

THE ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE:
POLITICAL CULTURE, CRISIS,
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF VICTIMS

by

Maureen S. Hiebert

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The Origins of Genocide: Political Culture, Crisis, and the Construction of Victims.
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Drawing on comparative politics and international relations theory, this dissertation develops a constructivist analytical model to explain the origins of genocide. Through a comparative historical analysis of the Holocaust (an ethnic/racial genocide) and the Cambodian “killing fields” (a political/revolutionary genocide) it is argued that genocide involves a unique three-step reconceptualization process. First members of the victim group lose their (often marginal) status within the political community and are constructed as outsiders to whom rights and obligations are no longer owed. Next, they come to be seen as dangerous enemies whose continued physical presence is seen to pose an overwhelming threat to the political community. Finally, they are viewed as sub-humans who can be killed without compunction. This process of identity reconstruction as a whole is underpinned by an exclusionary and authoritarian political culture and is triggered by serious economic, political, and/or security crises. The dissertation is an attempt to bring both comparative theory construction to genocide studies while at the same time move the study of genocide beyond its original disciplines of history, sociology, and psychology to political science. The overall goal is to contribute to the search for the underlying causes of genocide in the service of effective prevention.

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As I worked on this project I joined a small but highly dedicated group of scholars committed to understanding and preventing the scourge of genocide. Studying genocide is in many ways an exercise in plumbing the depths of collective human behaviour that can at times prove taxing for the researcher. From my colleagues at the International Association of Genocide Scholars, many of whom are leaders in the field, I have received valuable support as well as a wealth of knowledge. I would particularly like to thank Roger W. Smith, professor emeritus at the College of William and Mary and the academic director of the Genocide and Human Rights University Program, Gregory Stanton of Genocide Watch, Joyce Apsel at New York University, Taner Akcam at the University of Minnesota, Frank Chalk, director of the Montreal Institute of Genocide and Human Rights at Concordia University, Howard Adelman at York University, and Alex Hinton at Rutgers University. I would also like to thank George Shirinian and Greg Sarkissian at the Zoryan Institute in Toronto for their interest in my research and for inviting me to share my ideas with the students in the Genocide and Human Rights University Program.

My greatest thanks, however, go to my husband, Josh Goldstein, who unfailingly supported the whole process both personally and professionally from start to finish despite his frequently stated opinion that I “really should study something less depressing”.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to our daughters Hannah and Abby, the two little lives that came along amidst the study of so much death. I often regarded the time

I spent trying to figure out why something so horrible as genocide happens as “going to the dark place”; coming home to Josh and the girls was always like stepping back into the light.

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CHAPTER I

Explaining Genocide: A Constructivist Theory

I lost sight of what was going on. It's crazy. And I was standing with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law with her little girl, when someone approached us, and said, "Give this child to the grandmother." And my sister-in-law gave the child to my mother-in-law. They went to the left, and we went to the right. *And I said, "Why?"* My mother-in-law took the little one and went to the left. Regina, Ester, and I went to the right. To the left were all the people who were led to the gas chambers, crematorium, however you call it".

(Sara Grossman on her selection at Auschwitz, August 1944)¹

INTRODUCTION: WHY GENOCIDE?

In an essay in which he attempts to grapple with the meaning of the Holocaust, George Steiner offers that "all too plainly, the issues defy the ordering of common sense. They seem to be just on the other side of reason. They are extraterritorial to analytic debate".²

Years earlier Hannah Arendt called the genocide against European Jewry an "outrage to common sense" and concluded that the regimes which committed such deeds

have discovered without knowing it that there are crimes which men can neither punish nor forgive. When the impossible was made possible it became the unpunishable, unforgivable absolute evil which could no longer be understood and explained by the evil motives of self-interest, greed, covetousness, resentment, lust for power, and cowardice; and which therefore anger could not revenge, love could not endure, friendship could not forgive. Just as the victims in the death factories, or the holes of oblivion are no longer "human" in the eyes of their executioners, so this newest species of criminals is beyond the pale even of solidarity in human sinfulness.³

1 Sara Grossmann, quoted in Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 352.

2 George Steiner, *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1995* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), pp. 346-347.

3 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), p. 459.

As Steiner and Arendt tell us, genocide is a phenomenon so horrendous it beggars both our imagination and reason. Their words also get to the heart of the often conflicted nature of academic and popular debate over genocide. On the one hand, some scholars and even more survivors of specific genocides see the attempted extermination of Armenians, Jews, urban Cambodians, or Tutsis as singular events defined by their unique horribleness. Individual cases of genocide are therefore thought to be unsuitable for academic explanation or for comparison to other cases of the crime. On the other hand, the phenomena “genocide” is seen by others to be in desperate need of explanation for the purposes of understanding, education, and, most importantly, prevention. The latter impulse informs this dissertation.

We must acknowledge, however, that no amount of theorizing, explanation, or research can possibly come to grips with the terrible *experience* of genocide. That experience is something only the victims can know. For social scientists the task instead is to try to uncover the logic—perverse though it may be—of genocide. As we will see in the course of this study, this task of uncovering the logic of genocide can be accomplished through comparative analysis of different, and indeed most different, cases of genocide using the theoretical approaches of political science, comparative politics, and constructivist international relations and social theory. With an emphasis on the internal logic of genocide, the fundamental question at the heart of this dissertation, and genocide studies in general, is simply why does genocide happen? More specifically, why is *genocide* the

policy option of perpetrator political elites rather than other forms of state violence, oppression, or conflict?

To answer the big question, Why genocide?, we need to ask and answer three specific questions, one of ideational origin, one of timing, and one of decision-making. These questions are: (I) Where does the idea to commit genocide come from? (II) Why does genocide happen when it happens? and, most importantly, (III) How do political elites come to choose to exterminate, or try to exterminate, whole groups of people simply because of who they are rather than employ other less drastic “final solutions” to the perceived “problem” posed by the existence of certain groups? A failure to provide a theoretical account that can answer all three questions will be a failure to explain the logic and processes of genocide.

The theory of genocide developed over the course of this study is that genocide—as opposed to other forms of political violence, mass killing, or gross human rights violations—is the result of a specific “permissive” political culture (the question of ideational origin) and a set of short-term crises (the question of timing), both of which set the stage for a unique multi-part genocidal reconceptualization in which the victim group comes to be seen as a dangerous “enemy within” whose mere physical existence is believed to pose a mortal threat to the continued survival of the dominant community requiring the physical liquidation of the group (the question of decision-making).

The theory will be developed and illustrated by two relatively dissimilar cases of genocide: what the Nazi regime called the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” (i.e., the genocide against European Jewry) which took place from 1941 to 1945, and the Khmer Rouge “killing fields” in Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979 that targeted urban socio-economic classes, ethnic Vietnamese and other minorities, and suspect Khmer Rouge party cadres.

Before we can discuss either the particularities of the theory of genocide that will be developed in the following chapters or the cases that form the object of this investigation, we need to confront one of the most contentious issues among genocide scholars and lay observers, how to define the concept genocide.

I. DEFINING GENOCIDE

Although genocide scholars and legal experts have expended much time and energy trying to define genocide, there is still much strenuous debate over what constitutes genocide and which instances of gross human rights abuses should be classified as such. Beginning with the coining of the term “genocide” by the legal scholar Raphael Lemkin in 1944,⁴ to the promulgation of the United Nations (UN) Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948 through to academic debates of today, scholars have failed to reach a theoretical or practical consensus as to what exactly genocide is. Through

⁴ Lemkin coined the term genocide in his 1944 study *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (New York: H. Fertig, 1973). He based the term on the ancient Greek *genos* meaning “race” or “tribe” and the Latin *cide* or “killing”.

a brief overview of these debates it will be shown that a relatively narrow definition of genocide is required for comparative analysis and explain why such a definition will be used in the exploration of the origins of genocide presented in this study.

Despite the controversy it has engendered over the years, the UN Convention definition still serves as the recognized legal definition of the crime of genocide and continues to be, in one way or another, the starting point for most contemporary academic definitions of the concept genocide. Article II of the Convention states that genocide

means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious groups 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.⁵

Each element of the Convention definition has been the subject of legal and academic controversy. First is the issue of numbers—i.e., should there be a minimum cut off for the number of victims before mass killing can be labeled genocide? The Convention refers to “whole” or “part” of a group, but practically what does this mean? In the tradition of the Convention, Leo Kuper argues that genocide must involve a “substantial” or “appreciable” number of victims but does not give an absolute number or percentage of victims.⁶ Manus

5 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A (III), 9 December 1948, Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights <<http://www.OHCHR.org/english/law/genocide.htm>>.

6 Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, (continued...))

Midlarsky implicitly takes a proportional approach in his definition of genocide, suggesting that genocide involves the intentional destruction of ethno-national groups such as the Armenians, Jews and Tutsis, in which the death toll reaches between 66–70%.⁷ In his definition of the broader but related concept of mass killing—meaning the “intentional killing of a massive number of noncombatants”—Benjamin Valentino quantifies “a massive number” as “at least fifty thousand intentional deaths over the course of five or fewer years”.⁸ While each of these authors suggest that either a specifically defined proportion or actual number of deaths as part of a definition of genocide is arbitrary, they all argue that a relatively high number of deaths must be part of a definition of genocide in order to establish the scale of the crime.

However, the quantification of death as part of a definition of genocide raises important questions that call the utility of this approach into question. If we can establish “intent to destroy” should the destruction of members of a group not be considered genocide if the absolute number or proportion of members killed is relatively low? What about an (unfortunately) hypothetical scenario in which a successful outside intervention prevents

6 (...continued)
1981), p. 32.

7 Manus Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 10, 25. For a fuller analysis of Midlarsky’s theory of genocide see Maureen S. Hiebert, “Review of *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*”, *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter, 2006).

8 Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 11–12.

the implementation of a planned genocide or interrupts its execution before the casualty rate could climb to a specifically defined “genocidal” level? Is the partial destruction of a sub-section of a victim group as defined by gender, geographical location, or some other sub-group characteristic—for example the mass murder of the male population of Srebrinica during the Bosnian war—genocide or simply an isolated massacre, or a “genocidal massacre”⁹ or “gendercide”?¹⁰ Lastly, what are the ethics of determining genocide by the numbers? There are no satisfactory answers to these questions, and as such, the definition of genocide used in this study will not include a designated number or percentage of victims.¹¹

- 9 Kuper uses the term “genocidal massacre” for the slaughter of a sub-stratum of people within a victim group, for example, the obliteration of whole villages by the French in Algeria after the riots in Setif in 1945 or the destruction of Lidice and Lezaky as reprisals for the assassination of German officials in the Second World War. He does, however, concede the essential arbitrariness in drawing the line between genocidal massacre and genocide proper (Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use*, p. 32).
- 10 First coined by Mary Anne Warren in her *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan and Allanheld, 1985), p. 22. “Gendercide” is gender-selective mass killing defined as “the deliberate extermination of persons of a particular sex or gender”. Warren stresses that gendercide, unlike “gynocide” and “femicide” is a gender-neutral term in that the victims can be male or female. Drawing on Warren, Adam Jones emphasizes the gender-selective killing of what he calls “battle-aged” men (ages 15–55) in genocides and wars in his edited book *Gendercide and Genocide* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004). For a critique of the concept of “gendercide” see Maureen S. Hiebert, “Review of Adam Jones, ed, Gendercide and Genocide”, *H-Genocide*, H-Net Reviews (September, 2005), <<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=239631137095724>>.
- 11 The cases in this study have, nonetheless, high absolute and proportional numbers. Recent research by Yisrael Gutman and Robert Rozett for the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Authority puts the death toll among Europe’s Jews at between 5.59 and 5.86 million of the 11 million targeted by the Nazis or between 51 percent and 53 percent of Europe’s pre-war Jewish population (Yad Vashem, <http://www1.yadvashem.org/Odot/prog/index_before_change_table.asp?gate=5-3>). The figure 11 million comes from the Nazi’s Wannsee Protocol of 20 January 1942 which gave the total number of Jews targeted for “special treatment” across all European states including those states not occupied by the Third Reich (The Wannsee Protocol, 20 January 1942, Yale University Avalon Project, Yale University Law School <<http://yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/wannsee.htm>>) Estimates for the Cambodian
(continued...)

The second, and more central, issue concerning debates over how to define genocide is the issue of intent. Although the Convention clearly states that genocide is characterized by the “intent to destroy” a group, some analysts argue that intention should not be central to a definition of genocide. The true intentions of elite actors over sometimes lengthy periods of time, or during the chaos of war or revolution can be extremely hard to prove. Genocidal political elites more often than not go to great lengths to obscure their true intentions by using dissembling or euphemistic language—even in confidential documents or private discussions—to refer to their genocidal destruction of specific groups. In the Holocaust, deportation to the death camps was called “deportation to the East” or transfer for “special treatment”, while mass shootings of civilians in the occupied East were referred to as “*Aktions*” (actions). Individuals who were slated for torture and execution by the Khmer Rouge were “invited to study with *Angkar*” (literally the “Organization”). In Rwanda, Hutus were exhorted in radio broadcasts to “do your work” and kill their Tutsi neighbours. Additionally, even if the destruction of a group was not the primary intent of political elites, the non-intentionalists argue that the destruction of the members of a group is no less real, and political elites, by virtue of the objective policies they pursue, are no less responsible for the inflicting of mass suffering and death. To rest a definition of genocide

11 (...continued)

genocide range from 1.7 to 2.2 million class enemies and ethnic minorities plus 230,000 additional internal party cadres who died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge (Gregory S. Stanton, <<http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocidetable2005.htm>>). Manus Midlarsky estimates the percentage of Khmers whose deaths can be attributed to the Khmer Rouge regime at 25 percent of the pre-DK population while the ethnic Vietnamese population was reduced by a full 100 percent through killing, forced deportations, and flight (Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap*, p. 312).

on intent would therefore exclude a number of serious instances of the deliberate causing of mass death. In making this argument, psychiatrist and President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (2005 to present), Israel Charny, for example, eschews intention in favour of outcomes. Central to Charney's definition of genocide is simply the causing of death to defenseless people. He deliberately leaves out the issue of intent not only for methodological reasons (i.e., the problem of available evidence) but also because he believes that to argue that the causing of mass death to innocents is not genocide is simply morally wrong. Charny thus defines genocide "in the generic sense" as the "mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims".¹²

Other leading genocide scholars argue that intent to destroy a group of people because of their collective identity must be central to a definition of genocide precisely because it is this very specific intention that differentiates genocide from all other crimes and is the characteristic that gives genocide its terrible signature. In their definition, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, for example, explicitly refer to the "intent to destroy" a victim group¹³ while Steven Katz suggests that genocide, as distinct from other atrocities and mass

12 Israel Charny, "Toward a Generic Definition of Genocide" in George Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 75.

13 Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 23.

murder, only occurs when there is an “actualized intent” to physically destroy an entire group.¹⁴ Helen Fein deals with the problem of proving intent by suggesting in her definition that intent is demonstrated by the “purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity”.¹⁵ As will be discussed shortly, intent to destroy is central to the definition used in this study not only because the idea of intentionality is necessary to preserve the conceptual uniqueness of the phenomenon of genocide (see below), but also because as we will see over the course of this study, the existence of intent is discernable in the structure of even most different cases of genocide.

Finally, there are debates surrounding who the recognized victims and perpetrators of genocide ought to be. Since its inception, the Convention definition has been criticized for limiting the legally recognized victims of genocide to only four specific groups defined by race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. Those who would like to see a broader definition suggest variously that political affiliation, class, or gender, for example, should be added to the list since, in their view, members of these kinds of groups have also been the victims of genocide. With respect to perpetrators a less intense debate exists over whether states or recognized political elites in positions of authority are the only perpetrators of genocide, or whether any group, including rebels and terrorists, can be classified in the same way.

14 Steven Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1994.

15 Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Sage, 1993).

Unlike definitional debates in other fields, the gravity of labeling certain acts of mass killing and persecution as genocide has imbued the term with enormous normative weight. As a result, debates over the use and abuse of the label are often emotionally charged. In the very legitimate quest to validate their own suffering and to draw public attention to it, victims of gross human rights abuses have increasingly labeled their own experience as genocide even though what has happened to them often does not fit established legal or scholarly definitions of genocide. Such claims include the charge of “cultural genocide” in which a group is said to be destroyed when the state or some other authority deprives members of a group of their culture but not their lives. These groups and their supporters decry what they see as an overly narrow definition of genocide and the rejection by “mainstream” scholars and legal experts of their suffering.¹⁶ On the other side, victims of widely recognized genocides, especially the Holocaust, argue that any dilution of the definition of genocide is an insult to the unique suffering of survivors and the memory of those who died. Some Holocaust survivors and scholars go further and argue that the *Shoah*, the destruction of European Jewry by Nazi Germany, was a catastrophe without equal and is not comparable to any other instances of state-sponsored mass murder, and therefore is not covered by the term genocide.¹⁷

16 Along with physical and biological genocide Ward Churchill suggests that Aboriginal people in North America have been subject to cultural genocide (Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian: Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* [San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2004]).

17 See, for example, Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 1–67. The Hebrew word for the destruction of European Jewry, *shoah*, literally means “the
(continued...)”

For the present study a relatively narrow definition of genocide will be employed that is based on the Convention but is expanded to allow for a wider range of victim groups. It also conceptualizes genocide as qualitatively different from all other forms of state-sponsored violence, rather than an extreme form of state or political violence that lies at the end of a continuum of violence and oppression. Genocide is here defined as *the actual or attempted intentional, systematic physical or biological destruction of the members of a group as defined by the perpetrator authorized and/or directed by a state or comparable authority.*

Intentionality is emphasized in order to distinguish genocide from mass killing as a means of repressing a group of people or unlawful killing of an adversary in a conflict in which both sides possess some form of offensive and defensive capabilities. As defined here genocide is not a means to a political or military end,¹⁸ save amorphous often highly ideological goals of “purification” of the race or ridding society of hidden “enemies within”, nor is it a method of collective punishment for what are actual illegal acts (even if the allegations of such crimes are often made by the perpetrators). As well, twentieth

17 (...continued)
catastrophe”.

18 Taking the opposing perspective Valentino argues that mass killing, of which genocide is in his view a distinct but related phenomenon, is a “strategic” means for elites to use their power capabilities to achieve radical policies and/or to counter “the most dangerous threats” (Valentino, *Final Solutions*, pp. 3–4). It will be shown, however, that although genocide takes place within specific ideological, political, and often security contexts, the ultimate motivation for genocide is not “strategic” as Valentino suggests, but is based on a specific conception of the victim group as a mortal threat to the future survival of the wider community. Although Valentino brings up perceptions of threat, he, like most other genocide scholars, does not further problematize what kind of threat the victim group is believed to pose and why this conception leads to genocide.

century genocides have typically transcended conflicts over “real” things such as territorial, political, or economic control, although pre-genocide tensions and conflicts have often involved real and perceived struggles over resources. “Actual or attempted” destruction of a group is included in the definition because genocide involves the intent to destroy a group even if the attempt is unsuccessful. This logic is analogous to the crime of attempted murder in domestic law.¹⁹ Finally, genocide is not an accidental or unintended consequence of some other kind of military action or political policy. Rather the killing is an end in itself. Genocide is an attempt to physically eliminate an innocent, defenceless group of people who are ultimately targeted for who they are and not because of the power they really possess or what they have done.

Emphasis is also placed on the systematic nature of genocide, again because the killing is intentional, but also because it is organized. We must be clear that genocide is not a spontaneous act of irrational mob or “tribal” violence. It is not a random event that is committed without reason, direction, or a clear objective.

Genocide is also defined here as consisting of only the physical and biological destruction of the victim group.²⁰ In his critique of the idea of cultural genocide, Irving

19 Article III, Section D of the UN Genocide Convention lists the “attempt to commit genocide” as an indictable offense along with genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, incitement, and complicity in genocide (United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A (III), 9 December 1948, Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights <<http://www.OHCHR.org/english/law/genocide.htm>>).

20 The five methods of genocide defined in Article II of the UNGC involve both physical and biological destruction. Three methods, “killing members of the group”, “causing serious bodily or mental harm”
(continued...)

Horowitz points out that what he calls “symbolic” genocides are, at least in principle, reversible, while “actual” genocides, which involve real deaths, are not, since the killing is the “final event”. Horowitz suggests that the study of genocide “show what separates death, the ultimate punishment allowing no rectification or correction, from all other forms of victimization, where, in theory at least, recovery if not redemption is possible”.²¹

As in the approach of Chalk and Jonassohn²² the definition used here leaves the identity of the victim groups up to the perpetrators since they are the ones who choose their victims, define the victim’s alleged characteristics, and draw the boundary between the victim group and the rest of society. By not limiting the identity of the victim group we can acknowledge the victimization of political groups and whole socio-economic classes in the past as well as the targeting of other groups who may become victims of genocide in the future.²³

20 (...continued)

constitute physical destruction because of the direct use of force or deprivation to end the victims’ lives. The third method, “conditions of life calculated to bring about [the group’s] physical destruction” is self-explanatory. The remaining two methods - prevention of births and forcible removal of children - are biological forms of destruction since the group cannot sire or raise a new generation and, therefore, reproduce itself. (United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A (III), 9 December 1948, Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights <<http://www.OHCHR.org/english/law/genocide.htm>>)

21 See Irving Horowitz, *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power* (Fourth Edition) (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), p. 41.

22 Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, p. 23.

23 As stated, the Convention definition has been criticized for restricting the recognized victims of genocide to racial, national, ethnical, and religious groups. However in the April 2004 conviction and sentencing of Serbian General Radislav Krstic for “aiding and abetting genocide” in the slaughter of approximately 7,000 Muslim men and teenaged boys in Srebrenica, Bosnia in July 1995, the International Criminal
(continued...)

The relatively narrow definition of genocide to be used here avoids two key problems noted by political scientist Giovanni Sartori which inhibit effective case selection and comparison. The first problem associated with more open-ended definitions of concepts is that of “degreeism”. Sartori identifies degreeism as the “abuse (uncritical use) of the maxim that differences in kind are best conceived as differences of degree”.²⁴ For Sartori the result of degreeism is either the inclusion of what are fundamentally different kinds of cases under one definition, or the exclusion of an equally large and differentiated number of cases along a continuum “whose cut off points are stipulated arbitrarily and can, therefore, be moved around at whim”.²⁵

The second problem is what Sartori refers to as “concept stretching” in which definitions are so loosely defined as to apply to an unwieldy variety of quite dissimilar cases”.²⁶ Both of these problems are present in several definitions of genocide, particularly those that seek to expand the definition to draw attention to other instances of gross human rights abuses. While perhaps understandable from a normative point of view,

23 (...continued)

Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ruled that the crime of genocide can be applied to cover, in this case, men only, rather than all ages and both sexes within a victim group. The court rejected Krstic’s appeal that the numbers killed at Srebrinica were “too insignificant” to be genocide (BBC News On-line, “War Crimes Case Widens ‘Genocide’”, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3638473.stm>>).

24 Giovanni Sartori, “Comparing and Miscomparing”, *Journal of Theoretical Research*, vol.3, no.3 (1991), p. 248.

25 Sartori, “Comparing and Miscomparing”, p. 249.

26 Sartori, “Comparing and Miscomparing”, p. 249.

expanding the definition of genocide to such a degree robs the concept of any real meaning. As Helen Fein warns, when genocide is used to decry such diverse phenomena as abortion, bisexuality, suburbanisation, and dieting as well as massacres and pogroms we “work and act in a public arena in which the term ‘genocide’ [is] so debased by semantic stretch that it stirs suspicion. Virtually everything but genocide... is called genocide!”²⁷ Although a limited definition will by necessity leave out several cases of state-sponsored mass killing, death, and other atrocities, it will help ensure that what we compare are instances of exactly the same phenomenon. The subsequent comparisons we make will be valid and can reasonably be generalized to other instances of genocide.

II. THEORIES OF GENOCIDE

To date, most of the genocide literature has been written by historians or specialists of specific genocides who have focused, quite ably in many instances, on the analysis of individual cases of genocide.²⁸ While vital, such studies do not explain why, in general,

27 Helen Fein, “Genocide, Terror, Life Integrity, and War Crimes: The Case for Discrimination” in George Andreopoulos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 96.

28 A very few examples are: Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Third Edition) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on the Launching of the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sir Martin Gilbert, *Holocaust: The History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (New York: Henry Holt Company, 1995); Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York: F. Watts, 1982); Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933–1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975). On the Armenian genocide see Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Vahakn Dadrian’s *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); and, Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, and Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1992). For Cambodia see: Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian* (continued...)

genocide occurs and how genocides differ from other atrocities and conflicts. There are, therefore, relatively few comparative theories of genocide. Individual case studies as well as existing comparative works on genocide can be divided according to the relative importance placed on agency or structure as the principle factor or factors that lead to genocide. The first group of explanations focus on the role of elite actors in the initiation and perpetration of genocide or on mass social psychological factors that lead whole societies to tolerate genocide and some of its members to actively participate in it. The second cluster of explanations suggest that structural factors lead to genocide, including societal cleavages, regime type, modernity, and the radical eliminationist ideologies modernity has produced. Below, we will briefly consider each of these approaches and how the problems, lacunae, and insights of each approach contribute to the explanation offered in this study.

A. Agency-Centred Explanations

1. *Elites*

The first kind of elite explanation centres on the leading role played in the decision to commit genocide by specific historical figures. These works are for the most part historical

28 (...continued)

History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991; and, Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975–1982* (Boston: South End Press, 1984). On the 1994 genocide in Rwanda see: Romeo A. Dallaire, *Shake Hands With The Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003); Alison Des Forges, *Leave None To Tell The Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* (New York: Picador USA, 1999); and, Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

and seek to demonstrate that Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Enver and Talatt Pasha, for example, were the ultimate source of the genocides in Europe, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, and Turkey respectively. Some of these works, such as Gerald Fleming's *Hitler and the Final Solution*,²⁹ were written explicitly to counter the claims of genocide deniers that specific elites, in this case Hitler, did not sanction the killing, were lied to about it by their subordinates who were really to blame, or simply were not aware of what was happening to the victims.³⁰ From a comparative perspective, the question raised by these studies is: Are genocides the result of the actions of individual leaders? Would the Holocaust have happened without Hitler or the "killing fields" without Pol Pot? Is there a "not-so-great-man" theory of genocide? The answer to this question is that we simply do not know. Although senior political elites are central to the decision-making process that leads to genocide (as we will see in chapters 3 and 4) we cannot turn back the clock and factor out individual leaders from the equation to see whether a given genocide would have happened without them. In addition, since the goal of the present study is comparative theory construction, this kind of elite level approach is of limited value because the role specific elites play in a given genocides can be idiosyncratic, based in part (but not exclusively) on individual life experiences and psychological factors. As such there is a limited basis for

29 Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982)

30 Fleming's book was a direct response to David Irving's revisionist history of the Holocaust, *Hitler's War*, in which Irving argues that Hitler did not sanction the genocide of Europe's Jews from 1941 to 1945, that the death camps were not designed explicitly for exterminating Jews, and that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz. See David Irving, *Hitler's War* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

comparison across cases using this approach. It can be difficult to show empirically an exact causal connection between an individual leader's psychological and experiential make-up and his or her later decision to commit genocide. But as we will discuss later, radical eliminationist ideological beliefs and perceptions held by genocidal elites across different cases, when divorced from individual life histories and psychology, can yield important insights into why genocide occurs.

More comparative elite-level explanations have focused on disentangling how elites make the decision to commit genocide. In a recent example, Benjamin Valentino argues that genocide is the work of political elites, their subordinates, and a relatively small group of ordinary citizens who become low-level functionaries or front-line killers. Because whole societies do not, in Valentino's view, commit genocide, he argues that we must concentrate on processes of elite-level decision making. Valentino contends that elites commit genocide for strategic reasons, namely, to realize radical policy goals. In pursuit of these wider policy goals perpetrator elites employ exterminatory policies against a target group to force its members to do something they would otherwise not do, namely, to submit to a radical new way of life, to give up their homes and possessions, to cease their support for political and military opposition groups, or to counter threats posed by a group. This decision, for Valentino, occurs only when leaders have concluded that other options for achieving their

ends, including less violent forms of repression or limited concessions to victim groups, are ineffective or impractical.³¹

Valentino's analysis effectively gets at the central role that political elites play in the genocidal process since they are ultimately the ones who decide to commit genocide and implement genocide as a policy of the state. He also demonstrates that even though the wholesale slaughter of innocent people is barbaric, immoral, and seemingly illogical, genocide is seen by elite perpetrators as a rational act reached through an equally rational process of political decision making.³² Both the centrality of elites in the genocidal process and genocide as a rational policy choice will figure prominently in the present study, especially in the genocidal reconceptualization process covered in chapter 4. Where Valentino goes wrong is in his insistence that elites act more or less on their own in the perpetration of genocide. In making this argument Valentino largely dismisses the role of society in genocide, including the role of pre-genocide cleavages and crises in socializing ordinary citizens who are not victims to at least acquiesce to the liquidation of the victim group once the killing begins. In this way, Valentino misses the importance of societal actors and society in general as a facilitating bystander population. Although ordinary

31 Valentino, *Final Solutions*, pp. 4, 72–73

32 Valentino, *Final Solutions*, p. 4; For other scholars who understand genocide as a rational choice made by elites see Peter du Preez, *Genocide: The Psychology of Mass Murder* (London: Boyars/Bowerdean, 1994), p. 3; Roger W. Smith, "State, Power, and Genocidal Intent: On the Uses of Genocide in the Twentieth Century" in Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian (eds.), *Studies in Comparative Genocide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 3–14; Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), pp. 7–8.

citizens are neither part of the decision to commit genocide nor actively engaged in the killing genocide cannot happen if large numbers of non-victims in society strongly object to and oppose the killing. This factor is illustrated by the successful resistance by ordinary Danes to the deportation of Danish Jews to the occupied East for extermination, by the termination of the Nazi T4 medical killing program of physically and mentally disabled Germans in mid-1941 in the face of growing public opposition, by the Rosenstraße protests in Berlin in early-1943 which released Jewish husbands of mixed marriages during the Holocaust, and by the Khmer Rouge's decision not to execute King Norodom Sihanouk during the genocide, fearing a backlash from their peasant supporters.³³ What ordinary people think and do is directly relevant to the genocidal process even though political elites drive the process. For a more complete explanation of genocide we need more than a strictly elite level decision making model.

We also need to problematize further the notion that genocide is a means of countering perceived threats posed by the victims. In his presentation of what he calls "ethnic mass killings" Valentino suggests that this particular form of mass killing takes place when elites believe the victims "pose a threat that can be countered only by physically removing [those potential victims] from society". This argument is accurate, but as the final chapter of this study argues in detail, a general perception of threat attributed to the victim group is not enough to explain why genocide specifically is the policy response of radical political elites

33 See also Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap*, pp. 283–284.

rather than other forms of violence and repression. The decision to commit genocide is reached only when political elites come to hold a very specific mortal threat conception of the victim group in which the physical survival of the wider community is seen to be imperiled by the continued physical existence of the victim group.³⁴

2. Mass social psychology theories

A second set of agency-centred explanations of genocide focus on the social and/or psychological orientation of members of perpetrator societies rather than political elites. One formulation of this approach argues that certain societies that have gone on to experience genocide are psychologically predisposed toward the victimization of specific marginal groups. Such predispositions are said to be linked to early childhood development such as authoritarian parenting, commonly held psychological characteristics, what some

34 Valentino's generalized threat conception is, in part, a product of his insistence that mass killing is a means to an end and that instances of what other scholars call genocide can be grouped under the broader concept "mass killing". Valentino abandons the concept genocide while at the same time acknowledging that it is a phenomenon distinct from mass killing. Nonetheless, by including incidences of what most scholars call genocide in his study of mass killing, Valentino *de facto* argues that genocide is the same as other crimes such as crimes against humanity or war crimes. The key difference between genocide and the latter two is that war crimes and crimes against humanity are committed in the pursuit of other policies such as territorial conquest, inter- and intra-state warfare, forced population transfers, and the like. To make his argument that mass killing is a preferable concept to what he says is the overly restrictive concept genocide (because genocide includes only a handful of cases; Valentino, *Final Solutions*, pp. 10–11), he interestingly never mentions the concepts/crimes "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity". Under international law, specific war crimes and crimes against humanity are classified as separate crimes from genocide and from each other. Many of these kinds of crimes are, in fact, what Valentino covers in his book: territorial ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, counterinsurgency warfare in Guatemala in the 1980s, and what he calls "terrorist bombing" over Japan and Germany by the Allies during the Second World War. To be sure, genocide frequently occurs in conjunction with, or is implemented in part through, such policies. However, the impulse behind genocide is qualitatively different from other forms of mass killing precisely because the killing is motivated by a desire to physically eliminate a group of people simply because of who they are.

analysts have labeled “national character”,³⁵ or indoctrination into racist or eliminationist beliefs concerning the eventual targets of genocide.³⁶ Rejecting the assertion that whole societies have the same psychological make-up, other analysts like Erwin Staub have compared different societies³⁷ in which genocide has occurred and suggest that many members of societies that experience genocide become psychologically distressed as a result of severe crises and are, therefore, willing to accept the victimization of marginal groups. These same societies also have a history of antipathetic relationships with, and perceptions of, marginal groups. Once crises take hold, members of society project their own frustrations and hardships onto these groups. Crises are perceived by ordinary people as events that create “winners” and “losers”. The winners are understood to be the marginal group or groups while the members of the majority group see themselves as the losers who are suffering at the hands of a distrusted minority. As crises deepen, and as the state begins to use repression and violence against the victim group, the wider society becomes increasingly psychologically disposed to accept the victimization of the group, and in the

35 See, for example, Theodore Adorno’s analysis of why Germans embraced fascism and violence. Theodore W. Adorno, Else Frenkel, and Daniel J. Levinsons, *The Authoritarian Personality: Studies in Prejudice* (Abridged Edition) (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1993).

36 A controversial example of this position is Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s argument that the Germans, and not other European societies, perpetrated the final solution against Europe’s Jews because Germans were socialized from an early age into a specifically German, and extreme, form of anti-Semitism—what Goldhagen calls “eliminationist anti-Semitism” (Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* [New York: Vintage Books, 1997]).

37 Staub concentrates on the Holocaust but also engages in a social psychological comparison of the Holocaust with the Armenian and Cambodian genocides and the “dirty war” in Argentina.

case of some individuals, ripe for recruitment into the genocidal process as low-level killers.³⁸

Individual-level agency centred arguments, meanwhile, attempt to discern why during genocide the killers murder objectively innocent and defenseless people. These analyses, made mostly by psychologists, but also historians and anthropologists, link active perpetration of genocide to, for example, socialization of certain professions into ideological perspectives that make killing members of the victim group psychologically possible or even desirable.³⁹ Other analyses tie genocidal killing to the nature of group dynamics, particularly in military or security units, in making the killing of large numbers of victim tolerable for ordinary (that is, not psychologically disturbed) people⁴⁰ and the influence of cultural beliefs and practices that sanction violence against individuals or outgroups.⁴¹

The “national character” social psychological explanations, many of which focus on what are said to be psychologically damaging practices such as “authoritarian parenting”

38 See, e.g., Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Psychological and Cultural Origins of Genocide and Other Forms of Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

39 Robert Jay Lifton, *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986).

40 Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993).

41 Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005).

and the existence of an “authoritarian syndrome”⁴² are the most overtly problematic because they are, for the most part, overly general and simplistic in that they suggest that all or most members of a society that eventually perpetrates genocide share the same psychological characteristics which induce them to behave in exactly the same ways toward the victim group. As well, some formulations of this argument veer toward stereotyping whole societies. Staub’s rejection of national character and mass psychology explanations in favour of social psychological processes concerning the experience and interpretation of what he calls “difficult life conditions” is more useful in that he points to the role of crises and how crises are interpreted in the period immediately preceding genocide and the fact that genocidal policies must be tacitly supported or at least tolerated by society in general for such policies to be successful. Staub’s argument is problematic however in his assertion that crises induce a common psychological response among non-victims in society that leaves society as a whole willing to accept attacks on the victim group by the state. First, there is little direct empirical evidence presented by Staub to show that the kind of frustration that he cites actually exists or directly influence society’s supposed acceptance of increasing victimization of the target group. Secondly, while Staub’s work, and the mass

42 According to the authors of the “Authoritarian Personality”, the genocide against the Jews of Europe was in part motivated by a Freudian “authoritarian syndrome” in which individual German’s “attitude toward authority and its psychological agency, the superego, assumes an irrational aspect. The subject achieves his own social adjustment only by taking pleasure in obedience and subordination”. Unresolved love for the mother and hatred of the father is transformed into aggression, some of which is directed outward as sadism “which seeks an outlet in those with whom the subject does not identify himself: ultimately the outgroup. The Jew frequently becomes a substitute for the hated father...” (T.W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Part Two, Second Edition) (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 759.

social psychology approach in general accounts for why societal actors accept or acquiesce to this decision, it does not account for why political elites make the decision to commit genocide in the first place. If we want to understand the significance of crises as the trigger for genocide we need to look instead at how such events are interpreted based on pre-existing exclusionary political cultural beliefs⁴³ and practices and how this foundation of beliefs and practices shape how elites in particular interpret the meaning of crises in such a way that the eventual victims of genocide come to be identified as not only responsible for crises but also a threat in the future.

B. Structural Explanations

Among the existing theories we can identify four types of structural explanations for genocide: societal changes, crises, regime type, and modernity.

1. Societal Cleavages

Societal level structural explanations concern pre-genocide social cleavages as a precursor to or predictor of genocidal killing. In general this approach holds that societies that later experience genocide are riven by deep ethnic, cultural, religious, or class divisions as well as relationships of inequality, domination, and subordination between different groups.⁴⁴

A more specific version of this approach suggests that ethnic stratification, in which

43 Although a social psychological approach and a political cultural approach are not completely unrelated, social psychology deals primarily with psychological interpretations of events and the psychological foundations of behaviour. The present study focuses instead on shared beliefs, norms, and actions which have their roots in commonly shared sets of cultural values and practices rather than psychological needs, goals, or the emotional and behavioural characteristics of individuals and groups.

44 Kuper, *Genocide*, p. 28.

different ethnic groups occupy different hierarchically arranged socio-economic positions, create and exacerbate tensions between groups particularly when a minority dominates the upper strata of the socio-economic hierarchy.⁴⁵ Critics argue that simply because social cleavages and tensions exist in a society it does not mean that genocide will inevitable occur since there are many plural societies past and present that are divided in exactly the same way which do not go on to perpetrate genocide.⁴⁶ Although this criticism is true, empirical research shows us that social cleavages are pronounced in pre-genocide societies. We must, therefore, take seriously the structure of pre-genocidal societies and the relationship between groups within them.

The social cleavages approach requires further theorizing in order to show how cleavages fit in with other variables that together lead to genocide and to distinguish why some divided societies turn genocidal while others do not. The study presented here confronts both of these problems by emphasizing not just the fact of divisions within pre-genocide societies, but more importantly how these divisions create unequal and exclusionary interaction, attitudes, and perceptions between groups. By emphasizing modes of group interaction and attitudes, the important fact of social cleavages is reconceptualized in this study as part of an ideational and material structure, what is called here the pre-genocide “permissive” political culture, that creates the potential for (but not certainty of)

45 E.g., Helen Fein, “Accounting for Genocide After 1945: Theories and Some Findings”, *International Journal on Group Rights*, vol. I (1993), pp. 88–92.

46 Valentino, *Final Solutions*, pp. 16–17.

genocide. By providing both the ideational foundation upon which elites, and to a lesser extent society, interpret the meaning of crises as well as the conceptual basis for the genocidal reconceptualization of the victim group as a mortal threat to the wider community, unequal and exclusionary interaction and attitudes are, therefore, a necessary but not sufficient condition for genocide.

2. Crises

The fact that serious political, economic, and security crises almost always precede genocide has also been the subject of study among genocide scholars. Crises are seen in the literature as destabilizing events that create profound challenges for political elites and significant hardships for ordinary citizens which are blamed on a target group. As noted earlier, some analysts argue that crises produce social-psychological distress, frustration, and difficult life conditions that are then projected onto a marginalized group that is believed to be responsible for crises.⁴⁷ Other scholars eschew explicitly social-psychological analyses while preserving the scapegoating as a result of crisis argument.⁴⁸ Leaving aside scapegoating altogether, Manus Midlarsky argues in a recent volume that external security crises, specifically territorial loss, leads to genocide when political elites engage in a strategy of

47 Staub, *The Roots of Evil*, pp. 13–50; Israel Charney, *How Can We Commit the Unthinkable? Genocide, The Human Cancer* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), pp.107–110.

48 E.g., Florence Mazian's comparative analysis of the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust in Florence Mazian, *Why Genocide? The Armenian and Jewish Experience in Perspective* (Ames: University of Iowa Press, 1990), pp. 243–247.

“loss compensation” by physically liquidating specific groups.⁴⁹ Finally, crises have also been conceptualized in the literature as a “political opportunity structure”⁵⁰ that allows radical political elites both to come to power and to implement long awaited genocidal policies against a target group.⁵¹

All of the crises leading to victimization explanations clearly demonstrate that severe crises almost always precede genocide but they have much more difficulty explaining why genocidal policies directed at a victim group materialize in the wake of crisis in some places but not in many others. Scapegoating and loss compensation on their own do not tell us how societies go from the general blaming of a specific group for crises or losses to the very specific decision to exterminate that group as a form of collective punishment. Why crisis and scapegoating or loss compensation lead to genocide and not some other form of repression or violence is not clearly articulated. Because most of these are societal level analyses, empirical evidence does not itself show how scapegoating among ordinary people results in a decision by political elites to commit genocide against a target group. These explanations also do not sufficiently problematize the relationship between the eventual

49 Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap*, pp. 103–107.

50 This concept was formulated by Sidney Tarrow in his analysis of social movements (Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movement, Collective Action, and Politics* [First Edition] [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994]).

51 One of the first detailed comparative analyses of genocide in part adopted this argument. See Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: The Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992) and Barbara Harff’s “The Etiology of Genocide” in Isidor Wallimann and Michael Dobkowski (eds.), *Genocide and the Modern Age* (New York: Greenwood, 1987), pp. 41–59.

victims of genocide and the rest of society at the time of the crises, and the resulting scapegoating, except to say that the victims had previously been the objects of vaguely articulated prejudice or hatred. Even Midlarsky's elite level analysis of territorial loss and loss compensation through genocide is marred by the absence of any explanation of why a particular group is chosen for extermination.

As for crises as political opportunity structure, while the historical record shows that crises allowed genocidal elites such as the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge, and the Young Turks (perpetrators of the Armenian genocide) to take over control of the state, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these same elites had already formulated a plan of extermination that they intended to turn into reality once in power. The empirical basis of the political opportunity structure argument in the case of the Holocaust, for example, has been called into question in the recent resolution of the "intentionalist" versus "functionalist" debate among Holocaust historians more or less in favour of the functionalists. Detailed archival research by Christopher Browning and others based on Russian archives opened up after the end of the cold war has shown, contra the earlier thesis of Lucy Dawidowicz, that the extermination of Europe's Jews was most likely not a pre-existing plan developed by the Nazis before coming to power or even in the first two years (1939–1940) of the Second World War.⁵²

52 Christopher R. Browning, *The Path To Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against The Jews: 1933–1945* (Tenth Anniversary Edition) (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).

Despite the analytical problems and the fact that crises are not unique to states that perpetrate genocide, the targeting for destruction of certain groups following crises cannot be ignored if we want to come up with a complete explanation for why genocide happens. To understand why crises can result in genocide, we need to concentrate on how political elites in particular interpret the meaning of crises. Similar to the scapegoat theory it is argued here that crises are perceived by genocidal elites as the direct or indirect result of pernicious actions or influence by the victim group. The present analysis goes beyond this argument by suggesting first, that this interpretation is not the result of “hatred” for the group, but is grounded in an enduring set of exclusionary and unequal practices and attitudes—the permissive political culture—and the animation of the more malevolent anti-group features of that political culture. Second, the interpretation of crises does not stop at assigning blame for current crises, but more importantly involves the projection of threat into the future. But as with the permissive political culture, crises, and the interpretation of them, are only necessary, not a sufficient condition. This is so because the assigning of threat to the victim group at the time of crises by elites is frequently only of a very general nature and, therefore, cannot explain why genocide specifically is the policy option rather than some other response. To understand why genocide occurs in the wake of crisis we need to problematize conceptions of threat. As we shall see, genocide requires the reconceptualization of the victim group as a mortal threat to society.

3. Regime Type

One of the earliest comparative explanations of genocide, offered by Irving Horowitz, argues that genocide is an inevitable product of totalitarian systems and is, therefore, regularly practiced by totalitarian regimes. Because totalitarian regimes attempt to exert total political, economic, and social control over all aspects of life and over all members of society, such regimes inexorably end up liquidating whole groups of people who are deemed to be outside of, or hostile to, the totalitarian order.⁵³ Similarly, for Hannah Arendt (although her work predates Horowitz and does not deal explicitly with genocide but with totalitarianism) the fullest expression of totalitarianism—that practiced by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes—was the exercise of “total domination” in the death camps in which “everything”, including the extermination of “superfluous peoples”, became “possible”.⁵⁴ Looking at the opposite side of the political spectrum, Rudolph Rummel also links regime type to genocide and other forms of mass violence by suggesting that while democratic regimes are liable to inflict violent death on citizens of other states through combat operations, bombings, or isolated atrocities they are very unlikely to target their own citizens for mass repression or killing. Based on a detailed statistical examination of deaths caused by governments, Rummel argues, according to what he calls the “power principle”, that “the more power a government has, the more it can act arbitrarily according to the whims and desires of the elite, and the more it will make war on others

53 Horowitz, *Taking Lives*, pp. {x}

54 Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. {x}.

and murder its foreign and domestic subjects. The more constrained the power of governments, the less it will aggress on others".⁵⁵

As Rummel's empirical investigation tells us, regime type, at least when considering twentieth-century genocides, is related to whether a regime is more or less likely to commit genocide. Non-democratic regimes have a higher incidence of committing atrocities against their own people, including genocide, when compared with democratic regimes which in the past century virtually never perpetrated genocides against their own people. But because there are also a large number of authoritarian regimes historically and currently who have not perpetrated genocide, Rummel's study only tells us that there is a correlation between authoritarian regimes and the genocidal killing but not a causal connection between the two phenomena. The study presented here similarly argues that non-democratic states are more likely than democracies to commit genocide, but goes further by suggesting that this is so because states that do commit genocide historically have used authoritarian methods to manage domestic conflicts. Such methods, which are articulated in this study as a part of the pre-genocide permissive political culture, involve the use of repression and sometimes violence against perceived enemies that is underpinned by a tendency to interpret conflicts as zero-sum struggles in which the state must win or be completely defeated. These authoritarian practices and perceptions in turn create an ideational and experiential context in which a victim group, perceived as a mortal threat by

55 Rudolph J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, N J: Transaction Publishers, 1994), pp. 1-2.

now genocidal elites, are dealt with not through concessions or lesser forms of repression, but through violent processes of extermination intended to secure the survival of the state and majority society.

The claim being made here is limited. The mere fact that a regime is authoritarian or that it has historically perceived, and confronted, conflicts in the manner just described, does not mean that the regime will inevitably go on to commit genocide. As with the other elements of the permissive political culture (exclusionary group interaction, a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance coupled with an exclusionary conception of membership in the political community) authoritarianism and authoritarian methods of conflict management only create the potential for genocide, not a certainty that genocide will happen.

This last qualification is absent from Horowitz's totalitarian regime thesis. As we will see below, although the ideologies that animate what have been labeled totalitarian regimes⁵⁶—namely communist regimes and Nazi Germany—not all totalitarian regimes have perpetrated genocide against segments of their own population. Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea certainly did, as did the Soviet regime under Stalin during the 1930s when socio-economic classes and perceived political enemies were deliberately liquidated through

56 The totalitarian label, as distinct from authoritarianism, has always been controversial, as it has not always been clear that actually existing regimes usually labeled totalitarian such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia really achieved total penetration of all aspects of life as suggested by prevailing theories of totalitarianism. As we will see, Democratic Kampuchea came close to exerting total domination over all Cambodians.

indirect biological (famine) and direct physical (execution) means. But other so-called totalitarian regimes such as Vietnam (see chapter 4) did not single out whole groups of people for destruction, although the first decade of communist rule after unification in 1975 was marked by repression and serious human rights abuses against former regime elements. Given the different experiences of totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century concerning the perpetration, or not, of genocide, we cannot credibly argue that the structures and processes of totalitarian regimes invariably result in the genocidal killing of specific groups.

4. Modernity and Eliminationist Ideologies

The final group of structural arguments link the onset of genocide to broad process of modernization as well as to the creation of radical, often racist or revolutionary ideologies which sanction the elimination of groups of people perceived to be non-members of a new racial, national, or revolutionary political order.

For example, Zygmunt Bauman argues in his analysis of the structural foundations of the Holocaust that the increasing division and specialization of bureaucratic functions within the modern nation-state and society allows the thousands of people involved in genocidal programs to conceptually remove themselves from any moral responsibility for their small and specialized part in the extermination process.⁵⁷ As such, the killing of whole groups of innocent human beings has become conceptually, psychologically, and morally

⁵⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 98–111.

unproblematic in the modern age. Influenced by modern conceptions of inferior and superior races or exploited and exploiting classes, coupled with a proclivity for now powerful, centralized, bureaucratic states to conceive of grand projects of social engineering and their capacity to implement such policies, modern states have the potential to become genocidal “gardener states”. For the gardener state, genocide is not a policy of destruction but a grand project of construction. Reminiscent of Arendt’s totalitarian everything-is-possible thesis, Bauman argues that the gardener states seeks to construct new social, economic, demographic, or political orders in a way similar to how a landscaper plants and tends a garden. Just as gardens inevitably grow weeds that do not belong in a meticulously designed garden, so too new racial, national, or revolutionary systems contain human beings who do not belong in the new order. As with weeds that are pulled by a gardener to maintain the intended design and composition of the garden, groups of human beings who do not belong to the new order must be exterminated by the gardener state.⁵⁸

Although Bauman provides us with a compelling metaphor congruent with the spirit of many radical ideologies and the desire to construct completely new societies, his analysis does not tell us why the pulling of human weeds—i.e., the removal of certain groups who do not belong to the new order—necessarily involves physical extermination. Simply understanding a group as misfits who upset the composition of the new order cannot explain why genocide becomes a policy option for some elites rather than apartheid-like

58 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, pp. 66–76.

segregation and repression, internal deportation, or expulsion. The latter policies accomplish exactly what Bauman suggests the gardener state wants to do, which is the removal of groups of people who are thought to deviate in some way from the rest of the newly constructed order. His metaphor is not irrelevant, but it is too benign. This study takes a similar approach to Bauman in identifying what we will call the first conceptual “switch” in the reconceptualization process that leads to genocide. This switch sees the victim group as nonmembers of the new order to whom the state owes no rights or obligations and society affords no protection. But to explain why *genocide*, as we will see in chapter 4, we need to turn to a second conceptual switch: the conception of victim groups as mortal threats to the new order based solely on the fact of the groups’ continued existence. To return to Bauman’s gardener metaphor, we must remember why gardeners get rid of the weeds in their gardens. It is not just because weeds do not look right or were not in the flat of flowers the gardener planted, but because, if left unchecked, they will choke off and kill the garden. That is why gardeners do not just pull off the tops of weeds or replant them somewhere else, but instead are careful to thoroughly dig weeds out by their roots or use herbicide to ensure that the weeds can never grow again.

Bauman’s insights into bureaucratic specialization and the moral distancing of perpetrators from the genocidal process are important and can help to explain how it was that large numbers of public and private employees, managers, and administrators in Nazi Germany could continue to play their own small but deadly part in keeping the machinery

of destruction in motion unmolested by moral qualms about the program's outcome. It cannot explain other genocides, like the Cambodian genocide, Rwanda, and now Darfur, where the killing was and is not bureaucratized and instead involved or involves face-to-face public killing. Nor can the modern bureaucratic state thesis explain why political elites decide to perpetrate genocide in the first place (Bauman's separate gardener state thesis addresses this question), only how it was that a modern Western state like Nazi Germany, with desks full of killers like Eichmann, had the capacity to execute genocidal policies.

Other genocide scholars suggest that the main product of modernity that led to the genocides of the twentieth century was not the modern state but modern revolutionary ideologies that are inherently genocidal.⁵⁹ These ideologies rest on modern conceptions of the world as naturally divided into races and nations or on Marxist notions of class conflict between exploiting and exploited classes. Nineteenth century conceptions of "race" did not see race as a social constructs as is currently the case, but rather as a natural phenomenon in which races were hierarchically ordered according to inferiority and superiority. Physical characteristics, such as skin colour, were believed to be external manifestations of an inner being that was indelible, immutable, and transgenerational.

Influenced by Johann Gottlieb Fichte's and Johann Gottfried von Herder's conception of the nation as primordial entities with a common language, culture, and history,

59 Chalk and Johassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, pp. 37–40; Helen Fein, "Revolution and Anti-Revolutionary Genocides: A Comparison of State Murders in Democratic Kampuchea, 1975–1979 and in Indonesia, 1965–1966", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 35, no. 4 (October 1993), pp. 796–823; Peter du Preez, Genocide, *The Psychology of Mass Murder*, pp. 28–47.

nationalism by the nineteenth century morphed into a racialized understanding of nationhood as an ethnic and racial community and not simply as a locus of political rights.⁶⁰ Primordial and exclusionary understandings of race and nation gained particular prominence in Germany and elsewhere on the European continent by the latter half of the nineteenth century. Historian Eric Weitz further argues that the rise of race thinking and ethnic nationalism coincided with the rapid expansion of European imperialism and the resulting exposure of increasing numbers of Westerners to indigenous and other peoples who were physiologically and culturally different from themselves. These encounters only seemed to confirm the idea that some races, namely white Europeans, were superior to Africans and Asians and the indigenous people of the Americas already colonized by European settlers in previous centuries.⁶¹ The felling of Western colonists to tropical diseases and the simultaneous rise in support for eugenics and the “theory” of social Darwinism (struggle for the survival of the fittest races) culminated in a conception of society as “analogous to the body and race as a biological organism, whose health needed constant attention, whose vitality was continually in danger of being sapped by killer bacteria borne by the weaker members and by those of completely alien races”.⁶²

60 Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp.17–31.

61 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, pp. 45–46.

62 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, p. 39.

When added to the dehumanization of the enemy during World War I, all of these ideational factors produced, according to Weitz in the case of the Holocaust, the idea that the Jewish “disease” in Germany weakened the German “body” and should be removed through radical eugenicist measures in order to preserve the racial purity of Aryans.⁶³ Similar revolutionary ideas that societies are divided based on the ownership of the means of production into classes, and the inevitability of class conflict, inspired genocidal revolutionary movements and regimes that identified certain classes as exploiters and counter-revolutionaries who did not fit into the new revolutionary system and, therefore, had to be eliminated in genocidal purges in states such as the Stalinist Soviet Union and Democratic Kampuchea.

The current study takes up many of the themes developed in explanations of genocide which stress the role of ideology in underpinning genocidal behaviour. Ideology based explanations get to the important role of ideas, the propensity for genocidal elites to categorize society, and to conceptualize their victims as alien and hostile to new revolutionary systems that must be purified of all deviant behaviour, thought, or unworthy or inferior human beings. As we will see in chapters 2 and 4, the categorization of revolutionary societies into in and out groups is reflected, for example, in the switch one conceptualization of the victim group as well as is the connection between exclusionary beliefs during the genocide and the pre-genocide political culture. More than other

⁶³ Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*, p. 47.

explanations of genocide, the ideology approach also picks up the central role of threat perception, namely that genocidal elites come to see their victims not just as inferiors or misfits, but as dangerous enemies within. As already suggested, the explanation that will be developed over the course of this study contends that the exact nature of this threat conception needs to be problematized further than the genocide literature has done up to this point in order to pin-point why certain elites in certain, often revolutionary contexts, end up committing genocide and not other acts of repression or violence. Weitz's work demonstrates the shortcomings of an ideology based approach in this regard. The author lays out in great detail the conceptual origins of Nazi and radical communist thought, but then, when it comes to the case studies of the individual genocides, is unable, based on his earlier arguments, to account for and indeed does not attempt to account for, why genocide was perpetrated against some groups and not others. In the case of the Holocaust, for example, Weitz ties Nazi racist, social Darwinistic ideology to the T4 eugenics program that targeted physically and mentally ill patients in Germany (a program that was officially halted, as was mentioned, when ordinary Germans found out about it), the harsh treatment meted out against Poles who were slated to become a vast pool of slave labour for the Nazis in the new German East after the war, and the Jews, who from the summer of 1941 onward were the objects of extermination. How can the same ideology account for the differences in policy concerning German patients, Poles, and Jews?

The answer is that the underlying ideology of radical political elites only identifies certain groups as outsiders or a hostile elements that are seen as threats by the regime. These ideologies are presented by genocide scholars as specific enough as to contain a mortal threat conception of a particular group such that genocide and not some other repressive or violent policy becomes the necessary outcome. Yet as the brief examination of post-1975 Vietnam in chapter 4 will demonstrate, even highly ideological regimes like the victorious one in Hanoi do not necessarily see hostile elements as enemies that must be exterminated. Although the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) conceptualized former regime elements and the urban upper classes in the South as potential threats to unified socialist Vietnam, these groups were subject to repression and detention, but not genocide. The difference between a Vietnam and a genocidal Democratic Kampuchea, a Nazi Germany, or a Hutu Power Rwanda is that genocidal elites tie the threat posed by the victim group to the group's physical existence and not power capabilities. For the CPV, the stripping of former army officers and South Vietnamese government officials of their livelihoods and their liberty was deemed to be sufficient to neutralize the threat these groups supposedly posed to the regime and socialism. In neighbouring Cambodia these strategies were not enough from the perspective of the Khmer Rouge, nor were they in Nazi Germany and other states that have committed genocide. Genocide became the only acceptable policy option in the latter cases because, as the second mortal threat conception detailed in chapter 4 shows, genocide is perpetrated against victims who are believed to

pose a threat to society or a new revolutionary order simply because they continue to exist, not because they possess any real objective power capabilities or because of general exclusionary ideological beliefs.

C. Collective Identity and Dehumanization

Contained within the works and approaches already cited, as well as other authors who have looked specifically at the issue, is the way in which genocidal elites and societies construct the identity of their victims and how this process leads to genocide. Identity based arguments emphasize how the perpetrators of genocide dehumanize their victims such that members of the victim group, who are no longer seen as human, can be easily eliminated. Anthropologist Gregory Stanton, for example, contends that dehumanization is the third of eight stages of genocide. Stanton argues that in the run up to genocidal violence “one group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases”. Conceptualized as non- or sub-human, “dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder”. Dehumanizing discourse is often articulated to the public as hate propaganda in the media which is used “to vilify the victim group”⁶⁴ and foster support for, or the perpetration of, genocidal killing.

⁶⁴ Gregory H. Stanton, “The Eight Stages of Genocide” (United States Department of State; presented at the Yale University Center for International and Area Studies in 1998), <<http://www.genocidewatch.org/8stages.htm>>. For an analysis of dehumanizing discourse in genocide see Herbert Hirsch and Roger W. Smith, “The Language of Extermination in Genocide” in Israel Charney (ed.), *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographical Review* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), pp. 386–403.

One of the central arguments of this study is that how elites construct the identities of their victims is crucial to explaining why elites commit genocide against particular groups. The literature that examines dehumanization and dehumanizing discourse identifies one of the conceptions of the victim group that elites, and to a lesser degree societies, hold in genocidal situations. As Stanton and others note, conceptualizing and speaking of the victims of genocide as non- or subhuman makes their physical elimination psychologically tolerable because the perpetrators are not killing, and the bystanders are not permitting, the physical destruction of human beings like themselves. The dehumanized conception of the victim group and how it facilitates the actual killing of the victims is what we will call the third, and final, “switch” reconceptualization of the victim group. This reconceptualization is discussed in the final section of chapter 4.

However, dehumanization on its own cannot tell us what motivates genocidal elites to try to exterminate their victims. Sub- or non-humans are powerless “vermin” or “animals” that, precisely because of their inferiority, do not threaten whole societies, ways of life, or “races”. To be sure, political elites, even genocidal elites, treat those they dehumanize in appalling ways and do, in genocidal situations, dehumanize groups they have slated for destruction. But groups that are *only* dehumanized and are *not* invested with power and therefore threat, do not need to be exterminated. Such groups are perceived to be so low that their continued existence is not considered threatening. Instead they become human fodder for a regime’s grand projects, repression or segregation, or are simply neglected. To

return to the Polish example during World War II, Poles were used during the Nazi occupation in some areas as slave labourers or were forcibly removed from their homes and deported to other parts of the General Government to make way for ethnic German settlers. They were not slated for wholesale destruction simply because they were Polish.⁶⁵ Those Poles that were killed during the invasion in September 1939 or were later rounded up and sent to the concentration camps, were eliminated because they were elites and community leaders—priests, local politicians, and professionals—whom the Germans feared would go on to constitute the leadership of a resistance movement. The tenaciousness of the struggle waged by the Polish underground and the free Polish army (the AK) up until the end of the Nazi occupation largely substantiated this suspicion. Of course this argument is not intended to justify the Nazi's incarceration and killing of the Polish elite. Rather it simply shows that in the case of Catholic (i.e., non-Jewish) Poles, the only targets for elimination were a group of individuals who possessed real power capabilities based on their actually or potential roles as community leaders and not on their ethnic or other communal identities. Once those individuals were removed, Poles as a group were not seen as a threatening enemy in need of elimination, only as an inferior race suitable for indefinite servitude to their supposedly superior Aryan masters. Europe's Jews, on the other hand, were conceptualized not just as non-humans—as the discussion of the third switch in the Nazi case will reveal—but also as an overwhelmingly powerful threatening enemy whose

65 Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), pp. 127–159; 307–327.

power to destroy Nazi Germany, the Aryan race, and the entirety of European civilization rested not on individual members' status as doctors, lawyers, rabbis, civil servants, or any other profession, but on the fact that they had been born, and more importantly, continued to exist, as Jews. Ending the Jews' lives was the only way to rid the group of the perceived ultimate source of its power and threat. As we shall see, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge conceptualized the "enemies" of *Angkar* in exactly the same way.

III. A CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY OF GENOCIDE: AN OVERVIEW

In the preceding discussion of the existing debates and theories in the field of genocide studies, we have touched upon the various elements of the theory of genocide that will be developed and tested in the succeeding chapters. In this section, the discussion will be restricted to the underlying premises of the theoretical approach, the questions each variable answers, and how each variable reflects the shifting importance of structure, process, and agency throughout the course of the argument.

The central claim of this study is that genocide occurs when political elites come to reconstruct the identities of their victims as a threatening "enemy within" such that the group's continued existence is believed to pose a mortal threat to the survival of the political community. This claim is premised on a constructivist understanding of the sources of political behaviour, specifically that the way actors construct the identities of other actors, and construct the meaning of the relationship between themselves and other actors, strongly influences how actors act toward each other. Moreover, changes in how

actors construct another's identity leads to changes in behaviour toward the other actor. Actors construct and reconstruct their conception of another's identity based first, on existing ideational structures—i.e., knowledge about and past practices concerning other actors—and second, on changes in material structures—i.e., objective material conditions in the economic, political, security or other spheres.

A constructivist approach that emphasizes the importance of collective identity construction, both the structural underpinnings for this process and the process itself, is useful because (as we have seen in section II above) it helps us to theorize and problematize parts of explanations in the existing literature that require further development if we want to understand why elites choose genocide as a specific policy to deal with certain groups in society. Each of the three variables that make up the approach advocated here addresses those three key questions introduced at the beginning of this chapter that must be answered if we want to answer the foundational problem: Why genocide? Those questions were: (I) Where does the idea to commit genocide comes from? (II) Why does genocide happen when it happens? and, (III) Why do elites choose genocide specifically as a policy option?

As indicated in the initial discussion of the theory at the beginning of this chapter, the collective identity reconstruction process that leads to genocide does not stand on its own, but is underpinned by two variables: first, the pre-genocide permissive political culture and, second, short-term crises that precede the outbreak of genocidal killing. These two

structural variables answer the first two of our three questions. In their interaction, they underpin the third variable: the process by which elites reconceptualize the identity of their victims as mortal threats.

The first variable, the pre-genocide permissive political culture, consists of three dimensions. The first dimension covers exclusionary and unequal group interaction and traces out the history of formal and informal exclusionary and unequal practices and divisions between groups in society. These include restrictive citizenship laws, residency requirements and formal and informal limits to participation in the economy, as well as social norms and practices concerning group interaction and hierarchical socio-economic relationships between groups. The second dimension, a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance and exclusionary conceptions of the community, is manifested in a history of antipathy and distrust between groups, anti-group myths, stereotypes, and attitudes coupled with restrictive understandings of who properly belongs to, or are, authentic members of the political community. The final dimension includes authoritarian, statist interpretations of, and reactions to, conflicts within society or between groups in society and the state. Political elites historically understand conflicts to be zero-sum struggles which must be met with a strong authoritarian response, possibly including violence, not negotiation and compromise.

The political culture variable is a structural variable, rather than an agency or process one, because it taps established patterns of interaction and knowledge rather than self-

generated action by actors (agency) or an evolving process. Because the permissive political culture is characterized by enduring practices and knowledge—attitudes, norms, myths, perceptions—concerning the relationship between societal groups and regarding the eventual victims of genocide, it answers the question where does the idea to commit genocide come from? The permissive political culture variable does this because it acts as an ideational structure or lens through which genocidal elites interpret the meaning of crises (variable two) such that the eventual victims of genocide come to be identified with crises. It also acts as an ideational structure in that the most malevolent features of the permissive political culture, animated by the occurrence of severe crises, further constitute a body of knowledge and practices vis-à-vis the victim group that underpin the genocidal reconceptualization process (variable three) that leads to genocide.

The crisis variable is for the most part a structural variable, although it also contains elements of agency. It accounts for the timing of genocide, thereby answering the question why a genocide happen when it does. It is a structural variable because crises involve rapid and destabilizing changes to economic, political, or security conditions. These quick and negative changes to material conditions serve as the catalyst for the genocidal reconceptualization of the victim group by political elites because they alter, through the traumatic effects of crises, how political elites in particular think about groups in society. Crises are, as already mentioned, interpreted through the ideational lens of the pre-genocide political culture and the negative attitudes and practices surrounding specific

groups that the pre-genocide political culture contains. They do so in such a way that these same groups come to be negatively associated with crises. Elites believe that the groups, which they will eventually try to exterminate, are responsible for the outbreak of crises and that there is an overwhelming potential that the group will continue to threaten the political community in the future. It is at this point in the second variable and the overall theory that our explanatory focus begins to shift from one based on structure to one based on agency and process. Elite interpretations of crises, although brought on by changes in structural conditions, involve agency on the part of political elites because their actions are self-generating and involve specific actors, as well as a process of interpreting the meaning of destabilizing events.

At this juncture the stage is merely set for possible genocide, for we have not yet answered the final decision-making question: Why do elites choose to commit genocide against their victims instead of choosing some other, less deadly, policy? Here the explanation completes the shift from structure to agency and process as we follow the way in which genocidal elites reconceptualize the identity, interests, and future actions of the victim group so that genocide becomes their only “rational” policy option.

The collective identity reconceptualization process that leads to genocide involves the turning on of three conceptual “switches”. The first switch involves reconceptualizing the victim group as aliens or foreigners to whom the state owes neither rights nor obligations.

This switch must be turned on since it decouples the victims from the political community—but it is not enough to induce elites to implement genocidal policies.

For genocide to occur a second conceptual switch must also be turned on. If left “off”, it is argued here, some other policy of repression, segregation, or violence (including non-genocidal mass killing) will be chosen by elites. This crucial and unique second switch conception of the victim group provides the motivation for elites to commit genocide specifically because, as discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, elites will only pursue a policy of extermination if they see the victim group’s continued existence as a mortal threat to the wider community, race, or revolution. The conception of the victim group as mortal threat is not based on the possession of real power capabilities by the group but on the mere fact that the members of the group continue to remain alive. Threat that is believed to rest on objective power capabilities can be neutralized through the removal of those capabilities by non-genocidal policies of expropriation, segregation, incarceration, or repression. Such policies are not an option when elites come to hold the second switch conception of the victim group because the power of the victim group to menace the survival of the larger community is believed to be based solely on the group’s existence as living breathing human beings. Removing power capabilities in this instance entails the physical or biological ending of the member’s lives. As detailed in chapter 4, the second mortal threat conception of the victim group includes three threat motifs: the epic struggle motif in which the perpetrators and victims are seen by the former to be locked in a deadly

zero-sum struggle for physical survival; the victims as agent or master of powerful foreign actors motif; and a deadly disease motif in which the victim group is conceptualized as a deadly contagion that will kill its host.

The final switch conception constructs the victim group as non- or sub-human. The dehumanization conceptualization allows for efficient guilt-free killing once the decision to commit genocide has already been made. When turned on by itself the third switch does not result in genocide because victims who are only dehumanized because of their supposed inferiority are not believed to pose a mortal threat that must be liquidated.

IV. CASE SELECTION AND METHODOLOGY

A. The Cases: The “Final Solution” and The “Killing Fields”

The comparative theory of genocide outlined above will be tested against two cases: the Nazi “final solution” against the Jews of Europe, 1941 to 1945 (commonly known as the Holocaust since the Second World War) and the Cambodian “killing fields” during the Khmer Rouge period from 1975 to early-1979. The cases have been selected for both their similarities and their obvious differences.

With respect to similarities, each case fits the definition of genocide established for this study. Evidence for each case demonstrates that the intention behind the killing was the liquidation of whole groups of people based on the victims’ collective identity. The Nazi regime clearly intended by mid-1941 to exterminate all of European Jewry at the precise moment when the Jews of Nazi occupied Europe had lost almost all of their material

resources and maintained virtually no effective capacity to defend themselves, let alone pose a real threat to the Third Reich. Similarly the victims of the Khmer Rouge were not targeted because they objectively threatened the future of the revolution, but because they were perceived to be irrevocably counterrevolutionary by virtue of their pre-revolutionary socio-economic status, as urbanites, as ethnic minorities (the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Muslim Chams), and later, suspect Khmer Rouge cadres.

In the case of the Holocaust, this study focuses on the Jewish victims of the Nazis because only the Jews were victims of genocide. To be sure, the Nazis targeted Poles, Slavs, Roma, homosexuals, and political opponents, particularly the Communists, for repression, ill treatment, and in some cases targeted killing, but the intention behind this targeting was not genocidal. As noted earlier, the Nazis did not plan to exterminate the Poles as a race, but to kill the Polish elite in order to “decapitate” the Polish population and force Poles as a group into perpetual servitude. As for the Roma, the Nazis drew a distinction between “wandering” and “settled” Roma. The former were perceived to be in the way of Nazi settlement plans in the occupied East and were liquidated, but the larger population of “settled” Roma were, for the most part, treated the same as the rest of the local population. The Roma as such were not targets of genocide based solely on their identity or the fact of their existence.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, p. 47.

Similarly, homosexuals in Germany were subject to state repression periodically under the Third Reich. While the treatment of homosexuals interned in the concentration camps at the hands of homophobic guards and other prisoners was appalling and the criminal sanctions for male homosexuality severe⁶⁷, the intention behind the persecution of gay men was based on their sexual preferences and behaviour rather than their identity. Homosexual preferences and sex acts were taken by some in the Nazi hierarchy to be manifestations of “deviant” and “asocial” behaviour that ran contrary to, and threatened to “soften”, the hyper masculinized conception of male identity in Nazi ideology. Male-to-male sex was also seen as an activity that “deflected sexual energies that were needed in the ‘battle for the birth rate’”.⁶⁸ Further, a line was drawn between a relatively small segment of men who were deemed to be “inborn” homosexuals and a much larger group of men who were caught engaging in homosexual activity because they had been “seduced”.⁶⁹ The former were often tried and convicted on sex offenses and incarcerated for lengthy prison terms in concentration camps but young men who fell under the latter category were treated leniently if they were prosecuted at all. Many of them were “treated” for their temporary “deviance” and released back into society or, during the war, returned to their army units

67 By contrast no specific laws were passed by the Nazi regime criminalizing lesbianism and very few women were charged under anti-homosexual laws (Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 287.

68 Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987), p. 219.

69 Harry Oosterhuis, “Medicine, Male Bonding, and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 32 (1997), p.191.

at the front. In this group, homosexuality was regarded as a temporary affliction, a behaviour that could be corrected through “re-education”.⁷⁰ Finally, although it is true that some senior Nazi officials were extremely hostile toward homosexuality (Himmler, for example, threatened to execute any SS member suspected of homosexual tendencies), others, including Hitler, did not see homosexuals or homosexuality as a threat and instead regarded sexual preference as a private matter. As such, Eric Johnson concludes that the Nazis “had an ambivalent and inconsistent” ideological and policy orientation toward gay men and never intended to exterminate homosexuals as a group.⁷¹ Harry Oosterhuis similarly argues that in contrast to the Jews “the persecution of homosexuals was neither wholesale nor systematic”.⁷²

Lastly, political opponents were not targets of genocide despite the fact that the persecution of Communists, especially in the early years in the Third Reich, was harsher and more bloody than that of the Jews during the same period. During periods of particularly severe repression Communists were subjected to “house searches, protective custody warrants, torture-extracted confessions” and throughout the Nazi period, internment in concentration camps. But even in this case many members were treated with

70 Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 289. Harry Oosterhuis further argues that homosexuality of the “seduced” variety could not be prosecuted by the Nazi regime on a wide scale because to do so would have decimated the ranks of the Hitler Youth and the Wehrmacht (army) (Oosterhuis, “Medicine, Male Bonding, and Homosexuality”, p. 191).

71 Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 287.

72 Harry Oosterhuis, “Medicine, Male Bonding, and Homosexuality”, p. 189.

leniency. Junior members with little authority or responsibility often had their cases dropped or received relatively mild detention orders. Even those who were sent to concentration camps could be released for good behaviour, especially if they agreed to act as informants, while repeat offenders were sent into exile. Communists as a group, according to Johnson, were frequently arrested or “hounded out of the country”, but “they were never marked for extinction.”⁷³ Communists, like many other non-Jewish victims of the Nazis were targeted because of their activities, and as long as the unwanted behaviour stopped, the repression stopped too. The targets of Nazi persecution could be “healed” so long as they were not Jews.⁷⁴

The Jews, by contrast were marked for complete extermination not because of what they did or believed but because they had been born. Unlike the Poles, Roma, gay men, political opponents, or Jehovah’s Witness (who were required only to sign an agreement stating they accepted the Reich’s authority over them to gain release from the camps), the Jews could not change their behaviour or beliefs to save their lives. Only the Jews were the object of a “final solution” to the “problem” of their existence. The extermination camps established in occupied Poland were not, like the earlier concentration camps, designed to function as vast prisons for the Reich’s real and perceived opponents, “deviant” or “asocial” elements, but to rid Europe of all of its Jews. Although the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp

73 Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 141; also see pp.173-174; 176-178.

74 Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 141.

system and other large extermination camps had non-Jewish prisoners, the majority of deportees gassed on arrival were Jews, particularly women, women with children, the elderly, and the sick. Two out of the three camps constructed for the extermination of Polish Jewry under Operation Reinhardt, Sobibor and Treblinka, were for Jews only. All Jewish arrivals, save a small number needed as “special squads” to operate the gas chambers and crematoria and to collect and sort the belongings of the victims, were sent to the gas immediately upon their arrival from the ghettos in Lodz, Lublin, and Warsaw.

As in the case of the Nazi regime, the Khmer Rouge victimized a number of different groups, but unlike the Nazis all of the groups victimized by the Khmer Rouge were the targets of genocide. It is argued here that the political (suspect cadres) and class (“new people” deported from the cities) victims of the Khmer Rouge were victims of genocide as were the Vietnamese and other minorities, not politicide or some other form of repression.

There continues to be a lively debate in the genocide literature about whether political and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic groups should be recognized as victims of genocide. Raphael Lemkin’s original formulation of the crime of genocide included the extermination of groups “because of their political beliefs and/or practices”.⁷⁵ The 1946 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 96 (I) calling on member states to draw up a convention to prevent and punish genocide included the assertion that “[m]any instances of such crimes

75 Levon Chorbajian, “Introduction” in Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian (eds.), *Studies in Comparative Genocide* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. xvi.

of genocide have occurred when racial, religious, political, and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part”.⁷⁶ As Leo Kuper’s research shows, the ultimate exclusion of political and other groups from the 1948 UN Genocide Convention was not because genocide by its nature only involves groups based on ethnic, racial, or religious identities into which group members are born,⁷⁷ but because political wrangling over the inclusion of political groups threatened to scuttle the entire convention.⁷⁸ The Soviet Union, whose objections to including political groups ultimately ruled the day, argued that genocide does not apply to political groups because genocide is inherent to Nazi ideology which is a fundamentally race-based system. The Soviet delegation further argued that from a socialist “scientific” perspective political groups do not have identifiable “objective characteristics” as do racial or ethnic groups.⁷⁹ Supporting the Soviet position the Iranian delegation

76 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 96 (I), 11 December 1946, <[http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NRO/033/47/IMG/NR003347.pdf](http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NRO/033/47/IMG/NR003347.pdf?OpenElement)>OpenElement.

77 With respect to ethnic and national groups there is much debate in the literature on nationalism as to how “primordial” or “natural” ethnic or national groups really are. Early nationalist writers such as Herder and Fichte believe that the world is “naturally” divided up into ethnicities and nations with a set of “objective” characteristics including a common language, culture, religion, and history. Ernest Renan, on the other hand, argue that the homogeneous nations described by Herder and Fichte simply do not exist and that, instead, nations exist only when a group of people believe they belong to a nation (Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holms & Meier, 1983); Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?”, translated and reprinted in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 17). Taking a constructivist approach similar to Renan, Benedict Anderson suggests that the advent of communications technology from the printing press onward has allowed nation to develop when populations come to see themselves as “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition) (London: Verso, 1991).

78 Kuper, *Genocide: It’s Political Use in the 20th Century*, pp. 24-29.

79 Absent from the Soviet’s official arguments was the real reason the USSR did not want political groups
(continued...)

argued that political groups were too “mutable”. Members could come and go unlike in religious and national groups that individuals are born into, and for the most part, remain a part of for the rest of their lives. Delegations who fought for the inclusion of political groups, including the United States, France, and most other developed countries, noted that membership in political groups was no more mutable than in religious groups and that history has shown that states have been “easily able to identify political groups they wished to destroy”.⁸⁰ Political groups remained in successive drafts of the Convention right up until 29 November 1948 when the issue was reopened at Soviet insistence. Before being voted off the final draft of the Convention, political groups were recognized as victims of genocide with the caveat that the Convention was only applicable “to the most horrible form of crime against a group, that of its physical destruction”.⁸¹ As with the victim groups that were included in the final version of the UNGC, the key to the proposed inclusion of political groups was the “intent to destroy in whole or in part” members of the group.

In current debates, scholars who reject the idea that the victimization of political groups can be genocidal argue that not only are political groups mutable but that the victimization of political groups is politically or ideologically motivated and, therefore, does not

79 (...continued)

recognized in the UNGC - the genocidal targeting of real and perceived political “enemies” during the Great Purges of the 1930s.

80 Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the 20th Century*, pp. 28-29.

81 Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the 20th Century*, p. 29.

constitute genocide.⁸² Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr take the position that the killing of members of political groups is similar to, but distinct from, genocide and requires a new concept called “politicide”. For Harff and Gurr, victim groups who are identified as real or alleged political opponents, including groups involved in rebellions, are the targets not of genocide, but what they call “politicide”.⁸³ The first position is problematic because politically or ideologically motivated mass killing can be both genocidal and non-genocidal depending on the intention of the perpetrator. If the intent is to destroy the group based on the group’s identity, real or perceived, then the killing is genocidal. Eric Weitz’s research into ideology and genocide shows that the radically exclusionary or utopian ideologies that underpin genocide define certain groups as outside and/or threatening to the new order.⁸⁴ These ideologies include the class-based communist ideologies of Stalinist Russia, the People’s Republic of China during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge as well as the race-based ideology of Ottoman Turkey, Nazi Germany, and the Hutu Power regime in Rwanda. Harff and Gurr’s definition of politicide is in many ways a distinction without a difference. The killing of

82 For a recent formulation of this argument see Manus Midlarsky’s chapter on Cambodia in *The Killing Trap*, in which Midlarsky argues that only the extermination of the Vietnamese and other minorities should be considered genocide. For Midlarsky, the attack on the new people and suspect cadres were ideologically motivated and as such cannot be considered genocidal (Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap*, pp. 309-322).

83 Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr, “Toward an Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases Since 1945”, in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1988), pp. 359-371.

84 Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*.

defenseless former political opponents or completely innocent individuals who are perceived or alleged to be members of an opposing political group is identical to the status of racial and ethnic victims of genocide so long as the perpetrator imputes threats that do not really exist to objectively powerless groups grounded in the intention to destroy the members of the group as such. The mass killing of actual political opponents who possess real power capabilities, on the other hand, is not genocide. Rather, it is a bloody contest between two opposing forces, albeit a contest in which repression, killing, and atrocities are perpetrated by one or both sides. In this case, behaviour is once again key in that the victims of atrocities genuinely act as real opponents, rebels, or insurgents who really do want to undermine, destroy, or replace an established or emerging political or economic order. Political or socio-economic victims of genocide do not act this way. Instead, it is their identity, defined by the perpetrator, as members of a threatening group, despite all objective evidence to the contrary, who must be destroyed as a group, that constitutes genocide.

In arguing that the political victims (suspect cadres) and socio-economic victims (new people) of the Khmer Rouge were victims of genocide, this study rests on the contention of Chalk and Jonassohn that although political groups are subject to genocidal destruction as “enemies of the people” these alleged enemies “are mythical to begin with” and, therefore, “it is futile to search for rational and objective boundaries to define them...Millions of human beings have died because of their alleged membership in these

‘mutable’ groups”.⁸⁵ While Chalk and Jonassohn leave the identity of the victim group up to the perpetrator, thereby allowing for the recognition of political, class and other groups as victims of genocide, Helen Fein, after initially rejecting the inclusion of political groups, now defines the victims of genocide in an inclusive fashion, stating that the victims of genocide are selected for destruction “because they are members of a collectivity” and are “defenseless or [are] killed regardless of whether they surrender or resist”. As in this study, Fein also emphasizes the importance of intention, arguing that the destruction of group members by the perpetrator “is undertaken with intent to kill and murder”.⁸⁶ Fein also makes a distinction between the genocidal targeting of political groups and what she calls “state terror”, the latter of which involves the selective killing of victims who are targeted because they are believed to have committed subversive acts while the victims of genocide are targeted because of their group membership.⁸⁷ Calculated killing and organized state murders of members of political and other groups are not on their own genocidal, according to Fein, but they often precede genocide.⁸⁸

In Cambodia one can argue that the initial targeting of defeated members of the Republican army and civil service were targets of calculated killing and state murders meant to liquidate former opponents of the Khmer Rouge whom the new regime feared might

85 Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, p. 10.

86 Fein, “Genocide, Terror, Life Integrity”, p. 97.

87 Fein, “Genocide, Terror, Life Integrity”, p. 98.

88 Fein, “Genocide, Terror, Life Integrity”, p. 103.

one day attempt to return to power. Similarly the sporadic targeting of cadres prior to the purges of 1977 and 1978 was intended to terrorize other cadres and the wider population into submission to accept the radical policies of the top Party leaders in the Central Zone. The purges themselves, however, transcended state terror and became genocide when the senior leadership began to arrest, torture, and murder the Eastern Zone cadres *en masse* simply because of their group identity as Eastern Zone cadres and soldiers. Unlike individual Communist party members who were persecuted by the Nazis and whose changed behaviour in the camps and willingness to act as informers could end their persecution, the actual behaviour of the Eastern Zone cadres was irrelevant to their fate. The cadres, their family members, and acquaintances were killed only because of who the regime thought they were.

In terms of the new people, Lyman Legters's argues that classes have also been targets of genocide, particularly in communist political systems. Although he dismisses political groups as "too slippery", Legters suggests that class should be recognized as a victim group because "different social orders have diverse ways of classifying their own populations" and that class "is the primary classification device of socialist systems".⁸⁹ Legters argues that the Soviet attack on the kulaks - peasants labeled as counter-revolutionary petty bourgeois wreckers by Stalin - is a clear case of genocide because the kulaks were identified as members of a "class inimical to socialism and the proletariat" and, as such, had to be

89 Lyman H. Legters, "The Soviet Gulag: Is it Genocidal", in Israel Charney (ed.) *Toward the Understanding and Prevention of Genocide* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), p. 65.

physically destroyed.⁹⁰ For Legters, socio-economic class must be included in a definition of genocide if genocide “is to be universal in its impact” and “take account of other than ethnic and religious styles of classification”. Legter continues that

[i]f an allegedly socialist society, whose primary form of classification is that of class, either targets or invents a class with extermination in prospect, that program must account as genocide lest the term lose its continuing pertinence for the contemporary world in all its variety.⁹¹

The fate of urban, mostly middle-class Khmers during the DK period closely parallels the kulaks and Legter’s contention that classes can be victims of genocide. As we will see in Chapter 4, the Khmer Rouge rigidly divided Cambodian society along class lines, with the deportees from the cities identified as a class of “new people” who, like the kulaks in Stalinist Russia, were believed by the Khmer Rouge to be “inimical” to the revolution. The new people were, as Legter’s suggests, an invented class whose members were not persecuted until they saw the error, or more appropriately the regime cease to perceived the error of their ways, or were re-educated to accept the revolution. Instead, the new people were invented and targeted “with extermination in prospect”. As with the Jews of Europe, the suspect cadres, and the ethnic minorities in Cambodia, one’s identity as a “new person”, and the Khmer Rouge’s intent to destroy the group, marked these victims for genocidal destruction. Their behaviour did not determine their fate. The identity the Khmer Rouge constructed for them did.

90 Legter, “The Soviet Gulag”, p. 65.

91 Legters, “The Soviet Gulag”, p. 65.

In both the Holocaust and Cambodia the victims faced destruction perpetrated by the state in a fashion that was systematic and organized, although the exact plan for, and methods of, killing were quite different. In Nazi-controlled Europe, the mobile killing squads and the industrial death camp system coupled with an astonishing commitment of materiel, personnel, and badly needed rolling stock in the middle of a total continental war illustrates the systematic and meticulously planned nature of the *Endlösung* (“final solution”). In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge relied more heavily on destruction through deprivation, maltreatment, malnourishment and starvation, lack of medical care, overwork and slave labour, as well as killing, usually involving torture and then execution (the latter method became widespread during the internal purge phase of the genocide in 1977–1979). While most of the privations just listed may appear to be the indirect effects of a radical revolution gone awry, they were in fact part and parcel of a carefully planned system designed to ensure that “the new people”, the Vietnamese minority in particular, and other “enemies” of the revolution would physically cease to exist. It bears emphasizing that we cannot discount the killing fields as genocide simply because most of the victims were ethnic Khmers or because mass death was often caused by less direct means. As will be shown throughout the study, the Khmer Rouge leadership—even once it began to turn the genocide inward onto the Khmer Rouge movement itself—intended to exterminate, in one way or another, all perceived threats to the revolution, even its own cadres.

Despite the fact that the Holocaust and Cambodia are both cases of genocide they are relatively dissimilar cases. It is because of their dissimilarities that these two cases have been selected to illustrate the proposed explanatory model. The comparison will be what Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune call a “most different” comparison.⁹² Although Przeworski and Teune advocate for “most similar” comparisons in order to control for as many variables as possible, a “most different” approach is useful for the comparative analysis of genocide. This is so, first, because each case of genocide is marked by its own horrible uniqueness. As such we are unlikely to find exactly equivalent cases. Genocides vary across time and space, who the victim groups are, what methods of destruction are employed, not to mention the particular individual and collective manifestations of the suffering of the victim groups, the brutality of the perpetrators, and the indifference of the bystanders. A most different comparison is, in a sense, the only kind of comparison available to us. It also allows us to acknowledge and treat seriously the great variety among genocides while still attempting to locate what is fundamental to all or most genocides, both in terms of the preconditions for, and the actual perpetration of, genocidal mass murder.

Secondly, the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide respectively represent relatively “easy” and “hard” tests for the theory. Testing against these particular cases will help to establish the scope conditions of the theory—i.e., what variety of cases the theory can and cannot explain. Because of its sheer magnitude, scope, “success”, and the undisputed

92 See Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1970).

intention of the Nazis to physically eliminate Europe's Jews, the Nazi "final solution" is the archetype of genocide. Any comparative theory of genocide must be able to explain it. The Cambodian genocide, on the other hand, is what we might call a political or revolutionary genocide, rather than an ethnic or racial genocide, that involved a sustained but often indirect attack on particular socio-economic classes and ethnic minorities as well as a murderous internal party purge. In addition, the Holocaust was perpetrated by a highly developed modern European radical state across multiple European states using what were then highly sophisticated organizational and technological means. The Cambodian genocide was perpetrated by a radical revolutionary state bent on the total political, social, economic, and culture transformation of a hitherto underdeveloped former French colony. The Holocaust was committed in the name of race purity and the protection of the German Reich and Europe while the Cambodian genocide was unleashed in the name of waging and protecting a total communist revolution.

The task, then, is to establish whether, despite all the variation across the two cases, that the same structures and processes are at work in both genocides. The proposed theory outlines what these structures and processes are and hypothesizes that they are present in both cases, although they manifest themselves in different ways. The degree to which they are found in the Cambodian genocide will establish whether the theory can in fact account for both the more commonly found racially motivated genocides, of which the Holocaust is emblematic, as well as political revolutionary genocides.

B. Methodology

The methodological approach taken in this dissertation is comparative, historical, and qualitative in the tradition of Theda Skocpol's work *State and Social Revolutions*⁹³ as it is not centred around the excavation of hitherto undiscovered primary evidence meant to fill in or uncover new historical details of the individual cases. Rather, as with Skocpol's work, this study is primarily an exercise in comparative theory construction and the testing of that theory against an already voluminous body of available evidence. This purpose is particularly suited to the Holocaust case for which there is more published literature in several different languages than one could hope to cover in a lifetime.⁹⁴ The Cambodian case is less well documented, but the available evidence is more than sufficient to allow for a thorough analysis of the case in light of the proposed theory. Sources used in the study will include the secondary literature, particularly in the more historical chapters that deal with the pre-genocide political culture (chapter 2) and much of the chapter on the crises that preceded the genocides in each case (chapter 3). Evidence concerning how the Nazis and Khmer Rouge leadership interpreted the meaning of crises, also in chapter 3, as well as most of the evidence cited in the discussion of how Hitler, Pol Pot, and their lieutenants reconceptualized the identity of their victims in chapter 4 will be based on primary evidence

93 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

94 From the secondary literature this study uses some of the seminal English language works in Holocaust studies and works by reputable historians of German history and anti-Semitism.

available from the Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Centre, the Nazi Propaganda Archive, the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, and the Cambodia Genocide Project at Yale University and other published sources of Nazi and Khmer Rouge documents and speeches.

CHAPTER 2

The “Permissive” Political Culture of Genocide

INTRODUCTION

The first necessary—but not sufficient—precondition for genocide is the existence of a specific kind of political culture. The political culture variable answers the question where does the idea to commit genocide come from? The answer to this question lies in an examination of the dominant political culture—i.e., the attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices—of societies that have gone on to commit genocide. What will be called in this study the pre-genocide “permissive” political culture creates the ideational potential for genocide by socializing elite and societal actors into a particular set of exclusionary beliefs and practices that make the idea to commit genocide possible. As such, the permissive political culture is an ideational and material structure that provides the conceptual underpinning for genocide. As we will see in this chapter, the permissive political culture is constituted by three dimensions: exclusionary and unequal patterns of group interaction; exclusionary conceptions of the community; and, authoritarian modes of conflict management. The idea to perpetrate genocide comes to elite political actors out of these prevailing political cultural attitudes and practices. In turn, genocide is acceptable and

comprehensible to non-victims in society because they too are socialized into the same political culture.

We must be clear, however, that there is not a direct causal relationship between the existence of a permissive political culture and the occurrence of genocide. The permissive political culture only becomes significant in the presence of another important variable: profound, destabilizing crises (chapter 3). Crises are both interpreted through the lens of the pre-genocide permissive political culture and serve to animate the more malevolent anti-group features of the pre-genocide political culture. In turn, these two together set the stage for the final crucial variable, the genocidal reconceptualization of the collective identity of the victim group that actually leads to genocide (chapter 4).

On its own, then, the existence of the permissive political culture merely creates the necessary potential for genocide, for its role in the genocidal reconceptualization process that leads to the decision to commit genocide is to make the process conceptually possible in the first place. Elites and the majority society need to already hold a certain set of entrenched exclusionary and/or anti-group beliefs and practices in order for elites to entertain the possibility of genocide and for the bystander population to accept the genocide once it begins. In polities where the permissive political culture is absent or relatively weak, the notion of committing genocide against any group in society is unlikely to occur to political elites or to be supported by society at large because intergroup relations and conflict have historically been managed by more inclusive means. This is not

to say that liberal democracies, which by and large do not share most of the characteristics of the pre-genocide “permissive” political culture, or at least not to the same degree, do not experience group tensions and conflicts or that the state always effectively and fairly manages these kinds of societal conflicts. One need only think of the history of slavery and its legacy, segregation, limited suffrage, the Indian reservation system, anti-Semitism, and more recently racial, regional, and linguistic tensions in the North America democracies. What is qualitatively different in liberal democracies is that many of these exclusionary practices were eventually ended in favour of more inclusive policies and that intergroup tensions have rarely been resolved through the wholesale physical destruction of a specific group. This is so precisely because the idea to commit genocide has no foundation in the prevailing political culture of these societies.¹

In order to bring out the way in which the permissive political culture serves as a necessary condition for the interpretation of crises and then the reconceptualization of the victim group, this chapter will first explore the three dimensions of a permissive political

1 One can plausibly argue that indigenous people in the Americas were subject to genocidal destruction at the hands of the European colonial powers in the New World. Unlike the modern racial-ethnic and political- revolutionary genocides of the twentieth century covered in this study, the fate of indigenous people in the Americas (and Australia and New Zealand as well) can be characterized as genocides of conquest. Here the victims’ destruction is not an end in itself but a means to the end of settling land in the colonial world. The destruction occurred because indigenous populations were seen to be in the way of colonial settlement and incapable of modernizing or assimilating. Since the victims were not a part of the societies that committed genocide, as is the case in modern genocides, the three dimensions of the permissive political culture, which are in part predicated on the victim’s membership (albeit marginal) in the political community, does not apply to the case of indigenous people. Needless to say the physical elimination and forced assimilation of large numbers of indigenous people over centuries is no less morally repugnant than the shorter sharper genocides of recent decades.

culture and then show how these dimensions were present in the pre-Nazi era united German Second Reich and the Weimar Republic (1871 to 1932) and pre Democratic Kampuchea (pre-colonial and colonial times to 1975) Cambodia,

I. THE 'PERMISSIVE' POLITICAL CULTURE: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

For political scientists, the concept of political culture has been both frequently used and hotly contested. A “soft” concept,² it encompasses important affective, evaluative, and cognitive orientations toward the political system, public policy, and the political community in general. Despite its continued use in comparative political inquiry political culture remains difficult to define and operationalize. As Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy note, “political culture has proved at the same time imprecise and advantageous, risky and useful, full of pitfalls but deserving of more attention than disregard”.³ Despite the conceptual and methodological challenges, political culture is a useful concept for explaining genocide because it can provide some insight into the origin for the idea to conceive of and perpetrate something so extreme and seemingly irrational.

In their seminal work *The Civic Culture*, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba define political culture by specifying both parts of the concept: “political” refers to “specifically

2 “Softness” means that a certain degree of inference is involved when moving from hard or direct data to concluding that an attribute exists to a given extent. The greater the degree of inference from sensory data needed to reach a conclusion, the greater the use of subjective interpretation. See Lawrence C. Mayer, *Redefining Comparative Politics: Promise versus Performance* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), pp. 179–180.

3 Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy, *How to Compare Nations: Strategies in Comparative Politics* (Second Edition) (Chatham NJ: Chatham House, 1990), p. 69.

political orientations—attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the self in the system”; “culture” to psychological orientations toward social objects. Attitudes toward the political system or political community are internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population.⁴

More recently John Pierce et al. have problematized the content of political culture, dividing it into three layers: core political culture, traditional political culture, and “new” politics political culture. Particularly relevant for the present study is their definition of core political culture which they argue refers to “distinctive patterns of those fundamental individual orientations to the social and political world out of which grow characteristic and central political structures and processes, and which define *the core relationships of a society’s components (individuals, groups, institutions) to each other*”.⁵ The core level involves such fundamental concerns as the relative role of the individual and the community in defining norms of behaviour, the relative rights and positions of different groups in society, and the criteria by which privileges and deference are allocated within society.⁶ Political culture thus accounts for the beliefs, values, and attitudes that members of a society hold regarding their own and others’ place in society.

4 Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, An Analytic Study* (Little Brown, 1965), pp. 12–13.

5 John C. Pierce, Nicholas P. Lovrich Jr., Brent S. Steel, Mary Ann E. Steger, and John R. Tennert, *Political Culture and Public Policy in Canada and the United States: Only a Border Apart?* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), pp. 40–41; italics added.

6 Pierce et al., *Political Culture and Public Policy*, p. 41.

However, in this study political culture is conceptualized as an ideational and material structure. This conceptualization is drawn from international relations theorist Alexander Wendt's understanding of structure which, he argues, can be both material and ideational in nature. Structure provides the basis for inter-group knowledge and practice which in turn shape inter-subjective understandings of collective identities, interests, and actions.⁷ The relationship between political culture as an ideational and material structure and actions is, meanwhile, mutually constitutive and reinforcing. In his theory of "structuration", Anthony Giddens suggests that the duality of structure implies that the "constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. [. . .] Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling".⁸ Giddens adds that "the moment of the production of action is also one of reproduction in the contexts of the day-to-day enactment of social life. This is so even during the most violent upheavals or most radical forms of social change".⁹

7 Wendt's theory of collective identity construction was originally formulated to explain the conflictual and cooperative behaviour of states in an anarchical international system. See Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391-425.

8 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 25.

9 Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 26.

Political culture as a relatively enduring set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and patterns of interaction can, therefore, be understood as a structure that is not solely the product of socialization but also of action. It is a continuously evolving structure that both informs action and is modified by action. The ideas and practices embedded within a given political culture are changeable, or they may be relatively consistent, with some beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices lying dormant until they come to the fore during crises such as economic depressions and other upheavals, political instability, and military/security shocks including loss in war, the spill-over effects of war in neighboring states, and regional geopolitical instability, as we shall see in chapter 3.¹⁰ As political elites attempt to understand and confront crises, they draw on the beliefs and political practices they and the rest of society already know.¹¹ What they collectively “know” is an exclusionary, authoritarian, and at times violent pre-genocide political culture. This pre-genocide political culture is thus marked by a latent/manifest quality in which the more sinister political cultural beliefs and practices concerning often marginalized groups in society are drawn on and come to the surface during crises, turning what had previously been relatively benign attitudes and practices into a violent attack on a specific segment of society.

10 For a similar argument concerning the connection between culture and experience, see Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky’s *Culture Theory* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1990).

11 This position is drawn from V.O. Key’s argument that “[t]he political elite mediate between the world of remote and complex events and the mass of the public. A great function of political leadership is the clarification of public problems and the presentation of a course of action” (V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* [New York: Knopf, 1961], p. 17).

The political culture that is bound up with societies that go on to experience genocide is called here a “permissive” political culture. It is “permissive” in the military sense of the words in that it describes an environment in which there is a potential for a particular action to become a reality. The possibly resulting action, in this case genocide, is not a necessity, nor is it inevitable. The pre-genocide permissive political culture is a set of beliefs, values and practices that creates an ideational environment within which the idea to commit genocide becomes possible. This possibility only becomes an actuality, however, in the face of crises (chapter 3) and the final genocidal reconceptualization of the victim groups identity and future actions (chapter 4).

The pre-genocide permissive political culture has three dimensions: exclusionary and unequal patterns of group interaction, exclusionary and unequal conceptions of the community, and authoritarian methods of conflict management. These dimensions are in many ways an inversion of Robert Putnam’s ideal of “civic engagement” in liberal democratic societies. For Putnam, civic engagement is characterized, first, by political equality, both formal and informal, such that the political community is bound by “horizontal relationships of reciprocity and cooperation” and mutual obligations. Political leaders, meanwhile, see themselves as responsible for all citizens and do not aspire to exercise absolute power. Second, civic engagement includes feelings and actions of

solidarity, trust, and tolerance, and third, social structures of cooperation in which the norms and values of the political community are embodied and reinforced.¹²

A. Dimension One: Exclusionary and Unequal Patterns of Group Interaction

The first dimension of the permissive political culture, exclusionary and unequal patterns of group interaction, is manifested in legal and other formalized divisions within the political community that simultaneously reflect and reinforce societal fragmentation and inequality. Legally based divisions include the limited extension of citizenship rights and obligations, both in terms of who is granted citizenship as well as the content of the rights and obligations extended to particular groups in society: education systems, residency restrictions, rules of land tenure, and other exclusionary regulations governing participation in the economy. Similarly the associational life characteristic of the permissive political culture is built around distinct divisions in society rather than cross-cutting cleavages. The social structures of everyday life tend to promote particularistic goals while their membership is composed of individuals from specific rather than diverse groups. Rather than “bowling alone” as Robert Putnam fears in America, members of these societies only “bowl with their own kind”.

What is important here is not just the existence of non-integrative formal structures and institutions but rather their effect on the perception of elites and society. Elites and the majority population see the political community as one that either ought to be, or should

12 Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 88.

remain, exclusive and/or unequal, rather than pluralistic, integrated and egalitarian. Formal segregationist practices serve to divide society along relatively rigid boundaries and prevent the interaction and potential integration of the community as a whole.

It is equally important to note that the exact formal divisions present prior to the genocide are not necessarily the ones which form the boundaries for the identification of the victim-group during the genocide itself, although this happens in most cases. Rapid, revolutionary change in which the entire foundation of the political community is restructured can create new, ultimately deadly divisions as was the case in the Khmer Rouge's Democratic Kampuchea. However, even in this case the legacy of prior divisions and inequalities strongly influenced the willingness of the state under the Khmer Rouge and non-victims in the new revolutionary society—the so-called “base people”—to target specific groups. In sum, the identification and persecution of a victim group or groups becomes possible and intelligible when the political community historically lacks a strong civic, legal and associational foundation that links all members of a community together.

B. Dimension Two: Exclusionary Conceptions of the Community

While the first dimension concerns the importance of how society is formally divided, the way in which groups do or do not interact with each other, and the impact this has on the intersubjective perceptions of elites and societal groups, the second dimension of the permissive political culture taps more directly the content of these perceptions. The second dimension is characterized by a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance vis-à-vis members of

other groups that is the result of the structural fragmentation of society (first dimension) but also deeply held cultural beliefs and values. Anti-group attitudes serve to reinforce formal divisions within society and to hinder the development of a more inclusive integrative understanding of how the political community is or ought to be. At a more general level, this attitudinal dimension also focuses on conceptions of membership in the political community. This conception involves understandings of authenticity, namely, who constitutes “real” or “genuine” members of the community. Such notions are particularly important in situations where formal political rights, such as citizenship, are extended to most or all groups within society but where the majority population feels this to be illegitimate.

The attitudinal elements of the permissive political culture are not, however, always at the forefront of political cultural beliefs. Rather, anti-group feelings—either regarding membership or the exhibition of intolerance and a lack of trust and solidarity—may vacillate between being latent and actively manifest in everyday life. In the latent phase such attitudes, while still present, do not directly or actively influence day-to-day life in blatantly malevolent ways. Instead they remain just below the surface waiting to be activated by catalytic events.

C. Dimension Three: Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management

The permissive political culture is, finally, characterized by a propensity of elites to adopt authoritarian responses to inter-group political and/or social conflicts and by members of

the majority society to accept such policies as normal and even desirable. The important element here is not the mere fact that the state which goes on to perpetrate genocide is authoritarian—although historically, most genocides have been committed by non-democratic regimes. Rather, most significant it is the manner in which real and perceived inter-group conflicts are dealt with by political elites, including intra-elite conflicts, and how societal actors view this kind of policy approach. Inter-group tensions and conflicts tend to be framed by top decision-makers as zero-sum struggles in which the political community at large, and possibly the leading position of the state and the leadership of specific elites, are seen to be in peril.¹³ The subsequent response is a strong one, with the state playing an active and direct role in suppressing real and perceived challenges through a number of non-democratic policy interventions. Examples range from the revocation of the rights and privileges of the target group to placing restrictions on economic activity and movement within the state to the use of physical repression. There is little if any effort to engage in dialogue or mediation between the state and the group in question with the aim of reaching an acceptable consensus as to how the conflict should be resolved. As such, there is rarely an attempt made to end conflicts through mutually satisfying, inclusive, and democratic means. Compromise with opponents is seen as dangerous because it risks

13 In an earlier work Robert Putnam refers to these kinds of elites as “conflict-oriented politicians” for whom conflict is highly salient. They are likely to be “fragmented and paralyzed, for their cognitive lenses magnify conflicting interests and minimize mutual interest”. The interpersonal orientation of these elites is riven by “personal and partisan antagonism” a “culture of conspiracy, mutual suspicion and cynicism” (Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976], p. 86).

betrayal of one's own side. Partisan hostility, therefore, often "smothers cooperative efforts".¹⁴

The role of elites in this process, it must be stressed, is not only that of policy creation but of creating a particular orientation to the process. While elite actors formulate and implement authoritarian policies to combat group tensions and conflicts, they also believe that such an approach is entirely appropriate and is one of the principle activities of the state. Similarly, most members of society accept the state's authoritarian methods as justified and believe that the state and political elites ought to play this kind of role in managing group conflicts.¹⁵ With the exception of zealots and vigilantes, the majority of the population believes it is the responsibility of the state to protect the political community by resolving group conflicts swiftly and with force if necessary. Again, the tendency is to eschew inter-group dialogue or consensus building at the societal level. This tendency not only grows out of the preference for, and deference to, an activist and, at times, repressive state, but also exclusionary practices and beliefs.

The result is that members of society who are not targeted accept the state's reconceptualization of a group or groups in the community as an immanent overwhelming threat when the call for genocide comes (see chapter 4). This acceptance is so because

14 Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Elites*, p. 86.

15 To be sure, there are some members of society who reject such undemocratic practices and who oppose the repression of the target group. These individuals are, however, in the minority. They are also likely to be the same group of people who later go on to oppose the genocide and may become active in resistance to it even if they are not themselves members of the victim group.

political elites and members of the majority society are socialized into the same permissive political culture. Political elites interpret and explain crises based on mutually shared practices and beliefs. Because these practices and beliefs are held in common by political elites and most members of society, the call by elites to commit genocide against a particular group at a specific time is comprehensible to societal actors. The suggestion here is not that members of a society in which genocide takes place relish the killing or that they are “natural born killers”, only that the call to genocide makes sense to a population shaped by this particular understanding of the relationship between groups in society and the role and policy practices of the state. The non-victims in society are thus primed to become a facilitating bystander population which allows elites and the state apparatus to perpetrate genocide in the absence of widespread and active societal resistance.

II. THE HOLOCAUST

In many—though not all—genocides, the exclusionary permissive political culture that provided the ideational potential for extermination was historically centred around a specific group that later became the victim group. In the case of the Holocaust, the exclusionary and authoritarian pre-genocide political culture of Germany that underpinned the genocide of the Jews was marked by a history of formal legal restrictions that separated Jews from Germans (first dimension), antipathy toward Jews that was at first religiously based and then in the post-Enlightenment period became focused on Jews as ethnically or “racially” different from Germans which in turn hindered acceptance of Jews as full

members of the unified German nation (second dimension), and a history of authoritarian statist responses to real and perceived societal conflicts (third dimension).

A. Exclusionary and Unequal Patterns of Group Interaction

The first dimension of the permissive political culture can be found in Germany in a history of anti-Jewish legal restrictions, including the denial of full citizenship, restrictions on residency and freedom of movement as well as restrictions on participation in certain sectors in the economy. The legal restrictions against Jews will be discussed chronologically, beginning with pre-modern times, the struggle for emancipation in the early to mid-nineteenth century and the post-unification era of full emancipation up to the advent of the Nazi regime. While the situation of German Jews changed dramatically from the pre-Enlightenment era to the early 1930s, the Jewish community was never fully integrated as equals into the German political community. The lack of full Jewish integration and acceptance into German society by Germans (as opposed to the Jews' own perceptions and practices of assimilation including the adoption of the German language, culture, and national identification) was in part the result of an earlier history of physical separation and later negative reactions to the struggle for, and final attainment of, Jewish emancipation. Both before and after emancipation, then, we see a continuation, albeit in different forms, of exclusionary and unequal patterns of Jewish-Gentiles interaction.

1. Restrictions on Citizenship and Resistance to Emancipation

During the Medieval and early modern period in what would become Germany, Jews were denied legal membership in the political communities in which they resided. They were legally defined as an alien group that lived variously under the protection of municipalities, monarchs, or local administrations. Although they officially lived under the protection of local elites who granted this status, Jewish communities did not retain any rights as subjects. The granting of residency and protected status was largely *ad hoc* and was frequently subject to revocation and at times the subsequent expulsion of the Jews from the area. The Jews' existence in any one locale was essentially at the whim of Christian elites; nobles who were willing to admit Jews often did so for purely instrumental reasons. Jewish communities, desperate for places that would accept them, were taxed at higher rates while poor nobles could rent out their castles to individual Jews for more than they could get from upper class gentiles. Similarly, smaller towns were sometimes willing to accept Jews since they were seen to provide economic stimulus and an additional source of tax revenue.¹⁶

Rights of residency and movement were highly restricted. Most Jews lived in walled ghettos, primarily in urban areas and larger rural towns. Jews were only permitted to reside within the ghettos and were not allowed to travel outside of them unless they obtained special permission from outside authorities. For centuries this situation remained unchanged, and was supported by many Jews and Christians alike. For the Jewish

16 James F. Harris, *The People Speak!: Anti-Semitism and Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Bavaria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 15.

communities and their rabbinical leadership in particular, separation allowed for the survival of the Jews in a hostile environment. It enabled them to live by the prescriptions and proscriptions of religious law and afforded them a level of protection, albeit precarious, from their less-than-sympathetic Christian neighbours.¹⁷ For German Christians, restrictions on residency and movement kept a hated and feared minority safely at bay.

There were exceptions to this rule, but they applied only to specific individuals. As early as 1700 the *Hofjuden*, upper class “protected” or “court” Jews began to appear in Germany. These were wealthy powerful “westernized” men who were retained by monarchs and other senior German political elites as financial managers or administrators. Protected Jews were granted wide ranging freedom of residency and movement, socialized with upper class gentiles, and often lived extravagant lifestyles. Some were even given royal honours or noble titles.¹⁸ Despite their elevated position such Jews were not, however, extended legal membership in the political community as royal subjects or citizens. Their special status was entirely dependent on the needs and benevolence of a personal patron for whom they were employed and the personal bonds of trust and loyalty between patron and client.

17 Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 15; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), p. xiv.

18 Vamberto Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 160.

With the dawn of the Enlightenment came the first attempts in a number of German states¹⁹ to grant limited emancipation to the Jews but this consisted mostly of expanded residency and economic rights. Full legal citizenship was the last to come and was fraught with tensions and opposition from those who believed that Jews could and should never be full German citizens. The fractious process of extending full citizenship to the Jews of Germany stands in marked contrast to the situation in France. In the latter, the citizenship law of 11 November 1791 conferred all at once unequivocal legal equality on all French Jews. The new, revolutionary French state acted swiftly to grant Jews their legal rights, depriving the opposition of any opportunity to be heard, thereby giving these opponents little real chance of reversing the law. During the same period in the Germanic states that would become Germany, Jewish emancipation was neither complete nor general. Dissent was loudly raised “while the voices of statesmanship and friendship [toward the Jews] weakened”. Even German liberalism, in the view of one commentator, “became tainted with lack of conviction and resolve in regard to Jewish emancipation”.²⁰

The eventual extension of full citizenship to German Jews began with the de-ghettoization and naturalization of the Jews in western Germany in the Rhineland, Frankfurt, and Hamburg during the French conquest of 1796–1808 and continued in Prussia in 1812 as a process of general reform. After the French were driven out, many of

19 Unification of these states into the unified state of Germany occurred in 1871.

20 Alfred D. Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans: From the Enlightenment to Imperial Germany* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979), p. 244.

the new freedoms granted to Jews were repealed and then subsequently given back to varying degrees in the following decades as various German states embarked upon limited programmes of emancipation.²¹ In 1848–49 the principle of absolute equality for Jews was declared in revolutionary Germany and Austria-Hungary but did not become law in the wake of the collapse of the revolution. Full citizenship was first achieved in the northern states of Germany that were united under Bismarck in 1866. The 1869 constitution of the united northern states stipulated that citizenship did not depend on adherence to any one religion. This conception of citizenship was extended to all of Germany with the creation of the united German Second Reich in 1871.

One of the primary reasons for the frequent relapses in achieving the final emancipation of German Jewry was the often vociferous resistance of elites and ordinary Germans alike to various proposals for expanding citizenship to Jews. A series of angry petitions were written to the Bavarian upper house in 1849 and 1850, for example, opposing the Lower House's approval of a bill (91 to 40 votes in favour) on 14 December 1849 endorsing a proposal to extend citizenship to Bavarian Jews. In a detailed analysis of the petitions historian James Harris found an unambiguous sense of hostility by local Bavarians toward

21 In 1808 Prussia, for example, defined citizenship in cities to include all who qualified without regard to religion but this provision was later repealed. In Bavaria in 1813 a form of state citizenship with respect to economic pursuits was extended to the Jews, but this excluded political rights. The most complete emancipation—i.e., the granting of political rights and the lifting of demographic restrictions—did not come to most German states until just prior to unification: Bavaria in 1861, Baden in 1862, Wurtemberg in 1861 and 1864, and Prussia in 1867. But there was a small group of states that provided general emancipation in 1848: Brunswick, Hessen-Darmstadt, Hessen-Homburg, Nassau, Oldenburg, Saxony, Saxe-Weimar, and Waldeck.

the prospect of complete Jewish emancipation.²² Harris states that the wave of petitions against the bill was “spontaneous, extremely broad-based, and genuine”.²³ All but three of the petitions came from communities (1,723 petitions) and organizations (28 petitions) representing over 86,795 signatures. Harris conservatively estimates that nearly one quarter of all communities in Bavaria east of the Rhine and approximately 10 to 20% of adult males or heads of families participated in the anti-emancipation campaign by signing a petition. These calculations do not include the 144 petitions that were simply signed “the whole community”. Only six petitions, three from individuals (two of whom were rabbis), one from a civic association, and two communities with large Jewish populations supported emancipation.²⁴

In summarizing the content of the petitions Harris found that those who opposed emancipation argued that the Deputies who voted in favour of the emancipation bill were not only wrong, but that they did not represent the opinion of a majority of Christian Bavarians. Many petitions alleged that the emancipation of the Jews would damage their

22 The Bavarian state first attempted to grant Bavarian Jews a limited form of citizenship in 1813 through the so-called “Jew Law”. Its provisions allowed Jews to enter Bavarian society socially and occupationally, but did not grant Jews legal citizenship. Even these limited reforms, pursued in Bavarian and elsewhere at the time, caused a strong negative reaction, culminating in the German-wide “Hep Hep” riots of 1819 and the reimposition of most of the old restrictions on Jews. Although historians have yet to find a definitive explanation for the riots, the underlying reason seems to have been a “popular belief” that even the limited emancipation extended to the Jews at the time signaled that governments “favoured Jews” and were preparing to “abandon” Christian Germans to the Jews (Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 29).

23 Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 123.

24 Harris, *The People Speak!*, pp. 123–127.

own civic rights and privileges but more importantly their material possessions and well-being. One petition from the town of Hilders claimed that the state should not be protecting Jews by giving them equal rights with Christians, but restricting Jews further and protecting the Christian majority from them. The petition then went on to decry the rights Jews would have under the new legislation to become judges, civil servants, politicians, and full voting members in the community. The petitioners asked incredulously if “[s]uch rights are to be granted to an alien people that is hostile to Christians everywhere, that to this day harbours the same hate toward our religion with which it once nailed the Saviour to the Cross?!” In one of a series of proposed counter restrictions, the petition goes on to suggest that no Jew should be a judge or revenue officer lest Christians have to “humble themselves before the Jews” or swear an oath to them. The same Restrictions would apply to Jewish trainees or secretaries, the presence of whom “would play into the hands of their nation in the most outrageous way”. Jews should similarly be barred from ministerial or administrative positions; that is, any office requiring trust “lest the people be betrayed and sold out”.²⁵

Another petition from the town of Hirshchau argued that the lifting of residency restrictions and the granting of equal rights would lead to a massive influx of Jews into the town. “What a scourge and a canker will several Jews be here”, the writers warn.²⁶ Still

25 BHStA, no. 2658 (10 January 1850) (trans. Harris) cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, pp. 252-253

26 BHStA, no. 2660 (20 December 1849) (trans. Harris) cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 254.

another petition chastised the deputies who voted for the emancipation bill as “pro-Jewish”. “We will consider ourselves victims and slaves of Jewish agitators” and can no longer “guarantee our loyalty” to such a pro-Jewish government.²⁷ In the end, the Upper House voted down the Lower House bill.

Even those who were sympathetic to the struggle for Jewish emancipation during the mid-nineteenth century were concerned about the entry of Jews into the heart of German political and civic life. If Jews were granted legal equality could they become civil servants? If they could vote for local councils and representative assemblies, could they then stand for election? Could Jews, as elected representatives, really represent the will of their constituents, most of whom were not Jewish? These concerns reflected a broader apprehension about whether Jews could “serve” in what many Germans—progressives among them—still regarded as a Christian state. Theologian H.E. Paulus in his work *Die jüdische Nationalabsonderung* (Jewish National Separation) admitted to a contradiction held by many liberals. Paulus argued that no “thoughtful person” would accept discrimination against another based on religion, but one “could not contemplate with many doubts” the admission of Jews into the offices of judge, state official, professor of law etc. Jews, Muslims, and “non-believers” “could not have equal claims to civil, military, and

27 BStA, no. 2660 (6 January 1850) (trans. Harris) cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, pp. 255-256.

church offices in Christian states...The more we are governed in a Christian manner, the better”.²⁸

Once full emancipation came with the founding of the Second Reich in 1871, these same concerns continued to be voiced. But now what was called into question was the ability and willingness of Jews not just to become members of, and possibly serve, a Christian state, but a unified, nationally and “racially” homogeneous Germany. As we will see further in the discussion of the second dimension, many Germans doubted that Jews could or would assimilate fully into a unified Germany by abandoning their separate Jewish identities and practices to become fully German. Doubts about whether Jews could serve the new Reich were reflected in a continued ban on Jews joining the enormous Prussian civil service and the military’s officer corp. Anti-Semites, who were increasingly vicious and active during the depression of the 1870s–1890s pressed for the re-imposition of legal restrictions on Jews and the revocation of their citizenship rights. The latter reflected what came to be known as the “second” Jewish Question of nineteenth century Germany in which the first question of emancipation was superceded by the question of anti-Semitism. The Jews, however, retained their full legal citizenship until the Nazi era and a series of legal measures taken from 1933 to 1938 that disenfranchised Jews by systematically stripping them of their civic, political, economic, and social rights.

2. Economic Restrictions

28 H.E. Paulus quoted in Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 246.

Until the early to mid-nineteenth century Jews were legally barred from several sectors of the German economy including most trades, crafts and professions such as medicine, law, and journalism. Because Jews were legally forbidden from owning and using land they were also unable to engage in agricultural production. Unable to earn a living in the mainstream economy, Jews turned by necessity to areas either not barred to them or open at a “reasonable price”, namely some form of small-scale dealing or trading. Historian Gisela Krug’s in-depth survey of economic activity in Uterfranken in the state of Bavaria prior to the first “Jew Law” of 1813, for example, revealed that most Jews were confined to “buying and selling cattle and livestock, trade of all kinds, brokerage, dealing in petty goods, peddling, slaughtering, and employment in religious congregations”. Krug notes that most Jews were not wealthy and “direct commercial dealings in currency were very limited”.²⁹

The long term effect of economic exclusion was, ironically, a persistent negative perceptions of Jewish economic activity concerning the Jews’ influence over the wider economy, their supposed lack of ethical conduct, and an unwillingness to perform manual labour. Such attitudes led many Germans to resist the integration of the Jews into the economy. While it was true that “court Jews” did act as financial managers for many elites in the German states and elsewhere in Europe, raising and handling large sums of money

29 Gisela Krug, “Die Juden in Mainfranken zu Beginn des 19 Jahrhunderts: Statistischer Untersuchungen zu ihrer sozialn und wirtschaflichen Situation”, in Harm-Hinrich Brandt (ed.), *Zwischen Schutzherrschaft und Emanzipation: Studien zur Geschichte der Mainfränkischen Juden im 19 Jahrhundert*, Mainfränkische Studien, Vol. 19 (Wurzberg, 1987), p. 66ff cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 17.

in the process, the likes of the Rothschilds—to name the most famous such family—were relatively rare among the Jewish community. But the perception of wealthy Jewish bankers controlling the economy far outlasted the role of the medieval court Jews and the role of Jewish financiers in the actual workings of the German economy. As Hannah Arendt points out, by the time of the formation of the unified German state, Jews had long ceased to dominate the banking and financial sector.³⁰ As we will see later, however, the alleged role of “Jewish bankers” in controlling the domestic and international economy through a world wide conspiracy became a mainstay of anti-Semitic attitudes and propaganda.

The push for economic emancipation during the nineteenth century raised fears among many Christian Germans that wealthy Jews would further come to dominate the economy. As for the average Jew entering the professions and other previously unavailable sectors of the economy, the reaction from outside the Jewish community was one of unease. This stemmed largely from the belief that because Jews had always been peddlers and hagglers, they had a penchant for engaging in underhanded business practices that put other “honest” Germans at an economic disadvantage. A popular novel of the time, *Soll und Haben* by Gustav Freytag drew a stark contrast between German merchants and their Jewish counterparts. While the merchants were concerned with “satisfying the needs of their community”, the Jews were portrayed as being “exclusively concerned with their own material gain, using deception and criminal activity to amass wealth”. Freytag, considered

³⁰ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 4.

by many to be a liberal, warned the reader of Jewish materialism and trickery.³¹ The same sentiment was expressed in stronger form in the petitions, previously mentioned, written to the Bavarian Upper House opposing the emancipation bill of 1849–50. One petition demanded that Jews be restricted from haggling and peddling since it encouraged fraud “and draws countrymen into the claws of the Jews from which he can seldom extricate himself”.³² Another petition illustrated one community’s fears at having Jews enter the local economy with a story about a local Jewish peddler named Luber who supposedly swindled the townspeople. The authors of the petition suggested that more Jews in the local economy would see an explosion of such unseemly business practices and the certain decimation of Christian businesses.³³

Prior to unification, rather than responding to pressure from below, individual German states took the lead in granting limited economic emancipation. But such activism was primarily motivated by instrumental economic concerns rather than any sense of obligation toward German Jews. Once Germany was unified, Bismarck similarly pressed for full economic emancipation so that the Jews could make a “proper economic contribution to the new German state instead of remaining on the periphery of the economy”.³⁴

31 Felix Gilbert, *Bismarckian Society's Image of the Jew* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1978), pp. 3–4.

32 BHStA, no. 2658 (10 January 1850) (trans. Harris) cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 253.

33 BHStA, no. 2660 (20 December 1849) (trans. Harris) cited in Harris, *The People Speak!*, p. 254.

34 Ronnie S. Landau, *the Nazi Holocaust: its Meaning for All the World's People—and its Moral, Ethic, and Psychological Implications* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994), p. 77.

The response of many Jews during this period was to take advantage of the loosening and eventual elimination of economic restrictions to enter the occupations previously barred to them, particularly professions such as medicine, law, academic life, and journalism. Many Jews believed that if they could prove their economic value to the state and their gentile neighbours, they would eventually be granted their full legal rights as citizens and that they would be treated as equals once they were legally emancipated. Some Jewish leaders counseled their community members to fully obey the laws governing their newfound participation in the larger economy as a means of disabusing Germans of their negative views of Jewish economic behaviour. An anonymous author in *Die Synagoge* in 1839, for example, urged in an article titled “How We As Jews Must Conduct Ourselves in the State” all Jews to scrupulously obey all relevant economic laws and edicts going so far as to endorse the liberal’s argument that the laws were designed to lift the Jews out of the “depths into which we had sunk in the past centuries”. The author called on all Jews to thus give up what he called “ignoble businesses” and avoid “irregular crafts” and “strive to raise their talents and morals”. Ending on an optimistic note he assured his readers, “oh be certain, the goal will not be unfulfilled, the prejudices extinguished”.³⁵

The author’s final hopes were not realized after full legal and economic emancipation. The rapid influx of Jews into the middle class and especially the professions led to a new source of antagonism: that Jews were taking over the professions and pushing gentiles out

35 “Eine jüdische religiöse Zeitschrift: zur Belehrung und Erbauung für Israeliten”, *Die Synagoge*, jp. 2, hef 1 (Munich, 1839); quoted in Harris, *The People Speak!*, pp. 26–27.

of this sector of the economy. The over representation of Jews in the professions relative to their percentage of the population, coupled with the successful adaptation of Jewish entrepreneurs to market capitalism, particularly in the retail sector, also bolstered the long-standing notion that Jews dominated the economy. The reaction of many non-Jews was to call for new restrictions on Jewish influence in the economy. White-collar employees were particularly upset about the economic success of Jewish citizens because they themselves were unable—for other unrelated reasons—to become professionals or wealthy entrepreneurs. In the absence of legal economic restrictions, several occupational and service organizations barred Jews from becoming members. For example, Jews were not admitted to the *Deutschen Handlungsgehilfenverband* (German Business Assistance Society as *Schicksalsgenossen* (comrades in destiny) or to the explicitly anti-Semitic *Bund der Landwirte* (Industrial Association), both of which were founded in 1893.

Sociologist Eva Reichmann argues that the impact of economic emancipation in a “competitive society” such as nineteenth century Germany is to “further sharpen competition especially when the majority is slow to take over the trades held by the now emancipated minority” (in this case the Jews) thereby giving the impression that the minority dominates most sectors of the economy. The early monopoly in money lending and petty trade held by Jews was gradually broken down as Jews left to join the professions and gentiles slowly went into commerce and finance. These “mutual incursions made by each side into what had previously been the other’s exclusive territory increased the fear of

competition on the part of the majority”.³⁶ The fear of economic competition constitutes for Reichmann what she calls the objective or real “Jewish Question” and is, for her, one of two sources of anti-Semitism (the other being subjective socio-psychological perceptions).³⁷

The perception of Jewish domination of the professions, business, commerce and finance persisted into the twentieth century and became a mainstay of gentile perceptions of German Jews. By the time of the Weimar Republic this perception had become so well entrenched that Jews were commonly seen as perennial “outsiders” who had now become powerful “insiders” not only in the economy, but the entire Weimar system itself.³⁸ Such views were to be found even among moderates who disavowed the radical racist anti-Semitism of the Nazis and other anti-Semitic groups. Franciscan theologian Father Erhard Schlund, for instance, advised his readers to “reject *völkisch* extremism” but then went on to espouse typical anti-Jewish sentiments. He counseled that “patriotic Catholics” would

36 Eva Reichmann, *Hostages of Civilisation: The Social Sources of National Socialism and Anti-Semitism* (London: V. Gollancz, 1950), p. 26.

37 Hannah Arendt offers a very different interpretation of how perceptions of the Jew’s role in the economy fed anti-Semitism. For Arendt it was the declining role of the Jews in the economy, particularly as financial and economic managers for political elites and in commerce and finance in general that made the Jews seem “superfluous” in the eyes of gentile Germans. Like the aristocrats of pre-revolutionary France, the Jews had lost their public economic function and influence and were left with nothing but their wealth. Arendt concludes that hatred for a people with wealth but declining or no power is based on the “rational instinct that power has a certain function and is of some general use. [. . .] Only wealth without power or aloofness without a policy are felt to be parasitical” (Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 5). Although Arendt’s thesis is interesting, she offers little evidence to support her position.

38 Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 1–2.

have to evaluate the situation vis-à-vis the Jews carefully and then suggested that “[h]e will unite with the anti-Semites in sorrow over the constant increasing influence of Jewry [. . .] and in the wish to see that influence steadily diminish. Above all, he will deplore and counteract the avaricious struggle for money and material goods, [and] the domination of financial matters”.³⁹ As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, it was this perception of Jews’ role in the economy that in part fired the Nazi leadership’s radically anti-Semitic interpretation of the inter-war economic crises and which allowed many Germans to accept the decoupling of the Jews from the German economy once the Nazis came to power.

3. Restrictive Associational Life

Finally, associational life also remained largely separate along German-Jewish lines after ghettoization and emancipation. Jewish and German communal life continued to be focused around their own religious and cultural institutions, namely the local synagogue or church. At the same time, as economic restrictions against the Jews were lifted and many Jews were denied access to occupational associations, other service leagues and the like and began to create their own secular associations to serve business people, artisans, and professionals within the Jewish community. But the creation of these organizations was not solely a response to rejection by their German counterparts. Rather, it allowed non-religious Jews who wanted to integrate into a modern German society to do so while still

³⁹ Erhard Schlund, *Kathozismus und Vaterland* (Munich, 1925), p. 72; quoted in Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 57.

participating in the Jewish community, thus fostering a modern, secular German but still Jewish identity.

On the German side, excluding Jews from cultural, service, and business associations was both informed by and reinforced anti-Jewish attitudes as well as a corresponding desire to preserve and promote German culture, language, heritage, and for some, Christianity. Anxiety about the relative lateness of German unification and the corresponding perceived need to strengthen national unity through a shared and homogeneous culture strongly influenced pro-nationalist attitudes and exclusionary practices directed at Germany's Jewish minority. Historian Werner Jochmann's research reveals that during the anti-Semitic backlash of the 1880s and 1890s, societal organizations became even more overtly exclusionary than had previously been the case. Jochmann suggests that "a wealth of examples show how, in the [18]90s anti-Semitism infiltrated [. . .] into every last citizen's association, penetrating folk clubs and cultural societies". Jochmann notes that anti-Semitism was a "particularly potent motivating force among middle-class organizations, including economic organizations" whose members feared economic competition from the Jews.⁴⁰ Many economic and non-economic organizations went so far as to declare themselves *judenrein* (Jew free) prohibiting Jewish membership no matter what their

40 Werner Jochmann, "Structure and Function of German Anti-Semitism, 1878-1914", in Herbert A. Strauss (ed.), *Hostages of Modernization: Studies in Modern Anti-Semitism, 1970-1933/39* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 52-53.

common economic or class interests.⁴¹ During the Weimar Republic technical and university student associations similarly became a bastion of exclusionary associational life. Unable to limit the number of Jews admitted to the universities, they barred Jews from joining the influential German Students Organization as well as their fraternities and boycotted establishments where Jewish students congregated.⁴² Although found mostly at the technical institutes, the most anti-Semitic students even marched the greatest possible distance from Jewish students at academic processions.

It would, of course, be incorrect to suggest that Jews and Germans had no social or associational contact at all. During the years immediately following unification, Jewish socialite Rachel Varnhagen hosted a well known bohemian salon in Berlin that brought together “enlightened” aristocrats, middle-class intellectuals, and actors—Jews and Gentiles among them. But as Arendt points out, Varnhagen’s salon proved the rule of Jewish-German exclusion, for the gentile members of her salon were like the Jews in that they “did not belong to respectable society”. Varnhagen’s salon “by definition and intentionally was established on the fringes of society, and did not share any of its conventions or prejudices”.⁴³ Alfred Low has also noted the increased social contact during the nineteenth century between upper class, acculturated Jews and Germans, particularly in Berlin, but

41 Blanca Rosenberg, *To Tell At Last* (Urbana, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 24; Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 73.

42 Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, pp. 61–62.

43 Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 59.

that this was not the case on other cultural and social levels.⁴⁴ Significantly, Rachel Varnhagen's salon closed during the depression of the late 1800s when the gentiles who frequented her salon became swept up in the anti-Semitic fervor of the time.

We can see, then, that the exclusionary legal, economic, and associational practices in Germany prior to the advent of the Nazi regime conditioned ordinary Germans to accept the repression of the Jews. It would also influence in part the radical anti-Semitism of the Nazi leadership. The historical segregation of the Jews from German society fed mistrust, fear, and, among more radical elements, hatred. The Jews' gradual entry into German life through their legal and economic emancipation heightened these tensions, feeding new efforts within society to keep Jews and Germans separate, and to check the alleged disproportionate and negative influence of the Jews within Germany. At the same time members of the Jewish community wrestled with the desire to integrate into mainstream German civic, economic, and social life while at the same time resisting assimilation and the loss of their Jewish identity. The result for both sides was a lack of successful integration between the two communities that in the end left German Jewry vulnerable once the Nazis came to power. Not fully part of German society, the Jews were separated out without much resistance from their German neighbours (see chapter 4, section iii, "switch one") with whom they had never truly cemented close civic, economic, or associational ties.

⁴⁴ Low, *Jews in the Eyes of Germans*, pp. 254–255.

B. Exclusionary Conceptions of the Community

The second dimension of the permissive political culture consists of a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance as well as exclusionary conceptions of membership in the political community (which, because it incorporates the other aspects can serve as our linguistic shorthand for this dimension as a whole). In pre-Holocaust Germany, the former manifested itself as persistent negative beliefs and attitudes about Jews while the latter was revealed in an equally persistent tendency to define Jews, before and after their legal emancipation, as outside or marginal to, the German political community. These attitudes both reinforced, and were reinforced by, many of the exclusionary practices discussed above. Anti-Jewish beliefs and attitudes were evident in common anti-Semitic myths and stereotypes, both religious and secular. Exclusionary conceptions of the German political community were found in a propensity for both anti-Semites and liberals to conceive of the nation in chauvinistic terms, albeit in different ways, for different reasons, and with different implications for their conceptions of the place of German Jewry in the German nation.

1. Anti-Semitic Beliefs and Attitudes

In pre-modern times anti-Jewish beliefs and attitudes were almost exclusively based on religious antagonism and thus constituted religious Jew-hatred or anti-Judaism.⁴⁵ Christian-based antipathy toward Jews was grounded in Judaism's rejection of Jesus as the

⁴⁵ As we will see below, this set of anti-Jewish beliefs is distinct from modern, largely secular, anti-Semitism in which Jewishness as a national, ethnic, or "racial" characteristic is the target rather than Judaism itself.

Messiah, and the attendant allegation that Jews were “Christ killers”. Once the Church consolidated its hold over the Holy Roman Empire (800 C.E.), the Church hierarchy came to see the unwillingness of most Jews to abandon an “anachronistic” belief system as a direct challenge to Christianity. By rejecting the Messiah that God had sent for them, the continued existence of Jews and Judaism undermined the very precepts of Christianity. Despite the efforts of the Church, the Jews remained in the words of historian Uriel Tal “impenitent and obdurate”, a group whose very existence disconcerted Christians and “weakened [their] assurance in the merits of [their] own cause”. The Jews’ refusal to accept the Messiah perhaps suggested to Christians that the “fault lay in the redemptive message itself and in the historical culture it produced”.⁴⁶

By the thirteenth century, Church doctrine concerning the Jews hardened further with the Jews becoming synonymous with the Devil. Through the “control of the Church over European cosmology and moral culture”, a relatively “uniform cognition of the Jews” was created in which “Jews were considered creatures of the Devil” who were “responsible for all ills”, the supposed poisoning of water wells, and the spread of the Black Death.⁴⁷ Centuries later the legacy of Christian based anti-Jewish beliefs allowed the Nazis to demonize the Jews in a way that was intelligible to most Germans and Europeans.

46 Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Politics and Ideology, 1870-1914* (trans.) Noah Jonathon Jacobs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 15.

47 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 53.

Theologian Norman Solomon suggests that Christian inspired anti-Jewish attitudes survived into the twentieth century because these beliefs were “deeply embedded in the popular cultures of the nations among whom [the Nazis] operated. So long had Christians taught that Jews were a despised people, the rejecters and killers of Christ, obdurate in their adherence to a superseded faith, that European culture was saturated with this image of the Jew”.⁴⁸

Pre-Enlightenment religious Jew-hatred spawned a number of highly salient myths about Jews that persisted into the modern era. Some of these myths retained their religious overtones while others became secularized and imbued with racism. Perhaps the most virulent and long-lasting anti-Semitic myth was what commonly became known as the “blood libel”. Although the exact content of the story changed over time and place from its inception in the Medieval period, it consisted of the appalling allegation that Jews sacrificed Christian babies to use their blood for the making of matzoh for Passover.

Another long-standing myth told the story of the “Wandering Jew”. Again appearing in a number of different versions, the Wandering Jew was said to be a Jewish man who jeered Jesus as Jesus walked to his death shouldering the cross on which he was to be crucified by the Romans. As punishment for inflicting additional pain and suffering on the Messiah, the abusive Jewish man was said to be condemned by God to walk the face of the

48 Norman Solomon, “Does the Shoah Required a Radically New Jewish Theology?”, in Ronnie S. Landau (ed.), *Christians, Jews, and the After-effects of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992); quoted in Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, p. 53

earth forever, without rest and without a home, hated by all other people (i.e., Christians). The myth is thought to have originated around 1000 AD during millennial fears of the coming of the Anti-Christ. A similar story was also spread by the Crusaders who brought back the story of the “Deathless One” who was doomed to wander the earth until the Day of Judgement. In Germany this myth was known as *der ewige Jude* or the “Eternal Jew”. The story of the “Wandering Jew” “attached to the Jews collective guilt” for the crucifixion of Jesus. Jews became in the eyes of Christians an “accursed people” filled with shame who were “condemned to be vagabonds until they accepted the divinity of Jesus”.⁴⁹ The repeated expulsion of Jews from various regions in Europe helped keep this myth alive as Jewish communities in the European diaspora literally found no rest in a permanent homeland.

A third anti-Semitic myth, the myth of a world Jewish conspiracy, spanned both pre-modern religious anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism. In its many forms this myth alleged that the Jews variously controlled the Vatican, the Freemasons, the Illuminati, the Assassins, the spread of communist revolution, the international banking system and capitalism in general, as well as national economies and politics—all with the ultimate aim of world domination and the enslavement of non-Jews. The fact that some of these institutions and processes were diametrically opposed to one another was of no consequence to those who propagated and believed this myth. The most explicit form of the

49 Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*, pp. 138–141.

myth was—and regrettably still is—found in the fictitious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Most likely the product of the Czarist regime, the *Protocols* first appeared in an August or September 1903 issue of the St. Petersburg newspaper *Znamia* (Banner). The *Protocols* was written as if penned by the “elders” themselves. In it they supposedly describe how they intend to take over the world through a number of nefarious methods: domination of the press; inter-marriage; the overthrow of traditional institutions including religious institutions and Europe’s monarchies; the assassination of national leaders; the deliberate spread of diseases; and, less obviously, through radical liberalism, socialism, and republicanism. At the end, the “elders” as descendants of the House of David would be ready to assume direct control of the world which hitherto they had controlled only covertly.⁵⁰

Anti-Semitic myths, as well as more amorphous yet pervasive anti-Jewish attitudes and beliefs, were in part the product of generational socialization. Even into the nineteenth century German children were read stories in which Jews were explicitly held responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. In his work *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and Truth), Goethe described in detail the fear of “the Jew” he learned as a child.⁵¹ Many of the most popular German fairy tales were riven with anti-Semitism. Foremost among them were

50 Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*, pp. 197, 206–207. For an extensive interpretation of the influence of the *Protocols* had on the Nazi’s plans to exterminate European Jewry see Norman Cohn’s, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New Edition) (London: Serif, 1996).

51 Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 254.

several stories written by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. One collection of fairy tales contains the story *Der Jude im Dorn* (The Jew in the Thorn), a story about the Jews' greed for money. The principle Jewish character is portrayed in the worst anti-Semitic light, eventually resorting to theft to satisfy his lust for money. In the end he is hanged by the righteous Christian community for his evil deeds. Alfred Low suggests that the deliberate inclusion of this popular tale in a publication for children "could not help but underscore and further strengthen anti-Jewish feeling in a new generation".⁵² A prominent liberal advocate for Jewish emancipation, similarly argued at the time that the hatred of Jews was "instilled into us Christians when we learned to read". The end result of this thorough childhood socialization was that "the dislike of the Jew by the Christian is a physical and moral idiosyncrasy which is as hard to conquer as the repugnance which some feel against blood and insects". The author concluded with a damning indictment of German society: "The disgrace strikes home at the prejudice of our parents, the carelessness of our educators, the curse of two thousand years of the historic past".⁵³

Years after the Holocaust, a former Hitler Youth leader, Melita Maschmann, recalled in her personal testimony to a Jewish childhood friend likely lost in the Holocaust, that the situation had changed little in 1920s Germany.

52 Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 171.

53 K. Gutzkow, *Börne, Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 6 (1845), pp. 36–37 quoted in Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 254.

As children we had been told fairy stories which sought to make us believe in witches and wizards. Now we were too grown up to take this witchcraft seriously, but we still went on believing in the “wicked Jews”. They had never appeared to us in bodily form, but it was our daily experience that adults believed in them. [. . .] The grown ups “knew” it and one took over this knowledge without mistrust. [. . .] The wickedness was directed against the prosperity, unity and prestige of the German nation, which we had learned to love from an early age. The anti-semitism of my parents was a part of their outlook which was taken for granted.⁵⁴

The nature of anti-Jewish attitudes took a decisive turn in Germany and elsewhere in Europe with the rise in the nineteenth century of modern racist anti-Semitism. Just as the Enlightenment brought notions of reason, individual rights, and liberties to Western Europe, it also produced the more sinister idea of a world naturally divided into competing nations and “races”. The rise of anti-Enlightenment Romanticism added to this equation in Germany a rejection of those same liberal notions of individualism, emancipation, and progress, in favour of the glorification of beauty and the values of the past. Romantics embraced a “golden age” of the Medieval period and the Holy Roman Empire coupled with a quest to promote and preserve “national individuality”, tradition, and authority. By emphasizing the values of the past, the Romantics explicitly re-infused Christianity into the nation’s identity and national life.⁵⁵ This understanding of the political community excluded Jews from a place within the nation.

While the influence of religious anti-Judaism continued into the modern era, the advent of secular racist anti-Semitism produced a dangerous change in the conception of Jews in

54 Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered, A Dossier on My Former Self* (London: Abelard-Shuman, 1964), p. 40.

55 Gilbert, *Bismarckian Society’s Image of the Jews*, p. 15; Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 170.

Germany and elsewhere that would have tragic consequences in the twentieth century. Modern anti-Semites argued that Germans, or “Aryans”, and Jews were two diametrically opposed “races”: the former superior, the latter inferior, degenerate and yet dangerous. Both groups were engaged in a titanic struggle with each other for survival.⁵⁶ The identification of the Jews as a so-called “race”, in which the Jews as a sub-species of human beings were believed to possess certain unalterable socio-biological characteristics, also meant that Jews could not escape or alter their identity: it was biologically determined. Pre-existing negative myths, stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs now came to be identified with the Jewish “race”. It was no longer religious Judaism that was the problem but, as Jacob Katz writes, “some aspect of their character that found expression in their behaviour”.⁵⁷ Conversion to Christianity or cultural assimilation, while of course still possible and practiced, mattered little to anti-Semites who conceptualized the world along racist principles. It was this view of the world and of the Jews that inspired the Nazi leadership and ultimately led them to destroy European Jewry.

The paranoid racist view of Jews espoused by anti-Semites gained considerable currency during the post-unification depression of the 1870s–1890s just as Germany’s Jews were finally granted full civic and economic rights. Wilhelm Marr, the journalist who coined the

56 This particular conception of the Jews formed the basis for what is called in chapter 4 of this study the “epic struggle” threat motif associated with the second “switch” genocidal conceptions of the Jews. The other threat motifs are the threat of foreign influence or domination and the lethal disease motif.

57 Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 4.

term “anti-Semitism”, typified the beliefs of the emergent anti-Semitic right in Germany. In his influential book of 1873 (a best seller of which twelve editions were published in just six years) titled *Der Sieg des Judentums über das Germanentums* (The Victory of Jewry over Germanism), Marr was obsessed with the supposed defeat of the Aryans at the hands of the Jews. Ascribing the Jews’ supposed victory to their degenerate racial characteristics, Marr charged that prior to the rise of the anti-Semitic right, “[w]ith their diabolical cunning [and] their control of finance and the press, the Jews were gaining mastery everywhere and the future belonged to them”. In Germany they had “set up a ‘socio-political dictatorship’”⁵⁸ through the infiltration of Jews into the political and economic elite. Like so many other anti-Semites of the day, Marr played on feelings of envy and frustration by painting a picture of a hitherto separate minority now growing in wealth and power. But as with Christian Jew-hatred, “the Jew” was still magnified, this time in racist terms as, a creature endowed with mysterious and dangerous powers. For Vamberto Morais, the rise of modern anti-Semitism in post-unification Germany sowed the seeds of the hatred that exploded in the 1930s and 1940s. Although anti-Semitism later subsided in the years of the Second Reich prior to World War I, “the harm to the country and to the new generation was still being done; new seeds were being sown for the later ‘harvest of hatred’. Year by year students were being taught to worship the idol of German military might and

58 Wilhelm Marr quoted in Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*, p. 173.

the collective image of an invincible Germany which perhaps could only be defeated by the ‘enemy within’”.⁵⁹

Secular anti-Semitism was further bolstered by the simultaneous rise of radical leftist politics and the marketization and industrialization of the German economy. The dislocation created by the consolidation of capitalism in Germany led those who failed to benefit from the changing economic paradigm to ascribe this failure to the Jews. Leaders of the working class portrayed Jews as greedy capitalists who exploited honest German workers while old aristocrats who did not become successful entrepreneurs accused Jewish business leaders of unscrupulous business practices. Similarly anti-Semitism among the emergent *Mittelstand* (loosely translated as middle-class) was a reaction to many of the features of modernity: industrialization, new trends in the commercial and retail sector such as the advent of the department store, the perceived “unfairness” of the market and price competition that was seen to undermine the position of small farmers and small manufacturers.⁶⁰ Paradoxically, Jews were also identified with the rise of radical leftist politics and the possibility of revolution in the new German state. The *Mittelstand* particularly feared that the Jews, through their supposed domination of socialist and communist parties in Germany and Russia, were bent on a Godless communist revolution that would see the proletarianization of the German middle-class.

59 Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*, p. 176; italics added.

60 Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, p. 80.

The legacy of religious inspired Jew-hatred and secular anti-Semitism survived in Germany into the twentieth century and the post-World War I Weimar Republic. Despite an initial softening of views concerning German Jewry at the beginning of the First World War as Germans of all stripes banded together to fight the Entente, the military stalemate that quickly ensued turned popular opinion against the Jews as did the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles, as we will discuss in more detail in chapter 3. The continuing salience of religious anti-Jewish sentiment was a product of the importance of Christianity and religion in general to most Germans during the Weimar period. Historian Donald Niewyk argues that church prejudices “reflected enduring popular superstitions about Jews”, especially in small town Germany. In the state of Franconia, for example, some Germans still believed that Jews were buried with sacks of stones to hurl at Christ in the next world. In East Frisia, vagrants were still described as being “as lost as the soul of a Jew”. Niewyk suggests that these almost quaint religious antipathies might have remained latent and harmless had it not been for the “apprehensive reactions of both Protestant and Catholic clergymen to the politics and culture of the day, and the willingness of a minority of them to identify the Israelite faith as a major carrier of the materialistic bacillus”.⁶¹

Secular anti-Semitic beliefs and attitudes about Jews were much as they had been in the previous century with Jews perceived as both rich capitalists and radical socialist revolutionaries. The latter identification was magnified by the leading role many Jews

61 Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, pp. 55–57.

played in the social democratic movement after the war and the establishment of the republic itself. Although German Jews fought for and against the establishment of the Weimar republic, and despite the fact that most Jews did not vote for the Social Democrats in large numbers until the Nazis became a serious threat in 1930, many anti-Semites and not a few ordinary Germans defamed Weimar as a “Jewish Republic”. Meanwhile the fear of Jews as communist revolutionaries was fed by the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the role that a few prominent Russian Jews, including Leon Trotsky, played in the revolution.⁶² At the same time racist anti-Semitism of the likes discussed above found a home in a number of right-wing parties and movements, including the fledgling National Socialist Workers Party under Adolf Hitler.

By the 1920s, then, most Germans continued to hold long-standing, widespread antipathies toward the Jews rather than outright hostility and violence, save a minority of virulent anti-Semites. Instead, Germany was marked by a steady, latent form of moderate anti-Semitism—what the author Thomas Mann derisively called *Bildungsantisemitismus* (a culture of anti-Semitism).⁶³ Niewyk argues that this latent, low-level anti-Semitism was significant vis-a-vis the rise of the Nazis and the perpetration of the Holocaust because the

vague sense of unease about Jews [. . .] may have helped neutralize whatever aversion Germans might otherwise have felt for the Nazis. Marxists who viewed Jews as capitalists, Christians who questioned the Jews’ otherworldliness, patriots who feared Jewish radicalism, conservatives who saw in Jews the embodiment of modernism—all had in

62 Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 28.

63 Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 28.

common a certain reluctance to excuse Jews entirely from guilt in the making of their own predicament or to believe that they were in much real danger.⁶⁴

The fact that most Germans held anti-Semitic beliefs and attitudes served to “neutralize anti-Semitism as a political issue” that “otherwise might have prevented large numbers of people from all sorts of socio-economic backgrounds from eventually voting for the Nazis”. The Nazis were thus able to “appeal to the radical anti-Semites without worrying about driving away other sources of support” who were attracted to other elements of the Nazi platform.⁶⁵ The latent anti-Semitism of the German public would later fulfill the same function during the Third Reich thus allowing the Nazis to implement anti-Semitic exclusionary civic, economic, and social policies in the 1930s and to perpetrate genocide during the Second World War. For the Nazi leadership, their own racist anti-Semitism, born out of the wider anti-Semitism of German and European society, was, as we will see in the next chapter, the ideational foundation for their interpretation of the inter-war crises as the fault of the Jews and their later reconceptualization of the Jews as a mortal threat to Germany and Germans.

2. Jews as Non-members of the Community

The second dimension of the permissive political culture as found in Germany also involved the exclusion of the Jews as accepted members of the political community. Since the legal and economic exclusion of the Jews has already been covered in the first dimension, the

64 Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 80.

65 Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 81.

discussion here will focus on exclusionary conceptions of the German political community with respect to German Jewry.

Exclusionary conceptions of the German nation that rejected Jews as members of the nation were unambiguously present among committed anti-Semites. For the anti-Semitic and *völkisch* right, the rejection of Jewish integration into pre and post-unification Germany was unequivocal: Jews were not Christians or, as the racists later put it, they were “non-Aryans”. As such, the Jews were completely opposite to the German people, an unalterably alien and degenerate race that should not and must not become accepted members of the German nation. To do so would risk the destruction of the morally and racially superior German biology, culture, and way of life.

Although the number of Germans who espoused this extremist view of Jews was relatively small, their views were not completely divorced from commonly held attitudes and beliefs about the Jews and exclusionary conception of the emergent German nation. As discussed above, most Germans, both elites and the masses, right, liberal, and left were socialized into a culture of latent anti-Semitism and, increasingly, ethnic nationalism. The Nazis and their most ardent supporters elevated both of these sets of attitudes to a central position in their world view. For the rest of the German public in the 1920s through to the 1940s, the radical anti-Semitism and German chauvinism of the Nazis was comprehensible and tolerable because its foundations rested on a commonly held understanding of the Jews and their place within the German nation.

To illuminate the foundational beliefs that informed how Germans of various ideological and socio-economic stripes understood who properly belonged to the nation, it is most useful to examine the beliefs of liberal advocates of the Jews rather than the virulent anti-Semitism of a small number of right-wing racists. The position of the liberals concerning the inclusion of the Jews in the German political community is instructive because theirs was the most favourable attitude expressed publically toward the Jews, yet they too evinced an exclusive conception of the nation. One can safely assume that the views of ordinary Germans—which are harder to tap through the available evidence—lay somewhere in between the liberals and the radical anti-Semites.

Beginning with the early years of the struggle for emancipation, many liberals, flush with the values of the enlightenment, championed the cause of Germany's Jews for civic and economic rights. While certainly a position that was likely more inclusive than most Germans in the early nineteenth century—and certainly more so than ardent Jew-haters—the liberal advocates of Jewish emancipation nonetheless based their arguments on a restricted understanding of Germany as a Christian nation. The core of their argument consisted of two closely linked but illogical positions: that Germany was a Christian nation, and that the emancipation of the Jews was an act of Christian charity. Underlying both positions was the notion that Jews could only become full members of Christian Germany if they became Christians.

As an early advocate of Jewish emancipation, Wilhelm von Humbolt believed that once German Jews attained their legal equality they should be fully assimilated (rather than integrated) into the German states, and that the mass conversion to Christianity by the Jews would be “desirable, gratifying and beneficial”.⁶⁶ In a letter written to Goethe regarding the Jews of Frankfurt am Main, another liberal friend of German Jewry, Bettina Brentano, expressed both sympathy and prejudice and the need for Christian conversion all at once. Attached to a picture of an impoverished elderly Orthodox Jewish man she wrote on the one hand of how she wished to share his “torment, to compensate him for everything with a thousand-fold love”. But then she continued “I do not deny that the Jews are a greedy immodest people”, although she explained this as a result of their historic persecution. In true liberal spirit she argued that the Jews were part of “humankind” and that therefore they should be freed from the ghettos. She applauded the move by some Christian parents to send their children to be schooled with poor Jews in the city. But then she immediately writes: “The Jews are full of vice; that cannot be denied. But I do not see at all what can be corrupted among the Christians; and if [. . .] all humans ought to be Christians, one should let them into heavenly paradise”.⁶⁷ The implication of these two

66 Wilhelm von Humbolt, *Politische Denkschriften Gesammelte Wertke*, in Gebhardt (ed.) (Berlin, 1903) cited in Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 173.

67 Bettina Brentano, *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (Berlin, 1881) quoted in Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 188.

examples of liberal thinking at the time was that Jews could only enter German society as fully assimilated Christians, not as an integrated, equal, yet distinct group—i.e., as Jews.

The liberal demand that Jews surrender their separate identity as the price for admission into German society continued on through the nineteenth century up to and after unification. The emphasis, however, began to shift from conversion from Judaism to Christianity, to the abandonment of a distinctly Jewish culture and a collective understanding of themselves as a separate group. Liberal theologian H.E. Paulus in his 1831 work *Die jüdische Nationalabsonderung* (The Jewish National Separation) argued that it was up to the Jews to assimilate into German society not only by abandoning Judaism but also by giving up the notion that they were a Chosen People who were nationally distinct from other people. Paulus warned that Jews everywhere would have to prove in each country in which they lived that they belonged only to that nation and no other.⁶⁸

After unification, this perspective became the norm among many liberals as their commitment to championing the cause of their now formally equal Jewish co-citizens waned. The dominant ideology of the time was nationalism as articulated in the need to foster a new German “national spirit” within the Second Reich. Liberals thus appear to have adopted a different kind of exclusionary understanding of membership within the German nation. While they did not call for Jews to be excluded from the new Reich, as did the anti-Semites, many liberals began to call more explicitly for both Jewish cultural

68 Cited in Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, pp. 245–246.

assimilation and to openly question the willingness and ability of most German Jews to do so. The desire of most German Jews to retain at least some of their Jewish identity and culture was anathema to liberals because it also challenged the liberal view of progress, spiritual enlightenment, and the goal of “national destiny”. As Uriel Tal argues, “the liberals, therefore, began to regard the Jews, the prototype of particularism, as the chief impediment to national and spiritual unity”.⁶⁹ Liberal intellectuals, such as poet and art historian Gottfried Kinkel, called on Germany’s Jews to recognize that the only true mission was “the historical and universal mission of the German nation”. As long as the Jews “failed to regard this as the final consummation of their own historical tradition”, they would not achieve the equality they aspired to “for it is they who continue to separate their will from the will of the nation”.⁷⁰

The exclusionary understanding of the German political community vis-à-vis the Jews espoused by the liberals and the anti-Semites survived into the next century up to the Nazi era. As will be covered in chapter 3, exclusionary conceptions of the German nation were reinforced by Germany’s defeat in the First World War as German elites, particularly the emergent Nazi leadership, and the public looked to the Jews as disloyal enemies-within who collectively shirked their responsibilities to defend the Fatherland and/or who worked behind the scenes to ensure Germany’s defeat. Later, during the Weimar period, Jews came

69 Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, p. 296.

70 Gottfried Kinkel, Private Correspondence, No. 4, Family Archive quoted in Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, p. 41.

to be identified with a regime that many Germans did not regard as legitimate, i.e., as truly German.

By the time the Nazis came to power, Jews were in a curious position. They were legally full members of the political community who in many respects made significant contributions to the community through their activities in the arts, science, business, the professions, literature, and the like. Many of them were as chauvinistically German as any of their gentile counterparts and saw themselves not as members of a separate ethnic or racial identity but as “Germans of the Jewish faith” no different from German Protestants and Catholics. For gentiles, both elite and not, radical anti-Semites and not, Germany Jewry retained a much more separate, non-German identity that in their view did not always fit well with their own conceptions of the German nation and what it meant to be German. As we shall see in chapter 4, the prevailing exclusionary conception of the political community, and the marginal place of Jews within it, facilitated the practical and conceptual separation of Germany’s Jews from the rest of society by the Nazi regime (“switch one”) and their ultimate physical liquidation during the Holocaust.

C. Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management

The final dimension of the permissive political culture that provides the permissive environment for genocide is a history of non-democratic approaches to dealing with societal conflicts by the state and general support for the state’s actions by the majority society. In pre-Nazi Germany we find evidence for this orientation and practice in the

general authoritarian orientation of the unified German nation-state, a culture of hierarchy, obedience and order, and specific instances of authoritarian responses to inter-group conflict.

1. Authoritarian State and a Submissive Public

The founding of the Second Reich reinforced and perpetuated existing non-democratic and illiberal tendencies in both the structure of the German state and German political culture in general. Much of the reason for this reinforcement lay with the fact that modern Germany was founded in the immediate aftermath of military victories over Austria and then France in the Franco-Prussian war. The latter war, fought in 1870, whipped up nationalist fervor throughout the German states and rallied the southern states to the cause of the Prussian dominated North German Confederation. More importantly, the birth of the empire through “blood and iron” established the Monarchy, the Chancellory, the army, the ultra-conservative Prussian civil service and the aristocracy—that is, those who were directly responsible for the victories over Austria and France—as the principle political elites in the new Reich. The Second Reich did not, therefore, come from the will of the people nor was it created through a democratically negotiated process of nation-building. Instead, united Germany was a voluntary association of political elites from the various German states, of whom the Prussian Chancellor and Emperor were the first among formal equals. The central role of the old political elite in the formation of the Reich, the concomitant absence of liberal leaders and of liberal democratic procedures and values,

strengthened reactionary over progressive elements and favoured autocratic over democratic principles and institutions for decades to come.⁷¹

The constitution of the Second Reich further bolstered the position of the conservative elite. Drawing heavily on the draft constitution of the North German Federation of 1867 and influenced even more by the new Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, the political system that emerged was designed not only to preserve the dominance of Prussia within the new federation, but to entrench a system of top-down politics. The *Reichstag* (parliament) was largely created to appease liberal forces but was also used by Bismarck to keep conservative parties in check. The Reichstag was elected by universal suffrage and at times exerted limited control on the government. The actual power of the Reichstag was, however, limited relative to the Bundesrat (Upper House) and the Chancellory, particularly under Bismarck. The Reichstag maintained only limited influence over the more powerful and conservative Bundesrat⁷² while all legislation required the consent of the upper house; spending on the army (the so-called “iron budget”) was beyond its control, and all other expenditures were only discussed every three years.⁷³

71 Gilbert, *Bismarckian Society's Image of the Jew*, p. 28; Niewyk, *The Jews of Weimar Germany*, p. 5; Landau, *Nazi Holocaust*, pp. 77-78.

72 The Bundesrat enshrined the federal nature of the empire in the form of a federal council populated by non-elected representatives of Germany's constituent states. All legislation passed by the *Reichstag* required its consent—which was by no means guaranteed—and it could veto constitutional changes. The states were represented according to size and power thereby ensuring the domination of Prussia. All meetings were held in private and were presided over by the chancellor or the Kaiser.

73 William Carr, *A History of Germany, 1815–1985* (Third Edition) (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), pp. (continued...)

For Bismarck and other conservative elites, the Reichstag was little more than a talking shop with no real power, a “sop to public and liberal opinion” that functioned as a safety valve for public discontent that was meant to play “an insignificant part in public life”.⁷⁴ Throughout his time as Chancellor, Bismarck repeatedly threatened to engineer a political *coup d’etat* to get rid of parliament in favour of a government led solely by the executive offices of the state. Failing this, he hoped that parliamentarianism would simply destroy itself: that the “antics of an impotent Reichstag would finally discredit parliamentary institutions in German eyes”.⁷⁵ As Chancellor, Bismarck only consulted parliament when he knew in advance that it would support him. On issues that he surmised the majority of members would not, such as budgetary, economic, and military matters that protected the interests of the old aristocratic elite, he simply chose to ignore the Lower House in favour of the monarchy.

Although the debates in the Reichstag between deputies and parties from across the political spectrum were often raucus, and while certain election campaigns attracted considerable attention, the weakness of the Lower House as a genuine democratic decision-making body had important consequences for the management of conflicts in German politics and society. The concentration of power among the executive offices, the

73 (...continued)
106-107.

74 Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 107.

75 Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 107.

monarchy, the army and the civil service ensured that the articulation of competing interests or any kind of consensus or compromise reached in the Lower House was marginal to the political process. The decision making process thus remained in the hands of a conservative executive that, as we will see, preferred an authoritarian approach to dealing with conflicts, particularly those that appeared to threaten its authority. This left political elites unprepared for the momentous changes that followed the collapse of the Second Reich, the failed revolution of 1918–1919, the advent of a genuine parliamentary system under the Weimar Republic and the serious challenges that rocked the republic during its brief history, including the rise of the Nazi Party. With the exception of some liberal and socialist politicians, most political elites continued to favour a top-down executive led approach to politics and conflict management. Meanwhile the German public became socialized to expect that the state, rather than a democratically elected parliament that represented the public's interests, should be primarily responsible for policy decisions and the resolution of conflicts.

At the same time, the office of the Chancellory and the Monarchy reinforced the notion that the state, personified in the form of a powerful leader in an equally powerful office, was the appropriate arbiter of politics and conflict management. During the Second Reich the Chancellor formally and practically exerted enormous executive power. Although formally termed a “responsible officer” of the Reich, the Chancellor faced few real constraints. He was not obliged to act on resolutions passed by the *Reichstag* nor could he be removed

from office by a non-confidence vote. He was appointed to office for an unlimited term and remained in power at the convenience of the Emperor.⁷⁶

The tendency toward authoritarian rule and conflict management was front and centre during Bismarck's tenure in office from 1871 to 1890. His attitude toward parliamentary democracy was illustrative of his approach to politics in general. According to historian William Carr, Bismarck saw politics as little more than a "naked struggle for power [in which] the ruthless pursuit of self-interest was the only possible policy for a great state".⁷⁷ Often petty and tyrannical in his personal dealings, "intolerant of independent" or contradictory thinking in others, consumed by a "lust for power" and a willingness to use force to maintain power both internationally and domestically, the "Iron Chancellor's" legacy in German politics was significant. For Bismarck, politics was governance by rulers and officials, not the people. Despite his often successful attempts to satisfy the material interests of the aristocracy, the *Mittelstand*, and to some extent the working class, Bismarck's bonapartist ways and penchant for *Realpolitik* over compromise "seriously retarded Germany's political growth"⁷⁸ toward a functioning participatory democracy.

None of Bismarck's successors exercised the same power that he did as Chancellor and some, such as Leo von Caprivi (1890–1894) sought, through his "new course"

76 Carr, *A History of Germany*, pp. 119-120.

77 Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 84.

78 Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 144.

programme, to implement a more conciliatory less authoritarian and more flexible form of government. Significantly it was chancellors such as Caprivi whose tenures were the shortest and were fraught with consistent attempts by other elites to unseat incumbents who tried to open up the political system. The desire by the aristocratic elite and many ordinary Germans to maintain a strong authoritarian presence at the top of the political system to which elected institutions were subordinate continued up to the end of the Second Reich and beyond.

The domination of conservative elites and the preference for authoritarian leadership was also the result of the weakness of liberal forces by the time of unification. The fortunes of liberals and liberalism never fully recovered following the defeat of the 1848 revolution, while liberal forces played almost no role in German unification. The failure of the 1848 revolution isolated German liberalism from the rest of western Europe, breeding instead a feeling of uniqueness in which the liberal movement increasingly focused on notions of national freedom and unity rather than individual freedom and constitutionalism. Once Germany was unified through war by a conservative political elite, the emerging national focus of the liberal movement reinforced the dominant preference for a strong state, as liberals came to see the state as a force above society and political parties that assured unity, efficiency, power and protection.⁷⁹ During the time of the Second Reich, Heinrich von

79 Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structures, Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p.18; Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1972), pp. 13–14; Tal, *Christians and Jews in* (continued...)

Treitschke, for example, proclaimed that the individual ought to sacrifice himself to the “greater community” of which he was a “link” and that, therefore, the individual “did not have the right to resist the authority of the state”, even if its actions were held to be “immoral”.⁸⁰ The preference for a strong state among liberals was still evident years later in Max Weber’s advocacy during the crafting of the Weimar constitution for a strong presidency which rested on his belief that Germany and Germans required a strong authority at the apex of the political system.⁸¹

Although liberal parties were present in the Reichstag following unification they were only a real electoral force until the 1880s and even then there were no strong liberal parties. To be sure, a small minority of mostly upper middle class highly educated liberals pressed for legal, economic, and constitutional reforms, but they were never able to break the power of Bismarck and his successors, the monarchy, and the Prussian aristocracy and civil service. The weakness of liberal politicians and parties, coupled with the marginal role of parliament in general in German politics during the Imperial era, meant that both the

79 (...continued)

Germany, p. 79. A striking example of liberals’ preference for national unity over liberalism appeared in the *Preussische Jahrbucher* of February 1867 in which an unidentified liberal writer argued that if Germany should ever be confronted with the alternative between national unity or liberalism that risked national unity, it was the duty of all Germans, including liberals, to choose the former. If this choice should necessitate the rule of a military dictatorship under a *Führer* (supreme leader), Germans should still choose national unity and accept authoritarian rule rather than freedom and the classical values of liberalism (cited in Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, pp. 42–43).

80 Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politik* (Leipzig, 1899) quoted in Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 28.

81 Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism* p.22.

spirit and practice of negotiation and compromise were missing from German politics from the time of unification right through to the ascendancy of the Nazis. As we shall see shortly, a lack of commitment to liberal values by German elites and society further strengthened the tendency toward authoritarian methods of rule and conflict management.

The authoritarian tendencies in German politics were not eliminated with the advent of the Weimar Republic. With the creation of the Republic the previous constitutionally mandated emphasis on executive power was ended with a turn toward genuine parliamentarianism and democracy. However, many of the key institutions and personnel who dominated the political system during the Second Reich and who were responsible for the conduct of the First World War remained unreformed and firmly ensconced in the political structures of the new Republic. Weimar was largely held in contempt by these same powerful forces as fears of Bolshevism and the Social Democrats' role in the acceptance of the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles proved decisive. Humiliated by their role in Germany's defeat in the battle field, the military refused to sign the armistice of 1918, leaving that task to the fledgling Social Democratic government of Friedrich Ebert. Shortly thereafter the country was rocked by an attempted Soviet-style revolution to which the new Republican government was forced to respond. Although successful in pushing for the creation of a constitutionally effective democratically elected parliamentary system, the Ebert government reacted to the threat of Bolshevism at home and the stigma of having signed the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles by leaving key public institutions,

such as the military, judiciary, the civil service and the universities, unreformed. Rationalizing its decision as a means of ensuring effective administration, the new government allowed these institutions to continue to be staffed by old power elites even though many of these officials were clearly hostile to the new regime. Within the state apparatus, these institutions became a bastion of anti-democratic sentiment which consistently undermined parliamentary politics and served as a focal point for popular authoritarian beliefs in society.⁸² The result was a formally democratic political system comprised of profoundly undemocratic institutions at a time when Germany faced formidable economic and political crises. By the late 1920s, the fractious Reichstag seemed incapable of effective governance, especially the maintenance of law and order, and the swift and effective resolution of economic crises and political conflicts.

2. Illiberal Intellectual Tradition and Education System

The authoritarian structure of German politics was both shaped and reinforced by illiberal elite attitudes and beliefs that extolled the virtues of hierarchy, order, obedience, power, and violence. The apparent failure of liberalism to take hold in Germany can be traced both to the origins of the German state and Germany's illiberal intellectual tradition. As discussed above, Germany did not experience a liberal revolution as did France, England and the United States, but rather was forged by conservative political elites through victory

82 Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, pp. 88–89; Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 250.

in war. The result was that liberal values and practices never became an integral part of Imperial German politics.

Secondly, the intellectual traditions that were dominant in Germany before and after unification were of a more authoritarian and nationalistic variety than was the case elsewhere in western Europe. Karl Dietrich Bracher argues that the roots of this tradition can be traced back to disillusionment with the initial principles of the French Revolution following the Terror and the fight against the Napoleonic conquest. The liberal ideals of the revolution were replaced with a “Romantic-mystical feeling about a unique national consciousness” that eschewed a humanistic cosmopolitan orientation in favour of a “national idea of the German cultural mission”. The anti-Napoleonic wars reinforced these attitudes as the struggle for national liberation “helped restorational efforts triumph over internal reform and revolution”.⁸³ Conservative beliefs concerning politics and the state thus came to dominate German political culture. The desire for external unity trumped demands for internal freedom, thereby weakening democratic, constitutional and reform movements which were subjugated to the power of the nobility, military and bureaucracy.⁸⁴ The lack of commitment by all but a minority of liberals to liberalism and democracy

83 Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 17.

84 Bracher *The German Dictatorship*, p. 18.

during the tumultuous Weimar years made the reintroduction of authoritarian rule after 1933 “acceptable in a concrete political and social situation”.⁸⁵

The victory of conservative over liberal attitudes among Germany’s political elite created what Fritz Stern characterizes as a “state of mind” that opposed any attempts toward further democratization. Political elites feared that “[a]ny concession in any realm might undermine the authority, prestige and status of the entire system”.⁸⁶ The upper and ruling classes’ disdain for liberal notions of tolerance, dissent, debate and openness bred a fear of opposition and open discussion. They relied instead on bureaucratic rule and repression when necessary, backed by a latent readiness to use force in the face of change and conflict. Any change in the status quo that might jeopardize the authority of the state or the dominant socio-economic position of the ruling elite was vigorously resisted by the 1890s. Fear of conflict or change led to a denial that either conflict or change was desirable or necessary, leading to a “siege mentality” in which “increasing abuse was heaped on parliamentary institutions” and the very ideas of “debate, compromise, tolerance, reason”. Such an orientation by Germany’s elite “made it easier to believe in force as an alternative to persuasion or debate”.⁸⁷

85 Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, p. 34

86 Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism* p. xviii.

87 Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism*, pp. xxi–xxii.

As with anti-Semitic attitudes discussed in the second dimension, the preference for hierarchy, order, repression, and violence was in part a product of socialization. In this instance the education system played a key role in socializing future elites into adopting illiberal responses to conflict and change. Discipline, respect for hierarchy and order were central to the elementary and secondary education system from the Imperial period and beyond as the school system remained largely unreformed until the Weimar era. The longevity of Wilhelmine discipline in the school system prior to Weimar ensured that the liberal and humanitarian reforms of the Weimar Republic, both inside and outside the schools, were easily overcome by a new generation of elites socialized in the old system. Such reforms were dismissed by elites and many sectors of the public as the “mollycoddling aberrations of the ‘interregnum’” that allowed for a return to the doctrine of order and discipline of the Imperial era “with little fear of opposition”.⁸⁸

Most important for the socialization of future elites was the university system. A relatively exclusive system, universities drew their students and faculty primarily from the upper classes, although more middle class students were able to attend university by the end of the Imperial era. The weakness of liberalism at unification and its further decline thereafter saw a concomitant decline in tolerance for liberal views, leftist politics, and opposition on university campuses. It also led middle class students to eschew liberal politics in favour of entrance into the upper echelons of society through attendance at

88 Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 199.

university—and a coveted job in the ultra-conservative civil service upon graduation—and thereby consciously embraced a chance to be socialized into the authoritarian culture of the ruling elite.

The illiberal socializing role of the universities was sanctioned by law in 1879 when universities were explicitly mandated to ensure the maintenance of “order, morality and honour” in the hopes of protecting universities and their students from socialist and even democratic influences. Lectures and speeches by resident and visiting faculty increasingly began to stress illiberal themes, moving the universities away from the liberal educational tradition begun by Wilhelm von Humbolt at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Several *Festreden* (ceremonial speeches) at the University of Bonn, for example, strongly discouraged critical or even neutral remarks about the state and the monarchy. Anti-parliamentarianism moved some speakers to call for a common “bourgeois front” above the parliamentary factions. Legal scholars, who increasingly rejected the notion of natural or historical law, contributed to an “uncritical acceptance” of the existing authoritarian and elitist constitution and political system. Professors of economics were more likely to directly acknowledge the existence of social and economic cleavages and tensions within Germany, but by and large called for statist or illiberal solutions to these problems.⁸⁹ Such anti-

89 Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 618.

democratic and chauvinistic themes continued to make inroads after the turn of the century.⁹⁰

Meanwhile a curriculum that stressed high ideas (a vestige of von Humbolt's liberal influence), a simultaneous disdain for participation in real politics, and the struggle between parochial interest groups limited faculty and students to personal, professional and local concerns. The further socialization of students for *Wissenschaft* (literally knowledge but what is now referred to as the social sciences) and professional careers produced a new generation of elites and citizens who were uncritical and conformist, deflecting pressures for progressive changes away from the state.⁹¹ There were, to be sure, some faculty and students who continued to hold traditional liberal views, but these individuals were in the minority.

Associational life on campus further reinforced illiberal tendencies among university students. At the height of student organizational activities on German university campuses in the 1890s, affiliated students (approximately 40% of the student population) were organized into a number of student groups ranging from a small number of liberal organizations to a much larger number of conservative, nationalist, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, a small but growing number of proto-fascist and anti-Semite groups.⁹²

90 Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany*, p. 619.

91 Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany*, p. 625.

92 Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany*, p. 620.

Konrad Jarausch summarizes the corporate mentality and socializing function of the non-liberal groups as the following: elitism; anti-intellectualism (akin to modern fraternities); authoritarianism, enforced through pledge systems and hierarchical organizations in which senior members maintained absolute control; and, apolitical nationalism coupled with “instinctive conservatism”.⁹³ Jarausch argues that the majority of organized students—the apolitical nationalist and conservatives—were easily manipulable for the “defense of the status quo at home and expansion abroad”, while another large sector of conservative groups championed nationalist and anti-Semitic causes. The latter became the spokesman for the dominant political elite.⁹⁴

In addition to authoritarianism, belief in the virtues of hierarchy, obedience and violence was perpetuated among successive generations of the ruling elite through dueling and other bloody rights of passage. By the post-unification Wilhelmine period, dueling began to decline in other parts of western Europe while in Germany it became more widespread. Partly an act of resistance by the old aristocracy to the German state’s move to exercise a monopoly over the legitimate means of coercion within the Reich, and partly an embracing of the virtues of war and violence following the unification of the country through victory on the battlefield, dueling was widely practiced among upper and middle class elites in the military and universities. Dueling, and membership in “fighting societies”,

93 Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany*, p. 620.

94 Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany*, pp. 625–626.

was not only seen as a way of controlling entry into aristocratic “good society”, it was an important process by which male members of the ruling class were inculcated into respect for hierarchy, order, inequality, and violence. It also had important consequences for elite attitudes toward conflict resolution. Defending one’s honour through superior individual fighting skills and competency with arms militated against the adoption of more democratic forms of conflict resolution that emphasized consensus and compromise. Instead, dueling reinforced the existing aristocratic notion that the use of violence in disagreements was appropriate—“even when the weaker or less skillful person was totally at the mercy of those who were stronger”.⁹⁵ As Norbert Elias suggests, a dueling culture that pitted stronger and weaker individuals against each other also made current and future elites “accustom[ed] to a strictly hierarchical order, and hence an emphasis on inequality between people”.⁹⁶ The combination of sanctioning violence to solve conflicts and the belief in a natural hierarchy of people was a potent combination at a time that also saw the rise of racist and social Darwinist theories about the supposed inferiority and superiority of peoples engaged in an on-going struggle for physical survival.

3. *Passive Civil Society*

Many of these views were also shared by the German public at large. There were, of course, a variety of political perspectives held by individual Germans, including liberal and socialist

95 Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 51–52.

96 Elias, *The Germans*, p. 19.

attitudes that favoured greater democratization, freedom, equality, and tolerance for dissent and compromise. The overall picture, however, was one in which support for authoritarian leadership, respect for hierarchy and order, and the acceptance of repression and force was relatively widespread among the aristocracy, the emerging *Mittelstand*, and the working class throughout united Germany. The preference for authoritarian politics can be traced again to the victory of conservative over liberal forces during unification and a general lack of political education that inhibited the cultivation of an active democratic citizenry.

In the first instance, the lack of a role played by liberal forces and the middle class itself in the unification of Germany led many among the *Mittelstand* to accept their second rank status relative to the victorious aristocracy, monarchy, military, and civil service. In so doing the middle class embraced their membership in a new unified and powerful state within Europe by subordinating the pursuit of individual rights, freedoms, and greater equality to the unity and glory of the German nation-state. The victory of the aristocratic elite in the unification process also led many middle class Germans to embrace, in modified form, aristocratic values including a “reverence of courage, obedience, honour, and discipline”, as well as support for the “projection of power and the use of violence”.⁹⁷ A Wilhelmine bourgeois ethos thus emerged in the post-unification years in which toughness and ruthlessness were presented as an ideal attitude to be valued above more liberal notions of

⁹⁷ Elias, *The Germans*, p. 180.

tolerance, compassion, and compromise. The embracing of illiberal attitudes and practices was evident among the middle class in, for example, the membership by aspiring middle class elites in fighting fraternities, and the practice of dueling among university students and junior military officers as a means of entering elite society.

Secondly, the preference for aristocratic political and social values, coupled with an authoritarian political system in which individual leaders (i.e., the Chancellory and Monarchy) exercised ultimate political power, stunted the development of a democratic and politically engaged society. The result was a collective retreat from politics spurred by the belief that politics was the act of ruling by strong individual leaders. Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II's strong personal leadership styles reinforced this preference, with important consequences for Germany's political future. Writing near the end of the First World War liberal politician and sociologist Max Weber was harshly critical of Bismarck's legacy concerning the docility of the German public in political matters.

Bismarck left behind him as his political heritage a nation without any political education, far below the level which, in this respect, it had reached twenty years earlier. Above all, he left a nation without any political will, accustomed to allow the great statesman at its head to look after its politics for it. Moreover, as a consequence of his misuse of the monarchy as a cover for his own interests in the struggle of political parties, he left a nation accustomed to submit, under the label of constitutional monarchy, to anything which was decided for it, without criticizing the political qualifications of those who now occupied Bismarck's empty place and who with incredible ingenuousness now took the reins of power into their hands.⁹⁸

98 Max Weber quoted in Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 145.

The legacy of Bismarck extended into the tumultuous Weimar years, with an increasing desire as time went on for a strong leader at the top. This desire was in part satisfied with the First World War hero Paul von Hindenburg's ascension to the Republican presidency in 1925. Historian William Carr suggests that many Germans saw Hindenburg as an *Ersatzkaiser* and that "Germans were not really happy as long as a head of state was a civilian in a top hat; they longed for a respectable figure in a uniform with a chest full of medals".⁹⁹

The preference for authoritarian politics and disillusionment over the ability of a liberal democratic political system to effectively deal with crises and conflict was magnified during the Nazi era to include the use of force against political opponents, "undesirables", and of course, the Jews. General Superintendent of the Protestant church in Brandenburg, Friedrich Dibelius, gave voice to this tendency in a sermon marking the opening of the Reichstag in a ceremony attended by Hitler and Hindenburg in March 1933.

A new beginning in the history of the state is always marked, in one or another way, by the use of force. For the state *is* power. New decisions, new attitudes, transformations and upheavals always signify victory on one side and defeat on another. And if the life and death of the nation are at stake, then the power of the state must be employed effectively and with vigour, whether internally or externally. [. . .] If the state carries out its duties against those who undermined the foundations of the state order—against those in particular, whose coarse and corrosive words destroy marriage, expose faith to contempt,

99 Carr continues that Hindenburg supported parliamentary democracy as long as it functioned reasonably well but "when the great crises came in the 1930s...the presence of this authoritarian-minded old gentleman in the presidential palace prove[d] a serious liability for the republic" (Carr, *A History of Germany*, p. 294).

and slander all who lay down their lives for their fatherland—then let the state carry out its duty in God's name!¹⁰⁰

Each dimension of the pre-genocide permissive political culture in Germany helped set the stage for both the interpretation of the inter-war crises as a direct consequence of Jewish malfeasance and the later reconceptualization of the Jews as a mortal threat to Germany that could only be met through a program of continent-wide extermination. Restricted citizenship and the later opposition to the full emancipation of the Jews, legal and informal economic barriers, and associational separation between Jews and Gentiles in pre-Nazi Germany all created an ideational and practical environment in which the removal of Jews from German society under the Nazi regime was conceptually possible for the Nazi elite and understandable to ordinary Germans. The prior history of separation of Jews and Germans and the lack of genuine and complete integration between the two groups left Germany fragmented along the German-Jewish divide. The Nazis' initial program in the 1930s and early 1940s of conceptually and practically removing Jews civically, economically, and then physically from German society ("switch one") played on existing exclusionary German-Jewish interaction and harkened back to a time when Jews were completely separate from mainstream German life.

Similarly, prevailing religious and modern racist anti-Semitic beliefs and attitudes conditioned the emergent Nazi elite (albeit in much more extreme form), as we shall see, as well as German society as a whole to see Jews as exploiters, parasites, and a powerful but

100 Friedrich Dibelius quoted in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, p. 198.

hidden force that controlled and possibly menaced Germany from within. An exclusionary conception of national identity and membership in the German nation that equated membership with both “Germanness” and Christianity further reinforced the notion that German Jews, as Jews, were not fully German. Long-standing anti-Semitic beliefs and exclusionary conceptions of membership in the German nation fed both the Nazis’ claims that German Jewry was responsible for the loss of the First World War and the economic and political crises of the inter-war period (chapter 3) as well as their later genocidal reconceptualization of the Jews as a mortal threat to the Third Reich and the Aryan race (chapter 4). The already existing understanding of Christian Germans as the only authentic or genuine members of the German political community also made the conceptual stripping of German Jews of their membership in German social, economic, and political life under the Nazis both ideationally possible for Hitler and his lieutenants, and tolerable for most Germans.

Finally, the authoritarianism of unified Germany, particularly the Second Reich’s history under Bismarck of conceptualizing and dealing with conflicts through statist and non-democratic means, the incomplete transition to democracy during the Weimar period due to the continued dominance of conservative political forces within the state, and the lack of enthusiasm among Germans for liberal democratic values and political practices, created the potential for the Nazis not only to seize power under crisis conditions, but for the Nazi leadership to conceive of and use the considerable power of the modern German state to

solve the “problem” supposedly posed by the Jews through statist and ultimately eliminationist methods. Strongly influenced by an authoritarian elite political culture that saw politics as a zero-sum game, the Nazi leadership, as we will see later in chapter 4, came to see their own struggle against the Jews in similar but highly magnified terms as a epic battle to the death in which the full force of the German state must be deployed to once and for all win the race war against the ever present and always threatening “Jew”.

III. CAMBODIA

The three dimensions of the pre-genocide permissive political culture embedded in Cambodian history and society differ from that found in the German case in that formal restrictions and anti-group attitudes (dimensions one and two) did not revolve around one specific group, but rather socio-economic, regional, and ethnic divisions. The final dimension—authoritarian approaches to conflict management—on the other hand, included many of the non-democratic tendencies of the German Second Reich, but also a considerable degree of elite political violence that heavily influenced the use of extreme brutality at all levels of the Khmer Rouge’s Democratic Kampuchea during the genocide against the new people, the ethnic minorities, and suspect cadres.

A. Exclusionary and Unequal Patterns of Group Interaction

The first dimension of the pre-genocide permissive political culture was not manifested in ethnically-based civic, economic, legal, or other formalized restrictions as in Germany. Rather it appeared in the hierarchical structures of economic, social, and to a lesser extent,

political life found at all levels of society. Moreover, the lack of integrative interaction between groups in Cambodian society was manifested within a relatively ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogeneous community of Khmers, excepting the minority Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cham Muslim communities.¹⁰¹ The rigid hierarchical economic and social structures characteristic of Khmer society generated and reinforced inter-group separation and fostered an overall environment of societal fragmentation along socio-economic, regional, and ethnic fault lines. These divisions would become those around which the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot constructed a radical egalitarian ideology and a genocidal program aimed at eliminating what had been the top tier of the old socio-economic hierarchy, the ethnic minorities, and suspect party cadres.

The first dimension will be explored by examining the structure and character of societal organization, specifically family and kinship structure, village life, and social stratification as well as the education system and its role in the socialization process; and economic organization and stratification.

1. Social Stratification

Unlike many cultures in Asia, such as China, Vietnam, and India, family and kinship ties in Cambodia were focused around the nuclear family rather than the extended family or kinship group. An American “area handbook” published in the mid-1950s argued that,

101 The ethnic minorities in total comprised approximately 20 percent of the 1975 population of Cambodia. (Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 251-252.

“[a]s might be expected in a society without extended family kin groupings and with weak development of voluntary organizations, bonds within the nuclear family are particularly strong”.¹⁰² In one of only a very few ethnographic studies of rural Cambodian village life, anthropologist May Ebihara found that the nuclear family was the strongest unit of social identification, with personal loyalty owed to one’s immediate family members rather than non-members or more distant relatives.¹⁰³ For Ebihara, the most important element of Khmer life was that the distinction between family and non-family was tightly drawn and that little social interaction took place beyond immediate family members.¹⁰⁴

Khmers also did not practice ancestral worship nor did they maintain a strong system of filial piety—i.e., obligations to extended family members, particularly elderly parents and grandparents—thus further removing the immediate family from village society. In neighboring Vietnam, where ancestral worship and filial piety was practiced for centuries, the veneration of ancestors and the primary importance placed on remaining active in the same village in which one’s extended family members lived and were buried, created a strong connection between individual Vietnamese, their families, and their village. Villages and extended family organization, according to historian Michael Vickery, “especially

102 Mitchell G. Zadrozny, *Area Handbook on Cambodia, Preliminary Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1955), p. 314.

103 Ebihara did find that extended family ties were at times important in rural areas, but only for socio-economic reasons (May Mayko Ebihara, “Khmer” in Frank M. Lebar, Gerald C. Hickey, and John K. Musgrave (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia* [New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964], p. 103).

104 Ebihara, “Khmer” in Lebar et al., *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, pp. 101–102.

compared to China, Vietnam, and India, were extremely weak. Khmer villages were not cohesive units as in Vietnam, dealing collectively with officials, and beyond the nuclear household families easily disintegrated”.¹⁰⁵ Once one’s obligations were fulfilled to the state, usually through the paying of taxes or *corvée* labour there was little to constrain one’s behaviour or bind individuals to other larger familial, socio-economic, regional, or national groups.

Village life in Cambodia has, therefore, been described by observers, beginning with the French, as far more atomistic and anomic than traditional village life in other parts of Asia. One colonial official, Jean Delvert, described the typical Khmer village or *plum* (meaning “inhabited place” with no organizational connotations) as “only a group of houses in particular geographical conditions”. He concluded that the lack of integrative village organization resulted in an “absence of rural community”.¹⁰⁶ Delvert’s understanding of the Khmer village, though, is rather extreme. Traditionally, most Khmers maintained relatively strong ties to their home village, and rarely traveled beyond it, despite the fact that villages typically lacked internal cohesion. At the same time they harboured suspicions about those from other villages and had only very limited knowledge of the world outside their immediate existence.¹⁰⁷ Up to the mid-twentieth century, most villages were fairly

105 Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: 1975–1982* (London: South End Press, 1984), p. 13.

106 Jean Delvert, *Le Paysan Cambodgien* (Paris: Mouton, 1960), p. 235.

107 Ebihara, “Khmer” in Lebar et al., *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, p. 99.

isolated and self-contained, especially those located far from major waterways. Larger villages and market towns tended to bind together a number of smaller communities into a religious and economic unit.

Usually, each village had its own *Wat* (Buddhist temple) and compound used for religious ceremonies and prayers, monks' residence, and a Buddhist shrine. The *Wat* served as the centre of ceremonial and religious life in the village. Politically, the traditional village was governed by a village headman who was nominated by local elders and notables, and elected by all male members. The main task of the village headman was to engage in "consensus-building and reconciliation within the community" should disputes arise.¹⁰⁸ Most village residents came together to celebrate Buddhist religious festivals.¹⁰⁹

Unlike Delvert's description of the traditional village, face to face contact between village members (but not between members of different villages) was evident. This contact, however, was primarily for socio-economic reasons and was most notable in poorer villages where economic specialization was low.¹¹⁰ Food production, for example, was only a common exercise in the limited sense of mutual aid in harvesting and transplanting rice. As such, contact between non-family members within the village was primarily for instrumental economic reasons. Ben Kiernan suggests further that the historical

108 Zadrozny, *Area Handbook on Cambodia*, pp. 310–312.

109 David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 4.

110 Zadrozny, *Area Handbook on Cambodia*, p. 313.

fragmentation of the rural economy was in part responsible for the primacy of individualism over communalism.¹¹¹

Peasant land holdings were also relatively autonomous and were not tied to communally owned land. As such, few if any watch committees or occupational associations developed within most villages. Because of a lack of economic specialization and division of labour within the village economy—and thus “few interdependencies created through commodity exchange”—generalized social conflicts were not likely to be solved through the creation or use of community organizations.¹¹² Rural Cambodian society, therefore, lacked an organized community which, in the end, left the countryside, as Kiernan suggests, “open for a movement like that of Pol Pot to overturn completely a society barely cemented together by its fragile social organization”.¹¹³

111 Ben Kiernan, “Peasants” in Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981* (London: Zed Press, 1982), p. 32.

112 Kiernan, “Peasants”, in *Peasants and Politics*, p. 32. Serge Thion similarly argues that social fragmentation from the village to the national level was in large part due to “a lack of intermediary social groups which could relate the nuclear family to the national community as a whole. A loosely structured village community, drawn together by the Wat, was not a strongly binding tie among the villagers” (Serge Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” in David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays* [Monograph Series no. 25] [New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983], p. 29).

113 Kiernan, “Peasants”, in *Peasants and Politics*, p. 33. This fragile social order worked for the most part prior to the security and other crises of the 1960s and 1970s because it served the minimum requirements necessary for keeping what was still a pre-modern rural economy functioning. When the Vietnam War and the civil war broke out these tenuous bonds began to shatter (see chapter 3) leaving Cambodian society unable, and in the countryside, increasingly unwilling to counter the Khmer Rouge’s attacks on its “enemies”.

As the above description of the village indicates, associational life was almost non-existent. Unlike the traditional Vietnamese village where professional associations, watch groups, and secret societies proliferated for centuries, Cambodian villages contained few of these kinds of organizations. This situation was likely due to a lack of communal economic structures which necessitated the creation of community organizations to manage communal lands and economic tasks. It must be noted that under the colonial administration and continuing under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk after independence in 1953, civic associations such as youth organizations were created. These organizations were established, however, at the behest of the state for the purpose of mobilization and pacification. They were not autonomous associations arising independently out of civil society and therefore did not constitute the kinds of freely formed social organizations indicative of what, as we saw earlier, Robert Putnam calls “civic engagement”.¹¹⁴ The result was the atomization of social life beyond the family. In the absence of sustained non-instrumental social interaction with fellow villagers and those beyond the immediate community, the kinds of cross-cutting cleavages and inclusive organizations Putnam suggests are key to a democratic civic life never developed in rural Cambodia. A sense of fellow feeling and obligation toward members of the wider

114 The French also created similar organizations, for example, *les Jeunes du Cambodge* in 1941. Led by French military officers, the members learned marching, “civic instruction”, and studied “morality” along with various practical skills. At the same time, the colonial administration created the *Mouvement de rassemblement* which was meant to organize youth, teachers, and civil servants. The movement quickly fell apart, however, after the end of the Second World War and was not replaced with any other comparable organization.

community was therefore absent, leaving, as we will see, rural Cambodian society open to the call for genocide and unwilling to defend the urban and ethnic minority victims of the Khmer Rouge.

The most significant form of stratification, however, was the hierarchical stratification of socio-economic groups within society and a closely related and overlapping division between rural and urban.

The long-standing socio-economic hierarchy that developed during the Angkorian period (802-1432 C.E.) and that survived relatively intact right up to the Khmer Rouge's Democratic Kampuchea consisted of three distinct groups. The hierarchy was headed by the elites, namely the Royal family and the pre-colonial aristocracy. The latter were replaced by, or more often were themselves transformed into, high ranking government officials with the arrival of the French.¹¹⁵ Other top-tier elites included military and religious leaders and wealthy and educated urbanites during the colonial and independence periods (1863-1953 and 1954 onward respectively). A second middle group consisted of all those not engaged in manual labour. This group included white collar workers in government, lower ranking military officers, teachers, other professionals, and lesser ranking Buddhist monks. This intermediate strata was further subdivided into "upper" and "lower" ranks depending

115 Until the arrival of the French in 1863 when the Kingdom of Cambodia became a French protectorate, Royal and aristocratic elites exercised and enhanced their power through the possession of entourages, including slaves. When the French moved to officially abolish slavery in 1877 (although the actual practices of slavery would not end for another twenty years) these same elites were left without a power base. Many former aristocratic patrons/slave owners became lower level regional civil servants in the French colonial administration.

on the prestige of the position held by the individual. Historically, the ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese communities were over-represented in this intermediate group as most Khmers were not engaged in commercial and professional pursuits until well into the twentieth century. The final “lower” group consisted of the vast majority of the population: the rural peasantry and “unskilled workers of peasant origin”.¹¹⁶

Upward mobility between these social groups was theoretically possible since group membership was not based on heredity. Mobility could be achieved through education and personal connections. In reality, mobility was rare given a general lack of access to education and the inability of most Cambodians to manipulate the class system. As Ebihara points out, access to education and personal connections often depended on an individual’s prior possession of wealth and power.¹¹⁷ Only in rare circumstances, such as during war, could a peasant who rendered “exceptional service” to a powerful patron be given an official position in the Imperial court system as a reward or could a poor but brilliant child receive an education funded by a wealthy family or the court that would lead to a similar position.¹¹⁸ As such, the three hierarchical strata maintained a high degree of integrity and continuity over time. For the mass of the population, social position was essentially fixed,

116 Ebihara, “The Khmer” in Lebar et al (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, p. 104; Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 12.

117 Ebihara, “Khmer” in Lebar et al (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, p. 104.

118 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 13.

and, as Vickery suggests, “it would have been almost unthinkable to imagine rising above the class into which one was born”.¹¹⁹

It is important to note, however, that age went some distance in ameliorating this otherwise rigid system of social hierarchicalization. With the exception of well educated and wealthy young adults after independence (see the discussion on education below), age always played an important role in leveling the social hierarchy as the elderly, particularly elderly men, were traditionally afforded a high degree of deference and respect within and between social strata. The rules of interpersonal conduct based on age were well defined, tightly prescribing and proscribing interpersonal interaction.¹²⁰

Most personal interaction between members of the hierarchical royalty/elite, official, peasant tripartite structure were of a dependent, patron-clientalistic nature. Everyone below the King (or after independence, the Prime Minister) had a “fixed dependent status that determined his or her obligations to the next higher level”. Peasants, for example, were often the “dependents” of specific individual officials to “whom they paid taxes or *corvée* labour and from whom they received protection”.¹²¹ Although patron-clientalistic relationships between individual members of the social hierarchy meant that members of the three socio-economic groups in the social hierarchy interacted with each other, they

119 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 12.

120 Marie Alexandrine Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society* (trans. Mark W. McLead) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 11; Ebihara, “Khmers” in Lebar et al (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Southeast Asia*, p. 104.

121 Vickery, *Cambodia*, pp. 13–14.

did so primarily one-to-one in the context of dominant and subordinate, primarily instrumental relationships. Interaction was also highly prescribed and proscribed according to mostly Buddhist precepts of knowing one's place in the social hierarchy, saving face, and avoiding open disagreement or conflict.

As a result, not only was interaction between members of different groups for the most part unequal, with the peasants in the least advantageous position, but most Cambodians developed a "preference for social relationships based on mutual recognition of a social hierarchy that was clearly spelled out and adhered to". Clarity in the nature of relationships dictated appropriate address and behaviour based on recognition of and deference to authority in a given social situation. The "greatest anxiety in a social situation was produced when social relationships", and therefore expectations, "were unknown or when one party did not act as expected".¹²² A premium was also placed on saving "face" and of avoiding conflict and offense. As will be discussed later, these concerns led to a further lack of development of individual or collective mechanisms for effective conflict management and resolution. While the goal was primarily to avoid open conflict at all costs, the result was at times an outburst of violent conflict because there was little other outlet for pent-up individual and collective frustrations.

Finally, a widening urban-rural split began to open up during the colonial and independence periods that further exacerbated societal fragmentation along both socio-

122 David J. Steinberg, *Cambodia: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (Revised Edition) (Survey of World Cultures Series) (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1959), pp. 273–274.

economic and regional lines. With the advent of the French colonial administration in 1863, increasing numbers of Cambodians—many of them from the ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese minorities—moved to the cities to work as lower-level administration officials (Vietnamese) or as merchants and traders in the commercial sector of the nascent urban colonial economy (Chinese). Once the French took control of the capital, Phnom Penh, in 1889,¹²³ modern stone and brick buildings were erected, including hospitals, military barracks and prisons, and administrative and commercial buildings. Canals were constructed for drainage and shipping while a network of paved roads was put down to service the city. By the early 1920s Phnom Penh had grown to 70,000 inhabitants and was populated by mostly upper-class Khmer elites and the ethnic minorities, including 10,000 Vietnamese and 20,000 Chinese, and a smaller number of Europeans, each of which lived in their separate quarters in the capital.¹²⁴

Prior to independence other smaller provincial cities and towns were also resident to many non-Khmers. These centres operated as mostly Chinese-run financial and trading centres with a smaller but important group of mostly Vietnamese working as artisans and traders, all overlaid at the highest level by the French administrative structure. Entry of rural Khmers into the cities at this time was difficult because of the dominant role played

123 The colonial Governor General at the time, deLanessan, convinced King Norodom to sign an agreement with the colonial administration waiving all of his rights to the city's land and everything that was constructed on it in return for an annual rent of 30,000 piasters.

124 John Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolour: King Sisowath and the 'Mission Civilisatrice', 1904–1927* (Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 37) (Monash: Monash Asia Institute, 1996), p. 74.

by the ethnic minorities and French colonial *functionnaires* in the running of the local economy and the colonial administration. Such migration was possible through relatively limited opportunities to join the now largely symbolic royal administration, usually as a reward for personal service to urban-based Khmer elites. But even these positions were relatively rare as most of them went to the children of established Khmer elites already based in the cities.¹²⁵ Because French officials were situated in the capital and other provincial cities, and, therefore, required the comforts to which they were accustomed, and because the French maintained a lack of interest in developing the economy beyond resource extraction and the production and export of food stuffs, little economic or infrastructure development was pursued in the countryside where most ethnic Khmers lived, save a system of highways. The concomitant absence of modernization and expansion of the education system for the benefit of all Cambodians (see below), particularly the vast majority of ethnic Khmers that lived in the countryside, meant that the colonial period changed much in the cities and for the Khmer elite and the ethnic minorities who lived there, but little in the countryside.

After independence large numbers of Khmers did begin to migrate to the towns and cities to take up newly created positions in the civil service under Prince Sihanouk's program of "Khmerization". Secondary and post-secondary students also migrated to the cities to advance their education. Many stayed on to enter, or try to enter, the civil service

125 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 18.

or other professions such as teaching. As we shall see in the second dimension, the reluctance of many of these students to return to their towns and villages, even when they could not secure gainful employment in the cities, created tension and animosity both in the cities where they languished and between the city and countryside which they now spurned as beneath them. Other rural residents began to migrate to the cities by the late 1960s because of increasing rural landlessness and declining rice yields because of the increase in combat operations on their lands (see chapter 3 for the history of the conflicts). Most found low paying menial work.¹²⁶

With the main exception of rural economic migrants, this geographical split between urban and rural (which will be referred to again in the economic and education sections below), mapped on to the three social strata described above, with the first two groups—the elite and non-manual labourers—populating the urban areas and the “lower” peasantry making up most of the rural population. While other exceptions to this division existed, with a tiny minority of wealthy landowners residing in the countryside, mostly in Battambang in the northwest, as well as lower ranking Buddhist monks charged with maintaining the village *Wat* system, the division between urban and rural was, however, unambiguous, with the poor rural peasantry majority remaining isolated for both economic and geographical reasons from the small yet powerful urban elite. Most peasant villagers maintained little contact with their urban countrymen save to pay their taxes, “abide by

126 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 160.

national government policies”, and to “hear its propaganda”.¹²⁷ Despite this disconnect from urban life, the rural peasantry nonetheless maintained a deep respect for the King and the Prime Minister.¹²⁸ As we shall see in the second dimension, the physical and socio-economic separation of urban and rural Cambodians fostered and was reinforced by mutually antagonistic perceptions of urbanites as elitist, decadent, and corrupt in the eyes of many peasants, and the peasantry as tradition bound, backward, and unworthy of the time, effort, or resources of the urban centres and their citizens.

Within the countryside a less obvious, but no less significant regional divide existed. The regional and ethnic split in this instance was between the majority lowland wet-rice, mostly Khmer peasants and the cities on the one hand, and the indigenous hill tribe people in the highlands in the north and northeast on the other. Vickery describes the indigenous population as separated from the lowlanders by “distance, poverty, ingrained hostility, or a conscious preference for autarky”. This separation left the tribals “outside of Cambodian society which everyone knew and which Phnom Penh considered the only Cambodian society of any importance”.¹²⁹ For their part, the indigenous hill tribes were particularly contemptuous of urban dwellers, seeing urbanites as lazy and corrupt. Because of this perception, and because of their physical and economic separation from the very system the

127 Ebihara, “Khmer” in Lebar et al (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, p. 103.

128 Ebihara, “Khmer” in Lebar et al (eds.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, pp. 103–104.

129 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 5.

Khmer Rouge sought to destroy, Pol Pot and his subordinates would recruit large numbers of indigenous teens and men into the Khmer Rouge in the late 1960s, as will be discussed further in the second dimension and in chapter 3.

2. Education System

For centuries, a significant source of socialization into, and reinforcement of, restrictive social interaction and support for the established social hierarchy was the traditional education system, the so-called “pagoda system”. Dating back to the replacement of Hindu Brahmanism with Theravada Buddhism as the dominant religious and social institution in Cambodia, the pagoda system provided Cambodian boys with a basic primary education administered by local monks. The emphasis was on the moral teachings of Buddhism through the study of a series of poems or “treaties” called *chbap*. The poems illustrated the need to know one’s place in society and to act accordingly. Failure to do so would lead to personal and social disruption and unwanted conflict. In his translation and analysis of the *chbap*, David Chandler notes that the poems are silent regarding proper methods of collective action or collective awareness. Instead the poems were taught in pre-colonial and modern times as a justification of, and everyday method for, accepting and dealing with the existing social system.¹³⁰ Anthropologist Marie Martin suggests that the precepts taught in the poems were “good in theory, but rigidly taught, they harm[ed] the individual and ultimately the society” because they taught individuals to accept their station and life

130 David P. Chandler, “Normative Poems (Chbap) and Pre-Colonial Cambodian Society” in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1984), pp. 274–275, 277–278.

circumstances without any guidance for how to deal with conflicts and the changes wrought by colonialism, independence, economic development or the importation of non-traditional mainly western values, ideologies, and practices.¹³¹

Lack of reforms to the education system by the French, particularly in the countryside, and the uncoordinated expansion and modernization of the system after independence by Sihanouk also exacerbated the tensions both between urban and rural Cambodians and between the ethnic minorities largely based in the cities and the majority Khmers peasantry. The French were not interested in modernizing the pagoda system during the colonial period in large part because they believed that most ethnic Khmers were too conservative and “backward” to be taught in a modern education system. Choosing to believe the Vietnamese’s unflattering interpretation of the Khmers’ supposedly limited cultural and intellectual abilities, and having decided among themselves that the Vietnamese were naturally more clever and amenable to being taught the standard French curriculum, the French decided to concentrate their reformative efforts in the Vietnamese protectorates of Tonkin and Annam, the colony of Cochin China, and among the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia. The French also elected to keep the pagoda system believing that the Cambodian population could be kept pacific through the continued teachings of Buddhist principles. In addition, the marked failure of Christian, mostly Catholic, missionaries to convert large numbers of Cambodians and to subsequently establish private Western-style

131 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 10.

Christian schools, meant that there was no solid foundation upon which the French administration could build a modern mass education system.

What limited attempts that did occur in the nineteenth century to improve the pagoda schools were often resisted by local monks who saw as heresy attempts to introduce Western education methods and curriculum into the schools. Reforms were also hampered by a paucity of printed material aside from religious texts, as well as the poor quality of the teacher-monks and their inability to adapt to new pedagogical methods. This conservatism suited the French. Twenty years into the French mandate there were only one hundred students in French language primary schools, only eight of whom were Cambodian, the rest were children of French colonial officials.¹³²

Reforms were, however, forthcoming for the very limited number of Cambodia's mostly Francophone elite consisting of Royal courtiers and family members as well as the Vietnamese and Chinese minorities living in the cities. For this small group the French envisioned a school system that would train a cohort of lower level *functionnaires* who would work in the colonial administration and economy. As one French official put it in characteristically paternalistic fashion:

The aim of French education [in Cambodia] is in the first place to create elites, assistants [sic] with a view to a useful collaboration, to help in the moral and intellectual uplifting of the race, to augment its dignity and well being and to enrich their country by intelligent

132 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolour*, pp. 221–230, 232.

and sustained labour. It includes within it conserving their own characteristic features, and of leading little by little the indigenous spirit up to the light of the West.¹³³

To this end, elite Cambodians were sent to France to train as interpreters and other vocations useful to the French and, after the 1880s, to Saigon and Soc Trang in Cochinchina or to the only post-secondary institution in Indochina in Hanoi.

Eventually in 1924 the colonial administration opted for a new three-tier education system: reformed pagoda or primary village schools, *khet* (provincial schools) in the provincial capitals, *ecole residentielles* (residential schools) located in each local *circonscription* administrative unit, and by the 1920s the secondary school *ecole Sisowath* in Phnom Penh. The so-called “reformed” pagoda schools did expand primary education throughout the country, although most students were still men and boys.¹³⁴ Instruction continued to be in Khmer and traditional Buddhist teachings were augmented with some modern academic and vocational content. These rural primary schools were supported by a number of paid *moniteurs* (French assistant teachers) but the vast majority of pagoda schools continued to rely on the unpaid labour of poorly qualified monks who remained hostile to Western educational content and pedagogy. As a result, teaching quality in most rural villages remained poor. The production and supply of new Khmer language textbooks was also extremely low, while student absenteeism continued to be a serious problem as

133 RSC 304, M. Humbert-Hesse, “Rapport General sur L’enseignements au Cambodge, Janvier 1923”, 10 January 1923 quoted in Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 220.

134 By the early 1920s there were over 2,200 reformed pagoda schools across the country with a total of 37,000 students enrolled (Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 239).

,most peasant families preferred to keep their children home to work on the family farm for economic reasons and because the students found the curriculum to be useless in their everyday lives. Similar problems plagued the *khét* schools which were slow to open.¹³⁵

Rural education got a boost, at least in terms of infrastructure and availability, during the first decade and a half after independence in 1953. Based on Sihanouk's vaguely articulated goal of extending modern Western education from the cities to the masses in order to end high rates of adult illiteracy and to promote economic development through compulsory universal education, the government embarked on a massive campaign to expand the education system. Sihanouk's fixation with quantity over quality, however, failed to overcome many of the shortcomings of the colonial school system, particularly in the countryside. The curriculum was frequently inaccurate or was perceived as irrelevant to peasants who required basic literacy and technical agricultural training.¹³⁶ Shortages of supplies, adequately trained faculty, and Khmer language materials were not overcome before the war and bombing in the countryside in the late 1960s and early 1970s brought educational reforms and, in some places, education altogether to an abrupt halt.

In the cities, however, education reform did take hold, but in doing so, inflamed tensions between city dwellers—including students who had come from the farm to the city for an education—and those who remained in the countryside. Under Sihanouk, the

135 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 239.

136 David M. Ayers, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Education, the State, and Development in Cambodia, 1953–1998* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), pp. 39–40.

number and quality of secondary schools increased in the cities and, in 1960, the first Cambodian university, the *Université royale khmer* was opened in Phnom Penh. The increase in educational opportunities was not without its problems. Although by the early 1960s most subjects were taught in the Khmer language in primary and secondary schools, many technical and scientific subjects continued to be taught primarily in French. The continued use of French in the school system was the result not only of the post-independence existence of elite private French language schools, but also because most of the best qualified high school and university instructors were educated in the colonial-era private French system or in France. As well, shortages of Khmer language textbooks, difficulties with translating French texts into Khmer, and technical problems with the mass production of texts in the Khmer alphabet, hindered the Khmerization of the school system. The result was that graduates of Khmer language primary and secondary schools under performed in, or dropped out of, post-secondary technical and academic institutions at much higher rates than students schooled in the French lycees. The latter students were mostly the urban-based Khmer elites, as well as ethnic Vietnamese or Chinese, while the former were mostly ethnic Khmers, many of them from the countryside.¹³⁷

The split between urban and rural was further exacerbated by the preference among students for training in the humanities, arts, and their expectations of jobs in the civil service rather than commerce, industry, the professions, trades, or, most significantly,

137 Ayers, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, p. 28.

agriculture. Although the civil service expanded greatly in the post-independence period—not the least as a result of nepotism and corruption—the public sector could not absorb all of the graduates who expected to be employed by the state while the private, technical, and agricultural sectors were deprived of much needed expertise. An increasing number of well educated but under- or unemployed young people schooled in a Westernized school system created a reservoir of politically active young adults on both the right and left (see chapter 3, especially the aftermath of the Samlaut Rebellion and the March 1970 coup) with surplus time on their hands to harass the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes or to engage in radical communist politics as recruits to the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, because these students for the most part rejected traditional mores and behaviour and considered as beneath them returning to the countryside to help develop the most significant sector of the economy and society, the education of minority and elite urban Khmers set the stage for what David Ayers suggests was a “profound transformation” that “proved [to be] a significant factor in undermining the solidarity of the traditional cohesive social system” which signaled the beginning of a “social revolution”.¹³⁸ As we shall see in dimension two, the contempt with which newly educated urban Khmers came to regard their fellow citizens in the countryside and vice versa, fostered considerable regional antipathies between both groups—antipathies that the Khmer Rouge leadership themselves

138 Ayers, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, pp. 28–29; Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, p. 10.

internalized and ruthlessly exploited among their peasant supporters during the civil war and the genocide.

3. Economic System

The economic system in Cambodia was historically characterized by geographically isolated land parcelization and, by the mid-twentieth century, increasing centralization of land ownership coupled with commercial and light industrial development in the cities. For centuries the primary economic unit was the small independent family farm engaged in wet-rice cultivation on plots of approximately one hectare in size. This relatively unusual circumstance—at least by Asian standards—was a direct result of Cambodia’s abundant forest cover, mountains, and lakes, and the resulting parcelization of farming land into the few isolated areas with sufficiently fertile soil. Because Cambodia does not have highly fertile rice-growing deltas, large land holdings held by landlords or communal farming arrangements were not the norm. Early land parcelization due to geographical separation led in turn to the fragmentation of the rural economy from an early stage.¹³⁹ Added to this fragmentation was the general economic exploitation of the countryside by the cities, greater levels of economic development in the urban economy, and the domination of certain sectors of the urban and rural economies by the ethnic minorities during the colonial and post-colonial period. Each of these themes will be developed in the narrative below.

139 Ian W. Mabbett and David P. Chandler, “The Khmers” in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981*, p. 23.

The traditional pre-colonial economic system, which for centuries was essentially an agricultural system, was intended and did function in good years to provide the basics for the peasantry, maintain the Imperial “leisure class” in the cities, and produce a small surplus for export. National wealth was produced from the land, which was formally owned by the Monarch, and collected by Royal officials.¹⁴⁰ Aside from supporting the courtier class, wealth collected from the countryside was mostly used by the Imperial court and Buddhist religious organizations for building local *Wats* from which the local population received religious, social, and educational services. Some of the taxes collected by officials remained in their own hands in lieu of a salary paid by the court.¹⁴¹ This system rested on “absolutism”, “institutionalized corruption”, and the “divine right of the well-born”.¹⁴²

The advent of colonialism saw the mapping of the French colonial economic system on to the existing system. The colonial economy was centred around resource and agricultural extraction from the countryside for the maintenance of the protectorate and for export to France.¹⁴³ Much like the old system, the French, headquartered in the cities, extracted raw materials from the countryside and engaged in direct taxation. In 1892 the colonial

140 Traditionally, all of the land in Cambodia was the exclusive property of the Crown. The King, however, was not a landowner in the feudal European sense and did not derive taxes from the land as such. Instead, taxes were paid in crops or livestock and the land itself was effectively the tiller’s so long as it remained under cultivation.

141 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 12.

142 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 55.

143 Within the French Empire, colonies and protectorates, such as Cambodia had to be self-sustaining and did not received financial or other resources from France.

administration took direct control over taxation, changing the method of payment from a set quantity owed in goods, usually rice or livestock as had previously been the case, to monetary payments. The requirement that all protectorates and colonies be self-sustaining generated the need for ever increasing tax revenues to fund all of the administration's activities from public works and infrastructure, most of which were built in the cities, and to pay French and other officials. Over time the tax system grew into a complex and often times onerous set of taxes on salt, alcohol, opium, rice and other crops, export-import goods as well as the levying of extra fees for government services. Poor Cambodians who could not pay their taxes were required to provide ninety days of *corvée* labour per year, usually for the construction of infrastructure projects. This provision was a source of widespread discontent and was exacerbated by the fact that even if an individual could pay his taxes, he could still be liable for other forms of labour. Most peasants did not have sufficient cash reserves to afford their tax bill and had to resort to selling some of their rice, which they often needed to sustain themselves, for cash or hired themselves out on the off-season.¹⁴⁴ The colonial rural tax burden, and the extraction of other resources from the rural economy, continued and expanded an already exploitative economic system in which the rural peasant population received unequal treatment from the colonial administration and the mostly urban-based Cambodians that helped run it.

144 David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 153–155.

The tax burden was ameliorated in some cases, however, by local officials who deliberately under-represented the number of people under their jurisdictional control in order to spread the tax burden around. Other officials engaged in the same practice, not for the benefit of the peasants for whom they were responsible, but to “skim off a profit for themselves”.¹⁴⁵ The latter practice points to another form of exploitation and unequal relationship between the urban-based elite and the rural peasantry: corruption. As noted, in pre-colonial times, court officials responsible for tax collection kept some of the wealth (rice, other crops, livestock) for themselves in lieu of a salary. During the colonial and independence periods, local officials were put on a salary, but many officials continued to see their positions as ends in themselves and as a continued means of extracting wealth for their own personal use from the peasantry. Colonial practices of extracting wealth from the countryside in the form of monetary taxation, which occurred in conjunction with the commercialization of the urban economy and the influx of Western luxury goods brought by the French, produced strong incentives for Cambodian officials to engage in corruption to the disadvantage of the peasants. So strong was the association with official corruption and the advent of colonialism that the word for soliciting a bribe for government services at the time and after independence was *bonjour*. Corruption by government functionaries continued to a much greater degree after independence, as will be discussed in chapter 3,

145 Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 16.

and seriously exacerbated urban-rural antagonisms by the late 1960s up to the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975.

Societal fragmentation and inequality within the economic system also escalated during and after the French mandate when the size of rural land holdings began to increase in the mid-twentieth century. This situation eventually created economic divisions between those who benefitted from the centralization of land ownership—namely a small but growing number of rural landlords mostly in Battambang in the west and absentee landlords from the cities—and the peasants who lost their family farms and now found themselves landless. Until the 1930s most peasants owned enough land to support their immediate family, usually one hectare of rice land for a family of three or four. Historian Ben Kiernan's research on land centralization shows that the 80% of Cambodian farmers in 1930 who owned less than five hectares of land accounted for 44% of the land cultivated while more than half of the land under cultivation was owned by the wealthiest 20% of farmers. By 1950, four-fifths of the rural population subsisted on less than two hectares at a time when family size was increasing to an average of six persons—a size that required at least two or even three hectares of land for subsistence farming. The result was a marked rise in the proportion of tenant farmers and sharecroppers who were forced to sell their now insufficient landholdings and to become workers for local landowners. In 1950, tenants and sharecroppers represented only 4% of the rural workforce. By 1962 it was 6% and only

ten years later, 20%.¹⁴⁶ Kiernan's research also shows that at the same time landlordism began to increase significantly, especially after independence in 1953 when wealthy urbanites, enriched by foreign capital and public service salaries (official and unofficial), bought up land near towns from ruined peasants. Landlords with holdings larger than ten hectares increased from 4,500 in 1930 to 10,491 in 1950 while those with more than twenty hectares climbed from 1,191 in 1956 to 5,020 in just six years by 1962.¹⁴⁷

The impact of increasing land centralization was the simultaneous development of a group of landlords and financially independent peasants on the one hand, and a class of "rootless, destitute rural dwellers with very few ties to the land" on the other.¹⁴⁸ Hou Yuon, a Khmer Rouge economist, member of the Cambodian National Assembly and sometimes cabinet minister under Sihanouk in the early 1960s, and eventual victim of the genocide in 1975, noted in his PhD dissertation the trend toward land dispossession and the way in which it began to break down already fragmentary peasant social relationships. Referring to this group as a new "semi-proletariat", Hou Yuon described a desperate group of very poor peasants, tenant farmers, permanent and casual farm workers with "either no land, no tools, and no financial means or having very small plots of land with insufficient

146 Kiernan, "Introduction" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics*, p. 4.

147 Kiernan, "Introduction" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics*, pp. 4–7

148 Kiernan, "Introduction" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics*, p. 7.

equipment”.¹⁴⁹ They were “completely ruined—all those who [were] more or less destitute through exploitation and usury”. Hou Yuon continued that these people became “rootless”, “often pushed out of their own villages by misery and hunger”, abandoned by the other villagers who referred to them as “vagabonds, unknowns, and wanderers” or “thieves, gamblers, vagrants, infamous individuals”.¹⁵⁰ While this group was not in the majority, by the late 1960s “their position was desperate enough for them to have nothing at all to lose in any kind of social revolution”—“even if it brought few material benefits to the rural population as a whole”.¹⁵¹

Finally, within the rural economy, economic divisions were opened up with the advent of a limited French plantation system. Owned and operated by French businesses who produced and exported rubber for use in France, the plantations did little to benefit either the rural economy as a whole or individual Khmer peasants. Most of the agricultural workers on the plantations were either local ethnic Vietnamese or were immigrants recruited from the Vietnamese protectorates or Cochin China because the French assumed that the Vietnamese were more capable and willing to adjust to the rigors of modern market-driven agribusiness than the Khmer peasantry. French plantation owners also claimed to be dissatisfied with what they said were the poor work habits of the few Khmers

149 Hou Yuon, “Colonialization and Modernization” in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981*, pp. 37–47.

150 Hou Yuon, “Colonialization and Modernization” in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981*, p. 48.

151 Kiernan, “Introduction” in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics*, pp. 7, 13.

who did work on the plantations.¹⁵² Life on the plantations was far from ideal and few Khmers were prepared to work regular shifts or to be employed as labourers rather than work their own land according to their own schedules. Although work on the plantations was grueling and sometimes dangerous, it nonetheless afforded the mostly Vietnamese workforce with a slightly more secure source of income, albeit a rather meager one. The over-representation of the Vietnamese in the plantation system continued right up until combat operations and the US bombing campaign took most of the still French-owned plantations out of production by spring 1970.¹⁵³ Similarly the cultivation of and trade in spices and peppers, mostly in the Pursat region, which had begun in the pre-colonial period and was dramatically expanded under the French, was dominated by the Chinese and Vietnamese minorities.¹⁵⁴

The relative impoverishment and exploitation of the peasantry versus the enrichment of the urban elite from the colonial period onward was, as had already been suggested indirectly above, stimulated by the generally greater development of the urban economy relative to the countryside. Although the French made little effort to foster industrial

152 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 262.

153 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 263.

154 Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, p. 63.

development in the cities, the colonial administration did take steps to expand the commercial sector, light industry, and the civil service.¹⁵⁵

Given that the colonial economy was largely based on the export of raw materials, agricultural products, and traditional crafts from Indochina to France, the commercial sector of the urban economy by necessity expanded under the French mandate beyond the limited commercial economic activity that existed prior to colonialization. The primary benefactors of this expansion were not only the French but also the Chinese and Sino-Khmer merchants and financiers who had dominated trade and finance in the cities and towns since pre-colonial times. After the end of the French mandate, the urban commercial sector continued to grow—not because of high levels of government investment or entrepreneurship, but because of the importation and sale of Western luxury goods purchased by often corrupt government officials. Rather than investing their legal and illegal financial resources or using their personal wealth to start up their own businesses, civil servants, military officers, and politicians preferred to spend the money on themselves through the purchase of personal goods and services.¹⁵⁶ As with so many other differences between the urban and rural society and economy, the increasing wealth of the cities by the

155 During their mandate the French did little to encourage entrepreneurship or to introduce new industrial products or production methods. In the early twentieth century the colonial administration did open rudimentary mining and quarrying operations in a number of provinces but output was extremely low (see Tully, *Cambodia Under the Tricolore*, pp. 54–55). By the end of the colonial period the gains in the industrial sector were modest to say the least: one distillery and a few plants for treating latex on rubber plantations. As an observer put it, “[n]othing was envisioned for development, not even light industry useful to the people” (Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 77).

156 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 24.

1960s—which was both in part generated and paid for through official corruption—contributed to the increasingly fraught relationship between urban and rural Cambodians.

At the beginning of the French mandate, light industry in the cities was centred around the production and trade of traditional handicrafts. This kind of economic activity was encouraged by the colonial administration because of the prevailing perception among the French that Cambodia was a quaint traditional society and because of French archeological and anthropological interest in Khmer culture and architecture from the Angkorian period. Phnom Penh and other cities became the cite of mostly family owned workshops that produced traditional crafts for sale on the domestic market and for export back to France.¹⁵⁷ As noted earlier many of the artisans who operated these workshops were ethnic Vietnamese.

The industrial development of the urban economy after independence involved the limited production of consumer goods as well as the belated expansion, mostly by the state or through foreign assistance programs or government subsidies, of heavy industry. By 1962 textile mills, cotton ginning mills, paper mills, brick foundries, machine tool processing plants, and one iron-ore plant were in operation.¹⁵⁸ Some of these operations were modestly successful, while others were hobbled by a lack of needed inputs and expertise, and poor quality control. More significantly for the overall enrichment of

157 Martin: *Cambodia*, pp. 38–39.

158 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol.38, no. 9 (November 1962), p. 452.

Cambodian's living in the cities, but for all the wrong reasons, was the nationalization of the banking sector, as well as a number of light and heavy industrial firms in December 1963 (see chapter 3). Sihanouk's decision to remove control of the financial and industrial sectors from "foreign" middlemen (i.e., the Chinese) fueled a rapid increase in official corruption as government officials with little expertise, but a healthy sense of personal entitlement and close ties to Sihanouk used their positions within these organizations to feather their nests. This practice did nothing to redeem urban Cambodians in the eyes of an increasingly impoverished and, after the war and bombings began, displaced peasantry.

Finally, the growth of the civil service in the cities, both under the French and after independence, widened the economic gap between city and countryside and the perception that a small group of Khmer urban elites and ethnic minorities were the sole beneficiaries of economic development and corruption—benefits to which many urbanites believed they were entitled (see below in the second dimension). Anxious to keep their administrative costs down and to concentrate their personnel in the major urban centres like Phnom Penh and Battambang, the French came to rely heavily on local employees to staff the lower echelons of the colonial administration. But just as the French preferred to engage the services of Chinese merchants and traders to run the commercial economy, colonial administrators declined to hire Khmers (except local Khmer elites with Royal connections) in favour of ethnic Vietnamese or immigrants brought in from Vietnam to staff the civil service. Employing the same logic used to justify the provision of higher, mostly French,

education to the Vietnamese, as well as the hiring of Vietnamese workers on the plantations, the colonial administration believed that the Indochinese most able to serve as administrative employees were not the Khmer but the supposedly more westernizable Vietnamese. It was not until after independence when Sihanouk came to power that the civil service became “Khmerized”. Sihanouk’s Khmerization program rapidly expanded the civil service and brought large numbers of ethnic Khmers already in the cities, as well as those originally from the countryside who had come to Phnom Penh for secondary and post-secondary education, into government employment. Their official salaries plus whatever they could skim off the government or ordinary Cambodians requiring government services not only increased the amount of money available to these individuals, it also helped the urban economy to grow, particularly in the goods and services sector. Little of this money, except for the purchase of land by absentee urban landlords, was spent in the rural economy. The expansion of the civil service and the enrichment of civil service employees, politicians, and military officers that went along with it further soured the relationship between urban and rural Cambodians, as did the memory that until the 1950s many colonial employees were not Khmers but urban based Vietnamese.

We can see, then, that unequal and exclusionary group interaction manifested itself at several levels in the Cambodian case from the family, village life, geography, the social stratification of society, and economic inequality between social groups. The first three served to prohibit meaningful non-instrumental interaction between members of different

groups. The economic system and the economic changes that began to occur during the middle of the last century, when combined with the hierarchical social structure of Cambodian society, served to reinforce inter-group inequality, both real and perceived. Prior to the Khmer Rouge period, Cambodian social life was fragmented, with few cross-cutting relationships or institutions to bind Khmer society together. Simultaneously, social and economic inequality invested in this fragmented and stratified social system a significant element of what the KR leadership and their followers saw as exploitation.

The lack of social cohesion left different groups in society, particularly urbanites and the new middle class, isolated, and society as a whole incapable of uniting to defend its members from the Khmer Rouge once the genocide began. As we will see in chapter 4, the fragmentation of society also informed the Khmer Rouge's identification of targets for elimination according to radical class analyses that conceptualized urban socio-economic groups and the ethnic minorities as exploiters or reactionaries who could never be part of the revolution and who posed a mortal threat to it. The poorest of the peasantry, many (but not all) of whom supported the Khmer Rouge were receptive to this message given their position at the bottom end of the old social and economic hierarchy. As more and more of them became landless, rootless, and destitute for economic and security reasons by the late 1960s, the poorest of the peasantry came to believe that they had little at stake in the old system. Having been shunned by those who did—namely better off, well educated, Westernized urbanites in the cities—many rural Cambodians were willing to

allow the Khmer Rouge to turn the tables on their fellow countrymen once the genocide began.

B. Exclusionary Conceptions of the Community

The second attitudinal dimension of the permissive political culture is only partially found in pre-DK Cambodia. As outlined in section I of this chapter, the dominant attitudes, values, and beliefs characteristic of the second dimension of the permissive pre-genocide political culture are, first, a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance between groups in society and, second, a restrictive conception of who properly constitutes “authentic” members of the political community. This first cluster of attitudes and perceptions as well as their sources will be the subject of the discussion below, for, as we saw, what is missing in Cambodian political culture is a discernable conception of restricted membership in the political community.

Cultural attitudes and practices concerning a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance had profound implications for the manner in which Cambodians conceptualized their relationship between other individuals and groups during crises which produced a vacillation between passivity and violence, or “disproportionate revenge”. This tendency created the ideational and experiential context for the extreme levels of violence perpetrated by both junior and senior Khmer Rouge cadres during the genocide.

1. Hindu and Buddhist Traditions and Conceptions of the “In” and “Out” Group

The Hindu Brahminic culture reached what became Cambodia (then known as Kambuja) in the ninth century. It ordered life according to a “pyramid-like system” whose “apex was the god-King, Devaraja, who acted as an intermediary between the gods and an earthly social order” organized around strictly defined class, status, rank, and role relationships. Although the Brahminic tradition came to be supplanted by Buddhism, the influence of Brahmanism on the hierarchicalization of social life and conceptions of leadership remained important throughout Cambodia’s subsequent history. This caste-like system, in which conspicuous deference was shown to one’s betters, persisted in social behaviour among Cambodians well into the twentieth century.¹⁵⁹ The Brahminic tradition also contained within it a so-called “warrior” tradition. Among the elite caste it produced both the great architectural achievements of Angkor Wat and a number of costly wars as part of repeated attempts at monarchical grandeur and regional conquest.

Theravada Buddhism replaced Brahmanism as the dominant religious and cultural order with the conversion of King Jayavarman VII (1181–1219). Theravada Buddhism preached equality and extolled individual achievement, merit, and reincarnation. It espoused personal salvation through the individual’s own efforts and sought to achieve peace and tranquility within the human soul. The notion of karma suggested that individuals were reincarnated on the basis of their actions—good and evil—in the present life, and that one’s station in this life was a result of past actions. For many Cambodians this particular understanding

159 Abdulgaffar Peang-Meth, “Understanding the Khmer: Sociological-Cultural Observations” in *Asian Survey*, vol. 13, no. 5 (1991), pp. 445–446.

of karma encouraged a sense of fatalism: the circumstances of one's life were believed to be predestined thereby depriving the individual of control over, or responsibility for, their present fate.

Cambodian political scientist Abdulgaffar Peang-Meth argues that the simultaneous influences of Brahmanism and Buddhism created various conflicts and contradictions. On the one hand, the Hindu-Brahman influence “taught the Khmer to accept the pyramid-like universe of the Devaraja in which the individual is an instrument serving this social order. This Khmer is patient, obedient, accepting, active, and resolute”. On the other hand, Theravada Buddhism taught Khmers to “seek salvation through his own efforts and to seek peace and tranquility within the soul. This Khmer is patient, peaceful, accepting, passive, disinterested, altruistic, gentle and a believer in karma and reincarnation”.¹⁶⁰ Peang-Meth continues that

[i]t is with good reason that the Khmer are described simultaneously as valiant warriors and as peaceful, compassionate, gentle people [who were] capable of engaging in the terror and barbarism of the Khmer Rouge years and in the atrocities committed against the Vietnamese civilians at the outset of formal Cambodian involvement in the Vietnam War in 1970. The Khmer carry within them an ingrained memory of their early leadership in the Southeast Asian region, their capability, even invincibility. Although they have been in eclipse since the thirteenth century, the ‘tiger/warrior’ in them has reappeared at crucial moments when they needed to reassure themselves of their power.¹⁶¹

Although Peang-Meth's analysis is a rather general “national character” argument, he does point to the root of certain salient tensions within Cambodian culture, specifically the

160 Peang-Meth, “Understanding the Khmer”, pp. 446–447.

161 Peang-Meth, “Understanding the Khmer”, p. 447.

problem of passivity and violence, both of which stem from an inability to confront individual and social conflicts before they reach the boiling point, as will be discussed below.

One product of the competing Brahminic and Buddhist traditions in Cambodia was a relatively rigid and enduring understanding of how “in” and “out” group members were to be regarded and treated. The rural poor, for example, usually did tend to maintain an attachment and sense of instrumental mutual obligation to each other—that is, to others within the same social strata—but not to those outside their particular social group. Relationships between fellow members of a family, village or social strata were frequently peaceful and amicable because they were informed by a widely understood and practiced set of social norms that fostered pro-social behaviour. On the other hand, larger socio-political interactions between different or unknown groups within national politics, for example, were often informed by an “extremely salient” feeling of suspicion.¹⁶² Anthropologist Alexander Hinton found that Cambodian socialization practices emphasized that, when interacting within a known community, a person should attempt to “have friendly relations with others” (*roap an knea, reak teak*). Avoiding interpersonal conflict, being friendly and polite was important in order to gain respect from others and thus to gain honour. Individuals who transgressed social norms, in contrast, were subject to “gossip, avoidance, and public censure”. In such a culture, where “face” (*mukh*) is highly valued,

162 Alexander Laban Hinton, “Genocide and Psychosocial Dissonance” in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 98, no. 4 (December 1996), p. 821.

the threat of potentially bringing shame upon one's self represented an effective control over individual behaviour within the social group.¹⁶³

The treatment of out-groups or "enemies" has historically been quite different and has been strongly influenced by the Brahminic notions of status and function. The duty of fulfilling one's "natural" social role varied across place and time. Within a known social group or in the presence of recognized social superiors the individual was expected to behave respectfully. When dealing with an out-group or a recognized "enemy" the individual's *dharma* required him or her to "crush the enemy" (*kamtech khmang*) without hesitation.¹⁶⁴ Although Buddhism promotes peace and harmony, it legitimates the use of force against enemies who threaten the social order by above all else valuing the need to know one's place in society, to maintain social order, and to act accordingly.¹⁶⁵

2. Socio-Economic, Urban-Rural, and Ethnic Antipathies

The cultural barriers to inter-group solidarity, trust, and tolerance discussed above were compounded by emerging antipathies between urban, well educated, upper and middle class westernized Cambodians in the cities and the majority of poor peasants in the

163 Hinton, "Genocide and Psychosocial Dissonance", p. 821.

164 Hinton, "Genocide and Psychosocial Dissonance", p. 822.

165 One of the most enduring stories in Cambodian folklore is the epic *Reamker*. Set in a Brahmanical world of war and duty, it reflects Cambodian ideals about virtuous behaviour within a known community and against an unknown socio-political enemy. The main character, Komphakar, displays proper respect and obedience toward his elder brother and King, Reap, while at court. On the battlefield, he valiantly fights his adversaries to the death in accordance with his duties as a warrior. (Chandler, "Normative Poems", pp. 274-278).

countryside brought on by the uneven development of the national education system and the urban and rural economies. Already divided by hierarchical social stratification and culturally restrictive inter-group behaviour, wealthier urbanites and poorer peasants came to see each other in mutually antagonistic ways that undercut the development of a wider and inclusive sense of national community and solidarity.

As was noted in the first dimension, the reformation of the education system first by the French and then after independence by the Sihanouk regime disproportionately benefitted ethnic Khmer elites and the ethnic minorities in the cities, and from the 1950s onward, rural Khmers who traveled to the cities for further study. Surprisingly, among the latter group was a newly found disdain with which students came to regard their former life as peasants, as well as their family and friends who remained in the countryside. As David Chandler notes “[m]ost high school graduates felt that by virtue of their education, they had stepped up from agriculture or petty commerce and had become intellectuals, immune from manual labour and rural life”.¹⁶⁶ Students who had only recently left their villages in pursuit of an education were “now contemptuous of peasant life and determined to remain in the urban milieu. Often boys with no more than a primary schooling considered themselves intellectuals”. This perception led to what Michael Vickery calls “diploma snobbery”.¹⁶⁷ The general tendency among students, whether urban or rural, to favour

166 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 181.

167 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 21.

secondary and post-secondary studies in the humanities and public administration was, as noted earlier, rooted in a personal desire for status and the prospect of accumulating wealth through the salaries, perks, and opportunities for corruption that came with a civil service or teaching position. As such, “bureaucrats, teachers, and even the unemployed with some education had a privileged status [and] were jealous of their position and presumed prerogatives” vis-à-vis other less well educated Cambodians in both the cities and the countryside.¹⁶⁸ Even among radical leftist students and their teachers and leaders, educated urbanites “[i]n coffee shops and seminars [. . .] complained about the feudal attitudes of the peasantry” while “many conservatives took their [i.e., the peasants’] inferiority for granted”.¹⁶⁹ For their part, many peasants and other less fortunate Cambodians came to see graduates who refused to work in the countryside or at manual or technical jobs, even when not being able to find a coveted spot in the civil service, as the progeny of “an education system [that] was producing an increasingly numerous class of useless people”.¹⁷⁰

Urban-rural antagonism was also fostered by the perception among the urban elite that the peasantry existed to support the growing prosperity in the cities. Many members of this elite simply took the peasantry who worked in agriculture, forestry, and the fisheries for

168 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 21.

169 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 181.

170 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 19.

granted.¹⁷¹ As the cities became more westernized and prosperous “the city folk”, Michael Vickery argues, “began to regard peasants, not just as people who were poorer or less refined, but, because of the agricultural slack season, as people who did not work hard enough”.¹⁷² Urban elites also accepted that, in the post-colonial period, it was entirely appropriate for the revenues generated from the sale of rice, other crops, and raw material extracted from the countryside be used to finance an increasingly luxurious urban lifestyle instead of reinvestment in the rural economy. Rampant corruption by government officials and army officers did little to diminish the offenders’ sense of personal entitlement at the expense of others, including the peasantry.¹⁷³

The attitude of many urban elites was not lost on those in the countryside. Decades before the Khmer Rouge came to power, *Issarak* (an anti-French non-communist guerrilla army) officer, Boun Chan Mul, decried not only the snobbery of the urbanites vis-à-vis the peasantry, but also the generally exclusionary and individualistic attitudes of urban elites whom he claimed were “irresolute, egotistical, equally lacking in generosity and a sense of solidarity, destroying what was meant for others if they could not have it themselves, animated by a spirit of vengeance that included the family of the target of their

171 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 181.

172 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 24.

173 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 16.

criticism”.¹⁷⁴ The knowledge that the rural economy supported urban economic growth and the enrichment of government and other elites led to a situation in which “[s]ome degree of resentment, even hatred, of the towns should have been expected”.¹⁷⁵ This perception would lead many poor farmers and highland tribals to view the deportees from the cities during the genocide as pampered elites who could not or would not adjust to the rigors of rural life because of “laziness, corruption, or factiousness”. As Vickery suggests, there must have been “some *schadenfreude* at seeing pretentious city folk brought down to their level”.¹⁷⁶

Resentment over economic disparity, elitism, and the unpunished corruption of the urban centres was not confined only to ill-feeling about urban Cambodians’ relative economic success. It also had a profound impact on how devout Buddhist peasants interpreted their own chances for accruing merit in this life, hope of a better life in the future, and the seemingly unfair advantage already wealthy elites had in this important cosmic game. In a Buddhist cosmological version of nothing succeeds like success, Cambodians believed that the more money a person had and the more money the person spent, the greater the merit accumulated toward determining the individual’s next life. Those who were already wealthy were in a position to spend their wealth which allowed

174 Bun Chan Mol, *Charit Khmer [Khmer Mores]* (Phnom Penh, 1973), p. 46 quoted in Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 6.

175 Vickery, *Cambodia*, pp. 16–17.

176 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 5.

them to accrue more merit for their next life. Because of their current circumstances, the “poorest peasants [. . .] were deprived by their poverty of the main merit-making and cosmic insurance function of their society’s religion”. Vickery concludes that “we can surmise that some of them, at least, must have felt resentment”.¹⁷⁷

Finally, the poor peasantry and the wealthy elites in the cities failed to evince much solidarity during the civil war (1968–1975) and the American bombing that inflicted disproportionate losses on the countryside. With combat operations confined to rural areas until the last few weeks of the war, and with the concentration of the US bombing campaign in the east until the end of the campaign in 1973 when the bombing spread countrywide (except for in the cities), rural Cambodians bore the brunt of the suffering in terms of casualty rates, the destruction of property, and displacement. As we will see in chapter 3, the Khmer Rouge leadership played on existing hostilities against the urban population, by accusing them of collaborating with the American “imperialists” for their own decadent and hedonistic self-enrichment while constructing a narrative in which the peasantry, the Party, and the Revolutionary Army fought for independence and the end to feudal and capitalistic exploitation. The blatant graft, corruption, and conspicuous consumption by military officers and senior government officials based in the cities particularly irked rural Cambodians whose own lives had become a struggle for survival waged while bombs rained down from the sky, soldiers fought over their fields, and friends

177 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 9

and loved ones died in the cross-fire. Fed by Khmer Rouge propaganda, peasants came to see the civil war as a fight by the cities to preserve their privileges at the expense of the rural areas. From the peasants' perspective, urbanites seemed to care "little or nothing for the problems of the 'other half' of their countrymen" and appeared "to have been quite content to have all the rural rebels bombed away by American planes".¹⁷⁸

Lastly, during the same time period, the Lon Nol regime, and Prime Minister Lon Nol personally, inadvertently primed the conceptual pump for the near extermination of the Vietnamese minority (who made up approximately 10% of the population before 1975) during the genocide by whipping up and magnifying pre-existing anti-Vietnamese sentiments. Lon Nol embraced these sentiments and pushed the anti-Vietnamese conceptual envelope further largely as a response to a steadily climbing number of North Vietnamese Army and National Liberation Front (or "Viet Cong") forces taking refuge or fighting along side the Khmer Rouge inside Cambodia's eastern border. In an attempt to ensure that the majority ethnic Khmers in the countryside did not collaborate with the Vietnamese communist forces or their Khmer Rouge allies, Lon Nol began to publicly draw a clear distinction between the Vietnamese *ymon* ("savages") and what he called the "Mon-Khmer race" as soon as he came to power in March 1970. Supposedly distinguished by proper Buddhist teachings, "racial virtues", and "modern science", Khmers were, in Lon Nol's view, "invincible"—despite the obviously poor performance of his troops on the

178 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 25.

battlefield.¹⁷⁹ The ultimate goals of Lon Nol's self-proclaimed "neo-Khmerism" was the reunification of all Khmers in Southeast Asia as well as return of Kampuchea Krom (southern Vietnam) to Cambodia.¹⁸⁰

To be sure, Lon Nol played the anti-Vietnamese race card in part for purely instrumental reasons, although his racist quasi-mystical conceptions of Khmers and Vietnamese does seem to have been genuine. His forces were on the brink of defeat by the summer of 1970 in large part because of the superior training and equipment of the communist Vietnamese forces who were fighting (temporarily, as it turned out) alongside the then still weak Khmer Rouge. But the extent to which the Prime Minister's racist understandings of the Vietnamese in general—be they from Vietnam or home grown, communist or not—were consonant with the existing anti-Vietnamese attitudes of the Khmer population, was revealed in the public response to a government pogrom launched against the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia in May 1970. After dozens of Vietnamese were massacred by government soldiers in Phnom Penh and its environs or forced to emigrate to South Vietnam, Khmers, individually and collectively, including progressive groups on the left and Buddhist organizations, failed to condemn the killings.¹⁸¹ Fatefully, the rhetoric and actions of the Republican government coincided with an upsurge in racist

179 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 205.

180 Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 348.

181 *FEER*, 11 June 1970, p. 27.

anti-Vietnamese perceptions among the Khmer Rouge leadership. As we will see in chapter 3, beginning in 1973 the most radical faction of the Khmer Rouge broke with their communist comrades in Hanoi and launched an internal purge of the so-called Khmer Rouge “Hanoi cadres” who had spent time training in North Vietnam before returning to Cambodia in 1970–1971. Later during the genocide, the Khmer Rouge would pursue a ruthless program of extermination against the Vietnamese population as well as the remaining Hanoi cadres and other Khmer Rouge suspected of spying for the Vietnamese. This part of the genocide was motivated, as we will see in chapter 4, by similarly racist, but also mortal threat conceptions of the Vietnamese (local or in Vietnam) as foreign “enemies” and *yuon* bent on the destruction of an independent Cambodian state and the Khmer “race”.¹⁸²

3. Passivity and Disproportionate Revenge

The final source of the absence of inter-group solidarity and tolerance is a feature of Cambodian political culture without equivalent in pre-Nazi Germany: the phenomenon of “disproportionate revenge” arising from the highly restrictive nature of social interaction and the manner in which this cultural practice inhibited the resolution of conflicts between individuals and groups. As we have already seen, both the Hindu-Brahman tradition and the Buddhist tradition highly prescribed and proscribed social behaviour as well as the acceptance of the social hierarchy. Social life was traditionally held together by a shared

182 Regrettably, the present day Cambodian government has not been shy about playing the anti-Vietnamese race card when in need of a convenient scapegoat.

belief that people's social positions were more or less permanent. A small number of elites were "perceived from below as meritorious", while the elite's viewed an "undifferentiated mass of poor" from above as "undeserving of respect".¹⁸³ Serge Thion notes that inter-group perceptions of the fixed nature of the existing hierarchy and the acceptance of dependence and superiority within the system was strong well into the twentieth century: "The rectitude of these intransitive relationships has been drummed into everyone from birth. Cambodian proverbs and didactic literature is filled with references to the helplessness of the individual and to the importance of accepting power relationships as they are".¹⁸⁴

Within the social hierarchy the primary social rule was to "be discreet, unobtrusive, keep your station"—i.e., a good *neak cuo* or "someone who knows his place".¹⁸⁵ This injunction, along with showing appropriate deference to authority based on status and age, created a highly ingrained taboo against openly contradicting others while keeping quiet no matter what the source or degree of disagreement between individuals. When inevitable personal rivalries occurred there was, according to Martin, a lack of effective communication between Khmers even over "important collective social, political, and cultural problems". She further argues that this inability to communicate freely among each other

183 Mabbett and Chandler, "The Khmers" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics*, p. 224.

184 Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Revolution and Its Aftermath*, p. 12.

185 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 11.

made it “almost impossible” for individuals to “struggle in constructive ways” when they needed to, and for society as a whole to unite. The latter problem stemmed directly from the Buddhist education system in which the recitation of Buddhist and other cultural principles were stressed in favour of more modern skills, including free and self-directed inter-personal and inter-group interaction (see dimension one).¹⁸⁶

The most important byproduct of these restrictions on social interaction was a lack of effective individual and collective conflict management mechanisms. Although usually highly constrained in their interpersonal behaviour, when restraints were forgotten, removed, or altered, usually due to some sort of extraordinary or extreme circumstance, the result was often a violent outburst of pent-up frustrations. Sudden explosions of violence were frequently associated with a public loss of face at the hands of another. Offense could lead to a lack of control and possible violence, what one Khmer commentator has described as a kind of “madness” similar to going berserk, the experience of *amok* among the Vikings of medieval Europe, which the Khmer referred to *areak coan* or to “be[ing] possessed”.¹⁸⁷

Similarly, violent responses to a loss of face caused by another have also been associated with what is known as *kum*: a “grudge”. Genocide survivor Dr. Haing S. Ngor, made famous for depicting New York Times translator Dith Pran in the film *The Killing Fields*,

186 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 14.

187 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 15.

describes *kum* as “a long standing grudge leading to revenge much more damaging than the original injury. If I hit you with my fist and you wait five years and then shoot me in the back one dark night, that is *kum* [. . .] Cambodians know all about *kum*”.¹⁸⁸

Anthropologist Alexander Laban Hinton argues that *kum* as a result of real injury or a public loss of face often leads to the meting out of *karsangsoek* or “disproportionate revenge”.¹⁸⁹ Hinton suggests that the cultural model of disproportionate revenge is a “form of knowledge which most Cambodians have internalized and may be inclined to enact in given circumstances”—usually in the aftermath of individual or collective injury or loss of face.¹⁹⁰ Like the pre-genocide permissive political culture formulated in this study, the “cultural knowledge” of disproportionate revenge “constitutes a crucial site upon which genocidal regimes can work”, with perpetrator elites “us[ing] these highly salient cultural

188 Haing S. Ngor, *A Cambodian Odyssey* (London: MacMillan, 1987), p. 9. Having survived the Killing Fields, Ngor was shot to death in February 1996 outside his home in Los Angeles by members of the Oriental Lazy Boyz gang in a botched robbery.

189 Alexander Laban Hinton, “A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide”, *American Ethnologist*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1998), p. 353.

190 One of the sources of socialization into *karsangsoek* was, and continues to be, the widespread teaching, recitation, and dramatization of poet Santhor Mok’s nineteenth century epic poem *Tum Teav* (named for the two Romeo and Juliet-like main characters). After two young lovers are prevented from marrying, King Rama finds out that his authority over the marriage, which he explicitly sanctioned, has been disregarded by a subordinate official who, for his own selfish reasons, prevented the marriage with tragic consequences for the two lovers. Enraged by his public loss of face at the hands of his underling, the King orders the official, Archoun, and his family and relatives seven generations removed to be buried up to their necks in the ground and their heads chopped off with an iron plow and harrow. All members of Archoun’s political faction were to be boiled alive and residents of his district forbidden to leave the area (Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 354).

models to motivate individuals to commit violent atrocities”.¹⁹¹ As Haing Ngor’s description of *kum* suggests, disproportionate revenge may not necessarily be immediately forthcoming. Cambodians have “several expressions for storing away memories” of events, people, or groups that have angered them: to “hide it inside the body”, “put it in the head”, or “bury it in the heart”, awaiting the right moments to take revenge when the recipient will not be expecting it.¹⁹²

Just as individuals may resort to disproportionate revenge when one individual causes another to suffer, for example, through the murder of a family member, the loss of power (e.g. a job), or a loss of face, Hinton argues that groups can also hold a “grudge” when members of their group have been similarly wronged by another group, either because of a singular event or the “build up of smaller hurtful or humiliating events”. A collective grudge is then countered with collective revenge out of a desire to defeat a foe “grounded in feelings of anger and shame”.¹⁹³ The most violent responses to real and perceived injury involve *phchanh phchal*, “complete defeat of the enemy” which entails the elimination of not only the individual that caused the harm, but that person’s family and associates. Those that can successfully *phchanh phchal* by “cutting off” the offender’s “family line” eliminate any possibility of future reprisals against themselves for having taken revenge by irrevocably

191 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 353.

192 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 356.

193 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, pp. 355–356.

ending “up on top and stay[ing] there, looking down on the completely defeated (or dead) foe”.¹⁹⁴

The Khmer Rouge leadership, although generally dismissive of what they saw as the backwardness of traditional Cambodian culture, was not deaf to the cultural salience and utility of “grudge”, “revenge”, “completely defeating the enemy”, and “cutting off the family line”. The very real exploitation of the countryside for the benefit of the urban areas stoked, as we have seen, resentment by many poor rural Cambodians. The Samlaut peasant rebellion of 1967, for example, that exploded over taxation and land expropriation (about which more will be said in chapter 3) engendered a “great deal of anger toward rich and urban dwellers and quickly enhanced Khmer Rouge ideology about class struggle” and exacerbated already existing resentments concerning the openly disrespectful way rich people treated the poor. The reality of economic exploitation, urban elitism, and, with the advent of the civil war and the bombing campaign, the deaths of loved ones and the decimation of livelihoods were all, according to Hinton, perceived by poor Cambodians in the countryside as a “collective loss of face” and “injury” at the hands of “an arrogant urban elite” that “looked down” (*moel ngeay*) on them.¹⁹⁵

194 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, pp. 356-357.

195 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 361

The Khmer Rouge took this resentment and gave it the culturally understandable label “rural class grudge” (*kumnum vonnah*).¹⁹⁶ In doing so, Pol Pot and his subordinates provided a green light to the familiar next step of countering injury and loss of face by the taking of disproportionate revenge. This time, the target would be the urban population deported to the countryside. A former guard at the torture and execution facility Tuol Sleng (S-21) in Phnom Penh told Hinton that the Khmer Rouge taught the guards that

the poor were poor because of the rich and the rich were rich because of the poor. They wanted us to become seized with painful anger about this exploitation, to hate and to fight bravely against the capitalists, feudal and landlord classes, the rich big people who harmed the poor.¹⁹⁷

A radio broadcast in 1976 similarly kept alive the murderous rural class grudge among the peasantry. “Our brothers and sisters”, the broadcast said, “lived a most miserable life [before the revolution] enduring all manner of hardships. [. . .]Our brothers and sisters were looked down upon, regarded as animals”.¹⁹⁸ A deportee from the cities told Hinton that the Khmer Rouge “made people in the countryside have a grudge against the urbanites by teaching them about class contradictions. When we left the cities, the rural population considered us their enemies”.¹⁹⁹ As we will see in chapter 4, the execution of the internal party purge phase of the genocide also drew on the cultural attitudes and

196 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 361.

197 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 365.

198 *FBIS*, Khmer Rouge Radio Broadcast, 1976, H1.

199 Hinton, “A Head for an Eye”, p. 361.

practices associated with disproportionate revenge, specifically “completely defeating the enemy” (*phchanh phchal*) and “cutting off the family line” which were manifested in the torture and execution of not only suspect individuals but also their “strings of traitors”: i.e., their family members and all known associates.

The claims being made here are limited, however. It is important to note that we do not have sufficient evidence to show to what extent most peasants supported the victimization of the new people, the ethnic minorities, and suspect cadres or whether most rural Cambodians were persuaded by the Khmer Rouge’s appeal to “grudge” and “disproportionate revenge”. Hinton’s research, based on interviews with low-level perpetrators, mostly tells us how the Khmer Rouge motivated their own recruits to torture and kill through appeals to existing cultural norms of revenge and violence. It also shows that the Khmer Rouge sought to marry more generally held resentments between socio-economic and regional groups with these specific cultural norms as a strategy of shoring up support for, or at least toleration of, the regime’s own genocidal policies.

As we will see, although the Khmer Rouge completely rejected the economic, political, and social system that preceded them, once they came to power they played on the existing tendency toward exclusionary and anti-social attitudes and antipathies between different socio-economic classes and especially between urban and rural Cambodians. Elite and other urban Cambodians who had been at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy were classified and reconceptualized during the DK period as “new people” who maintained no rights

under the new revolutionary order and who, as Pol Pot proclaimed in 1977, were “the counter revolutionary elements which betray and try to sabotage the revolution” and therefore “are not to be regarded as our people. They are to be regarded as enemies of Democratic Cambodia, of the Cambodian Revolution, and of the Cambodian people”.²⁰⁰ As for the legacy of passivity and disproportionate revenge, the Khmer Rouge drew on and skillfully exploited this element of Cambodian political culture by directly associating the exploitation suffered by the poorest of the rural peasantry at the hands of the urbanites and landowners with a loss of face. Because Khmer culture valued “saving” face and the sanctioning of violence to avenge a loss of face, the Khmer Rouge were able to appeal to prevailing social norms in the perpetration of the genocide.

C. Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management

The final dimension of the permissive political culture focuses on the role played by the state in managing conflicts between groups in the pre-genocide period. The response by the state to inter-group tensions or conflicts is repressive rather than one of conflict resolution based on accommodation or compromise. At the same time, the majority society (those not ultimately targeted during the genocide) historically support authoritarian approaches to resolving conflict, leaving the bystander population at the very least acquiescent to the state’s use of violence and other deadly measures—such as deprivation, starvation, lack of medical care etc.—against the victim group once the killing begins. In

200 Pol Pot, *FBIS*, 1977, H28.

Cambodia, the available evidence only confirms the first half of the equation: a history of state-centred, authoritarian and violent approaches to dealing with conflict. These tendencies manifested themselves in, first, the authoritarian legacy of the “god-King” and, second, the use of repression and violence to counter factionalism and eliminate political opponents.

However, before we enter into an analysis of these two tendencies it is important to note that the farthest the evidence points to is that most Cambodians, particularly in the rural areas, were used to the idea of a strong and stable state that maintained the established socio-economic hierarchy (although they rarely got such security for long periods of time). There is insufficient data to show whether or not pre-genocide popular opinion supported the state’s frequent resort to the use of repression and violence in the face of conflict prior to the Khmer Rouge victory. Given a similar lack of evidence covering popular opinion during the genocide, we cannot say for certain that the historical support for, and deference to, an authoritarian state headed by the Monarch or Prime Minister translated into support by a bystander population for the excesses of the Khmer Rouge, despite Pol Pot’s manipulation of the culture of “grudge” and disproportionate revenge and the very real legacy of inequality and socio-economic cleavages. Further, the fluid manner in which the Khmer Rouge continuously constructed new “enemies” who threatened the revolution (see chapter 4) meant that a consistent bystander population analogous to non-Jewish Germans did not really exist throughout the DK period.

Moreover by 1978 new policies that enforced communal eating and child rearing, for example, were met with displeasure by many peasant “base people” who failed to fully embrace *Angkor’s* intrusion into their most intimate familial relationships. As the victimization spread to include what the regime now regarded as individual recalcitrant peasants (who must deep down really be selfish bourgeoisie) as well as suspect Khmer Rouge cadres already targeted for elimination beginning in 1977, the initial categorization of victims (new people and minorities) began to blur and take in peasant “bystanders” and Khmer Rouge perpetrators. In light of all of these considerations the following discussion will be limited to the history of the Cambodian state’s role in conflict management and how an *elite* political culture of authoritarianism, factionalism, and violence influenced the genocidal practices of the Khmer Rouge.

1. Authoritarian Legacy of the God-king

From ancient to modern times, the Khmer monarch was regarded as a “god-King” who sat atop a hierarchical social and political system. The rise of the Indian Brahminic cult of the divine god-king, Devaraja, began with the unification of the kingdom of Kambuja in 802 CE under King Jayavarman II. Jayavarman’s successors led the Khmer empire into its so-called “golden age” when the empire greatly expanded, art and architecture thrived, irrigation networks were created, and the kingdom prospered. During his reign, for example, Suryavarman II (1112–1150) built Angkor Wat and Jayavarman VII

(1181–1219) built Angkor Thom. This golden age established the monarchy as the pre-eminent symbol of national power and unity, both real and ideal.

The monarchy was absolutist in that it was owed all subjects' loyalty, but it was not despotic since the kings did not wield absolute power. The kings maintained a paternalistic relationship to commoners who were able to petition the monarchy in times of distress. At the same time, the monarchy's power was truncated by his need to deal regularly with the royal administration, dignitaries, and other elites because there was no permanent mandarin to administer the state's affairs as in China and Vietnam.²⁰¹ Milton Osborne suggests, however, that although "[a] King's power might be circumscribed [. . .] he still symbolized the idealized greatness of the kingdom. Good or evil flowed from the success or failures of his intercession with the cosmic powers that govern the universe".²⁰² But there was also little sense either among the ruling elites or society that power ought to be shared beyond the palace's inner circle. In classical Cambodia, power was thought of as a "finite expendable commodity". In fact, the verb "to govern" was the same as "to consume".²⁰³ Formally, no legal constraints existed for those at the top. According to Peang-Meth, the Devaraja god-king did not engage in accommodation or conciliation. In times of conflict, the warrior tradition pushed the King to persevere and resist: "On matters

201 Ebihara, "Social Organization", p. 285.

202 Milton E. Osborne, *Politics and Power in Cambodia: The Sihanouk Years* (New York: Longman Press, 1973), p. 13.

203 David P. Chandler, "The Burden of Cambodia's Past" in *Asian Society* (2000), <http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/cambodia/burden.html>, p. 5 of 9.

of importance, the Brahminic influence work[ed] against agreement gained through negotiation and compromise”.²⁰⁴ Because the Cambodian political and socio-economic system was also one of patron-clientalistic dependence rather than self-reliance, the position of the monarchy, and after independence senior political leaders, was reinforced as “everyone looked to a powerful savior from above or outside rather than seeking a local solution”, particularly during times of crises.²⁰⁵

During colonial times the French administration bolstered the symbolic importance of the monarchy by publicly endorsing the notion of the king as semi-divine even while the monarchy was stripped of most of its real political power. At the same time, French archeologists instilled in the elite the myth of the grandeur of the Angkor period, the empire’s subsequent decline and the resulting inability of the Khmers to govern themselves effectively and to ward off their aggressive neighbours (Vietnam to the east and Thailand to the west). Although the intention was to demonstrate to Cambodians the need for French colonial rule, this story led many elites, including the monarchy, to identify with the myth of Angkor which made them supposedly superior both within Cambodia and in comparison to the seemingly more “vigorous” Vietnamese.²⁰⁶

204 Peang-Meth, “Understanding the Khmer”, p. 448.

205 Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 14.

206 David P. Chandler, “The Burden of Cambodia’s Past”, <http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/cambodia/burden.html>, p. 3 of 9.

The legacy of the authoritarian god-king lived into the post-independence period as well. Cambodia's leaders "never felt that they owed much to the electorate" or that "power was something to be balanced or shared". Excepting Prince Sihanouk at his peak immediately following his abdication of the throne and election as head of government in 1955, "no Cambodian leader thought it necessary to be popular, flexible, or responsive". The people's loyalty was supposed to be unquestioned while "power was seen as its own reward".²⁰⁷ Commenting on Sihanouk's regime, for example, Milton Osborne notes that "[a]s a Cambodian King asserting his political role as well as benefitting from the aura of his office, Sihanouk could group behind him members of the royal family and senior officials whose conservative outlook on life combined distrust for popular democracy with the conviction that a powerful ruler would best defend their interests".²⁰⁸ Another, less favourable account, suggests that elites "once they assume power when they can do whatever they wish [. . .] do not try to get along with others; they purge or physically eliminate anyone who gets in their way".²⁰⁹

Sihanouk not only exercised authoritarian rule but seemed to embrace the traditional notion of the god-King and the peasants' belief that he was semi-divine. During a visit to Washington in October 1958, for instance, to a reporter's suggestion that if only

207 Chandler, "The Burden of Cambodia's Past", <http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/cambodia/burden.html>, p. 6 of 9.

208 Osborne, *Politics and Power in Cambodia*, p. 51.

209 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 15.

Cambodia were a bigger nation Sihanouk would be a “great Asian leader”, Prince Sihanouk responded by stating that “the Prince is less myself than our nation and its policy, of which I am the incarnation”.²¹⁰ A 1955 English language tourist brochure issued by the government claimed that Sihanouk had abdicated the throne to join politics as a political leader in his “fervent desire to serve his people [by] whom he is worshiped as a God”. It continued that his mission was to fight injustice and “lead them back to a tradition of a glorious past”.²¹¹ Two years later an American embassy report noted that Sihanouk sometimes saw himself as an “overworked parent” who “projected his discomfort” onto his “children”, accusing them of ingratitude and disrespect.²¹² Throughout his time in power and up to his most recent abdication of the throne in 2005 (having re-ascended the throne in 1992), Sihanouk frequently referred to rural Cambodians either as his “children” or as the “little people”.

Lon Nol, a military officer and commoner, did not maintain such an overtly paternalistic relationship with his fellow citizens, but he did believe that he deserved their acquiescence. And despite their officially egalitarian ideology, the Khmer Rouge leaders as early as their student days in Paris came to see themselves, in true Leninist fashion, as the vanguard of the revolution. There, having bonded as a group and having already begun the

210 Quoted in Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 99.

211 “Tourists [sic] Notes Cambodia” (Phnom Penh, 1955, p. 12) quoted in Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 78.

212 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 92.

process of developing their core ideological principles, Pol Pot (then Saloth Sar), Ieng Sary, Khieu Sam Phan and others who, like “most Cambodian students in France saw themselves as intellectuals”, soon believed that they stood “ahead and above the rest of their compatriots” who had stayed at home and either collaborated with the French or fought them as Issaraks or along side the Viet Minh (the communist guerrilla movement in Vietnam).²¹³

Meanwhile ordinary Cambodians for the most part accepted their lower status relative to their leaders, having been socialized into a socio-economic hierarchy in which political elites exercised absolute command. From pre-colonial times through to independence, the dominant perception of the majority of Cambodians—albeit not universal, especially among westernized well educated youth in the cities—was that their leaders were meritorious in this life because they must have accumulated merit in past lives: “Those in power, it was widely thought, belonged in power; those at other levels of society had been born to take orders”.²¹⁴ As such, politics was supposed to involve strong central leadership minus popular participation since “political affairs were seen not as the people’s business but as royal [or government] business (*reachkar*) that occupied the time of those in charge”.²¹⁵

213 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 52.

214 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 4.

215 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 4.

2. Factionalism and the Repression of Political Opponents

The authoritarian legacy of the god-king intersected with the history of factionalism in Cambodian politics. Despite the fact that the god-kings were regarded as semi-divine, benevolent, paternalistic, and exercised authoritarian rule over their subjects, their lack of absolute power created sometimes vicious power struggles within elite inner circles. This dynamic was in part due to the vagaries of external military defeats after the fall of Angkor in the fourteenth century that often left individual Kings vulnerable to domestic challengers for power who believed they could defend the embattled kingdom and recapture past glories. At the same time, there were no regularized rules of succession. Nominally, succession was based on kinship ties but a direct line of succession based on primogeniture was never established. This absence left the door open for the role of “personal ties, shifting loyalties, intrigues, false familial claims to the throne”, and “violence centred around large powerful families” with independent bases of power.²¹⁶

Even under strong rulers, the fragmentation of society and rivalry among the elite meant that the potential for conflict was always latent within Cambodian political culture. An atmosphere of physical danger, insecurity, and frequent acts of random violence between factional opponents characterized much of elite political life during the pre-colonial period. Internecine fighting was most often between small forces in localized areas

216 Leai Tai, a 1889 rebel leader, for example, claimed to be the King Norodom’s fourth brother at the same time as one of Norodom’s actual brother, Si Votha, also vied for ascension to the throne. (Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution”, p. 11; Mabbett and Chandler, “The Khmers”, p. 162).

in which “invaders and defenders destroyed the villages they fought for and landscape they moved across. Even in times of peace there were no institutional restraints on *okya* (a high official rank) or other Cambodians who mobilized a following”.²¹⁷ The monarchy, meanwhile, was also more than willing to use violence to end rebellions or other challenges to the state. Although rebellions usually ended with general amnesties granted by the Imperial court to the followers of rebel leaders, senior leaders themselves were often executed. Evinced a zero-sum interpretation of rebellion and the actions of rebel leaders, “the most serious crime” other elites could commit “was not to have killed, fought, and ravaged the countryside, but to have openly opposed the king”.²¹⁸

With the advent of colonial rule came the use of repression by the much more centralized authority of the colonial administration against supporters of independence. While the anti-colonial struggle was not nearly as drawn out or bloody as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, the violence perpetrated by anti-colonial forces, even among their own members, could be swift and brutal. A French intelligence report written in 1952, for example, noted an incident in which the anti-French non-communist Khmer Issarak guerrilla force, led by Son Ngoc Thanh, executed some of their own soldiers. The report stated that one of Thanh’s deputies, Ea Sichau, ordered the execution of eight newly recruited students and teachers on the suspicion that the recruits were “enemy agents” after

217 David P. Chandler, “Cambodia Before the French” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, unpublished, 1973), p. 106 quoted in Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 7.

218 Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution”, p. 11.

they had apparently done nothing more than complain that life was too hard in the jungle and that they wanted to return home.²¹⁹

By the post-independence period, Cambodia's leadership had learned to use repression as the principle means of dealing with rival political groups. During his first election campaign in 1955 after abdicating the throne, Sihanouk outlawed most political parties, muzzled his competitors, and presented his own party, the *Sangkum*, "not as a political" party but as a "movement" which was the "symbol of the common people".²²⁰ Although Sihanouk remained popular with many peasants who believed his triumph over the French confirmed his "magical" political powers, his relationship with other elements within the elite and society was much more confrontational.²²¹ In what turned out to be a successful attempt to deal a death blow to the Democratic Party, Sihanouk used both public humiliation and political violence to silence what had been the most moderate, reform-minded, pro-democracy force in Cambodian politics in the 1940s and early 1950s. At a public debate organized by Sihanouk in the aftermath of Democratic Party allegations of government malfeasance, Sihanouk made the Democrat's request for more time to prove the allegations and their refusal to join Sihanouk's *Sangkum* movement—a demand made

219 Bulletin Quotidien de Renseignement (Speciale), (Ministere de l'Interieur, Phnom Penh, 25 September 1952) cited in Vickery, *Cambodia*, p. 7.

220 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 63.

221 When publically recounting the defeat of the French, Sihanouk would conveniently leave out the role of long-time independence activists such as Son Ngoc Tanh who had worked for years to oust the French while the young King (Sihanouk became "Prince" after abdication) led a decidedly apolitical, dandyish life.

by Sihanouk during the debate which was broadcast live on national radio—seem treasonous. Having deliberately created a situation in which the Democrats appeared to have caused the Prince to lose face, several senior Democratic leaders were pulled from their cars after leaving the debate and publicly beaten by palace guards. Over the next three days there were over thirty incidences of violence in Phnom Penh against Democrats, possibly ordered by the palace. Lon Nol, then head of the army, apparently let it be known that if Sihanouk wanted the Democratic Party dissolved, the army was “prepared to do it”. The treatment of the Democrats, who never were able to recover as a political force in Cambodia after the incident, set the precedent for how Sihanouk, Lon Nol, and the Khmer Rouge dealt with their opponents: “violent rhetoric before a mass audience and the public humiliation of defenseless opponents followed by surreptitious [or overt, in the case of the Khmer Rouge] physical brutality”.²²²

In 1958 Sihanouk similarly initiated a bloody crackdown against suspected rightist coup plotters and later instituted a system of surveillance aimed at potential rivals among the urban elite. In response to the first substantive sign of popular discontent with his regime, Sihanouk and Lon Nol (by this time Sihanouk’s deputy and army chief) ferociously crushed the Samlaut peasant rebellion in Battambang in 1967 (see chapter 3). Using the Royal military and then local peasants to ferret out the last of the rebels, the regime physically liquidated a large number of socialist insurgents “literally crushing all actual and potential

222 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, pp. 93–94.

sources of subversion”.²²³ The extent of the crackdown after the rebellion was in part motivated by how Sihanouk conceptualized it. Rather than recognizing the rebellion for the popular outburst over excessive taxation and unilateral land expropriation that it was, Sihanouk took it as a personal insult. He was particularly incensed that some rebel captives referred to him as “a-Sihanouk” (literally “that fellow” Sihanouk, a pejorative form of address in Cambodia) rather than his honorific title “Samdech”.²²⁴ Following the cultural pattern of loss of face, grudge, and disproportionate revenge, the Prince ordered that the offenders’ villages be razed to the ground and renamed.²²⁵

As for the Khmer Rouge and their support for the Samlaut Rebellion, Sihanouk publicly threatened to “treat the Khmer Reds as I have treated the Khmer Serei”: that is, through the execution of the Khmer Rouge’s top leadership.²²⁶ To prove the point, three Khmer Serei agents were arrested shortly thereafter and their public execution filmed and shown in theaters throughout the country.²²⁷ Later, after the Khmer Rouge began to wage violent revolution in January 1968, Sihanouk bragged to *Le Monde* journalist, Jacques Decorney, that he had ordered the execution of twenty communist opponents. Sihanouk asked

223 Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (Boulder: Westview, 1984), p. 71.

224 The Khmer Rouge would also refer to their victims, particularly within the Khmer Rouge, with the same pejorative or with the descriptive “the contemptible” (e.g., “the contemptible” Hu Nim).

225 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 165.

226 The Khmer Serei were non-communist guerrillas operating out of Thailand.

227 *FBIS*, 24 April 1967; BBC/SWB/FE2247/A3/A.

Decorney not to report the executions but then said; “I have announced it [to you] [. . .] because the communists have waged total war. [. . .] I have liquidated them, I have liquidated them with pleasure, and I feel no remorse. [. . .] It is total war”.²²⁸ Prefiguring the Khmer Rouge’s own paranoid fears during the genocide that internal factions in league with foreign powers were trying to destroy the revolution, Sihanouk publicly stated in January 1968 that what he called “various reports” showed that the Khmer Rouge based in the isolated northeast, and the non-communist Khmer Serei operating out of Thailand, had formed an alliance in order to “sink and kill the partisans of Sihanouk, and after that they will cut Cambodia in half”.²²⁹

Ultimately it was Sihanouk’s repression of the leftists, coupled with his fractious relationship with the mostly conservative parties in parliament, that squeezed moderate groups on both the right and the left out of the political process and led the increasingly radical Khmer Rouge to renounce overt political activism in favour of violent revolution and the complete destruction of the old order. Authoritarian politics continued unabated during the Lon Nol period (1970–1975) with the periodic imposition of martial law and the suspension of basic political freedoms (see chapter 3). Lon Nol proved himself just as likely to see real and perceived challenges as zero-sum struggles and just as prone as his former boss to use violence to protect his position. In the early 1980s refugee Tam Eng

228 BBC/SWB 2719/A3/9.

229 *FBIS*, 29 January 1968.

recounted how the new regime suppressed pro-Sihanouk demonstrations in her district shortly after Lon Nol removed the Prince from power in a March 1970 coup. Following protests on 28 March 1970 in Tam Eng's village of Ang Tasom in Takeo province, government troops arrived the next day to put down the demonstrations.

The next day [March 29], there was another demonstration, of thousands of people— young, old, men, women from many villages around. Then soldiers arrived from Takeo city, commanded by Lt. Col. Nim. Tanks flattened the people, two or three hundred died. I rode my bicycle there and saw all the bodies. Some people were not yet dead, and were lying there, waving flags and their hands, saying 'Long Live Samdech Euv' [literally: Long Live Prince Papa—i.e., Prince Sihanouk]. Then soldiers brought tanks and flattened them all [again].²³⁰

Lon Nol's pogrom against the Vietnamese minority, launched at exactly the same time, also demonstrated that, at the very least, he was unable to control the violence of his subordinates and, at worst, that "Lon Nol and his associates were willing to conduct a racially based religious war against unarmed civilians whose families had lived in Cambodia for generations".²³¹

By the time the Khmer Rouge took the capital in April 1975, the authoritarian legacy of the god-king and political factionalism had created a poisonous, often violent, elite political culture that was about to get much worse. Chandler sums up Cambodian politics into the twentieth century as follows: "[f]or hundreds of years absolute rulers [. . .] confronted factional opponents and factions [. . .] confronted one another scrambling to

230 Tam Eng (Paris, 24 January 1980) (interview with Kiernan) in Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975* (Second Edition) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 302.

231 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 203.

serve their own interests in a volatile high-stakes game”. This dynamic engendered a “winner takes all political culture based on endemic distrust [which] impeded the development of a civil society, stifled free expression, encouraged cronyism and violence, and exacerbated people’s tendency to distrust and fear those in power”.²³²

The victorious Khmer Rouge were well schooled in Cambodian elite political culture and employed in many ways a super-sized version of some of their predecessors’ methods. Their goal was to implement a total and immediate communist revolution; the creation of a perfectly egalitarian dictatorship of the proletariat. All possible challenges to the revolution, real and perceived, were to be crushed without mercy. *Angkor*, which the revolutionary expression warned had “the eyes of a pineapple”—i.e., sees everyone, knows everything— was to rule from above, unchallenged. Following the Stalinist methods they learned in Paris as student members of the French Communist Party in the early 1950s, discipline within the Party was also to be strictly enforced to ensure that the perennial problem of elite factionalism did not reoccur. Actual or potential conflicts were not only not to be managed through negotiation or compromise—they were to be avoided entirely through the physical liquidation of anyone who might become a source of conflict, resistance, or most importantly, threat to the survival of the revolution.

232 Chandler, “The Burden of Cambodia’s Past”, <http://www.asiasociety.org/publications/cambodia/burden.html>, p. 5 of 9.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that a particular kind of political culture is present in those societies that go on to commit genocide. This pre-genocide “permissive” political culture is characterized by exclusionary and unequal patterns of group interaction within society (dimension one); a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance and exclusionary conceptions of membership in the community (dimension two); and, a propensity for the state to employ authoritarian policies—and sometimes violence—to counter real and perceived threats and to deal with conflict (dimension three).

In the first dimension we see in both Germany and Cambodia unequal and exclusionary legal and structural divisions between groups in society. Prior to unification and the emancipation of the Jews, the divisions between Jewish and gentile Germans were legally based, involving restrictive citizenship and legal limitations on Jewish participation in certain sectors of the economy. After emancipation with the founding the unified Second Reich, these formal legal exclusionary and unequal divisions gave way to structural barriers between Germans and Jews. In Cambodia, all of the unequal and exclusionary inter-group relationships were informal rather than legal, revolving around a strict socio-economic hierarchy, educational disparities, and regional inequalities between urban and rural Cambodians. In Germany, the legacy of legal and other structural barriers between Jews and gentiles prevented Germany’s Jews from fully integrating into German society—despite

their own attempts to assimilate. In Cambodia, socio-economic, educational, regional, and, with respect to the Vietnamese, ethnic, divisions left Cambodia a fragmented society with few social bonds between groups.

The second, attitudinal dimension, reveals certain similarities between the two cases, but also some important differences. In Germany within the majority Christian population we see a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance for the Jewish minority. This dimension manifested itself first in religious Jew-hatred and then, by the late nineteenth century, “scientific” racialized anti-Semitism in the form of myths and stereotypes as well as specifically racialized understandings of Jews as unalterably different from and, for the more radical anti-Semites, inferior to Germans. These understandings fed the notion, common even among liberals, that Jews as Jews could not be authentic members of the German national community. In Cambodia, we also find a lack of solidarity, trust, and tolerance between socio-economic, regional, and to a lesser extent (again regarding the Vietnamese) ethnic groups in part based on long-standing cultural norms concerning conduct between members of “in” groups and “out” groups within the social hierarchy as well as the result of economic development during colonialism and after that favoured the urban areas and ethnic minorities rather than the majority Khmer peasantry. Urban Cambodians came to see their rural counterparts as backward, lazy agricultural workers whose purpose was to support the accumulation of wealth in the cities. Peasants came to see urbanites as elitist and corrupt, with little interest in the travails of life in the countryside.

There are two notable variations in the second dimension between the two cases. Unlike in Germany, Cambodians did not have a clearly defined sense of national belonging. The very fact that Cambodia was divided along subnational identities meant that the mutually antagonistic perceptions different groups maintained about each other did not include an understanding of the other group or groups as inauthentic members of the national political community (save again the Vietnamese). In addition, we see in Cambodia a set of norms and practices not found in the German case: a culturally based passivity and fatalism that gave rise to an inability to deal directly with inter-personal and inter-group conflicts, and a related dynamic in which loss of face or injury led to the development of a “grudge” and subsequent meting out of “disproportionate revenge”. The last two phenomena are culturally specific to the Cambodian case and help explain the Khmer Rouge’s particular resort to extreme violence and how they motivated their core supporters, soldiers, and cadres, to commit violent acts against the regime’s many supposed enemies during the genocide.

Lastly, both in pre-Nazi and pre-DK Cambodia there was a propensity for political elites to adopt authoritarian approaches to conflict management. In Germany this manifested itself in the triumph of conservative forces with the founding of the Second Reich and the preference among political leaders at the time, particularly Bismarck, to deal with political opponents (e.g., the socialists) with a heavy hand rather than through negotiation and compromise. The entrenchment of these same forces during the Weimar

Republic ensured that although the Republic was formally a democracy some of the most powerful sectors in the state apparatus—especially the civil service and the officer corp—were not committed to making parliamentary democracy work. At the same time, institutions in society, such as the universities, socialized the increasingly middle class German population to accept the leading role of the state in politics and for citizens to remain outside the political process.

In Cambodia's pre-colonial period, the authoritarian legacy of the "god-King" similarly established a propensity for the state to engage in authoritarian responses to conflicts—particularly real and perceived challenges directed at the monarchy itself. This practice and perception carried over into the independence period with Sihanouk's understanding of himself as a "god-King" (despite having abdicated the throne) whose rule could not be challenged and whose authority or decision-making need not be shared with other elites, political parties, or the Cambodian public. Specific to the Cambodian case was the additional problem of elite factionalism, stemming from the lack of clear rules for ascension to the throne, and a history of political violence used by elites to crush factionalism and challenges to their authority. The pre-colonial kings, Sihanouk after abdication, and Lon Nol after him, all used violence to put down opponents while these same opponents, from the Khmer Issaraks to the Khmer Rouge, were more than willing to use violence within their own organizations to staunch factional conflicts.

As an ideational and material structure, the pre-genocide permissive political culture in both Germany and Cambodia laid the conceptual foundations both for the interpretation of the crises that preceded the genocides as the deliberate actions of the Jews in the case of the Nazis, and middle class urbanites, the ethnic minorities, and suspect cadres in the case of the Khmer Rouge, as we shall see in the next chapter, and also provided the ideational foundation for what I will call the genocidal “three switch” reconceptualization of the victims groups to be examined in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Crisis and Its Interpretation: The Catalyst for Killing

INTRODUCTION

If political culture is the ideational foundation for genocide, crises are its trigger. Crises, and elite interpretations of the meaning of crises, help explain why genocide happens when it happens since crises are the catalyst for the reconceptualization process that leads directly to the decision to perpetrate genocide against a specific group or groups (see chapter 4). In this chapter it is argued that short-term economic, political or military/security crises highlight and exacerbate inter-group tensions, societal fragmentation and conflict evident in the pre-genocide permissive political culture. In genocidal situations political elites also interpret crises in light of prevailing political cultural norms, attitudes, and practices which in turn leads political elites to try to deal with crises and protect the existing regime and society by ultimately liquidating a particular group whose identity is reconceptualized as posing a mortal threat to the wider political community.

But why is genocide the response to a crisis? Any number of societies endure such experiences and the inter-group tensions and even violent conflicts that go with them without going genocidal. The answer lies not in the nature of the crises themselves but

how elites and the non-victim groups in society perceive a crisis; why it happened, who is to blame and most importantly, how to protect the current regime and the dominant society from similar events in the future. To borrow Alexander Wendt's phrase about anarchy in the international system, crisis, in this instance, is what elites "make of it". As discussed in Chapter 2, the prevailing permissive genocidal political culture provides the conceptual underpinning by which elites and society come to interpret the meaning of crises in such a way as to lead to genocide against a particular group. In genocidal situations crises are interpreted to be illustrative of an ongoing struggle between the political community on the one hand and a specific group on the other. This group is seen to be responsible for the current situation and to benefit from it.

The occurrence of crises as seen through the lens of the existing permissive political culture sets the stage for the reconceptualization of the victim group to be detailed in chapter 4, from marginalized insiders, to outsiders, to dangerous enemies, and finally sub-humans who can be killed without feeling. Taken together crises, and elite reactions to them, serve to animate the more virulent anti-group features of the permissive political culture, turning what had hitherto been relatively benign manifestations of exclusionary beliefs and authoritarian political practices into an extremist construction of the identity, interests and potential actions of the target group. This reconstruction of the victim group culminates in the formation and implementation of genocidal policies designed to bring about the physical or biological destruction of the target group.

This chapter will outline the economic, political, and military/security crises that preceded the advent of the Nazi regime and the perpetration of the Holocaust and the genocide during the Khmer Rouge's Democratic Kampuchea. Proportionally more space will be devoted to detailing the crises in Cambodia in the 1960s and early 1970s as these events are much less well known than the inter-war upheavals in Weimar Germany. The analysis of how the interpretation of crises based on the pre-genocide permissive political culture will be explored in each case. The specific genocidal reconceptualization of the victim groups in both cases and how this process led to the decision to commit genocide against these groups will be examined extensively in chapter 4. Crises, in short, are the intermediary step between the ideational potential for genocide embedded in the permissive political culture and the process of collective identity reconceptualization that leads to genocide.

I. THE HOLOCAUST: INTERWAR CRISES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CRISIS

The First World War heralded the denouement of the Wilhelmine Second Reich and ushered in a period of instability punctuated by a series of interrelated international, economic and political crises. The crises themselves are well known: the defeat in World War I and the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles; the revolutionary fervor of 1918 to 1920; the hyperinflation of 1923; the Great Depression beginning in 1929; and, the general political instability of the Weimar years (1919 to 1932). These crises will not be described in detail here, rather the focus will be on how political elites, specifically National

Socialists, along with the majority of Germans, constructed the meaning of these events. The crises of the interwar period were interpreted as indicative of a real competition between socio-economic groups and as resulting in a societal fragmentation that had been incipient in Germany since the middle of the nineteenth century. Inter-group competition and fragmentation was seen as driving the instability of the Weimar era and to pose an increasingly serious threat to the future of Germany and the German people. Moreover, the perceived root of the current and coming crises were believed to be the responsibility of Germany's Jewish community. Rather than a situation of endogenous and exogenous shocks that exacerbated disunity or competition between several groups, the crises of the interwar period were interpreted as a struggle between the German people and the Jews.

The assessment of the Jews as the ultimate cause of Germany's plight and as an overwhelming danger in the future was grounded in Germany's pre-genocide permissive political culture. The permissive political culture acted as an ideational and material structure that led the emerging Nazi elite both to identify a long-suspect minority as a serious threat that ultimately could only be removed through their physical liquidation and to make the eventual genocide against the Jews comprehensible and acceptable to most ordinary Germans.

A. International Crises

1. World War I

Like all the other combatants in World War I, Germany embraced the war with a spirit of great national unity, optimism, chauvinism and a belief that the war was theirs to win and win quickly. Acknowledging the fissures that already existed in Imperial Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II called at the beginning of the war for a *Burgfrieden* (civic truce) that would put existing domestic conflicts in “suspended animation”. These conflicts would then somehow be solved through victory in war in a manner that would preserve the “authoritarian domestic social and political status quo from widespread demands for liberalization”.¹ But with the stalemate that began in early 1915 and the appalling casualty figures at the front came declining morale at home and a serious economic crisis. The strains of waging industrialized warfare, which used massive amounts of human and material resources for the duration of the four year conflict, seriously distorted Germany’s economy. Growing sacrifices were forced on the population by the strictures of the centrally planned war economy and the British blockade that restricted available economic inputs and the government’s ability to collect needed revenues from customs duties. Inflation soared as the government resorted to printing money to finance the war with the average annual inflation rate reaching 32% (available figures do not include the burgeoning black market) and a decline in the overall value of the mark to three-quarters of its pre-war value. Despite

1 Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 28.

the hardships they endured Germans were further asked to contribute financially to the war effort by purchasing war bonds that would be redeemed after victory from reparations payments exacted from Germany's enemies.²

The negative socio-economic effects of the war on the homefront were far reaching. Artisans were either conscripted or unable to obtain needed raw materials, shopkeepers were undercut by factories that could sell cheaply, wages among civil service and white collar workers stagnated while the wages of skilled factory workers in the war industries continued to rise. As more and more male family providers were either killed or maimed the number of civilians, particularly war widows and orphans, found themselves on social support. All of these problems undermined the Kaiser's civic truce. It fanned resentment among farmers, many of whom had taken in urban children free of charge, and small producers who chafed under increasing government controls and declining returns on their investments while urban workers and trade unions, on the other hand, embraced the new powers—not to mention their rising wage packages—extended to them to ensure the smooth operation of factories crucial to the war effort. Meanwhile consumers were faced with ever decreasing rations of food stuffs and other basic necessities. As historian Michael

2 Niall Ferguson, "The German Inter-War Economy: Political Choice versus Economic Determinism" in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History Since 1800* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 261; Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 31.

Burleigh notes, the strains of total war “exacerbated pre-existing social tensions and generated new grievances and resentments”.³

2. Interpretation

As the victories of late Summer 1914 became the stalemate of late Winter 1915 the inability of mighty industrial Germany to decisively win the war in short order was interpreted by many Germans not as a failure of the vaunted Prussian military to overcome the superior manpower and materiel of its enemies, but as a result of the “duplicitous dealings” of a hidden “enemy within”.⁴ Despite the fact that young Jewish men enthusiastically answered the call to arms to defend the Fatherland, that various Jewish organizations rallied to the cause by raising money, providing goods and services to help support the war effort, and that the Jewish industrialist Walter Rathenau performed brilliantly as the head of the newly created War Resources Department, the responsibility for the stalemate was placed, along with the communists, anarchists and “foreigners” in general, on Germany’s Jewish population. Jews were accused of shirking front-line military duty, of engaging in anti-German black-marketeering and profiteering and of generally exploiting the situation for their own benefit. As a Leipzig rabbi put it with reference to

3 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, pp. 28–29.

4 Vamberto Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 176.

Rathenau, “it is called patriotism if one profits from cannons or armoured plate, but treason sets in with eggs and stockings”.⁵

In a bid to confirm popular suspicions that Jewish men were avoiding military duty, an infamous census was commissioned by the Prussian War Ministry in 1916 to investigate Jewish war time activities. Significantly the results were never published, largely because the numbers did not confirm the anti-Jewish accusations, but the damage was already done. Without published evidence, anti-Semites of the day and later the Nazis claimed that the census revealed damning proof of Jewish treason.⁶ The fact that Rathenau was a Jew and that a marginally higher proportion of Jews than found in the overall population worked in the *Zentral Einkaufs Gesellschaft* (Central Purchasing Company)—created by the War Resources Department to requisition and produce goods for the war—was taken as further confirmation by some Germans that Jews would rather engage in corporate activities than go to the trenches.⁷ The perception of the Jews as unpatriotic, of being obsessed with their own well-being, of not being truly committed to the cause of German unity and the

5 Helmut Berding, *Moderner Antisemitismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 172; quoted in Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 30.

6 Ronnie S. Landau, *the Nazi Holocaust: its Meaning for All the World's People—and its Moral, Ethic, and Psychological Implications* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994), pp. 84–87. War statistics show that, in fact, Jewish losses at the front and the number of Iron Crosses won by Jewish soldiers was disproportionately higher than their numbers would have indicated. And while many Germans believed that Jews were shirkers and pacifists, the leading pacifists of the day—Foerster, Quidde, Schuckeng, Wehberg, von Gerlack—were non-Jews.

7 Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Urbana: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 152.

defense of the Fatherland seemed to confirm what many Gentile Germans believed to be a trend ever since the emancipation of Germany's Jews in the previous century.

Ruminating on the reasons for the defeat while in prison in 1924 Hitler voiced many of these commonly held sentiments, albeit in rather more extreme form. Hitler explained the Jews seeming support for the war as a clever means by which to gain the support of German workers for the war in order to enlist them in the "Marxist-Jewish" plans to destroy the "non-Jewish states" of Europe. As soon as the Jewish leaders "recognized the danger which menaced them [i.e., popular support for the war] they rapidly pulled the tarn-cap⁸ of lies over their ears, and insolently mimicked the national awakening".⁹

On the economic front, the economic crisis that gripped Germany during the war was seen due not to the logistics of waging a total two-front war or the policies of the imperial government, but rather to the domination of the Jews of the war economy. Hitler wrote that the "Jewish people had become 'indispensable'. The spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores. Through the war corporations, they found an instrument with which, little by little, to finish off the national free economy [. . .] Thus in the year 1916–1917 nearly the whole production was under the control of Jewish finance".¹⁰ The Jews were, therefore, believed by Hitler to be both responsible for the

8 A cloak that confers invisibility.

9 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (trans. Ralph Manheim) (New York: Houton Mifflin, 1999), p. 168.

10 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 193.

Great War and for engineering Germany's defeat because it was the Jews, whom he alleged controlled the "international Jewish Stock Exchange", that benefitted most from the war and Germany's collapse after its defeat. Jews, he argued further, had not suffered during or after the war as had ordinary German workers.¹¹ As for the supposed shirking by young Jewish men of their war duty, Hitler claims that while attached to a replacement battalion in Munich in 1916–1917, military offices were filled with Jews. "Nearly every clerk was a Jew and nearly every Jew was a clerk. I was amazed at the plethora of warriors of the chosen people and could not help but compare them with their rare representative at the front".¹²

When the German military unexpectedly sued for peace in the fall of 1918, the German public was shocked. The defeat was largely the result of the implosion of the Imperial army brought on by a number of damaging interconnected circumstances. Likely causes of the army's collapse, and the ensuing capitulation, included a combination of "rifts between front line and rear guard soldiers and between officers and the ranks" compounded by "troops further demoralized by desperate", and, at times "radical, civilians", as well as a growing number of troops who simply "were not willing" (much like their counterparts in the opposite trenches) "to continue to fight and die for nothing".¹³ Throughout the war

11 Adolf Hitler, "Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922", <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>>, p. 2 of 8.

12 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 193.

13 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 31.

the flow of information from the front by the military was sparing—although war propaganda was in abundant supply—leaving the German public completely unprepared for the possibility, let alone the reality, of defeat. For many Germans the failure of the military on the battlefield and the regime at home produced a crisis of confidence in the entire Imperial system. Feeling profoundly betrayed, many sectors of the population, particularly on the left, blamed the Imperial system itself for the war, and the ensuing immiseration of the population, the decimation of the economy, and the growing divisions within society. It was the more radical among them along with disgruntled soldiers who attempted a soviet-style revolution in the immediate post-war period. For those on the right who were part of or still supported the old order, the explanation for why the war was lost lay elsewhere. The accusations made against Germany's Jews during the war were repeated, giving rise to the so-called "stab in the back" legend. Not only had the Jews shirked their military duty and engaged in war profiteering, they had done it deliberately to humiliate Germany, to help bring about the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, to foment further revolution in Germany, and most absurdly, to further their plans for world domination.

From the vantage point of 1924, Hitler ascribed the defeat to a collapse of morale at home, "an abandonment of the war effort by the homefront", that was instigated by the Jews. "It required the whole bottomless falsehood of the Jews and their Marxist fighting organizations" to lay the blame on Ludendorff, and by extension the entire Imperial

military command. To accomplish this task the Jews had fomented pacifism and defeatism before and during the war through their alleged control of the press. The “infinitely wily tactics of the Jews” released a printed “poison” that “was able to penetrate the bloodstream of our people unhindered to do its work, and the state did not possess the power to master the disease”.¹⁴ Germany’s Jews, therefore, were ultimately responsible for the defeat and the revolutionary fervor that followed by “systematically over decades robbing our people of the political and moral instincts and forces which alone make nations capable and hence worthy of existence”.¹⁵

It was this lesson of “knowing one’s enemy” that Hitler and other Nazi leaders constantly repeated while in power not only with respect to the disastrous defeat in World War I but the causes of the current conflict and the treatment subsequently required for the Jews of Germany and later Europe. In a speech to the Reichstag in April 1942 following the brutal winter campaign in the Soviet Union of 1941–1942 Hitler reminded his listeners exactly how and by whom the First World War had supposedly started and who was responsible for Germany’s defeat four years later. “The hidden forces which incited England already in 1914, in the First World War, were Jews. The forces which paralyzed us at that time and finally forced us to surrender with the slogan that Germany was no longer able to bear homeward a victorious flag, came from the Jews”. With respect to the

14 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp. 244–245.

15 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 327.

capitulation to the Western powers in November 1918 Hitler continued that “when the German nation being befogged by the hypocritical phraseology of [. . .] Wilson laid down its arms, although undefeated, and withdrew from the battlefield it was acting under the influence of that Jewish race which hoped to succeed in establishing a secure bulwark of Bolshevism in the very heart of Europe”.¹⁶ Hitler’s propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels referred similarly, albeit more cryptically, to the Jews alleged role in the 1918 defeat by arguing that German Jews must now be compelled to wear the *Judenstern* as a “prophylactic measure to be sure that the Jew cannot infiltrate our ranks and sow discord”¹⁷ unlike during the First World War. Hitler and Goebbels made these remarks only a few months after the decision was taken to extend the genocide against the Jews already underway in the Soviet Union through mass shootings by the *Einsatzgruppen* to industrial mass murder in the death camps of occupied Poland and elsewhere. The need to avoid a repeat of the November 1918 disaster at the hands of the Jews clearly continued to be part of the Nazi leadership’s genocidal calculations concerning the Jews of Europe.

The “stab in the back” theory was given further life with the circumstances of the surrender. After Ludendorff and von Hindenburg recommended that an armistice be sought along the lines of US President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, Prince Max von Baden

16 Hitler, Address to the Reichstag (26 April 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 4 of 14.

17 Joseph Goebbels, “The Jews are Guilty!” (“Die Juden sind schuld!”, *Das eberne Herz* [Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943], pp. 85–91), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p. 2 of 4.

was appointed chancellor with parliamentary support, a maneuver meant to satisfy one of the allies' key demands: the removal from office of the government that had caused the war. By October 1918, however, the "German Revolution" had broken out when sailors mutinied at the port in Kiel. Disaffection soon spread to the army and workers in the cities. Fearing a soviet-style revolution, the Social Democratic Party stepped into the political power vacuum, accepted the abdication of the now disgraced Kaiser and proclaimed a republic. Too humiliated to sign the armistice and negotiate a peace treaty, the military called on the socialists to do it instead. Since Jews and socialists were often considered allies if not one and the same, the "stab in the back" legend that the honourable German army and people had been betrayed by the socialists and the Jews was further reinforced.

3. 1918 Failed Revolution

The revolutionary turmoil of 1918–1919 signaled, at least temporarily, that the recent Bolshevik Revolution in Russia could spread to Germany and the rest of Europe. This caused much anxiety across the political spectrum from the conservative old guard of the former regime, right wing and anti-Semitic groups, the broad spectrum of the upper and middle classes, and on the left, the social democrats. Although the sporadic takeovers of shop floors, ports, city councils and other local organizations were quashed for good by the beginning of 1920, the specter of Soviet-style revolution and suspicions of who might be fostering it lingered on. The attempted revolution itself was a consequence of a number of different trends: long festering discontent with the old order among the new industrial

working class who resented the continuing domination of the conservative Prussian rural elite in politics and society; memories of the draconian anti-socialist campaign during the latter part of the nineteenth century; anger over the loss of the war and the sacrifices forced on the people and the rank and file soldiers in a struggle Germans were led to believe they were winning; and, the rising popularity of Marxist-Leninist ideology among the most radical of the working class in the wake of the success of the Russian Revolution.¹⁸

4. Interpretation

Through a misattribution of the complex reasons for the attempted revolution and willful omission of the role the *ancien regime* played in creating it, the meaning read into the revolution by the emerging anti-Semitic right wing was not only that radical workers, socialists, communists and other discontented elements were trying to destroy Germany and bring communism to the Fatherland, but that again it was the hidden Jewish “enemy within” that was ultimately responsible for the push for revolution. From the time of the Russian revolution, which was said to have been engineered by Jews who came to dominate the upper echelons of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a consistent connection

18 Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, pp. 88–89. Significantly it was the Social Democratic government of Friedrich Eberts, under pressure to end the rebellion and prove its anti-Bolshevik mettle, that deployed loyal elements of the military establishment, the police, and the Freikorps to put down the various revolts. This decision, together with the lack of reforms in the military high command, the ultraconservative civil service, the judiciary, and the universities successfully appeased for the time being the old conservative elite, but it fatally undermined the survival of democracy in the fledgling democratic republic. It ensured that conservative right wing personnel and their ideas continued to dominate key civil and military institutions of the republic, bolstering anti-democratic and anti-Semitic views at the very centre of the federal government’s power. It was these same forces who convinced the aged President von Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as chancellor in 1933. Also see Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 33.

was drawn between Bolshevism and the Jews. Caught up in the aftermath of Lenin's revolution, the end of what was hitherto the most bloody conflict humanity had ever seen, and the on-going turmoil at home, no one was in the mood to try to accurately discern how or even whether the Jews were really associated with socialism or revolutionary activity or to seriously interrogate what the Jews varied and disparate beliefs were. As one Holocaust historian put it, "these nuances counted for nothing in the vicious climate of post-war Europe".¹⁹ The negative association of Jews and the excesses of the Russian revolution and revolutionary politics in general was not lost on the Jews themselves: the Chief Rabbi of Moscow wryly noted that the "Trotskyites made the revolution but the Bronsteins paid the bill".²⁰

The example of what Hitler and other Nazi leaders referred to as "Jewish Bolshevism" as practiced in Russia forecast dire consequences for Germany should the revolution take hold in Germany. For Hitler the savagery of the "Jewish Bolsheviks" in Russia was only the beginning of a larger Jewish plot to enslave Europe. In gaining power in Soviet Russia "the Jews cast off the few cloaks that he still wears. The democratic peoples Jew becomes the blood-Jew and tyrant over peoples. In a few years he tries to exterminate the national intelligentsia and by robbing the people of their national intellectual leadership makes them

19 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 37.

20 The "Bronstein's" reference is to Leon Trotsky's original German-Jewish last name. Quoted in Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 38.

ripe for the slaves lot of permanent subjugation”.²¹ In the new Soviet Union proof of Jewish control was for Hitler in the “400 Soviet Commissars of Jewish nationality” along with the “thousands and thousands of sub-commissars” who “do not suffer”. Meanwhile “all the treasures which the ‘proletariat’ in his madness took from the ‘bourgeoisie’ in order to fight so-called capitalism—they have gone into their hands”. Ordinary Russians can now only get bread and other essentials from the “State Central Organization and this is in the hands of the Jews”. Everything the Russians have won “flows back again to his seducers”.²² The attempted revolution in Germany following World War I was abundant proof of Bolshevik Jewry’s supposed European-wide plot. In the case of Germany, Hitler insisted that German workers and soldiers had been led astray by Jewish agitators in the turbulent months after the war. As evidence, Hitler cited his experience while in military hospital recovering from a gas attack when revolutionary fervour among disaffected soldiers reached him. Hitler claims that several “sailors arrived in trucks and proclaimed the revolution; a few Jewish youths were the ‘leaders’ of this struggle. [. . .] None of them had been at the front. By way of a so-called ‘gonorrhoea hospital’ the three Orientals had been sent back home from their second-line base. Now they raised the red flag in the homeland”.²³ For

21 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. {x} {Yad Vashem downloads—under “Nation and Race”}

22 Hitler, “Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>>, pp. 2–3 of 8.

23 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 203.

the Jews “the Revolution is milk and honey”²⁴ and as such Germany’s Jews had a vested interest in perpetuating the political and economic turmoil of the immediate postwar period. Hitler’s thinking on the matter was strongly influenced by Baltic German emigres like Erwin Scheubner-Richter and Alfred Rosenberg, both of whom were convinced that revolutionary Bolshevism was indeed a Jewish plot. For Goebbels, Hitler’s influential Propaganda Minister, Bolshevism was an “expression of Jewish chutzpah” with Jews ruthlessly exploiting “real or imagined problems” particularly during the inter-war period in the service of achieving their ultimate goal of “total domination”.²⁵

The allegation that the Jews both inside Germany and internationally were bent on communist revolution and the eventual enslavement of the world became, as we will see in chapter 4, one of the three main threat motifs that motivated the extermination of Europe’s Jews during the Holocaust. Harkening back to earlier perceptions of Jews as responsible for the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the crisis of the revolutionary period in Germany, Hitler, for instance, in an address to the Reichstag in April 1942 at a time when the genocide had already begun, described the Jews as the “carriers of the Bolshevik infection which once threatened to destroy Europe... Jews are the parasitic germ of [the

24 Hitler, “Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>>, p. 3 of 8.

25 Joseph Goebbels, “Mimicry” (“Die Zeit ohne Beispiel” [Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1941]), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb18.htm>>, p. 1 of 4.

Bolshevik] diseases” which had become a “vital question of fate” for all the nations of Europe.²⁶

B. Economic Crises

1. Treaty of Versailles and Reparations

The very real socio-economic conflicts that led to the unsuccessful revolution continued into the 1920s and were exacerbated by the effects of the reparations payments and other punitive damages mandated by the Treaty of Versailles, the hyperinflation of 1923, and the Great Depression that began at the end of the decade. The non-monetary penalties paid by Germany as part of the Versailles settlement involved the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar Land and Upper Silesia as well as its overseas colonies. The former “reduced Germany’s prewar territory by 13%, 10% of the population”, 15% of arable land, 75% of iron ore deposits, “a reduction in pig iron production capacity by 44%”, steel by 38% and coal by 26%.²⁷ The loss of the colonies left Germany more dependent on the importation of foreign food stuffs and raw materials, thus placing an additional burden on Germany’s balance of payments. The balance of payments problem was further exacerbated by the

26 Hitler, Address to the Reichstag (26 April 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 5 of 14.

27 Derek Howard Aldcroft, *From Versailles to Wall Street, 1919–1929* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), pp. 22–23.

confiscation of almost all of its merchant fleet, some of its railway rolling stock and foreign investments (including patents and licences) held in Allied countries.²⁸

It was, however, the reparations payments to the Allies that inflicted the greatest damage on the struggling post-war German economy. Identified as the principle aggressor, the treaty stipulated that the German government be held liable for the Allies' costs of prosecuting the war although an exact amount was not fixed in the treaty. The Allies subsequently agreed—after shelving a proposed penalty of a stratospheric 500 to 800 billion gold marks, their subsequent rejection of Germany's proposal of 50 billion gold marks at current value, and much horse trading among themselves—to reparations of 132 billion gold marks (approximately \$32 billion US) with 52% going to France, 22% to the British Empire, 10% to Italy, 8% to Belgium and 8% to lesser allies. The final amount bore no relation" to the original claims of the victor states nor to Germany's ability to pay, merely to what the Allies could agree upon in light of inter-Allied debts.²⁹ The payment schedule devised by the Allies was onerous and in short order had to be rescheduled. Meanwhile the German government was faced with rebuilding what war damage it suffered, paying out pensions to disabled war veterans, widows and orphans, servicing its

28 Karl Hardach, *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 17–18. Other provisions constituted what Hardach calls "provocative pinpricking" designed to "inflict psychic damage" such as the stipulation demanded by France that all Napoleonic banners and battle-gear captured by the once victorious Germans be returned from Germany's museums. As we now know, economic penalties and reparations, as well as the loss of the war itself, inflicted a much greater degree of psychic pain.

29 Hardach, *The Political Economy of Germany*, p. 24.

internal war debt, grappling with a devalued currency and a balance of payments problem that was seriously exacerbated by the reparations.

Meanwhile, despite the large number of war losses and deaths from the influenza pandemic, a pre-war population boom led to larger numbers of people entering the job market in the 1920s. By 1925 there were 5 million more Germans looking for work than there were jobs. This trend “only began to reverse itself by 1931–1932”.³⁰ Unemployment in the 1920s was also exacerbated by the increasing use of technology in the automobile, mining, and other sectors at a time when skyrocketing inflation served as a “powerful disincentive for personal saving” which in turn led to a “dangerous dependence on foreign sources of investment”.³¹ Those who were fortunate enough to have a job were not always lucky enough to keep it. Normally tenured government and white collar workers were laid off in record numbers—approximately 750,000 government and state employees were let go, for example, between 1923 and 1924—due to government cutbacks and the use of new office technologies. At the same time 150,000 jobs in the banking sector were also eliminated.³² Civil servants who managed to retain their positions were shocked to find

30 Dietmar Petzina, “The Extent and Causes of Unemployment in the Weimar Republic” in Peter Stachura (ed.), *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany* (London: MacMillan, 1986), pp. 44–45.

31 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 60.

32 Jane Caplan, “Speaking the Right Language: The Nazi Party and the Civil Service Vote in the Weimar Republic” in Thomas Childers (ed.), *The Formation of the Nazi Constituency* (London: Barnes and Noble Books, 1986), p. 189.

that their wages had sunk to levels close to that of manual labourers, unlike in Imperial times.

To pay the reparations to the Allies, who were unwilling to accept direct transfers of economic goods, the German government resorted to borrowing from the Reichsbank as it had during the war. In so doing the government consciously avoided directly taxing the needed revenue from its citizens in order to head off civic unrest. But the government's strategy of printing money to buy foreign currency for reparations flooded the economy with surplus currency, fueling a disastrous period of hyperinflation by 1923. The effect of hyperinflation was severe for many Germans. For those dependent on contracted incomes such as rents, pensions, insurance benefits and salaries, the amount they received in income could not keep pace with ever skyrocketing prices for basic consumer goods. At the same time, however, residual incomes—i.e., profits—soared which led to a strikingly unequal distribution of incomes. As such, holders of liquid assets were the biggest losers since the mark ceased to be a means of storing value, while investors in material assets such as property actually benefitted from inflation. Meanwhile profiteers, who bought up goods, factories and real estate on credit which they paid back with inflated money, and currency speculators, who made easy gains on the foreign exchange, commodity and stock exchanges sometimes amassed huge fortunes. Merchants and industrialists also benefitted from rising prices because of the “large margins” between “buying prices of the past and selling prices of the present”. Debtors also gained from inflation including the federal

government and the heavily indebted *Länder*, as well as private borrowers who paid back their debts with inflated money.³³

2. Interpretation

At the time the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and for years later as the fallout from it became so painfully apparent, the treaty was denounced by almost all sectors of Germany society including the Scheidemann government itself. Scheidemann publicly and rather melodramatically proclaimed at Versailles: “What hand would not wither that binds itself and us to these fetters?”³⁴ Scheidemann’s *cri de coeur* gave rise to the often repeated metaphor during the Weimar period that Germany was a “nation in chains”, chains the Allies “deliberately bound around the country” to “enmesh Germany in a network of restrictions and obligations in perpetuity”.³⁵ For the right-wing and *völkisch* parties Versailles “discredited international institutions, international law, and the emerging liberal internationalist” values of the post-World War I era. Seeing what they thought were the clear failures of the Versailles process, rightist German intellectuals came to embrace doctrines based on the “inevitability of conflict” among different peoples and races³⁶ including the idea of “race war” that would later culminate in the *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of extermination) against the Soviet Union and the extermination of European Jewry

33 Hans Joachim Braun, *The German Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 40.

34 Scheidemann; quoted in Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 47.

35 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 47.

36 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 47.

during the Second World War. Those deemed responsible for accepting the terms of the treaty were branded by rightists as the “November criminals” who had toppled the Kaiser, surrendered to the Allies, and were, therefore, directly responsible for the hardships imposed by Versailles.

In his “Proclamation to the German Nation” in February 1933 just after coming to power Hitler reiterated the damage done, and in his view was still being done, by the capitulation and reparations. “Millions of industrial proletariat are unemployed and starving; the whole of the middle class and the small artisans have been impoverished. When this collapse finally reaches the German peasants, we will be faced with an immeasurable disaster” the loss of a “two-thousand-year-old inheritance”.³⁷ On the eve of war in 1939 Hitler again referred to Versailles and the reparations as the “brutal education with which the democracies favoured us for fifteen years” suggesting that this lesson had led to the “more than 800,000 children who died of hunger and undernourishment at the close of the War” as well as agricultural losses, all “in accordance with the cruel paragraphs of a dictate which the humane democratic apostles of the world forced upon us as a peace treaty”.³⁸

37 Adolf Hitler, “Berlin: Proclamation To The German Nation—February 1, 1933”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/02-01-33.html>>, p. 1 of 3.

38 Adolf Hitler, “Extract from the Speech by Hitler, January 30, 1939” (Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981, Document no. 59), <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201988.pdf>.

By the end of 1923 internal reforms and diplomacy with the Allies brought the inflationary crisis to a close. But permanent damage had already been done. For some in the working and middle classes, many of whom were the biggest holders of money assets, the great inflation inflicted severe economic losses. Recent research shows, however, that the traditional “destruction of the middle class” thesis is not supported by the evidence.³⁹ The real impact of the crisis was much more psychological. According to economic historian Karl Hardach, the German public was left “traumatized” by such a serious economic crisis. “[T]he general psychological effect on public opinion [of hyperinflation] was enormous: the only thing one could be certain of was that nothing was certain”.⁴⁰ It was also not lost on many Germans that the suffering caused by hyperinflation was not shared equally. Popular resentment directed at property owners, industrialists, and speculators who benefitted from inflation was fertile ground for extremist politicians on both sides of the political spectrum. Communists and their supporters accused businessmen and property owners of typically capitalist exploitation while workers saw their savings destroyed. Attempting to attract supporters of the *völkisch* parties, communists were not above playing the anti-Semitism card as well. The communist agitator Ruth Fischer (who was herself half Jewish) pronounced in the early 1920s that “whoever cries out against

39 Braun, *The German Economy*, pp. 40–41.

40 Hardach, *The Political Economy of Germany*, p. 28.

Jewish capitalists is already a class warrior, even when he does not know it [. . .] kick down the Jewish capitalists, hang them from the lamp post and stamp upon them”.⁴¹

But it was among the various right wing parties, including the newly created Nazi party, that the economic misery of the 1920s was interpreted as the result of the exploitation of honest German wage earners and small businessmen by scheming money-hungry Jews who had supposedly come to dominate the German economy. Since the Jews were believed to have caused the loss of the war, and the loss of the war had produced the reparations and hyperinflation, the Jews were also held ultimately responsible for the crisis in the first place. The typical Hitler speech of the 1920s culminated in the assertion that, as Michael Burleigh notes, “Germany had been betrayed and ruined by her post-war leaders, every one of them puppets of sinister forces”. Hitler would then invariably “introduce the anti-type to the altruistic, idealistic Aryan hero, namely the egotistical and sinister Jew... Plain people had been ruined, but now deliverance and vengeance were at hand. Those laughing now would be weeping. Faith, sacrifice and (always) ‘iron’ willpower would win the day”.⁴² In just such a speech before the party faithful in April 1922 Hitler ascribed the current economic crisis to the 1918 capitulation and reparations which he believed would lead to a dismal end, “[p]ledging of our land, enslavement of our labour-strength [. . .] November 1918 was in truth no achievement, but it was the beginning of our collapse” and the loss of

41 Quoted in Ossip Flechtheim, *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Junius Verlag GmbH, 1969), p. 178; cited in Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 55.

42 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 115.

Germany's sovereignty. Hitler continued that if Germans wanted to know who was responsible for "our misfortunes, then we must inquire who profited from our collapse". Since what he called "Christian capitalism" was already "as good as destroyed" the real culprit was "the international Jewish Stock Exchange" whose "capital gains in proportion as the other loses ground". The Jews were therefore responsible for "the collapse of our economic life, the capital which receives its character from the single supra-state nation which is itself national to the core, which fancies itself above all other nations, which places itself above all other nations and which already rules over them".⁴³ Hitler concluded the speech by assuring his audience that he sympathized with the plight of his fellow Germans and that it was his duty as a "Christian" and a "fighter" to fight against the Jews:

when I look on my people I see it work and work and toil and labour [. . .] When I go out in the morning and see these men standing in their queues and look into their pinched faces, then I believe I would be no Christian but a very devil, if I felt no pity for them if I did not, as did our Lord two thousand years ago, turn against those by whom today this poor people is plundered and exploited.⁴⁴

Writing in his usual hysterical style, but this time only to himself, Goebbels similarly decried the suffering of the German people in a diary entry of 2 January 1926. He complained that "[t]he German people are spared nothing. At every corner one can see the effect of the 'peace'. Economic collapse, unemployment, horror of the future, a race cursed

43 Hitler, "Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922", <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>>, p. 2 of 8.

44 Hitler, "Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922", <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>>, p. 7 of 8.

by fate. [. . .] We are heading for collapse".⁴⁵ Uncharacteristically, Goebbels did not blame the Jews for Germany's troubles this time around, although he would repeat the charge in his later speeches and writings with much alacrity.

3. Great Depression

The years following the great inflation were economically relatively stable. That tranquility came to an abrupt end with the Great Depression.⁴⁶ Haunted by the specter of hyperinflation and keen to once and for all cease Germany's reparation payments, the newly appointed conservative Chancellor Heinrich Brüning compounded the situation by implementing a disastrous economic plan designed to head off inflation and demonstrate to the Allies that Germany could no longer make its payments. The result was an economic crisis in almost all sectors of the economy. The domestic restriction on credit, combined with the depression itself, hit industry hardest in the form of business failures and massive unemployment. In 1929, unemployment figures amounted to 1.9 million but rose to 5.6 million as a yearly average in 1932 before reaching a maximum between January and March

45 Joseph Goebbels, diary entry 2 January 1926 (trans. Oliver Watson) in Helmut Heiber (ed.), *The Early Goebbels Diaries: 1925–1926* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishing, 1962), p. 58.

46 The Great Depression in Germany was caused by a combination of factors. Foremost among them were a "normal" cyclical recession at the end of the 1920s, an unstable international economy made more so by the stock market crash and depression in the United States, "the economic legacy of the war, protectionist policies by various governments, an on-going domestic agricultural crisis, external account imbalances caused by reparations and war debt", excess capacity in industries like "steel production, engineering, automobiles, electrical goods, optics and synthetics", the deflationary policies already cited, "over-speculation in securities, long-term investment of short-term credits and international money transfers" without "corresponding transfers of goods". Braun, *The German Economy*, pp. 64–66; Aldcroft, *From Versailles to Wall Street*, pp. 282–284.

1933 with 6 million registered unemployed.⁴⁷ Official unemployment numbers did not include the many unregistered unemployed whose numbers, when added to the official tallies, likely totaled 7.6 million or perhaps 33% of the workforce. When dependents are added, the total number of Germans affected by unemployment was approximately 23 million people.⁴⁸ The large numbers of unemployed seeking government assistance simply overwhelmed the public insurance system. By early 1933 only 900,000 of the 6 million unemployed received national insurance.⁴⁹ The swelling ranks of the under- and unemployed created a “huge reserve of potential workers” which in turn “drove down real wages” by approximately 16% from 1929 to 1932. Civil servants were not faced with unemployment (unlike in the 1920s) but were subject to deflationary budget cuts that saw their wages shrink by 25% to 28% during the depression years.⁵⁰ Simultaneously a decrease in demand for agricultural products and fluctuations in prices for staple crops such as rye caused serious difficulties in the agricultural sector. To placate the influential Prussian *Junkers* the now conservative Weimar government pursued a policy of agricultural protectionism that consisted of “high import duties, low import quotas and restrictions on

47 Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, p. 109.

48 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 122.

49 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 123.

50 Braun, *The German Economy*, p. 67.

the stockpiling of food stuffs in public granaries”,⁵¹ all of which limited the availability of agricultural goods to the wider population and drove up prices.

C. Political Crises

1. Political Instability and Violence

Bruning’s severe deflationary measures also caused the most serious political crisis of the Weimar years at a time when German politics had become completely polarized between right and left. The last of several upheavals, the dispute over how to end the depression and resistance to Bruning’s policies eventually led to the appointment of Hitler as chancellor and bolstered the already rising electoral fortunes of the Nazis and the Communists at the expense of the Social Democrats and moderate centrist parties. While this crisis spelled the end of Weimar and beginning of the Nazi era, the Weimar Republic had been dogged by on-going political instability and a lack of commitment by elites and ordinary Germans alike to democratic governance. The early years of the republic were marked by the struggle to quell the revolution and to placate the old conservative order while at the same time bring parliamentary democracy to German politics for the first time. The resistance of radicals on the right and left to this project led to a serious rise in political violence in the early 1920s. Political murders during Weimar totaled 350, including the assassination of the then Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau, in 1924.⁵² Near the end of the Weimar period

51 Braun, *The German Economy*, p. 67.

52 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 53.

political violence was perpetrated mostly by the various paramilitaries attached to the extreme right and left, notably the Nazis and the Communists, who regularly duked it out on the streets amongst themselves or with their other opponents.

After Rathenau's death and the stabilization of the economy in the middle of the 1920s German politics was relatively stable until the depression years. It was during the last years of the republic that the system itself was attacked from the right and left as simply incapable of governing effectively and of rebuilding Germany as a proud and strong nation. The unreformed civic and security institutions and their personnel, as well as the rapid turnover of successive parliaments, helped in no small part to undermine parliamentary democracy. Chronic political instability and the seeming inability of the myriad of governments to grapple with repeated economic crises, the fall-out of the peace treaty, the problems (real and perceived) of law and order and other issues undermined respect for parliament and elected politicians in a society where neither was axiomatic. Over time what efficacy there was for democratic governance eroded away for many ordinary Germans.

With respect to parliamentary instability the numbers are telling. Between 1919 and 1933 there were fully twenty different governments, the longest being Hermann Muller's "Great Coalition" that lasted for twenty one months from 1920 to 1923, with the shortest, another Muller government, lasting only twelve weeks. With the rapid turn over of governments and with the concomitant participation in a number of different parties in these governments, the Nazis and the Communists emerged by the 1930s as the only

“credible” parliamentary opposition that was not tainted by membership in previous governments. No matter their longevity or make-up, parliament after 1930 began to atrophy from lack of use. During Brüning’s nearly two years in office the Reichstag sat for 94 days in 1930, 42 days in 1931, and only 13 days in 1932. In the absence of parliamentary debate and decision-making, governments “increasingly resorted to non-democratic procedures”, particularly rule by presidential decree which in turn further “marginalized parliament” and “concentrated power in the hands of senior civil servants” and the “close advisors” surrounding the elderly Hindenburg.⁵³ Neither group were convinced democrats.

The public, meanwhile, developed the not undeserved understanding that many coalition cabinets were created through an unseemly process of behind-the-scenes horse trading where principles appeared to be easily sacrificed while everyone else was left in the dark. Simultaneously, party caucuses could not always be counted on to support the government even when the cabinet included the party’s own members. Forty-five Social Democrats, for example, refused to vote in favour of Stresemann’s first cabinet even though four of their own were cabinet members.⁵⁴ By the end of Weimar, public contempt for politicians was such that parliamentarians were regarded as *bon vivants* preoccupied with crafting self-serving deals. Bad behaviour in parliament on all sides lived up to this billing

53 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 123.

54 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 62.

and encouraged the ascendant Nazi and the Communist parties to engage in particularly egregious behaviour in the national Reichstag and local parliaments so as to discredit the parliamentary process even further. In doing so they declared their open hostility toward democracy in general. As historian Michael Burleigh notes, this atmosphere “made the attractions of an imagined pre-political yesteryear—of which the wartime ‘civic truce’ became the idealized template—all the greater, and increased the temptations of any political party that promised both consensual transcendence and national deliverance, especially when that party denied being a conventional party at all. The Nazi ‘movement’ mastered that particular sleight of hand to perfection”.⁵⁵ In the end it was the unwillingness of the Social Democrats and the Communists to cooperate with each other to stave off the Nazi Party at the ballot box and inside the Reichstag that sealed the fate of Weimar.

2. Interpretation

The political travails of the Weimar Republic were often attributed by its critics, particularly among right-wing anti-Semites, to “degenerate” Jewish influence. Weimar was thus derisively referred to as a “Jewish Republic”. This perception was fed by the traditional affinity many Jews had with liberalism since the nineteenth century and the prominent role a few Jews, such as Eduard Bernstein, Otto Landsberg, Hugo Preuss and others played in the social democratic movement that founded the Republic, as well as Jews such as Walter

⁵⁵ Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, p. 62.

Rathenau,⁵⁶ who served as government ministers. Although German Jews both supported and opposed the creation of the Republic and voted across the political spectrum (save of course for *völkisch* and anti-Semitic parties), they came to be perceived as the outsiders who had now become the ultimate insiders. As such, Germany's Jews became intimately linked, both objectively and subjectively, to the rise, decline, and failures of Weimar—despite the fact that as a group they were still not fully accepted into German society.

In Hitler's mind the Jews' control of the Weimar Republic was so great that the Jews no longer had to hide their influence or their true identity since "the Jews domination in the state seems so assured".⁵⁷ In one of the earliest works he wrote for the newly formed National Socialist party Hitler emphasized that all Germans must "realize that the whole internal structure of our state is not Germanic, but rather Semitic". But the Jews influence was supposedly far beyond mere control over the state apparatus for "all our actions, even our thinking are today no longer German but Jewish". And it was, in Hitler's view, precisely the inability to once again "know one's enemy" that was the true weakness of the new republic. Democracy was simply not up to the task of combating the real enemy since for Hitler "this battle will not be fought by majorities and parliamentary groups, but by the only form of majority that has shaped the fates of nation states on this earth as long as it

56 For years after Rathenau's assassination right wing anti-Semites repeated the rhyme "Kill off Walter Rathenau/The goddamn Jewish sow".

57 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. x {?}

has existed”: race.⁵⁸ Sharpening his attack on Weimar and the Jews, Hitler argued elsewhere that democracy as a system of governance was not only incapable of combating the pernicious effects of the Jews since democracy itself was “fundamentally not German” but rather “Jewish”. What Hitler called “Jewish democracy” was “without exception only a means toward the destruction of any existing Aryan leadership”. Although democracy claims to rule through “majority decisions” it can be made to serve particular interests. Becoming “master of the States can be achieved by the man who can lie most artfully, most infamously; and in the last resort he is not the German, he is, in Schopenhauer’s words, ‘the great master in the art of lying’—the Jew”.⁵⁹

The conception of Weimar as a “Jewish Republic” paralleled the already established narrative of the Jews’ responsibility for the capitulation and the revolution following World War I. The creation of the Republic was a deal with the devil done by the Kaiser with Jewish Marxism from which only the cunning Jews were to benefit. “While they [the Jews] still held the imperial hand in theirs, their other hand was reaching for the dagger. There is no making pacts with Jews; there can only be the hard: either-or” Hitler insisted.⁶⁰ He

58 Adolf Hitler, “The National Socialist Party and the German National (Conservative) Party” from H.A. Jacobsen and W. Jochmann, eds., *Ausgewählte Dokumente zur Geschichte des nationalsozialismus, 1933–1945* (“Selected Documents in the History of National Socialism”) (Bielefeld: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1961) at (Shoah Resource Centre, Documents on the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, Documents on Hitler, no. 3), <http://yad-vashem.org.il/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201999.pdf>.

59 Hitler, “Munich—Speech of April 12, 1922”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22html>>, pp. 4–5 of 8.

60 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 206.

lamented the formation of local republican councils in Munich at the beginning of the Weimar period, characterizing them as “the passing rule of the Jews” which “had been the original aim of the instigators of the whole revolution”.⁶¹ As for the political parties, Hitler accused the Jews in one of his early speeches of manipulating what he called “the old parties” to get their nefarious way. Hitler saw that this manipulation was a relatively easy task because the Jews already knew the parties well while the parties “are easily satisfied” by the Jews: “Only endow them with a few seats as ministers or with similar posts and they are ready to go along with you”. In this analysis Hitler stepped away from saying that Weimar was run by the Jews, simply saying that the Jews manipulated those who did. “Only look at the parties and their leaders, Stresemann and the rest of them,” Hitler cried, “[t]hey are not dangerous. They never go to the roots of the evil”. And yet the government is “ready for appeasement so as to stay the deadly cancerous ulcer through policy moderation”. This approach was a mistake in Hitler’s view and must be replaced by correct thinking in which “there are only two possibilities: either victory or defeat!”⁶² Weimar was, then, for Hitler either directly run by the Jews, or run by a group of gullible and doltish men who were too weak to confront the racial enemy that both controlled

61 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 207.

62 Adolf Hitler, “Munich—Speech of July 28, 1922”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/07-28-22.html>>, pp. 7–8 of 8.

them and menaced the entire nation. For Goebbels, Weimar was nothing more than a crass “Jewish plutocracy” that used socialism “to establish the crassest financial dictatorship”.⁶³

Upon taking power Hitler reiterated the failings of parliamentary democracy and its connection to the crises of the Weimar period. In his inaugural “Proclamation to the German Nation”, Hitler refrained from mentioning the Jews directly but repeatedly emphasized the “Marxist” nature of the Weimar governments which Hitler and other Nazi leaders linked to the Jews elsewhere. With the Nazis in power the time had come to replace the “turbulent instincts” of Weimar with the “national discipline of the building of our national life”. He railed against the legacy of the Republic, accusing the “November parties” of ruining the German peasantry. Moreover, “[i]n fourteen years they have created an army of the unemployed. [. . .] The Marxist parties and their lackeys have had fourteen years to show what they can do. The result is a heap of ruins”.⁶⁴ Six years later Hitler once again decried the legacy of the republican period but this time explicitly spelled out the supposed alliance between the Weimar parties and the Jews. The former, he charged, opposed the rise of the Nazis because “of their guilty conscience and worse intentions [. . . for] [d]uring the long battle of National Socialism for the leadership of the country they [the Weimar democrats] had all come together in defense of their interests and made

63 Goebbels, “Mimicry”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb18.htm>>, p. 1 of 4.

64 Hitler, “Berlin: Proclamation To The German Nation—February 1, 1933”, <<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/02-01-33.html>>, pp. 2–3 of 3.

common cause with Jewry”.⁶⁵ To reject National Socialism now and return to democratic rule would effectively mean a return to the bad old days of democratic Germany when the country was “plundered and oppressed”. In a speech to Nazi party officials in 1942 with the battle of Stalingrad raging and the genocide against the Jew in full operation, Hitler reminded his supporters that Weimar was a “conspiracy of Jews and capitalists and Bolsheviks of that time [that] we wanted to do away with. And we finally got rid of it”. In coming to power the Nazis overcame “this conspiracy of influential circles, these [. . .] parliamentarians, petty politicians and so forth”. Hitler then noted in a repetition of his now familiar statement regarding the Jews that “[a]nother power, too, which was very strong in Germany has meanwhile been able to learn from experience that the National Socialist prophecies are no mere phrases; it is the main power to which we owe all this misfortune—international Jewry”.⁶⁶

The Jews’ control over Weimar and their ultimate responsibility for the hardships of the Weimar period remained a consistent theme for the Nazi leadership during the war years. Even at the end of the war, after the Third Reich had wrought so much destruction on others and were now being returned the favour, Hitler turned again to the Jews’ pernicious domination of the Weimar Republic. In his final radio address to the German people on

65 Hitler, Speech Before the Reichstag (30 January 1939), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 1 of 6.

66 Hitler, Speech in Munich (8 November 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, pp. 4–5 of 15.

30 January 1945, twelve years to the day since he had come to power, six years to the day since he had first publicly threatened the “annihilation” of European Jewry, and less than two weeks after the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, he still blamed the Jews for the failures of Weimar and implicitly warned of a return to Jewish dominated “bourgeois” democracy after the war. While the Jews were enduring the final agony of the death marches to the west from the evacuated camps in now Soviet-occupied Poland Hitler again recalled the failure of what he now called the “bourgeois” Weimar Republic. Following the failure of “Jewish Asiatic Bolshevism” to successfully complete the revolution of 1918 “Judaism began systematically to undermine our nation from within, and it found its best ally in those narrow-minded bourgeoisie who would not recognize that the era of a bourgeois world is ended [. . .] that the epoch of unbridled economic liberalism has outlived itself and can only lead to its self-destruction”.⁶⁷

With the final crisis of the Third Reich’s own self-destruction staring the German leader in the face Hitler turned for the last time to the Jews as the ultimate explanation for both the cause of the current catastrophe closing in from the east and west and as an overwhelming threat to the future that must be combated through the careful observation of the racial laws. In his political testament dictated only hours before taking his own life Hitler gave voice to his infamous prophecy, a tacit admission of the genocide, and the necessary fate that must await the Jews lest they continue to exist and destroy the world.

67 Hitler, Radio Address to the German Nation (30 January 1945), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 2 of 4.

But nor have I left any doubt that if the nations of Europe are once more to be conspirators in money and finance, then those who carry the real guilt for the murderous struggle, this people will also be held responsible: the Jews! I have further left no one in doubt that this time it will not be only millions of children of Europeans and Aryan peoples who will starve to death, not only millions of grown men who will suffer death, and not only hundreds of thousands of women and children who will be burned and bombed to death in the cities, without those who are really responsible also having to atone for their crime, even if by more humane means. [. . .] But before everything else I call upon the leadership of the nation and those who follow it to observe the racial laws most carefully, to fight mercilessly against the poisoners of all the peoples of the world, international Jewry.⁶⁸

In sum, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party skillfully exploited the crises of the interwar period to discredit the Weimar system and to ultimately seize power in 1933. But it was their consistent negative association of the Jews with these crises that proved to be the ultimate trigger for genocide. The extremist anti-Semitism, authoritarianism, militarism and chauvinistic nationalism of the Nazi leadership and the eventual targeting of the Jews grew out of the existing permissive political culture as did popular receptivity to the Nazis' anti-Semitic construction of recent events. The conceptualization of the Jews as both to blame for Germany's woes and as a threat to Germany's future and the survival of the "Aryan race" sparked repeated calls for the Jews elimination from German society and, once the Nazis took power, the actualization of this plan, first through civic and economic disenfranchisement, then through concentration and deportation and finally mass murder.

II. THE CAMBODIAN "KILLING FIELDS": THE SIHANOUKIST AND LON NOL YEARS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CRISES

68 Adolf Hitler, "Political Testament" (Berlin, 29 April 1945) (Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981, Document no. 72), <http://www1.yadvashem.org.il/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201985.pdf>

V. As with the Nazi Holocaust against German and European Jewry, the Khmer Rouge's "killing fields" were triggered by a series of economic, political, and security crises, namely the stagnation and then contraction of the Cambodian economy, the political instability of the later Sihanoukist and republican regimes, and the deteriorating security environment caused by the ensuing civil war and the expansion of the Vietnam conflict into Cambodia. These crises were interpreted by the Khmer Rouge leadership, and to a lesser extent their peasant supporters, as both threats to the nation in general and to the revolutionary organization in particular. The former, comprised of the economic stagnation and then collapse of the 1960s and 1970s respectively, as well as the political instability of the same period, were identified according to Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideology as indicative of the semi-colonial, semi-feudal, and reactionary nature of the existing socio-economic system. Responsibility for these more general economic and political problems was attached to the non-revolutionary, mostly urban-based socio-economic classes as well as ethnic and religious minorities. Members of these classes and ethnic groups were, as we shall see in chapter 4, targeted during the genocide because they were perceived to lie completely outside the new order and deemed to be inherently reactionary or racial enemies whose existence threatened the future survival of Democratic Kampuchea and the ethnic Khmer majority. Obsessive concern over the survival of the party and the so-called "National Democratic" Revolution during the civil war (as opposed to the "Socialist Revolution" during the DK period) characterized

the Khmer Rouge's interpretation of the acute security and military crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The border incursions from Vietnam, the American bombing campaign, and the close but tense relationship between the North Vietnamese Army and the Khmer Rouge during the civil war were all filtered through real and imagined threats of the physical isolation and potential destruction of the communist movement and by political cultural and ideological beliefs that bred an obsession with the need to counter any hint of factionalism with extreme repression and violence. Although political instability and military crises created the conditions under which the Khmer Rouge came to power, *Angkar* nonetheless was on a constant search for "enemies", namely the Vietnamese (domestic and from North Vietnam) and suspect Party cadres, who allegedly worked covertly to undermine the drive to defeat the Khmer Republic, and after 1975, destroy revolutionary Kampuchea.⁶⁹

69 It must be noted that the evidence used in this study for the interpretation section of each crisis differs in both quantity and form across the two cases. In the German case we have abundant evidence demonstrating how Hitler and other senior Nazi leaders interpreted the crises of World War I and the interwar period in the form of speeches given and writings penned at the time the crises were unfolding as well as retrospective interpretations given during the Holocaust. In Cambodia there is almost no known evidence (written or otherwise) from the late 1960s to the end of the civil war in 1975 upon which we can base our analyses. The paucity of direct evidence from this time period is due, first, to the tenuous existence of the Khmer Rouge as a guerrilla fighting force in often remote areas of the country. Faced with the task of survival and fighting government forces, the Khmer Rouge leaders are believed by scholars such as David Chandler to have had little opportunity to catalogue their perception of events in written form. Their outlaw status and isolation from Cambodians living in cities and towns meant that the Khmer Rouge were also not able to deliver public speeches that were then preserved in writing or on film as was the case for the Nazi party before they came to power. Secondly, Pol Pot's personal leadership style with his immediate subordinates is believed by Chandler (see *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* [Boulder: Westview, 1999]) to have been highly secretive which produced virtually nothing by way of a paper trail. Chandler also notes that when dealing with junior cadres, Pol Pot's preferred method of communication was the "study session" in which the Khmer Rouge leader offered informal lectures designed to raise the revolutionary consciousness of the cadres and to impart practical

(continued...)

A. Economic Crises

The lack of forward momentum by the 1960s in the development of the agricultural sector was in large part the product of neglect on the part of Sihanouk and his officials. Despite the fact that Sihanouk was still at the height of his power up to the mid-1960s, mismanagement and corruption among government officials, coupled with Sihanouk's own lack of interest in rational economic planning, meant that no serious policies were formulated or implemented which might have substantially improved rice yields or reduced rural indebtedness. Low levels of mechanization, "poorly conceived and underfunded irrigation systems" as well as "unrealistic resettlement programs intended to bring marginal lands into production" hampered the "rational development of agriculture".⁷⁰ As a result, the regime

69 (...continued)

tactical information for combating government forces. Again, Pol Pot himself and other Khmer Rouge leaders did not preserve a record of what was discussed at these sessions. Finally, many of the cadres Pol Pot addressed at these sessions were illiterate peasants and as such written materials were not circulated nor could the information and perspectives given at these sessions be written down by the cadres. The evidence scholars like Chandler and Ben Kiernan (see *How Pol Pot Came to Power: A History of Communism in Kampuchea 1930-1975* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986]) have uncovered concerning the Khmer Rouge during the pre-DK period is based on two sources: retrospective analyses of the period by senior leaders written during the Khmer Rouge's time in power when the genocide was on-going (these documents were discovered by the historian Ben Kiernan and anthropologist Gregory Stanton who were the first westerners to arrive in Cambodia in early 1980 to investigate allegations that the Khmer Rouge had committed genocide) and interviews with cadres and survivors of the genocide conducted by western researchers (foremost among them Ben Kiernan) and journalists after the Khmer Rouge were forced from power. Admittedly it would be preferable to have direct evidence from the pre-genocide period of crisis, but these resources either have not been found or likely do not exist. Nonetheless, the retrospective interpretation of the pre-genocide crises are illuminating and were offered during the genocide by way of explanation for why the new people, the minorities, and cadres linked to the communist regime in Vietnam had to be physically liquidated.

70 David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945* (Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 118, 179; Marie Martin, *Cambodia, A Shattered Society* (trans. Mark W. McLead) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 75.

missed the opportunity to develop the rural economy which instead began to stagnate in the period of calm before the civil war and the encroachment of the Vietnam War. Agricultural yields of staple crops such as rice per hectare as well as per capita income remained among the lowest in Southeast Asia throughout the 1960s prior to the upheavals of the 1970s when large amounts of productive land were taken out of cultivation and their inhabitants became refugees or worse. The most lucrative cash crop, rubber, “continued to be a premier source of revenue generation on the international market”, but a dramatic fall in prices in the late 1960s substantially shrank the profits derived from its sale at a time when harvests were also beginning to be affected by US defoliation, bombing, and combat on both sides of the Vietnam-Cambodia border.⁷¹ The “development of other cash crops such as pepper, kapok, cotton and tobacco” was also “hampered” during this period by what David Chandler calls “bureaucratic lethargy”—all of which “stifled initiative” and further hamstrung rural economic development—and was made worse by the state’s monopoly on crop exports that was part of the 1963 nationalization of much of the economy.⁷²

Although Cambodia’s pre- and post-colonial economy was never what one might call robust, nonetheless there was real economic growth in the commercial and light industrial sectors in the 1950s and into the early 1960s. This trend came to a stop, however, with

71 *Far Eastern Economic Review* (hereafter: *FEER*), vol. 69, no. 29 (16 July 1970), p. 32.

72 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 180.

Sihanouk's decision to unilaterally cancel all aid programs from the United States when the economy was nationalized. On November 19, 1963 Sihanouk requested that the United States immediately cease all economic and military assistance programs. In so doing the Sihanoukist regime renounced approximately \$30 million (US) worth of aid per year. Aside from military aid totaling \$10.4 million in the fiscal year 1962–3, the program cancellation meant the immediate withdrawal of approximately \$19.3 million of economic aid—\$14.6 million of commercial aid and \$4.7 million for various development projects. Because of the way it was structured, the United State's Commercial Aid Program served two purposes: it allowed Cambodia to import essential goods without cost and it provided non-inflationary local currency funds to finance development projects; and it helped meet the budgetary expenditures of the Cambodian Government. The program "financed almost all imports" of petroleum products "as well as wheat flour, condensed milk, jute bags, machinery, various chemicals, trucks, and tires". This amounted to about 15% of total Cambodian imports for the fiscal year 1962–3. As for development aid, from July 1954 to June 1963 the US provided \$88 million for education, public health, agriculture, public works, and infrastructure projects. This included the building of a 252 kilometer highway linking Phnom Penh with the seaport of Sihanoukville.⁷³ Aside from forgoing all US economic and military aid, the 1963 economic programme also called for the nationalization of the financial, banking, import/export trade, the insurance sector, and distilleries.

73 Francois Nivelon, "What Sihanouk Will Miss", *FEER*, vol. 42, no. 10 (5 December 1963), p. 510.

As a leading figure in the non-aligned movement Sihanouk made it clear that his goal was to pursue a neutralist course between the United States, whom he declared had “been erased from this country”, and “[t]he Communist powers [who] are erasing themselves, because they do not want us as associates”.⁷⁴ Interestingly, Sihanouk looked to De Gaulle since he saw that “nobody can accuse [France] any longer of following here an imperialist or neo-colonial policy”,⁷⁵ although the stated rationale for the nationalization policy was to reduce foreign control over the economy. However Sihanouk’s primary concern was with giving Khmers, rather than ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese, a greater role in Cambodia’s economy and trade, thereby eliminating “middlemen”, and to “conserve foreign exchange” through the limiting of what he considered “unnecessary luxury imports”.⁷⁶ Sihanouk believed that the continuing low rice yields, lackluster progress in the industrial sector, and difficulty collecting taxes was in large part due to the influence of a small commercial elite based in the capital, many of whom had cultural ties to Chinese traders and merchants in Saigon and Bangkok. This same elite had, in Sihanouk’s view, become dependent on, and corrupted by, “luxury imports from American sponsored commodity import programs”. Nationalization was intended to solve these problems and,

74 Nivolon, “What Sihanouk Will Miss”, *FEER*, vol. 42, no. 10 (5 December 1963), p. 510.

75 Sihanouk continued that “[i]t is known that we are not solicitants, but if France wishes to, she can help Cambodia to maintain herself in strict neutrality. In our country, freed from the US, and of which the Communist countries do not want to take the responsibility, it could be the time for France” (Nivolon, “What Sihanouk Will Miss”, *FEER*, vol. 42, no. 10 [5 December 1963], p. 510).

76 Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, Country Studies; Area Handbook Series, Cambodia, 1987, <http://www.lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/khtoc.html>, p. 12. {check title}

more importantly, “cut the ties” between ethnic Chinese and Sino-Khmer commercial elites in Cambodia with their compatriots in South Vietnam and Thailand.⁷⁷ In so doing Sihanouk hoped to achieve the essentially political goal of bringing to heel some of his most vocal domestic critics on the right.

The short and long-term consequences of the nationalization programme were unambiguously negative. Productivity in the sectors formerly financed by American aid began to decline almost immediately which in turn depressed imports thereby leading to a serious decline in foreign exchange reserves. With the state now controlling imports, stores of luxury items enjoyed by the “European classes” (i.e., western expatriates, including approximately 7000 French citizens) and local urban elites began to decline sharply by the end of 1964 as Sihanouk had hoped. However, these “luxuries” also included needed economic inputs such as cotton cloth and sugar, for a newly opened palm sugar mill.⁷⁸ The absence of luxuries from the Cambodian economy also put a drag on one of Cambodia’s most lucrative economic sectors in the mid-1960s: tourism. Although Angkor Wat continued to be a world-class tourist attraction, foreign tourists began to stay away from Cambodia by the end of 1964 because of the artificially inflated exchange rate of the riel as well as price increases for hotel accommodations, food, and other “luxuries”

⁷⁷ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 131.

⁷⁸ Francis Renoir, “Between Two Friends”, *FEER*, vol. 46, no. 14 (31 December 1964), p. 675.

deemed necessities by most western visitors.⁷⁹ The demonstration effect of nationalizing private businesses also deprived the Cambodian economy of needed foreign investment⁸⁰ which seriously attenuated development in the industrial sector for the remainder of the decade. Not only did industry lack needed foreign investment, it also suffered from isolation from foreign markets which in turn perpetuated the problem of low foreign currency reserves. The ability of the state to acquire crucial heavy industry inputs on the international market was consequently severely constrained, particularly the purchase of “crucial materials” including “cement, iron, steel, industrial machinery, and electrical equipment”.⁸¹ The downturn in foreign investment was mirrored by a decline in domestic investment in the remaining private sector as nationalization dampened the inclination of entrepreneurs to invest their own resources in the economy.⁸²

In the banking sector, nationalization led to the collapse of the largest financial institution in the country, the Bank of Phnom Penh by mid-December 1963.⁸³ Despite

79 Renoir, “Between Two Friends”, p. 675.

80 Library of Congress, Cambodia, 1987, p. 12.

81 Francis Renoir, “Between Two Friends”, *FEER*, December 1964, p. 675.

82 Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, p. 78.

83 Meanwhile chairman and general manager of the Bank of Phnom Penh, Songsakd Kitchpanich, absconded to Saigon with what Sihanouk alleged in a public broadcast on the bank’s failure to be 120,000 to 130,000 riels, most of it the assets of urban bureaucrats, businessmen, and royal family members who had used the bank for years to shelter their funds and investments. Songsakd had been a leading financier of several commercial enterprises and the troubled Far East Life Assurance firm which prior to the collapse of the bank had experienced various legal difficulties (“Cambodia: Banker’s Flight”, *FEER*, vol. 43, no. 2 [9 January 1964], p. 49).

Sihanouk's anticipation that France or some other donor would step into the breach, the aid that was received was insufficient to fill the budgetary gap.⁸⁴ As such, chronic budget deficits became the norm from the mid 1960s onward which, as an article in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* accurately predicted in 1965, "inhibit[ed] strict adherence to long-range economic planning" and led the state under Sihanouk to abandon any attempts "to run the economy on any sort of orthodox basis".⁸⁵

In purely economic terms the long term effects of the nationalization programme were a continuation of the immediate results of the policy. By the early 1970s, even after the partial denationalization of the foreign trade and banking sector in late 1969 and the official admittance of Cambodia into the IMF and the World Bank, foreign investment remained depressed as did foreign aid—save the reintroduction of American military and economic assistance in late 1969. Industrialization steadily declined throughout the 1960s and early 1970s along with foreign exchange reserves.⁸⁶ The economic difficulties caused by nationalization were, as we will see, seriously exacerbated by the encroachment of the Vietnam War and the civil war from 1968 onward.

1. Stagnation and Corruption

84 Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, p. 80.

85 F.T. Mits, "Cambodia's Neutralist Flair", *FEER*, vol. 48, no. 7 (13 May 1965), p. 321.

86 Francois Nivolon, "Cambodia and Laos: Going Nowhere", *FEER*, vol. 69, no. 29 (16 July 1970), p. 32.

Although the economic malaise induced by the nationalization programme was significant, it was the flourishing of government corruption directly caused by the program that outraged government critics on the left and right as well as the population at large. In a political culture in which, as one analyst put it, “civil servants believed that public property belonged to everyone, especially to them, and therefore helped themselves to public money and supplies”,⁸⁷ the handing of the financial and foreign trade sectors over to government bureaucrats led to rampant corruption. Staffed by Sihanouk cronies and allies, nationalized state enterprises became a “focal point” for “personal profit-taking” by civil servants who were ill equipped to effectively administer the enterprises for which they were now responsible.⁸⁸ Already hampered by a lack of expertise, the new government enterprises laboured under the weight of further economic mismanagement and lack of effective economic planning. Thus the very programme Sihanouk publicly pronounced would reduce elite corruption and rationalize the economy in fact alienated entrepreneurs who decried the nationalization of key sectors of the economy while at the same time breeding a system of crony quasi-socialism among Sihanouk’s hangers-on. By creating a situation in which official corruption was allowed to flourish unchecked and private investment in the economy discouraged, Sihanouk “allowed the private sector to decline” while “alienating”

87 Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, p. 78.

88 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 138.

centrist and rightist entrepreneurs “for good”.⁸⁹ It was these people, among others, who eventually supported the ouster of Sihanouk by Lon Nol in 1970, ushering in an unprecedented period of economic and political chaos in which the communist insurgency thrived and eventually triumphed.

In his final year in office Sihanouk decided with apparently little forethought that the country’s declining government revenues could be partially refilled by the opening of state-run casinos in Phnom Penh and the port city of Sihanoukville. By the end of 1969, 9% of government revenues came from the casinos but at a huge cost to the patrons and a significant leap in official corruption. With the casinos open twenty-four hours a day many patrons became so indebted they committed suicide while the officials in charge of the casinos and several members of the royal family were personally enriched by skimming profits off the casinos. As public dissatisfaction with the casinos grew, Sihanouk banned all negative media reports about the casino project.⁹⁰

2. Civil War and Economic Collapse

With the outbreak of civil war and the encroachment of the war in Vietnam the Cambodian economy plunged from stagnation in the 1960s to full scale crisis and collapse in the period from 1970 to 1975. At the beginning of the civil war the economy was already staggering under a serious recession in 1969. GNP began to grow 2.3% which was slower than the

89 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 138.

90 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 185.

rate of population increase. Agricultural credits provided by the soon to be deposed Sihanouk government were “insufficient to relieve rural indebtedness” where interest payments often “exceeded a typical peasant family’s annual income”. Meanwhile, money allocated for the agricultural sector in the national budget was used primarily to pay civil servants’ salaries and, unsurprisingly, had “little effect on improving crop varieties and diversification or yields”, the latter of which remained at the same level on a national basis as it had been in the 1940s.⁹¹

Fighting between the Khmer Rouge and the Republican government *Forces Armees Nationales Khmeres* (FANK) on the one hand, and the incursions by the Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) and periodically clandestine US Special Forces in “hot pursuit” missions to root out southern Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF or “Viet Cong”) guerrillas and North Vietnam Army (NVA) main force regulars on the other, severely disrupted the rural economy. So much rural land had been taken out of cultivation because of combat operations and the US bombing campaign that by 1971 the Lon Nol government was incapable of exporting either rice, rubber, or wood from which it had earned most of its foreign currency exchange.⁹² This problem was exacerbated by the fact that some districts on the eastern border were effectively administered by NVA and NLF forces. Vietnamese cadres extracted taxes from the local Cambodian population while at

91 Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981* (Zed Press, 1982), pp. 134–165.

92 Martin, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, p. 133.

the same time purchasing rice and other products at inflated prices relative to what the Cambodian government paid for local produce in a bid to win the allegiance of their Cambodian “hosts”.⁹³ The Vietnamese communist’s system of part local pacification part self-interested resupply ensured that the Cambodian government could neither administer NVA/NLF controlled border districts effectively, including tax collection, nor have access to locally grown commodities which could then be resold on the domestic and international markets.

The fighting in the countryside also inflicted severe damage on rice paddies and several rubber plantations. By the late 1960s rubber harvests began to be reduced by the effects of defoliant sprayed on both sides of the Vietnam-Cambodia border by the US military. The Cambodian government in 1969, for example, claimed that as much as 37,000 acres of arable land, including 7,000 acres of valuable rubber plantations, had been destroyed by American defoliation sorties.⁹⁴ As fighting escalated on all sides, encroaching combat operations and the extension of NVA/NLF sanctuaries across Cambodia’s eastern border also left a number of plantations insecure. By July 1970, three of the five biggest French-managed estates—Snoul, Mimot, and Krek—were close enough to NLF sanctuaries to be inside military operation zones. A fourth, Chup, was only twenty miles west of a military operation zone. All four plantations ceased operations by April or early-May 1970.

93 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 160.

94 Elizabeth Yung, “Economy: Cambodia’s Come-on”, *FEER*, vol. 65, no. 38 (14/20 September 1969), p. 742.

Although the fighting destroyed few of the trees, technical facilities were badly damaged. Only one plantation remained open by the end of June 1970. Damage on the Chup estate was estimated at the time to be more than US\$1 million.⁹⁵

The harvesting and sale of rice and rubber had the highest earning potential of all crops cultivated in Cambodia. In 1969 rubber exports totaled approximately US\$20 million, more than half of Cambodia's total foreign earnings. The effects of defoliation and war-related damage, as well as the short and long-term effects of a drought in 1968, caused rubber production to decline from 53,000 tons in 1967 to 46,000 tons by the end of 1969. This was followed by a disastrous reduction in production, according to one report in 1970, precipitated by the closing of the four plantations on the eastern border.⁹⁶ With rice and rubber export earnings almost reduced to zero by the end of 1970, government revenue earnings from the two commodities, which normally accounted for approximately 70% of export earnings, were down by over 50%. A 200,000 ton contract to export rice to China and North Vietnam was scraped because of war-induced contractions in rice production. Similarly, plans to export 50,000 tons of rubber on the world market "went down the drain" as one analyst put it at the time, largely because most plantations by early 1971 were located in districts experiencing the heaviest fighting, resulting in further destruction of equipment, disruption of transportation systems, loss of manpower—mostly

95 Nivolon, "Cambodia and Laos", *FEER*, p. 32.

96 Nivolon, "Cambodia and Laos", *FEER*, p. 32.

ethnic Vietnamese workers who were recruited to the Vietnamese communist insurgency or fled to South Vietnam as refugees—and insecurity.⁹⁷

Although rice production was strong owing to good weather and less fighting in rice cropping districts in the 1969–1970 growing season, the escalation of border incursions, US bombing, and the civil war in the summer of 1970 threw production plans into chaos with only 100,000 tons loaded up for sale before harvesting came to a standstill in mid-March.⁹⁸ For the remainder of the war Cambodia was barely able to cover its own domestic needs for rice production. Near the end of the civil war in the fall of 1974 shortages of rice, coupled with a steep devaluation of the riel, drove the price of a 45kg bag of rice up to 10,000 riels, slightly less than an average civil servant's monthly wage. For the under- or unemployed workers and peasant refugees swelling the city their "only hope" was to become "one of the few people on the lists of international food donors operating in the capital".⁹⁹ Central and municipal governments were unable to provide food and other relief to refugees as government finances were mired in huge budget deficits caused by several years of mismanagement, corruption, and ballooning military expenditures.

But the reduction in rice available for local consumption and export was not solely due to war damage inflicted on rice paddies and the peasants who cultivated them. As early as

97 Arnold Abrams, "Economy: Aid Minuet", *FEER*, vol. 70, no.49 (5 December 1970), p. 82.

98 Nivolon, "Cambodia and Laos", *FEER*, p. 32.

99 Neil Davis, "Cambodia: An Explosive List of Increases", *FEER*, vol. 86, no.39 (4 October 1974), p. 20.

the mid-1960s as much as one quarter of the rice cultivated in Cambodia was sold more or less openly, often by corrupt government officials, to the communist Vietnamese forces operating on the eastern frontier¹⁰⁰ or smuggled over the border into South Vietnam.¹⁰¹ While personally enriching corrupt officials, the illicit trafficking in rice throughout the war depleted government coffers by bleeding off the main source of government tax revenues.

The crisis in the agricultural sector also extended to the cultivation of cash crops including cotton, sugar, and jute as well as finished forestry products such as paper. All of this was amplified by the closing from 1970 onward of large parts of the rail and highway transportation grid due to fighting and aerial bombardment. Staple and cash crops as well as the transportation of light and heavy industry inputs and finished products to domestic markets or to seaports for export were severely hampered by the lack of secure transportation routes under Cambodian government control. By the summer of 1970 the Phnom Penh-Saigon highway was patrolled and kept open by ARVN troops, but the main roads from the Cambodian capital to Kompong Som, Kampot, Kompong Cham, Kratie, Siem Reap, and Battambang were unusable most of the time. Similarly, the railway from Phnom Penh to Battambang, the most productive rice growing area in the country, and the Thai border was out of use due to unrepaired war damage. Commenting on the economic difficulties induced by the fighting, one western journalist at the time commented,

100 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 112.

101 Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–9* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 16–17.

“[c]onfusion reigns. Raw materials are not being supplied and distribution of what production there is, is proving difficult”.¹⁰²

As for tourism, it “had died”. Angkor Wat, located near the town of Siem Reap with its newly extended air strip, had become “military country”. Cambodian government troops lived in a newly renovated Air France financed hotel near the famous temple while the “Vietcong [were] camping in the Angkor ruins and fighting rage[d] for control of Siem Reap”.¹⁰³ By the time the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, the Cambodian economy across the board had almost completely collapsed.

3. Interpretation

The economic stagnation and decline of the latter Sihanouk years and the ensuing financial and economic chaos wrought by the civil war undoubtedly constituted a major crisis for most Cambodians. For the Khmer Rouge leadership, however, the economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s were considered less for their immediate impact on the Khmer Rouge’s primary constituents—that is poor peasants and urban workers—than as confirmation of the inherently exploitative, decadent, and corrupt nature of the existing socio-economic system and the “reactionary” classes who dominated it. Captured hand-written Khmer Rouge documents from 1971 reveal a highly ideological but also very general interpretation of the economic situation without citing specific examples of economic decline or

102 Nivolon, “Cambodia and Laos”, p. 32.

103 Nivolon, “Cambodia and Laos” p. 32.

deprivation caused by the collapse of the economy. According to one of the documents, written by cadres from the radical South West zone, Cambodia was understood to be “a semi-colonial, semi-feudal” country. The current revolutionary struggle was being waged as a response to the severe repression of the “exploiting classes” who “resist the people’s war to the end”. Identifying the exploiting classes as “the imperialists, the feudalists, and the capitalists” the document warned in language that would become unambiguous during the genocide that “they are the life-and-death enemies of the people’s war”; a war waged to “exterminate the exploiting classes”.¹⁰⁴

By tying general economic problems to specific enemy classes, the Khmer Rouge played on long standing political cultural antipathies held by many peasants concerning the cities and their inhabitants, intellectuals, and government economic representative, particularly tax collectors. For the Khmer Rouge these same groups were integral to their own understanding of the pernicious nature of the existing economic system, the predations of imperialism, the city, bureaucrats, the middle class, and intellectuals. As Becker suggests, the Khmer Rouge and their peasant supporters in the liberated zones “discovered a frightening coincidence of prejudice. They were each other’s best converts to a bitter and burning hatred”.¹⁰⁵ How frightening this “bitter and burning hatred” of class enemies was became clear well before the genocide when the Khmer Rouge began to pursue radical

104 “Who Leads the People’s War?” cited in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, pp. 323, 326.

105 Becker, *When the War Was Over*, p. 137.

collectivization policies in the zones under its control from 1973 onward. In the city of Kratie, for example, all vestiges of the old economic system and the classes that benefitted from it, particularly those who owned private property, were purged immediately. Senior cadres warned that the gentler Khmer Rouge occupation of Kratie up to 1973 had been “insufficient” to “root out the influence of class enemies”. The Khmer Rouge journal *Trung Pradevat* (Revolutionary Flags) decried that Kratie “showed the same signs as the old society. Honda motorcycles were speeding up and down the streets like before; while our ragged guerrillas walked in the dust”. All of this “showed that they [i.e., capitalists or “bourgeois traders”] were still the masters”. The Party, therefore, had to ensure that “the state (*Angkar*) controlled everything”.¹⁰⁶ Similarly the taking of the old Imperial capital, Oudong, on the border between the North and Southwest zones occasioned a similar exercise in stamping out the ills of the old society and those believed responsible for them. As one Western observer noted at the time of the fall of Oudong, the Khmer Rouge were committed not only to overrunning government outposts, “but to destroying the last vestiges of a civilization that appeared totally decadent and irrelevant”.¹⁰⁷ At Oudong, local officials, teachers, and other elites were taken to the jungle and executed and the city razed.

During the DK period the Khmer Rouge leadership retrospectively interpreted the travails of the old economic system and the pernicious influence of the urban bourgeois

106 *Tung Pradevat* (“Revolutionary Flags”), no. 8 (August 1971), p. 14 (trans. T. M. Carney) cited in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 369.

107 Donald Kirk, “The Khmer Rouge: Revolutionaries or Terrorists?” (unpublished ms, 1974), p.1.

and rural landowning classes in much the same light as before their take-over. Such interpretations were explicitly tied to the genocide then underway against these same classes. The pre-revolutionary economic order marked by the decadence and corruption of the cities was said to appear “as if there was plenty, there was sufficiency. But the country was enslaved, indebted to others”.¹⁰⁸ These “others” were the bourgeois classes and the Vietnamese and Chinese minorities, the latter two of whom were an integral part of the commercial and financial sectors of the economy. Five months before the Vietnamese invasion that ended the Khmer Rouge’s rule, Nuon Chea similarly described pre-revolutionary Cambodia as “neo-colonial and semi-feudal”. “Internal contradictions” were rife between “on the one hand the working class and the capitalists” in the cities “and on the other the poor peasants and the feudal class” in the countryside. At this time, capitalists and reactionaries together oppressed our people”. Based on the Party’s “analysis of the situation [. . .] the party determined its revolutionary tasks: to make the national democratic revolution [. . .] to liberate the Kampuchean nation and the poor peasant class”.¹⁰⁹

108 “Abbreviated Lesson on the History of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Movement Led by the Communist Party of Kampuchea” (Party Centre, undated) (trans. Ben Kiernan) in David Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976–1977* (Monograph Series 33) (eds. David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan, Chanthou Boua) (Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), p. 225.

109 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” (Searching for the truth [Khmer version], number 17, May 2001) (Documentation Center of Cambodia) <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 1.

As for the poor peasants themselves, Nuon Chea was at pains to show the confluence of interests and interpretation of the pre-revolutionary economic system between the Party and the peasantry. In the years immediately prior to the armed revolutionary struggle and during the Samlaut peasant rebellion (which he does not mention by name), “the movement in favour of production and against land-owners was very strong. Peasants pitted their strength against the ruling class. They had nothing but used everything [. . .] Revolutionary forces in the rural areas were very strong then”.¹¹⁰ This is, of course, the Khmer Rouge’s own retrospective interpretation-cum-propaganda piece which was presented as the historically close conceptual and operational relationship between their peasant base and the Party. While it is true that some peasants supported the Khmer Rouge’s opposition to the very real disparities between urban and rural Cambodia and the evident exploitation and corruption of the old economic system, the continuing appeal of Sihanouk during the revolutionary struggle and after 1975 suggests the connection between the poor peasantry and Khmer Rouge was not as tight as the communist leadership suggested. Pol Pot and his deputies realized the hold Sihanouk held over many peasants all too well as was evident in their inclusion of him as the nominal head of the FUNK and their decision during the DK period not to execute the man many Cambodian peasants revered as their national father.

110 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 3.

But it was the problem of “contradictions” between economic classes that most preoccupied the Khmer Rouge in their analysis of Cambodia’s, and the Party’s, past and future. Prefiguring Nuon Chea’s comments on the contradiction between previously exploiting and exploited classes, an undated Party history, likely from early 1977, contended that the pre-1975 struggle was in part about the smashing of the old economic system of production and the necessary resolution of “contradictions between the town and countryside”, between workers and peasants, and between “producers who perform physical labour and producers who perform mental labour”. Here the reference is clearly to the revolutionarily-sound worker and peasant “base people” of the DK era and the reactionary class of deportees from the cities or “new people”, the former exploiters of the old system. The document then refers in cryptic tones to the on-going liquidation of the new people warning that the resolution of the contradictions between the two groups have not yet been completely resolved: “Some of the filth of former class enemies remains; we will solve this further”.¹¹¹

B. Political Crises

The economic crises of the 1960s and early 1970s were mirrored in, and reinforced by, the political authoritarianism, instability, and corruption of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes. The authoritarianism of both regimes grew out of an elite political culture of unbending centralized paternalistic authority (see Chapter 2) and the alienation of critics on both the

111 “Abbreviated Lesson on the History of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Movement” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 222.

right and left who were squeezed out of the political process. These elements eventually undermined Sihanouk's authoritarian but relatively stable rule by the end of the 1960s with rightist military and civilian elites eventually overthrowing the increasingly mercurial Sihanouk in a 8–9 March 1970 coup. During the same period Cambodia's nascent communist movement, whom Sihanouk dismissively called "Khmer Rouge" (red Khmers) abandoned legitimate politics for violent civil war and revolution. Under the singularly incompetent rule of Sihanouk's successor, Lon Nol, Cambodia descended further into political instability as the new regime and its leader were soon shown to be completely incapable of governing effectively, bringing together disparate political actors, defeating the insurgency, or stemming rampant corruption.

With the granting of Cambodian independence from France in 1954 under the Geneva Accords, then King Sihanouk became the dominant force in Cambodian politics for the next decade and a half. His control of the political process after independence was solidified in a national referendum on 7–9 February 1955 confirming his rule. Sihanouk's abdication of the throne to his father, Prince Norodom Suramarit, one month later enabled the now Prince Sihanouk to participate freely in Cambodian politics, thus facilitating the election of his *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* (Popular Socialist Community) with 100% of the vote in elections held on 13 September 1955. Through a combination of genuine popular support, opposition newspaper closings, voter intimidation, bullying of all civil servants to join the *Sangkum*, the strategic use of political violence against opposition candidates, and voting

irregularities, Sihanouk triumphed over all potential rivals for power in the 1955 elections. The elections also marked the end of nominal constitutional politics and genuine pluralism until the UN sponsored election in 1992 and entrenched Sihanouk's firm grip on power for the remainder of the 1950s up to the mid-1960s.

During his time in power Sihanouk relied on the authoritarian methods he employed to win the 1955 elections to maintain control while evincing an unabashedly paternalistic attitude toward his people. His leadership style endeared him to many, particularly among the peasantry who continued to regard him as semi-divine, but seriously tested the patience of his political opponents and modernized middle class urbanites. Historian David Chandler argues that once in power Sihanouk came to believe that as the father of independence he could, "rule as he saw fit" and saw no need "to grant freedom of action to people he disliked".¹¹² Chandler continues that the Sihanouk period can be seen as either "a golden age" of "stability and relative prosperity" or a time when "one man" exercised a "totalitarian and absurd" ruling style. While Chandler's rhetoric in the latter instance may be excessive he correctly points out that the seeming stability of the early Sihanoukist period in fact set the stage for the political crises that would rock the country from the late 1960s onward. Sihanouk's authoritarian leadership style "clos[ed] off any possibility of pluralism, political maturity, sound planning, or rational debate. By treating Cambodia as a personal fief, his subjects as children, his opponents as traitors, Sihanouk did

112 David Chandler, *History of Cambodia* (Third Edition) (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 187.

much to set the agenda, unwittingly, for the lackadaisical chaos of the Khmer Republic, the horrors of Democratic Kampuchea, and the single party politics of the post-revolutionary era".¹¹³

One of the ways Sihanouk set the stage for the political instability and horrors to come was the poisonous manner in which he played opponents on the right and left off against each other. Courting one and side and then the other at different times but never giving either real political power, the prince ensured that neither side remained loyal and instead came to harbour deep resentments against the man who almost literally played politics with them. Having crushed the political right in the later 1950s by outlawing their political parties and using political violence against specific opponents, Sihanouk opted for a tactical alliance with the left in the early 1960s. Among those on the left who joined Sihanouk's Sangkum movement were Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn, and Hu Nim,¹¹⁴ all of whom were clandestine members of the Revolutionary Worker's Party, later to become the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) or Khmer Rouge. By entering into their own tactical alliance with Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge was able to survive politically and physically by pursuing a national front policy (urged on them by the communist regime in North Vietnam) and, until the mid 1960s, escape jail or death, unlike their counterparts on the right. Sihanouk

113 Chandler, *History of Cambodia*, p. 189.

114 Only Khieu Samphan would survive the DK period. Hou Yuon was executed by his fellow Khmer Rouge leaders in 1975 for questioning the radical nature of Khmer Rouge economic and social policies while Hu Nim was arrested, tortured, and executed later during the purge phase of the genocide, accused of being an agent of the CIA.

courted the left by allowing radical teachers who joined the *Sangkum* to teach their political views in the classroom and by cutting off all American aid and nationalizing the finance, banking, and import/export sector in 1963. The alliance with the leftist and clandestine communists would not last however, as Khieu Sampan, Hou Yuon, and Hu Nim refused to abandon their principles and become co-opted by Sihanouk. Although the three Khmer Rouge members stood for and were successfully elected in 1966 to the National Assembly and given cabinet posts, they resigned in 1967 over the Samlaut rebellion (see below) and fled under threat of arrest to the *maquis* to join the insurgency.

Sensing that the leftists were becoming too powerful and seeking to placate critics on the right as well as international criticism that his rule had become authoritarian, Sihanouk allowed for relatively open elections for the National Assembly in 1966. The resulting parliament, weak though it was, was not personally loyal to Sihanouk with many members on the right openly hostile to Sihanouk's rule, his economic program of "Buddhist socialism", and the break with the US. Significantly the 1966 vote saw the election of many of the political elites who would later plot to overthrow Sihanouk, particularly General Lon Nol whom Sihanouk subsequently appointed as Prime Minister largely because of the General's loyal following among the army's officer corps. Confronted for the first time with a government staffed by members who were not his personal lackies Sihanouk simply began to ignore opposition members of his own government. Instead he surrounded himself with a parallel government that shielded him from outsiders and information that he did not

want to hear. As such Sihanouk created a resurgence in patron-clientalistic relationships with people who were personally beholden to him while ignoring and alienating duly elected members of parliament. Although much of the peasantry still remained loyal to him, Sihanouk's feudalistic relationships masquerading as the government of a modern Asian state severely irritated his political opponents and Cambodia's urban elite on all sides of the political spectrum.¹¹⁵ By allowing political opponents into government and then denying them any genuine political power he unwittingly reignited the factional politics of the pre-Sangkum period. The consequences of Sihanouk's gamble in opening up the 1966 elections would not be favourable to him in the long run. Within a year his regime was faced with a serious leftist peasant rebellion in the northwest that essentially served as the spark for the civil war, increasing "nervousness and impatience among the urban left" in response to the appointment of their arch enemy Lon Nol as prime minister—a prime minister "who had personal ambition and a clientele of his own".¹¹⁶

1. Samlaut Rebellion

What became known as the Samlaut Rebellion lasted from March to May 1967 in the Samlaut region of Battambang province. The rebellion was partly a response to the new Prime Minister's heavy-handed and nonsensical policy of buying rice directly from peasant producers at below market rates in an effort to thwart illegal sales and smuggling of rice to

115 Martin, *Cambodia*, p. 86–87.

116 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 157.

the NLF. It was also a reaction to Lon Nol's attempt, during Sihanouk's absence in France for medical care, to unilaterally expropriate and redistribute fallow lands regarded by local peasants as their own¹¹⁷ to senior military and police officers, retired soldiers, and senior civil servants. The rebellion itself began with localized attacks on government officials and soldiers with mostly sticks, rocks, and sharp farm implements and seems to have been, at least initially, a self-generated peasant revolt. One local village clerk described the local rebels not as "Red Khmers" but as peasants who "were furious with provincial officials who, allied with local capitalists, had robbed local people of their land".¹¹⁸

On 2 April 1967, two hundred local inhabitants carrying anti-government banners and brandishing knives continued their revolt by attacking a camp used to house labourers sent to Battambang province to clear the area for crops. The workers fled after two soldiers were killed and their rifles captured; the camp was subsequently torched. Skirmishes between newly arrived government troops sent to put down the rebellion and the rebels continued for two days as up to two thousand men, women, and children fled or were forced into the jungle. By the middle of May, eight battalions of regular soldiers, as well as locally recruited vigilantes tasked with "hunting the Reds" brought the rebellion to a bloody, and as it turned out, temporary end, but not before it had spread to other districts in the north and east.

117 These lands were not technically owned by individual peasant farmers. They were part of the pre-colonial land system that still informally governed land use in parts of the Cambodian countryside at the time of the rebellion in which the monarchy was the sole possessor of the land with the peasants maintaining de facto rights to the land under their cultivation.

118 Quoted by Hin Sithan, *No Na Chea Khodok Reasr Khmaer (Who Are the Murderers of the Khmer People?)* (unpublished memoir) cited in Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 57.

Even after Sihanouk had announced on 18 June 1967 that the rebellion was over government aircraft bombed and strafed villages and jungle hide-outs, and some villages such as Beng Khtum Thvak and Russey Preas were raised to the ground. Meanwhile peasants in other villages were massacred after having been surrounded by government forces. Bounties were reportedly paid for the heads of rebels which were then trucked from Battambang to the capital so that Lon Nol could see for himself that his program to mop up the rebellion was in fact being implemented.¹¹⁹ This particularly gruesome practice prefigured the fratricidal barbarity of the civil war to come.

As they were to acknowledge later in their official party history written during the genocide, the Khmer Rouge did not initiate or lead the rebellion although it certainly supported it.¹²⁰ In the countryside many of the peasants who had been directly involved with or caught up in the rebellion and the government repression that followed it nonetheless shortly came to embrace the Khmer Rouge by joining their ranks as revolutionary soldiers and cadres. Having found their own government unsympathetic to long standing grievances over indebtedness, usury, and a crushing tax burden, as well as the rice purchasing and land expropriations that triggered the rebellion, many peasants turned to the one organization that seemed to share their sense of frustration, injustice, and

119 Kiernan, "The Samlaut Rebellion, 1967–68" in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea*, p. 173.

120 Pol Pot, Speech (27 September 1977) quoted in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea*, p. 255.

the need to radically overhaul the existing socio-economic system. As historian Ben Kiernan contends:

corruption, the misuse of the military and other authority, and increasing impoverishment, in the Samlaut, Pailin and Andoeuk Hep districts [. . .] created a vast reservoir of peasant unrest that lacked only a reasonably sophisticated leadership. By early 1967, that leadership had begun to take shape and it provided, as well as a sympathetic and purposeful ideology, the guidance to enable an already disaffected peasantry to carry out a serious and effective rebellion.¹²¹

During and after of the violence in Samlaut, Sihanouk and Lon Nol independently of each other began to attack urban leftists whom they accused of instigating the rebellion as a means of undermining the prime minister. The accused included teachers, students, and other activists as well as Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn, and Hu Nim. On 22 April 1967 Sihanouk, having returned from overseas, brought charges against the three senior Khmer Rouge cadres plus two other deputies he considered less blameworthy, but declined to, as he put it, “make martyrs of them by having them shot” as some of Lon Nol’s supporters had demanded. Instead they were to appear before a military tribunal. Two days later, fearing for their safety and that their true allegiance would be revealed, Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn disappeared from their homes in Phnom Penh and vanished into the jungle to help lead the rebellion. Rumours quickly spread that the secret police had assassinated the two on Lon Nol’s or Sihanouk’s orders. An ensuing storm of student-led protests in Phnom Penh, the city of Battambang, and Hu Nim’s electoral district raged for most of

121 Kiernan, “The Samlaut Rebellion, 1967–68” in Kiernan and Boua (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea*, p. 180.

the month of May as the students demanded the government hand over the two missing deputies “dead or alive” and that Hu Nim, still living openly, be allowed to keep his parliamentary immunity. Confronted with rebellion in the northwest countryside and angry demonstrations in the capital, Lon Nol resigned as Prime Minister ostensibly for health reasons. Sihanouk himself then formed the ominously named “Exceptional Government of National Safety” comprised of his own supporters, three members of Lon Nol’s government, and three leftists.

At a public meeting on 30 September 1967 and again at a press conference later on 5 October, Sihanouk publicly threatened Hu Nim with arrest and challenged him to “go over to the other side as Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn had done”. Taking Sihanouk’s advice, Hu Nim disappeared four days later into the *maquis* in Kompong Cham province just to the northeast of Phnom Penh. During the next few months several leftist deputies were arrested while others fled into exile and seven supposedly “red” school teachers from the capital were executed by the police at Trapeang Kraloeng in Kompong Speu province. Fearing for their safety other leftist deputies fled to the jungle to join the communists. Once again, students, teachers, and other urban leftists feared that like Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn, Hu Nim had been executed, launching another series of protests. Rumours abounded, however, that the three KR deputies were alive and well and helping to lead the nascent revolution. Many of their young urban supporters decided to follow the men they dubbed “The Three Ghosts” into the countryside.

As the first major political and security crisis to hit post-independence Cambodia, the Samlaut rebellion signaled a definitive end to the relative stability of the early Sihanouk years. The Samlaut rebellion and the regime's authoritarian and violent response to it produced three major consequences for the remainder of the pre-DK period and the fate of the political left: the abandonment by the Khmer Rouge once and for all of their "national front" political strategy of agitation, propaganda, and limited participation in the political process in favour of violent revolution; the disaffection of large numbers of peasants who were now willing to support or even join the ranks of the communist rebels; and, the flight of a small but significant number of urban teachers, students, professors, and workers to the *maquis* to join the revolution against what they saw as a repressive and reactionary state. Legitimate and effective political participation by the left was essentially quashed by the regime following Samlaut, leaving the door open for only supporters of the regime or rightist opponents increasingly dissatisfied with Sihanouk's erratic rule.

For the remainder of Sihanouk's time in office, Cambodian politics was buffeted by factionalism and the rudderless rule of a leader who seemed to be losing interest in governing his increasingly rebellious "children". Beginning in 1968 the Khmer Rouge officially launched its armed struggle against the Sihanoukist regime with the establishment of the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea (RAK) which was minimally supported at the time by the North Vietnamese, the NLF, and the Chinese. Although the communist insurgents were no match for the government forces sent into the countryside to neutralize

them in the early years of the civil war, Sihanouk's army, led by Lon Nol, was nonetheless incapable of bringing what was then a small and poorly armed insurgency to heel. Meanwhile in Phnom Penh and other cities teachers, students, and other on the left continued to oppose Sihanouk and the corruption of the mostly conservative political and economic elites that dominated Cambodia's civil service and urban economy. Cut-off from a political process they regarded as authoritarian, corrupt, and paternalistic, and lacking real career opportunities despite their relatively advanced level of education, young urbanites withdrew their support from Sihanouk once and for all.¹²²

On the right, Sihanouk's political opponents resented his effective rejection of the election results of 1966 in which many rightist deputies were elected. They were also increasingly critical of his inability to engage in rational economic planning based on what they perceived to be ill-advised quasi-socialist economic policies, many of which directly subverted the economic interests of conservative entrepreneurs who found themselves blocked from participating in the economic boom that was sweeping other parts of Asia. Moreover, critics on the right rejected Sihanouk's officially unacknowledged willingness to allow NVA and NLF military bases on Cambodian territory. By the end of Sihanouk's rule, civil servants and military officers began to "feel the pinch" of declining government revenues both professionally and personally while they saw their children, unhappy with

122 Chandler, *History of Cambodia*, p. 203.

Sihanouk's failure to deliver justice and employment, drift to the left.¹²³ In sum, the outbreak of the civil war and political polarization in the cities transformed Cambodian politics from a relatively stable "ramshackled social contract" under the early Sihanouk years "into an obsessive search by inimical factions for a single answer—a fight to the death among paradigms".¹²⁴

For his part Sihanouk began to recognize his waning ability to successfully manipulate his opponents and maintain an unchallenged grip on power. He became uninterested in ruling, frustrated, "unable to win a complex struggle"¹²⁵ with his opponents on both the right and left and with the Khmer Rouge in what was becoming a full-fledge civil war. Instead of governing, the Prince concentrated his efforts near the end on producing lavish Bollywoodesque movies and musicals, hatching questionable economic plans such as the ill-fated casino program, or deciding belatedly to reestablish economic ties with the United States and denationalize parts of the economy. Reflecting on Sihanouk's fifteen years in power, French sociologist Marie Martin suggests that although Sihanouk can be justly praised for his successes in keeping Cambodia more or less at peace with its neighbours (see below) and internally united until the last two years of his rule, "he never made even the smallest personal sacrifice. He abandoned none of the privileges and deportment of a feudal

123 David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Revised Edition) (Boulder, Col: Westview Press, 1999), p. 82.

124 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 125.

125 Chandler, *History of Cambodia*, p. 203.

prince, refusing to bring about social, civil, and political transformations that would have given the country national stability and international standing”.¹²⁶

Fed up with Sihanouk’s rule, General and Prime Minister Lon Nol and Deputy Prime Minister Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak¹²⁷ overthrew Sihanouk in a coup on 17 March 1970 while the Prince had left on a vacation first on the French Riviera for a “rest cure” followed by a diplomatic tour to Moscow and then Beijing. Under intense pressure from Sirik Matak, Lon Nol reluctantly signed a declaration by the National Assembly the following day denouncing Sihanouk and officially removing him from office. The declaration was approved by the National Assembly by an 86–3 vote. Lon Nol retained his post as Prime Minister.

The Prince was informed of his ouster in the back of a limousine on the way to the Moscow airport by one of his Soviet hosts. The shocked and furious Sihanouk was persuaded by Zhou Enlai representing the Chinese government, as well as representatives of the Soviet and the North Vietnamese regimes, to enter into an alliance with the Khmer Rouge to oppose the usurpers in Phnom Penh and their American “imperialist” allies. In a radio broadcast on 23 March 1970, Sihanouk proclaimed his intention to create the *Front Uni National du Kampuchea* (FUNK). The front would embrace “all Khmer both inside and outside the country—including the faithful, religious people, military men, civilians,

126 Martin, *A Shattered Society*, p. 117.

127 Sirik Matak, a conservative royal prince, had been passed over in 1941 by the French in favour of the boy-King Norodom Sihanouk to assume the throne.

and men and women who cherish the ideals of independence, democracy, neutrality, progressivism, socialism, Buddhism, nationalism, territorial integrity, and anti-imperialism”.¹²⁸ The *Gouvernement Royal d’Union Nationale Kampuchea* (GRUNK) in which Sihanouk entered into a formal alliance with the Khmer Rouge was founded on 5 May 1970 with Sihanouk assuming the post of the GRUNK head of state, Penn Nouth, one of Sihanouk’s most loyal advisors, as prime minister, and senior Khmer Rouge cadre and former “ghost” Khieu Samphan as deputy prime minister, minister of defense, and commander and chief of the GRUNK armed forces. The other two ghosts, Hu Nim and Hou Youn, who had served in the 1966 government, also held posts in the GRUNK. Conspicuously absent from the official roster was Saloth Sar, later to be known as Pol Pot. He, however, remained firmly in charge behind the scenes of the CPK (Khmer Rouge) as the supreme commander of all military and political operations.

As with the 1966 elections and the Samlaut rebellion, the political crisis of the 1970 coup produced consequences that were uniformly negative but on a much larger and ultimately catastrophic scale. The coup ushered in a period of unprecedented political instability under the helm of a republican government that was incompetent, authoritarian, and rapaciously corrupt, and as we will see later, militarily ineffective and thus willing to allow the Pentagon a free hand to unleash a murderous bombing campaign over the eastern border regions to save its own skin. At the same time, the removal of Sihanouk and

128 Norodom Sihanouk quoted in Library of Congress, *Country Study: Cambodia*, p. 14.

his strategic alliance with the Khmer Rouge drove many peasants away from the central government and into the arms of what was a *de facto* Khmer Rouge dominated military-political front. Emboldened by the weakness of the republican government and the public fig leaf provided by Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge by 1972 broke with their historic and moderating Vietnamese communist patrons and embarked on a period of violent radical economic and social policies that would come to full fury during the genocide.

Within two days of Sihanouk's public broadcast announcing the creation of the FUNK, the new republican government was hit with three days of sometimes violent pro-Sihanouk anti-government protests that ended with government forces killing several protesters. On 25 March 1970, protesters converged on the provincial capital of Kampong Cham, a rubber-rich area northeast of Phnom Penh, waving anti-government banners and demanding Sihanouk's return. The following night buses and trucks carrying several thousand demonstrators converged on Phnom Penh. While the demonstrators camped overnight near two bridges over the Tonle Sap and Tonle Bassac rivers, government soldiers were sent in to turn the buses around. The operation turned bloody when troops fired on some of the protesters who refused to turn back and instead tried to cross the bridges into the capital. At the time, the regime claimed that two people were killed, but the toll turned out to be at least twenty. Back in Kampong Cham, protesters sacked the provincial headquarters and torched the court house. A magistrate and two members of the national assembly were killed. Government troops again used deadly force, killing thirty

protestors, although some estimates put the death toll much higher. The following day similar disturbances protesting Sihanouk's ouster sprang up in Takeo province in the south and the environs of Kampong Speu, both of which resulted in civilian fatalities at the hands of government forces.¹²⁹ At the time, government sources blamed the demonstrations on local Vietnamese and NLF insurgents from South Vietnam operating in Cambodia. Foreign observers, however, doubted that ethnic Vietnamese or Vietnamese communists played a significant role in orchestrating what appeared to be a spontaneous protest over the coup.

The immediate reaction to Sihanouk's removal clearly demonstrated that the new government's particular solution to the "Sihanouk question" had in fact created a much more serious and ultimately deadly set of problems. One Western diplomat said as much by noting in reaction to the pro-Sihanouk demonstration after the coup that "[t]he question of communist instigation is basically irrelevant. You can assume that the Vietcong will do what they can to harass a hostile government. The point is that before they never had much opportunity to cause trouble because the country was united around Sihanouk. Now there are divisions to exploit".¹³⁰ An even more pessimistic and prescient Western diplomat correctly noted the fundamental change in the dynamics of Cambodian politics: "In short, the truce has ended. We have gone from uneasy peace to partial war. This creates a great strain on the government, and on the people. The communists probably hope that

129 T.D. Allman, "When Khmers Kill Khmers", *FEER*, vol. 68, no.15 (9 April 1970), p. 5.

130 Quoted in Allman, "When Khmers Kill Khmers", p. 5.

this tension will permit Sihanouk to return to power. If he does not come back, they will be in the position of either negotiating or fighting—as they wish—with a weak government discredited by popular demonstrations and unable to hold its own on the battlefield”.¹³¹ Another observer concluded that, although the new government had “made a lot of mistakes”, it had only made “one fundamental error—throwing out Sihanouk”. Noting that the demonstrations and the violence in the aftermath of the coup had been relatively short lived and that Cambodians, in general, “are among the least demonstrative in Asia”, it would be a mistake to think that “everything seems more the same than changed. [. . .] Cambodia in recent days has changed more than during the previous 10 years. And the change has not been for the better.”¹³² Government officials not surprisingly disputed this interpretation of the coup and the significance of Sihanouk’s alliance with the Khmer Rouge. As one Cambodian official explained: “Every day that Sihanouk does not return he becomes more discredited. He has hurt himself by staying so long in Peking, and by throwing his lot in with the communists. We are going to have trouble now. But it is better to deal with these problems now than to have left things the way they were”.¹³³ Trouble there was indeed.

131 Quoted in Allman, “When Khmers Kill Khmers”, p. 5.

132 Quoted in Allman, “When Khmers Kill Khmers”, p. 5.

133 Quoted in Allman, “When Khmers Kill Khmers”, p. 5.

One source of trouble, of course, was the obvious continuing popularity of Sihanouk himself among many of Cambodia's rural poor. It is no surprise that those who demonstrated in the cities for Sihanouk's return were not urbanites but had come from the countryside to defend the man they continued to regard as semi-divine. One report shortly after the coup suggested that some demonstrators who came to Phnom Penh were there to rescue Prince Sihanouk and Queen Kossamak, erroneously believing the two was being held captive at the Royal Palace. Others thought that Sihanouk was waiting for them at his official residence, Camchar Mon, to give them guns to defend the nation against the new regime.¹³⁴

By pushing Sihanouk out the door, and with Sihanouk now allied with the communist insurgency, a symbolically and practically significant segment of Cambodia's population opposed the new republican regime right from its inception. Many peasants, despite their misgivings about the Khmer Rouge, and a tradition of accepting, albeit grudgingly in many instances, central authority, followed their former ruler and supported the FUNK and the GRUNK in the struggle against the usurpers in Phnom Penh who had dared to overthrow their king. One Western diplomat suggested at the time of the post-coup disturbances that Sihanouk's removal had profoundly disoriented the political compass of many Cambodian peasants. "The people hate the Vietnamese", who at the time still dominated the Cambodian insurgency, "but they love Prince Sihanouk. Now the government is calling

134 Allman, "When Khmers Kill Khmers", p. 5.

Sihanouk a traitor, and Sihanouk is threatening to regain power with the help of the Vietnamese. There must be total disorientation in the villages. For decades, they were secure. Now they don't know which end is up".¹³⁵

Sihanouk's 1970 alliance with what was then still a relatively weak Khmer Rouge not only brought over peasant supporters who might otherwise have shunned the communists, it allowed the Khmer Rouge itself to hide behind a facade of moderation and broad based rural, and in some quarters, international support.¹³⁶ This arrangement left the true role and intentions of the Khmer Rouge within the FUNK unclear, with many observers referring to the anti-Lon Nol forces as "Sihanoukists" despite the fact that the FUNK was made up of royalists, nationalists, and, of course, communists. In reality, as the civil war progressed the Khmer Rouge came to play the dominant role on the anti-republican side. Sihanouk realized this all too well, constantly fearing that the Khmer Rouge might execute him or consign him indefinitely to a life in exile where he would be "left to wither on the vine in Peking" as one source close to the Prince put it, while "events passed him by".¹³⁷ For their part the Khmer Rouge leadership was unsure both what to do with Sihanouk and what the Prince himself wanted, although they clearly continued to see his stature as an

135 Allman, "When Khmers Kill Khmers", p. 5.

136 T.D. Allman, "Deeper Into The Mire", *FEER*, vol. 83, no. 1 (7 January 1974), p. 18.

137 Allman, "Deeper Into The Mire", p. 18. As it turned out the latter scenario was close to what eventually happened to Sihanouk during the DK period when the Prince was sent on long stays to Beijing by his Khmer Rouge masters or kept under virtual house arrest at his official residence in Phnom Penh.

asset. But they remembered all too clearly his brutal treatment of some of their ranking members and supporters before 1970 and feared that if the Prince returned to power he would rally the nation and “destroy them the way de Gaulle destroyed the communist members of the Resistance in France after World War II”.¹³⁸ Fear of being destroyed “from within” by “enemies” was to be the principle motivator of the Khmer Rouge genocide.

What was becoming clear in the “liberated zones” was that life under the FUNK, whatever Sihanouk’s role in the anti-republican front, was really life under the Khmer Rouge and that life could be brutal indeed. Partly in response to the US bombing campaign (see below) and partly as a result of a break with their Vietnamese communist patrons, a now unrestrained and emboldened Khmer Rouge leadership began to implement many of the radical collectivist economic and social policies in the areas under its control after 1972. From 1973 to 1974 Pol Pot’s Centre organization also purged four of eight Southwest committee leaders, two of whom are thought to have been murdered by Pol Pot’s allies Vorn Vet and Ta Mok.¹³⁹ Over the same period cadres returning from exile in

138 Allman, “Deeper Into The Mire”, p. 18.

139 Vorn Vet was himself executed in late 1978 presumably under Pol Pot’s orders just prior to the Vietnamese invasion. Ta Mok (“Grandfather Mok”), the former head of the Southwest Zone, was indicted by the joint UN-Royal Cambodian Government Extraordinary Chambers established to try the surviving senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Held in detention since 1998 Ta Mok died in July 2006 in detention while awaiting trial. The surviving Khmer Rouge leaders from the DK period, including Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Nuon Chea, are currently under investigation by the Extraordinary Chambers and are expected to be indicted on genocide charges and other charges in 2007. All but Ieng Sary and his wife Ieng Thirith, who are in Thailand receiving medical treatment live freely in Cambodia. Prosecutors are concerned that because of Ieng Sary’s ill-health he may die before being indicted and prosecuted. Pol Pot died of natural causes in 1997 in the Khmer Rouge’s headquarters near Pailin in the northwest after being removed from power and placed under arrest
(continued...)

North Vietnam, other pro-Vietnamese cadres, and several of Sihanouk's supporters were rounded up and forced to perform hard labour before being executed.¹⁴⁰

But the "trouble" alluded to by Lon Nol's official did not stop at Sihanouk and his alliance with the Khmer Rouge. It had just as much to do with his boss. The evening Sirik Matak convinced Lon Nol to depose the Prince, with a mixture of guilt and foreboding, Lon Nol immediately felt that removing Sihanouk would prove to be a mistake for which he might very well be punished. Perhaps recognizing his own limitations as a leader Lon Nol's personal, and somewhat superstitious, misgivings were completely on the mark. The General subsequently managed to fumble his way through five years of incompetent rule plagued by unending political and military crises that he could not resolve while enduring a series of stress-induced health problems (stroke, hypertension, and diabetes) that at times prevented him from actively engaging in productive decision-making. Attempting to withdraw from the downward spiral of Cambodian politics and the worsening civil war, the Prime Minister retreated into Buddhist mysticism as well as the fantasy that he had become a close friend of US President Richard Nixon, to whom he wrote several detailed personal letters, despite the fact the two men had never met.¹⁴¹

139 (...continued)
by Ta Mok.

140 Nou Mouk (interview with Ben Kiernan) (Oudong, 26 August 1981) in Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, pp. 22–23.

141 An infamous anecdote indicates, in fact, how unknown Lon Nol really was in Washington. When a junior State Department official was asked shortly after the coup by a superior what the US
(continued...)

After Lon Nol suffered a stroke in early 1971, political factions in Phnom Penh began jockeying to either prop up their ailing leader or remove him. These various maneuvers in turn ushered in another period of political instability fraught with palace intrigue that would last until the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh. When Lon Nol returned to active politics later in the year, he did so in half-measures, appointing his deputy Sirik Matak “premier delegate” while he continued to convalesce. Historian David Chandler suggests that from this point onward, “paralysis had replaced Sihanouk’s volatile dictatorship, and public opinion, insofar as it could be gauged, began to drift in a pro-Sihanouk direction”.¹⁴²

By October of 1971 Lon Nol apparently felt well enough to flex his authoritarian muscles when he refused to renew the mandate of the National Assembly and the Senate or form a new cabinet. Instead he appointed himself head of state and reissued previous articles of emergency limiting the right of Assembly, *habeas corpus*, and freedom of the press. Judith Coburn, writing for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, reported that Cambodia had become a “one-man show again” with Lon Nol openly dismissing what he called “the sterile game of liberal democracy”.¹⁴³ Significantly, and in an exceptional foray

141 (...continued)
government knew about the new Cambodian leader, the official responded only half-jokingly; “all we know is that Lon Nol spelled backward is Lon Nol” {citation}.

142 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, pp. 211–213.

143 Judith Coburn, “Cambodia: New Game-Old Wicket”, *FEER*, vol. 74, no. 44 (30 October 1971), p. 12.

into Cambodia politics, Buddhist monks staged a public demonstration calling on the new head of state to “restore justice”. At the same time, old political players including the redoubtable nationalist Son Ngoc Thanh as well as republican factions within the army and the Cambodian intelligence service began to resurface. Cambodian politician Douc Rasy accurately warned that “[t]hey [the Lon Nol regime] are building another republic of Caesar, like Sihanouk. Like Sihanouk they call for unity and the sacrifice of the nation, but the nation knows it is for the benefit of someone other than the nation”.¹⁴⁴

Instability and corruption in and out of government was further aided and abetted by the blatant rigging of elections in 1972 in which a resurgent Lon Nol was “elected”. Unmolested by a US patron who willingly turned a blind eye to questionable and certainly corrupt political behaviour in the pursuit of their own geo-strategic interests, Cambodia’s political elite felt free to continue in their self-serving ways. Phnom Penh’s elites thus eschewed any attempts at responsible governance, needed reformation of governmental institutions, the generation of new political and military strategies or ideas at a time of great national crisis when exactly these kinds of changes were needed most. Instead they preferred to concentrate on limited personal pursuits, “focused on individuals, families, feuds, tactics, and power”.¹⁴⁵

144 Douc Rasy quoted in Coburn, “Cambodia: New Game-Old Wicket”, p. 12.

145 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 223.

The political situation slipped even further into the abyss in March 1973 when a Cambodian Air Force captain, Pech Kim Luon, stole a T-28—ironically, a prop-driven fighter-bomber specifically modified by the US Air Force for counter-insurgancy in South Vietnam—and dropped two bombs on Lon Nol's compound before flying off with the plane to Khmer Rouge-held territory. On the same day the capital was beset by an anti-government teachers' strike and demonstration timed to coincide with the third anniversary of the coup. Government forces were ordered to crack down hard on the strikers and in the end they used not only live bullets but grenades to put down the strike. Lon Nol immediately declared a state of siege placing several opposition politicians under surveillance, including Sirik Matak, while many members of the Royal Family were put under house arrest. The National Assembly was suspended, non-government newspapers were closed, civil liberties were curbed, and an already existing curfew was extended. Responding to American pressure to stabilize the political situation at a time when the US was completing troop withdrawals from South Vietnam under the January 1973 Paris Peace Accords, Lon Nol negotiated an odd tactical power sharing arrangement with Sirik Matak (whom he had just placed under surveillance), Cheng Heng, and In Tam (who had been purged from government in 1971) culminating in the formation of a High Political Council that governed by decree. Doing a faithful imitation of his predecessor, Lon Nol then promptly left the country on a three month international tour tacitly encouraging the

remaining council members to squabble among themselves. By the end of the year the council was nothing more than a rubber stamp.

And so Cambodian politics went until the Khmer Rouge marched to the capital on 17 April 1975. During the last two fitful years of republican rule an official state of siege limiting political opposition, freedom of assembly, the press and the like remained in effect. The Khmer Republic continued to be beset by factional infighting which included the regime losing its only half-respected leader, In Tam, to resignation in early 1974. Journalist T.D. Allman concluded at the time that the republican government was “no longer a functioning political entity”, but instead a high office that was “not the preserve of competence and integrity but of blandishment and opportunism”. Summing up the sorry state of official Cambodian politics, Allman unflatteringly compared the latter Lon Nol period with the end of Sihanouk’s rule.

Lon Nol’s grasp of what is left in the Khmer Republic has gone through cycles of weakening and strengthening. But the end result is something like a macabre caricature of what prevailed in Cambodia before 1970: an uncrowned god-king, with the title of Chief of State, monopolises power from a palace in which he is isolated from the realities of Cambodia by a coterie of flunkies and flatterers. Beyond this circles lies a knot of hostile and quarrelsome politicians, and beyond them lies the tragedy of the Cambodian countryside.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile corrupt politicians and civil servants fiddled while Cambodia burned. Corrupt officials even created a new province for the sole purpose of handing out more governorships, allowing the newly appointed governors to siphon off funds intended for

146 Allman, “Deeper Into The Mire”, p. 18.

regional development.¹⁴⁷ For the rich and not-so-rich in the urban centres life became both hedonistic and nihilistic. Almost everything had literally become a game by the end, with residents betting on almost every aspect of life, including when the next Khmer Rouge rocket attack on a now surrounded Phnom Penh would commence.¹⁴⁸ All of this bad behaviour was fodder for the Khmer Rouge and their supporters.

3. Interpretation

The on-going instability of Cambodian politics in the 1960s and 1970s, and political crises of the Samlaut Rebellion and the 1970 coup that brought Lon Nol to power were seen by the Khmer Rouge as another indicator of the elitist and corrupt nature of a post-colonial order that was slavishly beholden to Western “imperialism” and the urban bourgeois classes. The early Sihanoukist governments were characterized by the Khmer Rouge as populated with “right wing, corrupt and vagabond government officials”¹⁴⁹ who “strongly looted” from the state and society. To protect their power, government officials “conducted many seizures” and “once in a while made secret arrests”.¹⁵⁰ The corruption

147 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 230.

148 Martin, *A Shattered Society*, p. 127.

149 Hu Nim, “Planning the Past: The Forced Confessions of Hu Nim” (Tuol Sleng Prison, May–June 1977) (trans. Chanthou Boua) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 239. Hu Nim’s statements are known to have been extracted under torture and therefore reveal the KR leaderships’ position on the matter rather than Hu’s own.

150 “Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class to Be as Keen and Strong as Possible”, *Tung Pradevat*, Special Issue, September–October 1976 (trans. Kem Sos and Timothy Carney) in Karl D. Jackson (ed.), *Cambodia: Rendezvous With Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 289.

of the regime and their intolerance for the leftist opposition caused the communist movement “difficulties”, but “the people had strong rage toward the enemy”.¹⁵¹ These same officials, and Sihanouk himself, were perceived to be to blame for the failure of the early leftist united front *Pracheachon* Movement at the ballot box in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Khmer Rouge thus argued in the DK period that *Angkar* was forced to abandon electoral politics for violent revolutionary struggle aimed at overthrowing the old regime and exploitative class enemies because of Sihanouk’s strangle hold on power and his frequent use of the state security apparatus, laws, and the courts “to oppress the people”, all of which was supported by “the power-holder class”.¹⁵² An anonymous Party official, possibly Pol Pot, contended rather incredibly that at this time popular opinion nonetheless “supported [radical candidates] by 99% but state power lay in enemy hands”. Only by fighting a revolution “could we defeat the enemy”.¹⁵³

The first major political crisis to hit the Sihanouk regime was the 1967 peasant Samlaut Rebellion which was seen by the Khmer Rouge as the result of increasingly volatile class contradictions that exploded in rage at “enemies—the US imperialists, their lackey and

151 “Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class”, *Tung Pradevat*, Special Issue, September–October 1976 (trans. Kem Sos and Timothy Carney) in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 289.

152 Pol Pot, “Long Live the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea” (27 September 1977), *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (hereafter: *FBIS*), 2 October 1977.

153 *Tung Pradevat*, September–October 1976, p. 7 quoted in David Chandler, “Seeing Red: Perceptions of Cambodian History in Democratic Kampuchea” in David Chandler and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays* (Monograph Series no. 25) (Yale University Southeast Asia Studies), p. 41.

reactionary classes”. The Party claimed a guiding role in the rebellion, although it acknowledged years later that the uprising or “basic work” was “the work done in the countryside and among the workers”.¹⁵⁴ After falsely taking credit for organizing worker and student protests in the cities during the Samlaut Rebellion, Nuon Chea argued that the rebellion showed that “the movement of the people ignited. Those who were hungry rose up against traitors, reactionaries, and agents of the administration”.¹⁵⁵ Here Nuon Chea identified the groups he deemed responsible for the desperate situation that drove the peasants to rebel. In his analysis of the brutal post-Samlaut crackdown by the Sihanouk regime Nuon Chea noted the objective reality of the extreme violence of the persecution of the rebels and their Khmer Rouge supporters. As a response to the regime’s use of force and the active persecution of the communist movement in Cambodia, the senior KR leadership interpreted the rebellion and the resulting decision of the KR to wage violent revolution against its enemies as stemming from the “deepening” of “contradictions in our society”. Because “the enemy tried harder to suppress our movement” and because of “this situation, confronting the acute contradictions” the legal option was abandoned for armed

154 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 2.

155 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 3.

revolution.¹⁵⁶ Although the Samlaut Rebellion had serious implications for the KR—namely a torrent of political violence aimed at crushing the communist movement and their supporters and the subsequent decision of the Khmer Rouge to head for the *maquis*—the rebellion itself was seen more as a crisis for the nation marked by growing class contradictions and an increasingly heavy-handed state, rather than a crisis of the KR’s communist revolution.

The second serious political crisis of the nation was the March 1970 coup that ousted Sihanouk from power. The coup, and the Lon Nol regime’s crack down on pro-Sihanouk protesters, was regarded by the KR as not only an illustration of the authoritarianism of the existing political system and the rise of a pro-American “lackey” regime, but also as an opportunity to make real political and military gains. Blame for the coup was squarely layed at the feet of those deemed responsible for the suppression of the Samlaut Rebellion and the country’s many social, economic, and political ills: namely the urban reactionary bourgeois classes and US “imperialism”. Although the KR affixed responsibility for the coup on the pro-American Lon Nolists and their class supporters, the Khmer Rouge leadership did not see the coup at the time as a serious threat. But during the DK period, although the coup itself was not mentioned, the rampant paranoia that counter-revolutionary elements within and outside the Party were constantly working to undermine

156 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 3.

and eventually topple the revolution may have been informed by the experience of Sihanouk at the hands of his once loyal Defense Minister. As such, the coup starkly illustrated the dangers of factionalism and the need to defend the leadership's hold on power at all costs.

Following the coup and for the remainder of the republican period, the KR conceptualized the Lon Nol regime and the “national democratic” revolution which aimed at overthrowing the old order in very similar but increasingly more extreme terms compared to their conceptualization of Sihanouk. The KR and their supporters were believed to be locked in a battle against their enemies in which they were “violently attacking [both] the American imperialists and their lackeys Thieu and Ky¹⁵⁷ [. . .] the foreign aggressors, and the traitors Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Cheng Heng, In Tam, and Son Ngoc Thanh, [as well as] our people's internal enemies”.¹⁵⁸ These internal enemies were said to be guilty of “selling our country and people”. They could only be defeated by combating “the feudalists, bourgeois and reactionaries absolutely and violently on every battlefield the party names”.¹⁵⁹ The civil war was, as the Khmer Rouge saw it, a war waged by progressive revolutionary forces against “various oppressing classes, with the capitalists and feudalists as the base, [who] joined the imperialists to fight the people and against the revolution in

157 I.e., South Vietnamese leaders Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky.

158 “Summary of Annotated Party History” (undated), Eastern Regional Military Political Service, in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 265.

159 “Summary of Annotated Party History” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 267.

the hardest possible way”.¹⁶⁰ A handwritten Party document from 1971 characterized the war even more sharply, in places employing conceptualizations about the conflict itself, the essential nature of the classes involved on all sides, and the desired fate of their “enemies” in terms that would become common during the genocide. The national revolution was at its core a necessary response to severe repression, a “people’s war” that the “exploiting classes resist to the end”. These “exploiting classes” were identified as “the life-and-death enemies of the people’s war [. . .] The only true leaders of the people’s war are the layers of the people who experienced the greatest oppression, the greatest pain, and have the greatest anger and are the most absolute in waging war to exterminate the exploiting classes, the imperialists, the feudalists and the capitalists”.¹⁶¹

C. MILITARY AND SECURITY CRISES

From the mid-1960s until the beginning of the DK period, Cambodia was also rocked by increasingly severe military/security crises. These included the encroachment of the conflict in Vietnam with the stationing of Vietnamese communist bases and supply lines on

160 “Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 280.

161 “Who Leads the People’s War?” quoted in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 326. The question of who is leading the people’s war and who the “true” leaders are is a cryptic reference to Sihanouk’s place in the anti-Lon Nol FUNK and Khmer Rouge assurances, or rather insistence, that despite Sihanouk’s continued popularity, Saloth Sar (later Pol Pot) and his deputies, not the deposed king, were firmly in charge. Sihanouk was all too aware of his precarious position within the FUNK, commenting to Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci in a 1973 interview: “I understand quite well that they only tolerate me because without me they cannot prevail over the peasants. [. . .] It is clear to me; when they no longer need me, they will spit me out like a cherry pit” (quoted in John Barron and Anthony Paul, *Murder of a Gentle Land: the Untold Story of a Communist Genocide in Cambodia* [New York: Reader’s Digest Books, 1977], p. 56).

Cambodian territory, American and ARVN “search and destroy” missions, and the United State’s “secret”—and then open—bombing campaign. Beginning in January 1968 Cambodia also endured a particularly intense and brutal civil war between the Khmer Rouge/FUNK and the Khmer Republic. The civil war followed to some extent its own internal dynamic and was, as we have seen, sparked by mostly domestic political factors. However, the course, lethality, and eventual outcome of the civil war was directly affected by the spread of the Vietnam War into Cambodia and was fed, directly and indirectly, through the arms, equipment, operational support, personnel, and direct military operations by all sides of the conflict in Vietnam. The spill-over of the Vietnam War and the civil war profoundly affected, and in the latter case was affected by, Cambodian politics. It also fueled rampant corruption by senior military officers. Finally, the butchery of the civil war, in which both side committed heinous atrocities, coupled with the devastation wrought by the bombing campaign, created a situation sadly reminiscent of the *Vernichtungskrieg* on the eastern front in the Second World War.¹⁶² Experienced at facing

162 With the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 the Nazi regime embarked on what it called a *Vernichtungskrieg* or “war of extermination” in the east against Bolshevism. For their part the Soviets waged what became known as the “Great Patriotic War” against the “fascist beast”. Unlike combat operations on the western front and in North Africa where the rules of warfare (established under the Hague Protocol of 1904 and the first Geneva Conventions of 1929) were more or less followed by both sides, the Wehrmacht was given explicit orders prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarosa) that the rules of war were not to be applied to Soviet soldiers, particularly prisoners of war, and civilians. This directive was contained in what was known as the “commissar order” which also covered the mass execution of Soviet Jewish men (and then later extended to women and children although these two groups were not mentioned in the order. A more detailed discussion of the commissar order and its role in the genocide against European Jewry will be covered in chapter 4). From the launching of Operation Barbarosa until the Soviet occupation of Berlin both German and Soviet forces committed atrocities against each others POWs and local civilian
(continued...)

death and causing it, moral inhibitions against mass killing and executions were almost non-existent on all sides in Cambodia even before the genocide began in 1975.

1. The Second Indochina War

The Second Indochina War began to escalate dramatically with the first major American bombing campaign, Operation Rolling Thunder, over North Vietnam in early 1964 in retaliation for supposed attacks by communist forces on the US Naval ships the USS *Maddox* and USS *C Turner Joy*. American ground forces were subsequently introduced in South Vietnam in March 1965 with the landing of the First Marines Third Division at Da Nang, initially to guard air bases and then to conduct “search and destroy” operations in the South Vietnamese countryside in pursuit of NLF forces, and later, NVA main force regular units. Attempting to stem the flow of supplies and personnel coming from the north to reinforce communist forces in the south, the United States also began to attack from the air the network of trails, bunkers, and transit camps dubbed the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Parts of the trail snaked into the eastern border areas of Laos and Cambodia, including the Cambodian province of Svay Rieng, three sides of which jut out into Vietnamese territory forming the area known as the Parrot’s Beak. To protect themselves and their supplies from American and ARVN ground force operations and aerial

162 (...continued)
populations. Soviet soldiers, for example, were used at Auschwitz Birkenau in early 1942 to test whether prussic acid, sold under the brand name Zyklon B, would be an effective chemical for the planned gassing of Jewish deportees to the camp. Few German soldiers, including the remnant of General Paulus’ Sixth Army captured at Stalingrad, survived their time in Soviet captivity.

bombardment Vietnamese communist forces established transit and supply bases in the Parrot's Beak and elsewhere along Cambodia's southeastern border.

The NLF/NVA bases and covert use of the port of Sihanoukville by Vietnamese communist forces to receive supplies from China was unofficially permitted by Sihanouk as part of his at times skillful but always tenuous plan to maintain Cambodia's neutrality. The Prince struck this secret alliance with the North Vietnamese for a number of reasons. First, Sihanouk sought to distance himself from the US in the wake of the US-sanctioned assassination of South Vietnam's leader Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Nhu in November 1963—a fate Sihanouk suspected the US might some day visit upon him. Second, Sihanouk also allowed North Vietnamese forces to operate in Cambodia as retaliation against the South Vietnamese government for their persecution of ethnic Khmers (Khmer Krom) living in South Vietnam, and CIA training of rightist Khmer insurgents, the Khmer Serei, in Thailand. Finally, Sihanouk believed at the time that the communist forces in Vietnam would eventually be victorious and, therefore, wished to establish in advance good relations with what would likely become a powerful and united Vietnam.

As the ground war in South Vietnam escalated, American military commanders became frustrated by the ability of the NVA/NLF forces to evade "search and destroy" missions by slipping across the border to sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. Beginning in May 1967 American Special Forces launched a series of secret border incursions into Cambodia under the code name Operation Daniel Boone to finally clear out the communist forces'

sanctuaries.¹⁶³ Daniel Boone and subsequent operations, some of which were pursued in concert with ARVN forces, were not entirely successful and failed to break up what the United States military referred to as the COSVN or Central Office for South Vietnam, a base or series of bases from which the NVA/NLF were believed to be directing their war in South Vietnam.

As we saw in the economic crisis section, the advent of the bases and the incursions to eliminate them in the mid- to late-1960s began to have a negative impact on the rural economy by taking farming land and plantations out of production and diverting rice harvests, often illegally, to supply Vietnamese insurgents and away from the local economy and population. The underground economy was further bolstered by an abundance of supplies originally intended for sale at US PX stores to American soldiers which ended up being stolen and then smuggled across the border and sold at markets in villages in Svay Rieng and elsewhere. At the same time American and South Vietnamese forces alleged—as it turns out, correctly—that arms were finding their way into NLF hands at bases in Cambodia and across the border in South Vietnam.¹⁶⁴ This was due not only to Sihanouk's secret deal to allow Chinese supplies to come up from the port city of Sihanoukville but also corrupt and profit-hungry Cambodian military officers who sold weapons to Vietnamese communist forces operating in Cambodia. Those not destined to benefit from

163 William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 24.

164 John Finn, "Cambodia: Porous Borders", *FEER*, vol. 63, no. 2 (5/11 January 1969), p. 50.

the situation were, as usual, local peasants unfortunate enough to farm in the vicinity of the bases. They were frequently forced to flee their land as fighting around the bases escalated or spilled over the Vietnamese border. Meanwhile, in South Vietnam the repression of the Khmer Krom pushed ethnic Khmers across the Cambodian border as refugees as early as 1965.¹⁶⁵ This would be the beginning of waves of refugees fleeing the border areas either to the cities or to other parts of rural Cambodia that would reach ever increasing heights and levels of misery by 1975.

The bases and incursions began to have a militarily destabilizing effect inside Cambodia not just because it drove the fighting across the border from Vietnam periodically into Cambodia itself but because the regime in Phnom Penh tried, unsuccessfully, to manipulate the situation to its own security advantage. Once the Khmer Rouge began their armed insurgency in early 1968, the Cambodian government was faced with a very weak but countrywide communist insurgency as well as military operations from the Vietnam conflict in the eastern border areas. Initially these two sources of military activity remained relatively separate from each other, with the Vietnamese communists extending only limited material and operational support to their somewhat disobedient Khmer Rouge allies and the Khmer Rouge for the most part operating outside the Parrot's Beak because of the presence of NLF/NVA bases. As the number of communist Vietnamese forces swelled in the eastern

165 From 1965 to 1967 an estimated 17,000 Khmers, including 2,300 monks, fled South Vietnam to Cambodia (Ben Kiernan, "Put Not Thy Trust in Princes: Burchett on Kampuchea" in Ben Kiernan (ed.), *Burchett: Reporting the Other Side of the World, 1939-83* (London: Quartet, 1986), pp. 252-269).

base areas in advance of the Tet offensive in South Vietnam in early 1968, Sihanouk unwisely decided to play a dangerous game with the Cambodian communist insurgency and the Vietnamese ensconced along the border. On the one hand, Cambodian military officers were allowed to enrich themselves by funneling weapons and supplies to the Vietnamese camps, the existence of which Sihanouk continued to secretly sanction while publicly denying their existence. On the other hand, the Cambodian army and the local population were encouraged to use force against the Khmer Rouge insurgents who were accused of being the lackeys of the North Vietnamese and the NLF while Sihanouk ordered the targeted killing of Cambodian peasants who supported the Cambodian and Vietnamese communist forces operating in the east. To complicate matters further, Sihanouk began to reopen contact with the United States in 1969 for military and economic assistance¹⁶⁶ while simultaneously decrying the incursions of US, ARVN, NVA, and NLF forces into Cambodian territory and threatening to break off diplomatic relations with both North and South Vietnam.¹⁶⁷ Domestically, it appeared as if Sihanouk believed that by “putting all of these variables in motion” he could “turn his people’s violence on and off at will”¹⁶⁸ all the while playing the combatants of the Vietnam War off against each other with conflicting

166 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 177.

167 Harald Munthe-Kass, “Cambodia: Sihanouk Lashes Out”, *FEER*, vol. 66, no. 52 (25 December 1969), p. 667.

168 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 177.

public and secret pronouncements in a quixotic last ditch attempt to keep Cambodia out of what was becoming an Indochina-wide conflict.

Time, of course, ran out for Sihanouk. The Lon Nol regime unambiguously opposed the NVA/NLF presence on the border, but this did not result in a withdrawal of the bases. Instead, the bases remained and the United States and their South Vietnamese allies felt freer to cross the border in search of the elusive COSVN and other installations with Sihanouk gone. With the inauguration of Richard Nixon as US president in 1969, American military policy turned from escalation to “Vietnamization”. American forces were to be slowly replaced with ARVN forces while the United States negotiated a peace agreement with North Vietnam. For US policy makers and military planners, the problem of the border bases became even more acute. In order to ensure that the South was not flooded with men and materiel coming in from Cambodia as the US troop draw-down began in 1970 and as negotiators in Paris tried to extricate the United States from South Vietnam, the bases had to be closed once and for all. For Lon Nol and his generals the hated Vietnamese communists, now operating much more closely with the Khmer Rouge, had to be expelled from the country. And so the stage was set for the bombing campaign (see below) as well as a new and more open round of incursions.

Erroneously believing that the new avowedly anti-communist regime in Phnom Penh would welcome the eviction of communist Vietnamese forces from Cambodia by outside forces, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu gave the green light for increasing

attacks into Cambodian territory immediately following Sihanouk's ouster. Disregarding Lon Nol's acute displeasure with blatant violations of his country's sovereignty, Alexander Haig and others on US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's staff pressed for a much more coordinated and robust strike against the sanctuaries citing increased activity and cooperation between Vietnamese and Cambodian communist forces in the south and west near Phnom Penh. The decision was made to launch a major incursion into Cambodia. Operation Shoemaker began on 30 April 1970 led by ARVN and US ground forces as well as the CIA trained Khmer Krom militia based in South Vietnam and Son Ngoc Thanh's CIA trained Khmer Serei out of Thailand. The area of operation included three eastern border provinces: Ratanakiri in the northeast (home base of the Khmer Rouge), Kompong Cham, and Svay Rieng. The number of troops and area of operations of American ground forces was limited to the Fish Hook just north of the Parrot's Beak in order to keep the United States' profile as low as possible. Nonetheless, President Nixon addressed his nation on the first day of the operation, justifying the expansion of the war into Cambodia as a necessary step in the fight against NVA and NLF forces in Cambodia whom he claimed "would constitute an unacceptable risk to those who will be there after the withdrawal of another 150,000 [American] men".¹⁶⁹ At a private staff meeting Kissinger presented a strictly Cold War *Realpolitik* rationale for the invasion. When asked if the United States should worry about extending the war into Cambodia, Kissinger reportedly answered,

169 Richard Nixon quoted in Michael Malloy, "Back on the Bumps", *FEER*, vol. 68, no. 20 (14 May 1970), p. 18.

“Look, we’re not interested in Cambodia. We’re only interested in it not being used as a base [. . .] We’re trying to shock the Soviets into calling a [peace] conference and we can’t do this by appearing weak”.¹⁷⁰ The 1970 invasion was the most significant incursion into Cambodian territory by non-communist and American forces in the pre-DK period. Smaller incursions by South Vietnamese and Khmer Krom forces continued sporadically during the Cambodian civil war some of which were in support of Republican forces while others continued to be in pursuit of their own strategic objectives.

The 1970 incursions and those that followed failed to dismantle the COSVN or to permanently root out communist Vietnamese forces operating in Cambodia. It did succeed in setting several very serious precedents on the military front. First, despite Kissinger’s cynical self-regarding Cold War analysis, the invasion succeeded in pushing the fighting westward inside Cambodia toward more heavily populated villages and rice patties on the west of the Mekong River. Second, supported by American and South Vietnamese fighter aircraft, this same area from the end of the summer of 1970 until the American disengagement became an aerial free-fire zone in which RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Air Force) and to a lesser extent USAF pilots were far more likely than inside Vietnam to target whatever they wanted.¹⁷¹ Third, as William Shawcross argues, ARVN forces in many instances committed serious atrocities on their missions inside Cambodia, giving full

170 Henry Kissinger quoted in Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 145.

171 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 174.

“expression to their historical contempt for the Khmers”, acting “as if they were conquering a hostile nation, rather than helping a new ally”.¹⁷² This behaviour did nothing to stem racist anti-Vietnamese attitudes inside Cambodia in general and Khmer Rouge suspicions in particular that Vietnam, communist or otherwise, was intent on destroying Cambodia in the long run. Finally, despite the Cambodian government’s unhappiness with the 1970 invasion, it nonetheless paved the way for the use of American tactical air support and strategic bombardment in support of FANK operations against the Khmer Rouge. As we shall see, the use of American air power devastated much of the eastern Cambodian countryside and inflamed passions against the republican government and army.

2. Bombing Campaign

The fateful decision by the Pentagon to use “secret” and then open aerial bombardment and later close air support for Cambodian government troops to neutralize the Vietnamese communist presence in Cambodia was reached in early 1969 by the newly inaugurated Nixon Administration. The initial secret bombing operation, code named “Breakfast”, targeted the Fish Hook in Svay Rieng where the COSVN and the NVA Base 353 were believed to be situated. The bombing campaign was part and parcel of the Vietnamization program which, as noted earlier, required the neutralization of Vietnamese communist forces operating in Cambodia. Although Operation Breakfast was the beginning of a multi-year bombing campaign, it was initially a response to a one-time only request for strategic

172 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, pp. 174–175.

air support from US Army General Creighton Abrams issued on 9 February 1969. But as William Shawcross notes, once the authorization for Breakfast was given on 17 March 1969 and “the decision had been made in principle that communist violations of Cambodia’s neutrality justified aggressive reciprocal action, it was not difficult to repeat the performance”.¹⁷³ And repeated it was. Over the next fourteen months, 3,630 B-52 raids were flown against suspected bases along Cambodia’s border in a series of secret operations code named “Lunch”, “Snack”, “Dinner”, “Dessert”, and “Supper” that constituted what came to be known as Operation Menu.¹⁷⁴ The bombings were, of course, not a secret to the Cambodian peasants on top of whom these secret bombs exploded. The Joint Chiefs of Staff well knew that these operations, each aimed at a specific NVA base, would involve civilian casualties. The exact number of civilian deaths due to Menu was not established at the time but the JCS’s own information suggests that the total number of civilians living in the target locations was 2,321.¹⁷⁵ In the end, communist logistics were only temporarily disrupted by the initial bombing which only served to push the bases, and the bombing that followed them, westward.

Undeterred by protests in the United States and motivated by the perceived need to protect dwindling American ground forces as well as ARVN and Cambodian government

173 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 26.

174 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 28.

175 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 28–29.

forces, the US administration dramatically escalated the bombing campaign over Cambodia from 1970 to 1973. No longer officially secret, an historically unprecedented number of sorties and bomb tonnage was dropped over Cambodia until world and American public opinion and the US Congress put an end to the slaughter from the sky.

Reports from the bombing zone painted a horrific picture. In early December 1970 one Western journalist vividly described the effects of an “interdiction” mission flown over the village of Taing Kauk. At the time the USAF and US Navy did not officially fly close combat support missions for the Cambodian army, although the use of American air power in this case looked more like air support than an interdiction mission. Whatever the mission, Taing Kauk was devastated.

The scene, as always, is the same: charred, twisted debris and skeletons of homes to mark shattered lives; inhabitants whose hardened faces furnish few clues except the lost look in their eyes; and then the silence—not so much the lack of laughter or marketplace chatter, but the unheard sound of sorrow. If only children would cry or women weep, if only one old man would wail, it all might somehow seem better. But they never do, not by the time outsiders arrive. [. . .] Half of Taing Kauk, once a bustling centre with busy marketplace and many fine houses, was obliterated; the rest was only permanently scarred.¹⁷⁶

Fortunately most of Taing Kauk’s 20,000 civilians fled the town before the bombing. Cambodian government troops reported finding only “four North Vietnamese bodies, one machine gun and two dozen communist chickens who immediately *chieu hoied* (defected).¹⁷⁷ Three years and thousands of sorties later after a US bombing raid over the strategic village of Banam, northeast of the naval base at Neak Luong in Prey Veng

176 Arnold Abrams, “The Terrible Thing . . .”, *FEER*, vol. 70, no. 49 (5 December 1970), p. 21.

177 Abrams, “The Terrible Thing . . .”, p.21.

province, journalist Elizabeth Becker similarly reported that the village was deserted and in ruins: “Its factories and markets were obliterated by US napalm and bombs”. Noting that the town had previously been captured and recaptured by both sides with little damage, “this reoccupation destroyed it”.¹⁷⁸

Although the civilian death toll in Taing Kauk was mercifully low, this was hardly the norm. A Senate investigations team in 1973 revealed one of the reasons why. The team found that since mid-March of 1973 alone, US aircraft carried out an estimated 240 daily raids inside Cambodia. Prior to April 1973, 80% of these were officially interdiction missions directed at North Vietnamese installations on the border areas and in South Vietnam. Since April the same percentage of missions were flown in support of Cambodian government forces, often in densely populated areas. Even more troubling, the team discovered that while raids outside the eastern Cambodian border area were directed through US command in Vietnam and Cambodia, eastern Cambodia itself was not covered by any kind of operational targeting or restrictions under the rules of engagement for the open-ended Operation Freedom Deal. American aircraft therefore bombed frequently and “freely—and with no apparent attempt to avoid civilian areas” with anything considered by the pilots to be NVA/NLF positions or supply lines fair game. The committee further discovered that even the measures taken to protect civilian areas outside Freedom Deal were woefully inadequate and likely failed to significantly reduce civilian casualties.

178 Elizabeth Becker, “Cambodia: Ah... over here, Dick”, *FEER*, vol. 79, no. 11 (19 March 1973), p. 12.

Requests for interdiction bombing and air support coming into the US embassy in Phnom Penh were plotted on 1:50,000 scale maps—maps that an air attache admitted were several years old. The embassy also did not have current photography available on proposed target areas which would have permitted the identification of new or relocated villages.¹⁷⁹ Sen. Stuart Symington, chair of the subcommittee that sent the investigative team to Cambodia, concluded a 27 April 1973 statement on the findings of the team with a bitter indictment of the American intervention in Cambodia, asking “what the Administration expects to accomplish by the continuing destruction of this little country”. Symington then questioned the policy of “dropping bags of rice to some Cambodians and 500 lb bombs on others”. The end result of US policy, Symington charged, was that the US was helping to continue the war in Cambodia while “killing innocent civilians and destroying the land itself”.¹⁸⁰

Once the United States began to fly close air support missions for the Lon Nol forces, villages and rice paddies that had seen relatively little damage, despite being on the front lines of the civil war for years, were destroyed. When the civil war reached the more heavily populated areas of the Mekong Delta and around Highways 1 and 2, the tactical air support that came with it became more lethal. Elizabeth Becker reported the resulting scenes of “[r]efugees pouring into Phnom Penh, leaving their homes in the lush Mekong

179 William Shawcross, “A Matter of Motive”, *FEER*, vol. 80, no. 19 (14 May 1973), p. 19.

180 Shawcross, “A Matter of Motive”, p. 19.

River region to escape the raids. Captains of river convoys from South Vietnam report that villages along the Mekong are deserted, on both the east and west banks”.¹⁸¹

The bombing sorties and air support raids were finally halted by the US Congress in August 1973 in the aftermath of the ferocious Operation Arc Light bombing campaign in the late spring and summer of 1973. Flown in support of republican forces struggling to fend off a Khmer Rouge offensive begun in February 1973, Arc Light saw a dramatic increase in the number and intensity of B-52 raids over eastern and southern Cambodia.¹⁸² Shawcross describes the effects of Operation Arc Light starkly: “[w]ithin a few months an enormous aerial campaign had destroyed the old Cambodia forever”.¹⁸³ By the time the military was prohibited from using air power in Cambodia, the United States had secretly and openly dropped approximately 3.5 million tons of aerial ordinance on Cambodian territory from 1969 to 1973—three times the amount dropped over Japan by the end of the Second World War. Casualty figures and material damage has never been thoroughly assessed but was extremely high.¹⁸⁴ The psychological and ideological effect were equally as devastating.

181 Becker, “Cambodia: Ah... over here, Dick”, p. 12.

182 William Shawcross tells of how some Cambodian army officers refused to move their units into battle against the Khmer Rouge without US air support even going so far as to refer to the planes and their devastating cargo as “The Garuda of the Legends”, the “Magic Arrow”, or the “omen of divine intervention” (Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 271).

183 Shawcross, *Sideshow*, p. 264.

184 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 225.

3. Civil War

The misery inflicted on rural Cambodians from the sky was magnified by the civil war (which also involved air power in the form of close air support) that raged in full force from 1970 to 1975. As noted, the Khmer Rouge took to the *maquis* in early 1968 but remained a small, poorly armed, and relatively ineffective force until 1970. When the Khmer Rouge abandoned open legal opposition to Sihanouk after the crushing of the Samlaut Rebellion, the organization and its leaders were forced into a two-year period of isolation from 1968 to 1970 during which the Khmer Rouge was barely able to survive in the jungle while being hunted by government forces, lacking meaningful support from communist allies abroad, including the North Vietnamese, with little by way of weapons, ammunition, trained personnel, basic provisions including medicines, and even food.¹⁸⁵ Holed-up in the only provinces in which they could evade final defeat or capture by government forces, Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and the rest of the top leadership set up their headquarters in various malaria infested locations from 1968 and 1969 in the remote mountainous northeast provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri. This period of isolation and near destruction of the communist movement in Cambodia in the early days of the civil war served to radicalize the Khmer Rouge and, as we shall see in the interpretation section, was seen during the genocide as a significant near-death experience for the party that must not be repeated.

185 Chander, *Brother Number One*, p.x. As noted in an earlier footnote there is no direct evidence from this period and therefore, the description of this time is necessarily very general.

The Khmer Rouge became radicalized during this time in part because of their isolation from Cambodian society (which will be discussed in the interpretation section) but also because of two events that occurred in the years and months prior to the Khmer Rouge's withdrawal from the cities. First, just before making the decision to abandon open politics and to wage violent revolution Pol Pot (then Saloth Sar) traveled to China in 1967 near the beginning of what the Chinese Communist Party called the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". Pol Pot was impressed with Mao's vision of a radically egalitarian society in which the supposed "decadence" of the cities was to be vanquished, so-called "experts" who were no longer sufficiently "red" were replaced in their professions by revolutionarily sound peasants, and trained doctors, engineers, teachers, and others from the cities were sent to work on collective farms in the countryside as a form of revolutionary re-education. After his return to Cambodia, Pol Pot and the rest of the Khmer Rouge leadership were effectively cut-off from subsequent developments in China with respect to the Cultural Revolution including its ultimate failure.¹⁸⁶ In the absence of any information detailing the excesses and ultimate collapse of the program, the Khmer Rouge leadership took the GPCR as a positive model for building revolutionary socialism but one that did not go far enough. In the early dark days of the civil war the Khmer Rouge leadership plotted their

186 On his death bed in 1976 Zhou EnLai told a visiting delegation of Khmer Rouge leaders that included Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary that any replication of the Cultural Revolution by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia would be a huge mistake because the program had proved to be a failure in China. His guests reportedly smiled politely and agreed among themselves that the sick old man had lost his revolutionary fervor. (Sihanouk, cited in Karl D. Jackson, "The Ideology of Total Revolution", in Karl D. Jackson (ed.) *Cambodia, 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 63.

path to power and the radical form of Maoist agrarian communism that would become the economic, political, and social policies of the DK period.

Second, the Khmer Rouge leadership was profoundly shaken by the destruction of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) at the hands of government forces under General Suharto from 1965 and 1966. In the immediate post-independence period the PKI came to play an influential role within Sukarno's national unity government, growing to become the third largest communist party in the world after the Soviet Union and China. Following a period of economic crisis and political instability, a new right-wing anti-communist military regime led by General Suharto came to power with the backing of the United States. Determined to rid Indonesia of the threat he believed the PKI posed to his regime, Suharto coopted local Islamic and Hindu groups to operate with the Indonesian army to crush the PKI in a campaign of mass murder that is believed to have led to the deaths of approximately half a million party members and sympathizers.¹⁸⁷ The PKI was never able to recover from the massacres and has remained banned and its surviving members blacklisted or in exile ever since. The PKI's fate was one the Khmer Rouge were determined not to repeat.

Finally, during the early years of the civil war in 1968 and 1969 in the dying years of the Sihanouk regime, the North Vietnamese did not evince much interest in supporting the

187 Harff and Gurr offer a wide range of deaths from 500,000 to 1,000,000 (Harff and Gurr, "Toward an Empirical Theory of Genocide"), while Rudolph J. Rummel cites a the more common figure of 500,000 (Rummel, *Death by Government*)

cause of communist revolution in Cambodia. For Hanoi, what appeared at the time as the Khmer Rouge's hopeless struggle against Sihanouk's regime (with whom the North Vietnamese had a relatively amicable relationship) was, to borrow William Shawcross' phrase, a "sideshow" that was a distraction from the main event of defeating American and South Vietnamese forces in the Republic of Vietnam. From their perspective, the North Vietnamese preferred a neutral and peaceful Cambodia until the job in Vietnam was done. Accordingly, Hanoi counseled the Khmer Rouge to pursue a united front policy in Cambodia rather than wage a violent revolution. When the Khmer Rouge leadership declined to take this "brotherly" advice, the Vietnamese communists responded by providing little by way of aid to the Khmer Rouge. With the exception of the Communist Part of China, other communist parties, including the Soviet Union, seemed to share Hanoi's interpretation of events in Cambodia and extended scant support to the Khmer Rouge. Although the coup by Lon Nol and the incursions from South Vietnam by the ARVN and the United States into Cambodia would radically change Hanoi's calculation and would bring large numbers of NVA troops and assistance into Cambodia after 1970 to fight along side the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot and his lieutenants never forgot what they saw as a betrayal by the North Vietnamese, and by extension Khmer Rouge cadres trained in Hanoi, of the communist movement in Cambodia during it's greatest time of need. As we shall see, the "Hanoi cadres" were pegged during an internal purge in 1973 and later

during the genocide as disloyal members who had been “contaminated” by the traitorous North Vietnamese.

With Sihanouk’s overthrow Khmer Rouge fortunes changed in short order with the creation of the FUNK and the influx of rural supporters drawn to the anti-government struggle because of the communist’s alliance with Sihanouk. At the same time the North Vietnamese began to support the Khmer Rouge and the FUNK more directly with materiel and supporting combat operations now that the regime in Phnom Penh was staunchly anti-communist and supported by their own enemy, the United States. From the summer of 1971 to 1973, however, the now more robust Khmer Rouge began to break with their “older brothers” in Hanoi and to *de facto* disregard their alliance with Sihanouk in favour of their own military operations and collectivist policies in the zones under their control. From the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 (discussed earlier) when three out of four NVA divisions withdrew from Cambodia¹⁸⁸ until the end of the civil war the Khmer Rouge fought more or less on their own and according to their own increasingly brutal terms, with only logistical support from the North Vietnamese. By the end of the war the Khmer Rouge had become a well led, organized, and disciplined light infantry force capable of successfully attacking government forces no longer supported by US air power.

The Khmer Rouge faced off against an increasingly demoralized and corrupt government army kept alive by US air support and military aid. Poorly trained and poorly

188 The fourth was stationed on the border in Kompong Cham province.

led, government forces rarely attacked or counter-attacked without air support when it was still available. Given the dim prospect for success in the field and fueled by the availability of US military aid, republican force officers took the opportunity to engage in blatantly corrupt practices. This included the creation of several fictitious “phantom brigades”. In December 1972 Lon Nol’s government was forced to admit publicly that the FANK padded its payroll with nearly 100,000 soldiers. A US Senate investigation into Cambodian army corruption and theft of US military aid found that the non-existent soldiers’ pay amounted to at least \$2 million, most of which found its way into officers’ bank accounts each month.¹⁸⁹ The phantom brigade scheme also involved the use of child soldiers as young as eight who were officially reported as adult family men supporting numerous dependents—and thus entitled to an enhanced pay package—but who were actually paid less than the official \$20 monthly salary. Their officers pocketed the difference.¹⁹⁰ In addition, the same investigation found that large amounts of US military supplies had gone missing, presumably stolen by officers and soldiers and sold for profit on the black market. In an attempt to cover up allegations of corruption and the poor performance in the field of the FANK, the General in charge of the anti-corruption drive revealingly asked the domestic and especially foreign press not to report on corruption in the army “as stories of corruption demoralized our army”. Chief of Staff Maj.-Gen. Storene Fernandes then

189 Elizabeth Becker, “The Return of the Phantom Brigades”, *FEER*, vol. 79, no. 10 (12 March 1973), p. 12.

190 Becker, “The Return of the Phantom Brigades”, p. 12.

asserted in typical anti-Vietnamese fashion: “This talk of corruption is the work of North Vietnamese sabotage”.¹⁹¹ Corruption of this kind, however, continued throughout the civil war while the FANK was periodically hit by waves of desertions by soldiers unhappy over poor training, inadequate rations and equipment, and in some instances a complete lack of pay for months at a time.

The fighting between the ascendent Khmer Rouge and the Khmer Republican Army spread from relatively remote regions in the northwest and northeast early in the war to cover most of the countryside, particularly along heavily populated areas adjacent to major highways including Highways 1 and 2 and the Tonle Sap, Tonle Bassac and the Mekong river systems. Coupled with the effects of US air power, the fighting came to exact a heavy toll on the civilian population. In the aftermath of a month long see-saw battle for Route 30 near his village in the spring of 1973 Khum Sakheum recounted that he hid on an island “away from the armies and the planes that came in groups of four every day. I could see the smoke and flames that everyone else ran away from. My neighbours left, afraid of the fires. When there was no fighting between the armies, their houses would still catch fire. No one knew what to expect”. Gazing up at the sky, Khum continued “They didn’t know what I have learned—the bullets can come from planes as well as bombs”. Khum expressed his frustration with the enormous craters dotting his fields left behind by the 750 or 1,000 pound bombs dropped from American B-52s, the ground around his house cut-up by close

191 Becker, “The Return of the Phantom Brigades”, p. 12.

combat between government and Khmer Rouge soldiers, and the work that awaited him to repair his banana fields. The farmer was well aware that it was American firepower that kept the village from falling into the hands of the Khmer Rouge.¹⁹² A half blind Buddhist nun from the same village simply did not know what was responsible for the fighting that ragged around her pagoda: “I heard bombs and people marching back and forth since the new year and I could only think of Buddha and hope he would protect me”. As for the families who left the village for Phnom Penh as refugees, they slowly made their way to safer ground in “carts piled with sheet metal, sticks, fruits and vegetables” unable to explain what had happened. Elizabeth Becker reported at the time that “[t]hey only knew the war had changed dramatically during the past month and that the bombs and ground-fire had pushed them out of their homes”.¹⁹³

By January 1974 another Western reporter described the Cambodian civil war as having descended to the level of “a self-sustaining exercise in fratricide” which had become increasingly “pointless”; “Everyone has lost, though the ones who have lost the most are the hapless ‘common people’”.¹⁹⁴ The previous December, Khmer Rouge forces began the first of many rocket attacks on Phnom Penh. In the new year they added shelling to their repertoire, hitting the centre of the city with artillery from captured 105mm howitzers.

192 Elizabeth Becker, “More Bombs for Little People”, *FEER*, vol. 80, no. 21 (28 May 1973), p. 12.

193 Becker, “More Bombs for Little People”, p. 12

194 Allman, “Deeper into the Mire”, p. 18.

David Chandler hauntingly describes the effect these attacks had on the civilians in Phnom Penh, a city that by the end of the war was swollen with 2 million refugees: “artillery shells and rockets rained down on the capital. People were killed while eating noodles, selling fish, standing around, nursing their children, and bicycling to work. They were defenseless”. The United State embassy reported in early 1974 that “the mood of the less advantaged segments of the [. . .] population seems to be predominantly one of weary resignation”.¹⁹⁵

A failed Khmer Rouge offensive against the Phnom Penh in summer of 1974 almost ended the war, but was repulsed by Republican forces who only managed to reestablish a defensive perimeter around the now permanently besieged capital as far as the old Imperial centre of Oudong. The rocket attacks and shelling of the capital dragged mercilessly on for the remainder of the year while ground forces on both sides fought back and forth in the environs around Phnom Penh. The final blow came with the launching of a second offensive by the Khmer Rouge against the capital on New Years Day 1975. Rocket attacks and shelling intensified while the Khmer Rouge began choking off supply lines to the city by mining the Mekong River. The United States flew in food supplies to Phnom Penh but the amount was insufficient, resulting in dramatic price rises and serious food shortages that led to the starvation and death of thousands of children in the last months of the war. As the war raged in the countryside and the Khmer Rouge pursued its radical collectivist

195 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 230.

policies in the cooperatives it established in the “liberated” zones, rural Cambodians faced a terrible choice: “Risk starvation as a refugee in the Khmer Republic or give your soul to *Angkar* in exchange for the assurance of being fed something. Run away from the forced collectivization of the countryside so your child can starve to death in Phnom Penh”.¹⁹⁶

The fifth anniversary of the coup that overthrew Sihanouk came and went with electricity in the capital flowing for only four hours every other night while fuel, charcoal, food, and medicine stores were completely depleted in much of the city.¹⁹⁷ A month later, at the beginning of April, Lon Nol and his family left on a “trip” to Indonesia and for “medical treatment” in Hawaii. For his troubles Lon Nol was officially named a national hero and given one million dollars from the government’s coffers. Many other senior government officials and wealthy Cambodians similarly left for urgently needed medical treatment abroad around the same time. Government officials, including Nol’s younger brother Lon Non, and senior military officers who stayed in the hope of putting their war torn country back together alongside the Khmer Rouge would not live out the month. The last defenses around Phnom Penh were breached on 16 April 1975. The following morning the North and Eastern Zone Khmer Rouge troops entered the capital. Interrupting Republican General Sak Sutsakhan’s broadcast ordering his troops to surrender, a young Khmer Rouge cadres burst into the studios of Radio Phnom Penh,

196 Becker, *When the War Was Over*, p. 153.

197 Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*, p. 233.

grabbed the microphone and screamed at the residents of the defeated capital; “We come as victors, as masters, and not as negotiators”.¹⁹⁸ The war was over. The genocide was about to begin.

4. Interpretation

If the more general economic and political crises that afflicted the Cambodian nation prior to 1975 led the Khmer Rouge to identify class enemies and old regime elements as responsible for the country’s ills, it was the near death of the communist movement in the isolated jungles of the mountainous northeast in 1968–1969, the Paris Peace Accords between the North Vietnamese and the US in January 1973, and the US bombing campaign that were interpreted by the Khmer Rouge as crises, not of the nation as a whole, but of the revolution itself that fingered other equally culpable and dangerous “enemies”. The groups identified with these crises were the Vietnamese and suspect Khmer Rouge cadres.

Although the Khmer Rouge were able to recruit minority tribal groups to their cause during the period of isolation in the late 1960s in the first two years of the civil war and with help from the North Vietnamese after the March 1970 coup build and train a potent fighting force that would eventually defeat the Khmer Republic, the Khmer Rouge leadership never forgot their near extinction in the jungle nor overcame their fear of a similar extinction in the future. Pol Pot described the desperate state of communist forces

198 Sak Sutsakhan, *Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse* (Washington: US Army Centre of Military History, 1987), p. 170.

in the late 1960s as one of constant peril: “No matter how big the forests were, we found no shelter. No matter how good the people were, the enemy squeezed and manhandled them, and they could do nothing”.¹⁹⁹

The Party’s own crisis of the late 1960s, one which the Khmer Rouge feared could have mirrored the actual destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party after Suharto’s brutal campaign three years earlier, came to be read over time as the fault of both the Vietnamese communists in Vietnam and as the work of internal Khmer Rouge spies and saboteurs. In a 1976 document called “The Last Plan” based on the “confessions” of several cadres including Comrades Chhuk and Isoup Ghanty,²⁰⁰ the unnamed author suggests in a section titled “In the Period Before 18 March 1970” that “strings of traitors” within the party were trying to destroy the movement by following “CIA propaganda” and spreading the rumour within communist ranks that the Sihanouk side was “the winning party”.²⁰¹

199 Saloth Sar, “Guidance from Office 870”, *Tung Pradevat*, January 1972, quoted in David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Revised Edition) (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), p. 81.

200 This document, like Hu Nim’s confessions referred to chapter 2, should not be taken as a statement of facts freely given as testimony by the cadres mentioned in the document. Written by an unnamed author, the “Last Plan” is a compilation of “confessions” extracted under torture at the height of the purge phase of the genocide. As described in chapter 4, cadres who were arrested and detained by the regime were tortured into confessing their supposed transgressions against the Party over a period of many decades and to finger other “traitorous” cadres. The narrative offered by detainees was written and rewritten after repeated episodes of torture until the detainee wrote down the story *Angkar* wanted to hear. Cadres working at detention centres who could not extract the “correct” story in the eyes of their superiors before the victim died were often detained, tortured, forced to confess their own transgressions against the Party and put to death. The “Last Plan”, therefore, is a statement of how the senior leadership interpreted events in the Party’s history, not an accurate rendering of the Party’s real history.

201 “The Last Plan” from the “Summary of Answer [sic] by Chhuk, Secretary of Sector 24 on 23
(continued...) ”

Deviant cadres at the time were “apparently very revolutionary” but their “methods” (left unstated in the document) “actually led to the suppression of the revolution by the enemy [. . .] Their true action was to cooperate with the ruling class through replacing village and commune headmen previously discarded by various methods”.²⁰²

As for the North Vietnamese, they were perceived as having abandoned the fledgling Cambodian revolution and the Khmer Rouge in its greatest time of need. The Khmer Rouge’s complaints against the North Vietnamese were not entirely without merit as Hanoi believed that their own more important struggle against South Vietnam and the US should remain the priority for all Indochinese communist movements until victory in Vietnam was achieved. The unambiguous lack of moral and material support for the Khmer Rouge against Sihanouk’s forces from the North Vietnamese was resented at the time and was later read as a devious plot hatched between the “revisionist” Soviet Union and their predatory North Vietnamese proteges to deliberately keep the Khmer Rouge’s own revolutionary struggle from succeeding. At the height of the purge phase of the genocide, which targeted among others the Hanoi trained cadres, Nuon Chea complained that under the influence of the Soviets, the Vietnamese communists from the late 1960s onward “took action against us by sneaking around giving our cadres pamphlets such as Lenin’s *Left-*

201 (...continued)
September 1976 and of the 19th Answer by the Same Person Written on 23 September 1976” (trans. Timothy Carney) in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 301.

202 “The Last Plan”, p. 307.

Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder. They said we were too left”. Stretching the truth mightily, Nuon Chea then glossed over the crucial support the NVA provided in terms of men and materiel from 1970 to 1973 by stressing that, “Vietnam did not help us! A lot of people misunderstand this”.²⁰³

The period of isolation was also a crucible in which much of the Khmer Rouge’s radical collectivist ideology was formed. Begun after Pol Pot traveled for several months in 1965 and 1966 to China at the beginning of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the period of isolation in the late 1960s was seen, retrospectively, as “a test” without which the revolution and the communist party “would have had no experience of independence-self mastery”.²⁰⁴ From the “base areas” the Khmer Rouge waged what they called a “people’s war” in which the communist movement was forced to “overcome all obstacles [and] make any sacrifice”. The “strategic line took at its premise: independence; sovereignty; self-reliance. It was based upon the right to choose our own destiny with dignity”.²⁰⁵ Historian David Chandler puts a much less constructive spin on the Khmer Rouge’s early years in the *maquis* suggesting that as early as 1963, and particularly after the top leadership fled to the

203 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 3.

204 “Abbreviated Lesson on the History of the Kampuchean Revolution” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 220.

205 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 2.

northeast, “Sar [Pol Pot] and his friends saw few non-believers. They talked continuously to each other, bonding together and reinforcing their paranoia and their self-assurance. They probably spent most of their time identifying ‘enemies’ (*khmang*) and constructing scenarios of what Cambodians wanted”.²⁰⁶ With the early years of the Chinese Cultural Revolution still fresh in his mind and because of their isolation from Khmer society at a time during which the KR effectively exercised no control over any of Cambodia’s territory, Pol Pot and his comrades could only imagine or assert according to their own increasingly radical principles what most Khmers wanted. Ensnared in what they called Office 100 on the northeast border, the Khmer Rouge leadership drew all sorts of communalist prescriptions for the future and began to identify the class enemies and internal traitors they believed threatened the survival of the movement.

Aside from their isolation from mainstream Khmer society, the Khmer Rouge’s ideological perspective was also profoundly influenced at this time by the non-Khmer highland tribal peoples among whom they lived. The “tribals” were completely alienated from Khmer society and implacably hostile to the regime in Phnom Penh. They also practiced what the Khmer Rouge regarded as a form of autarkic primitive communism based on solidarity and mutual aid and which the leadership thought well suited to the entire Cambodian economy. For their part, many tribals strongly supported the “Revolutionary Organization” because of the Khmer Rouge’s attacks on government forces

206 Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 65.

and the seeming sincerity and sympathy of the senior KR cadres.²⁰⁷ Several young tribals, including children and teenagers, were subsequently recruited into the lower-levels of the Khmer Rouge. Lacking any stake in the existing socio-economic system and filled with envy and rage at the elevated status of urban and lowland Cambodians, many of the youngest tribals turned out to be the most brutal and feared front-line killers during the DK period.

The 1970 coup and the incursion of large numbers of North Vietnamese forces substantially changed the fortunes of the Khmer Rouge for the better. But by early 1973 the KR again felt their revolution to be under threat, not from the Khmer Republic, but from their North Vietnamese allies, internal party enemies, and the United States Air Force. Whereas the lack of assistance offered by the North Vietnamese in the late 1960s was seen as a sin of omission, Hanoi's signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 was construed at the time and later as an even greater sin of commission. Heavy lobbying by Hanoi for the Khmer Rouge leadership to sign-on to a comprehensive peace deal that would bring the US military intervention in all of Indochina to a close and to enter into negotiations with the Lon Nol regime was for Saloth Sar and his lieutenants proof that the Vietnamese were only interested in the success of their own revolutionary struggle and that the "little brothers" in Cambodia would simply have to wait their turn or abandon their struggle altogether. This interpretation of North Vietnamese' role in negotiating and

207 Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 77.

signing the accords lived on into the DK period. Once in power the Khmer Rouge viewed 1973 in general as a time when “the objective situation was strongly pressuring” the communist party. With respect to the possibility of entering into the Paris peace talks, the Khmer Rouge “analyzed the good factors and the bad factors of negotiations” and apparently discerned “the danger of negotiations”. Evoking again the specter of the destruction of the revolution, the decision to fight rather than negotiate was based on the calculation that “the enemy might destroy us. The danger of slavery [sic]. We fought at all costs”.²⁰⁸ The peace accord was nothing short of a monumental stab-in-the-back, a self-serving move that proved that the Vietnamese communists “made every effort to undermine [the] revolution”.²⁰⁹ Almost immediately after the accord was signed, North Vietnamese units were withdrawn from KR-held territory partly in accordance with the peace treaty but also at the insistence, in some places backed up with military force, of the Khmer Rouge. Hanoi trained cadres, who had recently begun to come home via the Ho Chi Minh Trail, were purged. Some of these cadres would survive the purges only to be ruthlessly liquidated in the latter years of the DK period as a just punishment for the traitorous peace accord of 1973.

208 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 289.

209 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 4; Becker, *When the War Was Over*, p. 148.

The vitriol directed at the North Vietnamese and their more moderate KR supporters may also have been driven by the unacknowledged fact that without North Vietnam's considerable investment of their own blood and treasure from 1970 to 1973, the Khmer Rouge might never have defeated the Lon Nol regime. Recognition of Vietnam's support would have undermined the Khmer Rouge's central doctrine of independence and self-mastery. It would also have involved acknowledging the superior capabilities of the NVA, something the increasingly racist Khmer Rouge leadership was loath to do. In fact the period 1970 to 1973 was reinterpreted from 1973 onward²¹⁰ as a time in which the Vietnamese were of either no assistance at all or a pernicious influence unwelcomed by the Khmer Rouge. In hindsight, "Vietnamese agents" were said to have called for "foreign [i.e., North Vietnamese] support" because the "Vietnamese army was great and strong". Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge were supposedly told they "should wait until the Vietnamese army fought for us, and that we could not fight as we had nothing."²¹¹

During the purge phase of the genocide, senior Khmer Rouge leaders sharpened their focus and identified the Vietnamese communists as a potent force that threatened the success and survival of the revolution. Recalling the height of the NVA's presence in Cambodia during the civil war, the Khmer Rouge suggested that the CPK "did not notice

210 As noted at the outset of the Cambodia section of this chapter, we do not have direct documentation from this period to confirm what the senior leadership was thinking at the time. However, historian Ben Kiernan has conducted numerous interviews with cadres concerning this period (see Kiernan's *How Pol Pot Planned the Future*, which, given the consistency of the recollections expressed by the interviewees, we can assume is a relatively accurate picture of that time.

211 "The Last Plan" in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978*, p. 301.

our contradictions with Vietnam". The NVA had not come to Cambodia to assist the Khmer Rouge "but to seize forces, to build up their own forces and to grasp our party as a whole". While the Khmer Rouge valiantly fought the "US-Thieu forces sent to help Lon Nol", the Vietnamese "tried to stab us in the back". Nonetheless the decision was made to "resolve the principle contradiction" by defeating the Lon Nol regime²¹² first before turning to confront the secondary contradiction with Vietnam. Resolution of the latter contradiction involved the genocidal liquidation of the surviving moderate Hanoi-trained Khmer Rouge cadres during the DK period whom the same supposed " Vietnamese agents" said should return to lead the fight against Lon Nol as they were "skillful in various techniques".²¹³ For the Khmer Rouge, these Khmer communist cadres had, in reality, "become 100% Vietnamese and had nothing left as Khmers. They were subservient lackeys of the Vietnamese".²¹⁴

212 Nuon Chea, "Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark, July 1978" <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 4. Going even further in a tirade delivered to newly returned Hanoi cadres during the civil war Southwestern commander Ta Mok pointedly noted that the cadres' former patrons in Hanoi had taken Kampuchea Krom (now southern Vietnam) and that it was the responsibility of all Cambodians to fight the Vietnamese to get it back. Following this line one of Mok's district chiefs in Rolea Peir in Kompong Chhnang told his troops that "Kampuchea Krom must be liberated. [. . .] If we do not fight the Vietnamese, we will lose the rest of our country". Then, reflecting centuries of ingrained anti-Vietnamese attitudes, the District Chief continued: "Vietnam is the most acute enemy, the hereditary enemy. After victory we aim to go and liberate Kampuchea Krom" (Kim Kai interview with Kiernan) (Kompong Chhnang, 4 September 1980) in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 362).

213 "The Last Plan" in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978*, p. 301.

214 "The Last Plan" in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978*, p. 301.

The perception of moderate pro-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge as “*khmang*” was further fueled by the steady increase in American bombing sorties over Cambodia from 1969 to 1973, culminating in the murderous Operation Arclight following the implementation of the Paris Peace Accords. With the skies over North Vietnam now off-limits, and with the Lon Nol regime floundering in the field, the full force of American air power turned even more ferociously on Cambodia. For the Khmer Rouge, the entire bombing campaign was seen as both a crisis and an opportunity.

As an opportunity, the increasingly indiscriminate destruction from the skies drove many Cambodians away from the regime in Phnom Penh and into the arms of the revolutionary cause as mostly rural Cambodians saw their villages and farms destroyed and their friends and loved ones killed by what they called the “blind ones” and the “killing birds”. In a series of interviews with Cambodian refugees after the genocide, Ben Kiernan found that many Cambodians became sympathetic to or joined the Khmer Rouge after being on the receiving end of a bombing sortie. A villager named Kguon Ao from Chithou in Kompong Cham, for example, stated that after a sortie killed 200 people in his town, “some people ran away to live far from the village. Others joined the revolution”.²¹⁵ Suon Sarat similarly told of how his village of Samrong in Svay Rieng was subject to a sustained B-52 attack in 1972: “B-52s bombed three times per day, fifteen minutes apart, three planes at a time. They hit houses in Samrong and thirty people were killed. [. . .] The

215 Nguon Ao (interview with Kiernan) (Kandol Chrum, 7 August 1980) in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 350.

people were angry with the US and that is why so many of them joined the Khmer communists”.²¹⁶ One survivor of a T-28 attack on another village in 1973 told Kiernan that “[p]eople in our village were furious with the Americans; they did not know why the Americans had bombed them. Seventy people from Chalong joined the fight against Lon Nol after the bombing”.²¹⁷ The same effect of the bombing was reported by a hardened Khmer Rouge cadre. Speaking to Western journalists on the Thai border in 1979, the cadre reported that after his village in Pursat was bombed in 1971 killing 200 of its 350 residents he immediately joined the Khmer Rouge, “propelling him into a career of violence and absolute loyalty to the CPK, both of which he was proud to recount”.²¹⁸ Without needing to make much of an effort the Khmer Rouge successfully exploited the physical and psychological effects of the bombing to draw those most effected by it, namely rural Cambodians, into the revolutionary fold and to demonize the Lon Nol regime and the United States.

On the other hand, the bombing campaign was simultaneously perceived in rather paranoid terms as an internal party crisis in which alleged internal party enemies operating covertly in league with the Lon Nolists and the United States were trying to physically destroy the revolution from the skies. The bombings were often blamed by senior cadres

216 Suon Sarat (interview with Kiernan) (Chantrea, 23 July 1980) in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 351.

217 Song O Reang Au (interview with Kiernan) (6 October 1980) in Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 353. The T-28s were actually flown by the Cambodian Air Force rather than the USAF.

218 Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 350.

at the time on alleged “spies” hidden among the cadres and the villagers who supposedly called in air strikes. Prefiguring the brutal commandant he would become of the notorious torture centre Tuol Sleng or S-21, Khang Khek Leu (later known as “Duch”) and his troops in the Northern Zone accused some cadres and ordinary villagers of being CIA agents and calling in the US planes during the final bombardment in the summer of 1973.²¹⁹ Among the Khmer Rouge cadres, recriminations for the bombing as well as a failed offensive in 1973 erupted into internecine conflicts and even assassinations of rival moderate and radical Khmer Rouge in the same zone. These same accusations were repeated by senior radical cadres and leaders during the genocide with so-called moderate cadres, then being targeted for extermination, being accused of holding back or sabotaging the revolutionary struggle during the civil war.²²⁰

CONCLUSION

The crises outlined above in pre-genocide Germany and Cambodia were not the direct causes of the bloodletting to come. They were, rather, the trigger for the genocidal reconceptualization process (to be examined in the next chapter) that led the Nazi leadership and Khmer Rouge to construct their victims as mortal threats to the Aryan “race”, the Reich, or the revolution. As the catalyst for this later process, crises and the

219 Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, p. 355. Duch’s accusations and actions were likely not just a tactic used to undermine or eliminate political rivals since they coincided with a wave of anti-moderate anti-Hanoi cadre purges as well as a sharp radicalization of Khmer Rouge policies in the zones under their control.

220 Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, pp. 355–356.

interpretation of them, fingered specific groups as responsible for economic, political, and military/security upheavals and as threats to the future. At the crisis stage, the threat conception of the eventual victims of the genocides were still relatively general and, therefore, did not themselves lead directly to the decision to liquidate the Jews or the socio-economic, ethnic, and political “enemies” of the Khmer Rouge. As such, crises should be seen only as a necessary condition that helps account for the *timing* of genocide but not, either on their own or in concert with the permissive pre-genocide political culture, as sufficient to explain the decision to commit genocide.

In both cases we find that the meaning of crises, and the negative identification of certain groups with crises, was underpinned by the pre-genocide exclusionary and authoritarian political culture. Existing real and perceived divisions between Germans and Jews, anti-Semitic values and beliefs, and a history of authoritarian responses to societal conflicts during the Second Reich conspired to lead the nascent Nazi party as well as other political actors on the right and even some on the left (particularly the communists) to identify Germany’s Jews as responsible for the loss of the First World War, the concessions and reparations forced on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, the great inflation and great depression of the 1920s and 1930s respectively, and the political instability of the Weimar Republic. As a minority that continued to be regarded as, at the very least, separate from or, at worst, covertly in control of the economy and, under Weimar, the state, Jews came

to be seen during the upheavals of the interwar period as an opportunistic fifth column driven to enrich themselves at the expense of German society.

In this interpretation of the interwar crises, we see many of the components of pre-World War I anti-Semitism but in a more overt and virulent form in comparison to the period from 1871 to the outbreak of the war when the main divisions in society centred around other groups such as socialists and Catholics. Although anti-Semitism existed during the *Kaiser Reich* it, took the shocks of the war years and the interwar period to crystalize generalized anxiety over the Jews into a more malevolent conception of Jews as the primary source of several specific crises that threatened to undermine the post-war Republic. To be sure the National Socialist movement of the 1920s and early 1930s gave voice to this perception in extreme form, particularly when speaking and writing amongst themselves. Nonetheless, the consistent linking of the Jews with Germany's many problems by the Nazis was not anathema to many Germans precisely because of the shared exclusionary and authoritarian political culture shared by the Nazi and other *völkisch* political elites on the one hand, and ordinary Germans on the other. Both were possessed, of what writer Thomas Mann called "*Bildungsantisemitismus*": a culture of anti-Semitism. Still, the conception of Germany's Jews as responsible for current crises and as a possible threat to the future, while a more malevolent conception of the Jews than before World War I, was not genocidal in nature. It was only after these crises were over and the Nazis came to power that conceptions of the Jews morphed further into a specifically articulated

mortal threat to the race and the *Reich* that the decision to commit genocide was taken.

During the DK period, as the trigger for the genocide to come, the crises of the 1960s and 1970s singled out different groups for different reasons. The economic stagnation and then chaos of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol years were interpreted by the Khmer Rouge through the lens of the pre-genocide political culture as the result of exploitation at the hands of the mostly urban-based bourgeois classes. But unlike in interwar Germany in which very specific economic and other crises were tied to the Jews who were said to have actively created these crises, the state of Cambodia's economy was seen in much more general terms by the Khmer Rouge as indicative of the widespread predation and decadence of feudalism and capitalism. Similarly the political travails of the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes, including the Samlaut Rebellion and the 1970 coup, were seen by the Khmer Rouge as the embodiment of a corrupt political system that rewarded the wealthy and the well-connected at the expense of the majority of poor, mostly rural, Cambodians. Nonetheless the ultimate reading of the economic and political situation was similar to the German case in that specific groups were identified as the source of the crises and as possible threats to the future. Urban-based elite and the middle socio-economic classes were believed to be perpetuating and benefitting from an exploitative, corrupt, and authoritarian political and economic system that preyed on and excluded the poor peasant masses in the countryside. These classes would continue to exploit the countryside so long as they remained at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy.

Security crises, namely the near death experience of the Khmer Rouge in the northwest in the late 1960s, the border incursions, the Paris Peace Accords, and the bombing campaign, were interpreted as much more specific crises that imperiled not the country as a whole but the revolution and the Khmer Rouge itself. Those deemed responsible for these crises were the North Vietnamese, who the Khmer Rouge could not punish directly, and the so-called Hanoi-trained cadres and other moderates within the communist movement. Seized by the fear that the Khmer Rouge would go the way of the Indonesian Communist Party and that internal agents were working to ensure that Hanoi's plan that the Vietnam War and revolution be resolved in North Vietnam's favour first at the supposed expense of the Cambodian communist movement, the Khmer Rouge began in 1973 what would become during the genocide a relentless and brutal search for enemies "burrowing from within".

The fact that the Khmer Rouge began to physically purge internal elements who were deemed suspect Hanoi and Lon Nolist/American agents, while at the same time implementing radical collectivist policies in zones under their control two years before the end of the civil war, suggests that the temporal dividing line between crises as the trigger for the genocidal reconceptualization of the victim group was not as firm as in the Nazi case. While the crises of the interwar period clearly preceded and served as the trigger for the genocidal reconceptualization of the Jews that led to the genocide of 1941 to 1945, many of the economic, political, and security crises of the pre-DK period were still on-

going when the Khmer Rouge began to liquidate internal party elements as well as local Lon Nolist officials and socio-economic elites in Khmer Rouge-occupied territory.

In the Cambodian case, then, we see a temporal overlap between many of the crises that singled out specific groups as a source of blame and generalized threat to the future and the active victimization of “enemies” of the revolution. This can be explained in part by the fact that after the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces, which acted as a moderating influence on the Khmer Rouge in the “liberated” zones from 1971 to 1973, the Khmer Rouge, unlike the Nazis before 1933, were free to begin implementing their radical policies before finally defeating the Republican forces on the battlefield in 1975. Differences in the timing of the onset of victimization—with the Nazi genocide beginning a full eight years after Hitler came to power versus genocidal massacres at the end of the civil war and genocide proper immediately after the fall of Phnom Penh—might also be explained by the possibility that the Khmer Rouge may have formed the intent to physically liquidate socio-economic and internal party enemies before coming to power. Available historical evidence, however, does not allow us to confirm or refute this hypothesis and therefore to determine if what happened during the civil war were isolated massacres or the opening stages of premeditated genocide. As we will see in the next chapter, the evidence confirming the genocidal reconceptualization of the victim groups by the Khmer Rouge leadership dates only from the DK period.

For both Germany and Cambodia, crises pushed opened the door to genocide.

CHAPTER 4

Reconceptualizing the Victim Group: The “Three Switches” of Genocide

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen, the permissive political culture and destabilizing crises are the conceptual and material and temporal precursors to genocide. However, they are not on their own, sufficient to explain why genocide happens. A political culture that includes formal divisions between groups in society, contested understandings of who properly belongs to the political community, and a history of authoritarian approaches to solving conflicts is not unknown around the world and has led to other less destructive forms of violence and conflict. Similarly, short-term crises are all too common and, by themselves, have not resulted in genocide. Instead political culture and crises, either separately or together, are often precursors to other forms of repression or persecution, political violence, ethnic or civil conflicts, wars, rebellions or revolutions, as well as the crimes against humanity and war crimes that so often mar these already bloody and destructive events. What, then, “makes” genocide?

To understand why genocide is perpetrated against a specific victim group we need to closely examine the way in which genocidal political elites and the dominant society

reconceptualize the victim group's identity, interests, and potential actions as a response to short-term crises. It will be argued in this chapter that elite conceptions of the victim group that culminate in genocide must go beyond the initial conceptual process covered in the preceding chapter—i.e., the identification of the victim group as to blame for crises and as a general threat to the future well-being of the political community. If the conceptual process stops at that point, the policy response to a perceived threat posed by a group to the wider community could be anything from the arrest and repression of the group's cultural, political, or economic elite, to restrictions placed on members' economic, political or cultural activities. More seriously elites may choose to use violence to encourage flight or to terrorize the group into submission, or to use large-scale population control measures such as physical segregation, internal deportation, or expulsion, and retributive massacres. State-sponsored violence, terror, forced population movements, and, of course, mass killing are, to be sure, often part of the genocidal process itself. But in genocide they are specific policies designed to achieve the larger policy goal of physically liquidating all or a part of the victim group. They are not stand-alone policies that are believed to be sufficient to counter real and perceived threats posed by a specific group.

I. GENOCIDE AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION

The reconstruction of the identity, interests, and future actions of the victim group that leads to genocide consists of a more detailed and specific formulation of the threat believed to be posed by the victim group. Central to the reconceptualization process is the emergent

belief that the victim group imperils the dominant community through the mere fact of the group's continued physical existence. Because the existence of the victim group is perceived to be the ultimate source of the threat menacing the political community, the physical liquidation of the victim group is understood by political elites (and accepted by the dominant society) as the only way to truly and definitively protect society from a pernicious and threatening "enemy within". Without this specific reconceptualization process the response to crises would be other less catastrophic forms of state violence, repression, or conflict in which the victim group is stripped of real material power capabilities but not the lives of the members of the group.

To understand how political elites arrive at this specific reconceptualization of the victim group, we must first unpack the mutually reinforcing and constitutive relationship between structures and elite agency and then show how this relationship influences the process by which elite political actors choose to initiate and execute genocide. The second half of the chapter will then examine what is called in this study the three conceptual "switches" regarding the victim group that must be "turned on" for genocide to happen. A case of intergroup conflict without genocide—Vietnam during and after what was called the "American War"—will be briefly considered periodically throughout the chapter. This case will illustrate that when the three conceptual switches of the victim group remain "turned off" in the wake of crisis, inter-group conflict and repression is the policy response, not genocide.

A. Rational Choice Explanations

On the face of it, genocide as a response to crises and a perceived threat to society is not only evil but seemingly irrational. Leaving the philosophic question of good and evil aside, reasonable human beings would rightly ask why the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge, the Young Turks, or the Hutu Power regime chose to destroy whole groups of people as the response to real and perceived threats, to exterminate men, women, and children simply because of who they were. But as sociologist and genocide scholar Helen Fein suggests, genocide is, from the perspective of the perpetrators, an apparently “rational choice”—a “goal-oriented act [that] is rationally instrumental to their ends”.¹

To explain why and how political elites make this rational but horrible choice we might reasonably turn to rational choice theory. As an exclusively agency-oriented explanation of political behaviour, rational choice theory argues that: actors choose between sets of goals; goals are “ordered by purposive actors”; the possible choices that actors’ might make are only those choices known to the chooser; actors try to choose the best means to their ends; means themselves are chosen through a process of calculating “subjective expected utility”; and “intentions can be inferred from behaviour”.² Significantly for the present study, rational choice theory does not inquire into how actors arrive at their intentions or goals.

1 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), pp. 7–8.

2 William H. Riker, “The Political Psychology of Rational Choice Theory”, *Political Psychology*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1995), pp. 24–26.

The late William H. Riker argued that linking intentions to prevailing social norms or structures is an “unnecessary convolution that complicates but does not eliminate the rational choice model” because social norms “are themselves creations of actors for some purpose”, elements of which actors’ choose from to frame their intentions and make their choices.³

Using a rational choice approach in conjunction with the explanation of genocide outlined in the present argument, we might argue that genocide (the observed behaviour of a regime) is simply based on the intention to respond to a crisis or set of crises and to meet a threat posed to the political community and/or newly created revolutionary order by a specific group. But without examining how genocidal elites arrive at this intention, and what precisely underpins this intention, we have no way of knowing why genocide is the response to crisis and not some other less horrific and less irrevocable form of repression or violence. All that rational choice theory can tell us is that intentions are connected to goals and that purposive actors act to achieve their goals based on a set of expected utility calculations that genocidal elites *may* follow to make the choice to commit genocide.⁴ Riker’s understanding of social norms or structures as simply the outcome of

3 Riker, “The Political Psychology of Rational Choice Theory”, p. 26.

4 “May” is the operative word here. Several laboratory studies performed on test subjects as well as analyses of real-world political and other actors have demonstrated that actors are frequently incapable of effectively ordering their preferences or of calculating subjective expected utility particularly in crisis situations. See, for example, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions”, *Journal of Business*, vol. 59, no. 4 (1986), pp. S251–S277; Michael Nicholson, *Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Donald P. (continued...)

previous choices by actors misses the possibility that agents' actions only consciously shape social norms and structures part of the time—i.e., that actors do not stand apart from ideational or material structures and simply pick and choose which elements of structure such as norms, beliefs, and practices will influence their intentions and goals. Missing in the rational choice explanations is the mutually constitutive nature of structure and agency, and therefore, the crucial ideational content that informs a choice to commit genocide as opposed to some other act.

The missing content can be filled by examining the interrelationship between structure and agency, specifically how the mutually constitutive relationship between structure and agency affects how genocidal elites come to reconstruct the interests, identity, and future actions of the victim group.

B. A Constructivist Explanation

Drawing on constructivist social theory, international relations theorist Alexander Wendt argues in his self-described meta-theory of collective identity construction, that the subjective understanding of a group's identity is influenced not only by formal political and/or economic organizational arrangements, and the material distribution of power capabilities between collective actors, but also knowledge and practices.⁵ Wendt suggests

4 (...continued)

Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

5 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425.

that material and ideational structures shape identities and interests as well as behaviour not only among one's own group but with respect to others. Collective identities are thus constructed and reconstructed according to collective understandings of the "self" and "other". Meanwhile conceptions of the "reality" of inter-group relations are also socially constructed such that new sets of mutual understandings, expectations, knowledge and perceived interests regarding different groups can either change or solidify over time, and thus in turn change or solidify certain inter-group relationships and actions.⁶

For Wendt, the structure of social consciousness—what he terms the "distribution of ideas or knowledge"—is shared among actors in the form of norms, rules, or institutions. Social and ideational structures constitute identities and interests, helping actors to, for example, find common solutions to problems, define expectations of behaviour, or what constitutes threats.⁷ In genocide, the permissive political culture is the "distribution of ideas" comprised of formalized rules and practices of exclusionary and unequal group interaction, exclusionary norms concerning conceptions of the community and authoritarian methods of conflict management which, in response to short-term crises, define and redefine the interests, identities, and expectations of behaviour of the victim group and thus who is believed to constitute a mortal threat to the political community and why.

6 Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics", *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 73–75.

7 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge Studies in International Relations: vol. 67) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 24.

As for how the “rational choice” to commit genocide is made, Wendt argues that we must inquire into how preferences are constituted because “we want what we want because of how we think about it”.⁸ Motivations, desires, or interests should be seen as “schemas”, “scripts”, “frames”, or “representations” which are knowledge structures that make possible “the identification of objects and events”.⁹ How elites think about a crisis and specific groups in society and how they come to reframe the identity, interests, and future actions of the victim group is part of a pattern of symbolic interaction in which collective actors relate to one another on the basis of the meaning they have given to one another and to the specific acts they perform. These meanings themselves stem from how the broader situation is understood which, in turn, itself is “embedded in culture”.¹⁰ Actors revise their definitions of the situation as they learn more about each other through continued social interaction. In situations in which power capabilities are uneven—as is clearly the case in genocide between the perpetrator state and the victims—“social acts [. . .] tend to evolve in the direction favoured by the more powerful”.¹¹

Wendt argues that, like individual actors, collective actors engage in “perspective taking” (i.e., cognitively standing in the others’ shoes) to further define each other’s

8 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, p. 119.

9 Roy D’Andrade, “Schemas and Motivation” in Roy D’Andrade and C. Strauss (eds.), *Human Motives and Cultural Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 28 quoted in Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, p. 122.

10 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, p. 330.

11 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, pp. 330–331.

identity and interests. Through a process of shared interaction, Ego shapes a conception of Alter that may or may not be objectively correct. Incorrect interpretations of the identity and interests of Alter are not, however, the result of incomplete information about Alter or misinterpretation of the “facts” about Alter as rational choice theory would suggest. Instead, emerging perceptions of Alter, no matter what they are, are not passive perceptions of something that exists independent of Ego,

but actively and over time *constitutive* of Alter’s role vis-a-vis Ego. Through her representational practices Ego is saying to Alter, ‘you *are* an X, and I will act toward you as if you were an X’. To that extent who Alter is, in this interaction, depends on who Ego *thinks* Alter is [. . .] Role-identities are the meanings that actors attribute to themselves when seeing themselves as an object, that is, from the perspective of the Other. To that extent who Ego is, in this interaction, is not independent of who Ego thinks Alter thinks Ego is. [. . .] [T]hese self-understandings are in one sense inside Ego’s own head, but they only become meaningful in virtue of Alter confirming them, which is to say in virtue of social relations.¹²

Playing the role of Wendt’s “Ego”, genocidal political elites take the perspective of “Alter”—i.e., the victim group—such that the latter is believed to see in the state and the dominant society as a community that will be or is already covertly under the group’s control, and/or to see a vulnerable society that can be exploited and ruined to the victim group’s advantage. Perpetrator elites in effect say to the victim group, “your continued existence *is* a mortal threat to our continued survival and we expect you to act as such a threat, and we will act toward you as if you are a mortal threat”. For genocidal elites, the

12 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, p. 335.

victim group's identity *is* that of a mortal threat because elites *think* the group is a mortal threat.

This “perspective” is not, of course, the real perspective of the victim group, but a socially constructed one based on perceptions rooted in the pre-genocide political culture and the interpretation of crisis. When political elites contemplate genocide in the wake of crises they do not of course begin a brand new process of social interaction with the victim group. Rather the process of symbolic interaction through perspective taking is a continuation of the social interaction between elites and the dominant society on the one hand and the eventual victim group on the other that has been going on for years, but is now pursued in a more urgent and malevolent fashion. The conceptual possibility of coming to see the victim group's existence as a mortal threat is grounded in: a widely held and entrenched pre-genocide political culture that sees the formal and unequal separation of the victim group from the rest of society; the tendency for groups in society to engage in informal sectarian associational arrangements; a conception of the political community that viewed the victim group as outside or marginal to “true” or “authentic” membership in the community; and, a state with a history of seeing societal conflicts—including those involving the victim group—as serious threats to the stability of the state and society that must be countered with repression, exclusion, and possibly force. Crises serve to animate the worst existing conceptions of the victim group as well as create an extremist context in which political elites search for a way to understand the situation they are in, to bring the

crisis or crises to a conclusion, and to prevent them in the future. Turning to an already suspect group, elites engage in a renewed process of interaction through perspective taking with the eventual victims of genocide. Drawing on existing conceptions of the group and a recent history of disruptive crises, elites read into the identity, interests, and future actions of the group a new and more powerful threat to the community that can only be solved through deadly “final solutions” to what are presented as perennial and now urgent and deadly “problems”.

This argument deviates from Wendt’s final assertion that conceptions of the collective self and other are only confirmed through the actions of Alter and the resulting social interaction between Ego and Alter. To agree with Wendt on this point would mean suggesting that the victims of genocide actually act in a way that is deserving of such a horrendous and final punishment. Clearly European Jewry, the Vietnamese, Chinese, Muslim Cham minorities, urban Khmers, and suspect Khmer Rouge cadres did not engage in behaviours that in reality posed a deadly threat to the perpetrator state and the bystander society no matter what the allegations made against them. By 1933 German Jews made up a small minority of Germany’s population and there is ample evidence to show that German Jews suffered as much during the economic upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s as other Germans. And while Jews tended to be clustered in certain economic professions there is no evidence to indicate any overt or covert control of the German economy. Once the Nazis began to strip German Jewry of their civil and political rights from 1933 to 1935

and their economic livelihoods by the late 1930s, there was no conceivable objective criteria by which it could be legitimately asserted that German Jews possessed any power capabilities with which to even protect themselves, let alone pose a mortal threat to Hitler's Reich. Similarly, once the Khmer Rouge defeated the Lon Nol regime in April 1975 and emptied the cities, all of their former enemies, civilian and military, were completely under the regime's control. Reduced to slave labourers in a country-wide system of agricultural gulags, terrorized, sick, and starving urban Khmers and their minority counterparts had no capacity to seriously threaten the Khmer Rouge regime. It was only once the DK leadership began to turn the genocide in on the Khmer Rouge itself, and to harass Vietnam across its eastern border, that the regime began to face real threats to its security.¹³

In comparison, the response to crises in non-genocidal situations either includes no reconceptualization of the identity and future behaviour of groups in society or the reconceptualization process does not involve seeing the continued physical presence of a specific group as an overwhelming threat. In the former situation, crises are accompanied by a conceptualization process in which different groups within the political community continue to be seen as full members of that community with commonly held rights and

13 Nonetheless, genocidal elites at times engage in the social interactive process Wendt describes by reading into the most meager attempts at self-defense confirmation of the threat believed to be presented by the victim group. The attempt by some Armenian towns such as Van to defend themselves once the genocide had already begun in 1915 was read as proof of the Armenian's desire for an independent state in the heart of Anatolia. And in Rwanda, the Hutu Power regime conflated the real threat of a new RPF offensive with unarmed Tutsi civilians in Rwanda itself. Ironically, it was the genocide against the domestic Tutsi and moderate Hutu population that accelerated the feared offensive of the RPF in April 1994 that ultimately led to the ouster of the Hutu regime and the end to the genocide three months later.

obligations vis-à-vis each other and the state, coupled with shared goals for the future. Cooperation, or at least accommodation, in the face of internal or external crises, be they economic, political, or military/security is the result. The political community, while in some instances still heterogeneous, is nonetheless conceived of by elites and members of society as a whole as one political community to which all members of society still belong. Here the collective “self” is conceptualized as inclusive such that there is no “other”. A collective self thus confronts crisis as a unified whole. Unlike genocidal situations, intersubjective understandings of society are based on an existing political culture of tolerance and inclusiveness.

In instances where non-genocidal state violence, repression, or inter-group conflict is the result of crises—e.g., the wars of succession in the former Yugoslavia— membership in the political community may become contested at the same time that there is an absence of common goals within the larger political community. The involved groups, be they ethnically, religiously, linguistically, economically, or politically based, see each other as competitors for economic, political, military/security, territorial or social goods in the present and possibly even as threats to group gains in the future. While the important element of threat and fear for the future also occurs in genocide, non-genocidal conflict situations produce inter-group conflict because the threat posed by competing groups is perceived to be mutual and is derived from actually existing power capabilities, not the mere fact of a group’s physical existence. Conflict between groups or state-sponsored

repression is pursued in order to weaken a competitor, to acquire their capabilities, to subordinate or even repress members of the group so that one's own group or the state may reap the benefits of having acquired the adversary's power capabilities (e.g., territory, economic and political power) for present and future gain and protection.

As in genocide, mutual conflict situations are marked by a conceptualization of the collective "self" and "other" in which a relatively strict boundary is drawn between the competing groups. Inter-group conflict is also frequently underpinned by a permissive political culture. But unlike genocide each group does objectively maintain some kind of real power capability and the contest itself is, for the most part, over "real" things; *that* contest is not purely constructed.

II. WARRANTS FOR GENOCIDE

Before exploring the three conceptual "switches" concerning the changing perceptions of the identity and future actions of the victim groups that led the Nazis and Khmer Rouge to commit genocide against their respective victims it must be noted that little is known about how, specifically, the decision to commit genocide was made in both of these cases. The focus here instead, therefore, is on establishing the changing collective identity constructions held by the elite perpetrators and society at the time when these decisions were likely made. To do this, written and verbal statements by political elites, recorded conversations among the relevant decision-makers, editorials in official media, as well as the perspective of the victims as expressed in post-genocide testimony will be examined. What

we cannot do is definitively track the exact effect of the reconceptualization of the victim groups' identity and future actions on the minutiae of the decision-making process itself. No documentary "smoking gun" in the form of an incontrovertible Hitler or Pol Pot "order" or minutes of crucial meetings have been found detailing exactly how and by whom the decision to commit genocide was made. Nonetheless we do know, particularly for the Holocaust, the time line during which a transition in anti-Jewish policy was made from deportation and concentration to full scale European-wide extermination. And in both cases there is a record of elite statements that demonstrate genocidal intent, albeit often in euphemistic terms—the implementation of *der Führer swunsch* (Hitler's wish),¹⁴ "deportation to the East" (extermination in the death camps),¹⁵ "cleansing" or "purifying" the Party and the revolution (execution of counter-revolutionary elements and suspect cadres through torture and execution)—as well as the documented facts of what were clearly centrally planned policies aimed at bringing about the systematic, organized, physical and biological destruction of the victim groups.

14 The late Gerald Fleming suggested that once the planning for the "final solution" began, Hitler engaged in verbal "dissembling" which he used to "shrewdly calculate his own exculpation". In an handwritten note of 7 October 1945 the then incarcerated former commander of the OKW, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, referred to Hitler's practice as *eine Sprachregelung* or "a semantic convention". As such, the official record concerning Hitler and the decision-making process concerning the "final solution" does not, as Fleming concludes, mirror Hitler's public threatening of the Jews. The "final solution" was no doubt carried out according to Hitler's "wish", but this wish and the exact orders that flowed from it were rarely written down by Hitler or his adjutant most responsible for the implementation of the genocide, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler (Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], p. 19).

15 In a December 1941 diary entry, Josef Goebbels acknowledged to himself that "deportation to the east" was "synonymous with the death penalty" (Josef Goebbels quoted in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* [London: Allen Lane, 2000], p. 485).

A. Warrant for the Final Solution

From the beginning of the war in September 1939 until the late summer of 1941, the Nazi regime sought to make the Reich *Judenrein* (Jew-free) through emigration to other European states and to the West, as well as deportation and ghettoization in occupied Poland. Until August 1940, top Nazi officials also entertained what came to be known as the Madagascar Plan which called for the mass expulsion of German Jews to a reservation on the African island of Madagascar. Although historians disagree to what extent the Madagascar Plan was seriously considered as a possible “final solution to the Jewish question”, there is evidence that Hitler took the plan seriously enough to propose it to Admiral Erich Raeder and Mussolini in June 1940. Hans Frank, head of the General Government in Poland, welcomed the plan as a way of relieving him of the thousands of Jews which, he bitterly complained to Berlin, were flooding into the ghettos in occupied Poland, putting a serious strain on food and other resources and spawning major outbreaks of communicable diseases. SS logistician Adolf Eichmann, meanwhile, set about having some of his staff undergo tropical training courses and inoculations against malaria. But the plan was ultimately shelved in August 1941 because of the failure of the *Kriegsmarine* to win the Battle of the Atlantic. Without secure access to shipping lanes to Africa, the plan, however seriously entertained, became a practical impossibility. Although the Madagascar Plan fell short of the extermination to come, it was far from benign and almost certainly would have caused untold numbers of deaths from disease and other natural causes.

How to interpret the evolution of the “final solution” from ghettoization and limited killing from 1939 to early 1941, to the complete extermination of European Jewry beginning in the fall of 1941 has proved difficult given the lack of direct evidence for what is believed to be the crucial period of decision-making immediately preceding and following Operation Barbarosa. Summing up this period surrounding the invasion of the Soviet Union, historian Mark Roseman argues that the summer of 1941 was a time “on the cusp of the full genocidal plan” that involved the move from brutal and violent occupation and mass murder through shooting of “Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia” to the mass execution of Jewish men, women, and children in some locations in the occupied East in the spring and summer of 1941. Roseman explains this crucial genocidal transformation as one that was spawned in the “murderous climate fostered by Hitler, [which saw] a variety of agencies working together rapidly to push measures forward, with the Himmler-Heydrich axis at the centre” all of which was “abetted” by highly ideological SS *Einsatzgruppen* field commanders who “liberally interpreted their brief”. Meanwhile, mounting population and food pressures in the General Government and the occupied territories produced a huge number of what the Nazis considered “useless eaters” making demands on scarce resources. It was not long after the summer of 1941 that the first death camp equipped with gas chambers and crematoria was opened at Chelmno in December 1941.¹⁶

16 Mark Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 2002), p. 32. For a detailed analysis of the documentary evidence covering the immediate pre-genocide period from 1939 to 1941 see Christopher Browning’s volumes *Fateful Months: Essays on* (continued...)

For most historians there are two possible time periods when Hitler is believed to have committed himself to exterminate European Jewry: either sometime in mid-July 1941, just before Himmler moved to extend the shooting *Aktion* in the Soviet Union, or in mid-September 1941 when Hitler approved the deportation of German Jews to the East. For the current study it is important to emphasize, however, that whatever the time period, and however the decision-making process actually unfolded, the three conceptual switches concerning the identity of the Jews coincided exactly with, and provided the conceptual framework for, the decision to exterminate Europe's Jews.

B. The Warrant for the Killing Fields

The desire for absolute secrecy, fed over time by rampant paranoia of internal enemies “burrowing from within”, ensured that the Khmer Rouge left even fewer clues than the Nazis did as to how and when the decision was made to commit genocide against the regime's many perceived enemies. Proof of the genocide itself rests with a series of purposeful acts which through dint of their apparent organization, repetition, and deadly results, confirm a systematic and organized intention to physically eliminate enemies of the revolution through direct physical and indirect biological means.¹⁷ The immediate

16 (...continued)

the Emergence of the Final Solution (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985) and *Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Canto edition) (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), as well as Philippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews: The Genesis of the Holocaust* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994).

17 Recall that Article II of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states that genocide can be committed by direct physical means through the “killing members of the
(continued...)”

execution of hundreds of Lon Nol regime officials and military officers in the first few days after coming to power on 17 April 1975 suggests a pre-existing plan to rid the revolution of its most likely future opponents right from the start. This despite clear indications that the utterly exhausted old regime elements had no plans or inclination to challenge the new revolutionary order. The simultaneous emptying of the cities and subsequent forced deportation of what came to be called the “new people” or “April 17 people” also suggests the execution of an already decided upon plan to systematically disperse and then persecute and ultimately destroy so-called “class enemies” through deliberate malnutrition, withholding of needed medical care, and overwork. By contrast, although we have no direct evidence available to demonstrate exactly how and by whom the decision was made to initiate the later purge phase of the genocide against the Party itself from 1977 onward, the purges were preceded by a pointed public address by Pol Pot to Party cadres in which he cryptically but forcefully warned of the bloodletting to come.

Despite the lack of documentary evidence concerning the genocidal decision-making process in Cambodia, threatening conceptions of the victim groups and the imputation of equally threatening perceived future actions to the victim groups were, as we shall see, clearly articulated by the Party’s senior leadership periodically from 1975 onward, particularly by “Brother Number One”, Pol Pot. These statements and other evidence of

17 (...continued)

group”, as well as indirect destruction through the “causing of serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” and “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”.

the Khmer Rouge's conceptions of the mortal dangers posed to the revolution by the victim groups' continued existence clearly overlapped with the opening of new fronts, as it were, against old and emerging "internal enemies" of the revolution throughout the DK period. As in the case of the Holocaust, conceptions and reconceptions of the victim groups' identities provided the ideational framework within which—whatever its actual mechanics—the decision, to commit genocide was made. Without such a framework, it is argued here, genocide would not have been possible.

III. THE THREE "SWITCHES"

The reconceptualization process that leads to genocide involves three discernible yet often overlapping "switches" which must be "turned on" for genocide to occur. What sets this process apart from mutual conflict situations or the exercise of non-genocidal state violence is the conceptualization of the victim group as a powerful and dangerous enemy "within" whose overwhelming power is believed to be derived from their physical existence. The three switches are: (i) the identification of the victim group as outside or foreign to the political community; (ii) the identification of the victim group as an almost superhumanly powerful dangerous "enemy within" whose continued existence threatens the very survival of the political community; and, (iii) the paradoxical identification of the victim group as subhuman.

A. Switch One: Victims as Aliens

The first switch in the process is the definition of who lies within and outside the political community or what Helen Fein calls the universe of reciprocal obligations.¹⁸ The function of this conceptualization is to clearly delineate to whom political, economic, and social rights and obligations are owed including citizenship, constitutionally recognized political rights, socio-economic support, participation in the economy and the like. Those who are conceptualized to lie outside the political community are deemed not to be entitled to such obligations and are thus reconceptualized from being marginalized insiders to non-members or “foreigners”. A strict boundary is thus drawn between “us” and “them” or the collective “self” and the alien “other”. This is similar to the boundary drawn between competitor groups in situations of inter-group conflict but goes much further in that membership in the political community is, as in the case of a civil war, no longer contested by competing groups. Rather, the victim group is unilaterally stripped of membership, first conceptually and then practically, by the state and the dominant society. No longer

18 Helen Fein argues that a necessary precondition of genocide is the conceptualization of the victim group as existing outside the community. She argues, with reference to the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, that both groups were decreed historically by the dominant group to be “outside the sanctified universe of obligation—that circle of people with reciprocal obligations to protect each other whose bonds arose from their relation to a deity or sacred source of authority. In the modern secular era, this traditional history of exclusion from the religious and social order allows for the modern definition of these same groups as strangers by virtue of the fact that the dominant group was already alienated from the victim group by traditional antipathies” (Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, pp. 4–5). In the theory presented here, the exclusion of the victim is only the first phase of the genocidal process because Fein’s approach on its own cannot account for why extermination is the option over other policies such as expulsion, forced assimilation, reeducation, or the use of violence that stops short of genocide.

members of the community, the victim group is effectively removed from society, devoid of protection by their (former) fellow citizens against a hostile state.

1. The Final Solution

The first conceptual “switch” concerning Germany’s Jews was “turned on” by Hitler and his victorious NSDAP shortly after coming to power in January 1933. Central to the Nazi conception of German Jews at this time was the idea that Jews were inherently foreign and that a strict boundary must be drawn between the alien, corrupting “Jew” and the German or “Aryan” majority. Conceptually and practically stripping German Jews of their “Germanness” was seen by Hitler as key to achieving the *völkisch* ideal of a strong, homogeneous and united Germany free of pernicious Jewish influence. Looking back on the first years of NSDAP leadership, Hitler made plain this conception of German Jews, urging in his closing speech at the Nuremberg *Parteitag* on 12 September 1938 that the removal of German Jews from all facets of German society must continue, “[b]ecause National Socialism desires to establish a true community of the people [. . .] Because we are National Socialists we can never suffer an alien race which has nothing to do with us to claim the leadership of our working people”.¹⁹ A year earlier Hitler similarly argued in a speech before the Reichstag on 30 January 1937 that “we refuse to permit an alien race any

19 Adolf Hitler, “Closing Speech at the Nuremberg Parteitag 1938, 12 September 1938”, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922–1939*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 735.

influence upon our political, spiritual, or cultural life or to allow an alien any privileged position in the economic sphere”.²⁰

Of course, the idea to separate Jews from Germans came out of the earliest party platforms of the Nazis in the 1920s. Prefiguring the administrative measures taken against German Jews in the 1930s, the *völkisch* newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* published a diatribe against the supposed evils of the *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews) on 10 March 1920 that ended with the party calling for the immediate removal of Jews from all government employment, newspapers, theaters, cinemas, stating that “the Jew must be deprived of all possibilities to continue to make his disastrous influence felt”.²¹ Once the Nazis began to implement just these kinds of policies, beginning with the boycott of Jewish businesses in April 1933, the rationale both inside the party and publicly was not only that the regime must protect German society from the Jews, but that the Jews themselves—despite their high degree of assimilation and history of full citizenship rights since unification in 1871—were not, and could never be, German. Speaking publicly in 1935 about the need for all Germans to observe the boycott, a local official, Kreisleiter Dr. Hans Hinkel summed up the prevailing Nazi conception of Jews as completely “other”: “The Jew is a state within a state. He will never become a real member of the national body. He

20 Adolf Hitler, “Speech Before the Reichstag, 30 January 1937”, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922–1939*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 735.

21 *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 20/34 (10 March 1920) (trans. Shoah Resource Centre, Yad Vashem), http://www.yadvashem.org.il/odot_pdf.

will always be a fellow citizen of other Jews". Then after reassuring the audience that the regime did not wish to physically harm German Jews, Hinkel stressed rather ominously: "[w]e wish to make it clear to the Jew that he, and certainly his children, have no future in Germany".²² Years later, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, one of the principle architects of the "final solution", offered a similar but far more sinister essentialist understanding of Jewish identity to his fellow SS officers. An essential element of Jewishness, Himmler argued, was "the fanatical drive to sustain themselves at the expense of others".²³

Throughout the 1930s the Nazi regime implemented a number of measures that successively stripped Jews of their legal and economic rights, as well as their place within German culture and society. These measures were consistent with the new conception of Jews as aliens or foreigners. Such measures included the boycott of Jewish business begun in 1933 and maintained, with varying degrees of effectiveness, until German Jews were squeezed out of the economy altogether by the late 1930s. Beginning in 1933 with the promulgation of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, Jews were dismissed from positions as university professors and other public positions. In September Jews were banned from owning land and the following month from acting as newspaper

22 Hans Hinkel, "Dr. Hinkel on the Jewish Question: An Article in the *Waren Newspaper*, 16 May 1935", *Waren Newspaper* (16 May 1935) (trans. Shoah Resource Centre) (Yad Vashem Archive, 0.51.050.205), <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203792.pdf>.

23 Heinrich Himmler quoted in Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 51.

editors. In 1934, Jews were barred from the German Labour Front and attaining legal qualifications. After a brief hiatus from persecution on the economic front in the mid-1930s, Jews were banished in 1937 from many professional occupations including teaching German pupils, and from practicing as accountants and dentists. By 1938 the economic segregating of Jews began to accelerate rapidly, leading in short order to the impoverishment of the entire German Jewish community and their further isolation from German society. In April 1937, Jewish owned businesses were ordered to register with the state, the first step in the December 1938 “Aryanization” scheme by which mostly Nazi party officials bought out desperate Jewish businessmen for a fraction of the value of their businesses, later to be replaced with outright expropriations. In the summer Jews were prohibited from trading and providing a variety of commercial services, Jewish doctors were barred from practicing medicine, and shortly thereafter Jews were banned from practicing law.

Similar edicts were issued concerning Jewish involvement in cultural life such as the exclusion of Jews from the newly created Reich Chamber of Culture in September 1933. But it was the enactment of the Reich Citizenship Laws of 15 September 1935 that drew the most explicit line between Jews and Germans, unilaterally stripping Jews of their legal status as citizens, thereby definitively removing them legally and conceptually from the German political community. Paragraph 2 established the criterion for full citizenship: “a Reich citizen is a subject of the State who is of German or related blood”; “the Reich

citizen is sole bearer of full political rights in accordance with the Law”.²⁴ In the First Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law, 14 November, 1935, Paragraph 4 explicitly disenfranchised Jews: “A Jew cannot be a Reich citizen. He has no voting right in political matters”. Departing from Judaism’s definition of Jewishness as based on matrilineal descent and embracing instead a racial definition, a Jew was defined as “a person descended from at least three Jewish grandparents who are full Jews by race”.²⁵

The legal, and more importantly, conceptual framing of the identity of Jews as separate for German and other national identities was not lost on at least some Jews at the time. Reading newspaper reports of the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws from his vantage point in Vienna, the highly secularized and assimilated future Jewish death camp survivor, Jean Amery (then named Hans Mayer), was immediately struck by his new separate racial identity conferred on him by the Nazi regime. Amery wrote after the war that he “needed only to skim them and already I could perceive that they applied to me. Society, concretized in the National representatives of the German people, had just made me formally and beyond any question a Jew”.²⁶ Amery continues that as the Holocaust

24 “Reich Citizenship Laws” (15 September 1935) (trans. Ronnie Landau) in Ronnie Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc. Publisher, 1994), Appendix E, p. 310.

25 “First Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law” (14 November 1935) (trans. Ronnie Landau) in Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, p. 311. The remainder of paragraph 5 discusses the legal status of *Mischlinge* or “half Jews”.

26 Jean Amery, *At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities* (trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1980), p. 85

unfolded he experienced, relative to non-Jews prior to his deportation and even later in Auschwitz, “the social reality of the wall of rejection that arose before us everywhere”.²⁷

The Nuremberg Laws were henceforth used in Germany to implement many of the economic exclusions already mentioned as well as the revocation of various civil rights, access to national health insurance (1934), tax reductions and child allowances (1937), and voluntary service in the military (1935). The racial laws were also employed in the late 1930s to issue special identity cards to the Jews, the requirement that Jews’ passports be stamped with a red “J”, that women add Sarah and men Israel to their names on all official documents, and the expulsion of Jewish students from non-Jewish German schools (all in 1938).

The Nuremberg Laws also provided the legal foundation for the final physical removal of Jews from everyday German life. In 1939 Jews lost their rights as tenants and were relocated to Jewish houses and with the outbreak of war were under curfew after 8:00 PM. On 23 November 1939, Polish Jews were forced to wear the *Judenstern* as all European Jews under Nazi occupation would eventually be compelled to do as well.

27 Amery, *At the Mind's Limits*, pp. 87–88. Perhaps projecting his later experiences during the Holocaust and what he called “my resentments” after liberation back in time, Amery contends that from 1935 onward to be a Jew meant for him “to be a dead man on leave, someone to be murdered, who only by chance was not yet where he properly belonged”. For Amery, the Nuremberg Laws were not simply a means of excluding Jews from German society, but “a death threat” which he felt “with complete clarity” (p. 86).

Summing up the Nazi regime's steady removal of Jews from German society in the 1930s, Holocaust historian Saul Friedlander suggests the Nazis doggedly overcame the challenge of separating out a previously assimilated minority.

Among the main obstacles faced by the regime in its attempt to eliminate the Jews from Germany was the fact that the victims had been part and parcel of every field of activity in German society. In consequence, if direct violence was not [yet] possible, the system had to elaborate ever new administrative or legal measures in order to undo, stage by stage, step by step, the existing ties between society and the Jews.²⁸

In 1942 German Jews began to be deported to the ghettos and death camps in the occupied East where they were joined by millions of other desperate and isolated Jews from all over occupied Europe. From 1939 to the summer of 1941 the policy was still one of ghettoization centred around the deportation and concentration of Jews in the Lodz and Warsaw ghettos in the General Government in occupied Poland and Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia as well as other smaller ghettos in other Eastern cities. Here Jews were completely segregated from the surrounding communities, cut off from the outside world, consigned to live and die in appalling conditions. With the turn toward deportation and concentration, the Nazi leadership still kept the first conceptual "switch" on concerning the collective identity of the Jews—even as it moved closer and closer to "turning on" the second conceptual "switch" that would lead from 1941 onward to the *Endlösung*, the genocidal annihilation of European Jewry. In the summer of 1941, Goebbels, for example, emphasized the necessity of maintaining the unequal legal status of the Jews through the

28 Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Vol. 1 The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 203.

continued removal of the Jews from the Nazi Germany. In a bid to head-off criticism of the requirement of German Jews to wear the *Judenstern* Goebbels, as the Propaganda Minister and Gauleiter of Berlin, argued forcefully that “the Jews had no right to claim equality with us” because “they are Jews who have no right to a voice in the community”.²⁹ In more stark tones, the same point was driven home in a remarkably frank and prescient statement that begins with the necessity to start physically segregating German Jews and ends with prefiguring the problems of ghettoization and the possibility of eventually physically liquidating the Jews in a 24 November 1938 editorial in the SS publication *Das Schwartz Korp*. The editorial married both the Jew as foreigner in need of separation conception (switch one) with the genocidal conception of the Jews of dangerous enemies to be physically liquidated (switch two):

Jews must be driven from our residential districts and segregated where they will be among themselves, having as little contact with Germans as possible [. . .] Confined to themselves, these parasites will be [. . .] reduced to poverty [. . .] Let no one fancy, however, that we shall then stand idly by merely watching the process. The German people are not in the least inclined to tolerate in their country hundreds of thousands of criminals, who not only secure their existence through crime, but also want to exact revenge [. . .] These hundreds of thousands of impoverished Jews [would create] a breeding ground for Bolshevism and a collection of the politically criminal subhuman elements [. . .] In such a situation we would be faced with the hard necessity of exterminating the Jewish underworld in the same way as [. . .] we are accustomed to exterminating other criminals—that is, by fire and sword. The result would be the actual and final end of Jewry in German, it absolute annihilation.³⁰

29 Joseph Goebbels, “Mimicry” (“Die Zeit ohne Beispiel” [Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1941]), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb18.htm>>, p. 3 of 4.

30 “Juden, was nun?“, *Das Schwartz Korp* (24 November 1938), quoted in Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 58.

And what of German public opinion? Lack of interest in defending their Jewish neighbours against increasing legal and other restrictions, seeming indifference to the impoverishment of a once vital community, and the absence of protest against the vilification of the Jews by the Nazis before and after 1933 suggests that the anti-Semitism of the Nazi leadership in general, and the switch one conception of the Jews in particular, were not completely out of step with prevailing popular attitudes. To be sure the regime at times felt it necessary to “educate” average Germans as to the dangers supposedly posed by the Jewish minority and to support early exclusionary measures. Senior Nazi officials regularly lamented the initial lack of support, for example, for the boycott of Jewish businesses. Aside from a small minority of Germans who opposed the increasingly harsh treatment of Jews, most Germans only voiced opposition from an instrumental point of view. Farmers, for example, continued to patronize Jewish cattle sellers because the farmers opposed attempts by the state to undermine traditional and financially rewarding business contracts.³¹ The Churches, meanwhile, remained mostly silent about the boycott, and many university faculties willingly complied with the decree to strip Jewish professors of their academic posts.

The Nuremberg Laws were for the most part greeted, often by Jews as well, with a sense of relief that the unseemly violent attacks of the late Weimar years and the uncoordinated *ad hoc* expulsion of Jews from various occupations and the like would come

31 Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 58.

to an end with the regularization of the legal status of Jews within Germany. Friedlander suggests, most Germans “were more or less passively satisfied with the laws” and while many Germans disliked openly violent anti-Semitism, they “did not object to the disenfranchisement and segregation of the Jews”. For the majority of the population the new legal status of the Jews “allowed individuals to divest him or herself of any responsibility for the measures regarding the Jews”.³² As such, there was as Landau suggests, “a deep identification with the very spirit of the legislation which met the need to institutionalize the concepts of racial separatism within the Reich, thus providing formal confirmation of the isolation and removal of the Jews from the midst of the German nation”.³³ In his analysis of German public opinion concerning the Jews during the Nazi period Ian Kershaw links Germans’ acceptance of the decoupling of the Jews from German society through legal and other forms of discrimination against the Jews to prevailing anti-Semitic public opinion in the 1930s. As the decade drew to a close most Germans came to believe that it was justified to remove the Jews from Germany.³⁴

Many Germans did react negatively to *Kristallnacht*, but again mostly for instrumental or self-regarding reasons. An official report from Lower Franconia tracking public reaction to *Kristallnacht*, for example, stated that although residents recognized the need for the

32 Friedlander, *Nazi German and the Jews*, p. 164.

33 Landau, *The Nazi Holocaust*, p. 227.

34 Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 274–275.

pogrom, rural residents in particular “regret that the actions have caused valuable items to be destroyed which, in view of the raw-material position, could more appropriately have benefitted the community as a whole”.³⁵ Some Germans were more concerned with the negative image such a public and savage attack risked creating of Germans and Germany abroad while others wondered what the pogrom portended for others groups in society, perhaps even themselves. As one expatriate leftist publication put it, if the regime could do this to the Jews, “who are going to be the next victims? That is what people are asking. Will it be the Catholics?”³⁶

On the eve of the Second World War attitudes toward Jews noticeably hardened as anti-Jewish measures and propaganda began to resonate further with an already receptive public. Kershaw’s public opinion study shows that among most Germans “[n]ow the feeling *was* that there was a ‘Jewish Question’, that the Jews *were* another race, that they deserved whatever measures were taken to counter their undue influence” and that the Jews “should be excluded from Germany altogether”.³⁷ When the privations of war began to affect most Germans at a time when Jews were deported to the East for annihilation, German society was unwilling to protect Jews from what had become a murderously predatory state. A survey of survivor rates in Germany conducted by the Simon Wiesenthal

35 “Local government report from Regierungspräsident of Lower Franconia” *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* (9 December 1938), pp. 473–475 quoted in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, p. 60.

36 *Deutschland Berichte der SOPADE*, vol 5, pp. 1205ff., 1352ff. quoted in Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, pp. 58–59.

37 Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich*, p. 275; italics original.

Centre after the war demonstrates that very few Jews were able to survive the war in hiding in Germany and that those who did “were mostly relatives of rescuers through mixed marriage”, were of “partial German descent”, or were “converts to Christianity”.³⁸ The willingness of ordinary Germans to acquiesce to the slaughter of German Jewry in part stemmed from what Peukert suggests was a willingness by most Germans to generally accept the use of terror and violence by the state “as a means of excluding those who were alien to the ‘national community’ or who were defined as alien to it”.³⁹ In his analysis of Nazi reports of public opinion during the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg shows that the public mood was reported as one’s of indifference, “even apathy toward all events that did not immediately touch ones personal existence”.⁴⁰ Kershaw similarly found that Germans’ disregard for the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust was in large part based on what is called here the exclusionary and authoritarian attitudes and practices of the pre-genocide “permissive” political culture and was, therefore, “not a neutral stance. It was a deliberate turning away from any personal responsibility [and] acceptance of the state’s right to decide on an issue of little person concern to most Germans [. . .] this apathy was compatible with a number of internalized attitudes toward Jews, not least with passive or latent anti-Semitism—the feeling that there was a ‘Jewish Question’ and that something

38 C. Gwyn Moser, “Jews in Austria, 1938–1945”, *Simon Wiesenthal Centre Annual*, vol.2 (1985), pp. 53–61.

39 Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, p. 198.

40 Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992), p. 195.

needed to be done about it”.⁴¹ Bystanders in German and occupied Europe thus asked few questions about the fate of the Jews, although they were aware of the disappearance of their Jewish neighbours and the sudden availability of their property and possessions. Deportees to the death camps similarly found that very few individuals were willing to rescue them. Instead, new arrivals at the Treblinka death camp were apparently, on one occasion, greeted by Polish peasants gesturing toward the incoming Jews that their throats would be slit. As Hilberg puts it, “and that was where they left it, between a warning and a taunt”.⁴²

For the Jewish victims, the sense of abandonment by gentile European society was palpable. Jean Amery suggests that even non-Jewish inmates in the death camps had “absorbed the teachings of Europe’s German masters”.⁴³ Bitterly noting the lack of protest by ordinary citizens or attempt at rescue in almost every occupied European country and beyond, Amery continues, “the world approved of the place to which the Germans assigned us, the small world of the camp and the wide world outside, which but rarely, in individual heroic instances, arose in protest when we were taken at night from our homes

41 Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich*, p. 277.

42 Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, p. 216.

43 Amery illustrates the point in his recounting of an overheard conversation at Auschwitz.. “I still hear a free French worker conversing with a Jewish-French concentration camp inmate: “I’m French, the inmate said. ‘Francais, toi? Mais tu es juif, mon ami,’ his countryman retorted objectively and without hostility” (Amery, *At The Mind’s Limits*, p. 88).

in Vienna or Berlin, in Amsterdam, Paris, or Brussels".⁴⁴ In his response to the often asked question, why did the Jewish inmates of the death camps not attempt escape, survivor and author Primo Levi similarly noted the Jews' status during the Holocaust as non-members of European society. "To whom could they turn for shelter? They were outside the world, men and women made of air. They no longer had a country [. . .] or a home, confiscated for the benefits of citizens of good standing".⁴⁵

2. Cambodia

In Cambodia, the first "switch" dynamic differs in a number of respects from the reconceptualization of German Jews as foreign or alien to German society. The identification of Jews as an alien race which was then separated bit by bit economically, civically, socially, culturally, and then physically from the rest of German society in the 1930s preceded the genocide of the 1940s, while the identification of Jews as a dangerous threat to the future of the German national community or "Aryan" race (second switch) began to be heard more and more in the late 1930s and early 1940s as the decision to commit genocide neared. The DK period in Cambodia involved the first switch reconceptualization of not one but several different groups of people at different times for the duration of the Khmer Rouge's rule. As well, the first switch conceptualization of the victim groups in Cambodia occurred virtually simultaneously with the second conceptual

44 Amery, *At The Mind's Limits*, p. 88.

45 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (trans. Raymond Rosenthal) (New York: Vintage International, 1988), p. 154.

switch which further defined these same groups as not only alien to the revolution, but also inherently threatening and dangerous. Further, while the victims of the Khmer Rouge were targeted for destruction by direct (execution) and indirect means (malnutrition, lack of medical care, abuse etc), the act of physical separation of the victims did not occur as it did in the Holocaust.

Nonetheless, the Khmer Rouge leadership made a point of explicitly differentiating supposedly counter-revolutionary class and ethnic minority elements from the rest of Cambodian society. Like the Nazis, they labeled these elements as foreign or alien. From 1975 to the demise of the Khmer Rouge regime in early 1979, those who came to be defined as outside the rights and protection of the new revolutionary community included: officials and soldiers of the defeated Lon Nol regime; the so-called “new people” or “April 17 people” made up of mostly upper and middle class urbanites, professionals, and a small class of rural landowners; the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Muslim Cham minorities; and, increasingly from 1977 onward, suspect Khmer Rouge cadres.

Although Pol Pot and his lieutenants rarely acknowledged any outside intellectual influences, the first reconception of the identity of the various victim groups as outside revolutionary Cambodian society revolved around a Marxist understanding of Cambodian society as historically and presently divided into antagonistic classes. In the quest for a homogeneous, united, “collective” revolutionary community, classes, ethnic groups, and eventually individual cadres and their associates and families deemed suspect were to be

overcome and as Alex Hinton argues, “excluded from the revolutionary community of equals”.⁴⁶ The first antagonistic group to be unilaterally excluded from joining the “revolutionary community of equals” were senior civilian officials and military officers of the *ancien regime*. Despite having surrendered to the victorious Khmer Rouge on April 17, 1975 and despite no evidence that they intended to actively oppose the new regime, officers and government officials in Phnom Penh, Battambang, and other cities were quickly rounded up, asked to write out their life histories, and then executed *en masse* within days of the KR coming to power. So quick and brutal was this process that we cannot definitively discern, from the point of view of the Khmer Rouge, whether the first conceptual switch was even turned on before the leadership decided to liquidate the remnants of the Lon Nol regime, perhaps having already skipped directly to the second genocidal conceptualization of members of this group as “traitors” or “active enemies” of the revolution. At the very least the fate of this group would seem to fit Fein’s observation that genocide is often preceded by state violence and targeted killing.⁴⁷ Journalist Elizabeth Becker notes that Republican military officers were asked to write out their life histories at

46 Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 189, 191.

47 Helen Fein, “Genocide, Terror, Life Integrity, and War Crimes: The Case for Discrimination”, in George J. Andreopolos (ed.), *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 103. For a brief discussion of Fein’s position on this issue see chapter 1.

the Monoram Hotel in Phnom Penh precisely because doing so “established their bona fides as ‘traitors’ in the eyes of the Khmer Rouge”.⁴⁸

The mostly urban-based middle and upper classes were full members of Cambodian society, both legally and conceptually, during the Sihanoukist and Lon Nol periods. Having become associated in the minds of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leadership with the historic oppression of the rural peasant masses, the privileged classes of the pre-DK era were reconceptualized as non-members of the revolution and shunted after 1975 from the top of the socio-economic and political hierarchy of Cambodian society down to the bottom in one fell swoop. In a process that was almost the opposite in many ways of the physical separation and concentration of German and European Jews, the hitherto privileged “new people” from Cambodia’s cities were forcibly deported to and scattered across the countryside within days of the Khmer Rouge’s capture of Phnom Penh. Fearing what might happen if the “new people” were left together in the cities, city dwellers were told to leave immediately and head for the countryside, many of them at least initially heading for their home villages, others following where ever the local cadres led them. The purpose was not to physically separate the “new people” from the rural peasant “base people”, but rather to separate the “new people” from each other in disparate rural communes under the watchful eyes of local cadres and the now favoured peasants, workers, and revolutionary soldiers.

48 Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), pp. 192–193.

Although segregation was not the order of the day for the Khmer Rouge, the “new people” were reconceptualized as a socio-economic class outside of, and antagonistic to, the revolution. The Khmer Rouge carefully parsed and sorted Cambodian society into three categories of classes. Class I, comprised of capitalists, landlords, and rich peasants, and Class II, “upper bourgeoisie”, “upper middle peasants”, and “upper peddlers”, all of whom were believed to possess the strongest attachment to private property and “individualism”—a quality that was said to be “part of their soul”. Workers and peasants, meanwhile, were understood to be more amenable to collectivization as a result of their experience of oppression at the hands of the other two classes⁴⁹ and thus were classified and perceived as full members of the new revolutionary community. This latter class “from deep down” in the countryside were “extracted from the earth like diamonds”. Their purity, in the eyes of the Khmer Rouge leadership, guaranteed the eventual disappearance of feudal or capitalist elements.⁵⁰

The class identity of every Cambodian was obtained through the mandatory writing (and in some cases re-writing) of personal histories. Personal histories were collected by village heads who were required to keep a complete record of the former occupations and family backgrounds of everyone under their jurisdiction and to forward copies onto the subdistrict office. Periodically more senior cadres carefully studied these histories to identify

49 Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, pp. 203–204.

50 David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Revised Edition) (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), p. 94.

undesirable elements: mostly “new people”, “reactionaries”, and the ethnic minorities. Using personal histories to categorize Cambodians into revolutionary and reactionary classes served to conceptually and practically divide DK society into three distinct and separate groups, each with differing levels of membership, or non-membership, in the new revolutionary community. Only poor peasants, some workers, and revolutionary soldiers were classified as revolutionarily acceptable “base people” and thus full members, while those with mildly suspect or quasi-bourgeois life histories believed to be rehabilitatable were classified as “candidate” or “probationary” members. The new people, mostly urbanites from Classes I and II were non-members of revolutionary Cambodia. As non-members, the “new people” received the harshest labour assignments, the smallest and poorest quality food rations, very little medical attention, and were constantly viewed with suspicion. A 1978 party publication identified the poor peasants as the foundation of the revolution and therefore deserving of the designation “full rights members” while “reactionaries”, whose status varied according to the degree to which they were perceived to be naturally hostile to the revolution, were further broken down into three sub-groups: “those who can be drawn to the revolution”; “neutralists, who do not oppose the revolution”; and, in language that clearly demonstrates the third “switch” conception of the victim group as non-human, “the savage ones who cannot be reeducated”. All leadership cadres were instructed to “select and assign by dividing into separate categories full rights, probationary and depositee members”, with the latter understood to be the new people deported from

the cities. The purpose of this exercise was to “clearly distinguish the good from the bad”.⁵¹

Just as the Nazis maintained an essentialist understanding of Jews as a “race” that could never be German, the Khmer Rouge made plain its similarly rigid conception of the counter-revolutionary identity of the new people and other suspect groups. This perception was based on the notion that each category of classes—revolutionary or reactionary—maintained its own “essence” (*khloemsar*) or “composition” (*samasapheap*) characterized by certain “elemental traits” (*theatu*).⁵² The conception of the new people as inherently bourgeois and counter-revolutionary held throughout the DK period. A Central Committee document from 1977 argued with respect to the “middle class” that “in the face of [the] party’s consecutive education, indoctrination of sentiment toward local [sic] [i.e., to become like the “local class” or “base people”], they are still not [revolutionarily] stronger than the base-class”.⁵³ Meanwhile, the same document called for more “base” people to be recruited into the Party to safeguard the party from class enemies: “The future

51 “Pay Attention to Pushing the Work of Building the Party and People’s Collective Strength Even Stronger” (trans. Kem Sos and Timothy Carney), *Tung Pradevat* (Revolutionary Flags), no. 3 (March 1978), pp. 37–53 in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 297.

52 Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 203.

53 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag From Community Party of Kampuchea’s Central Committee to Male and Female Cadres and All Cooperative Farmers in the Districts of Prasat, Campong Tralach and Tram Kak” (unofficial trans. Bunsou Sour) (Documentation Center of Cambodia), http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/Red_Flag.html, p. 14 of 17.

needs more extension of the local class. The base class ensures classness [and] class standpoint of the party's workers".⁵⁴

The supposed traits and behaviours of each class were thus seen to be more or less inherent, and therefore, reified and static. Members of suspect classes would always be just that: "Capitalists" and "intellectual capitalists" (the latter of whom were believed to possess an undefined asset termed "intellectual" property). They were defined by, and could not overcome, their counter-revolutionary identity. The previous possession of property was said in a 1976 special issue of the party publication *Tung Pradevat* (Revolutionary Flags) to "obstruct the understanding and the absorption of the Socialist Revolution. No matter how we explain it, the struggle cannot break it out".⁵⁵ Even though these classes had been defeated with the advent of DK, "their specific traits and contradictions (*tamna*) still exist [. . .] in consciousness, in standpoint" and more threateningly in "class rage". Capitalists, feudal landlords, and petty bourgeois intellectuals, therefore, still maintained the "essence of class". This essence was "the class standpoint, class character (*nissay*), sentiments, [and] habits" that "remind[ed] it of the desire to oppress". At worst these elements might undermine the class character of, and come to "exist[,] in worker-peasants, in our ranks of

54 "Letter of Honorary Red Flag", p. 14 of 17.

55 "Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class to Be as Keen and Strong as Possible", *Tung Pradevat* (Revolutionary Flags) (trans. Kem Sos and Timothy Carney) (Special Issue, September–October 1976), pp. 33–97 in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 270.

fighting men and women, and in the ranks of the Revolutionary Army”.⁵⁶ The article concluded by reinforcing the static nature of counter revolutionary class identity, suggesting that quite simply “[a] number of them [*vea*, literally “things”] cannot be corrected” since they “continuously seek occasions to oppose the revolution”.⁵⁷ The poor peasants, on the other hand, were identified in a later *Tung Pradevat* article as solidly revolutionary. The Party advised that for the revolution to succeed and for the cooperatives to run effectively, “we must base ourselves on this force at all times [. . .] This is our foundational force. There is no better”.⁵⁸

Which classes belonged and which did not to the new revolutionary order was further reinforced by political and everyday discourse. The preamble of the DK constitution notes that it is based on the “sacred and fundamental desires of the people, workers, poor peasants, and other labourers as well as those of the fighters and cadres of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Army [. . .] who assumed the heaviest responsibility in waging the war for the liberation of the nation”. Accordingly, Article 1 of the DK constitution restrictively states that “[t]he State of Kampuchea is a State of the people, workers, peasants, and all other Kampuchean labourers”. Article 3 continues: “This new culture is absolutely opposed to the corrupt, reactionary culture of the various oppressive classes and that of colonialism

56 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 277.

57 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 280.

58 “Pay Attention to Pushing the Work” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 297.

and imperialism”.⁵⁹ The revolutionary national anthem referred in rather blood-soaked terms only to “[t]he sublime blood of the workers and peasants/ The blood of revolutionary combatants of both sexes”.⁶⁰ In a 1978 radio broadcast entitled “Who Are We?”, the regime argued that, “‘we’ means our nation, people, worker-peasant class, revolution [. . .] trade unions, Revolutionary army and the Kampuchean Communist Party”. The others or “enemy”, were “feudal-capitalists and landowners and other oppressor classes”. Many of the latter, along with “imperialists” and “Vietnamese lackeys”, were said to be “implanted in our revolutionary ranks”.⁶¹

During the Party purges that began in 1977 the first switch reconceptualization of cadres to foreigners or aliens was particularly swift and capricious. Unlike the “new people” who had been identified long before the end of the civil war as outside the revolution, individuals or groups of cadres, many literally over night, went from being the ultimate insiders of the new regime to outsiders. Often alluding to their supposed “foreignness”, no matter how long and fervently they had actually supported the revolution and Pol Pot personally, suspect cadres were said to be doing the work of imperialist nations. These

59 Similarly, the membership in the Kampuchean Representative Assembly was restricted to members from the peasantry (150 members), “labourers and other working people” (50 members), and “the revolutionary army” (50 members) (“The Cambodian Constitutions” (1953–1993), Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979), [Documentation Centre of Cambodia], http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Constitution.html).

60 “Dap Prampi Mesa Chockchey” (“Glorious Seventeenth of April”) (<http://david.national-anthems.net/Khf2.htm>)

61 “Who Are We?”, *Foreign Broadcast Information Services* (hereafter: *FBIS*), 1978, p. H3.

included the United States, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam, sometimes inexplicably all by the same person. When the Eastern Zone cadres were purged in large numbers in 1978, those who had spent time training or in exile in Vietnam under the old regimes were also accused in essence of being foreigners, or as the expression went, as people with “Khmer bodies but with Vietnamese minds”.

With the cadres, the first switch and second switch conceptions of the victims as both foreign and threatening enemy respectively was made virtually simultaneously. Cadres made the transition from favoured, powerful, and often genocidal insiders to pernicious threatening enemies all at once. Describing the practical effects of this conceptual transition on a particularly nasty local cadre, a rare survivor of the notorious torture centre, Tuol Sleng or S-21, recalled in an interview many years later: “[w]hen he was at his cooperative he acted like a king. No one dared to look at his face. But now he was shackled by the leg, looking like a monkey. The revolution was always changing [people’s fortunes] like this”.⁶²

Unlike the Final Solution, it is difficult to discern accurately whether or not bystanders embraced the first switch conception of the various victims of the Khmer Rouge. This is in part due to a paucity of available evidence, but is also the result of the highly fluid nature of how Pol Pot and his subordinates continuously defined and redefined who was an enemy of the revolution and why. As such, the Cambodian genocide lacks one of the

62 Vann Nath (interview with Alex Hinton) in Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 157.

typical characteristics of most other genocides⁶³—a clear and consistently held distinction between victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. With the continuous, almost hysterical, search for “enemies burrowing from within” by the Party leadership, the periodic reevaluation of personal histories in search of supposedly subversive activities or tendencies, as well as the capricious and cruel nature of some cadres, Cambodian bystanders who had been considered reliable no less than cadres who had been loyal genocidal perpetrators for the Party could suddenly become suspect and therefore victims. And some victims, like Vann Nath, an inmate at Tuol Sleng, could be tortured and close to death, but then given a reprieve when found to possess skills useful to the regime. In short, we may not be able to say what bystanders thought of how the victims were reconceptualized because in the last years of Khmer Rouge rule it is hard to speak of a well defined bystander population. Almost everyone was a potential victim of a cannibalistic regime spiraling out of control.

3. Vietnam: A Comparison

In comparison, during and after the Vietnam War we see the first switch conception of Hanoi’s opponents as outside the struggle for national reunification, independence, and socialist revolution was either not present at all, or was confined to individuals (not groups) who directly collaborated with “colonialists” and “imperialists”. And even these people were conceptualized as individuals who could be eventually rehabilitated and integrated into a unified socialist Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh and his successor Le Duan repeatedly

63 E.g., Armenian genocide (1915), Holocaust (1941–1945), and Rwanda (1994).

referred to the “patriotism” of all Vietnamese and the fraternal relationship between Northern and Southern “compatriots”, the latter of whom, although regarded with some suspicion, were never defined as completely outside the revolution and united Vietnam. In his Declaration of Independence delivered in Hanoi on 2 September 1945 (the Vietnam Worker’s Party briefly seized control of the country after the Japanese surrendered and before the French returned), Ho Chi Minh set the stage for the many public statements and written works he would issue in the future concerning the “patriotism” of his people and the inclusive way in which he conceived of the revolutionary struggle.

Without any reference to class analysis, Ho declared that “our people have broken the chains which have fettered them for nearly a century”. He continued that the Provisional Revolutionary Government “represent[s] the entire Vietnamese people” and that “the entire Vietnamese people are of one mind” in opposing France.⁶⁴ Not a literally true statement of course, but Ho’s conception of the Vietnamese national community as a unified whole endured for decades to come. Exactly twenty years later, for example, Ho Chi Minh referred to Southerners—against whose regime the North was fighting a prolonged civil war and war for national liberation against US “imperialism”—not as outsiders or enemies, but as “our fourteen million Southern compatriots” who belonged to a united Vietnam that was “one country [. . .] one nation”. He called on his audience

64 Ho Chi Minh, “Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam” (2 September 1945), *Ho Chi Minh: Selected Writings 1920–1969* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), pp. 55–56.

in the National Assembly to “warmly hail our compatriots and fighters in the heroic South”.⁶⁵ In a July 1966 “Appeal to Compatriots and Fighters Throughout the Country”, Ho called Southerners simply “kinsfolk”.⁶⁶

In the last years before his death in the fall of 1969, Ho Chi Minh continued to remind Northerners not only of the integral place of southerners in Vietnam and the struggle for independence and reunification, but also of northerners’ obligations to their fellow countrymen. In a 20 July 1968 speech Ho recalled again that the Vietnamese people were united, particularly “our compatriots and fighters in the South” who are “closely and broadly united under the glorious banner of the National Front for Liberation”. “Compatriots and fighters in the North”, he continued, must not only remain vigilant and continue to build socialism in the North but to “give wholehearted assistance to our Southern kinsmen”. “North and South are of one mind. Our entire people will resolutely resist and defeat the US aggressors so as to liberate the South, defend the North, and advance toward peaceful national reunification”.⁶⁷

Ho Chi Minh’s successor, the more ideologically hard-line Le Duan, also used relatively inclusive language to describe Southerner’s place in the revolutionary struggle and the nation. In a lengthy theoretical work published in the early 1970s, Le Duan began by

65 Ho Chi Minh, “Address to the Second Session of the Third National Assembly of the DRVN” (10 April 1965), *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 297, 300–301.

66 Ho Chi Minh, “Appeal to Compatriots and Fighters Throughout the Country” (17 July 1966) *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 308.

67 Ho Chi Minh, “Appeal on the Occasion of 20 July 1968”, *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 341.

invoking the Vietnamese people's history of what he called "the long process of struggle to build and defend their country". During this process "our heroic people developed a national consciousness at an early date and evinced extremely ardent patriotism". Even though the anti-colonial struggle was divided into communist and "bourgeois" factions, both side, were characterized by Le Duan as "patriotic forces" whose differences were created and magnified by the French who fostered "reformist and collaborationist tendencies" among some Vietnamese.⁶⁸ In this formulation, in which Le Duan noted the existence of anti-communist forces that either did not embrace communist-led national liberation or who actively collaborated with the foreign colonial power, he nonetheless argues that these elements were driven to such actions not by inherently counter-revolutionary orientations, but the divide and rule policies of the French.

The absence of the first switch conception in Vietnam is further evident in the preference for an inclusive national united front strategy throughout the war years. The Khmer Rouge pursued a similar strategy during the civil war in the early 1970s, but the GRUNK and the FUNK were always firmly controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Little or no room was left open for genuine collaboration between different classes, religions, and ethnic minorities, particularly after 1973 when the radical Southwest and Centre cadres, under the control of the top Khmer Rouge commanders, began to physically purge a number of moderate pro-Vietnamese or Hanoi-trained cadres (discussed earlier in chapter

68 Le Duan, "The Vietnamese Revolution: Fundamental Problems, Essential Tasks", *Le Duan: Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), p. 163.

3. Those not targeted in 1973 were liquidated during the genocide) . Hanoi, on the other hand, found the united front strategy to be both practical in that they believed the anti-US revolutionary struggle could be best achieved through the broadest coalition of forces possible, and because it fit with existing conceptions of Vietnam as an inclusive national political community.

Based on a conception of the common membership of all Vietnamese in the national political community, the VCP leadership pursued a national front strategy in the South during the Second Indochina War in the 1960s and 1970s with the creation of the National Liberation Front and the Fatherland Front. The Manifesto of the National Liberation Front issued in December 1960 proclaimed that the NLF “undertakes to unite all sections of the people, all social classes, nationalities, political parties, organizations, religious communities, and patriotic personalities, without distinction of their political tendencies in order to struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the US imperialists” and “the Ngo Dinh Diem clique”.⁶⁹ Clearly the only people who were not potential members of the struggle were committed members of the GVN (Government of Vietnam).

But even the opponents of the DRV were not entirely excluded from potential membership in the current struggle. In a speech delivered on 20 July 1965, four months after the introduction of American ground forces, Ho Chi Minh repeated his earlier appeals

⁶⁹ National Front for Liberation, “Manifesto of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation” (December 1960) in William Appleman Williams (ed.), *Vietnam: A Documentary History* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1985) p. 206.

for a united front strategy, but with an added twist. He began by reiterating the need for “our countrymen of *all nationalities and all religions* [to] unite closely like members of the same family in the resistance against US aggression, for national salvation”.⁷⁰ Then, after stating that “our entire people are turning towards our beloved South, the Brass Wall of the Fatherland”, Ho directly addressed the anti-communist forces in the South and appealed to their common nationality and history.

Soldiers and officials of the Saigon administration! You are also descended from our Lac Hong ancestors. Why should you be resigned to serving the US aggressors and opposing your compatriots, thereby bringing eternal shame upon yourselves. Come to your senses and cross over to the people’s side, join the effort to liberate our native land and serve the country, and you will be welcomed by our people.⁷¹

Even as the United States military began to draw down its forces in a process called “Vietnamization” the Northern leadership continued to hew to the united front policy. Pointing to the “burdens” (left undefined) imposed by the Vietnamization program, a COSVN directive issued in 1971 suggested that the program had been successfully countered “with support from all social classes” and “uncommitted factions and many personalities of various [political] parties, including those in the National Assembly and the puppet government”.⁷² Another COSVN directive from 1973 called for the extension of the national front strategy after reunification with the creation of, among other things, a

70 Ho Chi Minh, “Appeal on the Occasion of 20 July 1965”, *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 304; italic original.

71 Ho Chi Minh, “Appeal on the Occasion of 20 July 1965”, *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 305.

72 COSVN, “Summary of COSVN Directive no. 01/CT71, January–February 1971” in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 396.

“national concord”.⁷³ Less than a year before the end of the war NLF cadres were again told to engage in an “immediate mission to unite all people in the political, military, and diplomatic fronts in the most active and flexibly way”. In a sign that conceptions were hardening against their opponents and in one of the only references to class, those against whom this expanded front was to struggle were defined as “mandarinistic, militaristic, fascist, U.S. lackey mercantile bourgeoisie”.⁷⁴

For Le Duan, frontist policies were necessary to ensure an effective struggle for national democratic revolution (i.e., the anti-US war for national reunification) in order for the “democratic claims” of all classes to be satisfied. It was also necessary to “guard against and oppose” what he called “both rightist and leftist tendencies”⁷⁵—that is, the kind of radical policies embraced by the Khmer Rouge. Recognizing the tensions and particularistic goals that existed between different groups within the national front, Le Duan noted that the Fatherland Front was “a unity of opposites which include various classes in league with each other on the basis of a definite common program of struggle”. The Front was, therefore, not classless, but classes could still work together to solve common problems in their own way. Each class joined the Front for its own interests as well as the common

73 COSVN, “On Policies Related to the Political Settlement and Cease-Fire, COSVN Directive 02/73, 19 January 1973” in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 426.

74 COSVN, “COSVN Directive 08/CT 74, August 1974” in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 444.

75 Le Duan, “The Vietnam Revolution”, *Le Duan*, p. 182.

interest, the latter of which is interpreted “by each class from its own angle”.⁷⁶ Even those classes that were the most antagonistic to the revolution such as the “national bourgeoisie” were salvageable and, therefore, potential members of the struggle. Although they are “restricted by imperialism” the national bourgeoisie “is also patriotic in some respects”. Most of them are in the hold of capitalism but “a certain number of intellectuals spring from the national bourgeoisie and even some of national bourgeoisie, their children in particular, have become conscious of the trends of the times [presumably socialism] and gradually showed a fundamental shift in their stand”.⁷⁷

The immediate post-unification period in Vietnam—the exact same years that overlapped with the genocide in neighbouring Cambodia—was the point at which the regime in Hanoi came closest to turning on the first conceptual switch concerning their former opponents in the south. But unlike in Nazi Germany or Cambodia where the Jews and the urban-based new people, the ethnic minorities, and suspect party cadres were immediately defined as outside the Reich and the new revolutionary community, Southerners in general, and former GVN officials, ARVN soldiers, and the urban “comprador bourgeoisie” in particular were defined by the Northern leadership as potentially hostile to the revolution, but not as non-members. Instead, these groups

⁷⁶ Le Duan, “The Vietnam Revolution”, *Le Duan*, p. 182.

⁷⁷ Le Duan, “The Vietnam Revolution”, *Le Duan*, p. 184.

required surveillance, “reeducation”, and in some cases, punishment before they could become fully functioning “new socialist” citizens of united Vietnam.

Dizzy with the unexpected success of the spring offensive that culminated with the fall of Saigon in late April 1975, the Party initially continued to evince an inclusive conception of who brought about the victory over the US “imperialists” and the “puppet Thieu regime”. A Party editorial written at the time praised southerners for their “burning resentment” of the old Saigon regime. The compatriots in the south had “resolutely risen up to overthrow the puppet administration and defeat the US” while many ARVN soldiers threw down their weapons in the last days of the war, refusing to die for a discredited regime.⁷⁸

Le Duan, by then General-Secretary of the VCP, meanwhile put the victory and unification within the broader context of past nationalist struggles: “This glory belongs to the heroic people of Vietnam” who have the “blood” of national heroes like the Trung Sisters (a 40–43 CE anti-Chinese rebel leaders), Ly Thuong Kiet (a 11th century General), Tran Hung Dao (a 13th century General) and others “in their veins”. The present victory was one “of patriotism forged by thousands of years of glorious effort to build and defend our nation and now raised to new heights the Party and the working class (sic)”.⁷⁹ Then using inclusive language to set out common goals for all Vietnamese in united socialist

78 Editorial in *Hoc Tap* (April 1975) in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 449.

79 Le Duan, “Forward to the Future” (15 May 1975), *Le Duan*, pp. 529, 531–532.

Vietnam, Le Duan called on “compatriots” in the North and South “in the whole country [to] start a stirring movement of labour. By our creative labour we will rapidly heal the wounds of war, restore and develop the economy, improve our living conditions”. In a cryptic reference to Hanoi’s former opponents, but one which allowed for their rehabilitation through work, Le Duan argued that by engaging in creative labour “we will shake off all vestiges of the parasitic life and sham prosperity generated in South Vietnam by our wicked enemies” and “transform the Vietnamese into new men and women, the masters of nature and society, the masters of their own lives”.⁸⁰ At no time in his speech did Le Duan exclude any group from this project or membership in the national community.

Concerned with the possibility of armed and other resistance by Southerners, particularly former army officers and regime officials, the inclusive patriotic words that greeted reunification were replaced by sometimes strong measures to prevent potential opponents from gaining a foothold. Although Southerners as a whole were not treated as suspect, they were seen as Westernized, decadent, and in need of an infusion of morally upright socialist culture. Former regime elements, the urban “comprador bourgeoisie”, intellectuals, writers and journalists, on the other hand, were singled out for harsh treatment. They were not, however, defined as non-members of the new revolutionary

80 Le Duan, “Forward to the Future”, *Le Duan*, p. 538.

community devoid of all legal status but instead as troublesome members who must be “corrected” or “reeducated”.

As in Cambodia, southern Vietnamese society was surveyed and categorized into different groups. But instead of determining in effect who belonged to the “revolutionary community of equals” and who did not, the purpose of this exercise in Vietnam was to determine who required reeducation before they could fully join the revolutionary community. Special teams of cadres or PAVN units interviewed and classified all families in the South according to their perceived loyalty to the new regime. Classification was largely based on past affiliations during the war. Those deemed mildly hostile were placed in “solidarity groups” where local self-defense militias were tasked with keeping suspect individuals under surveillance and suppressing “counterrevolutionary” activities on the spot. Former members of the army and regime were told to report directly to the authorities whereupon they were further broken down into categories, again according to the individual’s presumed opposition to the new order. Most low-level functionaries were sent home and then instructed at a later date to attend a few weeks of Marxist-Leninist indoctrination. More senior officials were sent to reeducation camps in the countryside for several months of reeducation before their release back into society. A minority of this group were sentenced to several years detention in reeducation camps, the last of whom were released in the late 1980s.⁸¹

81 William J. Duiker, *Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon* (Updated Edition) (Monographs in International (continued...))

Former regime elements, along with some bourgeois urbanites and intellectuals, were also coercively moved to what the regime called the New Economic Zones. These zones were originally created after unification to solve the legitimate problem of overcrowding in the southern cities, particularly Saigon, and to solve food shortages in the North. Urban dwellers in Saigon were encouraged to move back to their original villages or to the NEZs while Northerners were encouraged to move south to the NEZs to help solve the problem of needing to ship food from South to North. Although a program of incentives was offered to volunteers, most urban-based Southerners, even those who were refugees from the countryside, were not keen to pick up stakes and move back into the countryside, often on marginal lands. The NEZs thus became over time a place to send less hostile former GVN officials and soldiers and “comprador bourgeoisie”⁸² who were in need of honest socialist “creative labour” to turn them into reliable “new socialist men and women” as Le Duan called it. Transfer to the NEZs and incarceration in the reeducation camps also served to physically segregate potential counterrevolutionary elements from the wider population, thereby reducing the possibility of an anti-communist opposition insurgency from developing.

81 (...continued)

Studies, Southeast Asia Series, no. 56A) (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1989), pp. 11–12.

82 Jacqueline Desbarats, “Human Rights: Two Steps Forward One Step Backward?” in Thai Quang Trung (ed.), *Vietnam Today: Assessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), p. 57.

It must be noted that even though Vietnam did not descend into genocide either during or after the war, very serious human rights abuses, including political executions, were perpetrated against the inmates of the reeducation camps and former GVN residence of the NEZs after reunification.⁸³ As well, many Southerners with ties to the old regime were systematically oppressed with many forced to give up their jobs in the professions and their children barred for several years from entrance into the university and college system. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that top VCP leaders saw these groups as irredeemable outsiders who were not or could never be members of unified socialist Vietnam. And although members of these groups were persecuted during the first ten years after the war, they still maintained formal legal rights as citizens. These rights included provisions covering arrests, courts, and sentencing, and later the prevention of abuse and torture in the reeducation camp system. Cadres often ignored such restrictions and liberally interpreted laws governing “counterrevolutionary” behaviour on the part of those deemed a possible source of opposition to the state. But the fact that, at least formally, all Vietnamese without exception maintained their legal status as citizens with rights and obligations vis-à-vis the state suggests strongly that the first switch conception of these groups was not “turned on” in post-war Vietnam. Vietnamese who could not or would not

83 For a comprehensive overview of human rights abuses in Vietnam from 1975 to the late 1980s see Desbarats, “Human Rights: Two Steps Forward One Step Backward?” in Trung (ed.), *Vietnam Today: Assessing the New Trends*, pp. 47–66.; also see Jacques Bekaert “Eye on Indochina: Police and Civil Rights”, *Bangkok Post* (10 February 1989); Gareth Porter, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 173–174.

be reconciled to the revolution were eventually allowed to leave the country either through the Orderly Departure Program or escaped in the exodus of the “boat people” in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

B. Switch Two: Victims as Mortal Threat

The second switch in the genocidal conceptual process is the one that is entirely unique to genocide. The now foreign victim group is further reconceptualized as a powerful enemy bent on the destruction of the dominant group. Crucially, the source of this power and threat is believed to ultimately reside with the physical presence of the victim group. The continued existence of the victim group thus portends great danger for the very survival of the wider community. The history and future of the political community is reconstructed as an epic battle between a virtuous “us” and an alien, subversive, inherently pernicious and threatening “them”. Claims regarding the supposed economic, political or other manifestations of the victim group’s power are regularly asserted, but the actual resources or power capabilities possessed by the victim group are dwarfed by those held by the state and the dominant society. Objectively the victim group does not pose a credible threat to the dominant society. Because it is believed that the victim group derives its overwhelming power from the members’ mere physical existence and not substantial power capabilities, conflict or repression—in which real power capabilities could potentially be removed from a threatening group—is not enough. To neutralize the perceived threat posed by the victim group, its members must be physically eliminated in order to rid the group of the true

source of its power. As psychologist Robert Jay Lifton concludes in his study of Nazi doctors at Auschwitz, “[w]here the threat is so absolute and so ultimate [. . .] genocide becomes not only appropriate but an urgent necessity”.⁸⁴ Lifton continues, “thus perceived as an absolute threat to the continuous life of one’s own people, the victim group is seen as the bearer of death and therefore the embodiment of evil. More than merely nonhuman or heathen, it is dangerously anti-man and anti-God. Its disease takes the form of infecting others with death taint and deadly weakness. [. . .] Only genocide, total elimination of the disease will protect one from that weakness”. Because the victim group “threatens one’s own people with extinction so one must absolutely extinguish him first”.⁸⁵

Without linking the threat of the victim group to its continued physical presence, and thus investing the victim group with almost superhuman powers derived only from their existence, the call for genocide would not be made. Were the victim group to be conceptualized differently, they might be stripped of what ever “real” power or resources they might have (e.g., territory, economic, or political power) while still leaving the group physically intact.

In both the Holocaust and Cambodia, the second switch conception of the victim groups were grounded in, and expressed as, three forms of mortal threat in which the very survival of the political community was perceived to be at stake. These perceived threats in

84 Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1986), p. 477.

85 Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, p. 479.

turn served as the rationale for genocide. The first threat is the “epic struggle” threat in which the Nazis and the Khmer Rouge believed themselves to be engaged in a battle to the death—a “race war” or class conflict respectively—with their victims. Victory in their respective epic struggles required the physical liquidation of the threatening victim groups whose own victory would mean the destruction of the Aryan race and Germany or the Party and the revolution. The second threat motif was that of the threat of pernicious foreign ideological or national influence or invasion. For the Nazis this involved the linking of the extermination of the Jews with the need to save Germany from rapacious “Jewish Bolshevism” operating in league with the “Jewish Plutocracy” of the democratic Western powers. For the Khmer Rouge this meant the need to destroy internal enemies supposedly linked to a perennially expansionist Vietnam and to a lesser extent other “imperialists”. Finally, the third threat was expressed as a disease metaphor. According to this perception, the victims had to be physically eliminated because their continued existence exposed the Aryan race or the Khmer communist revolution to lethal contagions. Perceived as microbes, bacteria, or cancer, the victim groups were to be killed through violent processes of purification, cleansing, and the surgical cutting out of diseased parts. In Cambodia, there was one effect of the continuous hunt for new enemies based on these threat conceptions that is not found in the Holocaust and most other genocides: the creation of real enemies—in this case Vietnam and collaborationist cadres—who in the end really did threaten and destroy the revolution.

1. The Final Solution

a. First Threat Motif: Epic Struggle

At the heart of much of Nazi ideology was the belief that the world was divided into superior and degenerate races, the need to protect the purity of a people's "blood", and the idea of race wars. This applied particularly to the perceived epic struggle between Jews and Aryans. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler argued that "[t]he mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew. In hardly any people in the world is the instinct of self-preservation developed more strongly than in the so-called chosen". Contending the Jews have remained unchanged and unbowed through historical catastrophes, Hitler continued: "What an infinitely tough will to live and preserve the species speaks from these facts".⁸⁶ Behind this assertion was a more general understanding that "[h]istory itself represents the progression of a people's struggle for survival" in which "life is a never ending battle against death".⁸⁷ Human history is the formation of various groups, including states. The subsequent "portrayal of their genesis and dissolution alone is the replication of an eternal struggle for survival".⁸⁸ The ultimate rationale for the modern German state is, therefore, the implementation of "policies [which] must fight about [sic] the life and for the life of the people, and to do so they must always choose their weapons in such a way as to serve

86 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (trans. Ralph Manheim) (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999 edition), p. 300.

87 Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf* (ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg; trans. Krista Smith) (New York: Enigma Books, 2003), p. 7.

88 Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book*, p. 9.

this life in the highest sense” [. . .] “The goal is the preservation of life”.⁸⁹ Here, of course, Hitler is referring only to the preservation of German or Aryan life.

As for the relationship between races, Hitler simply asserts what he calls the “basic premise” that “all peoples are not the same” and that, as such, “[t]he higher the racial worth of a people, the greater its overall value which, in conflict and in the struggle with other peoples, it must then mobilize for the benefit of its life”.⁹⁰ If a successful struggle for the preservation of the blood and culture of the German people is not waged against the Jews “then the Jews can move in, in every form, and this master of international poison concoction and racial debasement will not rest until he has completely uprooted and thereby corrupted such a people. The end, then, is the loss of a certain uniform racial value and thus the final decay”. The final outcome would be that “every existing racial value of a people [Germans] is ineffective—if not downright endangered”.⁹¹ This interpretation of history and the enduring struggle between Germans and Jews manifested itself first in the anti-Semitic verbal attacks of the early years of the NSDAP and, later in public and other statements and writings, by senior Nazi officials in the late 1930s up to 1941 and beyond when the “final solution” was planned and executed.

89 Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book*, p. 15.

90 Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book*, p. 32–33.

91 Hitler, *Hitler's Second Book*, p. 33.

As noted earlier, although no “Hitler order” has been found in which he and his lieutenants are shown explicitly to plan and order the implementation of the “final solution”, it is clear from the available evidence that Hitler played the leading role in the process. Equally important, both he and those subordinates most closely involved in the decision taken in mid-1941 to exterminate Europe’s Jews saw the Jews as mortal enemies who must be destroyed if the Reich and the German people were to be saved. In a leading article titled “The Jews are Guilty!” in the Nazi journal *Das Reich* on 16 November 1941, just after the decision to commit genocide against the Jews was likely taken in the summer, the Propaganda Minister and Gauleiter of Berlin, Josef Goebbels, argued that Jewry was deservedly suffering a gradual process of annihilation. Invoking the epic struggle motif, Goebbels proclaimed that “the Jews are receiving a penalty that is certainly hard, but more than deserved [. . .] and is now gradually experiencing the destruction it planned for us, and would have carried out without a second thought if it had possessed the ability. It is perishing according to their own law: ‘an eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth’”.⁹² Here Goebbels tacitly admits to the genocide through reference to the Jews gradual destruction but also by interestingly using the past tense to refer to the Jews plans to destroy Germany (“and would have carried out”). Equally interesting is his perhaps unintentional admission that the Jews had no real objective power to carry out this supposed plan (“if it had

92 Joseph Goebbels, “The Jews are Guilty!” (“Die Juden sind schuld!”, *Das eberne Herz* [Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943], pp. 85–91), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p.1 of 4.

possessed the ability”). Goebbels, however, returned in short order in the same article to the standard representation of the epic threat conceptualization by reverting back to the present tense and bestowing on the Jews once again the capacity to realize their eliminationist designs: “Every Jew is our enemy in this historic struggle”, he warned his readers. Whether those Jews live in the ghettos of Europe or on Wall Street: “All Jews by virtue of their birth and their race are part of an international conspiracy against National Socialist Germany. They want defeat and annihilation, and do all in their power to bring it about”.⁹³ It is clear in this statement that the Jews’ status as enemy and mortal threat to the German people is linked directly to the former’s “birth” and “race”. Seeking to shore up public support for the unstated yet widely suspected fate of the Jews by the summer of 1941 Goebbels continued that Germany must win the war and never forget the danger posed by Germany and Europe’s Jews. He called on his readers to be mindful of the fact that “these harmless looking Jewish chaps would suddenly become raging wolves” if the war were to be lost and would “attack our women and children to carry out revenge”—presumably for the genocide that was about to befall them. Goebbels concluded with a call for a “cold hardness against the destroyers of our people, against the instigators of war, against those who would benefit if we lose, and therefore also against the victims if we

93 Goebbels, “The Jews are Guilty!”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p. 1 of 4.

win”.⁹⁴ This conception of the Jews was consistent with a hysterical tirade delivered by Goebbels before the war in which he characterized the supposedly evil powers of German’s supreme enemy in almost superhuman terms. Jews were said by Goebbels to be “the enemy of the world, the destroyer of cultures, the parasites among the nations, the son of chaos, the incarnation of evil, the ferment of decomposition, the visible demon of the decay of humanity”.⁹⁵

In 1942 and 1943 once the genocide was underway Hitler himself repeatedly referred to his “prophecy” that he articulated in what has come to be known as his “threat speech” of 30 January 1939 in which he forecast the destruction of European Jewry should the Jews succeed in plunging Europe once again into war. But in the restatement of his prophecy now that the decision to exterminate the Jews had been taken and was being executed throughout occupied Europe, Hitler noticeably changed its language to directly connect the Jews, not with starting a new European-wide war that would lead to the “Bolshevization” of Europe as Hitler had originally warned in January 1939, but with the destruction of the “Aryan race” by Jews. Thus on the ninth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power Hitler proclaimed in his address at the Berlin Sportpalast on 30 January 1942, “that the war can only end either with the extermination of the Aryan peoples or the

94 Goebbels, “The Jews are Guilty!”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p. 3 of 4.

95 Joseph Goebbels, “Der Parteitag der Arbeit vom 6 bis 13 September 1937: Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongressreden” (Munich, 1938), p.157 (trans. Friedlander) quoted in Friedlander, *Nazi Germany*, p. 184.

disappearance of Jewry from Europe”. Changing the date of his prophecy from 30 January 1939 to 1 September 1939, the date of the attack on Poland, Hitler continued “that this [war] will not come to an end as the Jews imagine, with the extermination of the European-Aryan peoples, but that the result of this war will be the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of Jewry. For the first time the old Jewish law will now be applied: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. [. . .] And the hour will come when the most evil world-enemy of all time will have played out its role, at least for a thousand years”.⁹⁶

In the crucial year of 1942 when the industrial mass murder camps were becoming fully operational throughout the occupied East, Hitler repeated his “genocidalized” version of his prophecy several times. Each time he repeated the conceptualization of the Jews as a racial enemy bent on the extermination of the Aryan race. In September 1942 during a speech in Berlin Hitler formulated the prophecy as the Jews desire for “starting an international world war to eliminate the Aryan nations of Europe”. It would not, however, “be the Aryan nations which will be wiped out by Jewry”.⁹⁷ Later on 8 November of the same year, Hitler delivered the most genocidal version of his prophecy, laying out explicitly the epic mortal danger posed by the Jews and the genocide underway to neutralize that danger. In his annual address to the party faithful, and thus to an audience to whom he could speak more freely and fanatically, Hitler stated his prophecy as follows: “If Judaism

96 Hitler quoted in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 494.

97 Hitler, speech in Berlin (30 September 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 8 of 13.

imagines any chance that it can bring about an international world war for the extermination of European races, the result will not be the extermination of the European races, but the extermination of the Jews of Europe”. After noting that those who had laughed at this prophecy “will perhaps laugh no longer after awhile”, Hitler concluded that “[i]nternational Jewry will be recognized in all its demonic peril. We National Socialists will see to that”.⁹⁸

The explicitly genocidal racialized version of the prophecy was repeated by Goebbels later in the war as well. Using almost identical language to Hitler’s 1942 formulation of the prophecy, the Propaganda Minister, in his 9 May 1943 article “The War and the Jews”, argued—in a manner that clearly linked the on-going genocide against the Jews to the perception of the Jews as a mortal threat—that “[n]one of the Führer’s prophetic words has come so inevitably true as his prediction that if Jewry succeeded in provoking a second world war, the result would be not the destruction of the Aryan race, but rather the wiping out of the Jewish race”. Goebbels continued that “wiping out of the Jewish race” was an important process, one that would take time but could “no longer be halted. It must only be guided in the right direction”.⁹⁹ For Goebbels the entire war was a “racial war”, one which the Jews started and directed. Invoking an epic struggle mortal threat conception

98 Hitler, Speech in Munich (8 November 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p.7 of 15.

99 Joseph Goebbels, “The War and the Jews” (“Der Krieg und die Juden”, *Der steile Aufstieg* [Munich: Zentraverlag der NSDAP, 1944], pp. 253–270), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb37.htm>>, pp. 2 of 4.

of the Jews Goebbels stressed that in the current “race war” the Jews’ “goal is to destroy and exterminate our people”. Then highlighting the rightness of the German cause both in the war and presumably the genocide, Goebbels claimed: “We are the only force standing between Jewry and world domination”. Curiously Goebbels then comes close to admitting the seeming ridiculousness (although not the obvious wickedness) of exterminating the Jews, while at the same time ascribing to them, without citing any evidence whatsoever, enormous yet undefined power: “It may seem surprising that such a small minority possesses such great power and is such a deadly danger. But it is so”.¹⁰⁰ At the end of the article Goebbels, however, reverses himself concerning the alleged power of the Jews, suggesting that since “[w]e know that they hate us from the depths of their souls” the Jews are nonetheless powerless and must be stopped from gaining power since that power would inevitably be turned against the German people. “There is nothing they would not do to us *if they had the power*. We cannot therefore give them even the slightest bit of power”.¹⁰¹ In an argument that seems to divorce objective power capabilities, of which the Jews are said to have none, from the mortal danger allegedly posed by Europe’s Jews Goebbels concludes: “We are dealing with the most dangerous enemy that ever threatened the life, freedom, and dignity of humanity. There can be no mercy”. As for the rest of Europe Goebbels argues that other Europeans will be “given over to the hate and

100 Goebbels, “The War and the Jews”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb37.htm>>, p. 2 of 4.

101 Italics added.

destructive will of this devilish race if we become weak and give up the battle". The war, then had "become a war for his [the European's] racial existence". Then again echoing the prophecy and the genocide, Goebbels ends: "[w]hen they planned a war to totally destroy the German nation, they signed their own death warrant".¹⁰²

In October 1943, once the genocide was well underway, in an infamous speech before an assembly of SS officers in Posen, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, the man in charge of executing that warrant, similarly argued of the dangers of leaving any Jews alive in Germany and by extension in Europe: "This is an unwritten and never-to-be written page of glory in our history, for we know how difficult it would be for us if today [. . .] if we still have the Jews in every city as secret saboteurs, agitators, and inciters. If the Jews were still lodged in the body of the German nation, we would probably by now have reached the stage of 1916–1917".¹⁰³ Seeking to assure his men that their role in the extermination programme was a just and noble cause, Himmler stressed that the SS "had the moral right, we had the duty toward our people, to destroy the people that wanted to destroy us". Then articulating the necessity of following a root-and-branch strategy for destroying the Jewish race so that the Jews could not threaten Germany and the Aryan race in the future,

102 Goebbels, "The War and the Jews", <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb37.htm>> p. 4 of 4.

103 Heinrich Himmler, "From a Speech by Himmler Before Senior SS Officers in Poznan, October 4, 1943", (Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981) (Document no.161, pp. 344–345), <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%204029.pdf>, p. 1 of 1.

Himmler answer his own question about what to do with the women and children: “I decided to find a perfectly clear-cut solution to this too. For I did not feel justified in exterminating the men—that is, to kill them or have them killed—while allowing the avengers, in the form of their children, to grow up in the midst of our sons and grandsons”.¹⁰⁴

As one of the principle architects of the genocide against the Jews, Himmler instilled in his SS men “an antireligious, antihumanitarian ideology that defined history as a constant and merciless struggle among races for survival” and that behind all of National Socialism’s other opponents (Catholics, communists, capitalists, etc.) “lurked the cunning Jew”.¹⁰⁵ In written testimony for his trial in Poland following the war, Auschwitz Kommandant Rudolf Hoess recounted an encounter with Himmler in which Hoess was first informed of the final solution. Hoess testified that Himmler told him in effect, “The Jews are the sworn enemy of the German people and must be eradicated. Every Jew we can lay our hands on is to be destroyed now during the war, without exception. If we cannot now obliterate the biological basis of Jewry, the Jews will one day destroy the German people”.¹⁰⁶ Hoess’ subordinate at Auschwitz, SS doctor Josef Mengele too saw the Jews,

104 Himmler, “From a Speech by Himmler Before Senior SS Officers in Poznan, October 4, 1943”, <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%204029.pdf>, p. 1 of 1.

105 Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, pp. 35, 48.

106 Rudolf Hoess, “Extracts from Written Evidence of Rudolf Hoess, Commander of Auschwitz Extermination Camp” (Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981)
(continued...)

though a highly gifted people, as “locked in a life-and-death struggle with Aryan Germans”.¹⁰⁷

b. Second Threat Motif: Foreign Influence

The mortal threat posed by Jews as the ultimate leaders of rapacious Bolshevism, the second threat conception, further solidified the conception of Jews as an all powerful, inherently dangerous, threatening and foreign force. Illogically, the Jews were also described as international capitalists who covertly controlled the Western Allies, secretly pushing Great Britain and the United States to fight another war with Germany . But it was the threat of “Jewish Bolshevism” that surfaced repeatedly in Nazi discourse that contributed to the perception that Jews were a threat like no other since Nazism and Bolshevism were seen as two competing *Weltanschauungen*.

This conception was articulated early in the 1920s in a piece about the Nazi Party written presumably by Hitler. Referring to the “terror” following the Russian Revolution, the article suggested that there were very few Russians now “who are not horrified by the Jewish dictatorship of blood and satanic infamy”. In the article, the Bolsheviks themselves were called “Jewish destroyers”.¹⁰⁸ Hitler expressed his view that Jews presented a threat

106 (...continued)
(Document no.164. pp.350-353), <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%204032.pdf>, p. 1 of 3.

107 Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, p. 377.

108 Adolf Hitler, “The National Socialist Party and the German National (Conservative) Party” from H.A. Jacobsen and W. Jochmann, eds., *Ausgewahlte Dokumente zur Geschichte des national-*
(continued...)

to Germany in part because of their long-standing association with Bolshevism. At the end of an interview with the New York based *Staatszeitung* in 1933, Hitler asked rhetorically, “[a]m I to allow thousands of pure-blooded Germans to perish so that all Jews may work, live, and be merry in security while a nation of millions is prey to starvation, despair, and Bolshevism?”¹⁰⁹

In an address to the 1936 National Socialist Party Congress, Propaganda Minister Goebbels public fulminations revealed the evolution of Nazi thinking on the threat posed by Bolshevism and the Jews:

the idea of Bolshevism, that is, the unscrupulous savaging and dissolution of all norms and culture with the diabolical intention of total destruction of all nations, could only have been born in the brains of Jews. The Bolshevik practices in its terrifying cruelty is imaginable only as perpetrated by the hands of Jews.¹¹⁰

From 1937 onward, Nazi threat conceptions of the Jews continued to escalate with further allegations that Jews were the ultimate danger behind Bolshevism as well as “a world enemy per se, as the peril that had to be destroyed lest Germany (or Aryan humanity) be

108 (...continued)

sozialismus, 1933–1945 (“*Selected Documents in the History of National Socialism*”) (Bielefeld: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1961) at (Shoah Resource Centre, Documents on the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, Documents on Hitler, no. 3), <http://yad-vashem.org.il/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201999.pdf>

109 Adolf Hitler, “Interviewed in *Staatszeitung* (1933)” in Norman H. Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol.1 (trans. Norman Baynes) (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 728.

110 Joseph Goebbels, “Akten der Parteikanzlei” (abstracts), part I, vol. 2, p. 249 quoted in Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, p. 183.

exterminated by it”.¹¹¹ In Hitler’s threat speech at the Reichstag on 30 January 1939, the Nazi leader emphasized the Jews’ dangerous capacity for the devious manipulation of international capital and Western governments to the point of being capable of starting a new world war which, in Hitler’s view, would lead, rather nonsensically and paradoxically, to the bolshevization of the world. This overwhelming power and threat posed by the Jews, would, however, be defeated in the most thorough way possible: “If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!”¹¹² After delivering what to date was the Nazi regime’s most explicit public threat to Germany and Europe’s Jews, Hitler concluded the speech by again referring to the essential foreignness of the Jews and their pernicious influence not only in Germany but world wide, calling the Jews an “unstable international race” which hoped to “profiteer from war or satisfy its Old Testament vengeance”. And finally invoking again the Jews as the root of Bolshevism but using it this time to turn a threatened world against a common Jewish enemy Hitler exclaimed: “The Jewish watchword ‘Workers of the world unite’ will be conquered by a

111 Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, p. 180.

112 Adolf Hitler, “Speech to the Reichstag, 30 January 1939” in Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol. 1, p. 741. Earlier references in this study to this prophecy/threat were to later more explicitly genocidal versions of the prophecy articulated by Hitler and other Nazi elites in the 1940s. The quotation here is to the original prophecy which concentrated on the “Bolshevik” conception of the Jews. As noted earlier, in later versions of the “prophecy” the threat of “bolshevization” at the hands of European Jewry was replaced by the threat of extermination of the “Aryan race” by the Jews.

higher realization, namely, ‘Workers of all classes and of all nations, recognize your common enemy!’”¹¹³

In another speech before the Reichstag four months later, Hitler proffered an even more conspiratorial threat posed by the Jews that involved not only the spread of Bolshevism through internal processes of co-optation for the purpose of destroying Germany from within, but the spread of Bolshevism through biological means. Thus Hitler argued that “[s]ince for this race the misfortune of our people became an end in itself, it was possible through the army of the unemployed which was thus created to breed those elements which were fitted to serve the cause of the Bolshevik Revolution.”¹¹⁴

As the decisions to invade the Soviet Union and to exterminate Europe’s Jews neared, Hitler married the racial epic struggle motif with the struggle against Bolshevism. Addressing a group of high ranking Wehrmacht officers in February 1940 Hitler told his audience that he believed the coming war in the East would determine the fate of the German race and placed the Jews at the centre of what would be an ideological racial war with Russia.¹¹⁵ The link between Jews and the threat posed by Soviet Bolshevism was drawn even tighter with the launching of Operation Barbarosa and the advent of the genocidal *Einsatzgruppen* and *Sonderkommandos*, tasked first with the shooting to death

113 Hitler, “Speech to the Reichstag, 30 January 1939” in Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol. 1, p. 741.

114 Adolf Hitler, “Speech to the Reichstag, 28 April 1939” in Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol. 1, p. 743.

115 Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 63.

of “commissars” and “Jewish men”—the latter of whom were believed to be the “intellectual reservoir of Bolshevism” according to SD chief Reinhardt Heydrich. At a meeting at RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* [Reich Main Security Office]) headquarters on 17 June 1941, Heydrich told the assembled *Einsatzgruppen*, *Einsatzkommandos*, *Sonderkommandos*, and other top police officers that “this reservoir must be destroyed”.¹¹⁶ The so-called “commissar order” ordering the mass shooting of Soviet commissars and Jewish men, issued soon after was later informally expanded to include all Jewish women and children in occupied Soviet territory.

For Goebbels, meanwhile, the war was the product of an unholy alliance between “Bolshevik Jews” in Moscow and the “Jewish plutocrats” in London and Washington.¹¹⁷ Lest Germans have any doubts about this supposed alliance or the extent of the world-wide Jewish conspiracy arrayed against Nazi Germany Goebbels reminded readers in his November 1941 article in *Das Reich* that the “little old Jewish lady in Germany” wearing the *Judenstern* has “a distant nephew [. . .] by the name of Nathan Kaufmann [who] sits in New York and has prepared a plan by which all Germans under the age of 60 would be sterilized”. Goebbels added Germans should also “recall that a son of her distant uncle is

116 Walter Blume, interrogation (29 June 1947), NA RG 238 M-10 19/R7/848 cited in Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 164.

117 Goebbels, “Mimicry”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb18.htm>>, p. 2 of 4.

a warmonger named Baruch or Morgenthau or Untermayer who stands behind Mr. Roosevelt".¹¹⁸

In the spring of 1942, as the genocide moved decisively into the industrial killing phase of all the Jews of Europe, Hitler again referred to the mortal threat posed by Jewish-Bolshevism but this time by also invoking a disease threat motif. Hitler reminded his audience in a 26 April 1942 speech at the Reichstag that the Jews were not only responsible for the outbreak of the war in both the West and the East, but that they "were the carriers of the Bolshevist infection which once threatened Europe".¹¹⁹ "We know", Hitler continued, "the theoretical principles and the cruel truth regarding the aims of this world-wide pestilence. It is called 'The Rule of the Proletariat' and it is really 'Jewish Dictatorship', the extermination of national government and of the intelligent elements among the nations".¹²⁰ Interestingly, Hitler initially spoke of the threat posed by the Jews in the past tense. Given that the years 1941–1942 were the key moments of decision-making and planning that launched the fully genocidal "final solution", the threat conception of the Jews presented by Hitler here points to the connection, albeit expressed indirectly in public, between the mortal threat conception of the Jews as predatory and

118 Goebbels, "The Jews are Guilty!", <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p. 3 of 4.

119 Adolf Hitler, address to the Reichstag (26 April 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 4 of 14.

120 Hitler, address to the Reichstag (26 April 1942), <http://www.hitler.org/speeches/04-12-22.html>, p. 5 of 14.

deadly infectious agents of Bolshevism and the decision to exterminate all of the Jews of Europe.

As the war against the Soviet Union inexorably turned against Nazi Germany following the fateful defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, the Nazi leadership sought on several occasions during the latter years of the war to shore up military and civilian morale by justifying the war of extermination in the East against so-called Jewish-Bolshevism and the “final solution” by again tying the survival of the Third Reich to the destruction of the Jews. In an address to the faithful near Obersaltzburg just days before the Allied invasion of Normandy, Hitler again indirectly acknowledged the genocide against the Jews by referring to the program at times in the past tense. Hitler asserted that “[i]n removing the Jews I eliminated in Germany the possibility of creating some sort of revolutionary core or nucleus”. Dismissing his own question that the Jews might have been dealt with “more humanely”, Hitler replied that “we are in a life-or-death struggle”. Blurring the lines between the Soviets and the Jews Hitler continued: “If our opponents are victorious in this struggle, the German people would be eradicated (*ausgerottet*). Bolshevism would slaughter millions and millions and millions of our intellectuals”. Then conflating the present with the future Hitler suggested that this future fate, “this entire bestiality has been organized by the Jews”.¹²¹ Around the same time Goebbels again peddled his world Jewish

121 Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, “Hitler Ansprache vor Generalen und Offizieren am 26 Mai 1944”, *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, vol. 2 (1976), p. 161 quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, pp. 636–637.

conspiracy theory arguing once more that the Allies that menaced the Reich from the West and the East were operating under the control of world Jewry bent on the extermination of the German people: “They organized the enemy’s war economy and encourage plans to exterminate and destroy the Axis powers. England and the USA recruit from among them bloodthirsty and vengeful agitators and political lunatics and they are the source of the terror commissars of the GPU”.¹²² In the immediate aftermath of the loss at Stalingrad and as part of the run-up for a major anti-Semitic campaign to ensure the “final solution” would indeed be final, Goebbels argued again in the pages of *Das Reich* about the dangers of the Jewish Plutocrats in the West and Jewish Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. For Goebbels these two forces in the Allied camp “depend on disorder, anarchy, and chaos. They seek them because they can only draw their infernal power for evil and destruction from those sources. Jewry has two ways to gain and maintain power over unified peoples: international capitalism and international Bolshevism”.¹²³

With Germany on the brink of catastrophe and almost six million Jews already dead by January 1945, Goebbels went on the attack against the Jews for the last time recalling the Jews still enormous power as manifested in their supposed control of the Allied war effort in the service of the utter destruction of Germany and its people. If one wanted to

122 GPU refers to the Soviet Secret Police; Goebbels, “The War and the Jews”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb37.htm>> p. 1 of 4.

123 Joseph Goebbels, “The European Crisis” (“Die Krise Europas”, *Der steile Aufstieg* [Munich: Franz Eher, 1944], pp. 205–212), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb72.htm>>, p. 2 of 5.

“understand this war” Goebbels argued, one had to keep in mind “the fact that International Jewry stands behind all the unnatural forces that our united enemies use to attempt to deceive the world and keep humanity in the dark. It [Jewry] is so to speak the mortar that holds the enemy coalition firmly together, despite its differences of class, ideology, and interests”. The Allies—Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt—“were made by Jewry. They enjoy its full support and reward it with their full protection”. Then in an allegation hitherto unseen, but one which is a logical extension of the Jews threat and power as expressed in the second threat motif, Goebbels charged that “[e]very Russian, English and American soldier is a mercenary of this world conspiracy of a parasitical race”.¹²⁴ To induce German soldiers and civilians to fully engage his “total war” strategy and fight to the last man to protect the Third Reich, Goebbels warned that defeat would mean a final victory for the Jews. “Humanity would sink into eternal darkness, it would fall into a dull and primitive state, were the Jews to win this war. They are the incarnation of the destructive forces that in these terrible years has guided the enemy war leadership in a fight against all that we see as noble, beautiful and worth keeping. For that reason the Jews hate us”.¹²⁵ Now facing certain defeat at the hands of the Allies, the Nazi leadership continued to see the very real threat of their own destruction as not the rather obvious

124 Joseph Goebbels, “The Creators of the World’s Misfortune” (“Die Urheber des Unglucks der Welt”, *Das Reich*, 21 January 1945, p. 1 of 3), <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb64.htm>>, p.1 of 4.

125 Goebbels, “The Creators of the World’s Misfortune”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb64.htm>>, p. 2 of 4.

result of defeat at the hands of their militarily and economically powerful opponents on the battlefield, but the conspiratorial controlling influence of the allegedly still all-powerful Jews consumed with the destruction of Germany—this despite the obvious reality of the Jews nearly complete physical destruction at the hands of Hitler’s Reich by the end of the war.

c. Third Threat Motif: Biological Contagion

The final switch-two mortal threat conception, the biological contagion motif, identified Jews as a pernicious and opportunistic infectious agent that threatened the purity of German blood and society with disease and death. The future health and strength of the Aryan or Nordic race could only be ensured through the destruction of what threatened it most: the Jews.

From the early 1920s onward Hitler’s public discourse about the Jews was riddled with references to the Jews as a “plague” and “a harmful bacillus”.¹²⁶ In *Mein Kampf*, he likened the Jews to “the typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious bacillus keeps spreading as soon as a favourable medium invites him [in]. And the effect of his existence is also like that of spongers: where ever he appears, the host people dies out after a shorter or longer period”.¹²⁷ During World War I the supposed leading role of the Jews in financing the war

126 Eberhard Jackel, *Hitler’s World View: A Blueprint for Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 57.

127 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 305.

allowed “the spider” to slowly begin to “suck the blood out of the people’s pores”.¹²⁸ In his 1939 threat speech Hitler again likened Jews who had immigrated to Germany in the distant and recent past to literal and metaphorical carriers of deadly diseases: “For hundreds of years Germany was good enough to receive these elements, although they possessed nothing except infectious political and physical diseases”.¹²⁹ Switching to a different, but equally pernicious biological metaphor, Hitler warned his audience that “we must once and for all get rid of the opinion that the Jewish race was created only by God for the purpose of being a certain percentage a parasite living on the body and the productive work of other nations”. In a veiled threat to the Jews, Hitler insisted that the Jewish minority must “adapt itself to sound constructive activity as other nations do, or sooner or later it will succumb to a crisis of an inconceivable magnitude”.¹³⁰

Other Nazi leaders evinced the same perception of Jews as a lethal contagion. Just after the invasion of Poland, Goebbels is reported to have commented to his officials that because of his “national socialist past and education” he believed that the Jews “represented an international infection, and that it will fight against the state of order until it controls them”. Under the “abnormal times in the life of a nation at war” Goebbels was “convinced that we cannot allow Jewry, as a seat of infection, to exist any longer”. He

128 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 193.

129 Hitler, “Speech to the Reichstag, 30 January 1939” in Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol.1, p. 738.

130 Hitler, “Speech to the Reichstag, 30 January 1939”, in Baynes (trans. and ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler 1922–1939*, vol.1 p. 740.

argued that there “can be no more discussion in Germany of the necessity of removing Jewry as a seat of infection. The vast majority of the German nation want a total solution to the Jewish question”.¹³¹ It is important to note that at this time Goebbels is likely not talking about genocide as a “total solution” but concentration and deportation.

By the time a total genocidal solution to the “Jewish question” was executed, Robert Jay Lifton argues that Nazi ideology conceptualized Jews as “deadly victims”, victims “posing absolute danger, as ‘infecting’ the ‘German national body’ and as [. . .] ‘deadly Jewish poison’”. If the Jews were left alive they would continue to engage in “race pollution” which was perceived as a “fundamental threat to German biological and biosocial continuity and immorality”.¹³² The Jews were, as Goebbels articulated it, a deadly pestilence that had to be physically removed from the European body politic. In his “The Jews are Guilty” article, published in the fall of 1941 just before or after the decision to pursue a program on continent-wide genocide against the Jews was made, Goebbels wrote that “[t]he Jews are a parasitic race that feeds like a foul fungus on the cultures of healthy but ignorant peoples. There is only one effective measure: cut them out”.¹³³ On another occasion, Goebbels similarly invoked the specter of deadly disease and the metaphorical

131 “Internal Memorandum Regarding the Solution of the ‘Jewish Question’” (undated Berlin 1939) (Shoah Resource Centre, Yad Vashem Archives, TR2/N11/1009/NG1531), http://www.yadvashem.org.il/odot_pdf, p. 1 of 2.

132 Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, pp. 476–477.

133 Goebbels, “The Jews are Guilty!”, <<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb1.htm>>, p. 2 of 4.

medical procedures required for dealing effectively with the threat posed by the Jews: “Our task here is surgical [. . .] drastic incisions or some day Europe will perish of the Jewish disease”.¹³⁴

On 23 July 1941, one month after Barbarosa and at a time when the mass shooting of Jews was already underway in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, Hitler referred to the Jews in a conversation with Croatian Marshal Kvaternik as “a centre of pestilence for humanity”. Without giving any details Hitler assured Kvaternik that all Jews were going to be removed from Europe and warned that any state that retained Jews would invariably become a new source of infection and decomposition.¹³⁵ Between 13 and 16 October 1941 at a joint meeting of public health officials, Wehrmacht, and SS physicians in Bad Brynica to discuss how to deal with the growing threat of epidemics in the General Government, Jost Walbaum, head of the Health Department for the GG, asserted that there were only two ways left to deal with the metaphorically—and now because of their appalling living conditions caused by the ghettoization policy—literally infectious Jews: “We sentence the Jews in the ghetto to death by hunger or we shoot them. Even if the end result is the same, the latter is more intimidating. We cannot do otherwise even if we wanted to. We have one and only one responsibility, that the German people are not infected by these parasites. For

134 Goebbels quoted in Rolf Hochhuth, *A German Love Story* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), p. 18.

135 Klaus Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 69.

that any means must be acceptable”.¹³⁶ As with Goebbels’ proposed final medical solution to the Jewish deadly disease problem, Walbaum’s comments came at a time when the decision to commit full-scale genocide had likely already been reached. The task for military, security, and public health officials was now to determine how this “final solution” was to be implemented.

Just after Himmler returned from the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 at which the logistics of perpetrating a Europe-wide genocide against the Jews were discussed, Hitler told Himmler and other guests during a dinner party in Berlin that the Nazis must engage in the same biological struggle against bacteria and disease as Pasteur and Koch. “The cause of countless ills is a bacillus: the Jews. [. . .] We will become healthy again if we eliminate the Jew”.¹³⁷ This “infection” was, as we have seen, often characterized by Hitler and other Nazi leaders as the disease-like spread of so-called Jewish Bolshevism. Jews were conceptualized as “the carriers of the Bolshevik infection”, as “the parasitic germ” of the “diseases” that Hitler called in a April 1942 speech to the Reichstag the “Rule of the Proletariat” and “Jewish Dictatorship”.¹³⁸

136 Jost Walbaum, “Arbeitstagung der Abteilung Gesundheitswesen i.d. Regierung in Bad Krynica” (13–16 October 1941) (Yad Vashem Archive, 0–53/145/57–265) quoted in Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 158.

137 Heinrich Himmler, *Monologe im Führer-Hauptquartier 1941–1944: Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims* (2 February 1942) (ed. Werner Jochmann) (Hamburg: A. Knaus, 1980), p. 293 quoted in Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 234.

138 Adolf Hitler, Speech to the Reichstag (26 April 1942), [web site], pp. 4–5 of 14.

Later in the war, in a conversation in which Hitler tried to persuade the Hungarian Regent Miklos Horthy to deport Hungary's Jews to the death camps, Hitler suggested that "[t]he Jews are to be treated as tuberculosis bacilli, which could infect a healthy body". Sensing Horthy's reluctance, Hitler assured him: "This was not cruel, considering that even innocent creatures of nature, such as rabbit and deer, have to be killed to prevent harm".¹³⁹ Of course, Hitler did not consider Jews to be "innocent creatures". He considered them, rather, a fatal parasite, as he told Goebbels in a 1943 conversation that Goebbels wrote in his diary was one of the most interesting discussions he had ever had with the Führer. Beginning with the thesis that there will always be parasitic forms of existence in nature to "accelerate the struggle and intensify the process of selection between the strong and the weak", Hitler argued that while in nature "life always works immediately against parasites" this was not always the case for humans. "From that results the Jewish danger. So there is nothing else open to modern peoples than to exterminate the Jews".¹⁴⁰

Senior SS members who were responsible for carrying out the killing shared similar biologically-based threat conceptions of collective Jewish identity. SS doctor Ernst B. told Robert Jay Lifton that Josef Mengele, who had been steeped in Nazi ideology and its racist bio-social understanding of the world, "was fully convinced that the annihilation of the

139 Miklos Horthy (Schloss Klessheim, 17 April 1943) (Politisches Archiv des A.A. Handakten Paul Otto Schmidt, vol. 7, 1943) quoted in Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 156.

140 Goebbels quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945*, pp. 588-589.

Jews was a provision for the recovery of the world, and Germany”.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile Chief SS doctor at Auschwitz, Dr. Eduard Wirths, who had regular contact with his superiors in Berlin, believed the project of revitalizing the German “race” and “volk” through the “purification of genes and race” as well as the long term “health” of the “German race” was gravely threatened by the Jews.¹⁴² This threat could only be neutralized through the physical liquidation of the Jews.

In his last written statements about the Jews and with the Allies set to cross over into the territory of the Old Reich in early 1945, Goebbels reaffirmed both the Nazi belief in the Jews as having constituted a deadly biological threat to the Aryan race and the need to physically eliminate this threat. In another tacit admission of the genocide that was now mercifully at its denouement, Goebbels asserted that the “Jews themselves became the grave diggers of their own hopes. They did not destroy healthy people” as was their intent “but rather the sting of their parasitic effects” had led others to “overcome the Jews”. Implying that the extermination (unstated) of the Jews had been the correct course of action, Goebbels noted that the “fact that the German nation was the first on earth to recognize this danger and expel it from its organism is proof of its [the German nations’] healthy instincts”. That the war the Nazi leadership unleashed in 1939 had severely damaged the health of German soldiers and civilians through years of ferocious combat

141 Dr. Ernst B. interview with Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, p. 377. Lifton uses only the first name and the last initial in order to protect the identities of his interviewees.

142 Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, p. 412.

operations, relentless aerial bombardment, privation and now the impending brutal invasion of a vengeful Red Army, was prudently not mentioned by the Propaganda Minister.

2. Cambodia

a. First Threat Motif: Epic Struggle

In the Cambodian case the first threat motif, the epic struggle, did not revolve around race (save the Vietnamese) but a conception of an unending lethal struggle between antagonistic classes. Building and protecting the revolution involved a constant battle to confront inevitable class contradictions and the hidden class “enemies within” they produced—enemies whose goal it was to destroy Democratic Kampuchea, the Communist Party, and the revolution.

During the “National Democratic Revolution” against the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes class conflict revolved around the struggle between “the people and the imperialists, feudalists and reactionary capitalists”. Now, during the period of “Socialist Revolution” the struggle was much narrower and concerned the conflict between only two opposing groups, the “proletarian class”, which presumably included the all important poor peasants, and the “capitalist class”.¹⁴³ A special issue of *Tung Pradevat* titled “Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class” released in the fall of 1976 took up the Party’s preoccupation with the persistence of what was frequently referred to as “contradictions”,

143 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 270.

calling on cadres to “separate clearly the anti-party contradictions and the internal contradictions so we can strike at the right target”. As for the enduring nature of class struggle, the Party “must develop the advance view which says that class contradiction and class struggle will remain for a long, long time”. Cadres must be prepared for a “class struggle [that] will be long, hard, and tough”.¹⁴⁴

Senior Khmer Rouge leaders similarly argued that the recent history of the Party was that of a “party led by the working class” steeped in “the contradictions in Kampuchean society” as “Brother Number Two”, Nuon Chea, told a communist party delegation from Denmark in July 1978. In pre-revolutionary times the Party fought “external contradictions” between the Cambodian nation and “US imperialism” while simultaneously battling “internal contradictions [. . .] between, on the one hand the working class and the capitalists and on the other the poor peasants and the feudal class”.¹⁴⁵ The capitalists in the city and the “feudal class” in the countryside, as we have seen, came to be known collectively as the “new people” in revolutionary Kampuchea. Among these “new people”—or “new peasants” as the “Sharpen the Consciousness” article called them—there still existed “life and death contradictions”.¹⁴⁶

144 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 275.

145 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” (Searching for the truth [Khmer version], number 17, May 2001) (Documentation Center of Cambodia) <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 1.

146 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 298.

The new people of course were always conceptualized by the Khmer Rouge as the harbingers of class contradictions that had the potential to destroy the revolution. Despite the fact that most new people from the cities were happy to see the civil war end and the Khmer Rouge take the capital, the new regime immediately continued to see the new people, including rich peasants and rural landowners, as antagonistic classes that would forever seek to destroy the revolution. Right from the time the young Khmer Rouge cadres entered the cities, this conception of the new people as dangerous and threatening enemies was apparent. As Cambodia historian David Chandler recalls, “the rebel soldiers viewed the city dwellers with smoldering disdain—they were the ‘enemies’ (*khmang*) the rebels had been hearing about, the ‘capitalists’ (*nay tun*) who refused to join the revolution”.¹⁴⁷ The end of the war and the advent of the new regime would bring no healing or consensus. Instead the Khmer Rouge would remain inspired, as Pol Pot later said in 1977, by “class and national hatred”. To follow through with the revolution hatred of antagonistic classes had to be maintained. These perennial enemies “were to be treated as they deserved”.¹⁴⁸

Making explicit reference to the enduring nature of class struggle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces and, therefore, the continuous threat of internal class enemies to the revolution, a Party document from 30 March 1976 noted that while the revolution had defeated many enemies there will still be many more in the future: “the

147 Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 103.

148 Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 103.

enemy will carry out activities against us, against our revolution, in various forms. This is the continuous non-stop struggle between revolution and counter-revolution". The document then projected in the document that this is a permanent state of affairs: "there will be enemies in ten years, twenty years, thirty years into the future [. . .] the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution will continue". Noting that not all but some contradictions are created by enemies, the document concludes that "we cannot escape them".¹⁴⁹

The class enemies of the revolution were not only the source of what the Khmer Rouge identified as the most serious form of contradiction—"life and death contradictions"—that threatened the very survival of the revolution, the capacity to menace the revolution was tied not only to individual deportees, but their children. Although a new person or "new peasant" could potentially "correct himself" and thereby render his or her contradiction with the revolution less than "life and death", the 1976 "Sharpen the Consciousness" article argued that for most new people "it is not easy to correct [themselves]".¹⁵⁰ While the Party conceded that "it is possible that some compositions [i.e., classes] can correct themselves [. . .] many cannot". Even "if these people die", the revolution will not be safe

149 "Decisions of the Central Committee on a Variety of Questions" (30 March 1976) (trans. Ben Kiernan) in David Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976–1977* (Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Centre for International and Area Studies, 1988), p. 16.

150 "Sharpen the Consciousness" in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 278.

since “they will have instructed their children to keep struggling against communists”.¹⁵¹ The understanding of the victim group as one that passes down its inherently counterrevolutionary tendencies to the next generation was the rationale for the root and branch approach to the genocide in which the family members, part of the so-called “strings of traitors” associated with those accused of opposing *Angkar* were also frequently eliminated. Just as Himmler feared the wrath of the vengeful descendants of the victims of the “final solution”, so the Khmer Rouge feared the progeny of those slated to perish at the hands of the Khmer Rouge.

The threat posed by on-going class contradictions was reinforced in a Party study session in 1976 in which the participants were told that the Party must remain vigilant against internal class enemies

because our socialist revolutionary direction is an uncompromising, bitter, life-and-death combat between classes, both indirect and most thorough, between the property-less class under the leadership of the Party and the life-and-death enemy who comprises the various exploiting classes [. . .] which hide themselves in our revolutionary ranks, in the army, and in the ranks of our Party.¹⁵²

Putting this threat conception into practice a cadre in the already purged Central Zone in mid-1977 recalled in an interview years after the genocide that he was given an order by a senior cadre to “smash internal enemies” in the on-going struggle to root out antagonistic counter-revolutionary classes and minorities. The enemies were identified as

151 “Sharpen the Consciousness” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 278.

152 “Summary of the Results of the 1976 Study Session” (Party Centre, undated) (trans. Ben Kiernan) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, pp. 169–170.

“Chams, Vietnamese, capitalists, former Lon Nol [officials], workers, intellectuals, and CIA agents”.¹⁵³ A 1977 Central Committee document reinforced the continuing threat to the revolution posed in particular by the new people. In an attempt to explain economic “short comings” in a number of districts, the Central Committee did not examine its own unworkable hyper-collectivist agricultural policies and instead fingered “traitorous elements” which had “burrowed from within and implemented systematic political, ideological and organization activities in the wrong ways. [. . .] We knew that there had to be enemies, who, by our assumption were new evacuees”.¹⁵⁴ Later under the heading “Situation of the Party’s Leadership” it is asserted that “[m]ost of middle class become enemy networks [sic] burrowing within, making thing[s] more complicated, opposed to the party and the people, and prevent the movement from progress intentionally or unintentionally”.¹⁵⁵

In what has become known as “the microbes” speech of 20 December 1976, Pol Pot warned of the dangers of not following the correct revolutionary Party line and how this

153 Interview with Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 154.

154 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Centre of Cambodia, p. 7.

155 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Centre of Cambodia, p. 14. This kind of language (save the specific use of the phrase “enemies burrowing from within”) is consistent with genocidal communist political elites in Stalinist Russia and China during the Cultural Revolution. As noted in chapter 1 both of these cases are classified by genocide scholars who recognize that political groups and socio-economic classes can be the victims of genocide as instances of genocide. In this study, the Cambodian case is one case, but not the only case, of a political/revolutionary genocide comparable to the Great Purges and the liquidation of peasant-kulaks in the Soviet Union, and the attack on various class enemies in China during the Cultural Revolution.

failure would produce the opportunity for enemies to “seize the occasion and trap us, and to embed themselves in our ranks”.¹⁵⁶ This speech served as a threat of sorts to the assembled cadres and was delivered just before the purges of 1977 began. Alex Hinton suggests that Pol Pot was essentially warning that “[t]hose who were unable or unwilling to conform to the ‘correct’ line would inevitably evolve into antagonistic contradictions, joining the ranks of the hidden microbes against whom the party was already fighting a vicious battle”.¹⁵⁷ The senior leadership believed that even within the revolutionary ranks, not to mention the new people, revolutionary commitment was unstable. Even the “base people” were not beyond suspicion since even among the “traitors” are not only the “petty bourgeois class” but also “a few [from] the peasant class, who actually have no nature of peasants. They become fake petty bourgeoisie”.¹⁵⁸ At the same time counter-revolutionary class tendencies and incorrect leanings were possible in all cadres because of the constant existence of class contradictions. Once the Party purge was underway, suspect cadres who were arrested and sent to the infamous Tuol Sleng prison were tortured into confessing not only their alleged reactionary class affiliations and tendencies, but to identify all of their associates and family members through the writing and rewriting of their biographical

156 “Report on Activities of the Party Centre According to the General Political Tasks of 1976” (Party Centre, 20 December 1976) (trans. David Chandler) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. {x}.

157 Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 148.

158 “Letter of the Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Centre of Cambodia, p. 7.

history.¹⁵⁹ These “strings of traitors” as they were called were then arrested, tortured into confessing that they were really class enemies and naming their associates and families, thus perpetuating a cycle of self and other incrimination through guilt by association based on fictitious but greatly feared class contradictions.¹⁶⁰

And what would these persistent enemies do to the revolution? According to Pol Pot: “They have big plans. They would destroy our leadership and would dissolve the Kampuchean revolution. They would like to take Kampuchea and make it dependent on foreign countries. [. . .] Class enemies, unable to live with the revolution, plan revenge, waiting for an opportunity”.¹⁶¹ A follow-up Party document from April 1977 argued that the battle to protect the Party and revolution from internal enemies must be won “in order to defend the country, make the socialist revolution and build socialism”.¹⁶² By 1978, the March issue of *Tung Pradevat* tacitly acknowledged the genocide against *Angkar*’s many

159 Written in the spring of 1977 once the Party purges were in full swing, “The Letter of Honorary Red Flag” noted the importance of the biographies in the fight to “sweep clean networking enemies burrowing within”. The biographies themselves “are also our target. Who contact who, with introduction from who”. By extracting this information the Party can “know [their] circles, sources, where we can conduct [our] search” (“Letter of the Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Centre of Cambodia, p. 15).

160 This is not a strategy employed exclusively by genocidal elites. Non-genocidal repressive regimes use the same means to ferret out suspected opponents. The argument here is not that the strategy itself in the Khmer Rouge case led to genocide but that the strategy was underpinned by a conception of the targets as a mortal threat that needed to be rooted out through a process of interrogation and imputing guilt by association in order to save the revolution from destruction.

161 “Report on Activities” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 184.

162 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Center of Cambodia, p. 7.

perceived enemies, commenting cryptically that “enemies have been refined out (*samrit samramn*) by us”.¹⁶³

b. Second Threat Motif: Foreign Influence

The perception that the revolution was at serious risk was heightened by the second threat perception: that DK’s many hidden enemies were stalking horses for foreign influence and invasion whom the Party considered, as one document put it, “running dog agents burrowing within ourselves”, “international agents”, or simply “enemy agents”.¹⁶⁴ Addressing fellow senior cadres as the Party Secretary in August 1976, Pol Pot argued that the revolution was surrounded by enemies “who torment and attack us. From the east and the west they [are] persisting in pounding and worrying us”.¹⁶⁵ Here Pol Pot is referring to both Vietnam (the east) and Thailand (the west), Cambodia’s traditional regional rivals.

Less worried about Thailand, the Khmer Rouge concentrated on supposed enemies of the revolution with connections, real and imagined, to Vietnam. These victims of the Khmer Rouge mostly included the Vietnamese minority, new people living in the Eastern Zone near the border who were believed to be unreliable and thus potential agents of the Vietnamese and, during the purges, cadres who had spent time in Vietnam. In the

163 “Pay Attention to Pushing the Work of Building the Party” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 298.

164 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Center of Cambodia, pp. 7–9.

165 “Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan by the Party Secretary” (Party Centre, 21 August 1976) (trans. David Chandler) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 126.

“microbes” speech, Pol Pot did not name Vietnam directly but alluded to the country by stating that this unnamed enemy “cannot attack us openly, so they attack us slyly along the frontier, and try to eat us from within”.¹⁶⁶ A radio broadcast on 10 May 1978 named Vietnam and their internal agents explicitly as a mortally threatening enemy who must be neutralized in order to save the “Cambodian race”. After calling for the purification of the armed forces, the Party, and the masses, the broadcast continued that the struggle against internal and external Vietnamese-inspired enemies was vital “in order to continue fighting the enemies in defense of Cambodian territory and the Cambodian race, for if we do not do so, our race will disappear. Do we want to see the end of the Cambodian race? If we do not try to defend our territory, we shall lose it, and then our race will also disappear”. Should the Vietnamese invade, the broadcast predicted “we shall lose our territory and our race will be completely swallowed up”.¹⁶⁷

In a document called “The Last Plan” by the Khmer Rouge, parts of the “evidence” gathered by the Party refined the supposed role of Vietnam and those purportedly working covertly for Vietnam inside DK and the Party. The Vietnamese communists in Hanoi were said to be the “implementers” of a plot to take over the country and destroy the Party. Inside Cambodia secret “CIA agents” and “Vietnamese expansionists” allegedly cooperated

166 “Report on Activities” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 191,

167 Phnom Penh Home Service, “Far Eastern Relations, Cambodia’s Strategy of Defense Against Vietnam” (1100 GMT, 10 May 1978) (Documentation Centre of Cambodia, FE/5813/A3/1), http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy.htm, p. 1 of 6.

to implement this “scheme in constant contact with the outside”.¹⁶⁸ The supposed plot that constituted the plan was gleaned from “answers” (i.e., forced confessions) to “questions” (i.e., torture) concerning particular cadres’ activities within the Party from the 1960s to the present. Until the plan was uncovered, cadres involved in its implementation worked for years to create internal divisions in order to weaken all parts of the party. The ultimate goal of the “men who were hiding inside” was to “join hands to smash all sides thus winning the power forever, particularly definitely abolishing communism”.¹⁶⁹ If internal destabilization by the plotters was unsuccessful the destruction of DK and the revolution was to be achieved by “Vietnam troops [sic] and the traitorous forces outside the country [who] would brutally invade Kampuchea and install their administration on the way”. If any or all of the plot was uncovered—as senior Khmer Rouge evidently thought had happened—“the faction which was uncovered should go abroad while the other part, still intact, should continue to take over the CPK”.¹⁷⁰ Thus this entirely fictitious “plan” had built into it the capacity to continue to menace the revolution indefinitely. Although most of the plot was the product of the senior leadership’s paranoid fear of destruction from within and without, the last part of “the plan” proved to be prescient. The purges of the Eastern Zone cadres and repeated military provocations along

168 “The Last Plan: Summary of Answer [sic] by Chhuk, Secretary of Sector 24 on 23 September 1976 and of the 19th Answer by the Same Person Written on 23 September 1976” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 299.

169 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 305.

170 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 300.

the eastern border in 1978 finally did induce Hanoi to invade and to “install their administration on the way”. But contrary to Pol Pot’s dire predictions, the invasion by the People’s Army of Vietnam and their Khmer Rouge allies from the Eastern Zone over Christmas of 1978 resulted neither in the loss of Cambodian territory in the long run nor the disappearance of the Cambodian people. Rather it saved Cambodians from further predation by their own leaders.¹⁷¹

When the Khmer Rouge leadership ordered border incursions into Vietnamese territory, the Eastern Zone troops—who were badly beaten and forced into retreat by what was then the most experienced light infantry army in the world—were then targeted as

171 The invasion by Vietnam in late December 1978 came after almost a year of repeated border incursions by Khmer Rouge forces into southern Vietnam in areas where the border between the two countries had long been in dispute. There is insufficient evidence available to account for why the Khmer Rouge regime launched the incursions and what their ultimate goals were supposed to be. Whatever the goal, the incursions by the Eastern Zone forces that were sent on these missions were easily repelled on each occasion by seasoned Vietnamese soldiers. Over time, Hanoi became increasingly irritated with DK and launched a full scale invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 to bring the incursions to a halt once and for all. Throughout the invasion and initial occupation, Hanoi denied that it was the principle intervenor. Rather the Vietnamese argued that they were merely giving support to Cambodian forces which Hanoi referred to as the Cambodian Front for Salvation. In reality, the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) did the vast majority of the fighting and was the real power behind the post-DK regime. The Khmer Rouge forces that fought alongside the PAVN were mostly Eastern Zone troops who, in the fall of 1978, defected to Vietnam as a way of escaping the genocidal purges of the Eastern Zone cadres underway in DK. Some commanders, such as Heng Samrin who later became the first head of the government installed by Vietnam after the invasion, simply decided to surrender their forces to the PAVN during unsuccessful border raids inside Vietnam. Others, like the current prime minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen, were captured by the Vietnamese and agreed to collaborate. Either way, the Eastern Zone forces that remained in Vietnam and opted to collaborate with the PAVN as part of the invasion force that removed the Khmer Rouge from power calculated that it was preferable to abandon the Khmer Rouge cause in favour of siding with Cambodia’s historical regional enemy than face genocidal annihilation at the hands of their own party in Cambodia. For a discussion of the invasion and the Eastern Zone troops’ role in it see Becker, *When the War Was Over*, pp. 432-434; Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodia*, pp. 265-272; Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime in Power*, pp. 453-455.

agents of the Vietnamese. One cadre remarked years later: “Then we became traitors. We had done everything correctly and then they came and killed everybody. They said we were doing the opposite of what we were doing. We fought the Vietnamese and they killed us for not fighting the Vietnamese”.¹⁷²

According to the Khmer Rouge, Democratic Kampuchea’s alleged enemies were not all doing the bidding of the Vietnamese. In his confession-through-torture before execution, senior moderate cadre Hu Nim “confessed” to being recruited as a CIA member to conduct subversive activities within the Party as early as 1957. His task was “to bring outsiders inside the Communist Party of Kampuchea in order to destroy it from within” and “to change the line of the [Party] [. . .] and the revolutionary movement” toward “revisionism” because “revisionism is the way toward capitalism anyway”.¹⁷³ Since the “confessions” at Tuol Sleng, particularly of very senior cadres like Hu Nim, were extracted over lengthy periods of time and over several drafts essentially dictated by their torturers, the confessions revealed not what the cadres themselves did or thought but how the Party leadership conceptualized them as enemies.

Other internal enemies were accused of serving several foreign masters. A former low-level Khmer Rouge cadres Chan Sok Kim, recounted after the genocide that her brother-

172 Interview with Steven Heder quoted in Roel Burgler, *The Eyes of the Pineapple: Revolutionary Intellectuals and Terror in Democratic Kampuchea* (Saarbrücken: Breitenbach, 1990), p. 135.

173 Hu Nim, “Planning the Past: The Forced Confessions of Hu Nim” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 246.

in-law and sister, both more senior cadres, were arrested and executed in late 1976 and early 1977 respectively after a “trying meeting” (a public criticism session) in which the Khmer Rouge accused the two of betraying the nation, of “being linked to the CIA; Vietnamese; or America. They accused me that my sister and her husband [were the] hidden enemy and wanted to revolt [against] the country”. Sok Kim was subsequently publicly criticized by her work group chief who was himself later arrested and killed. From the time of her siblings’s arrest, Sok Kim said the Khmer Rouge commanders “looked at me as their enemy”. After she was detained and reassigned to a prison labour detail Sok Kim worked on a rail line in the Eastern Zone, where, as she recalls, “[a]ll the prisoners who were sent to Pech Nil were Eastern Zone [cadres] and we were accused [of] link[s] to the Vietnamese network”.¹⁷⁴ Of her six siblings who joined the Khmer Rouge prior to 1975 only one sister, Chan Chi Lim, survived.

The “Last Plan” detailed the supposedly complex involvement of several foreign powers and local traitors in the plot to destroy the revolution. Although the near external enemy, Vietnam, was the “implementer” of the plot in concert with local “CIA agents”, the leader of the overall plan was allegedly the Soviet Union. The so-called “Soviet Plan” dated back to the 1960s when Cambodian students studying at Soviet universities were sent back to

174 Chan Sok Kim, “The Case of Chan Leang aka Nuon (Female) I10554, Interview with her younger sister, Chan Sok, 47 years old” (interview with Chhayrann Ra and Sochea Phan) (Ror Kar Khnul 3 village, Ror Kar Khnul subdistrict, Krouch Chhmar district Kampong Cham Province) (6 May 2004) (Documentation Center of Cambodia), <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Interviews/Sample_Interviews/Former_Kh_Rouge/Chan_Leang.htm>

Cambodia to assume their pre-assigned role as KGB agents. The returning students-cum-agents were said to have assumed full control of all local members of the Soviet and, of course secret, “Marx-Lenin Club” which in turn was used to establish KGB control over the hitherto unknown and secret Khmer Communist Party in 1965.¹⁷⁵ All of these secret organizations supposedly existed within the larger Khmer Rouge movement. But the Soviets, the Vietnamese, and the Americans were not alone in menacing the revolution via their internal allies. Chinese “residents”, who were identified in the document as neither Cambodian nor Khmer, were also identified in “The Last Plan” as a threat because of their supposed links to the Kuo Min Tang (KMT) in Taiwan. What were called “KMT men” apparently “controlled, managed, and established all Chinese associations, schools, and hospitals” in Cambodia. While many Sino-Khmers “pretended to be revolutionary” they in fact maintained “close association with the Vietnam revisionists”. Counter-revolutionary instructions were continuously “passed from Taiwan through Hong Kong” on to their ethnic Chinese operatives in Cambodia. The document claims this particular part of the plot was “established” in February and March of 1978 when it was learned that several Sino-Khmers had been “plotting to overthrow the party [. . .] together with the Vietnam assault from the outside”.¹⁷⁶ In a frank admission of the genocide against the Chinese

175 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 309.

176 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 303.

minority and the Sino-Khmers, the document noted in passing that the “network of Chinese residents” was “wiped out [in] February 1978”.¹⁷⁷

The hidden but pervasive danger posed by suspect cadres and the ethnic minorities and their international masters was apparently summed up by the “infiltration” slogans said to be used by those allegedly plotting against the revolution. In a formulation of the danger posed by the internal enemies of the revolution that echoed Pol Pot’s “microbes” analogy, the Vietnamese and KMT led groups were thought to have been instructed to infiltrate the Party “the way the weevils bore the wood” or “the way oil permeates”. Cadre Sophan’s group, meanwhile, was said to have “admitted the slogan: the buffaloes hide themselves to sharpen their horns and will come out when the water submerges the reed”. This rather esoteric phrase apparently meant that the conspirators were waiting for CIA orders to infiltrate the CPK.¹⁷⁸

Similar accusations that some cadres and others were in fact agents working in concert for the CIA, the Vietnamese, and the Soviet KGB—though in reality an impossibility—were rife by the summer of 1978. In his public address to visiting delegates of the Communist Worker’s Party of Denmark, Deputy Secretary Nuon Chea told his audience that in order to safeguard the Party and the revolution the life histories of all cadres were scrutinized to prevent infiltration “by, for example, CIA, KGB, or Vietnamese agents.

177 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 304.

178 “The Last Plan” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 305.

[. . .] By adopting these organizational principles, we have unity in the party and can cleanse our party of bad elements”. After noting that these efforts had not yet been completely successful, Nuon Chea added that the “enemy is still attempting to undermine the party. Consequently, we are striving to strengthen political and ideological education and to clean the party”.¹⁷⁹ In Khmer Rouge parlance, “cleanse” and “clean” were common euphemisms for purge through torture and execution. As for Vietnam, Cambodia’s powerful neighbour to the east not only threatened the Party and the revolution from the outside “through military, political, economic, and ideological means. The Vietnamese also try to infiltrate our party”. To emphasize the seriousness of this particular kind of threat, Nuon Chea added that “[w]e are not worried about the external, military aggression. We worry most of all about the enemy inside”.¹⁸⁰

In a rather bizarre reading of the relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam, Nuon Chea later asserted that since “liberation” a fundamental threat to the Party came from “anti-party activities organized inside our party [. . .] usually involv[ing] CIA, Vietnamese, and KGB agents” that had been “working inside the party for a long time”. How did the Party leadership detect this intra-party threat? As Nuon Chea put it, when the leadership observed problems with the implementation of the Party’s

179 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 7.

180 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 7.

economic, political, or social line at the local level, which were not solved through “persuasion, self-criticism and so on”, the Party “realized something was wrong”. By subsequently delving into the biographical backgrounds of certain cadres the Party was “able to uncover enemy agents step-by-step”. Without discussing when it would have happened and under what circumstances, Nuon Chea suggested that some cadres had been imprisoned by the offending foreign powers and, like the Manchurian Candidate, tortured and turned into enemy agents who were unwittingly accepted back into the Party—but “we now realized they had become agents of the enemy”. Although a “plot” by the United States to take over DK Cambodia with the help of the Vietnamese and the KGB six months after liberation was apparently foiled, Nuon Chea told his Danish guests that the Khmer Rouge must “apprehend the people who have infiltrated our party. We know the current plan involves not only Vietnamese agents, but has something to do with US imperialism and the KGB. All of them!”¹⁸¹

The threat posed by externally controlled enemy agents was so great that Nuon Chea referred more than once to the demise of the Communist Party of Indonesia in 1965 (discussed in chapter 3). After noting the “emergence of revisionism in the Soviet Union” about which the Party was apparently “saddened”, Nuon Chea recalled the “destruction of the Indonesian party by the enemy”. However, “[w]e have learned from these

181 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 10.

experiences. [. . .] We have tried not to fall by the wayside”.¹⁸² Later in the speech, Nuon Chea returned to the fate of the PKI saying that with “ninety per cent” of its leadership destroyed, the PKI had yet to rebuild and regain its “offensive strength” even after thirteen years.¹⁸³ The not so subtle lesson was clearly that the similar near total destruction of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and its senior leadership at the hands of internal and external enemies had to be avoided at all costs.

c. Third Threat Motif: Biological Contagion

For the Khmer Rouge the final threat conception, the disease metaphor, was invoked repeatedly as the revolution’s internal enemies were labeled as “microbes” or sources of contamination or poison which were “burrowing within the revolution” trying to destroy it from the inside out. One Party report called for “continuous measures” to be taken so that “enemies will not be able to advance, using venom and poison”.¹⁸⁴ Using almost identical language, a 1977 Central Committee document emphasized that “[b]y screening traitorous elements and bad elements, the party enjoys relief from [the] pain and abscess

182 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 7.

183 Nuon Chea, “Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers’ Party of Denmark, July 1978” <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Noun_Chea_Statement.htm>, p. 11.

184 “Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at the Zone Assembly”, *Tung Pradevat* (3–7 June 1976) (trans. Ben Kiernan) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 16.

[and] venom” caused by internal Party enemies.¹⁸⁵ Switching to a related hygiene metaphor, cadres were reminded at a study session in 1976 to remain vigilant against enemies but told that the Party had already taken effective measures: “We have been scrubbed clean and nurtured in political standpoint, consciousness, and organization”.¹⁸⁶

The most explicit formulation of the enemy-as-disease motif was articulated by Pol Pot in the threatening end of his 1977 “microbes” speech that in effect signaled the purges to come:

While we are engaged in a socialist revolution, there is a sickness inside the Party, born in the time when we waged a people’s and a democratic revolution. We cannot locate it precisely. The illness must emerge to be examined. Because the heat of the people’s revolution and the democratic revolution were insufficient at the level of the people’s struggle and at the level of class struggle among all layers of the national democratic revolution, we search for the microbes within the Party without success. They are buried.¹⁸⁷

Echoing Goebbels reference to surgical cuts to eliminate poisonous European Jewry, the Khmer Rouge, according to one survivor “justified destruction of ‘diseased elements’ of the old society. [. . .] We were told repeatedly that in order to save the country, it was essential to destroy all contaminated parts. [. . .] It was essential to cut deep, even to

185 “Letter of Honorary Red Flag”, Documentation Centre of Cambodia, p. 14. Although not stated explicitly we can assume that “screening” in this context likely means the detention, torture, and execution of suspect cadres.

186 “Summary of Results” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 168.

187 “Report on Activities” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 183.

destroy a few good people rather than chance one ‘diseased’ person escaping eradication”.¹⁸⁸

The conception of the enemy as an unseen but ever present disease infecting the Party and the revolution contributed greatly to the constructed nature of the victims of the Cambodian genocide. Since the enemy was unseen but present, they could take almost any form, even appearing to be loyal to the cause or of proper class background, but on the inside be a source of counter-revolutionary contagion. The fluid nature of the construction of the victims’ collective identity led the genocide—at first inflicted on old regime elements and clearly defined class enemies like the new people—to turn inward and become what has been labeled an “autogenocide”. Put in starker terms, the leftist thinker Serge Thion concluded that by the end of the Khmer Rouge’s rule, “[b]lood was all that the nefarious State Security was after. To ‘save’ the Kampuchean blood they had to spill it all over, and turn this ancient land into a bloody mess”.¹⁸⁹ Elizabeth Becker, one of only three Western journalists to travel to Cambodia during the Pol Pot period likewise concluded that “the Khmer Rouge had destroyed the society in order to save it” and “had created and then massacred ‘enemies’ in defense of their notion of the revolution”. Then noting the ability of the Khmer Rouge leadership to create real enemies (in this case the Vietnamese) out of

188 Teeda Mam Butt, *To Destroy You is No Loss: The Odyssey of a Cambodian Family* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987), pp. 153–154.

189 Serge Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” in David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *Revolution and Its Aftermath In Kampuchea: Eight Essays* (Monograph Series no. 25) (New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1983), p. 31.

fictitious ones, Becker continued: “Now they were gambling with the entire country in order to protect it. They were, in fact, marching toward an apocalypse”.¹⁹⁰

3. Vietnam: A Comparison

In neighbouring Vietnam, the second switch threat conception—articulated in the three threat motifs present in the Nazi and Khmer Rouge cases in which the victim group was conceptualized as mortal enemies threatening the survival of the state or revolution by virtue of their mere physical existence—was also not “turned on”. To be sure the VCP had a very clear picture of who they thought their enemy was and why. But their enemies, be it the French colonialists, the US “imperialists”, the GVN and the ARVN, the comprador bourgeoisie, and big landlords were all singled out for the real power they possessed and exercised within the country. Once these capabilities were removed after “liberation” these forces were still seen as suspect and in need of control, but they were not identified as mortal enemies who must be physically liquidated in order to safeguard the revolution from certain destruction.

Throughout the war for reunification, Southerners as a group were never conceptualized as enemies, let alone as a mortal threat. Southerners who sided with the US-backed GVN—the real enemy who were described as “cruel” and “dictatorial” fascists—were portrayed as wayward brothers who had yet to see the socialist light. A study document, for example, explained that people in the south who did not follow Hanoi’s lead simply had

190 Becker, *When the War Was Over*, p. 293.

“not yet firmly grasped the method of political struggle” and “have not yet followed correctly the mass line”.¹⁹¹ The task for the Party, therefore, was to win over these people with agitation, propaganda, and by local cadres setting a good example. In the early 1960s the “enemies” of peaceful unification and socialist revolution were defined in a Party journal article as “puppet personnel, militia, security agents, spies” and in a relatively rare reference to class “cruel and stubborn landlords”, the former of whom constituted a “stubborn and cruel group within the government and army of the US-Diem [regime]”.¹⁹² But even “enemy” soldiers were not seen as implacably hostile to the VCP’s struggle. They were seen, rather, as a potential reservoir of new recruits whose sympathy could potentially be won over.¹⁹³ By 1971 with the US military beginning to pull out of the country, the communist leadership maintained a relatively flexible approach to its “enemies”, again suggesting that “new forces, including the uncommitted classes, puppet soldiers and personnel, and a number of personalities in the puppet government” could be recruited “to promote a new movement against the US and the Thieu-Ky clique”.¹⁹⁴ As these few representative examples show, Hanoi’s enemies were not perceived to be permanent or

191 Le Duan, “Internal Study Document by Secretary of the Lao Dong Party Committee for the South” from *Le Duan: The Path of Revolution in the South* (November 1956) in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, pp. 189–190.

192 “The Struggle Objective of the Entire Party and People and Present”, *Lao Dong Party Internal Journal in the South* (February 1960) in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 198.

193 “Letter from the Party Committee for South Vietnam to Party Chapters” (28 March 1960) in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 204.

194 COSVN, “Summary of COSVN Directive No. 01/CT71” in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 397.

resolute mortal threats nor was there any mention of a perceived intention on the part of the regime's enemies to destroy the revolutionary unification movement in the South or the already existing socialist state in the North based on inherent counter-revolutionary or biological racial tendencies.

One source of internal enemies for the Khmer Rouge were, as we have seen, party cadres. In Vietnam, the Party before and since reunification has never gone through a purge process, let alone a genocidal purge of "enemies burrowing from within". The cadres were not of course perfect, but their faults were seen to be minor and did not reveal any hidden tendencies toward inherently counterrevolutionary activities. Ho Chi Minh was preoccupied on more than one occasion with the revolutionary morality of some cadres but these individuals were guilty of nothing more than "commandism", or "demand[ing] enjoyment and rest" or wanting to "pick their own work instead of fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them by their organization". Such attitudes at worst "weakened" their "combativeness and energy [. . .] and so their revolutionary courage and noble virtue". For Ho the three main threats faced by the party were, in fact, not groups inside or outside the movement, but "isms": capitalism, imperialism, and "individualism" which manifested itself in self-regarding aggrandizing tendencies.¹⁹⁵ Cadres were not conceptualized as dangerous hidden enemies whose "real" counterrevolutionary orientations would inevitably be unleashed against the revolution if these elements were not physically liquidated first.

195 Ho Chi Minh, "On Revolutionary Morality" (1958), *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 201.

The VCP leadership did view the struggle for reunification and the building of socialism through the lense of class conflict and class “contradictions”. But unlike the Khmer Rouge, who interpreted these contradictions as epic “life and death” struggles between reactionary and revolutionary forces that were destined to go on without end and which menaced the survival of the revolution so long as counterrevolutionary elements were allowed to exist, the VCP saw contradictions as a opportunity for progress. For Le Duan, national liberation revolutionary movements could take advantage of the natural “contradictions between our people and aggressive imperialism” which “is tied up with their [the people’s] opposition to the feudal regime” under colonialism and neocolonialism.¹⁹⁶ The contradictions that did exist between classes in South Vietnamese society were believed not to be inherently the product of pernicious and threatening counterrevolutionary forces or classes, but rather were sown and exacerbated by the tactics of the “US-Thieu-Ky-Khiem clique”. “[T]he enemy”, one COSVN directive argued, “was forced to resort to dictatorial and fascist policies which deepened the contradictions between people of various strata, including personnel of the puppet army and administration, and various political factions on the one hand and the US-Thieu-Ky-Khiem clique on the other hand”.¹⁹⁷ Increasing contradictions of this kind created the opportunity for revolutionary forces to take advantage of disunity in the South.

196 Le Duan, “The Vietnamese Revolution”, *Le Duan*, p. 171.

197 COSVN, “Summary of COSVN Directive No. 01/CT71” in Williams (ed.), *Vietnam*, p. 397.

As we saw in the discussion of the absence of the switch one conception in Vietnam, even after the war was over the regime's former enemies were seen as defeated opponents who could be transformed into loyal socialist citizens. There was no mention, even during the height of the repression in the 1970s, of Hanoi's former adversaries or non-revolutionary classes as current "enemies" only as potentially counterrevolutionary forces that might seek to remove the party from power. But again, "counterrevolutionariness" was never tied to inherent or biological characteristics such that the continued existence of these groups absolutely meant the destruction of the new revolutionary order. As such, repression, segregation in the reeducation camps and the NEZs, and even violence in the form of torture and selective political executions were enough, as it were, to protect the revolution. Added to this was the belief that these elements and Southerners in general were, unlike the victims of the Khmer Rouge who "could not be corrected", rehabilitatable and therefore did not pose an overwhelming irreversible threat. Just after the fall of Saigon Le Duan publicly expressed this sentiment:

In the spirit of national reconciliation and concord, our people have shown leniency to all those who have strayed from the right path and who are now returning to the people, no matter what their past was. Provided they sincerely mend their abilities to the service of the homeland and all the shame put on them by the criminal US imperialists will be washed away.¹⁹⁸

Even "counterrevolutionary elements" who, as a Ho Chi Minh City local regulations put it, "refused to be reeducated" were not branded as mortal threats, but as recalcitrants

198 Le Duan, "Forward to the Future", *Le Duan*, pp. 537-538.

who must be incarcerated for lengthy periods of time. Eventually the regime consented to letting these people leave the country, either legally or illicitly (the latter of which provided a golden opportunity for junior cadres to enrich themselves through taking bribes from Southerners desperate to leave the country), rather than engaging in genocide.

C. Switch Three: Victims as Subhumans

The dehumanization of the foreigner-cum-dangerous enemy within is the final switch of the genocidal reconceptualization process. This conceptualization of the victim group is not the rationale for genocide, as much of the existing genocide literature suggests, but instead provides a necessary understanding of the victim group in order for the actual extermination to take place. The dehumanization of the victim group is not enough to lead to genocide because to see members of a particular group as subhuman does not impute to them the capacity or power to constitute an overwhelming threat. The Nazis, for example, regarded Poles and other Slavs only as *Untermenschen*, as less-than human beings to be repressed and transformed into slave labourers for the Third Reich. Here only the third switch was turned on. Jews, on the other hand, were regarded as pernicious threatening enemies who, because of this very “fact”, had to be exterminated. Victims of genocide are, nonetheless, dehumanized by equating them with “vermin”, “pests” or “bacteria” so that the actual act of exterminating whole groups of people becomes intellectually comprehensible and psychologically tolerable for perpetrators and bystanders alike. Whereas the mortal threat conceptualization (switch two) provides the motivation

for genocide, dehumanizing the victim-groups makes the actual genocide psychologically palatable and, therefore, its perpetration possible. Herbert Kelman argues that dehumanization in a genocidal context is one of the processes by which the “usual moral inhibitions against violence become weakened”. Such an understanding of the target group creates a situation in which moral principles no longer apply to the victim, thus facilitating smooth and efficient killing as moral restrictions are more easily overcome.¹⁹⁹

1. Final Solution

Holocaust survivors have noted that ground-level perpetrators in the ghettos and the camps did not see Jews as human, but as animals or even less than that. The public dehumanization of Jews began as soon after the Nazis came to power. Boasting of the alleged success of the boycott of local Jewish businesses a Jewish newspaper in 1935 reported that a participant at a conference for German civil servants told his audience that Jews should not be surprised by the boycott since “when you, Jew, regard us as a beast, do not expect us to treat you like a human being”.²⁰⁰ SD commander Reinhardt Heydrich, a central figure in the planning and perpetration of the *Endlösung* until his assassination by British trained Czech agents in March 1942, characterized Jews to fellow SS officers in January 1939 as “the eternal subhumans”. Richard Breitman notes that this particular

199 Herbert C. Kelman, “Violence Without Moral Restraint: Reflection on the Dehumanization of Victims by Victimizers”, *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 29, no. 4 (1973), pp. 48–49.

200 “German-Jewish Press Reports About Anti-Jewish Incitement in Summer of 1935 (I)”, *Judische Rundschau* (2 July 1935) (Yad Vashem Archive, Documents on the Holocaust), http://www.yadvashem.org.il/odot_pdf.

phrase became widely used in SS circles after 1941 when the execution of the “final solution” began.²⁰¹ In a tour of newly occupied Poland in September 1939, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, Heydrich’s superior, later recounted to other SS officers how he (Himmler) had summoned a few of the “criminal specimens” to show colleagues traveling with him a sick elderly Jewish man’s bone structure, calling the old man and all *Ostjuden* (eastern Jews), “vermin”.²⁰² After a similar junket to the Lodz ghetto in the General Government, Goebbels reportedly told Hitler of his visit: “It’s indescribable. Those are no longer human beings. They are animals”.²⁰³

Speaking to Waffen SS troops heading into battle on the Eastern Front shortly after the invasion of the Soviet Union in late June 1941, Himmler hinted at the special tasks that awaited some of them. In so doing, he explicitly used dehumanizing language to describe Soviets and Jews, assuring his men that killing soldiers and civilians alike would be a morally uncomplicated task. Himmler called his intended victims “a mixture of races, whose very names are unpronounceable, and whose physique is such that one can shoot them down without pity and compassion”.²⁰⁴ When Himmler’s men were subsequently

201 Reinhardt Heydrich (24 January 1939) (NARG242, T-175/R17/2520613) quoted in Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 59.

202 Heinrich Himmler quoted in Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide*, p. 74.

203 Joseph Goebbels quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, p. 249.

204 Heinrich Himmler, Second Speech at Stettin (NA RG242, T-175/R109/2632683–85) (trans. George H. Stein) quoted in George H. Stein, *The Waffen-SS: Hitler’s Elite Guard at War 1939–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 126.

dispatched to the Eastern Front they received in relatively short order the “commissar order” of summer 1941 calling for the round-up and execution by mass shooting of all Jewish men and non-Jewish Soviet communist party cadres. But as Raul Hilberg points out, this order left behind “live Jewish women and children who could not fend for themselves”. Although there is no paper trail to show us when and exactly by whom the decision was made to expand the commissar order to include all Jewish women and children, the decision to kill *en masse* “utterly defenseless dependents was something new, another milestone fraught with a heavy psychological burden”.²⁰⁵ By August and September of 1941, however, the Jewish victims of this first real phase of the *Endlösung* were sufficiently dehumanized in the eyes of enough of the ground-level perpetrators that, as Hilberg notes, “this totalization was mastered as well. The evolution of the process was complete and the shooting became routine”.²⁰⁶

Face to face killing was not always psychologically easy or routine for all SS, Order Police, and Wehrmacht soldiers assigned these “special duties”. In the beginning commanding officers often had to ply their men with copious amounts of alcohol before and after major *Aktions* to numb the troops sufficiently to carry out their orders. Many commanders and soldiers began to grumble about this “bloody business”, not out of any compassion for their Jewish victims or a sense that what they were doing was wrong, but

205 Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, p. 17.

206 Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, p. 17.

because it was simply a gruesome task.²⁰⁷ The advent of the death camps and the industrial killing of Jews in gas chambers was in part a means of relieving the psychological burden for the low-level perpetrators of killing their victims face to face, although, in the Soviet Union, genocide out the barrel of a gun continued apace throughout the war.

But the death camps themselves not only performed the first function of relieving the psychological burden of killing face to face, they also served as a forum within which the victims could be completely dehumanized before their deaths, making their killing by gassing, medical experimentation, starvation, abuse, and disease a psychologically acceptable task. As Hannah Arendt argues, the death camps were the realization of the totalitarian system's ultimate goal of "total domination" over society and human beings by complete control and utter dehumanization. For Arendt, the camps were the only place on earth in which "the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings" was eliminated through the "ideological indoctrination of elite formations and through [. . .] absolute terror". By thoroughly dehumanizing the victims "every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other". As such, the death camps "serve the ghastly experiment of

207 Christopher Browning's research into the operations of Police Battalion 101 in Poland from 1942 to 1943 shows, however, that the initial revulsion shown by the men of the battalion at having to shoot whole villages of Jewish men, women, and children was short lived. Over time the killing, later followed by the rounding up of Jews for deportation to the death camps, became routine. Because the men of the battalion were not fit for regular military service or the SS all but two (both of whom were officers) were not Nazi party members and were not considered by Browning to be highly ideological (Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* [New York: Harper Perennial, 1992]).

eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not; for Pavlov's dog, which as we know was trained to eat when not hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal".²⁰⁸

The fight against humanity and human agency as manifested in spontaneity among the Jewish inmates was taken so seriously by the SS that all means possible were employed to ensure that inmates could not commit suicide by either throwing themselves against the electrified fence or acquiring a weapon or poison. Successful and attempted suicides at Auschwitz and the other death camps were, as a result, exceedingly rare and SS guards who failed to prevent a suicide were severely reprimanded. For the Nazis then, total domination through dehumanization meant depriving the Jews in the camps of exercising any individual human agency even over their own certain deaths. As Theodor Adorno sadly tells us "[t]he administrative murder of millions made of death a thing one had never yet to fear in just this fashion. [. . .] The last, the poorest possession left to the individual is expropriated [. . .] in the concentration camps it was no longer an individual who died, but a specimen".²⁰⁹

208 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979), p. 438.

209 Theodore W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1994) reprinted in Michael L. Morgan (ed.) *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.43.

In his painful recollections of the *Muselmänner*²¹⁰ who haunted his memories years after his liberation from Auschwitz, Primo Levi described the completely dehumanized state in which these “drowned” men existed.

Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living; one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.²¹¹

Noting the extent to which Jews were perceived as subhuman and treated as such in the camps, one Jewish prisoner doctor said of Mengele “he really hated us” and “treated Jews like laboratory animals—not quite human” because “we were really biologically inferior in his eyes”.²¹² Conceptualizing Jews in this way allowed Mengele and most other Nazi doctors to have few qualms about performing atrocious medical experiments on Jews or sending them to the gas chambers. In his analysis of the Nazi doctor’s practice of psychological “doubling” which allowed the doctors to maintain the split between the pre- and post- “Auschwitz healer-physician” and the “killer-physician Auschwitz self”, Lifton suggests that “the Jews as victims failed to touch the overall psychological processes of the Auschwitz self”. Lifton notes that whether an SS doctor failed to “feel” the Jews presence

210 Literally “Muslims” in German. *Muselmänner* was the name used by inmates to describe “the weak, the inept, those doomed to selection” (Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* [trans. Stuart Woolf] [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996], p. 88).

211 Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, p. 90.

212 Interview with Robert Jay Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, p. 378.

or did not see them at all, “he no longer experienced them as beings who affected him—that is, as human beings”.²¹³

While not referring to the nearby extermination of Jews at Auschwitz explicitly, the SS doctors’ ultimate superior officer, Heinrich Himmler, told an audience in Krakow in April 1943 that “anti-Semitism is exactly the same as delousing. Getting rid of lice is not a question of ideology. It is a matter of cleanliness”.²¹⁴ Echoing his commander’s perception of Jews as little more than insects in need of extermination through gassing, Order Police Alois Hafele, guard at the Chelmno death camp, told a superior in 1943 that he had become used to the killing. “Little men or little women, it was all the same, just like stepping on a beetle”. As Hafele spoke, he reportedly made a scraping motion with his foot on the floor.²¹⁵

For some death camp commanders, the dehumanization of Jewish prisoners through humiliation was a necessity for the low-level perpetrators to literally operate the industrial machinery of death. When asked by a post-war interviewer: “If they were going to kill them anyway what was the point of all the humiliation, why all the cruelty?”, Kommandant of Treblinka Franz Stangl replied, “To condition those who actually had to carry out the

213 Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, p. 444.

214 Heinrich Himmler, “Speech by Reichsführer-SS Himmler at Krakow April 1943” cited in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. IV (Washington, U.S. Government Print Office, 1946), <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/resources/document/DocJew 2n.html>.

215 Alois Hafele, “Indictment of Gustav Laabs and Alois Hafele” (Bonn, 25 July 1962) (8Js 180/61) cited in Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, p. 34.

policies. To make it possible for them to do what they did”.²¹⁶ For other perpetrators, their remoteness from the victims and the highly technical way in which they inflicted death facilitated the killing process. In a perverse bit of semantics—but one that was entirely appropriate to the dehumanization of death camp victims—the SS killer-technicians who dropped the Zyklon B pellets in to the ventilation systems of the gas chambers, and who, therefore, actually killed the victims inside, were called *Desinfektoren* (“disinfectors”): janitors who fumigated millions of what were considered to be subhuman vermin.

But the actual act of herding the victims into the gas chambers, the extraction of gold fillings from the corpses, the sheering off of the victims’ hair, and the operation of the crematoria, was performed not by the SS, but Jewish Kapos in the “Special Squads” selected for the purpose from the transports. These men were so successfully dehumanized and manipulated by the Nazis through threats of summary execution and the disingenuous provision of better living conditions that they became the midwives of a genocide against their own people.²¹⁷ For Primo Levi, the cynical manipulation of the Jewish Kapos to perform the most gruesome tasks in the industrial killing process was the most demonic evil perpetrated by the Nazis, the ultimate manifestation of the dehumanization of the Jews. The fate of the Jewish Kapos represented for Levi a stunning “paroxysm of perfidity and

216 Franz Stangl quoted in Emil L. Fackenheim, “The Holocaust and Philosophy”, *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 82, no.10 (October 1985), pp. 505–514.

217 The typically young strong Jewish men selected for the Kapos did not, in fact, survive because of the superior food rations and other benefits extended to them by the SS. All twelve Jewish Kapos *Sonderkommandos* attached to the gas chambers at Birkenau were without exception gassed after three of four months duty to ensure that none of the Kapos survived to tell their grisly tale.

hatred: it must be the Jews who put the Jews into the ovens, it must be shown that the Jews, the subrace, the submen, bow to any and all humiliation, even to destroy themselves".²¹⁸

2. Cambodia

In Cambodia the refrain "to keep you is no gain, to kill you is no loss" that was constantly repeated by the Khmer Rouge to the regime's victims clearly indicated the degree to which individual human life had become devalued and easily extinguished. In his analysis of the orientation Khmer Rouge cadres adopted toward the urban populations of Phnom Penh and other cities, David Chandler suggests the dehumanization of the new people was almost immediate. The rural cadres that took over and emptied the cities saw urban dwellers as "enemies" to be "treated as they deserved. Overnight they became 'new people' or 'April 17 people'—less than human, without privileges or rights".²¹⁹ In his "microbes" speech of late 1976, Pol Pot emphasized the degree to which the dehumanized enemies of the revolution were expendable telling his cadre-soldiers that they need not "be afraid

218 Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 52. Levi goes on to cite the recollections of a Hungarian prisoner doctor who tells of watching a soccer match between the SS responsible for the crematoria and the members of a Special Squad. For Levi the story represents the de facto leveling of the playing field between the SS men who had so debased themselves in their role as the executioners of millions of Jews and the Jewish Kapos of the Special Squad who had been so debased by the SS. Thus the "crematoria ravens" and the SS could "enter the field on an equal footing, or almost. Behind this armistice one hears satanic laughter: it is consummated, we have succeeded, you no longer are the other race, the anti-race, the prime enemy of the millennial Reich; you are no longer the people who reject idols. We embraced you, corrupted you, dragged you to the bottom with us. You are like us, you proud people; dirtied with your own blood, as we are. You too, like us and like Cain, have killed the brother. Come, we can play together" (p. 55).

219 Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 103.

to lose one or two people of bad background”.²²⁰ Later, in early 1977, a Party history suggested that although most contradictions in society had been resolved, “[s]ome of the filth of former classes remains; we will solve this further”.²²¹

In everyday life, the familial and egalitarian personal pronouns “brother” and “sister” that were used between cadres and the “base people” as indicators of inclusion in the revolutionary community and as signs of mutual respect were dropped when referring to “new people” or to suspect cadres. They were addressed with the dehumanizing vulgar pronoun *vea* (“it” or “thing”). Ethnic minority victims of the genocide were similarly addressed, with the Vietnamese frequently referred to by the pejorative *yuon* (“savage”). Such modes of discourse dehumanized those deemed to be non-members of the revolution and, as Hinton argues, helped legitimize—and one could add, facilitate—violence against the victims.²²²

As with the Nazis, the perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide went beyond speaking of their victims in dehumanizing terms that psychologically facilitated the physical destruction of innocent victims to creating a dehumanized system of killing. But instead of Auschwitz and the rest of the death camp system, the Khmer Rouge leadership sought,

220 “Report on the Activities” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plan the Future*, pp. 185–186.

221 “Abbreviated Lesson on the History of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Movement Led by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (Party Centre, undated) (trans. Ben Kiernan) in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plan the Future*, p. 222.

222 Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 191.

in Arendt's phrase, "total domination" over all Cambodians through forced communal agricultural production and cohabitation in what amounted to highly surveilled slave labour camps, but also, and uniquely, through the ideological elimination of the individual from the new revolutionary society. Pol Pot and his deputies constantly spoke in collective terms, dispensing with the personal pronoun *khnhom* ("I") and replacing it with *yoeng* ("we") or *Angkar* (literally, "the Organization"). French Cambodian Laurence Picq recalled that "one would speak and act only in the name of the group: we do this, we think that".²²³ The conceptual removal of the individual—all individuals—be they new people, Vietnamese or other minorities, or revolutionarily sound base people, soldiers, and cadres from all manner of thought and discourse, created an environment in which all Cambodians could be treated and dominated by *Angkar* in anyway powerful cadres saw fit. Because there were no individuals, because "individualism" was to be countered at all costs, the Khmer Rouge realized, at least in their own minds, a spectacular feat; the conceptual dehumanization of an entire nation. Under these circumstances "the impossible was made possible",²²⁴ and over time, anyone could become a victim.

The removal of the individual was internalized by the victims themselves, leading to the self-imposed dehumanized submission of many Cambodians as a survival tactic. As more than one survivor has noted, one of the only ways to survive the genocide was to become

223 Laurence Picq, *Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 36.

224 Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 459.

“deaf and dumb”, to give up all human agency and instead become an automaton. Even after one Cambodian survivor was told by her nephew that her Khmer Rouge cadre husband was “going for training” with Angkar (a common euphemism for arrest and execution), Iep Keav later recalled “I couldn’t cry in front of him. If I cried I would have died too. [. . .] I couldn’t express any feeling; I didn’t dare to say anything”.²²⁵ A Khmer Rouge cadre, Chann Him, similarly recounted that during a brief visit with his KR cadre brother, Chann Sim, the two brothers “weren’t able to talk much because we were afraid that the Angkar would accuse us”.²²⁶ This would be the last time Chann Him saw his brother alive.

The dehumanization of victims in the service of death in Cambodia reached its nadir at the Tuol Sleng torture and execution facility at a former high school in Phnom Penh. Articulating the Party leadership’s conception of their enemies as subhuman, former senior Party cadre Hu Nim was tortured into proclaiming in his extracted confession: “I am not

225 Iep Keav, “Case of Ing Vannak (man), Interview with Iep Keav (woman, age 69), mother of Ing Vannak, and her daughter, Voir Lim Thou (woman, age 45)” (interview with Sim Sopheak, Ra Chhayran, and Ea Meng-Try) (Toek Andaung Village, Taing Krasao sudistrict, Prasat Sambo district, Kampong Thom province, March 18, 2004) (Documentation Centre of Cambodia), <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Interviews/Sample_Interviews/Former_Kh_Rouge/Ing_Vannak.htm>.

226 Chann Him, “Case of Chann Sim, Interviewed with his brother named Chann Him, 55 years old” (interview with Pang Pivoine, Sim Sopheak and Ra Chhayrann) (Prek Por village, Tek Vil sub-district, Sa-ang district, Kandal province) (17 January 2004), <http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Interviews/Sample_Interviews/Former_Kh_Rouge/Chann_Sim.htm>

a human being. I am an animal”.²²⁷ Recalling the appallingly brutal torture he and other inmates endured at Tuol Sleng, survivor Vann Nath said in an interview after the genocide that the prisoners were treated as if they were “worth less than an animal to them. [. . .] They didn’t treat us like people”.²²⁸

The ability to treat their perceived enemies as subhumans was learned early by many Khmer Rouge cadres even before the victory in 1975. Many of these cadres were recruited at a very young age from the nomadic hill tribe peoples of the remote northeastern provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri where isolated Khmer Rouge camps were located during the latter Sihanouk years at the beginning of the civil war. By exploiting their resentment of prosperous city dwellers and the fact that these impoverished illiterate youths had no stake in the pre-revolutionary system, the Khmer Rouge leadership, as Karl Jackson suggests, “sought out those from the bottom rung of society—those who were so envious of persons with more wealth that they would willingly strike them down”.²²⁹ The teenage cadres were taken from their families and given what the Party said was the great honour of becoming *Oppakar Phdach Kar Robas Pak*, literally, “the dictatorial instrument of the Party”. To fulfill this role recruits were schooled in what Sihanouk called “the school for cruelty” in which brutality and the dehumanization of their future victims became the

227 Hu Nim, “Planning the Past” in Chandler, Kiernan, and Boua (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, p. 239.

228 Vann Nath (interview with Alex Hinton) in Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*, p. 191.

229 Karl D. Jackson, “Explaining the Terror” in Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975–1978*, p. 236.

principle lesson. As Sihanouk recalled of his years in the *maquis* with the Khmer Rouge in the early 1970s “Pol Pot and Ieng Sary quite rightly thought that if they trained their young recruits on cruel games played with each other, they would end up as soldiers with a love of killing and consequently war”. Under virtual house arrest Sihanouk saw those guarding his camp “constantly taking pleasure in tormenting animals. [. . .] The Khmer Rouge loved to make their victims suffer as such as possible”.²³⁰ Their own dehumanization at the hands of their senior Khmer Rouge trainers allowed the young cadres once the Khmer Rouge came to power to completely dehumanize their victims, to torture, rape, and murder men, women, and children with seemingly no moral qualms at all. Dith Pran, an interpreter for *New York Times* correspondent Sidney Schanberg, told Schanberg after the genocide that he was the most afraid of Khmer Rouge soldiers between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Dith Pran told Schanberg:

They took them very young and taught them nothing but discipline. Just take orders, no need for a reason. Their minds have nothing inside except discipline. They do not believe any religion or tradition except Khmer Rouge orders. That’s why they killed their own people, even babies, like we might kill a mosquito. I believe they did not have any feelings about human life because they were taught only discipline.²³¹

The projection by the youngest Khmer Rouge cadres of their own dehumanized state on to their victims was mirrored in the perceptions and experience of KR torturers vis-a-vis their victims at Tuol Sleng (also known as S-21). During the party purge phase of the

230 Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope : the Case for Cambodia* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 27–30.

231 Sidney Schanberg quoting Dith Pran cited in Jackson, “Explaining the Terror”, p. 239.

genocide from early 1977 onward Tuol Sleng became the focal point for the uncovering of supposed “spies” and “microbes” festering within the Party and was the facility in which several thousand cadres were forced under unspeakable torture prior to their execution to reveal their “strings of traitors” who in their turn were arrested and brought to Tuol Sleng to be tortured and executed. The Party cadres who did the torturing at S-21 were not, however, immune to the purges, and those who were unable to extract a confession, or who were unable to extract the “correct” confession in the estimation of their superiors, were often arrested, tortured, and executed in exactly the same manner as their former victims. The constant threat of failure and the knowledge of the likely consequences if their superiors came to suspect their revolutionary commitment by “deliberately” failing in their duties to root out “strings of traitors”, dehumanized the cadres posted to Tuol Sleng and led them to further dehumanize their victims and to treat them with even more extreme brutality.

In this element of the third switch, then, we see another contrast with the Nazi Holocaust. In Cambodia, both dehumanizing discourse and the dehumanization of the perpetrators facilitated killing through execution, abuse, and neglect of the regime’s victims. In the Nazi case, the explicitly dehumanizing discourse directed at the Jewish victims was also present while the projection of the dehumanized state of the low-level perpetrators onto the victims was not. In fact the SS, which bore the primary responsibility for executing the genocide on the ground, was billed by Himmler as an elite corp of the

most racially pure Aryans in the Reich, the “hardest of the hard men” who had been given the bloody but noble task of riding the Reich and Europe of the subhuman Jewish race.

CONCLUSION

In both the Holocaust and Cambodia all three conceptual “switches” concerning the constructed collective identity of the victim groups were “turned on” by the perpetrators prior to and during the genocides. In a process of collective identity construction shaped by prevailing ideational structures (the pre-genocide “permissive political culture” discussed in Chapter 2) and material structures (serious and destabilizing political, economic, and security crises discussed in Chapter 3) the Nazi and Khmer Rouge leadership came to reconstruct the identity of Jews, the new people, the ethnic minorities, and suspect cadres as outsiders to whom no rights or obligations were owed (switch one), dangerous enemies whose continued existence directly jeopardized the survival of the race, Reich, Party, and revolution (switch two), and as subhumans whose lives could be easily extinguished (switch three).

In the Holocaust, the first switch allowed for the pre-genocide legal, civic, economic, and social separation of the Jews from the wider German political community. From 1939 to the summer of 1941 the first switch conception of Jews as foreign and separate further served as the conceptual foundation for the concentration of German and European Jews in the ghettos of occupied East-Central Europe where the Jews remained physically separated from Gentile society, abandoned to their fate by their former co-nationals. The

first switch conception, and the policies based on it, set the stage for the possibility of genocide by factoring the Jews out of European society and in so doing leaving the Jews conceptually and practically vulnerable to further predation. However the first switch conception on its own did not lead to the genocide. At the time that the first switch conception was most consistently articulated, Nazi policy was one of separation as expressed in the Nuremberg Laws and the exclusionary economic and social policies of the 1930s and the later deportation and concentration policies of 1939 to 1941. To be sure the latter policies were implemented at a time when attitudes towards the Jews were hardening substantially. Nonetheless the period of ghettoization, largely based on the first switch conceptualization, was not yet genocide. In effect, the first switch conception of the Jews as foreign or alien only unlocked the door to genocide. It took the rise of the second switch conception as the dominant perception of Jews that grounded the Nazi leadership's decision to push open the door and step into the genocidal abyss.

In Cambodia, the first switch conception of the Khmer Rouge's various victims did not precede the later conception of the new people, former regime elements, the ethnic minorities, and suspect cadres as mortal threats to the revolution (switch two). Rather, the long standing belief by top Khmer Rouge leaders like Pol Pot and Nuon Chea that the Party and the revolution was constantly in danger—a belief bordering on paranoia that predated the April 1975 victory—meant that the victim groups were simultaneously identified as outside the revolution (switch one) and irreconcilably a mortal threat to it

(switch two) right from the start. Individuals were categorized into groups that were understood to be part of or separate from the revolutionary community *as well as* either revolutionarily pure and therefore supportive of the revolution or as suspect and therefore a mortal threat to the revolution. The deportees from the cities, the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Muslim Cham minorities for the most part were defined right from the start as outside the revolution (switch one) and as such a threat to it (switch two). Members of these groups, along with old regime elements, were marked for extermination through largely indirect biological means as soon as the Khmer Rouge took power. With only rare exceptions among the new people—i.e., those who either managed to hide their pre-revolutionary “bourgeois” pasts or who convinced local cadres that they were reformable and therefore eligible for elevation to probationary members of the revolution and the better food and treatment that came with it—the first and second switch conceptions of members of these group remained relatively fixed throughout the DK period.

The identity of Party cadres, on the other hand, was subject to wild fluctuations during the purge phase of the genocide, with cadres once deemed a part of the revolution suddenly reconceptualized as dangerous internal enemies working to destroy the revolution from within. Membership in the Party or the revolutionary armed forces was no guarantee that individual cadres, regardless of their actual behaviour, would not find themselves in very short order stripped of their literal and constructed membership in the revolution (switch one) and reconceptualized as the most dangerous mortal enemies of the revolution

(switch two): “traitors”, “spies” or “agents” in league with foreign powers bent on the destruction of Democratic Kampuchea. By contrast, Germans and other Europeans who were not legally defined as Jews according to the Nuremberg Laws were under no similar threat that they might be suddenly reconceptualized into the wrong category (i.e., Jewish) and as a result become the target of whole sale genocide. To be sure, non-Jews, including Slavs, the Roma, Soviet POWs, homosexuals, political opponents and the like suffered tremendously under the Nazis and were subject to appalling treatment, including forced population transfers, and incarceration as slave labourers in the camps. But even then, their status as non-Jews ensured that they were not *a priori* marked for death simply because of their very existence.²³² The boundary between perpetrator and victim was much more mutable in Cambodia, particularly for the thousands of cadres and their “strings of traitors”—including their spouses and children—who were tortured and executed during the genocide. Unlike the legal status of “Aryan” or non-Jew, their initial status as a revolutionary provided no guarantee of protection.

Although the victims group across the two cases differed significantly—the Jewish “race” in the *Endlösung* versus socio-economic class, alleged political affiliation (cadres) and ethnic and religious groups (ethnic Vietnamese, Sino-Khmers, and the Cham Muslims)—the second switch conception of these groups as mortal threats to the survival of the political community was constructed in remarkably similar ways. Both the senior Nazi

232 See chapter 1 for a discussion of why other groups victimized by the Nazis, including the Roma, were not victims of genocide.

leadership and the top Khmer Rouge cadres identified the threat posed by the victim groups as one that emanated from the groups' continued physical existence. So long as Jews remained alive the survival of the Aryan "race" and the Third Reich continued to be in jeopardy. So long as the new people, the ethnic minorities, and suspected traitorous cadres remained alive so too might *Angkar* and the revolution be destroyed from within or from the outside with the help of these implacably hostile counter-revolutionary forces. In each case the second switch formulation of the victim groups' identity and future actions fell into three distinct but closely related threat motifs. Jews and the various victim groups in Cambodia were seen as mortal threats because of the enduring nature of the struggle between "races", particularly between Aryans and Jews, or between classes riven by inevitable and, for the Khmer Rouge, unsurmountable, class contradictions. Jews were the perennial anti-race, the destroyers of the one truly worthy Aryan race. Likewise "bourgeois" urbanites and the bourgeois mentality called "individualism" buried within certain cadres were the source of the "life and death" contradictions that continued unabated despite the victory of the Khmer Rouge in the civil war. For both the Nazis and the Khmer Rouge then, the final epic struggle against these most threatening of enemies had to be won through the physical elimination of those who posed such an overwhelming threat. To do otherwise would be to court certain defeat and the physical destruction of their own cherished race or revolution.

While threatening in their own right, the victim groups in the Holocaust and the “killing fields” were also seen, in the second mortal threat motif, as either the power behind (Jews) or internal agents for (suspect cadres and the ethnic Vietnamese) powerful external forces. The Jews of Europe were conceptualized not just as a dangerous enemy because of their “race” but also as the ultimate power behind both “Jewish” Bolshevism and the “Jewish Plutocracies” in the West. The war that Hitler and the Nazi regime themselves unleashed was said to have been instigated by a vast Jewish conspiracy that successfully seduced Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill to work in concert to make war on and eventually destroy the Third Reich. In so doing, the Jews could finally realized their ultimate goal of world, or at least European, domination and the enslavement of non-Jews. As Nazi Germany’s fortunes deteriorated after the defeat at Stalingrad and the landing of the Allies at Normandy a year later, several Nazi leaders cryptically hinted that the genocide against the Jews then underway was a just punishment for the Jews’ leading role in the war being waged by the Allies against Germany. Both the need for a German victory, particularly against the Red Army in the *Vernichtungskrieg* in the East, and the full execution of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” became paramount if Germany and the German people were to survive.

For the Khmer Rouge the relational arrows were essentially reversed in the second threat motif, with the victim groups being controlled by, rather than controlling, threatening external forces, namely Vietnam. The ultimate danger posed by the internal

victims was, however, no less severe. Still nursing their resentments over North Vietnam's supposed abandonment of the Cambodian communist movement in the late 1960s, the American bombing campaign following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, and the perception that Hanoi wanted to dominate the Cambodian communist movement in favour of a "revisionist" stance that eschewed total revolution, the Khmer Rouge pursued a relentless search for internal Party enemies working for the now hated Vietnamese. Despite a complete lack of any confirmatory evidence to support the rather paranoid plots "uncovered" by the senior cadres of the Centre and Southwest Zones, the brutal purges of 1977 and 1978 sought to root out internal "spies", "enemies", "traitors" and local "CIA agents" working for the Vietnamese, who themselves were the "lackeys" of the "revisionist" Soviet Union. Although suspect cadres did not control hostile outside forces, the perceived control of the cadres by such forces constituted a mortal threat to revolutionary Kampuchea in a manner that was conceptualized as every bit as threatening as the Jews' alleged control over the Allies in the Second World War.

The major difference between the two cases lay in the actual relationship the victim groups maintained with the external forces to which they were allegedly allied. The Jews of Europe not only did not exercise any control over the Soviets and the Western Allies, the plight of the Jews once news of the genocide reached Washington, London, and Moscow, did not result in any serious attempts to rescue the Jews—save repeated assurances that the best way to end the killing was to defeat the Third Reich on the

battlefield. As such, the military conflict between Nazi Germany and its enemies proceeded apace until the Third Reich was indeed destroyed, ending in triumph for the side with the most soldiers left standing and the largest reserves of bullets, bombs, aircraft, and fuel. The genocide against the Jews was sadly not part of the Allied equation.

In the case of the purges against the Party cadres, particularly the brutal torture and execution of thousands of hitherto loyal but more moderate cadres of the Eastern Zone in 1978, the entirely false relationship alleged by the top Party leadership between Vietnam and local cadres turned into a reality. By executing large numbers of Eastern Zones cadres for their fictitious “traitorous” relationship with the Vietnamese communists, coupled with border raids by Eastern Zones troops against Vietnam that were bound to fail (and for which the cadres and soldiers were further victimized) the actions of the senior Khmer Rouge leadership forged in reality a relationship between the Eastern Zones cadres and the Vietnamese that up until then had only existed in the minds of Pol Pot and his lieutenants. The cadres really did become the “agents” of the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese, who until then were consumed with their own “strong march toward socialism” in a united Vietnam, really did decide to recruit disaffected cadres to invade Cambodia, overthrow the Khmer Rouge and effectively destroy the revolution. The cadres whom the regime accused of collaborating with the Vietnamese eventually did come to side with their neighbour to the east, providing intelligence and manpower for the PAVN invasion force, and becoming the nucleus of the Vietnamese-backed government that succeeded the Khmer Rouge. By acting

ruthlessly on their entirely unfounded suspicion that internal cadres were in league with the hated Vietnamese, the targeted cadres eventually turned Pol Pot's worst nightmare into reality.

Finally, the third threat motif likened the victim groups to a biological sickness that if left untreated would kill the "body" of the race or revolution. This conception of the mortal danger posed by the Jews and the various victims of the Khmer Rouge were articulated by senior leaders in both cases in remarkably similar language. For the Nazis the Jews were a lethal bacillus, or parasites, or a terminal cancer that required eradication or cutting out. For the Khmer Rouge, their enemies were hidden microbes "burrowing from within" the revolution. In this threat motif the mortal threat supposedly posed by the victim group was expressed in its most literal form. The victims were literally conceived of as very real biological sources of the wider communities' potential future death. The only way to protect the patient was to kill the disease first.

With the third switch dehumanization conceptualization we see both similarities and contrasts between the two cases. In both the Holocaust and Cambodia, senior leaders referred to their victims in explicitly dehumanizing ways such that low-level killers were imbued with an understanding of their victims as less than human. Himmler's communications with his senior field staff and the commissar order itself referred to Jews and Soviet Bolsheviks in explicitly dehumanizing terms in order to assure *Einsatzgruppen* troops and their superiors that the mass murder of Jews was not morally wrong. In the death camps,

senior commanders encouraged the dehumanizing treatment of Jewish inmates so that SS staff could, as Franz Strangl put it, “do what they had to do”. In Cambodia, the victims of the Khmer Rouge were likened to farm animals and made to confess that they were “no longer human”. In both cases the quest for total domination produced a system of death camps and slave labour communes in which the goal was to thoroughly dehumanized the victims so that they could be treated in anyway possible. No longer human in the eyes of their tormentors, everything—every kind of torture, humiliation, degradation, and manner of killing—became possible.

Where we do find a contrast is in the status of the perpetrators. For the Nazis, the SS perpetrators of the *Aktions* on the Eastern Front and in the ghettos and death camps were the epitome of racial purity and therefore superiority. SS men were given pride of place in the Nazi hierarchy as the best of the best, led by Hitler’s favourite, “*der treue Heinrich*” (loyal Heinrich). Their Jewish victims were regarded as a powerful yet wholly inferior racial enemies who must and could be killed without feeling. Killing Jews was believed to be a noble task necessary for the preservation of the Reich and the Aryan German people. By contrast, the most vicious perpetrators were as dehumanized as their victims in Cambodia. And it was because of this dehumanization, not their elevated status as superior beings as in the Nazis case, that allowed the child soldiers of the Khmer Rouge to become the lethal “dictatorial instrument” of the Party. Trained first to brutalize each other, marginalized from the old society, resentful of the advantages enjoyed by lowland urbanites and others,

lacking all moral restraint and sanctioned to kill, teenaged Khmer Rouge soldiers were primed to mete out the most appalling punishment on their victims once the genocide began. Only the Jewish Kapos, the “crematoria ravens” came close to the status of the teenage Khmer Rouge soldiers, but even then, the Kapos were imprisoned because they were Jews, were forced to perform the duties they did (which did not actually involve killing Jews in the gas chambers) under threat of execution, and all of them were killed in their turn in the very chambers into which they herded other Jews.

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