestic arena) managed to legitimize their spaces in public intervention."²⁰ In this sense,

the dictatorship claimed a family discourse intended to assign parents an individual responsibility for the safety of their children—whom the terrorist state itself was killing and making disappear—privatizing in this way families' responsibility to safeguard and control their children. By positioning and referring to themselves as "relatives," the human-rights activists politicized their family bonds with the victims.²¹

In the case of the struggle Pimentel initiated, we also see a father invoking the status of relative to legitimize his claim, appealing to freedom of conscience as a way to prevent his son from complying with the CMS. However, in this case the person who began this conflict was a male parent; by contrast, the majority of relatives initiating human-rights organizations have been women, self-defined as "mothers."²² This is because, until 1985, *patria potestad* was the right of men or, in the case of women, the right of single mothers and widows.²³ However, other factors may explain the appeal of the father's position, which gave rise to new meanings and resistance methods. This strategy was also part of the previous experience of the human-rights movement, which had succeeded in appropriating, giving new meaning to, and rejecting the traditional family model in the discourse of the last dictatorship.²⁴ This model—in which the family was the basic unit of the nation, and the nation was conceived of as the "big family"—linked the social structure to the biological order, giving natural characteristics to roles and social values:

The concept of the nation as a family . . . led to a definition of the political relationship between the state and citizens as family members, so that citizenship rights and duties were replaced by filial obedience. The official discourse painted citizens as immature children who needed the guidance of a firm father. This nation-family model followed the traditional Catholic model . . . [in which] the father is the head of the family and the mother is the one who both nourishes the family and safeguards traditional values.²⁵

Pimentel added that the appeal to this series of moral values also questions the foundations of the armed forces' family model. Máximo Badaró, in his research on the National Military School (NMS), explains that "the use of the family metaphor allows us, in turn, to invoke a model of social relations that positions the Army as the 'protective father' or 'guardian' for the whole of Argentinean society."²⁶

The military family that is recreated in the NMS is a patrilineal family in which children must obey and imitate the father. The freshman enters a model of social organization that represents positions associated with the figure of a father who holds the power to transmit knowledge and punishments and with subordinate positions associated with the place of the children.²⁷

So it was the “father” and “the guardian of your children,” and not a mother’s place, that gave Pimentel the authority and prestige to challenge compulsory conscription while opening up an area of dispute to explain what that role meant socially.

As noted in subsequent reports to Pimentel, the arguments against the CMS’s requirement were enriched by the Christian interpretation of violence, the defense of the family, the *patria potestad*, and a series of anti-war and pacifists arguments: “Through acts of war, the youth are taught a kind of historical linkage. This occurs in the majority of educational, military, and non-military institutions . . . In Christianity, which is my faith, but also before and after, these anti-war testimonies have taken place.”²⁸ Another issue was the criticism of the inculcation of a male warrior mentality:

Therefore, military institutions should be integrated with people with vocation. I do not say professionally, because this professional definition includes concepts of military effectiveness that I reject. What I want is a guardian of weapons; the soldier should guard the weapons, not to kill but to prevent from killing, to prevent their use and for the prevention of injustice, such as we suffer today.²⁹

However, rather than “conscientious objection,” Pimentel preferred to call his son’s and his family’s attitude “freedom of conscience”: “The freedom of the young, and of the family. I have relied on this family right, which is a basic state institution, recited as such, but unknown regarding the facts . . . This family institution has to be effectively recognized.”³⁰ He later wrote that

freedom of conscience, conscientious objection, enshrined by the Second Vatican Council, “everyone should consequently follow their conscience,” tells us that we cannot obey any order, and much less so those concerning murder. Thus, the CMS law is immoral according to Vatican II and commits an outrage against human rights.³¹

Once the Pimentel family’s decision had been made public, other parents and young people followed their strategy. Stojan Tercic, father of Alejandro, communicated his decision not to authorize his son’s compliance with the CMS to the illegitimate president, protecting himself with the exercise of *patria potestad*. In the letter he sent to the de facto president, he argued, “According to my conscience and exercising the *patria potestad*, I have decided not to allow my son Alejandro to answer the call for conscription. My decision is based on the belief that the CMS is opposed to God’s law, which says ‘Thou shall not kill,’ and there is no law above God’s law.”³² Fernando Angel Portillo, father of a young man from the 1965 military service cohort, sent a letter to the constitutional president, Raúl Alfonsín, explaining his opposition to his son’s compliance with the CMS, based on the principles of the Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and “my Christian conscience’s mandate.”³³ At this point, and with the constitutional authorities in office, Portillo was the fourth father to appeal to *patria potestad* to prevent his son from complying with the CMS.

FOSMO: From Family Decision to Political Struggle

Thanks to the impact that these cases acquired, on 13 November 1983, after the presidential elections of 28 October (the constitutional government was to take office on 10 December), FOSMO was constituted—conceived as a “pluralistic and ecumenical” institution seeking to concentrate persons and celebrities, groups and organizations, whose purpose was to fight for the abolition of the CMS. To replace the requirement of military service, they proposed “substitute activities, such as a social or civil service controlled by other sectors of the state and not by the armed forces.”³⁴ These would have the advantage of offering new ways to socialize and “shape” Argentine youth in the light of the new “problems” that the country was facing. Santiago Kovadloff, philosopher and member of FOSMO, argued in favor of an “optional service” and enumerated the benefits of implementing this new system:

An adult . . . is one who, in essence, is already in a position to decide what is good and what is not good for him. He should not be deprived of the opportunity to comply with the CMS, if desired. But there is no reason to force him to do it . . . If any obligation must now govern civilian and military conduct, it is that of acquiring, primarily, a substantial republican training in order to enable them all equally to consolidate the democratic demands of today.³⁵

In FOSMO’s founding document, the first area of dispute was the interweaving of violent practices involving what the CMS had accomplished and its relationship with the male morality of war that, during the twentieth century, had permeated Argentinean society. While denouncing the soldier’s subjugation to a “regime of severe discipline with physical, mental, and moral violence” by military personnel (with no real chance of repelling the arbitrary and humiliating acts of which he is the object), FOSMO questioned the adoption of a “military mentality, with a different and even opposite code of values to the rest of society,” that led to an “obsessive cult of military values.” However, far from denouncing the violence as an excess or a problem of the people in charge of the institution, they criticized the “structural character” of the institution, whose purpose was to “intervene in the social body”:

CMS’s characteristics do not arise as a consequence of the institution’s malfunctioning. On the contrary, they are the result of one of the main aims that was assigned to it at the time of its creation in 1901. Indeed, those who designed the current system assigned the CMS two main functions: one, to constitute a school for the citizenry’s morality, turning the army into “a powerful instrument to create public morality”; and the other, to act as an antidote against cosmopolitanism in a society composed of immigrants and the children of foreigners.³⁶

In a document published by FOSMO, Pedro Vendramin, another member, analyzed the CMS’s creation in 1901. He quotes Mariano Demaría, a congressional representative, in reference to a talk at the Military Academy in 1915 by Manuel Carle: “The officer feels that the nation has entrusted him with ‘the redemption of the uneducated, ignorant, and evil conscript, who is an Argentinean at birth but barbaric with respect to his condition, which is a threat to social stability and a threat to our culture.’”³⁷

In fact, it targeted the *cabecita negras*,³⁸ the indigenous populations, and the children of immigrants. It was about straightening out ideas or injecting nationalism to supposedly stateless people or to the children of European exiles like anarchists. And so, generation after generation, thousands of conscripts joined the army or navy—the

air force appeared much later [in 1950]—and, in this way, military society counted on the military service requirement to keep young people within its grasp, in order to teach them a value system that threatens civil institutions and the values of the people and that leaves the Constitution defenseless, and to provoke a series of seditious acts aimed at overthrowing several governments.³⁹

Soldiers were not “simple civilians who had to be instructed in warfare but foreigners who had to be nationalized, barbarians who had to be civilized. This ‘nationalization’ really only served to tame them, discipline them through different violent practices, ‘subdue the soldier’ (a phrase repeated in the barracks), by teaching discipline with ‘non-pedagogical’ methods, military training, long walks, physical punishment . . . , automatic responses, loss of personal identity, uniforms. . . .”⁴⁰ The slogan “subordination and courage” should be interpreted as “subordination to the whims of the uniformed professional” and denounced: this progressive loss of rights permeated the “violent methods” which were applied to soldiers and led to the deaths of some conscripts. Another FOSMO member, Alfredo Grande, highlighted the fact that FOSMO’s work was no longer to seek exceptions to the rule but, rather, to modify the rule, and invited others to join this movement: “You will fight for your child, but not just for him.”⁴¹

Because the CMS was actually a long-term bureaucratic institution, with its own structures, constitution, and organization for its members, norms, and rules,⁴² what the FOSMO wanted to do was to reveal the continual management that conscripts had to put up with, whether under a dictatorship or in a democracy. They thus demonstrated that from the beginning, the compulsory military system had the effect of normalizing military discipline throughout society, so that the punishments delivered in the barracks were seen as a normal part of military discipline.⁴³

Control over time and movement helped to discipline bodies during long waiting periods that encouraged a false immobility, forced marches, fast runs, the rigid schedule that deliberately cuts the most intimate times; the acceptance and approval of nonsensical orders that block critical thinking are the procedures imposed by every military hierarchy.⁴⁴

FOSMO’s Opposition

This active movement involving the CMS generated various forms of opposition to FOSMO. For example, Edward Siutti wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper *Tiempo Argentino* in March 1984:

I think like my sons’ father and like my father’s son that to die to defend a piece of my country, regardless of who the ruler is, however small and insignificant it may be, is perhaps the best death which any well-born man can claim. Of all the opinions the only one worth highlighting is that of Eduardo Pimentel . . . Not only is he, and I give good value and weight to what I say, a COWARD, but from his cowardice a coward’s family discourse emerges, and he intends to make it public, urging the youth, who are already confused, to the most ignoble desertion . . . Peace is a major achievement, but not at the expense of honor. And for a true patriot, national honor and one’s own honor are the same thing.⁴⁵

As this excerpt shows, the authorized position from which to defend the CMS was that of “my sons’ father and my father’s son,” a “well-born man” (a man who could aspire to a “heroic death” in battle). A man—even the father of sons—who opposed conscription was a “COWARD,” a man whose masculinity was deeply questioned. Eduardo

Pimentel wrote a lengthy letter, published in the same newspaper, in which he took a clearly anti-war stand and highlighted the naturalization of military socialization among Argentine youth: “My principles are different. I do not kill and will not kill any man ... War is a crime, every war is unjust, and those who cause it are criminals.”⁴⁶

Members of civil society strongly questioned the human-rights movement when it began to focus on the treatment of conscripts, who continued to be tortured and degraded and who had become the objects of state violence even under democratic government. This opposition arose because the movement dared to challenge a strongly rooted institution, in existence for more than eighty years, that also represented a highly meaningful experience for significant sectors of society. Since its creation in Argentina, large proportions of society considered conscription a rite of passage into male adulthood through the inculcation of a warrior mentality. At the same time, it played a role in the sense of belonging to—or exclusion from—the Argentine nation. Being a “man” and (therefore) being an Argentinean citizen (hypostatized in the fetish of having a *libreta de enrolamiento*, an identification card for men) were conditions that had been obtained by fulfilling the “duty” of military service (having first been declared “fit”). By surviving and living through this experience, one obtained this dual status.

However, other sectors in society made concerted efforts to avoid military service: to “escape” the draw, to be declared “unfit” in the medical examination, or to become conscientious objectors (e.g., the Jehovah’s Witnesses). Others tried to pay off military and medical authorities to make exceptions or be declared unfit, or to ease their way through military training through friends or close connections with military personnel. Among other reasons, conscription had become a space where soldiers were often used in a domestic capacity by the military—giving rise to the term “*co-lim-ba*,” short for *corre-limpia-barre* (“run, clean, sweep”); state violence was naturalized or was considered “a waste of time.”

Thus, questioning this ritual was tantamount to challenging the virility of those who fell under criticism. This was so because, as Henrietta Moore stresses, Western discourses about sexuality and gender construct women and men as different types of people. In Western cultures, Moore writes, “male sexuality and persons of the male gender are portrayed as active, aggressive ... and powerful; while female sexuality and persons of the female gender are seen as essentially passive, powerless, submissive, and receptive.”⁴⁷ These powerful dual discourses permeate society, and those who question them can be accused of not fulfilling the roles, attitudes, and daily socially constructed (self-)representations assigned to men and women. This explains the disparagement of Pimentel: being catalogued as a “coward” was synonymous with being passive, weak, submissive, and feminine.

Against this active debate, the commander-in-chief of the Army published an annex to the *Revista de Educación Militar* in which he posited that the war for “our” Malvinas Islands (in which a volunteer army had faced a conscripted army) had raised the issue of “replacing our current conscription system with a volunteer system to fill the ranks” for the armed forces, politicians, and society to consider. It was felt that the mandatory system had worked “with particular effectiveness” for eighty years and that it maintained its “validity” and was suited to “modern principles.” His final conclusions harshly questioned those who opposed the CMS:

- (e) In light of the analysis of global trends, the references that are currently heard from those who are promoting the merits of volunteer services ... are far from real.
 - (f) The experiences of some countries that have opted for voluntary service ... highlight the breakdown of discipline, the high costs that the system involves, and, in particular, the danger that citizens lose interest in national defense.
- It does not appear logical or desirable for our country that its adoption be advocated under the exclusive influence of a “Malvinas Syndrome” at this time.

While recognizing that not “everything must be kept as it is” and that there were “many aspects that can and must be improved,” the article damned those who criticized the operation of the CMS:

Finally, on a subject in which everyone feels empowered to express opinions and value judgments, today, more than ever, the old proverb holds: “SPEAK LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW AND NOTHING ABOUT WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW.”⁴⁸

The Launch: “Every war is unjust”

On 6 August 1984 at 5 p.m., the thirty-ninth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, the members of FOSMO held a demonstration at the Plaza de los dos Congresos to “abolish the CMS.” It was the launch of FOSMO at the doors of the Congress. The slogans read “For freedom of conscience”, “For the right of families to educate their children”, and “For the demilitarization of society”, “For more food for the world and fewer weapons of war.” Clearly, FOSMO did not define themselves as conscientious objectors but were fighting for “freedom of conscience”; they appealed to the right of the family to challenge the CMS and consolidated their pacifist and anti-war stance. This was the pillar on which the opposition rested.

The main speaker was Eduardo Pimentel, who also presented the main points of the petition⁴⁹ that would be read before the National Congress:

We, the Opposition Front against the CMS, have adopted the abolition of the CMS as our only goal. And for several reasons: because the CMS upholds the institution of slavery, and this cannot be, because it has been abolished. We call for its abolition because we want the freedom of conscience to be respected, the freedom of each person. The liberty of parents who have borne men to educate them as their conscience commands and not as mandated by the politicians in power; this is real, and this is what I demand: “no one, no instrument, warlike as it may be, is going to tread on my rights.”⁵⁰

On 9 August, three days after the demonstration, Eduardo Pimentel died at the age of sixty-one. Three of his sons took up his struggle. That is, a father’s struggle for freedom of conscience was ultimately inherited by three of his children. In its *Bulletin* of October 1984, FOSMO wrote to the then president,

We are on the same path, the path Eduardo Pimentel began when he turned his back on his two sons’ call for conscription. And we will follow that path. Although some think that Eduardo cannot guide us any longer, they are wrong. The true guide is an idea, generous and just ideas. Beyond death, they shall live. In those who make these ideas their own, developing them and taking action. In this regard, we have all been their children and will continue to be.

The Deaths of Conscripts

One of the first members of FOSMO was Eudoro Palacio, whose son Mario Daniel, a conscript of the 1964 cohort, died on 24 April 1983 in the Artillery Regiment Los Polvorines at the age of eighteen. The army's official version was that he died from "non-traumatic cardiac arrest resulting from liver and kidney failure," but his companions had a different version: "He died after a savage beating at the hands of several officers. He was tortured, according to witnesses, and received no medical treatment."⁵¹ For FOSMO, however, Mario Daniel's case was not the only one to be analyzed; it was incorporated into a broader complaint about everyday CMS routines: "Physical abuse in the CMS is the rule rather than the exception," as some claimed, "and the deaths of soldiers" were rarely made public.

But nobody can tell us that these are accidents or the defects of a system that needs correcting. We hold that all the deaths and violence are the inevitable result of the system. The inevitable result of the need to "bend," to teach young soldiers "subordination and courage." The inevitable result that occurs when some young men do not accept humiliation or gratuitous violence, or when their bodies just do not tolerate that particular way of "making us men."⁵²

In *Vidas Precarias*, Judith Butler discusses the characteristics of a particular form of violence, that which targets "unrealistic lives." Butler suggests that in certain social contexts and under certain historic conditions, certain deaths are more painful than others, while other lives that are far from protected are more vulnerable. This invisible and naturalized type of violence is aimed at a set of lives that are not considered worthy of attention or worth preserving. The violent termination of such lives does not leave traces, because such deaths are not socially recognized as losses and therefore do not merit an obituary or public mourning, since they do not fit the dominant cultural framework of "human."⁵³

If the possibilities of publicly authorized mourning reveal the rules that produce the "human," this differential distribution of grief makes it possible to render invisible the effects of state violence.⁵⁴ That is, there is a relationship between the violence that puts an end to these lives, the definition of a universe of beings recognized as "human" (and some others that are not), and the prohibition of public mourning. Butler seems to say that extreme violence by the state, quiet, natural, and even desired, can legitimately be exercised against those who have previously been stripped of their status as "human" (or as "citizens"?).

In this line of analysis, grief is not only the means by which a life becomes, or stops being, a life to remember painfully but, at the same time, gathers and recreates the national political community as it reveals the ties that bind us to others and that make us who we are. Butler argues that we are constituted by those deaths that we remember painfully, as well as by the deaths that we repress, those faceless anonymous deaths that make up the gloomy background of our social world.⁵⁵ For her, the challenge lies in recognizing the vulnerability and suffering of others (unevenly distributed throughout the world) and in taking collective responsibility for these lives and those deaths.

Butler constructs a national community with differential rights, lives, and deaths that are more or less worthy, bodies that are more protected and those that are vulnerable to state violence. However, as we see in the Eudoro case, Butler's argument opens the door for activism and social mobilization: it removes the anonymity of these deaths by means of a political struggle. FOSMO's battle for public recognition

of those unreal deaths made grief public; it proved itself as an effective mechanism to expand the boundaries of citizenry and the meaning of “human” (and, in that movement, the category “human rights”).

The Bill

Despite this extensive debate, FOSMO’s mobilization, and the electoral promises of the Radical Party, there was little change in the functioning of the CMS between 1983 and 1984. The Executive Power (EP) sent Congress a bill proposing an exception to the CMS where compliance was “incompatible” with “clear imperatives of moral conscience and religion.” Those exempted would be required to carry out some form of civil/community service for no less than one year under the coordination of an ad hoc committee.

Accompanying the EP’s proposal, FOSMO sent Congress a document containing another bill on “conscientious objection,” based on their analysis of the official proposal. FOSMO’s members argued that “conscientious objection is not ‘just a state of morally valuable affairs’ (as the message that accompanies the project . . . states), but a strict moral right of citizens as stipulated in the Constitution. . . .” The FOSMO document contained a significant systematization of the arguments opposing the CMS and a refinement of the civil/community service proposal:

Conscientious objection does not intend to repeal the CMS but to repeal its compulsion, at least with respect to those for whom this service creates a serious conflict of conscience. It is about solving legitimate subjective situations that are covered in the spirit of the Constitution, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of the Treaty of San José de Costa Rica, of which our country is a signatory.

Conscientious objection seeks not a privilege but justice, the exercise of a right. It is not a dispensation of a public charge but a substitution of the content. Instead of military service, a no less arduous civilian service, and, never lacking in our country, as in any nation in the world, a field to serve for the purpose of a common good.⁵⁶

The matching of the two types of service was intended to avoid “all kinds of discrimination” and “any action which may appear punitive” by the military; on the other hand, it was also intended to “ensure . . . that it would not be used fraudulently to evade constitutional duties.” Thus, “conscientious objection” and “civil service” would “benefit the social community and the citizens themselves.”⁵⁷ In an interview with the newspaper *La Voz*, Defense Minister Horacio Jaunarena stressed that from 1983 the number of conscripts in the combined forces had been reduced (from 70,000 to 35,000),⁵⁸ as had the probationary period for new conscripts. The “decompression of the international situation due to the diminishing possibility of impending conflicts does not mean that we are defenseless,” Jaunarena said, “but it allows us to plan our defense in a more orderly and rational way.”⁵⁹

However, it opposed the idea of an army composed solely of professional soldiers: “In an economic situation like ours it is very difficult to build a fully professional armed forces . . . Personally, I believe that our CMS can be improved and that before moving from one system to the other, it is necessary to carry out a good analysis of recruitment costs.”⁶⁰

The EP administration sent Congress the CMS exemption bill on 20 August 1984. Five years later, the newspaper *Nuevo Sur* questioned the EP’s decision to “freeze” any modification of the CMS that might “irritate” the military.⁶¹ This situation was even more paradoxical: on 10 March 1988, the Argentine state voted for a

resolution by the UN Human Rights Commission that called for states to recognize “conscientious objection” as a legitimate exercise of the right of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion “and recommended the elaboration of a law including ways to participate in civil service.”⁶²

Between 1984 and 1989, bills to regulate changes in the CMS multiplied, but all met the same fate: they were not debated in Congress. The initiative was taken up by the Christian Democrats’ congressional representative, Alberto Aramouni; he presented a bill on 21 June 1988 that contemplated a “community and alternative social service.” This bill was opposed under pressure from the Ministry of Defense, however, which also blocked a debate of *peronista* Carlos Ruckauf’s bill on the temporary reduction of the CMS.⁶³ A senator from the Radical Party, Antonio Berhongaray, sought the Army’s opinion on a proposal he had presented that would exempt “conscientious objectors.” According to the newspaper *Página 12*, hours before the Defense Committee issued an opinion on this project, Lt. Col. Ricardo Emilio Degiampietro—the “link” between the Army and Congress—went to Berhongaray’s office with a three-page top-secret report, unsigned and typed on paper without letterhead.⁶⁴ A partial list of arguments against those who opposed the CMS was published in the newspaper:

- The pseudo-religious arguments are fallacious.
- The fulfillment of citizens’ military obligations is not only not opposed to but fully reconciled with the Catholic faith.
- The proposal reflects an ideological view that works against the interests of the Republic.
- Unfortunate are those whose social conscience is being undermined by ideologues who, under the guise of pacifism, seek to disarm societies materially and spiritually so they can be conquered by evil atheistic ideologies that promote disarmament . . .
- Holding positions that lead to national vulnerability, particularly if they are mediated by national legislators, would signify “treason to the nation” and be an affront to the memory of all those who shed their blood for it.
- We should ask ourselves what the fate of our country would have been if its finest sons, in the darkest hours of the Republic, who came to live or die for, had allowed for conscientious objection.
- It would imply the subordination of an essential and indispensable requirement—the CMS—to a quite subjective fact (“a supposed deep religious, philosophical, or moral conviction”) that is impossible to confirm.
- Those who favor the objections should be reminded of the words that Boabdil’s mother pronounced after the fall of Granada to Christian troops led by Catholic monarchs in 1492: “Weep like a woman for what you could not defend as a man.”⁶⁵

This situation revealed how strongly some members of the military corporation resisted implementing any changes to the CMS and, in particular, their unwillingness to recognize the issue of “conscientious objection” as a collective and political way to circumvent the CMS. Understanding that FOSMO’s goal was not to protest “excesses” but to question the very logic of the way this institution functioned, the military corporation once again resorted to gendered language to challenge criticism and legitimize their interests⁶⁶—“Weep like a woman for what you could not defend

as a man”—portraying women as signifying weakness (crying) and men as warriors (who know how to defend themselves from foreign enemies).

The Portillo Case

Fernando Portillo, among the first members of FOSMO, had tried to prevent his son, Alfredo, from complying with the CMS by invoking the *patria potestad*. According to Fernando, he had heard that his friend Eduardo Pimentel had presented an appeal to prevent his children from complying with the CMS. He sent a letter to President Raúl Alfonsín justifying his decision:

We do not emphasize the religious aspect; our principle is a moral one. We resist our children's being instructed in the use of weapons and prepared to kill fellow human beings, whatever their religion. That is why we rely on Articles 275 and 276 of the Civil Code, which clearly express ... that children cannot leave home to enter the military without parental consent. The following stipulates that if the children leave the parental home, authorities can be asked to send them back.⁶⁷

Following his father's letter to the president, Alfredo Portillo received a letter summoning him to appear at the offices of the Military District of Buenos Aires under penalty of punishment. He did not do so. Once the administrative decision to enforce the CMS was noted, Portillo's case was sent to the judicial branch; five years later, the Supreme Court ruled that there was no constitutional basis for his refusal to comply with the CMS, even “reasons of conscience or deep conviction,” but recognized his right to do so without bearing arms.⁶⁸ This decision sparked an intense debate. Alfredo's parents were “dissatisfied” with the court ruling:

We are unhappy because we believe that no one can be forced in a civilized society ... [Instead,] it would be more beneficial to serve the country by carrying out a service to help others. ... Complying with the CMS is objectionable from every point of view, although it tries to appear to be an act of serving the country ... We propose a great national debate, in which all of the sectors involved can participate.⁶⁹

This ruling was not only widely discussed in the media but also aroused great dissatisfaction among the military authorities. Brigadier General William Walter alerted Defense Minister Horacio Jaunarena that “this ruling seriously worries the heads of the Armed Forces General Staff, as it has made individual freedom—specifically ‘freedom of conscience’—prevail above the common good of society,” and predicted that “if similar cases were to happen in a chain reaction in a not-so-distant future, the military service that citizens provide according to Law 17,531 would be significantly affected.” Finally, Walter asked the defense minister to instruct the attorney general, Andrés D'Alessio, to have prosecutors use “any means necessary to prevent the recurrence of a ruling like the above.”⁷⁰

Taking the same position months after the Supreme Court ruling, in July 1989 Colonel Auditor Raúl Edgardo Semberoiz published an article on conscientious objection in the *Revista Militar*.⁷¹ He questioned those who “opposed the obligation to bear arms in defense of the country based on the fact of belonging to the Catholic religion.” According to the objectors, conscription “could lead them to violate the commandment ‘thou shall not kill’” based on “freedom of religion and conscience.” Semberoiz argued that “individual rights ... should be legally protected as long as they do not affect the common good, order, and public morality. In this way, these requirements should be privileged to the detriment of the right that is temporarily restricted.” He referred to conscientious objectors as “deserters”:

Allowing precedents like that of this young deserter ... to start gaining ground in Argentine justice could leave the inhabitants of the nation ... absolutely defenseless, causing serious harm to the good and order of the community, which must not be attacked by external or internal dangers from an army of young people "armed" with only a court ruling wrapped around their hands.⁷²

In asserting a need to avoid precedents that could have a multiplier effect, Semberoiz acknowledged the existence of a broader political movement behind Portillo's struggle that sought to modify the rule and not simply to achieve exceptions. One of his arguments was that military training for "defense" was an important element that, along with others, met the "goal of deterrence" and contributed to "detering attacks or aggressions of any kind": "We could say that people are taught to use weapons to prevent deaths and not to produce them." Unlike the rest of the exceptions set out in the law, which are "more precise and easy to prove," the "legitimacy" of conscientious objection "is not even legally recognized."

It is precisely this: there is no doubt that every time an objection based on religious grounds is made, the content and scope of this foundation will have to be assessed, because it is not easy simply to accept, as in this case, any fanciful interpretation of a biblical text.⁷³

Semberoiz argued that, unlike the "free examination" that the Protestant religions allow, the "Word of God" for Catholics should be "interpreted according to the dictates of the Holy Doctrine." Here he stressed what he described as "an absolute consistency from antiquity to the present": "The Catholic Church clearly explains the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' and admits the existence of self-defense [against the unjust aggressor] and a just war which obviously requires the use of weapons." Therefore, Semberoiz concluded,

it is not logical or consistent or honest to invoke the Catholic religion to escape from the obligation to bear arms ... The Church should submit the petitioner to an ecclesiastical tribunal to determine whether the explicit codes of canon law and the implicit rules of Christian dogma have been violated.⁷⁴

Concluding Remarks

In this article I have reconstructed the history of FOSMO, an organization created in 1983 to fight Argentina's compulsory military service and uphold the exercise of freedom of conscience. I have shown how Eduardo Pimentel's decision to prevent his son from complying with the CMS (based on the exercise of *patria potestad*) spear-headed a broader movement that built a network of citizens, parents, and youth; and how, at the same time, it set up a rich conceptual, political, and legal structure to challenge the military conscription system and proposed the implementation of civil/community service as an alternative. Although originally based on moral and religious grounds, the arguments against the CMS garnered support and were mixed with Christian views on violence, the defense of the family, and the *patria potestad* and with arguments against war and for peace that appealed to human-rights discourse. The appeal to the courts, however, was a way to stave off punishment, and it set a precedent by taking the struggle against conscription outside the military sphere.

The experience of FOSMO also shows how the universe of issues and problems of the human-rights agenda has been incorporated, expanded, analyzed, and legitimized for society in a post-dictatorship framework. FOSMO showed how, from its historic

origins through its day-to-day operations, the CMS had “nationalized” subaltern groups through a series of disciplinary practices and the inculcation of a warring male morale.

FOSMO’s struggle met with strong resistance because it challenged a strongly rooted institution that promoted the socialization of youth (and was highly significant in building their masculinity). The system’s critics focused not on its failures but on the logic of operation, values, and practices that organized it. In this sense, FOSMO’s struggle jeopardized the ability of the military power apparatus to shape youths *par excellence*. This helps explain the strong resistance to the implementation of a law contemplating conscientious objection or even the possibility of performing a form of national service without weapons.

Notes

1. CMS was enacted through Law 4.031 law of 5 December 1901 and was finally abolished by former president Carlos Saúl Menem on 31 August 1994 via Decree 1537. Enlistment in the military is now on a voluntary basis, and women are now eligible to enlist.
2. On Carrasco’s death see Jorge Urien Berri and Dante Marín, *El último colimba. El caso Carrasco y la justicia arrodillada* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1995); Mirta Mantarás, *Caso Carrasco: un pacto de silencio* (Neuquén: APDH Neuquén, 1995).
3. I am grateful to my director, Dr. Sofía Tiscornia, for her comments, and to Pablo Pimentel and his family for their support, affection, and generosity in providing all the material about FOSMO. I wish to thank Alejandro Spoturno, Prof. Pilar Pérez, Dr. Laura Kropff, Laura Pakter, and Luz Rodríguez Penas for their collaboration in the translation process.
4. Sofía Tiscornia, *Activismo de los Derechos Humanos y Burocracias estatales. El caso Walter Bulacio* (Buenos Aires: CELS-Editores del Puerto, 2008), 201.
5. *Ibid.*, 157.
6. “Una polémica decisión,” *La Voz*, 18 February 1983, Pimentel family file. Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.
7. *Superhumor* (n.d.), Pimentel family file.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. “La oposición al servicio militar, a Tribunales,” *Río Negro*, 7 April 1983, Pimentel family file.
11. “Defienden la patria potestad,” *La Voz*, 8 April 1983, Pimentel family file.
12. Claudia Fonseca and Andrea Cardarello, “Derechos de los más y menos humanos,” in *Derechos Humanos, tribunales y policías en Argentina y Brasil*, ed. Sofía Tiscornia and María Pita, 9–41 (Buenos Aires: Antropofagia, 2005), 10.
13. Teresa Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 341.
14. Elizabeth Jelin, “La política de la memoria: El Movimiento de Derechos Humanos y la construcción de la democracia en la Argentina,” in *Juicio, castigos y memorias: derechos humanos y justicia en la política argentina*, ed. Carlos Acuña, Inés González Bombal, Oscar Landi, Luis Alberto Quevedo, Catalina Smulovitz, Adriana Vacchieri, and Elizabeth Jelin, 101–46 (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1995).
15. Ludmila Da Silva Catela, “Desaparecidos e direitos humanos. Entre um drama nacional e um dilema universal,” in *Antropología e direitos humanos*, ed. Roberto Kant de Lima and Regina Reyes Novaes, 203–66 (Niterói: Editora da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2001).
16. Eduardo Luis Duhalde describes the “terrorist state” as a (new) archetypical state model, characterized by the militarization of the state structure and the use of repressive methods that work to annihilate its opponents as well as to destroy every type of democratic and anti-dictatorial organization. This particular description and characterization of state terror, qualitatively different from any other group in particular, was imposed on the

- attempts to characterize the state's repressive *modus operandi* during the last dictatorship as a "war against subversion" or a "dirty war." See Eduardo Luis Duhalde, *El Estado terrorista argentino. Quince años después, una mirada crítica* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1999).
17. During the 1960s and 1970s, the military and security forces reoriented their activities and proceedings, embracing the DNS, which had originated in North America. They considered that "the enemy could be found in any social environment or situation and conceived of every conflict as an attack or aggression against security and as part of the 'subversive strategy.' At the same time, the Military and Security Forces endorsed the national interest monopoly of the Military Forces." Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más. La memoria de las desapariciones en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2008), 28.
 18. Pilar Calveiro, *Poder y desaparición. Los campos de concentración en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1998), 26–7, explains the change in the repressive modality: "The 1976 *coup d'état* represented a substantial change: the missing and the concentration and extermination camps stopped being one of the forms of repression to become *the* repressive modality managed and executed directly by the military institutions. From that moment on, the repressive activity focusing and centering on the jail system became the structure that allowed the systematic disappearance of people, controlled and managed by the military forces."
 19. CELS, *Conscriptos detenidos-desaparecidos* (Buenos Aires: CELS, 1982).
 20. María Pita, "Mundos morales divergentes. Los sentidos de la categoría *familiar* en las demandas de justicia ante casos de violencia política," in *Derechos Humanos, tribunales y policías en Argentina y Brasil*, ed. Sofia Tiscornia and María Pita, 205–35 (Buenos Aires: Antropofagia, 2006), 207.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. María Pita, "La construcción de la maternidad como lugar político en las demandas de justicia. Familiares de víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado y de la violencia institucional en Argentina," *Arenal* 8, 1 (2001): 127–54.
 23. Carla Villalta, e-mail to the author.
 24. Judith Filc, *Familia y dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1997), 65.
 25. *Ibid.*, 47.
 26. Máximo Badaró, *Militares o ciudadanos. La formación de los oficiales del Ejército Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009), 129 and 130.
 27. *Ibid.* 189.
 28. Eduardo Pimentel, "Yo intento subvertir las cosas injustas," *Río Negro Sunday magazine*, 17 April 1983, 4.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. *Ibid.*
 31. "¿Servicio militar obligatorio u obligados sirvientes de los militares?" *Siete Días*, 14 February 1984, 5.
 32. Stojan Tercic, letter, *La Nación*, 7 September 1983.
 33. Fernando Angel Portillo, letter, *La Razón*, 20 March 1984.
 34. Quoted passages in this paragraph are from "FOSMO's Foundations" (November 1983), Pimentel family file.
 35. "Hacia el fin del Servicio Militar Obligatorio," *Humor*, November 1983, 123.
 36. "FOSMO's Foundations."
 37. Pedro Vendramin, *Un derecho todavía violado [A still violated right]* (Buenos Aires: FOSMO, 1985).
 38. This Argentine term for economically marginalized immigrants from the provinces to the city of Buenos Aires racializes class. See Claudia Briones, *La alteridad del "Cuarto Mundo."* *Una reconstrucción antropológica de la diferencia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol, 1998).
 39. "¿Servicio militar obligatorio u obligados sirvientes de los militares?" *Siete Días Magazine*, 14 February 1984, 4.

40. Ibid.
41. *Nueva Presencia*, 3 August 1984.
42. Pilar Calveiro, *Política y/o violencia. Una aproximación a la guerrilla de los años 70* (Buenos Aires: Norma, 2005), 86.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 86–87.
45. Edward Siutti, letter to the editor, *Tiempo Argentino*, 1 March 1984, 23.
46. Eduardo Pimentel, letter to the editor, *Tiempo Argentino*, 13 March 1984, 23.
47. Henrietta Moore, “The Problem of Explaining Violence in the Social Sciences,” in *Sex and Violence: Issues in Representation and Experience*, ed. Penelope Harvey and Peter Gow, 138–55 (London: Routledge, 1994), 138.
48. “Conscripción o fuerza de voluntarios,” *Revista de Educación del Ejército* 40 (1983): 4–16, 14.
49. This petition included the fight for freedom of conscience. It stated that the respect for human rights was mandatory in all institutions of the army, security, and intelligence and that the Declaration of Human Rights was to be visible in all establishments.
50. Transcript, from a recording, Pimentel family archive.
51. *La vida en un bolillero* (FOSMO, July 1986).
52. Ibid.
53. Judith Butler, *Vidas precarias. El poder de duelo y la violencia*, trans. Fermín Rodríguez (Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 2006).
54. Ibid., 64.
55. Ibid., 74.
56. *Sabés por qué el Servicio Militar es OBLIGATORIO?* (Buenos Aires: FOSMO, 5 July 1985).
57. Ibid.
58. About 10,000 fewer soldiers—20 percent fewer than in recent years, for a total of 25,000—were to be asked to comply with the CMS in 1986, owing to budget constraints related to, for example, the modernization processes of the armed forces. “Disminuye la incorporación de conscriptos,” *Clarín*, 29 December 1985.
59. “Limitarán la incorporación al servicio militar” (interview with Horacio Jaunarena), *La Voz*, 25 August 1985, 9.
60. Ibid.
61. Alberto Ferrari, “Objetores de conciencia,” *Nuevo Sur*, 27 October 1989, 24.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Román Lejtman, “Ni objetores de conciencia ni moros que lloran como mujer,” *Página 12*, 30 September 1989, Pimentel family file.
65. Ibid.
66. Gendered language is often used to order differences in power, with the result that power takes on a sexual connotations in many contexts. Moore, “The Problem of Explaining Violence,” 139.
67. Fernando Portillo, “Mi hijo no quería que le enseñaran a matar...,” *Ahora*, 4 May 1989, 33.
68. “Servicio militar sin armas,” *La Prensa*, 18 April 1985, 6.
69. Portillo, “Mi hijo no quería...”
70. Rodolfo Iribarne, *Diario “Ámbito Financiero,” Clarín*, n.d.
71. Semberoiz was an advisor to the Joint Staff of the Army, professor of international law in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of La Plata, and author of the book *Derecho Internacional de Guerra* (Buenos Aires: Círculo Militar, 1985).
72. Raul Edgardo Semberoiz, “Los objetores de conciencia,” *Revista Militar* 72 (1989): 60–64, 61.
73. Ibid., 61.
74. Ibid., 63–64.

Editor's Introduction

The second part of this issue of *Genocide Studies and Prevention* presents an essential article on the debates in the UN Security Council in 1994, which determined whether or not to intervene in the Rwandan Genocide.

Karel Kovanda, who was the Czech Republic's ambassador to the Security Council during these debates, provides an insider's account of the fascinating and troubling discussions. The Czech Republic was a newly independent nation in 1994, and Kovanda participated in the debates as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Kovanda's discussion relies on internal documents from the Czech Foreign Service as well as on his own private notes and published information. He lays out the step-by-step evolution of the Rwandan tragedy and notes how the UN Secretariat was receiving, and passing on to the Security Council, insufficient and biased information, while NGOs had more accurate accounts of what was taking place. For the most part, he demonstrates that the Security Council spent most of its time focusing on the war between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and paid little attention—about 20% of its time, he estimates—on UNAMIR. It took weeks, according to Kovanda, for the Security Council to finally come to grips with the genocide. Kovanda notes that he was the first to employ this term publicly at an official UN meeting.

Kovanda's discussion exposes the inner working of the Security Council during a time of crisis. He also describes the mechanisms that, as he notes, “play a role in the day-to-day workings of the UNSC, such as the role of the UN Secretariat, informal consultations, groupings of UNSC members,” and many other considerations. Kovanda's insider account exposes the weaknesses of the Security Council and the reluctance on the part of many members to forthrightly confront an ongoing genocide. As such, it may be taken as an important point of departure for analyses of potential reforms that are necessary to make genocide prevention a reality.

Herb Hirsch, Virginia Commonwealth University

The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council: The Rwandan Genocide¹

Karel Kovanda

Deputy Director-General of External Relations, European Commission, Brussels

The Rwanda civil war that in 1994 degenerated into a slaughter of the country's Tutsi, amounting to genocide, was possibly the world's most devastating blood-bath of the 1990s. In 1994, the newly formed Czech Republic took up its place as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council; Karel Kovanda was the Czech Ambassador at the time. Drawing on internal documents of the Czech Foreign Service and on his own private notes, as well as on a wealth of published information, Kovanda details in this personal memoir the step-by-step evolution of the Rwandan tragedy as he and his delegation perceived it, and the Czech reaction to it. He repeatedly highlights the information gap: on the one hand, insufficient and biased information provided by the UN Secretariat; on the other hand, the detailed, accurate, and timely information his delegation received from NGOs. Kovanda estimates that during the first weeks, the Security Council gave perhaps 80% of its attention to the civil war between Rwandan government forces and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and 20% to how to handle the difficult position of UNAMIR, the peacekeeping operation then on the ground in Rwanda. Only after weeks of delay did the Security Council even start to come to grips with the ongoing genocide—a term that Ambassador Kovanda was the first to employ publicly in an official UN meeting. While focusing on Rwanda proper, Kovanda also explains and describes the sometimes little-known mechanisms that play a role in the day-to-day workings of the Security Council: the role of the UN Secretariat, informal consultations, groupings of Security Council members, and so on.

Key words: Rwanda, genocide, Czech Republic, UN Security Council

Introduction

Apart from its five permanent members, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has ten non-permanent ones, elected by the UN General Assembly for two years—five one year, the other five the following year. In the autumn of 1993, a sharp electoral battle involved the Czech Republic: after only a few months as an independent country (following the division of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993), the Czechs were fighting for UNSC non-permanent membership against Belarus. In June 1993 I assumed the position of Czech Ambassador—Permanent Representative to the UN, and was directly in charge of our electoral campaign.

In the event, we won the elections, in October 1993, together with Argentina, Nigeria, Oman, and Rwanda. These five countries would be joining the five other non-permanent members, carryovers from the previous year: Brazil, Djibouti, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Spain.

A lot has changed in the work of the UNSC since the 1990s: by and large, its work has become more scripted and formal. But as the Czech Republic joined the Security Council in 1994, managing its work was a matter for its president. He or she scheduled and chaired the public, formal meetings that we know from TV. In addition, however, the president organized and chaired so-called informal consultations of the UNSC. It was actually these consultations that occupied most of the president's time and demanded most of his or her energy. At the time, they took place almost daily, sometimes even several times a day; they were held behind closed doors, in a separate chamber of the UN Secretariat to which non-members of the UNSC, never mind journalists or other members of the public, had no access. But it was precisely during these informal consultations that everything, even the smallest matters, was decided. Everything that later saw the light of day at formal meetings (except for the actual statements of countries, formally called the "explanation of the vote") would be agreed here beforehand. This was where the text of every document, often down to the shade of meaning of every word in every UNSC resolution, every presidential statement, was negotiated, even fought over—usually by experts, that is, diplomats specializing in the given subject matter, but from time to time by ambassadors themselves. In this forum, ambassadors would also discuss a variety of other issues that never ended up being debated publicly. This was where the Security Council did its real work, whereas its formal meetings, then as now, resembled a theatre piece with proceedings scripted in advance.

The office of president rotates monthly, following the name of the country, in English alphabetical order. The president occupies the seat at the head of the oval conference table, and on the first of every month, the 15 UNSC members move one seat to the right. In December 1993, the top seat—the presidency—was occupied by China. Consequently, in January 1994, the chairmanship fell to the newly elected Czech Republic. And straight away, in January, we got a foretaste of what was to happen in Rwanda several months later.

I will return to these January matters. The critical chapter of this story, however, started only three months later, in April 1994. That month, the Security Council was chaired by Ambassador Colin Keating of New Zealand.

UNAMIR

During the first week of April, we were dealing with situations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a permanent fixture on the UNSC agenda; with issues in Georgia, Iraq, El Salvador, and Israel; and with the Libya–Chad relationship. Another of the many questions was that of extending the mandate for one of the numerous peace-keeping operations (PKOs) that the UN had stood up in various parts of the world, namely the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

A civil war among various factions had been underway in Rwanda for several years already.² In the autumn of 1993, the UNSC decided to organize this peace-keeping operation, which was to oversee the fragile truce between the antagonists. The UNSC had agreed to create it on 5 October 1993, in its Resolution No. 872.³ UNAMIR was to promote the rapprochement of the belligerent parties. One party consisted of the Rwandan government institutions, headed by President Juvénal Habyarimana, and their armed forces, both military and paramilitary. Most of these were Hutu. They were opposed by the so-called Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), consisting of the minority Tutsi people.⁴ The hard core of the RPF consisted of Tutsi who had escaped Rwanda for neighboring Uganda in 1959, when an earlier wave of interethnic slaughter engulfed the country. Still, in 1993, under pressure from the

international community, both parties managed to sign a series of agreements, the Arusha Accords (named for Arusha, Tanzania, where the accords were signed).⁵ UNAMIR was to keep an eye on the parties' actually fulfilling these agreements.

UNAMIR was not very big, and its members were lightly armed; their mandate was rather weak. All this followed from the view of the UN Secretariat (with which the Security Council agreed at the time) that the toughest part was to get the parties to actually reach an agreement; putting it into effect was not expected to be too much of a problem. But just a few short months after authorizing the formation of UNAMIR, we were arguing as to whether and under what circumstances its mandate should be extended.

Arguing over the conditions of extending a mandate had its own well-established framework: Will we agree to a shorter or a longer extension? Should we threaten to end the operation if the antagonists refuse to cooperate? The UN Secretariat recommended extending the mandate by six months, but the United States, for example, wanted the shortest possible extension—they'd be happy with one month, perhaps two, OK: let's make it three. It took a lot of work for the UNSC to finally agree, in resolution 909/1994,⁶ on a four-month extension, with a proviso that after six weeks, we would evaluate how the situation in the country was evolving. The date was 5 April 1994.

The Air Crash

For the Security Council as a whole—and this was definitely true for the United States—the issue of PKOs was singularly affected by a major debacle in Somalia. In October 1993, some six months before the events I am leading up to, the United States lost eighteen of their soldiers there, and the whole nation was enraged at TV shots of the soldiers' bodies being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu to the exuberant joy of bystanders. From that moment on, the United States was particularly perspicacious when it came to PKOs in general, and particularly those in which they participated themselves. The post-Somalia discussion culminated in Washington in Presidential Directive No. 25, which specified US policy concerning these operations and outlined certain criteria that would guide the decision as to whether to support this or that UNSC PKO and whether or not to participate.⁷ Madeleine Albright has written that its objective was to “to put America squarely on the side of strengthening UN peacekeeping operations,” but “with the understanding that . . . we would henceforth make the chain of command clearer and insist that such missions be . . . preceded by a significant period of consultations with Congress.”⁸

In the event, Rwanda was to become the test case for how solid this policy was; for on 6 April, only a day after the give-and-take over extending UNAMIR's mandate ended, news arrived about a catastrophe at the airport in Kigali, Rwanda's capital. Two presidents lost their lives in a plane crash: Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi.

It wasn't clear what had actually happened: one wondered, did the plane crash, or was it shot down? Was it an accident, or an assassination attempt? To one person, however, the answer was completely clear, before any investigation was so much as launched: Rwanda's permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador Jean-Damascène Bizimana. Coincidentally, Rwanda, like the Czech Republic, was a new member of the UNSC, never mind that the country was engulfed in a civil war and that it was the subject of the UNSC's close attention. Bizimana had no doubts—and made no bones about his opinion—that what had occurred was an act of terrorism

in which the RPF was the ultimate villain. Ambassador Jean-Bernard Mérimée of France also argued from the very first moment that the event was a terrorist attack. (The identities of those actually responsible for the plane crash were, to my knowledge, never determined, although responsibility of the RPF cannot be excluded.)

Information

The UNSC receives its information from the UN Secretariat, the apparatus that resides in that enormous matchbox which we all recognize from any number of images as the main UN building in New York, and which is headed by the secretary-general of the UN (UNSG). At the critical moment, the Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali was UNSG. The Secretariat, in turn, receives reports from its own people in the field. Information gathered in this way would be elaborated as formal Reports of the UNSG, which constitute the basis for any discussion of the UNSC, on any issue, of any territory.

At the critical moment, there were two people in Rwanda directly subordinated to the UNSG. One was his so-called special representative (SRSG), the highest civilian UN official in the country, a certain Dr. Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, formerly the foreign minister of Cameroon. I never knew much about him; for example, he never showed his face in New York to report personally to the Security Council, which was the standard practice of other SRSGs the world over. I had heard, however, that he was close friends with President Habyarimana, and one might well have wondered about his objectivity.

The other UN official who fed the UN Secretariat with information was the Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, commander of UNAMIR.⁹

Thus, it was on the basis of information from these two officials that the UN Secretariat prepared its Rwanda reports, which, in turn, served as the bases for UNSC deliberations. The Czech delegation, like those of a number of smaller countries, didn't actually have in hand any information apart from these reports. The nearest embassy we had (and have to this day) was in Kenya, and Czech diplomats there had precious little opportunity (or reason) to report first-hand from Rwanda. Of course, major powers had their own additional sources of information, aside from the UN Secretariat's briefs. Of the UNSC members, both the United States and France actually had their own embassies in Kigali.

Early Czech Involvement

From the Czech point of view, PKOs were important, particularly where our own soldiers or observers were involved. But although during the 1990s Czech personnel had been stationed in various places in Africa, including Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, and Somalia, none were stationed in Rwanda as part of UNAMIR. Rwanda was on the periphery of Czech interests; we had no historical interests, no economic interests, no interests connected with our own personnel there.

I didn't understand the Rwandan situation very well. After all, several civil wars were going on in Africa at the time. Nevertheless, my very first public statement in the UNSC coincidentally concerned precisely this topic, inasmuch as, in January 1994, the UNSC was deciding on the first extension of UNAMIR's mandate. The matter was rather foreign for the Czech Republic, and, personally, I didn't study it carefully either. Rereading the statements of other UNSC members,¹⁰ one gets the sense that no one, certainly not me, had any foreboding of the horrors that were to engulf the country within three short months. In fact, before I took up the UNSC

presidency in January, I had followed well-established custom by starting off with a round of individual consultations with every other UNSC member, inquiring as to how each evaluated the situation in various hot spots of the world; with respect to Rwanda, I reported the findings as follows: “According to most of the delegations, the peace process is progressing rather well. Nigeria sees positive signals that offer a chance to resolve the conflict without major delays and take it off the Council agenda altogether.”¹¹

Forebodings

And yet some—although beyond the UNSC circuit—did have their forebodings. One of them was Claude Dusaidi, an RPF representative working the corridors of the UN, who would share his views of Rwanda developments with all who would listen. As early as 7 January, he paid me a visit, not as the Czech Ambassador, for we really were too insignificant—certainly as far as matters in Rwanda were concerned—but as the January UNSC president. He explained that the fulfillment of the Arusha Accords was in jeopardy. President Habyarimana had, for example, refused to form a provisional government, which the accords foresaw for December 1993, and instead had prepared a list consisting exclusively of his own people, completely disregarding the views of other political forces. I informed the Czech Foreign Ministry, as well as my colleagues on the Security Council, about Dusaidi’s visit; informally, I also distributed a letter that he gave me, simply by passing copies around the table.¹²

Another person who had a horrific premonition—or, rather, horrific information—was General Dallaire. On 11 January 1994 he sent a certain critical telegram from Kigali, in which he described what he had learned from one of his sources: that Hutu paramilitary militias were gathering weapons and compiling lists of Tutsi in order to kill them all off at a suitable moment. Dallaire asked for permission to intervene, for example, to take over illegal weapons storage areas.¹³

The Security Council never learned about this telegram. And the UN Secretariat did not give Dallaire the go-ahead to intervene.

The Dallaire telegram is generally considered a key juncture, an opportunity for the international community to forestall the Rwanda catastrophe. If only we had known ... A number of journalists have asked me over the years whether the UNSC would have acted differently, if it had known ... It serves as an impulse to reflect about “alternative history.” But even though such reflections are usually barren, one might quite soberly say this much: If the Security Council had been familiar with the telegram, it would at least have had a chance to do something. At least a chance.

A Detour: The Story of the Dallaire Telegram

But the Security Council was not familiar with the telegram. The telegram itself had a peculiar fate. The UN Secretariat—either the Department of PKOs, headed at the time by Kofi Annan, or the Department of Political Affairs, headed by Murrack Goulding, a British official—had obviously underestimated its significance, and did not inform the Security Council about it.¹⁴ “Such situations and alarming reports from the field, though considered with the utmost seriousness by United Nations officials, are not uncommon within the context of peace-keeping operations,” wrote Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his foreword to the UN’s Rwanda sourcebook.¹⁵

But much later, long after the catastrophe was over, the UN Secretariat realized that they perhaps should have mentioned the telegram to the Security Council: in his foreword to the sourcebook I’ve been quoting, Boutros-Ghali averred that

Chinmaya Garekhan, his special advisor, informed the Security Council on 12 January “on the reports that had been received from UNAMIR.”¹⁶ I found this strange: after all, I had chaired the Security Council during that time, and was sure that I would have remembered discussing such a telegram, or even receiving information about it, if only because my meeting with Mr. Dusaidi a few days earlier had sensitized me to the Rwanda *problématique*.

In December 1995, as my tenure on the UNSC was drawing to a close, I therefore wrote a letter to the UNSG. I noted that I remembered the matter differently, and how should we explain that we have such different recollections of the circumstances of that fateful telegram? The UNSG invited me to a meeting but held his own. Mr. Garekhan, an Indian who regularly represented the UNSG at informal Security Council consultations and conveyed to the Security Council on his behalf information, was present as well. He made the point that “for better or worse, no reports are written from informal consultations,” so it would no longer be possible to ascertain what actually happened. We ended up agreeing to disagree, simply noting our differing recollections.¹⁷

However, reports from Security Council consultations are indeed made. It is well known that the UNSG has his people write fairly detailed and unsparing minutes: if someone makes a stupid comment, that’s how it is described. These are confidential reports, however, strictly for the needs of the UNSG and his immediate entourage, and only rarely do they seep out beyond this narrow circle of UN officials.¹⁸ Thus, in his discussion with me, Garekhan was not quite candid as far as the existence or not of such reports is concerned.¹⁹ And as for the substance of the matter, when an independent commission dealt with the failure of the Security Council in Rwanda, it criticized the Secretariat for not having informed the Security Council.²⁰

One wonders, of course, how the Secretariat itself perceived the situation in Rwanda. As I have pointed out above, it was receiving two sets of reports, one from General Dallaire and one from the SRSG. When these two lines of reporting disagreed (and they allegedly disagreed fairly frequently), the Secretariat and the UNSG were inclined toward the reading their “own” man provided. In a personal conversation in April 2004, General Dallaire told me that “they simply took me first as a soldier, and second as a fellow who’s in Africa for his first time and doesn’t understand anything.”

Murders in Rwanda, Uncertainty in the Security Council

Let’s return to events in April 1994. As soon as the two presidents perished in the plane crash, a terrifying wave of murders of Tutsi erupted throughout Rwanda. It was not spontaneous, it was not coincidental, it was not chaotic; this was a wave of systematic murder, carefully prepared in advance. Just as General Dallaire had predicted, it followed lists of names, addresses, Kigali license plates of Tutsi-owned cars, using weapons that Hutu had been accumulating for some time. The most awful behavior among Hutu was exhibited by the Presidential Guard and by specific organized militias and groups, the worst of which was the paramilitary Interahamwe. Within twenty minutes after the crash, roads in Kigali were blocked. Interahamwe personnel checked documents of passengers in all vehicles, and those whose documents were marked “Tutsi” were dragged out and killed. Several thousand Tutsi were murdered within the first few hours.

As the world eventually learned to its horror, this wave of murders (called “work” by Hutu officials) continued unabated for days and entire weeks. It was significantly spurred on by the firebrand broadcasts of Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille

Collines. Tutsi were being murdered, but—especially during the first few days—so were moderate Hutu politicians, including those who were to form the Arusha-agreed government, including the prime minister-designate, Agathe Uwilingiyimana.

At the same time, the front in the civil war moved. The RPF—naturally—did not intend to stand with folded arms and stick to the Arusha-agreed truce while armed Hutu were slaughtering their fellows. In my report to Prague, I described the activation of the supposedly demilitarized Tutsi as “very disturbing,”²¹ which indicates just how little I understood the situation in its first moments. On 7 April, the Security Council issued a Presidential Statement²² that emerged from the workshop of France and non-aligned UNSC members. It expressed its “regret” over the plane crash and “the ensuing violence.” It “strongly condemned” attacks against government officials, against “many” civilians, and, “in particular,” against UN personnel. It appealed to all sides in the conflict to “maintain the positions they held before the incident” (i.e., before the plane crash) and “in particular to respect the cease-fire.” These last formulations were directed against the RPF and against the Tutsi, but I clearly didn’t realize that at the time.

In the following days, the Security Council met, and met, and met again, but didn’t manage to come to an understanding of the situation. On 8 April, I conveyed to Prague information from the Secretariat: “the situation is unclear.”²³ The Security Council didn’t understand the Rwanda situation—or didn’t want to understand it? The UN Secretariat didn’t forward much information. Great Western powers seemed to have only a cursory interest in Rwanda.²⁴ There is no doubt that they had their own information ahead of time. Two of them had embassies in Rwanda, and the Secretariat shared the contents of the Dallaire telegram with France and the United States (but only with them, and with Belgium). I had the intense feeling that the Security Council was rudderless. Usually, the role of the Security Council’s intellectual leader, the one who could “see around the corner,” was played by the UK’s ambassador, Sir David Hannay. On this occasion, however, he didn’t have much to go on: as I learned much later from a British Foreign Office official, he was allegedly receiving virtually no instructions from London (Britain had never had an embassy in Kigali before August 1994) except to follow the lead of French diplomacy.

It appeared as though permanent members of the UNSC were giving the wave of murders a wide berth, as though they didn’t want to dirty their hands with it. After all, this was a domestic matter, not an international conflict, wasn’t it? And domestic matters, civil wars, tribal conflicts and ethnic cleansing, as well as dictatorial regimes, suppressing basic human rights, and the like—none of this was in the mandate of the UN Security Council. The Security Council dealt with *international* peace and security; what didn’t have an international dimension didn’t belong on the UNSC’s agenda, at least not technically.

One worry we did have: not the murderous rampage against the Tutsi, but the fate of foreigners in Rwanda and the role of UNAMIR. During the first hours of the bloodbath, berserk units of the Rwandan government army also butchered ten Belgian paratroopers who had been guarding the prime minister-designate. “Our boys” thus faced a clear danger, and there was not much UNAMIR, with its small numbers, light equipment, and weak mandate, could do. What to do about this? Strengthen UNAMIR? Withdraw it? Reduce it? And while France sent in a humanitarian mission to pull out foreigners (without making the slightest effort to protect their Tutsi collaborators or other people close to them), the Security Council spent endless hours discussing the UNAMIR problem.

It was a problem indeed: UNAMIR was a peacekeeping operation, but the soldiers had deliberately been given a weak mandate and were only lightly armed. It might have been difficult for them to defend themselves against groups of murderous Hutu running amok and probably on drugs. And UNAMIR was paralyzed by the fate of their murdered Belgian comrades.

The Belgian Withdrawal

This incident formed the basis for the Czech evaluation of the situation as well. As a result of its losses, Belgium decided on 12 April to pull out its entire contingent from UNAMIR. The Belgian troops were the best of the lot, and had the best weapons. I got a call from Prague from Dr. Ivan Bušniak, who had taken over my previous job as director general for bilateral relations with Europe and North America. He informed me that Mr. Willy Claes, the Belgian foreign minister, had telephoned the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ended up talking to Ivan—coincidentally, neither the Czech foreign minister nor any of his deputies was available at the time. Claes informed Ivan about the Belgian pullout and recommended the withdrawal of the entire UNAMIR contingent.

Ivan was surprised that the Belgian minister would stoop to talk to a “mere” director general, a post two levels below his own. But this only indicated just how important this conversation was for Claes. I later learned that he called Argentina (another non-permanent UNSC member) as well, and I suspect that he called all UNSC member states. From the Czech point of view, the opinion of Belgium was of paramount importance: this erstwhile colonial power was linked with Rwanda by a thousand ties.²⁵ Who better to understand the situation in the country than Belgium? I felt we could do much worse than follow Belgium’s advice. Only later did I come to understand that Belgium’s concern was not Rwanda, or UNAMIR, but rather camouflaging the precipitous withdrawal of their own contingent and the consequent weakening of UNAMIR.

Groups of UNSC Members

The situation in the Security Council was further obfuscated by the membership of Rwanda itself. The very fact that Rwanda was elected to the Security Council, or even that it had put itself forward as a candidate, was bizarre, given the civil war raging in the country, of which the Security Council was seized. That’s the way the UN works, though, in many instances: non-permanent seats on the Security Council are reserved for individual regional groups of member states, according a requirement that is partly written, partly based on custom, and once the African regional group of members decided to support Rwanda’s candidacy, there was not much anyone could do about it.

Ambassador Bizimana of Rwanda was a Hutu, and the situation was clear to him: everything was the fault of the Tutsi. Bizimana participated in the dealings of an informal yet very influential so-called Non-Aligned Caucus (NAC), which met behind closed doors before every session of informal consultations and coordinated its approach. At that time, other members of the caucus included Djibouti, Nigeria, Oman, and Pakistan. These countries continued to focus on the situation as they had known it during previous months—that is, on the civil war. Few gathered that in addition to the civil war between government forces and the RPF (the end of which was supposed to have been spelled out in the Arusha Accords), a completely new firestorm had erupted behind the line of conflict, that is, the mass slaughter of Tutsi who had nothing to do with the civil war. I recall that for Salim al-Khussaiby, the

ambassador of Oman, an extremely friendly giant of a man, the key to stopping the slaughter amounted to restoring the cease-fire between the government forces and the RPF; he failed to realize that such a cease-fire would have helped only the Hutu, who would have one less worry on their minds while massacring the Tutsi, whereas the RPF would in effect be betraying their people if they did not seek to come to their rescue as fast as possible. On another occasion, Salim complained about “various individuals” who are tolerated in the UN corridors even though they have nobody’s mandate to do anything—having in mind none other than Claude Dusaidi, the RPF representative, the very person who had informed me during my term as UNSC president in January 1994 about the problems besetting his country. Salim’s inspiration was clear: these comments didn’t germinate in his own head but, clearly, echoed the arguments that the ambassador of the Rwandan Hutu government must have been spreading among the non-aligned.

France played a particularly strange role. It had great influence over non-aligned members, both via Ambassador Bizimana of Rwanda and via Roble Olhaye, the ambassador of Djibouti. This very poor country on the Horn of Africa allegedly hosted French advisors directly in its Foreign Ministry, and on several occasions the French permanent representative, Jean-Bernard MÉRIMÉE, took the side of the murderers, overtly or covertly. One can only guess what was behind French policy. President François Mitterrand and his wife, and their relationship with the Hutu President Habyarimana, no doubt played a role.

French fears that Rwanda’s membership in the *Francophonie* could be jeopardized played a role as well, inasmuch as the RPF Tutsi, who had spent decades in Uganda, spoke English. Yet I found it downright grotesque to hear Ambassador Olhaye, of all people, saying, “Those RPF people, why, they don’t even speak proper French!” First, I would never consider anybody’s language as an appropriate basis for making political decisions; and, second, I found it quite strange for such a scurrilous comment to come from Olhaye who, though from Francophone Djibouti, was never heard to utter a word except in English. Again, this argument did not come from his own head.

Apart from the permanent members and the non-aligned, there was a third group of Security Council members, “the leftovers,” who were neither permanent members nor part of the NAC, and were therefore called “non-non.” In 1994, the Czechs were part of this group, together with Argentina, New Zealand, and Spain. (I don’t recall whether Brazil joined the non-aligned or the “non-non.”) When it came to Rwanda, however, this group was truly non-aligned, truly not involved. None of us had any great-power ties with Rwanda, nor a colonial past, nor were we afraid to criticize its government, as was the case among the non-aligned, where solidarity, including false solidarity, often reigned supreme. And, unlike many non-aligned countries, we had no reason to fear that our criticism of the situation in Rwanda could boomerang against our own domestic policies; none of us had a Biafra in our recent history. In the following weeks it was precisely these countries, the “non-non” Security Council members, who pronounced themselves most clearly on the Rwanda tragedy.

Better Information!

What then should the Security Council have done? On 10 April I wrote to Prague that the trickiest discussion would concern the question of whether the Security Council should even continue to be involved with Rwanda. The argument in favor of involvement, I wrote, was “the alleged responsibility that the UNSC bears for

Rwanda (or for its innocent civilian population)” and the argument that the situation there jeopardized the security of neighboring countries.²⁶ Others would argue against involvement, on account of “this being a domestic matter of a country which the UNSC should not get involved with.”²⁷ Four days after the plane crash, after four days of slaughter, the matter still wasn’t clear to me, and I still wrote about “alleged” responsibility. This was the classic Security Council stance: getting involved in the domestic affairs of a country had once before not paid off—in Somalia. If the conflict at hand didn’t have an unmistakable international dimension, we should leave the locals to fight it out amongst themselves, even if in the process they were to kill themselves off completely. In Rwanda, meanwhile, the number of dead had reached the tens of thousands.

We were not receiving much information from the Secretariat, and such information as we did receive was not accurate. Day after day, as the slaughter in Rwanda continued, we were dealing with the situation there only very superficially. According to the Secretariat, what was happening in Kigali was “armed combat among various factions.”²⁸ What was really happening I realized only from an opinion piece in the *New York Times* by Frank Smyth of the NGO Africa Watch.²⁹

I hadn’t known of Africa Watch before, but it was one of the Helsinki Watch family of organizations, which I knew well: during the Communist era, Helsinki Watch had been very involved in defending Czechoslovak dissidents. There was therefore an *a priori* reason to trust the Africa Watch folks. But, more importantly, Smyth’s article had an internal logic. Suddenly I had a *eureka!* moment; suddenly the scales fell from my eyes. Everything started making sense: both events in Rwanda itself and how to interpret the attitudes of individual UNSC members. Ten days had elapsed since the plane crash. The Security Council, meanwhile, was still in the throes of worry about the UNAMIR soldiers and the partial interests of some of its members, and continued to ignore the ongoing carnage.

Smyth argued that the slaughter was not accidental but managed. He explained that President Habyarimana had ruled through his Akazu clique and that slaughtering their opponents was the only way they could hold onto their twenty-one-year-old rule. Akazu needed weapons, but domestic legislation prevented Belgium, the old colonial power, from exporting weapons to war-torn countries; France, however, had begun military cooperation with Habyarimana in 1975. France was concerned with maintaining *la francophonie* in Rwanda. In addition, the presidents of the two countries (Habyarimana and Mitterrand) were friends. And France had assisted Rwanda in making a major arms purchase from Egypt—during the very period (1977–1979), as I learned later, when Egypt’s Foreign Minister was none other than Boutros-Ghali.

Smyth was mentioned as the author of a study on arming Rwanda that had been published several months earlier.³⁰ And suddenly I understood the peculiar game played by France in the Security Council, as well as the foot-dragging of the UN Secretariat (i.e., of Boutros-Ghali) in presenting the full picture of the horrors that were unfolding in Rwanda.

Seeking further information, I contacted Africa Watch directly and thus met one of the world’s leading specialists on Rwanda, the late Alison Des Forges. We became fast friends, and in subsequent months she became the source of accurate, dependable information about the situation in the country. There was a chasm of difference between her information and that of the UN Secretariat. I therefore decided—for educational purposes, one might say—to invite her to explain the situation to some of my colleagues.

And so it happened that on 18 April 1994, the Czech Mission to the United Nations hosted a very unusual meeting during which “small countries,” non-permanent UNSC members, had an opportunity to learn from reliable and extremely well informed, albeit informal, sources about the causes, origins, and course of the Rwanda catastrophe. Alison herself recalled this meeting as a quite extraordinary opportunity for her as an NGO representative to communicate directly with diplomats working on the UNSC.³¹

According to Alison’s information, the murder mill in Rwanda was to start up again, in full force and even more intensively, on 8 May. She hoped that the UNSC would decide to send in soldiers who could protect and save the remaining Tutsi. I stripped her of the last illusions she may still have had concerning the UN’s abilities when I pointed out that even if the UNSC were to decide on such an operation the following day, it would take weeks, even months, before member countries would offer contingents, before an operation could be organized, before it could actually be deployed in Rwanda. It broke her heart. Some of her friends were still in hiding in Kigali, and only a miracle could probably help them now.

The Security Council on UNAMIR

On 11 April, the Secretariat informed us that they were preparing a “long-term” study of UNAMIR’s future. The alternatives would be based on developments in-country. These developments would either show improvement, in which case UNAMIR could stay and monitor the fulfillment of the Arusha Accords, or they would deteriorate further, in which case it would be “necessary to revise” UNAMIR’s mandate or even reconsider its very presence in the country.³² UNAMIR was on the agenda daily. A few days later I reported to Prague that “a large part of the discussion . . . was devoted to variants of UNAMIR’s activities in the country.”³³

At the time, the secretary-general presented two alternatives: either, in the case of a cease-fire, to maintain a slightly smaller UNAMIR that would see to its terms being kept, or to pull out the greater part of UNAMIR, leaving only its commander with 200 to 300 soldiers. During the discussion, I was intrigued by the argument of Ned Walker, Ambassador Albright’s deputy: “If we were to decide now, the US would be for a withdrawal.” I understood clearly: “If we don’t decide now, we’re deciding to stay in the country,” I observed—and that’s how the matter ended up, for another few days, at least.³⁴

The UNSG promised “a special report” on UNAMIR; it reached us on 21 April, more than two weeks after the slaughter had started.³⁵ Yet even this report—unbelievable though it may sound—still saw UNAMIR’s main role not in stopping the carnage but in attempting to enforce a cease-fire between the army of the ruling Hutu and the RPF. After the withdrawal of the Belgian contingent and dispensable members of other groups, the number of soldiers and observers in Rwanda had decreased from 2,500 to some 1,700.

This time around, the UNSG offered three alternatives. One of them, a total withdrawal of UNAMIR, he didn’t recommend at all; it was perhaps introduced only for the sake of logical completeness, so to speak. The second repeated one of his alternatives of 14 April (i.e., leave only a small force in the country, now limited to 270 soldiers).

The third suggestion was quite different, however: it was a suggestion to radically beef up UNAMIR, by no fewer than several thousand soldiers, and to equip it with a new mandate, under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. I am still uncertain where this proposal emerged from, who or what might have inspired the UNSG to face the issue

in such a radical manner. Did someone's conscience wake up, perhaps? Or was it a foil to prove that nothing really could be done?

Chapter 7? This represented a definite shift. Operations that the UNSC organizes in various countries are run either under Chapter 6 or under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Chapter 6 assumes that the international operation takes place in accordance with the wishes of local authorities, for example, on the invitation of the host government. No big problem here. (UNAMIR was originally organized under Chapter 6.) Chapter 7 comes into play in much more complicated situations: the local authorities may not agree with the operation, or perhaps there actually are no effective local authorities, and so on. Given the nature of the situation, Chapter 7 operations are usually more dangerous, and peacekeeping under this chapter requires a more robust mandate and different rules of engagement. Additionally, from the point of view of international law, such operations, begun willy-nilly, amount to interference in the domestic affairs of the "host" country.

Years later, I reread this proposal. It was very good, even earth shattering. If implemented, it would have been the only proposal that could have changed anything. An operation under Chapter 7 could not only have arranged for monitoring some kind of peace (nonexistent in Rwanda, under the circumstances) but also allowed for an intervention in the country, whether or not the country's rulers (whoever they might be) wished it.

The proposal had only two "minor" flaws. First, it would have been absolutely impossible to find "several thousand" additional UNAMIR soldiers. According to his own evidence, the UNSG had personally telephoned dozens and dozens of heads of state and government in search of additional soldiers—to no avail. Salim Ahmed Salim, president of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), tried to recruit soldiers as well, as did President Museveni of Uganda, an RPF ally. And even if the soldiers were found, it would take months before they could be organized and sent, equipment and arms would have to be found somewhere else, and someone would have to arrange for their transport. Meanwhile, the slaughter continued daily.

The second problem was with Chapter 7 itself. At least one delegation was always extremely reluctant to use this measure when a domestic situation within a country was at stake—which decidedly was the case with Rwanda. This delegation always hesitated to allow the international community to intervene in a country over the head of the local government, and was always alert to the possibility of creating a precedent that at some point—who knows?—might be turned against its own authorities. This was the delegation from China, with its UNSC veto power.

The UNSG's report thus didn't satisfy many people. The non-aligned nations would gladly have strengthened UNAMIR; the United States would have preferred a complete pullout. UNSC Resolution 912, which was finally adopted on 21 April,³⁶ resolved the situation ambivalently. Only the 270 soldiers mentioned in one of the UNSG's alternatives were to stay in the country; the rest were to be withdrawn, but only to somewhere close by, in East Africa, as a sort of over-the-horizon reserve.

It was the worst decision the Security Council could possibly have taken. Not only did we not decide to strengthen UNAMIR, we ended up weakening it to the minimum militarily acceptable (i.e., capable of self-defense) force. Among other things, we thereby handed over to the killers perhaps thousands of civilians whom UNAMIR was still able to protect at the time. Our soldiers in UNAMIR were appalled. General Henri Kwami Anyidoho of Ghana, Dallaire's UNAMIR deputy commander, couldn't understand this decision: "Was the world going to abandon

Rwanda? Was it because the operation was in a typically developing country or more pointedly on the ‘dark continent’?”³⁷

The Czech Position Evolves

Meanwhile, my own interventions during Security Council consultations were ever sharper. On 20 April I wrote to Prague, “More alarming information has reached us from Human Rights Watch, according to which 100,000 people have been slaughtered already. Interpreting the warfare exclusively as tribal is terrific oversimplification.”³⁸ I argued even with my friends—such as the otherwise extremely capable and decent Ambassador Emilio Cardenas of Argentina—who in the context of Rwanda used the expression “humanitarian catastrophe.” The UNSG talked about a “firestorm of mass killing.” A few days later, the UNSC president, New Zealand’s Ambassador Colin Keating, received a representative of the French NGO *Médécins sans frontières* (MSF), who reported that shortly before their meeting, government forces and the Presidential Guard had broken into the MSF hospital in Butare and murdered all its Tutsi personnel, then returned and murdered all the Tutsi patients.³⁹

I understood the situation (finally!): this was not a “humanitarian catastrophe,” or even simple “killings,” no matter how massive; this was the deliberate extermination of one ethnic group. On 25 April, I wrote to Prague,

This is a matter of clear genocide committed by governmental and presidential units of the Hutu against the Tutsi. No matter how one turns the numbers around, there were perhaps 1.2 million Tutsi before the war, of which at least 100,000 have been slaughtered. The regional organization (OAU) takes into account the stability of the country or the legitimacy of its government: it tries to effect a cease-fire, and holds both parties at the same level. Is this not as if we had wanted Hitler to reach a truce with the Jews? (The comparison is not perfect but the proportions coincide.)

And, most importantly, I alerted Prague, our “non-non” group wanted to consult as to whether there might not be some other way for the Security Council to react than by simply pulling out UNAMIR, “of which at this moment only 450 men are left in the country.”⁴⁰

On the following day we received a letter from Claude Dusaidi, RPF’s representative in the UN, titled “Genocide in Rwanda.”⁴¹ Dusaidi pointed out that the Rwandan government’s goal was not victory over the RPF but, rather, the extermination of the Tutsi. And, among other things, he demanded the creation of a war-crimes tribunal.

At about this time, I called Ambassador José Ayala-Lasso. This Ecuadorian diplomat had been appointed the UN’s first high commissioner for human rights—coincidentally, on 5 April 1994, the very day of the plane crash. He had been worried about Rwanda; I urged him to go to the country as soon as he could. In the event, he visited on 11 and 12 May and talked to all sides. Even he, however, in the report published on 19 May, still described Rwanda as “a human rights tragedy,” avoiding the word “genocide.”⁴²

The Czech Draft Presidential Statement

On 28 April, my delegation began a fairly daring battle to get the Security Council, which effectively continued to ignore the slaughter of the Tutsi, to make some meaningful statement. In an interview at the time I pointed out that 80% of the attention that the Security Council had devoted to Rwanda concentrated on the fate of our

blue berets and the remaining 20% on the civil war. We had said nothing about the slaughter, and at a certain point I realized that we would be a laughingstock around the world if we did not finally come out with a statement on this topic. So I prepared a draft Presidential Statement on the issue.

The Security Council issues two principal types of public documents. One is the resolution, which is subject to voting; the other is the presidential statement. Though they are called “presidential,” these statements are in fact issued by the entire Security Council. They are not legally binding, and thus don’t have the same weight as resolutions; however, precisely because they are not voted on, their adoption requires consensus: all UNSC members must agree to every word of the text.

The Czech draft Presidential Statement⁴³ was unusual, intentionally and consciously. We deviated from customary usage in several respects. We took note of information that the Security Council had been receiving from the UNSG, but we also, and specifically, appreciated information received from generally highly regarded NGOs. This was unheard of: on the one hand, we were intimating that the secretary-general had not been informing us sufficiently broadly, and on the other hand (this was more of a technical matter), we were referring to documents that had not been blessed by the UN’s document registration system.⁴⁴ Yet we were very attached to the references to NGOs, because our most valuable and most trustworthy information originated with Africa Watch, Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and MSF, whereas the UN Secretariat did not furnish much of value.

Our draft warned the so-called interim (Hutu) government of Rwanda of its responsibility to rein in all military and paramilitary elements responsible for the ongoing brutalities. In particular, however, our draft contained the following formulation: “The Security Council reaffirms that the systematic killing of any ethnic group, with the intent to destroy it in whole or in part, constitutes an act of genocide as defined by the relevant provisions of international law.”

“The Security Council,” we continued,

points out that genocide cannot be condoned or tolerated, let alone justified, under any circumstances: not by civil war, not by the death of a leader, whatever suspicions surround it, not by past history. The Council further points out that an important body of international law exists which deals with perpetrators of genocide.

As I had expected, we didn’t achieve any immediate success, but some reactions still surprised us by their sharpness. I was taken aback, for example, by the reaction of the British ambassador, Sir David Hannay, who observed that such a presidential statement would turn us “into a laughingstock” and that in these matters “we should leave the leading role to the African group.” The French ambassador, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, argued in turn that according to his information, brutalities were committed not only by Hutu on Tutsi but also by Tutsi on Hutu. In reaction, I carefully analyzed the sources of our information (after all, the French MSF had only recently met with the president of the Security Council) and why I trusted these organizations, and invited him to elaborate similarly on his information about alleged Tutsi atrocities and to clarify its origin. He never reacted to this invitation. (This was yet another small stone fitting into the mosaic of suspicions I had developed concerning France’s policy on Rwanda.)

Ibrahim Gambari, Nigeria’s ambassador, then further muddled the outcome of our draft statement—though probably unintentionally, seeing that he was one of the most decent ambassadors on the Security Council, and my good friend. He

informed us about a meeting the previous day of the African Regional Group in the UN, which dealt with Rwanda. On basis of that meeting, he proposed his own draft presidential statement, which sought a sort of African solution, including, among other things, the involvement of the Central Organ for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution that apparently functioned under the umbrella of the OAU. I had never heard of this Central Organ (which in and of itself didn't mean much), but in addition, it didn't seem to have a very successful track record. These Nigerian ideas struck me as a chimera; they would not have led to anything sensible, and, unlike our draft, they didn't even characterize the situation in Rwanda as genocide.⁴⁵

The ensuing discussion combined reactions to both drafts. The effort that informed ours—namely, that the UNSC should finally dare to describe the Rwanda slaughter as genocide—was watered down; those who rejected that designation completely found it easy to focus on the African draft.

As the discussion progressed (still on 28 April), Colin Keating, president of the Security Council for April as ambassador from New Zealand, attempted to blend the two texts so that we could issue some presidential statement at all, of any kind. By this time, more than three weeks had elapsed since the beginning of the holocaust, and hundreds of thousands of people had been massacred. We argued for hours on end over every sentence, every word. And when it appeared that all the negotiations and all the arguments were going nowhere, Colin played his final trump card: his delegation rewrote the draft presidential statement, as it had emerged at that moment, into a draft UNSC resolution.

This was an absolutely brilliant maneuver. Unlike a presidential statement, a resolution didn't require unanimity. And so, if the Security Council was unable to agree on a presidential statement, the New Zealand delegation, supported by other friendly delegations (including, naturally, the Czechs), could present a draft resolution, possibly with even tougher language. Those who didn't like it could vote against it—and at least show their true colors. And even if any of the permanent members ended up vetoing the resolution, this would indicate the unbelievable—that a holder of the UNSC veto power was in agreement with genocide!

A technical comment needs to be made here. Any draft resolution or presidential statement is first issued by the Security Council internally, in blue (as opposed to black) ink. Such drafts are discussed as “texts in blue.” The actual document can be issued only twenty-four hours later. Even during these final twenty-four hours, the Security Council (or the co-sponsors of the text) can agree to some final changes, if necessary. This possibility, however, is used quite rarely.

Now, Colin timed his maneuver for the last possible moment. Only two days remained of New Zealand's presidency. Colin came out with his move just before midnight on 28 April. His draft resolution would have got the required twenty-four hours “in blue” by midnight on 29 April—and he would still have time to convene a public, official meeting of the Security Council for 30 April, the last day of New Zealand's presidency, and have this draft voted on.

A draft resolution thus hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of the hesitant members. Even so, negotiations were very complex. We were already completely exhausted when we fought over the last remaining issue—namely, how to apportion the blame for the continuing catastrophe between the Hutu and the Tutsi. The debate featured two clear-cut opinions: France, for example, wanted to divide the blame “equally,” whereas New Zealand, the Czech Republic, and several other delegations saw the carnage as unambiguously the work of the Hutu extremists.

Battered by the long hours, Security Council members might even have been prepared to accept some not completely repugnant formulation, if only to be able to retire—by now it was long past midnight, in the early hours of 29 April. I don't recall the final formulation we thought we had reached, but when Colin asked whether we could all agree to it, it was quiet around the table. For a long moment it seemed that the negotiations were over. Eventually, though, I couldn't help myself: the text still put too much weight on some spurious guilt of the Tutsi. It was as though the Jews were being responsible for their own extermination by the Nazis. I spoke up—the language still wasn't acceptable to me. Like-minded colleagues, especially from the “non-non” group, sighed in relief: they didn't like the proposed language either. This last skirmish then ended up with language improved even a little further, thanks to the chiseling skills of the British ambassador. “Attacks on defenceless civilians,” we ended up agreeing, “have occurred throughout the country”—this formulation was a concession to those who wanted to share out the blame equally, but at least it spoke about “the country” and not about tribal or political “groups.” But the sentence continued—“especially in areas under the control of the armed forces of the interim government of Rwanda,” that is, the Hutu. So in the end we attributed blame where it belonged.

Not surprisingly, not a word remained about the work of and information from NGOs that the Czech delegation had stressed in our original draft. I wrote to Prague that China and Oman were particularly loath to allow for a precedent of the Security Council's reacting to information from NGOs.⁴⁶

The word “genocide” was not mentioned either. At least an oblique reference to genocide appeared, though, as the statement recalled that “killing of members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying such a group in whole or in part constitutes a crime punishable under international law.” This crime, of course, is the one called genocide—even though the word itself was not used in the text. New Zealand's draft resolution, “in blue,” which had been held in reserve, went into the archives, and the presidential statement initiated by my delegation was accepted, albeit rather too watered down for our taste.⁴⁷

The Czech presidential statement initiative that New Zealand, in the president's chair, crocheted through the negotiations was our most intensive effort to influence the Security Council's deliberations on Rwanda. It was also the only occasion during our two-year stint on the Security Council when the Czech delegation by itself initiated a text of any document. Even though we did not succeed, or at least not without the text's being greatly watered down, I consider this to have been one of the most important of our efforts in the Security Council. It is not very well known, because the Security Council holds its consultations behind closed doors and its “internal matters” only seep out. This draft, and Czech public statements at formal Security Council sessions, presented the overall view of our country, one that eventually received broad international recognition.

Genocide—The Expression

And so we found out yet again, the hard way, while discussing this presidential statement, that the word “genocide” was taboo in the Security Council. Nobody used it publicly, however clear it was that this was exactly what was taking place. Nobody used it because using it would have legal repercussions. Genocide is forbidden by the international Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) of 1948; and, in addition, the UNCG confers a duty to

punish *génocidaires*. The United States, always weighing ever so carefully the legal implications of any step, did not intend, or did not wish, to act on this duty. Its representatives argued that in the case of Rwanda one could at most talk about “acts of genocide,” but not about genocide as such. I have never understood the distinction between the two.

This US position evoked a certain echo in Czech diplomacy as well. During a nighttime ride through the streets of New York, Alexandr (“Sasha”) Vondra, at the time first deputy to Foreign Minister Jozef Zieleniec, suggested that I moderate my statements concerning Rwanda. He had just arrived from Washington and was perhaps conveying the reaction of the US administration. I simply opened the daily paper and pointed out one article after another on the ongoing atrocities. The newspapers had a clear picture of the situation, and so did I. Sasha didn’t insist, and I moderated nothing.

On the one hand, the Security Council’s inability to come to grips with the situation was caused by the blinders worn by some countries had (the American “acts of genocide,” the difficulties that some Third World countries had in view of their own policies toward minorities). On the other hand, for many of us, the Rwanda events fell so dramatically out of the normal curve of nations’ possible behaviors that one instinctively refused to believe them. Fifty years after the term “genocide” was first introduced into the glossary of international politics, as a consequence of the Shoah, and twenty years after the holocaust launched by the Khmer Rouge, it was hard to admit that we were dealing not with a historical category but with an acutely contemporary one, not with a one-off event but with a recurring one.

Apart from that, I detected a soupçon in some of the remarks, along the lines of It’s easy for you Czechs to point fingers when you are not obligated to deal with any consequences. Are you perhaps going to send your soldiers to Rwanda? This, of course, was a cheap argument; if it were true, it would imply that smaller countries have no business at all sitting around the Security Council table. And, in addition, while the Czech Republic had no soldiers in Rwanda, it had deployed them in a long list of other difficult and dangerous places; if we had none in Rwanda, it was more a result of the random selection of where our soldiers went than of a deliberate policy of avoiding that country.

The fact that for weeks on end nobody publicly used the word “genocide” was, in my view, symptomatic of the complete collapse of the UN Secretariat’s responsibility and of the Security Council’s impotence. In the end, I became the first official to use the expression publicly, in a public session of the UN Security Council. (During informal consultations, behind closed doors, several of us had been using the term for some time now.)

The opportunity to make the point in public arose on 5 May 1994. A UNSC session had been convened to deal with Mozambique, but I managed to insert a reference to Rwanda into my remarks: “Different countries of the cone of Africa south of the Equator,” I said,

are facing an exceptionally broad array of political circumstances at this moment. On the one end of the spectrum, there is the hell of Rwanda. My delegation is appalled by the situation in that country and has been shocked by the fact that neither the Security Council nor the UN Secretariat has so far managed to describe the massacres in Rwanda with the only word that fits them—namely, genocide.⁴⁸

And the word was out in public, for what it was worth.

Resolution 918/1994

The presidential statement of 30 April was better than nothing, but the Security Council still hadn't started working on a resolution that would not only comment on the Rwanda massacres but also do something about them. Eventually, such a resolution was adopted—but not until May. The first public, official, formal meeting on Rwanda took place only on 16 May. On that occasion, I started my own statement forcefully: “The crocodiles in the Kagera river and the vultures over Rwanda have seldom had it so good.” The ambassador of Djibouti, sitting to my left, snickered.

They are feeding on the bodies of thousands upon thousands of children, women, hundreds of whom were pregnant, and men who have been hacked to death during the past six weeks by what has turned out to be a most vicious regime.

The massacres include 4,000 killed in Kibeho; 5,500 butchered in Cyahinda; 800 assassinated in Kiziguru; 500 slain in Rukira; 2,500 slaughtered in Kibungo; another 4,000 have been murdered in Shang'i, a parish in the Cyangugu prefecture, and 2,000 in Mibirizi, also in Cyangugu. This is the same Cyangugu where for several weeks now, many thousands have apparently been trapped for weeks on end in a stadium without any relief. Surely one wonders whether the dead are not better off than the living.

By now, the Djibouti ambassador had long stopped snickering. I hadn't finished.

So we have some 200,000 Tutsi lives lost [this was the number offered by the secretary-general], out of a total population of about one million—20 per cent of all of Rwanda's Tutsi. Each one of us can figure out how many lives such a percentage would represent in his own country, for his own people. This situation is being described as a humanitarian crisis as though it were a famine or perhaps a natural disaster. In the view of my delegation, the proper description is—genocide.⁴⁹

It was a chilling presentation, perhaps the strongest I ever delivered in a public session of the Security Council. For one thing, it was the first public presentation on Rwanda (consultations having been closed to the public) where I had the opportunity to present our overall evaluation of the situation. I spoke about the slaughter being executed by the Hutu on the Tutsi and about the impropriety of trying to hypothetically “spread the blame around,” an approach for which there was no evidence. (This was an oblique attack especially against the occasional arguments of France.) I spoke about the conceptual difference one must make between victims of war, albeit a civil war, and one-sided sacrifices of civilians far behind the front line. On the other hand, I refused any “collective guilt” of the Hutu and pointed a finger specifically at the butchers of the Presidential Guard and government military and gendarmerie units, all of which had been linked with former president Habyarimana. I also drew attention to the inflammatory Mille Collines radio station.

In conclusion, I reviewed the evolution of the Security Council's approach over the previous six weeks: first the absolute shock, when we hesitated even to believe the overall horror of the ongoing massacres; then the worry for our own units, after the ten Belgians lost their lives; then the courage of UNAMIR, which, in unbelievably uneven circumstances, managed to save at least the bare lives of at least a few tens of thousands of desperate souls in Kigali. I saluted their courage, as well as the NGOs, “which have done so much to apprise us of the true nature of the conflicts in Rwanda.” This, in turn, was an oblique criticism of the Secretariat for not informing the Security Council well enough.

At this meeting, the Security Council approved Resolution 918/1994 (co-sponsored by the Czech delegation), which directed the return of UN units to Rwanda.⁵⁰ After six weeks of horrors, we had finally managed to decide to boost UNAMIR's troop strength up to 5,500 and to strengthen its mandate. Even that was not easy: as I wrote to Prague,⁵¹ the Security Council found it taxing to deal with the views of the United States, who were very wary of the operation's failing. They feared that in a situation where neither party agreed with sending UNAMIR in and neither was prepared to abide by a cease-fire, the danger was dramatically increasing that UNAMIR would find itself in the midst of a bloody conflict, as in Somalia. And so, while the United States were prepared to contribute up to one-third of the costs of this operation, the perspective of possible victims decreased the chances that the US Congress would agree to this financing.

Disregarding the opposition of one of its members, namely Rwanda itself, the Security Council decided to impose an arms embargo on the country. The resolution was voted on in parts—an exceptional measure, used very seldom, in situations when this or that member objects to just this or that paragraph of the draft. The representative of Rwanda objected specifically to Part B, which imposed the arms embargo.

That the Rwandan (Hutu) government would even take part in this session, after six weeks of incessant slaughter, bordered on the grotesque. It was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (!) of the murderous Hutu “interim government,” a certain Jérôme Bicomumpaka. Colin Keating, New Zealand's ambassador, subjected him to scathing sarcasm and expressed his astonishment that we had even allowed him to take up Rwanda's place on the Security Council.⁵² The representative of Rwanda, said Keating, “does not represent a State. He has no legitimacy and is merely the mouthpiece of a faction.” (The representative in question is now facing responsibility for his part in the genocide at the Arusha international tribunal.)

The Hurricane Abates

A few days later, the secretary-general sent his people to Rwanda to prepare the new phase of UNAMIR's activity. (The delegation consisted of his deputy, Iqbal Riza of Pakistan, and Canadian Major-General J. Maurice Baril, Kofi Annan's military advisor for PKOs.) The Hutu regime in Kigali, meanwhile, was teetering on the brink, but it still had the strength to massacre people. The regime still controlled the capital, but its airport was now under RPF control. (At about this time, SRSG Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh pulled out of Rwanda. He was to visit several African countries and request their good offices in resolving the Rwanda conflict. One might say, none too soon! More recently, he has apparently given testimony at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda—in defense of the alleged *génocidaires*.)

Toward the end of May, the RPF and the Rwandan government forces (RGF) started talking, under the auspices of the UN, for the first time since 6 April, when the slaughter commenced. It still wasn't over, though, and during their first meeting, the RPF demanded an end to the massacres. The RGF allegedly asked their units and the militias to be “more tolerant” of the Tutsi, but as late as 28 May they nevertheless massacred some 500 Tutsi who had sought shelter in a cloister north of Kigali.

The UNSG issued another report on Rwanda on 31 May. No longer could he be mealy-mouthed. Here he confirmed our own information about the breadth and

depth of the cataclysm that had engulfed Rwanda: “There can be little doubt that it constitutes genocide,” he confirmed, more than three weeks after I had first publicly used this expression in the Security Council.⁵³ “My delegation,” I said subsequently in a Security Council meeting, “is troubled that it has taken so long for the Secretary to use this description in his reports, on which the Security Council bases its work heavily.”⁵⁴

Dénouement

In June 1994, three months after it had first swept the country, the tsunami of murders finally began to ebb. The greatest merit for this goes to the RPF, which had continued its civil-war offensive (and seldom has a war been more civil than here) and was crushing the Hutu forces. One might say that throughout the country the RPF was liberating the miserable remnants of Tutsi who had not been murdered; but, in fact, day after day they were faced with further and further evidence of the terror of extremist Hutu.

In these circumstances, France made an offer to the Security Council: it would undertake its own operation, allegedly to alleviate the humanitarian situation further by attempting to protect the endangered civilian population. It wasn't clear why France had suddenly become so solicitous, and various reservations and objections were voiced both in the Security Council and beyond. These doubts, rather exceptionally, found expression even during the vote on the French draft resolution, from which Brazil, China, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Pakistan eventually abstained. In my temporary absence, the Czech delegation didn't figure that anything could go wrong with the French initiative, and ended up supporting Resolution 929/1994, which authorized Operation Turquoise.⁵⁵

Only after some time did we understand what France had been up to. It became clear that France was very anxious about the unstoppable advance of the RPF and greatly feared for its protégés among the Hutu leadership. Operation Turquoise thus, in essence, blasted the way for the Hutu *génocidaires* to escape from the country, mainly to the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A number of French soldiers were apparently shocked when they realized, upon arriving in the country, who it was they were supposed to protect.

The murders didn't end even during this operation, though. In the south of the country—for example, in the forests and caves of the Bisesero region in Kibuya province—Tutsi had for weeks and months been fighting and resisting Hutu inroads, in an uneven struggle, without arms and eventually without food.⁵⁶ (Bisesero is today one of the main symbols of Tutsi resistance, as I witnessed during my 2004 visit to the Kigali genocide memorial on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the holocaust.) After the French arrived, multitudes of Tutsi fell into a trap: believing that they would now be safe, many descended from the mountains, only to be murdered by the Hutu, as late as June 1994. Only about 1,000 people survived in the area, where some 50,000 had originally sought refuge. One cannot say that this was France's intention; but there is no doubt that they went to Rwanda to protect the Hutu, not out of any great regard for the Tutsi.

A minor concluding comment: in July, Ambassador Bizimana, representative of the Hutu, made his last appearance in the Security Council. Long before then, he had stopped speaking up in informal consultations, apparently on the advice of the French themselves. Now he disappeared from New York, along with the contents of his delegation's bank account.⁵⁷ For a while, Rwanda's seat fell vacant. On

2 September 1994, it was taken up by Ambassador Manzi Bakuramutsa, representing the new Tutsi-led government.

What about the *génocidaires*?

The RPF ended up defeating the Hutu militarily. The Hutu administration—the so-called interim government, the government’s military, the Interahamwe, various militias, Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines—were all escaping the country. Masses of ordinary people were also crossing the borders to Tanzania and the DRC. I watched on television the slowly moving masses with their cattle-drawn wagons. They did not give the impression that their lives were threatened, that they were facing a clear and present danger. This is not to say that murderers among them had nothing to fear, nor to exclude the possibility that a great proportion of Hutu, perhaps even the majority, took part or were forced to take part in the slaughter. The TV images, however, left the impression of an orderly exodus, an exodus probably organized by the Hutu extremist wing. The days and weeks that followed only confirmed this impression.

The Hutu exodus amounted to an export of Rwanda’s problems. Refugee camps in neighboring countries turned into ulcers on the body of Central Africa. There were concerns for the refugees themselves, that is, for their living conditions, for the possibility of return, and so on; in addition, though, the camps were under the strict control of the Hutu militias, who forcibly prevented from returning even those who wanted to go back, and could have gone back, to Rwanda. The militias, defeated in the civil war, continued to spread disturbances from beyond the borders. Based in the refugee camps, they “continue to spew hatred against . . . their intended victims who got away. They preach hatred, operate incendiary radio stations, keep an iron hold over the rest of the camp population, prevent ordinary people from going back to their homes and fields, throttle efforts of humanitarian operations—indeed, they are possibly preparing for a renewal of the war,” as I argued in the Security Council in November 1994, months after a degree of order had been established in Rwanda itself.⁵⁸

For the new Rwandan government, now headed by RPF politicians, these refugee camps represented a constant security threat. Their chieftains spread their toxic influence throughout Central Africa, and one can say that a number of the area’s problems since, especially in the DRC and in Burundi, stem from unsettled accounts with the perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide and the consequent security concerns of the Tutsi government in Rwanda.

One task remained for the Security Council: to arrange for the settling of accounts. In early June, when even the secretary-general had come around to describe the events in Rwanda as genocide, I said in the Security Council that one doesn’t use the word “holocaust” lightly.

But today, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day, we reflect upon the Second World War as a war directed against a regime which became anathema to the civilized world precisely because of it having unleashed a holocaust. The regime in Rwanda has been attempting to do something similar—with machetes instead of gas chambers; with the notorious *interahamwe*, comparable to the SS; with [specified political parties] comparable to the Nazi party. It was precisely to forestall the re-emergence of such regimes that this Organization, the United Nations, was created almost 50 years ago.

Genocide is a crime, and, to state the obvious, where there is a crime there are criminals.⁵⁹

Three weeks later I elaborated,

The conflict in Rwanda has led to massive and systematic violations of a whole series of international agreements and conventions—including, to name just a few, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and—it goes almost without saying—of international humanitarian law ... Provisions of the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity may well be applicable to the circumstances of Rwanda.⁶⁰

How to deal with the criminals? Their crimes violated the basic principles of international law. The logic of the matter would require that the Security Council react in a way parallel to its reaction to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and that it create another ad hoc tribunal—something RPF's Claude Dusaidi had, after all, called for at the end of April. And this is exactly what the Security Council decided to do, in its Resolution 955/1994.⁶¹ The lion's share of the merit for reaching this decision—as, indeed, in so many other aspects of resolving the Rwandan catastrophe—goes to the New Zealand delegation.⁶²

These ad hoc tribunals were the only possibility available for international settlement of war crimes or crimes against humanity, given that any project of an overall, generic international criminal tribunal was at the time still in its infancy.⁶³ I pointed this out in the Security Council. The decision to establish a specific tribunal for Rwanda, I observed, “might signify a breakthrough in creating mechanisms that would impose international criminal law ... New concepts of international criminal law have been developed—war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and so on—while rules of procedure have remained quite underdeveloped since the Nuremberg trial.”⁶⁴

Punishment is one thing, justice is another, and national reconciliation is something else again. “The Tribunal,” I said in the Security Council,

might become a vehicle of justice, but it is hardly designed as a vehicle of reconciliation. Justice treats criminals whether or not they see the error of their ways; but reconciliation is much more complicated, and is certainly impossible until and unless the criminals repent and show remorse. Only then can they even beg their victims for forgiveness, and only then can reconciliation possibly be attained.⁶⁵

Yet remorse, regrets, never mind repentance, were clearly not something one could expect from the Hutu *génocidaires*—certainly not from those who had left the country and were mobilizing against the Tutsi from across the borders.

In Conclusion

The Rwandan Genocide took place in 1994, but it is still a live matter in Central Africa. The flight of the Hutu *génocidaires* to neighboring countries broadcast the seeds of Rwanda's catastrophe far and wide. Neighboring Burundi, which I visited twice during my tenure on the UNSC,⁶⁶ is engulfed in a Tutsi–Hutu rivalry as well.⁶⁷ The eastern part of the DRC has turned into a theater of an unclear and terrifically bloody war that over time has involved several other African countries, from Uganda to Angola and definitely including Rwanda. Permanent concerns for the security of their fellows have led current Rwandan leaders to hard-to-understand adventures in the DRC. One talks about a “thirty-year war” in Africa; one talks

about millions of dead victims, of which Rwanda itself lost perhaps 800,000 (we will never know the exact number). One can say without stretching the point that some of the roots of Central Africa's current warfare grow out of the carnage in Rwanda. Who sows the wind, reaps a whirlwind.

The United Nations has reflected on its role in this catastrophe. After he was elected UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan established a committee that analyzed in detail the entire role of the organization, its Secretariat, and the Security Council.⁶⁸

Important participating countries have also examined their positions and policies. During his visit to Rwanda, US President Bill Clinton expressed regret for his government's policy during the genocide.⁶⁹ Senate hearings took place in France, and Belgian parliamentarians also examined their country's role. In her memoirs, Madeleine Albright discusses her lack of information and the incorrect US evaluation of the situation, which attempted to fit Rwanda into a template derived from elsewhere. She sums up the US role thus: "The lessons we thought we had just learned in Somalia simply did not apply in Rwanda. Somalia was something close to anarchy. Rwanda was planned murder. Somalia counseled caution; Rwanda demanded action."⁷⁰

The position of the Czech Republic in this crisis was a principled one, and we followed it as best we knew how. During the 1930s, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain didn't want to commit his country to the cause of Czechoslovakia (threatened at the time by Nazi Germany), "a small far-away country which no one knows." For us, Rwanda, too, was a small far-away country we hadn't known much about; but it was precisely our historical experience with the Western diplomacy of the 1930s that obligated us to act differently.

Czech positions derived from one of the key principles of Czech foreign policy—respect for human rights. New Zealand was even more active than we were, probably because of their much longer diplomatic experience and the legal mind of Colin Keating, their superb ambassador and former justice minister. But even years later, the role of the Czech Republic and Czech statements and positions in the bog of those months look good. Our standpoints, our formulations, our initiatives, are to this day quoted in most publications that deal with the role of the Security Council during that period.⁷¹ We are remembered in Rwanda, and whenever diplomats from the Czech Embassy in Kenya visit the country, the role of the Czech Republic on the UN Security Council in 1994 is recalled with gratitude.

For me personally, Rwanda was a key formative personal, diplomatic, and political experience. It strengthened my realization of how indispensable it is to act in accordance with one's own internal moral compass, in accordance with the basic principles one adheres to, even if they cannot always be defined simply or briefly. Diplomatically, since Rwanda (and since the Srebrenica carnage that the Security Council dealt with in 1995), I have been fully conscious of the need to stand up against any danger of extermination of any people, anywhere. And politically, the red line beyond which one simply cannot make further compromises became even clearer.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article appeared in the Czech journal *Mezinárodní vztahy*, no. 3 (2004): 45–65.
2. The background of the situation in Rwanda, the civil war, the role of the UN, and the genocide is covered in an extensive and ever-expanding list of sources, each containing additional references. Ryszard Kapuściński, *Heban [Ebony]* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2003), 174–92, serves as a possible brief introduction. (Alas, I am not aware of an English trans-

- lation.) Rwanda itself is covered in, e.g., Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2002). Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United States and Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), is a detailed work about the US involvement. Linda R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2009), is exceptional. (The citations that follow below are from the book's first edition, however.) Alison des Forges, "*Leave None to Tell the Story*": *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), may contain the most extensive non-UN documentation.
3. All official UN documents on this matter for the period in question are contained in an extensive collection, *The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993–1996* (New York: United Nations, 1996). The text of this resolution is found on pages 221–31.
 4. In European African studies, these two peoples are usually discussed as “tribes,” though differences between them are really not the same as those between actual tribes. These distinctions, however, are not the subject of this essay. Kapuściński, *Heban*, explains the matter clearly.
 5. *UN and Rwanda*, 170–201.
 6. *UN and Rwanda*, 251–52.
 7. Technically, PDD-25 was not issued until 3 May 1994, but US diplomats followed its guidelines for months before that. Its actual text is confidential, but a summary and discussion of it can be found on the Internet through the Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm> (accessed 9 July 2010). See Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, 139, for a discussion of its influence on US decision making.
 8. Madeleine Albright, *Madame Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), 147.
 9. Dallaire has written about his tragic Rwandan experience in Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003).
 10. All statements are recorded in the provisional verbatim record of the 3326th meeting of the UN Security Council, UN Doc. S/PV.3326, <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/PV.3326> (accessed 28 June 2010). (Within the UN document numbering system, “S” indicates a UNSC document, “PV” stands for “provisional verbatim record”—in fact, there are no others—and 3326 is the consecutive number of the UNSC meeting in question.)
 11. The Czech Republic's Permanent Mission to the UN sent almost daily summaries of its work to Prague and other interested Czech embassies around the world. These were not classified, and I therefore quote them freely. Eventually they were formatted with the consecutive number for the given year, a file number, and a date. I quote here from Summary 2/1994, file No.1016/93 [*sic*], 4/1/94. All translations into English are my own.
 12. The text “Political Situation in Rwanda” was appended, unnumbered, to a summary sent to Prague. *UN and Rwanda* contains various documents from various sources, but not documents from the RPF.
 13. I have a copy of this telegram in my archive but am not sure whether it was ever published in its entirety. This telegram, too, is missing from the *UN and Rwanda* source-book. The telegram itself and the background to the information it contains are extensively treated in L.R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 91–92.
 14. I never understood the role of Marrack Goulding, at the time under-secretary general for political affairs. He was bound to play an important role in the flow of information, but his book *Peacemonger* (London: John Murray, 2002), which deals with a number of PKOs, is deafeningly silent about Rwanda.
 15. *UN and Rwanda*, 31.
 16. *UN and Rwanda*, 32.
 17. This little skirmish of mine with the secretary-general intrigued a couple of young Danish journalists, who covered it extensively at the time: see, e.g., Martin Burcharth, “Tjekken der taler Boutros-Ghali imod,” *Information* [Copenhagen], 7–8 December 1996.

18. I have some of these reports in my archive, but not the one dealing with the critical date.
19. For Gharekhan's recollections of the Rwanda developments see Chinmaya Gharekhan, *The Horseshoe Table* (New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2006), 236–56.
20. *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: United Nations, 1999), 26.
21. Summary No. 58/94, file no. 2424/94, 7/4/94.
22. *UN and Rwanda*, 254–55.
23. Summary No. 59/94, file no. 2437/94, 8/4/94.
24. This was true not only for the first few days but at least for the first weeks. “During the critical days between April 15 and 22,” Albright writes, “State Department spokesman Michael McCurry received only one question about Rwanda in his daily press briefings, and that concerned the safety of UN peacekeepers.” Albright, *Madame Secretary*, 154.
25. Technically, Belgium had been a trustee of Rwanda. After World War I, the League of Nations entrusted the former German colony of Ruanda-Urundi to Belgium; Belgian administration lasted until 1962, when two independent countries, Rwanda and Burundi, emerged on this territory.
26. At the time I hadn't yet come to understand that these arguments amounted to a delicate maneuver to bless the Security Council's debate over apparent “domestic” problems. If a domestic problem is such that the number of emigrants and refugees may jeopardize a neighboring country, this is a good enough technical reason for the Security Council to deal with it.
27. Summary No. 60/94, file no. 2438/94, 10/4/94.
28. Summary No. 61/94, file no. 2469/94, 11/4/94.
29. Frank Smyth, “French Guns, Rwandan Blood,” *New York Times*, 14 April 1994.
30. Frank Smyth, *Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994). Smyth's report was published in January.
31. Des Forges, “*Leave None to Tell the Story*,” 639.
32. Summary No. 61/94, file no. 2469/94, 11/4/94.
33. Summary No. 65/94, file no. 2546/94, 16/4/94.
34. On 15 April, the US delegation received instructions to inform the Security Council that the US favored “full, orderly withdrawal of all UNAMIR personnel as soon as possible.” The instruction continued, “Our opposition to retaining a UNAMIR presence in Rwanda is firm. It is based on our conviction that the Security Council has an obligation to ensure that peacekeeping operations are viable . . . and that UN peacekeeping personnel are not placed or retained, knowingly, in an untenable situation.” Albright, *Madame Secretary*, 150.
35. *UN and Rwanda*, 262–65. The document itself, S/1994/470, is dated 20 April, but it reached the Security Council one day later.
36. *UN and Rwanda*, 268–69.
37. Ibrahim A. Gambari, “Genocide in Rwanda: Shame on the World,” review of Henri Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali: The Rwandese Civil War—1994* (Accra: Woeli, 1994), *West Africa Magazine*, date unknown. Gambari was at that time Nigeria's ambassador to the UNSC. I have his review only in manuscript.
38. Summary No. 69/94, file no. 2603/94, 20/4/94.
39. Summary No. 72/94, file no. 2657/94, 25/4/94.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Attached to Summary No. 73/94, file no. 2674/94, 26/4/94.
42. See document E/CN.4/S3/3 in *UN and Rwanda*, 285–90.
43. This draft statement was never officially published; it remained a working document. The text itself is reproduced in the Appendix to this essay. It was made available to participants at a May 2004 conference on the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, organized in London by Never Again and the Imperial War Museum. That was the only occasion I am aware of when it was distributed in its original English beyond the confines of the Security Council.

44. The Security Council deals with thousands of documents issued by this or that international organization. In order to be referred to, these documents must first find their way into the UN's "registration system." Usually this is not a problem and is done routinely, at the request of some country, for example. The NGO documents we referred to had not, however, found their way into this registration base, and it would have been difficult to arrange for this to occur.
45. For Ambassador Gambari's recollection of the Rwanda debates see Ibrahim A. Gambari, "An African Perspective," in *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, ed. David Malone, 512–20 (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 2004).
46. Summary No. 76/94, file no. 2721/94, 29/4/94.
47. For the text of the presidential statement as it was eventually agreed on see *UN and Rwanda*, 271–72.
48. UN Doc. S/PV.3375, 8.
49. UN Doc. S/PV.3377, 15–16.
50. *UN and Rwanda*, 282–84.
51. Summary No. 85/94, file no. 2950/94, 17/5/94.
52. UN Doc. S/PV.3377, 11.
53. For the entire UNSG report see *UN and Rwanda*, 290–97. The quoted passage is on page 296.
54. UN Doc. S/PV.3388, 3.
55. *UN and Rwanda*, 308–9.
56. Des Forges, "Leave None to Tell the Story," 216–20.
57. For information about Bizimana's current life in Alabama see David L. Bosco, "Rwanda's ex-U.N. ambassador, who vanished after genocide, resurfaces in Alabama," *Washington Post*, 4 April 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/02/AR2010040201517.html> (accessed 29 June 2010).
58. UN Doc. S/PV.3453, 7.
59. UN Doc. S/PV.3388, 3–4.
60. UN Doc. S/PV.3400, 4.
61. *UN and Rwanda*, 387–94, including the tribunal's statute.
62. For Colin Keating's recollections of the Rwanda events, with his evaluation of lessons to be learned, see Colin Keating, "An Insider's Account" in *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, ed. David Malone, 500–511 (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 2004).
63. The statute of the International Criminal Court was signed only in June 1998, in Rome.
64. UN Doc. S/PV.3453, 7.
65. *Ibid.*
66. For a report from the August 1994 visit see UN Doc. S/1994/1039 (9 September 1994); for a report from the February 1995 visit see UN Doc. S/1995/163 (28 February 1995). During this second trip, the UNSC delegation also visited Rwanda; see UN Doc. S/1995/164 (28 February 1995).
67. I spoke on Burundi in the UNSC on 28 August 1995; see UN Doc. S/PV.3571, 4–5.
68. See *Report of the Independent Inquiry*.
69. Clinton apologized, but, as has since become known, his administration was much better informed throughout the period than he or even Madeleine Albright let on. See William Ferrogiario, ed., *The US and the Genocide in Rwanda 1994—Evidence of Inaction: A National Security Archive Briefing Book* (Washington, DC: National Security Archive, 2001), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/press.html> (accessed 29 June 2010) for declassified documents from the National Security Archive; see also Samantha Powers, "Bystander to Genocide: Why the US Let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 2001.
70. Albright, *Madame Secretary*, 154.
71. See, e.g., Des Forges, "Leave None to Tell the Story," 638–39; Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 152; and Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, 134, as well as references derived from these sources.

Appendix: Draft Presidential Statement on Rwanda, Proposed by the Czech Delegation to the UNSC on 28 April 1994

The Security Council is absolutely appalled and horrified over continuing reports of indiscriminate slaughter of innocent civilians in Kigali and various other localities in Rwanda. It notes that according to reliable reports, transmitted to the Council by the Secretary-General in his Special Report (S/1994/470), the current wave of killings was started by unruly members of the Presidential Guard, joined by elements of the Rwandese Government Forces (RGF), over which the interim Government, established on April 8, had failed to establish its authority. Unruly RGF soldiers were also responsible for the brutal murders of Mrs. Agathe Uwilingiyimana, Prime Minister, and several other ministers, of the provisional Government that stemmed from the initial implementation of the Arusha Accords, as well as for the deaths of 10 members of the Belgian contingent serving with UNAMIR.

In addition to information available from the Secretary-General, the Security Council has considered information available from well-respected NGOs. All this information points to one thing: the horrors of Rwanda's killing fields have few precedents in the recent history of the world. The Security Council reaffirms that the systematic killing of any ethnic group, with intent to destroy it in whole or in part constitutes an act of genocide as defined by relevant provisions of international law.

The Security Council points out that genocide cannot be condoned or tolerated, let alone justified, under any circumstances: not by civil war, not by the death of a leader, whatever suspicions surround it, not by past history. The Council further points out that an important body of international law exists that deals with perpetrators of genocide.

The Security Council warns the interim Government of Rwanda of the responsibility it bears for immediately reining in and disciplining all elements of the RGF and of the Presidential Guards responsible for the brutalities. The Council calls upon the interim Government of Rwanda to assure that any group, organization, movement, militia or individual under its control should cease and desist from all acts of genocide against any part of the population of Rwanda. The Council also calls upon the interim Government of Rwanda to investigate all acts of genocide and to severely punish those responsible for their commission. The Council furthermore expresses its hope that forces that are currently engaging the RGF and the Presidential Guard will not resort to comparable countermeasures.

Book Review

Chris Hedges, *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and The Triumph of Spectacle*. New York: Nation Books, 2009. Pp. 232, cloth, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Herb Hirsch, Professor of Political Science, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University; Co-Editor, *Genocide Studies and Prevention*

At first glance, a book that is a critical analysis of US culture might appear not be relevant to the study and prevention of genocide. This would be a profound mistake. Chris Hedges' analysis is not only applicable but important. Hedges, author of the National Book Critics Circle–nominated *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002), has given those who consider themselves genocide scholars much to think about and to apply to their concerns. With the possible exception of chapter two, “The Illusion of Love,” he digs into modern American culture and casts a critic’s glare on what is wrong and how it might eventuate in possible violations of human rights or even genocide. By way of reviewing his argument, I will attempt to spell out these connections.

Hedges is uniquely qualified for his journey through the depressing explication of the illusions of modern American society. A senior fellow at the Nation Institute and a former foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans, he previously wrote for the *New York Times*.

Hedges concentrates on the mechanisms used to divert individuals from confronting the political, economic, and moral realities that surround the modern citizen. Instead, he argues, reality is disguised by rituals of denial and entertainment spectacles. In a very real sense, the connection to genocide is not difficult to advance: similar rituals are used by states wishing to deny that they have perpetrated or allowed others to commit genocide. We will see how this works as we advance through the complexities of Hedges’ argument.

The book begins with an over-long introduction, fourteen pages, that compares contemporary American culture with professional wrestling—both are characterized by ritual and spectacle and devoid of content. A culture of “celebrity” dominates, and “real life, our own life, is viewed next to the lives of celebrities as inadequate and inauthentic” (19). It is no stretch to note that this type of diversion also draws attention away from the realities of life in other parts of the world and from what the United States is or is not doing in response to human-rights crises elsewhere. A culture focused on ritual and celebrity has no room for more substantive—and, one might add, depressing—realities. If, consequently, the US citizen is so diverted, it is highly unlikely that he or she will in any way pressure the US government to be concerned. This means, of course, that important issues remain on the periphery of consciousness and that, therefore, they are not on the agenda and will not be addressed.

But, Hedges argues, there is no reason to worry, since this celebrity culture provides expiation for whatever guilt may exist. Since, as portrayed in US culture, those

who win are the “Best and the Brightest,” it follows that “those who lose deserve to be erased. Compassion, competence, intelligence, and solidarity with others are forms of weakness” (30). The losers are “responsible for their rejection. They are deficient” (30). Here we find a ready-made rationalization for allowing crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide to proceed unimpeded and, in many instances, unrecognized, as the media do not cover them and the population does not care about them.

Hence, as Hedges writes, “celebrity culture plunges us into a moral void. No one has any worth beyond his or her appearance, usefulness, or ability to ‘succeed.’ The highest achievements in a celebrity culture are wealth, sexual conquest, and fame. It does not matter how these are obtained” (32). This focus masks the problems within US society and diverts attention from problems anywhere else. In fact, Hedges accurately notes that “the fantasy of celebrity culture is not designed simply to entertain. It is designed to keep us from fighting back” (38). Apathy and ignorance feed the majority values of the culture, and we become not victims or perpetrators but bystanders. We watch everything. Not only do we sit and observe “reality” television: we sit and observe Darfur and the Congo as well.

It is often argued that education will overcome these obstacles to consciousness, the ignorance of diversion. Hedges points out, however, that “honest intellectual inquiry, which is by its nature distrustful of authority, fiercely independent, and often subversive” (89), has become a rarity. Corporate hierarchy has become the dominant educational model, and business ethics dominate the modern university: “We have bought hook, line and sinker into the idea that education is about training and ‘success,’ defined monetarily, rather than learning to think critically and to challenge” (95). These are the new primary values of the American educational establishment. The “bottom line” triumphs over any concept of morality or ethics, and critical thinking is not only banished but becomes a threat to the profit motive. Learning must be utilitarian, as defined by this culture and not by any notion of humanitarian action. As for education as the panacea, Hedges concludes that “most universities have become high-priced occupational training centers” (109). Education, in such an environment, has become “a flight from conscience” (11), and a flight from conscience dooms large portions of humanity to suffer, with no recognition that anything is wrong. Hedges goes even further, noting that

the single most important quality needed to resist evil is moral autonomy. As Immanuel Kant wrote, moral autonomy is possible only through reflection, self-determination, and the courage not to cooperate. Moral autonomy is what the corporate state, with all its coded attacks on liberal institutions and “leftist” professors, have really set out to destroy. (112)

Absent these qualities, there is no danger to the status quo and no possibility that pressure will be forthcoming to confront the human-rights violations taking place in remote (at least, remote from the United States) part of the globe.

Hedges concludes with a discussion of the “Illusion of America.” By this he means that the myth of the United States is out of line with the reality. Our self-image, reinforced through the process of political socialization, political rhetoric, and self-absorption, is obsolete. “Our nation has been hijacked by oligarchs, corporations, and a narrow selfish, political, and economic elite, a small and privileged group that governs, and often steals, on behalf of moneyed interests” (142). These interests have no interest, so to speak, beyond money, and, Hedges argues,

in the name of patriotism and democracy, in the name of all the values that were once part of the American system and defined the Protestant work ethic, [have] systematically destroyed our manufacturing sector, looted the treasury, corrupted our democracy, and trashed the financial system. Seeing this plundering we remained passive, mesmerized by the enticing shadows on the wall, assured our tickets to success, prosperity, and happiness were waiting around the corner. (142)

Manipulated into passivity, diverted from reality and unable to see what has taken place, American citizens have lost the habit of democracy, the determination to take action to improve their own and others' well-being. Political will is not only absent in situations where genocide is being committed but has virtually disappeared from American society. The process of divergence has been so successful that it probably is the case that most US citizens have a difficult time recognizing their own self-interest, let alone the self-interest of the nation. The rabble-rousing discussion of health care is a perfect example. How there can be any debate over whether to provide health care for the 32 million people currently uninsured is baffling. Health care should be considered a right, and providing it for those currently without health care or the means to access it should be an honorable undertaking, as should stopping violence where innocent people are being slaughtered. Yet, as Hedges continually points out, the world has changed, and this perspective appears to have been driven out of Americans' cultural value structure, to be replaced by apathy and, if the present public discourse be any measure, hostility.

In this last chapter, Hedges adds more detail to his view of the decay of American culture. The economic decline and the reasons behind that decline—in particular, corporate domination of American political and social life—have, according to Hedges, caused Americans to lose the ability to distinguish between morality and immorality and to support action to combat evil—or to even recognize its occurrence.

“The government,” he writes, “stripped of any real sovereignty, provides little more than technical expertise for elites and corporations that lack moral restraints and a concept of the common”; “cultures that cannot distinguish between illusion and reality die” (143). Or, more appropriately for this discussion, allow others to die, unable or unwilling to distinguish between events that actually call for active intervention and interventions in the pursuit of corporate or national interest. So, no intervention in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, or in Darfur—but invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States has become a culture characterized by “war and rampant militarism” (144), and Hedges cites the usual statistics on US military spending, bases around the world, and arms sales to make his point. This leads, in Hedges' persuasive argument, to a kind of national psychopathology that is transferred from the modern corporation to the nation-state. Hedges borrows the typology of psychopathology from Joel Bakan's book *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*,¹ providing this checklist of psychopathic traits:

- Callous unconcern for the feelings of others;
- Incapacity to maintain enduring relationships;
- Reckless disregard for the safety of others;
- Deceitfulness: repeated lying and conning of others for profit [or for your own interests];
- Incapacity to experience guilt;
- Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behavior [as in failure to abide by international law]. (163)

It would not be difficult to note how US policy conforms to these traits, and this raises an interesting question: Is it possible for an entire nation-state to manifest a version of psychopathy?

Hedges appears to conclude that this is, indeed, the case. The decaying culture, he writes, “turns alienation and anxiety into a cheerful conformity. It turns a nation that wages illegal wars and administers off-shore penal colonies where it openly practices torture into the greatest democracy on earth” (190). And yet, despite his pessimistic (some might say “realistic”) analysis, Hedges’ conclusion sounds as though it were derived from some of those hucksters preaching motivation and happiness as he posits that, somehow, love must triumph over evil.

While that is certainly a result to be devoutly wished for, it is scant consolation for the victims of human-rights disasters—both historic and contemporary. For them, more concrete action and more direct confrontation with the forces so disturbingly described by Hedges must be the order of the day.

Finally, what may we conclude about the relationship between Hedges’ argument on the decline of American culture and the prevention of genocide? For a start, a society that is incapable of assessing and confronting its own internal problems, a society that cannot organize the political will to confront problems that are perhaps leading to the demise of its domestic culture, is clearly not a society with the means or the will to confront international issues in far-off places. If, as Hedges argues, America is diverted by ritual and celebrity, plagued by a declining educational and political structure that allows the decision-making process to be captured by corporate elites, it cannot be an America that will be in the forefront of defending human rights around the globe in places such as Darfur or the DRC. To expect otherwise, if Hedges’ analysis is accurate, is to engage in our very own version of missing the reality of twenty-first-century international politics. It has in fact been demonstrated over and over again that those of us interested in protecting and advancing human rights must depend on those nations and groups not so hell-bent on the pursuit of celebrity, money, and power.

Note

1. Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (New York: The Free Press, 2005).

Book Review

Hrayr S. Karagueuzian and Yair Auron, *A Perfect Injustice: Genocide and Theft of Armenian Wealth*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009. Pp. 203, cloth, \$39.95 US.

Reviewed by Uğur Ümit Üngör, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for War Studies, School of History, University College Dublin

Between 1895 and 1955, Ottoman Armenians suffered enormous loss of life and property as a result of pogroms, massacres, and other forms of mass violence. The 1915 Armenian Genocide can be seen as the zenith of this process of decline and destruction. It consisted of a series of genocidal strategies: the mass executions of elites, categorical deportations, forced assimilation, destruction of material culture, an artificially created famine, and, last but not least, collective dispossession. The state-orchestrated plunder of Armenians immediately pauperized the victims; this was at once a condition for and a consequence of the genocide. The Young Turk political elite launched this process of societal and economic transformation in order to establish a Turkish nation-state with a robust economy under ethnic Turkish dominion. As part of this process, the ethnically heterogeneous Ottoman economic universe was subjected to comprehensive and violent forms of ethnic homogenization. The redistribution of Armenian wealth—including shops, farms, churches, cash, jewelry, precious metals, fields, factories, and schools—was an essential part of this process. The genocide ripped apart the fabric of urban, provincial, and national economies, destroying market relationships and maiming economic patterns that had endured for many centuries.¹

The field of Armenian Genocide studies is rapidly developing. The publication of several important monographs in the past decade has opened up new ground with respect to the organization of the mass violence, the international context of imperialism, the national context of ethnic homogenization, and various rescue efforts.² But so far there exists no detailed treatment of the expropriation of Ottoman Armenians as a component of the genocide. This highly significant aspect of the event still needs to be properly understood.³ In *A Perfect Injustice: Genocide and Theft of Armenian Wealth*, Hrayr Karagueuzian and Yair Auron aim to fill this gap by exploring the confiscation of Armenian life-insurance policies by the Young Turk government. From a broader thematic perspective, the authors tackle two important questions in genocide research: How are victims of genocide dispossessed? How do third parties behave in this process of plunder? Their book provides an interesting but fragmented discussion that has both merits and shortcomings.

A Perfect Injustice consists of ten short chapters addressing some of the key debates around Armenian life insurance. Chapter one is an overview of Armenian history from the late nineteenth century to the period of the genocide. Chapter two demonstrates that on the eve of the genocide, thousands of Armenians bought life insurance from various European and American companies. Chapter three gives an overview of the insurers' counterclaims against Armenian claims for restitution, and chapter four highlights how the Young Turk regime attempted to collect the benefits

from these life-insurance policies after it had murdered those insured. Chapter five charts how insurance companies held Turkey liable for the deaths of their policy holders and pressured their foreign ministries to pursue this agenda. In chapter six, the authors develop a legal argument, using the 1915 sinking of the British passenger ship *Lusitania* as a “mini-precedent,” while chapter seven discusses the realpolitik of “dollar diplomacy” in the wake of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Chapter eight poses the question of whether Armenians’ unclaimed life-insurance policies are still recoverable. Finally, chapters nine and ten explore the 1915 and 1916 deposits to the Reichsbank, distinguishing two separate deposits, the latter of which, they argue, was of confiscated Armenian money. A conclusion rounds out the volume.

This book has many merits. It includes quotations from the letters, legal texts, and protocols of various insurance companies that lift the veil on how the companies behaved toward their Armenian clients when the latter were being persecuted and murdered. Karagueuzian requested undisclosed documents from New York Life (NYL) on the company’s transactions with Ottoman Armenians, and even received copies of some of them. NYL’s internal correspondence demonstrates that the company knew of the Armenians’ fate but willfully prevaricated toward the public to avoid incurring losses. For example, on 20 November 1922 NYL vice president Thomas A. Buckner wrote to the US secretary of state, Charles E. Hughes, that “much of this insurance . . . was written upon the lives of subject peoples, such as the Armenians and others who have, during the years since the outbreak of the European War, been subjected to massacre and illegal killing and fatal exposure” (25)—demonstrating clearly that NYL was aware of the mass killings of Armenians. He later added that “we believe the Turkish Government is, and should be held responsible” (34). The position of British insurance companies created a Kafkaesque nightmare. The companies categorically rejected Armenian claims, because the British government banned “payment of a policy on the life of an enemy [in this case, any citizen of the Ottoman Empire] during the war” (34).

Karagueuzian and Auron argue that after the Armenian Genocide, the position of the insurance companies was one of self-interest; in the authors’ words, it “combined petty corporate greed and self-serving corporate politics” (73). The insurance companies and banks merely sought compensation for the financial losses resulting from the Young Turk government’s criminal sequestration policies. They were also wary of their reputations and of their competitive positions with respect to other companies. The insurance companies pressed their countries’ foreign ministries to hold the Ottoman government liable for the financial damages they had sustained. Therefore, the authors also rightly raise serious questions about Calvin Coolidge, US president from 1923 to 1929, who only three months after leaving office became a member of NYL’s Board of Directors.

Even almost a century later, the insurance companies continued to perpetuate their policies, seeking to exploit every conceivable legal loophole to evade payments—including unreasonable pretexts such as Armenians’ failure to pay their premiums after they were deported and their relatives’ inability to supply death certificates. Ultimately, in 2005, both New York Life Insurance Co. and AXA S.A. agreed to pay multi-million-dollar settlements to the descendants of genocide victims. What is remarkable is that these companies initially stonewalled such requests and categorically denied all charges; only after realizing their *legal* vulnerability did they change tack and grudgingly admit that the Armenians were entitled to compensation. In

other words, they never took a principled stance on the murders of their clients, and they proposed only minimal compensation. Ultimately, these two insurance companies paid less than 2 percent of their total debts on pre-genocide life-insurance policy benefits to the victims' heirs.

The authors also clear up confusion about an important controversy, that of two considerable wartime deposits to the Reichsbank in Berlin: the 1915 German and Austro-Hungarian gold deposit to the Ottoman Empire's account and the 1916 Young Turk gold deposit to the Ottoman account. Karagueuzian and Auron argue convincingly that these were two distinct deposits: the former a loan from the Ottoman Empire's allies to their wartime ally, and the latter most likely looted Armenian assets, funneled by the Young Turk dictatorship to the Reichsbank's Ottoman account. Only thorough research into the records of the Reichsbank and the Ottoman Bank, however, can conclusively resolve this question.

All of these qualities speak for the book. But it suffers from drawbacks as well, beginning with its straightforward, at times emotionally involved style and unrefined vocabulary. *C'est le ton qui fait la musique*: the authors use an all-too-familiar popular discourse of "evil" perpetrators committing "unspeakable" acts, rather than attempting to understand the problem. They seem to have thrown to the wind Jacques Sémelin's caution that genocide researchers need to distance themselves from legal and moral approaches to genocide. There is considerable insipid repetition as well, especially on denial by states—which is repeatedly condemned but never really problematized. In addition, four major drawbacks mar the general presentation of the book: questions, argumentation, comparisons, and assumptions.

The authors seem to have asked the wrong research questions at the outset. Instead of inquiring how third parties conducted their businesses during a period when their clients were being persecuted, they use the available documentation to establish "guilt" on the part of the Young Turk government. Too often the authors take polemical issue with denialist arguments, for example in chapter four, when discussing the Young Turk regime's bizarre wartime claim that Armenian life-insurance policies should be paid out to the regime (48). This chapter is a missed opportunity: instead of getting to the bottom of this captivating event, the authors prosecute the perpetrating elites. Similar missteps are made in chapter ten, which begins with the Young Turks' 1916 gold deposit to the Reichsbank but then takes an inexplicable turn to discuss the political continuities evident in the Young Turk regime.

At times, too, the argument rambles. The authors' piling up of evidence to implicate the Ottoman minister of finance, Cavid Bey (121–3), is not convincing. It is clear that Cavid Bey was probably deeply complicit in Young Turk economic crimes. But the methods of using historical evidence are not applied adequately. Another instance is chapter five, which promises to discuss the insurers' defense against Armenian claims but is in fact a rather rash and undifferentiated treatment of Young Turk violence. The authors' blanket indictment of Germany (125–7) does not make much sense either: it relies on arguments from authority and on outdated and discarded scholarship that has been criticized and deconstructed in recent studies.

The many comparisons and parallels drawn in the book are not unproblematic either. The authors assert an equivalence between the Shoah and the Armenian Genocide, often deploying legal arguments to buttress a claim that post-Holocaust norms and practices of restitution apply to the Armenian case, too. The references to the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915 are perhaps misplaced as well. These

events are really of a different nature and magnitude. Comparisons are legitimate, and can be fruitful, but they need to be preceded, first and foremost, by thorough research on the Armenian case.⁴

The book also includes several debatable assumptions. The authors uncritically use the “Ten Commandments” (6, 18–9), the alleged December 1914 Young Turk plan to implement the Armenian genocide, which historians have identified as a forgery. Similarly, they write that “the ease with which the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide escaped retributive justice seemed to have impressed the Nazi leadership as they were contemplating a similar initiative towards the Jews” (99) and, later in the text, claim that the Nazis were “influenced by their knowledge of the Armenian Genocide” and “were greatly encouraged” by it (137–8). In fact, however, there is no real evidence for this assertion of a direct connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Shoah. The authors also err in suggesting that it would be “futile” to expect the discovery of Ottoman state documents attesting to the Young Turk government’s plunder campaign (117); in fact, research into the Ottoman archives in Istanbul demonstrates that a huge official paper trail exists.⁵

Despite these reservations, *A Perfect Injustice* is a step in the right direction and, if used carefully, a reasonable addition to the literature. The findings of Karagueuzian and Auron make grim reading on the abandonment of victims, but they are nevertheless useful for the study of third parties during genocidal processes. What is the role and place of victim dispossession in genocidal processes? Which strategies tend to be adopted by transnational organizations with professional or financial ties to genocide? These questions merit attention in future research.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive introduction to this theme see Mehmet Polatel and Uğur Ümit Üngör, *Confiscation and Colonisation: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London: Continuum, 2010), forthcoming.
2. Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim–Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006); Raymond Kévorkian, *Le Génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006); Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gensburger, eds., *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (London: Hurst, 2010).
3. Two English-language articles dealing with the problem are Dickran Kouymjian, “Confiscation of Armenian Property and the Destruction of Armenian Historical Monuments as a Manifestation of the Genocidal Process,” in *Anatomy of Genocide: State-Sponsored Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alexandre Kimenyi and Otis L. Scott, 307–19 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001); and Bedross Der Matossian, “From Confiscation to Appropriation: Historical Continuity and the Destruction of the ‘Armenian Economy’ in the Ottoman Empire,” *The Armenian Weekly*, 24 April 2007, 22–3, 27.
4. To be sure, there is potential for relevant and appropriate comparison: the elaborate juridical apparatus erected by the Young Turks for the profound dispossession of the Armenians and the spoliation process in general seem to invite comparative research with the Nazi economic ruination of Jews before 1941. Another more helpful avenue of research might be to compare Jewish attempts at restitution from insurance companies that had outstanding life-insurance policies on European Jews. In some cases, the same insurance companies (including AXA) that had refused to compensate victims of the Armenian Genocide later rejected Jewish claims through similar pretexts, such as the absence of death certificates.

5. See Polatel and Üngör, *Confiscation and Colonisation*; also see Hilmar Kaiser, “Armenian Property, Ottoman Law and Nationality Policies during the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916,” in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, and Stephan Dähne, 49–71 (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2006); and Taner Akçam, “*Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur*”: *Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), 208–36.

Book Review

Kim S. Theriault, *Rethinking Arshile Gorky*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2009. Pp. 288, cloth. \$90.00 US.

Reviewed by Sara Cohan, Education Director, The Genocide Education Project

I was twenty-eight years old when I visited the Whitney Museum for the first time. I immediately dashed to see the beloved painting *The Artist and His Mother* by Arshile Gorky. As I stood in awe in front of the painting, my eyes wandered to the museum placard. It read “Arshile Gorky, American Artist.” My heart stopped. It felt like as if the wave of genocide denial so often experienced by those of Armenian descent had crashed against that wall of the Whitney—erasing not only Gorky’s heritage but my own. A scholar in the field would have known what to expect. At the time, I was young and unprepared for this experience. How could Gorky be just an “American” in the eyes of the Whitney, without the slightest hint of his origins or experiences?

The Artist and His Mother cannot be understood without understanding that Gorky was a survivor of genocide—a displaced person who had lost his mother and his homeland. Negating the context of the artist’s life left a sterile painting representing only an aspect of Modernist art. Since this time, the Whitney has created a slightly more appropriate placard for the work, but attaching Gorky’s identity to his work on museum grounds is still a battle mirrored in the political arena of genocide denial. In April 2010, this was clearly at issue when the Tate Modern Museum in London hosted the current exhibit of Gorky’s work and indicated in the brochure that labeling Gorky as a survivor of genocide is a contested point.

In her recent book *Rethinking Arshile Gorky*, Kim Severt Theriault, associate professor of art history, theory, and criticism at Dominican University, eloquently reveals the impact of the Armenian Genocide on Gorky’s paintings and life. She provides a new lens through which to understand the artist and how the trauma he experienced led him to become a visionary artist. Theriault’s analysis makes it impossible for serious scholars to ignore the fact that Gorky’s work reflects the experiences of a man traumatized by genocide.

Theriault’s work accomplishes two tasks. First, she provides a brilliant analysis of Gorky as a cutting-edge artist of the 1930s and 1940s, applying art theory and criticism to the full range of his works. Second, she places Gorky in the context of his experiences as a survivor of genocide, aptly articulating the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on his art and life.

Theriault uncovers the aspects of Gorky’s life that have remained in the shadows in the world of art criticism. Gorky’s art—not just *The Artist and His Mother*—is explained from the perspective of an artist traumatized by genocide and trying to exist in exile. In the field of genocide studies, artworks created by various survivors have been a part of the academic canon; the art of Armenian Genocide survivors has remained on the margins for lack of serious intellectual evaluation. *Rethinking Gorky* fills this void.

Gorky's art chronicles not the events of the Armenian Genocide but the psychological devastation that infects the survivors of genocide. Theriault illustrates Gorky's struggle to reinvent himself constantly by moving to America, changing his name, marrying, and studying Western Art. Despite his efforts at concealment, his identity and experiences seep through his paintings. On canvas, the nightmare he endured is revealed. As part of his attempt to adapt to his new home, he tried to paint in a European tradition, but his early studies in Van inspired his style as well. His studies and experiences laid the foundation for his pioneering work as an abstract expressionist. His work was applauded in the art world, and he took the stage as a great American painter; the fact that his Armenian heritage greatly influenced his work was effectively masked. It would take decades for art historians to begin to truly evaluate Gorky's work and acknowledge all the aspects of his life and training that influenced his art.

Rethinking Gorky is truly a breakthrough publication. It firmly places Gorky as both an artist of note and a sage who tells us, in vivid images, about the brutal impact of genocide on the survivor. Theriault's book offers scholars of art history and genocide studies a foundation for understanding both Gorky and his art in the right context—as a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. Theriault has unveiled his abstract images and rebuilt his memory, constructing a new view of one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century.

Contributors

Walter Delrio holds a PhD in anthropology from the Universidad de Buenos Aires and a master's degree in history from the Universidad de Chile. He is a researcher at the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET); director of the project Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State, supported by the Universidad de Buenos Aires; coordinator of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; and a member of GEAPRONA (Research Group on Aboriginality, Provinces and Nation), headed by Dr. Claudia Briones. He also teaches social history at the University of Río Negro. He is the author of *Memorias de expropiación. Sometimiento e incorporación indígena en la Patagonia (1872–1943)* (Universidad Nacional de Quilmas Editorial, 2005).

Santiago Garaño is an anthropologist and a PhD candidate in the Philosophy and Literature School (FFyL) of the University of Buenos Aires; a National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) PhD fellow at the Research Institute on Cultural Diversity and Change Processes (IIDyPCa) of the National University of Río Negro; and a teaching assistant in the Humanities and Social Studies School of the National University of Río Negro. He is a member of the Political and Juridical Anthropology Team (FFyL, UBA). He is the author of “‘Romper la vidriera, para que se vea la trastienda.’ Sentidos, valores morales y prácticas de ‘resistencia’ entre las presas políticas de la cárcel de Villa Devoto durante la última dictadura militar argentina (1976–1983)” (*Historia Crítica*, 2010); “Pabellones de la muerte: los límites difusos entre la represión legal y la clandestina” (*Entrepasados*, 2009); and “Sentidos y prácticas de la *resistencia*. Memorias de ex presas y presos políticos durante la última dictadura militar argentina (1976–1983)” (*Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales*, 2009). He is also the co-author (with Werner Pertot) of *La otra juvenilia. Militancia y represión en el Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires (1971–1986)* (Biblos, 2002) and *Detenidos—Aparecidos. Presas y presos políticos desde Trelew a la dictadura* (Biblos, 2007).

Karel Kovanda, since 2005 Deputy Director-General of External Relations in the European Commission, Brussels, served for a number of years as a senior official of the Czech Foreign Service. From 1993 to 1997 he headed the Czech representation to the United Nations in New York, including (in 1994–1995) during his country's membership on the UN Security Council. In 1996 he served as Vice-President, and in 1997 as President, of ECOSOC. He later served as the Czech Ambassador to NATO (1998–2005). Mr. Kovanda was a leader of the Czech student movement in the mid-1960s; following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he spent twenty years in exile, largely in the United States. In 2010, he was awarded the Umurinzi Campaign Against Genocide Medal.

Diana Lenton holds a PhD in anthropology from the Universidad de Buenos Aires. She is a researcher at the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET); director of the project Indian Genocide, Diaspora and Ethnogenesis in Argentine Nation-State Building, supported by the National Agency of Scientific and

Technical Promotion; coordinating member of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; and a member of GEAPRONA (Research Group on Aboriginality, Provinces and Nation), headed by Dr. Claudia Briones. A teacher at the National Universities of Buenos Aires, Santiago del Estero, and Córdoba, she is the author of numerous articles, including “Aboriginalidad, memoria y lucha: el Malón de la Paz y la génesis de las organizaciones de militancia indígena en Argentina.”

Marcelo Musante is a sociologist and a graduate of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is a member of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; a researcher with the project Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State, supported by the Universidad de Buenos Aires; and a teacher of community communication and cooperatives technologies at Universidad John Kennedy and at a prison middle school in the province of Buenos Aires. He is the author of several articles, including “Napalpí: Una matanza negada.”

Mariano Nagy is a historian and a graduate of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is a member of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; a researcher with the project Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State, supported by the Universidad de Buenos Aires; and holder of the Human Rights Chair at the same university. He is the author of several articles, including “Dueños del pasado, excluidos del presente. Trayectorias y memorias de los pueblos indígenas de Buenos Aires.”

Alexis Papazian is a historian and a graduate of the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is a member of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; a researcher with the project Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State, supported by the Universidad de Buenos Aires; director of the project The Armenian Genocide: Memories of the Diaspora; and holder of the History Chair at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is the author of several articles, including “Los elementos de continuidad en los modos de realización simbólica entre el Genocidio Armenio y el conflicto de Nagorno-Karabagh.”

Pilar Pérez is a historian and a graduate in anthropology from the Universidad de Buenos Aires. She is a member of the Researchers Net on Genocide and Indigenous Affairs; a researcher with the project Memories and Files of the Genocide: Subjugation and Incorporation of Indigenous Peoples to the Nation-State, supported by the Universidad de Buenos Aires; a member of GEAPRONA (Research Group on Aboriginality, Provinces and Nation), headed by Dr. Claudia Briones; and a teacher of social history at the Universidad de Río Negro. She is the author of many articles, including “Las policías fronterizas: mecanismos de control y espacialización en los territorios nacionales del sur a principios del siglo XX.”

Mario Ranalletti is an Argentinean historian and a professor in the Master’s and Doctoral Program of the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero in Buenos Aires. He earned a PhD in history from the Institut d’études politiques de Paris in 2006. His research concerns the origins and nature of the state terrorism applied in Argentina during the last military government (1976–1983). His publications include

“Emigrar y regresar” (Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Productiva, 2010); “Aux origines du terrorisme d’État en Argentine (1955–1976)” (*Vingtième siècle. Revue d’Histoire*, 2010); “Contrainsurgencia, catolicismo intransigente y extremismo de derecha en la formación militar argentina. Influencias francesas en los orígenes del terrorismo de Estado (1955–1976)” in *Violencia política y genocidio en América latina*, edited by Daniel Feierstein (Prometeo libros, 2009); and “La guerra de Argelia y la Argentina. Influencia e inmigración francesa desde 1945” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 2005).