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# **HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES**

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This issue is dedicated to  
**PROFESSOR FRANKLIN H. LITTELL**  
on the occasion of his 70th birthday



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intergovernmental organizations (such as the Organization of American States, the European Council and the Organization of African Unity) and national governments for their assistance. They could apply pressure through threatened or actual suspension of aid, or other limitations on relations. And at last there is the possibility of forceful humanitarian intervention. When the U.N. and regional intergovernmental organizations fail to act and the offending regime is deaf to appeals, Kuper strongly favours humanitarian intervention by governments acting individually, preferably in cooperation.

The non-governmental human rights organizations can draw upon the examples of campaigns against the Vietnam war and apartheid to exert pressure directly on offending regimes, through demonstrations, economic boycotts, refusal to handle goods to or from offending states and 'selective exclusion from participation in international activities and events'.

Anyone embarking on a comparative study of genocide would do well to start with Kuper's 23-page bibliography of about 400 texts, a compendium all the more impressive because of Kuper's apparent thorough familiarity with it. In a detailed comparison of books about genocide, I have found no other books that mention even half as many cases of genocide as Kuper does. In spite of its eccentric degree of attention to the U.N., this book is essential reading for anyone concerned with the field of general and comparative studies of genocide. Moreover, it may rouse non-specialists to effective action. The failure to prevent genocide is more a failure of will than of institutions, and the arousing of concern is the first step toward prevention.

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*Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*, Kevork Bardakjian (Cambridge, Mass.: The Zoryan Institute, 1985), 81 pp., n.p.

In *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*, Dr. Kevork Bardakjian carefully examines the documentary evidence relating to Hitler's rhetorical question 'Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' What Dr. Bardakjian, a lecturer in Armenian language and culture at Harvard, has undertaken to prove in his short introduction to this collection of documents is not only the historicity of the question, which Hitler is said to have posed before a gathering of German generals at Obersalzberg on 22 August 1939. Rather, at the beginning and end of his discussion, Bardakjian reveals glimpses of a larger agenda whose central concern is the deliberate relegation of the Armenian genocide to historical obscurity.

Implicit in the author's analysis is a critique of the view maintained among both popular and scholarly audiences that the Nazi Holocaust was an event unique in human history. To his mind, far from being the first, 'the Holocaust was the latest in a chain of systematic butcheries that by now formed a clear pattern of increasing massive violence' (p. 1). Obviously, the murder of over one million Armenians by the Young Turk regime was a rather significant link in that chain of massive violence. While making this point, Dr. Bardakjian is not intent on diminishing the unprecedented magnitude of the Nazi-sponsored genocide; on the first page of his small booklet, he refers to the Nazi crime as 'the most horrendous in the history of mankind'. Rather, he is attempting to rectify a bizarre turn of events by which the mass murder of Turkish Armenians has been largely forgotten, with the bitterly ironic exception of Hitler himself.

Still, this large order is not the most immediate motive for Bardakjian's investigation. He has set out to examine afresh extant German documents in response to the recent claims of some scholars and pseudoscholars that Hitler could not possibly have uttered the statement about remembering the Armenians.<sup>1</sup> Others, including the distinguished historian Bernard Lewis in his latest book *Semites and Anti-Semites*,<sup>2</sup> have contended that even if Hitler had posed the question, it is of little or no relevance to the matter of the attempted Nazi extermination of the Jews.

It is to these smaller and larger challenges that Bardakjian directs his inquiry. He addresses

them, in part, by analysing the reliability and explaining the context of the document containing Hitler's reference. Of the three versions of Hitler's speech which were known at the time of the Nuremberg War Crimes trials, only one mentioned the Armenian comment. The fact that this version was not introduced as evidence in the trials has led certain researchers to conclude that it was a fabricated document. As Dr. Bardakjian shows, however, its lack of inclusion by the prosecution does not necessarily attest to its lack of authenticity. He suggests that enough irrefutable evidence had already been submitted, in the form of the two other versions of the Obersalzberg speech, to satisfy the prosecution's case (p. 16). Since the provenance of the third document, which included the Armenian remark, was then uncertain, U.S. Trial Counsel Sidney Alderman did not offer it as evidence. He did make reference to it, though, and indicated that it came into the possession of the prosecution 'through the medium of an American newspaperman'.

Indeed, the first hint of Hitler's reference to the Armenians has been traced to an American journalist, Louis P. Lochner, who had excellent contacts with German officials during the war. As he relates in his 1942 book, *What About Germany?*, Lochner received from an unnamed German informant a three-page manuscript of Hitler's speech, whose focus was actually not the Armenians but rather the imminent invasion of Poland. According to Lochner's source, Hitler attempted to instruct his generals to carry out the planned 'physical destruction of the enemy' (i.e. the Poles) while maintaining that no one remembered the annihilation of the Armenians (quoted by Bardakjian, p. 16).

It should be noted, as it has been by Bardakjian and others, that the historical analogy which Hitler is reported to have drawn was not between the Armenians and the Jews, but rather between the Armenians and the Poles. A good number of contemporary observers have confused the issue, assuming that Hitler was referring in his statement to the imminent destruction of the Jews. However, contrary to some critics (like Heath W. Lowry of the Institute of Turkish Studies), their confusion in no way diminishes the statement's veracity. According to Dr. Bardakjian, who has relied here on earlier research by Winfried Baumgart and Gerhard Weinberg, a chain of transmission from the Obersalzberg meeting to Lochner, unknown at the time of the War Crimes trials, can be traced (p. 21). It appears that the original informant, present at the Obersalzberg speech, was Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, who headed Hitler's military intelligence, the *Abwehr*. From Canaris to Lochner, the notes on Hitler's speech passed through the hands of three men, whom the War Crimes prosecution was unable to identify. Dr. Bardakjian contends that the absence of a firmly established chain of transmission was a major reason that the prosecution elected not to submit the version with the Armenian reference.

Another reason offered by Bardakjian is that, of the three versions of the Obersalzberg speech known at Nuremberg, one (which included the Armenian reference) was significantly more inflammatory and provocative than the others. The two versions which were submitted as evidence were terse recapitulations which contained little of the dramatic force of the third. In order to enhance the credibility of its case, the prosecution opted for the more 'sober' documents as evidence to be submitted. Bardakjian argues, however, that the third version (code-named L-3 at Nuremberg) captures more reliably the incendiary quality of Hitler's language. To his mind, the fact that it was not submitted as evidence 'remains irrelevant to the authenticity of L-3'; it was quite simply a tactical decision on the part of the prosecution. As a result, Bardakjian concludes, on the basis of his own examination, that '[a]lthough not an "official" record, L-3 is a genuine document and is as sound as the other evidence submitted at Nuremberg' (p. 24).

Throughout the 30-page introduction to *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*, Dr. Bardakjian convincingly establishes the provenance of L-3, the document containing Hitler's reference to the extermination of the Armenians. That Bardakjian's 'opposition' — namely, those who doubt the veracity of the statement — is comprised in part of Turkish propagandists and Hitlerian revisionists, the one group intent on denying the Armenian genocide and the other intent on denying the Holocaust, does not force the author to abandon or distort his evidence. Though he is no doubt informed by political and personal concerns in this matter, Bardakjian has offered a well-researched and well-written explanation of the circumstances and source of Hitler's remark.

He is less successful, however, in elaborating upon Hitler's attitude toward the Armenians in general. Indeed, one must question Bardakjian's assumption that the apparent willingness of the

German Government to return the body of Talaat Pasha, one of the architects of the Armenian massacres, to Turkey reveals an anti-Armenian bias (pp. 30–6). While it is not unlikely that Alfred Rosenberg and even Hitler consciously maintained such a bias, the return of Talaat's body from Berlin in 1943 does not necessarily reflect it. A number of other conditions, including most saliently the status of German military forces at this particular juncture, could well have influenced the German decision to return the body. As a result, Bardakjian's attempt to spin a larger contextual web for Hitler's remarks at Obersalzberg is not especially convincing. Nor are his speculations in this matter indicative of the meticulous scholarship which characterized the earlier sections of the booklet.

Even with these limitations, *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide* is, on the whole, a balanced treatment of Hitler's rhetorical question, 'Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' It is also a remarkably restrained account. For Dr. Bardakjian's interest in this remark does not rest solely and exclusively with the date and time of its utterance. Nor is it of particular relevance to him that Hitler's analogy was to the destruction of Poles rather than of Jews. As an Armenian, it is the mocking tone of Hitler's question that matters to him, that points out the severe case of historical amnesia which has seized the world to this day in regard to the Armenians. Indeed, it all too often seems that the burden of proof still lies with the victims to convince the world of Turkish complicity in the death of over one million Armenians.

This deplorable situation was manifested in an advertisement that appeared in the *New York Times* on 19 May 1985. Signed by an impressive array of American academics, the advertisement took exception to a resolution sponsored in the House of Representatives which made special reference to the Armenian genocide. The academics objected to the designation 'genocide' by claiming that the Armenians were only one of several groups to suffer from the cumulative effects of war and famine in 1915. More recently, one of the group's signatories, Bernard Lewis, has followed another path by arguing that, in contrast to conditions obtaining during the Nazi Reich, there were 'real issues' (presumably geopolitical considerations) which made understandable the Armenian genocide. If Jews (and others) are justifiably offended by the tactics of low-brow revisionists who deny the scope or occurrence of the Holocaust, how much more frustrating it must be for the Armenians when faced with a group of respectable academics rationalizing the murder of their people. To add insult to injury, the president of the United States, ever mindful of a sensitive military alliance with Turkey, continues to lend his voice to the chorus of rationalization and denials by refusing to authorize a national day of remembrance of the genocide.

It is against this backdrop of denial that Kevork Bardakjian has addressed the question of Hitler's Armenian reference. His first task was to refute the arguments of those who claimed that Hitler never did or could have uttered it. And that he did persuasively. The larger task — of overcoming political expediency and scholarly distortion to establish that the Armenian massacres took place — clearly remains to be accomplished. Without the institutional base, financial support, and abundance of living human evidence that researchers of the Holocaust possess, scholars of the Armenian genocide are at a comparative disadvantage. Yet, they should not be seen as rivals or competitors to those who research the horrors of Nazi excesses. For indeed they are partners in a tragic, dismal and yet essential enterprise, that of investigating the unprecedented and uncontrolled explosion of human violence in this century.

More broadly, memory of the Armenian genocide should not have to compete with that of the Holocaust for a corner of the world's consciousness. Nor should the insidious attempts to bury its memory forever be tolerated. Kevork Bardakjian struggles against these attempts in his small study. Like Jewish researchers of the Holocaust, he has unavoidably mixed personal sensitivities with scholarly standards. Nonetheless, what emerges from this confluence is an admirable work of research, well-documented and closely argued. At the same time, while addressing an important point of dispute among historians, *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide* necessarily and deliberately leaves unanswered a larger question — that of western and specifically American complicity in denying or distorting the historical occurrence of the Armenian Genocide.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Robert John, 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Times*, 8 June and 6 July 1985.
2. Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (New York, 1986), p. 21.

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*The Great Powers and Poland*, Jan Karski (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America™, Inc., 1985), 697 pp., \$28.50.

For centuries Poland's fate has been a tragic one. Its geographic location between Russia, Australia and Prussia—Germany has made it a cockpit ever since the first partition between these powers in 1772. When, after World War I, Poland attained its independence, there was hope that the new nation might become a viable part of Europe. However, from the outset, Poland was beset by territorial problems because of its diverse ethnic composition, Bolshevik incursions and Germany's dissatisfaction with the newly drawn boundaries. The German Republic could not be reconciled to the corridor between the Reich and East Prussia, nor with the status of Danzig. France and Great Britain, sympathetic to Polish needs, were unsuccessful in their attempt to establish good political and military relations with Poland. Josef Beck, Foreign Minister under Marshall Pilsudski — and his successor — leaned toward Germany after Hitler's rise to power. In 1934, the two countries signed a non-aggression pact in order to isolate the Soviet Union. The result was estrangement from France and Great Britain until it was too late. Jan Karski traces the complex diplomacy of the European powers *vis-à-vis* Poland as well as among themselves in this highly detailed book. He delineates the apparent strength of Poland under Pilsudski and its subsequent diplomatic decline under Beck. The relationships between Poland and Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union; its attitude toward France, Great Britain, Lithuania (the Vilna affair) and Czechoslovakia in 1938 (the Teschen problem), these and the internal politics and economics are treated as authoritatively as available records allow. All the important leaders — French, German, British, Russian, Polish, American — are shown in all their fallible interactions. Pacts and treaties, like the Rapallo compact between Germany and Russia, the Locarno Pact and the weaknesses of the League of Nations reveal the manoeuvrings of the nations, large and small. 'Collective Security', the French and British goal, founded because of Colonel Beck's diplomatic incompetence and Hitler's successful opportunism. World War II began in Poland. France and Great Britain honoured their commitments, but could not save the 20-year-old nation. Karski is a master of research. His book almost overwhelms the reader with its facts, which are objectively presented and carefully documented. The agony of Poland, the difficulties of its government in exile under the leadership of General Sikorski and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk and the final 'betrayal' at Yalta, countenanced by Churchill and Roosevelt, do not make for pleasant reading. The fate of the Jews, while not featured in detail, is mentioned in a number of strongly worded passages. It is the most gruesome part of a discouraging history. Karski, it should be remembered, was the courier of the Polish underground who informed Roosevelt of the horrors visited upon the Jews. He was not believed. It is impossible, in a review, to highlight all the events — the Warsaw uprising, for example — as they deserve to be. There can be no doubt, however, that this book is of great importance to the historian and the public at large because it offers insights into the often benevolent miscalculations of sometime great leaders and the eventually destructive ambitions of dictators.

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*Hitler — Memoirs of a Confidant*, ed. Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., trans. Ruth Hein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 333 pp., \$29.95.

For a brief, but important period, Otto Wagener was a confidant of Adolf Hitler. Wagener dined with Hitler, travelled with him and participated in numerous conversations with the man soon to