

WORLD

Human Rights and Genocide

Swiss Finally Compensate Survivors

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After 60 years, a settlement has finally been reached between Holocaust survivors, their heirs, and the Swiss banks, which refused to release money from many accounts opened by Jews before the Holocaust, claiming either that the accounts didn't exist, or that victims lacked sufficient proof of their status. The findings of the Volcker Committee, which released its findings days after the 1.25 billion dollar settlement was reached, state that there was no organized theft of Jewish accounts, although Mr. Volcker, a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, acknowledged that many relevant records were either lost or withheld from the Committee's auditors, making the full disclosure the committee had promised impossible. Despite the Swiss's brandishing of the report as a vindication of their innocence, claiming that as Georg F. Kray, chairman of the Swiss Bankers Association put it, "with the exception of a few isolated cases, the banks conduct during the period in question was correct," the Swiss opposed the work of the commission at every turn.

Before and during the Holocaust, uncounted numbers of Jews deposited their money in Switzerland, lured by the "neutral" Swiss's promises of confidentiality. However, it appears that in the pursuit of greater profits, Switzerland was willing to be flexible in its dealings with the Nazis on the subject of the accounts, while presenting a cold front to the actual owners of the accounts and twisting the laws to bar them from retrieving their money. The Swiss twisted their laws one way and another so much that they wrung whatever legitimacy there may have been out of its laws, leaving only their one consuming drive; profit. In one case a Jew who had escaped to South America sent word to his bank, verifying his identity and asking that an amount of money be released to his family in Europe. The Swiss refused, claiming that their banking laws prohibited it. However, when the Nazis cabled the Swiss and claimed that they had the right to the account, the Swiss promptly transferred the balance into Germany. According to

Volcker's report, such discrimination also occurred after the war, when many banks would reveal accounts to non-Jews, but not to Jews and resorted to such absurd strategies as

requiring death certificates for people who died in the camps. Banks in Britain and France never held victim's families to this standard of evidence. Conveniently enough for the bankers, if an account remained dormant for more than a certain length of time, in most cases it devolved on the bank, and its records were destroyed.

Before then Senator D'Amato opened his investigation of the Swiss Banks, the bankers themselves were "unable" to find more than 8,750 dollars of unclaimed Jewish deposits. This is only one of the incredible lengths to which the Swiss have gone to conceal their actions. Their unwillingness to share information alone suggests that what has been discovered is only the tip of the iceberg. When Christoph Meili released documents related to the Holocaust that had been illegally marked for destruction, he was unanimously demonized in his own country. He received hundreds of death threats directed at both his own person and his children, and was eventually forced to flee the country. Robert Studer, the chairman of the Union Bank, at which Meili worked, went so far as to

suggest that Meili had been bribed by an international Jewish conspiracy. More than two million accounts from the Holocaust time period couldn't be researched because their documentation had been destroyed, probably in much the same way as Meili's files were meant to be. Some estimates have placed the full value of the lost accounts as high as 20 billion dollars. As Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, said, the "whole story is what we didn't find."

When Mr. Volcker's study recently concluded, it had lasted three years and cost 200 million dollars. Only 20,000 accounts have been directly linked to Holocaust victims, and the report states that another 33,000 are strongly suspected of having links. The Swiss were afraid that even this number of accounts, which was much higher than they had anticipated, would serve as grounds for increasing the 1.25 billion settlement. Borer, one of the Swiss negotiators, actually suggested to the prosecution that Swiss sentiment was becoming increasingly hostile, and although

there might be further things to be discovered, it would be advisable that they come to a quick conclusion, lest they lose the settlement. Swiss anti-Semitism, often present, had begun to be openly expressed, and the small Swiss Jewish population had begun to fear for its safety.

The Volcker report did serve to lessen the Swiss-American and Swiss-Jewish tensions that had become so prevalent

The Swiss helped the Nazis carry out the greatest theft in history...

in the months leading up to its release, but in attempting to calm the situation it may have compromised its purpose, to bring about a full disclosure of the facts of the situation. The Swiss claimed that they had acted "correctly" and have treated the 1.25 billion dollars they have to pay as meant to assuage hurt feelings, rather than for committing the largest theft in history. At the conclusion of his testimony before Senator D'Amato's committee, Thomas Borer, the head of the Swiss investigation, stated "All the Swiss opposed Nazism." This absurd statement contradicted even the information that had already been released at that time. During the war Swiss banks accepted 279 tons of gold from the Nazis, much still embossed with the marks of the foreign banks it had been stolen from. Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank even went so far as to launder "victim gold" (i.e. gold teeth and wedding rings) for the SS, Credit Suisse accepting the gold, and Deutsche Bank paying into a secret SS account. Not only did the Swiss accept blood money from the Nazis, they helped strip Jews of their accounts in Switzerland.

There is the case of Laura Mayer, who was forced to sign letters, clearly written under duress, to Credit Suisse that transferred her accounts to the Gestapo. The bank accepted the transfer without question. After the war when Mayer herself went to Switzerland to try to learn what had happened to her money, the bank wouldn't release any information, citing the same secrecy laws they broke when they gave her account to the Nazis. Then there is the even more incredible case of Henry Lowinger, an Austrian Jew. After he was arrested, he was approached by agents of the Gestapo, which offered to release him in Switzerland if he gave them his fortune. They knew all the details of his secret account at the Swiss Bank Corporation. He later lamented, "It was possible only because the Nazis had information from inside the Swiss banks." The U.S. Treasury identified 15 of the bank's 24 directors as Nazi sympathizers. This does not even touch on the concealment of German corporate assets, and the loans given to the Nazis to buy Swiss armaments, which is a subject for an article in and of itself.

The Swiss have often protested their "neutrality", claiming that they dealt with the Nazis only because they feared what would happen otherwise. This is absurd. Even if the Swiss government hadn't aided the Nazis with loans and weapons, Switzerland would have still been of more value to the Nazis for its myriad ways of concealing and laundering funds than as a conquered province. Furthermore, even as the Nazis retreated and it became obvious that they were no longer in any shape to invade anyone, the Swiss continued to sell them armaments over the Allies' protests. After the war they helped the Nazis escape and hid their money, at a profit of course. A Swiss historian chairing part of one of the investigations told an audience in Jerusalem that there was no anti-Semitism in Switzerland. He was later found to be in the pay of the banks. The Swiss helped the Nazis carry out the greatest theft in history, and yet they still protest their innocence.

Tutu and the End of Apartheid

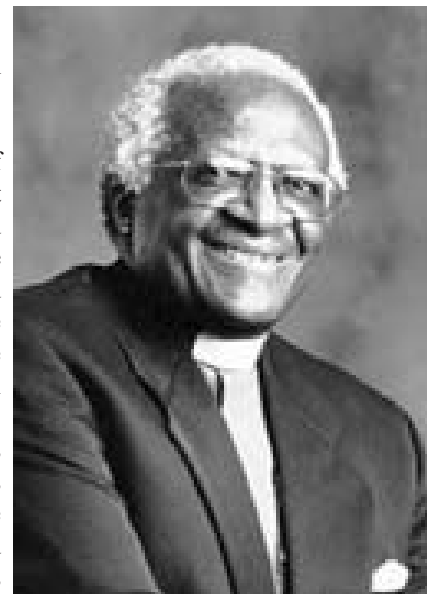
Matthew Pullar, St. Paul's Anglican Grammar School, Australia

Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born in 1913. He spent some time working as a teacher in a school for Black South Africans, but became an Anglican minister in 1960. In 1984, he became the first black Bishop of Johannesburg and in 1986, the first black Archbishop of Cape Town. It was probably the high position that he held that enabled him to assist in the downfall of apartheid.

Apartheid is a Dutch word meaning "separateness." The alleged idealism behind it was that blacks and whites would be able to live in separate but equal societies. The real idea was for the whites to be able to treat blacks as lesser people. It basically stripped the Africans of any human right. Blacks weren't allowed to marry white people, or live in "white" areas, enter a "white" area without a permit, play in the same football team as white people, go to church, university or school with white people or take up "white" jobs (meaning the jobs which provided a reasonable

income). As well as that, the whites could call them anything they liked, usually "kaffirs."

The system of apartheid arose as a result of many different fears and beliefs. Historians believe that Nazi Germany played an important part in the rise of apartheid. The concept of racial inferiority and superiority, naming white people as the "superior" race, was clearly present in the minds of pro-apartheid activists. It was almost as



if they were scared of the blacks gaining the political upper-hand. They felt that if they could find some way of separating the blacks from the whites, then South Africa would be a better place.

Allister Sparks, in his book *The Mind of South Africa*, says that there were “two distinct strands of thought that were later to acquire a certain importance...”, those two ideals being the concept of two separate nations, allowing the Afrikaner people to run their businesses without risk of “black economic competition [and] the more crudely racist belief in genetic inferiority and the need to preserve the ‘blood purity’ of the white race.” Sparks saw it as a combination of the white government’s “initiative” and the ideals of the Nazi government that led to apartheid being instituted.

Something that promoted the rise of apartheid was the attitude of the church. In general, the church appeared to be in favour of the segregation of blacks and whites. In 1935, a policy declaration was written by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), stating explicitly that “the church [was] in favour of ‘co-equal’ education for ‘coloureds’ Asians, Polynesians, etc.] and blacks ‘in their own

sphere’ and declared that ‘they must develop their own economic solidarity as far as possible apart from the European.’ “ As far as the majority of whites were concerned, if the church was in favour of apartheid, then it was God’s will for their country. It was this attitude that Bishop Tutu was in the best position to destroy.

In 1978, he became the Secretary-General of the South African Council and took this position as an opportunity to speak out for the rights of Black South Africans. However, like Reverend Martin Luther King, he promoted non-violent forms of protesting against apartheid. As well as this, he made visits to several foreign nations, including Australia, looking for international support. He did this by promoting racial justice among the young people of the nations and requested that the governments put economic pressure on the South African government, in the hope of reasoning them into a change. This included the boycotting of any exports from South Africa, as well as the boycott of the South African football team, the Springboks, all as a result of Tutu’s lobbying. The response from Australia and other nations was incredible and the government started to realise that perhaps it wasn’t such a

good idea, after all.

Others did the same as Tutu out of their own initiative. Four of these people were the Watson brothers, the topic of Kristin Williamson’s “Brothers To Us.” The Watsons, among others, constantly worked against the system by putting blacks and whites together at their work stations and treating everyone as equals. The amazing result was that no racial tension would exist inside their businesses. However, families like the Watsons experienced all sorts of discrimination, due to the stand that they had taken. Their entire families, as well as friends or associates, would receive threats, which were sometimes followed by the reality of the threat. Despite this, the Watsons,



along with many other anti-apartheid activists, “stuck to their guns” and refused to make a compromise with the apartheid system.

High-profile figures such as Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko worked alongside Archbishop Tutu in the non-violent resistance movement against apartheid. It was because of his “friends in high places” that he was able to make such a well publicised stand and create government awareness on how South Africa felt about apartheid.

The ultimate outcome of this resistance was the removal of the apartheid system. 1990 was known as the “start of South Africa’s decade of transition.” Nelson Mandela was released and his political “party”, the African National Congress, was legalised. He became the first African president of South Africa - an honour that seemed to have been a long time coming. However, the gradual political change or “transition” ended with apartheid being removed. Black South Africans had no limitations placed on which jobs they could receive, where they could live, who they could marry, where they could be schooled or which sporting teams they were allowed to be a part of.

Sadly, the injustice hasn’t gone entirely. In the same way that “apartheid” was put into practise before it was instituted, it will be a long time before people will want to treat the Black South Africans in the same way that they are expected to treat them. However, it has improved out of sight. Apartheid no longer exists and the white people of South Africa are gaining a much greater respect for the African people. It just seems a bit ironic that it has taken until now for the blacks to be in charge of a nation where they are the majority.

GM, Ford Acknowledge Slave Labor

Kris Koka Cold Spring Harbor, NY

In the first move of its kind by an American company, General Motors has announced that it will probably contribute to a fund created to compensate those engaged in forced labor during the years of Nazi domination in Europe. Companies like General Motors and Ford have long acknowledged that coerced labor had been present in their factories, most of which was done by individuals brought to Germany against their will from Central European countries. Adam Opel, the branch of General Motors under which these abuses occurred, was purchased by General Motors over seventy years ago. During the Nazi era, the German government seized control of the car maker from General Motors. Under Nazi control, Opel factories employed more than 2,000 forced laborers, none of whom have been compensated for their work.

Because the company was not controlled by General Motors at this time, it has long been the position of the General Motors that compensation was not its responsibility but that of the German government, which assumed control during the period. This contention of the US firms outraged and frustrated victims of slave labor in American companies’ factories. The director of the Nazi Victims support center, Lothar Evers, said, “there were people in charge of the Ford plant during the war that were promoted to the top levels of Ford in Europe after the war.” He went on to cite the fact that Ford requested compensation from Washington for the bombing of factories by Allied forces. “If you can claim damages for buildings destroyed by bombs, it is only fair that people whose lives were destroyed should be able to seek claims,” says Evers. Several of the larger German companies who had benefited from forced labor during the years of Nazi rule had long maintained the same argument as the Americans, but they have recently decided to attempt a settlement between all parties.

The parties involved are discussing the formation of a fund of approximately 5.3 billion dollars, or 10 billion German marks. Those representing coerced labor including American class-action lawyers, Jewish Organizations, and the Israeli government have made it abundantly clear that an offer of this size is what they deem proper reimbursement for the abuses committed at the hands of the corporations.

Stuart Eizenstat, the American deputy treasury secretary, has his own plans. Eizenstat is attempting to create a separate American fund to be given as compensation to those who were victims of forced labor. With about 200 contributing American companies, including General Motors and Ford, whose German subsidiaries employed forced labor during the years of the Nazi era, the deputy treasury secretary hopes to create a fund of about 500 million dollars, or 1 billion German marks. This plan, however, is being stalwartly opposed by German officials in government and industry. Germans oppose the conception of a separate fund, arguing that all companies involved should contribute to the same effort.

Negotiations are coming to a crucial stage as officials of German industry and government have refused to add to their



latest offer of 4.1 billion dollars, or 8 billion German marks. The government would contribute 3 billion marks, while the companies involved would add 5 billion. Wolfgang Gibowski of the German industry foundation has exhorted that Americans pay into the same fund so that extra money is available, and an agreement can be reached. The foundation has not yet accumulated a sufficient amount of commitments from German firms alone to reach the necessary number of 5 billion marks that the businesses are supposed to contribute. Gibowski is currently attempting to persuade almost 200 other German companies to contribute to the compensation.

Talks of a separate American fund worry the German foundation because they feel it will draw valuable and desperately needed sources of money from the fund being negotiated by the German government. “If there is a separate American fund, then that would lead to a separate French fund and a separate British fund, and there would be nothing left for the German fund,” argued Gibowski.

Those representing the victims in the case have evoked further conflict. The group bringing forth complaints against the various companies and governments is comprised of the World Jewish Congress, the Israeli government, and a shaky alliance of class-action lawyers representing mostly non-Jewish workers in Central and Eastern Europe. These parties are represented by seasoned lawyers including Melvyn Weiss, a veteran of battles with Swiss banks over property of Holocaust victims and of suits by states against tobacco companies and Michael Hausfeld, who argued a landmark case against Texaco for racial discrimination. With settlements of such magnitude, these lawyers could possibly earn hundreds of millions of dollars, and they are drawing animosity from many Jewish groups who say the lawyers are greedily holding out for a bigger settlement at the expense of those they are representing, survivors dying by the day of old age.

Genocide: The Scar of a Continent

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The world, generally, and Africa, specifically, has been be-deviled by atrocities and crimes against human-

ity. Genocide as a term refers to the extermination of a race or community by mass murder, or imposing conditions that make survival impossible.

Genocide has been witnessed on almost every continent, from Asia to Africa, America to Europe. In Europe a clear

case in point being the collapse of Yugoslavia and the subsequent emergence of alternate, ethnic-driven centers of power in the name of new republics, like Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Slovenia. This emergence has seen to the development of Jingoism and other shades of nationalistic chauvanism. This has led to the death of thousands of ethnic Albanians in the Serb province of Kosovo, which incidentally are 75 per cent Albanians. Indeed it is only the timely intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the United States of America, that halted the massacre of the Albanians in Kosovo. It must be recalled that the Serbs had previously been accused of perpetrating genocide through ethnic cleansing.

Other instances of genocide include the Cambodian case in the mid 1970's whereby up to one million people lost their lives in concentration camps under the brutal regime of Pol Pot, the former despotic ruler of Cambodia who led to the Khmer Rouge. At this writing, in South America, General Augusto Pinochete of Chile is due to face charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in Spain.

Turning over to Africa, genocide has been perpetuated on almost all corners of the continent, with the Great Lakes Regions bearing the brunt of these brutal crimes

against humanity. The boundaries of the three countries of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have witnessed mass migrations, indeed of Biblical proportions of populations scared by war and the threat of war. Other parts of the continents too, have not been spared the brutality of the war. These areas include Liberia, Mauritania, Angola and Somalia. On a compass, this points to east and central Africa, southern Africa, West Africa and North West Africa.

The desire to perpetrate genocide is certainly not in born; it is therefore crucial that an intricate and in-depth analysis be made of the causes of genocide which range from historical, economic and ethnic reasons. It would be a fallacy to state that genocide in Africa can be traced directly to one of these identified causes. This is largely because some of the areas in which these crimes against humanity have carried out are due to a combination of the said factors.

Ethnicity has long been touted as a key cause of genocide particularly in the case of Rwanda and Burundi. Here the two ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi are and have been in constant conflict with each other for a long period of time. The pre-colonial social structure itself was a recipe for genocide, with the minority Tutsi loading it over to the majority Hutu; of course the Twa had little or no role in the whole structure. The already bad situation was made worse by the Belgian colonial policy. The demarcation of the boundaries were also ill defined, with some Tutsi left in Congo (Eastern) and constantly viewed with hostility and suspicion by the other Congolese. The political question, however, is most significant, with successive regimes in Rwanda and Burundi playing the ethnic (genocide threat) card against the other community. This culminated in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide where up to half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were butchered within a period of close to 90 days.

The situation in Burundi was also heading the

same way, days after the then President Sylvester Ntibantunganya sought refuge in a foreign embassy. The coup d'etat that brought in the present military government stemmed the tide of genocide that was gathering momentum.

The case in Somalia is rather intricate, with clan warfare largely perpetrated by warlords costing numerous human lives. In Mauritania, genocide is being perpetrated against black Mauritania's by the ruling Arab elite. A number of years ago up to 70,000 black Mauritania's had to seek refuge in neighboring Senegal to escape the racial extermination they were facing. Liberia and Sierra-Leon faced internal strife with members of specific ethnic groups targeted by the different militias for persecution.

Just to illustrate the callousness of the genocide, the weapons used include spiked, clubs, spears, axes and even hoes whereby the targeted ethnic groups as in Rwanda, the Tutsi and moderate Hutus would then be hacked or slashed or even clubbed to death using these crude weapons! In fact some consider using the AK-47 (the most common assault rifle in Africa) as being merciful.

What are some of the signs that indicate that genocide is about to be committed? The example once again would be Rwanda. Just prior to the bloodletting, a hate radio went on air calling on members of a particular ethnic group to arm themselves in readiness to exterminate members of the opposing group. Circulation of leaflets and newsletters were used to justify the need to eliminate the other ethnic group.

Indeed it must be noted that instances of a ruling elite, getting scared of losing power, call on their ethnic groups to eliminate those threatening their ouster. The emergence of warlords is

also a clear sign of genocide being about to be perpetrated. The warlords are then symbols of the community's fight for survival. Formation of political parties in such cases can be tricky, in the sense that these political parties can easily be turned into exclusive ethnically driven vehicles for power.

In what ways can genocide be avoided in Africa? There are several ways to go about this; Firstly an attempt to evolve a political system that would be acceptable to all ethnic groups concerned, with equal representation in government of national unity. Perhaps also, gradual attempts towards the correction of the historical mistakes made by the colonialists. Devolution of the centers of power from individuals to institutions such as parliament.

The above are long term attempts at preventing the occurrence the genocide in future. However, it is imperative that all those who engaged in crimes against humanity through perpetrating genocide be tried and if found guilty should be punished. The use of International Organizations like the UN and the OAU to step in early before escalation of conflicts in the region is crucial. The establishment of the UN Tribunal on the Rwanda genocide is a step in the right direction. The move towards abolition of landmines and the establishing of a standing committee to monitor the arms embargo against the warring groups has to be hastened.

Fundamentally and above, all it must be noted that Africa bears huge scar of genocide and that the responsible perpetrators are lurking around somewhere on the continent. Just as it is said, "There can be no reconciliation without justice," all the perpetrators of genocide need to be rounded up and punished; that way the people will then be contented to go on with their lives

The desire to perpetrate genocide is certainly not inborn...

Rights and Genocide
Human

China and Human Rights

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The People's Republic of China. A land that is made famous by its culture, its people, its food, among other things. Unfortunately, one of those "other things" is the Chinese government's violation of human rights.

One human right that the Chinese government violates is the freedom of religion. The Falun Gong serve as a perfect example. Falun Gong is a blend of Taoism, Buddhism, and exercise. This religious practice is outlawed in all of China except for Hong Kong. According to the Chinese government's count, about 150 Falun Gong members have been arrested (Human Rights Watch Press Release, December 27, 1999.) Others have been beaten, and put in labor camps without a trial, all because of their religion. Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong says that Falun Gong is apolitical and has no intention of going against the Chinese government. In my opinion, the crackdown on the Falun Gong, who really pose no threat to the Communists, is just making the Chinese

government look bad. Falun Gong, not only are being denied their freedom of religion, but also their freedom to assemble, to recruit others, to practice their exercises and meditation in public, and to protest their own persecution. These are basic human rights that the Chinese government has no right to deny people. No government has such rights. The Falun Gong is not the only religion that China has persecuted. Ten Christian sects have been branded as illegal



cults (Washington Post, January 9th, 2000.) These sects are suffering a similar crackdown.

China has also sanctioned the Catholic Church. The government ordained five bishops without the Vatican's approval. Fides, the missionary's news service, claimed that China originally planned to ordain twelve, to match the number at the twelve St. Peter's ceremony, but they were unable to "convince" more than five. (The Associated Press January 8, 2000) By doing this, China has offended the Catholic Church.

Currently, most religious services in China are run in secret. There are about 30 to 40 million believers who worship illegally (Washington Post, January 9, 2000). My friend Chris works for one of these secret churches in China as we speak, or so I hope. I have not heard from him in several years. We used to exchange letters. He used to stay in contact with a local church in , Long Island. Unfortunately, he had to cut his ties with the church, and we could not write to him about any topic related to religion, because his mail was being screened. I worry for him.

The Chinese Communist Party never liked having their people believing in religion. They say religion is like a drug. The more you have, the more you need. In addition, they want their people to be loyal to the government, and not to their beliefs.

Another area of human rights that China often violates is political rights. China holds a few so-called "free" elections. Wangshanding, and Banqiao are two cities which have had such. In Wangshanding, local officials canceled the election. Yu Tielong was the candidate favored for the win, but he was a member of the China Democracy Party. It is believed that this is the reason the election was

cancelled (Time Magazine, January 11, 1999.) In Banqiao, an election was held for the People's Congress with four candidates. However, these four candidates were nominated by the Communist party, and they were competing for only three seats (Time Magazine, February 1, 1999). As one can imagine, voter turnout was low.

Today, China is trying to find a fine balance so they can boast democratic reforms while maintaining their power over the Chinese people. For a while, things were getting better in China. Two political activists, Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan, were freed from prison. China signed the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (Time Magazine, March 15, 1999.) Things were going so well that some journalists called today's era in China "Beijing Spring" (Time Magazine, January 11, 1999). However, it is believed that this was just a façade put on in preparation for President Bill Clinton's visit in June of 1999. China had to be on its best behavior or Clinton would cancel his visit. Now that Clinton has gone, however, Beijing is up to its old tricks again. Political activists Zhang Shanguang, Xu Wenli, Qin Yongmin, and Wang Youcai were arrested and each given sentences ranging from ten to thirteen years. Their "crimes" ranged from giving an interview about rural unrest in China, to working for the China Democracy Party (Time Magazine, January 11, 1999.)

Now do me a favor. Ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do?" In fact, there is. Glad you asked! Write letters, make petitions, write articles. Spread the word. China may be a favored nation to trade with, but what they are doing in taking away human rights is inexcusable and we should not allow it to go on.

Human Rights Violated in Chechnya

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In the territory of Chechnya the people have been living since the early Paleolithic times. Inguchya and Chechnya are mentioned in the seventh century in the selected works of Armenians. In 1810. Inguchya voluntarily became the subject of Russia, but Chechnya did not want to make it a slave. But in 1859, it was all the same annexed to Russia and Chechnya was under the power of Russia for long years.

In 1922, the autonomous region of Chechnya was formed. However, in 1943 the people from Chechnya were moved to various districts of Kazakhstan and Middle Asia. And in 1944 Chechnya was abolished. Only in 1957 was it reconstructed again by the decree of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union.

The war is going on in Chechnya at the moment. This war is called the genocide of Chechnya proclaimed because the state wanted independence and so many innocent people have been killed. A President, D.Dudaev,

was elected, but Russia did not recognize the independence of the Chechnya Republic. When the Democratic forces became weaker in 1997, Russia and its President B. Yeltsin began the war against Chechnya, which he had lost. During this war the President and the hero of Chechnya, D. Dudaev perished.

After the weakening of the Boris Yeltsin government, Russian Prime Minister Victor Putin has provoked the new war against Chechnya, which we could call genocide. At the time I am writing, the Russian army has bombed the towns and villages in Chechnya for more than three months, killing innocent people. Thousands of people of Chechnya were forced to evacuate, to the other countries. The capital of Chechnya is taken up at the present. However the inhabitants are unappeasable and they went in the mountains to fight as partisans.

The world is against this cruel war and the behavior of the Russia government. The world is urging Russia to halt the fighting, but Russia's desire to own Chechnya's oil is stronger than its humanness.

Genocide in Guatemala

*Karina Copen, I*EARN*

I spent two of the most extraordinary years of my life working with poor families in Guatemala. I worked through a group called the Godchild Project(Familias de Esperanza, in Spanish) outside of the city of Antigua. My job was to work with 65 families as a social worker.

I worked with people from every part of Guatemala. They had come from all over the country, enduring, at times, inhumane conditions in order to live on the outskirts of this beautiful, tourist town. As a tourist coming to study Spanish or take in the beautiful architecture of Antigua, one would have little idea of the realities of these villages of tin huts lined up on the sides of mountains that people lived in. Some settled here or around the capital to look for work. Many came to this area to escape the violence that plagued the more rural villages, where the fighting was fiercest between the guerrillas and the army, and where killings and massacres were commonplace during the brutal civil war.

The accounts coming out of Guatemala (and many other countries in Latin America), especially during the 1980's were speaking of widespread massacres, what one could call genocide against the indigenous, Mayan populations of Guatemala. Although the statistics differed depending on their source, the number of deaths during the Guatemalan civil war were said to be about 300,000 people. The entire population of the country at the time was only 5 million. Various reports have been issued since the war ended in 1996, to try to shine the light of truth upon what really happened in Guatemala. The Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) issued a report called "Guatemala Memory of Silence." The truth they found out was grim. The human rights abuses they cited included: massacres, disappearances, arbitrary executions, the rape of women, use of death squads, the denial of justice, and forced military recruitment.

But when do human rights abuses turn into genocide? Article II of the Convention on the prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1948 and ratified by the Guatemalan State on November 30, 1949 defines the crimes of genocide in the following terms: "...genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national,

ethnic, 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.

The CEH found that members of the Army or (the Army employed) Civil Patrols "...systematically committed acts of extreme cruelty, including torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading actions, the effect of which was to terrorize the population and destroy the foundations of social cohesion, particularly when people were forced to witness or execute these acts themselves...The resulting destruction of social cohesion



of the group, typical of these acts, corresponds to the intent to annihilate the group, physically and spiritually."

It is hard to comprehend that such obvious acts of racism, hatred and genocide were so rampant in the decades after the UN ratification of this convention, upon the heels of World War II. The CEH report concluded "that agents of the state of Guatemala, within the framework of counterinsurgency operations carried out between 1981 and 1983,

committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people..." based on the evidence which supports that they committed acts "a" through "c" listed above "with the intent to destroy in whole or in part' groups identified by their common ethnicity..."

We know that behind this report are thousand of painful stories of unspeakable human behavior and suffering. My hope for the people of Guatemala and those that have suffered atrocities all over our troubled world, is that we will some day begin to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them. The first step is for the truth to be known, remembered and taught.

"Let the history we lived be taught in the schools, so that it is never forgotten, so our children may know it." -Testimony given to the CEH. For more information about the war and human rights in Guatemala, I would recommend the following books: "I, Rigoberta Menchu;" "Bitter Fruit;" and "Unfinished Conquests" and the films: "Daughter of the Puma" and "Men with Guns".