THE HEGEMONY OF A RULING PARTY
AS A COMMON ELEMENT IN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE,
THE HOLODOMOR AND THE HOLOCAUST

With the development of comparative genocide as the second generation of genocide studies over the last decades it became important to examine the Holodomor as a crime of genocide committed by the Communist party of the Soviet Union in comparative perspective with other genocides. In this article, the author offers a comparative analysis of the Holodomor with cases of genocide in the first half of the 20th century – namely, the Armenian genocide of the Ottoman Empire and the Holocaust of Nazi Germany – from the perspective of perpetrators (organizers). The author compares the three genocides as crimes under international law in terms of one of the mental elements of genocide that characterizes each of them, noting the similarities in ruling political parties as organizers of those crimes who exercised the collective intent in each of the case of genocide under analyses. The author argues that hegemony of a ruling party: the Ittihadists, the Communists, and the Nazis which substituted the state organization was a common element in the genocides perpetrated in the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Third Reich. Moreover, in the ongoing Russian genocide against the Ukrainian nation with culmination since 24 February 2022, it is again the ruling party – Yedinaya Rosiya (Single Russia) which is the foundation of Russian totalitarian regime that organized this crime of genocide.

Keywords: the Armenian Genocide, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, organizers of genocide, the hegemony of a ruling party.

Introduction

As stated by Samuel Totten and Paul Bartrop, “under the strictest definition of genocide the Holodomor of the Ukrainians may be placed among the three most significant such acts in the first half of the 20th century – together with the Ottoman Turk genocide of the Armenians and the Holocaust.”\(^1\) These three genocides of the first half of the 20th century – the Armenian genocide, the Holodomor and the Holocaust may be compared on the bases of different mental and material elements of genocide. In my previous publications I have compared these genocides based on specific intent (dolus specialis) in each of them and victims of these genocides, noting the similarities and dissimilarities in those international crimes.\(^2\) In this article I will offer analysis from the perspective of organizers of the above-mentioned genocides, namely the ruling political parties which substituted state organization: the Ittihadists in the Ottoman Empire, the Communists in the Soviet Union, and the Nazis in the Third Reich. Those parties and their bodies organized genocides in their states having thoroughly planned them and implemented their plans. Hitler as well as Stalin (and now Putin) would hardly be able to commit genocide not having been leaders of huge political parties.

I would argue in the article that on the level of perpetrators, the Holodomor in Ukraine, like the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, was conceived, organized, and implemented by the monopolistic political party. Similarly to the Nazis and the Ittihadists, the Communist party of the Soviet Union was the actual author of the Holodomor

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in Ukraine and held control over all other state and legislative bodies.\textsuperscript{3} Paraphrasing Prof. Vahakn N. Dadrian and transferring his argument about shifting state power to political parties in the Ottoman Empire and in Nazi Germany, I would argue that to examine and comprehend the implicit (covert) as well as explicit (overt) aspects of these genocides it is necessary to examine the leadership, ideology, structure, and inner workings of political parties that become “substitutes for the governments they supplanted and usurped.”\textsuperscript{4} The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union played the same role in the Holodomor as the Ittihad Party Committee of Union and Progress in the Armenian genocide or the National Socialist Party in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{5}

The Armenian case

In the Armenian case, after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the new Ottoman rulers under the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), called Unionists, were split into liberal-democrats and authoritarian factions. In January 1913, the extremist CUP faction with its leading “pan-Turkish” ideology and the vision of a renewed empire, launched a coup against the moderates and established a de facto dictatorship. The ruling triumvirate – Minister of Interior Talaat, Minister of War Enver, and Minister of the Navy Jemal – “would plan and oversee the Armenian genocide, with the Special Organization’s affiliates in the Anatolia region serving as ground-level organizers.”\textsuperscript{6}

After the beginning of World War I, the Unionists exercised near total control in the government. “Party functionaries have been appointed to posts all across the empire. Unionist officers had been organized in every major town and city. Unionist officers commanded virtually all of the Ottoman army. The cabinet was entirely beholden to the CUP. Key decisions were made by the triumvir in consultation with their party ideologues and in conformity with overt and covert party objectives.”\textsuperscript{7}

The intent of the Young Turks Ittihadists to destroy Armenians appeared at the very outset when orders were given for deportations. Helen Fein refers to statements of Turkish officials to protesting diplomats as evidence of intent published in the British Blue Book, namely to an interview with Talaat Bey “(one of the ruling triumvirate) in 1916 in the Berliner Tageblatt: “We have been reproached for making no distinction between the innocent Armenians and the guilty; but that was utterly impossible, in view of the fact that those who were innocent today might be guilty tomorrow” (Bryce and Toynbee 1916, 633 …). US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau protested in Constantinople to Talaat (who also assured him that their policy was to eliminate all Armenians).”\textsuperscript{8}

As stated by Rouben Paul Adalian, “at every level of the operation against the Armenians, party functionaries relayed, received, and enforced the orders of the government. … The Ministries of the Interior and of War were charged with the task of expelling the Armenians from their homes and driving them into the Syrian desert … The army detailed soldiers and officers to oversee the deportation process. … Killing units were organized to slaughter the Armenians…”\textsuperscript{9} Behind all those crimes there stood the CUP which bore the main share of responsibility for the Armenian genocide.

The Holodomor Case

In the Holodomor-genocide case, it’s worth starting with Lenin’s Bolshevik party in Russia, which was a marginal force, however after the coup against the weakened Kerensky regime in 1917 the Bolsheviks found themselves in power. In the civil war between the “Whites” and the Bolsheviks (“Reds”) Stalin and his henchmen emerged as leaders of the red forces who imposed “war communism,” “an economic policy that repealed peasants’ land seizures, forcibly stripped the countryside of grain to feed city dwellers, and suppressed private commerce.”\textsuperscript{10} All who opposed those policies were “enemies of the people.” And number one in the list of enemies were Ukrainians with their strive for independence.

As stated by James Mace, in the summer of 1932 with Ukraine on the edge of mass starvation, Stalin’s top assistants Prime Minister Viacheslav Molotov and Agriculture Minister Lazar Kaganovich...
announced that Ukraine’s quotas for bread grain deliveries would stand at the level announced the previous May, however there wasn’t enough grain to meet the quota. On December 14, 1932 Stalin called the top leaders of Ukraine, the North Caucasus and the Western District to Moscow, where a secret decree was signed by Stalin and Molotov “On grain-collection in Ukraine, the North Caucasus and in the Western region,” in which the Central Committee (CC) of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (AUCPB) and Council of People’s Commissars (CPC) of the USSR directed the Communist Party and government leadership of Ukraine and the North Caucasus to resolutely root out the counterrevolutionary elements by means of their arrest, long sentences of confinement in concentration camps. That decree of the CC of the AUCPB and CPC of the USSR was one of numerous resolutions and directives which caused famine and were not only economic ones but had a clear link with the Ukrainian national issue. The resolution (postanova) demonstrates that the government feared the results of Ukrainization. It was believed that this policy of Ukrainization was implemented beyond the “allowed margins” and grain collection was to become a method of suppressing social and national resistance. This resolution clearly testifies that there was a direct connection between the policy of grain storage and the results of Ukrainization. In order to eliminate resistance to grain storage by “kulak elements and their party and non-party flunkeys,” CC of AUCPB and CPC of the USSR approved inter alia to propose CC of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks (CPB) and CPC of the Ukrainian SSR to pay serious attention to the proper implementation of Ukrainization, to eliminate its mechanical realization, to expel Petliurites and other bourgeois and nationalistic elements from party and state organizations, to thoroughly choose and bring up Ukrainian Bolshevik cadres, to guarantee systematic party leadership and control over the implementation of Ukrainization.

On 22 January 1933, Stalin sent a secret directive ordering Ukraine, Belarus, and the neighboring regions of the RSFSR to prevent the exodus of peasants from Kuban and Ukraine to the nearby regions of Russia and Belarus. The directive insisted that the exodus was organized by Polish agents and enemies of the Soviet regime to agitate against collective farms and the Soviet system. Local authorities and the OGPU were ordered to prevent mass departures and to immediately arrest the “peasants” of Ukraine and North Caucasus who made their way north. Roman Serbyn considers this directive to be “perhaps the best available evidence of the dictator’s genocidal intent against the Ukrainian people.”

All in all, in January 1933, Stalin took direct control of the Ukrainian Communist Party apparatus. His appointees, accompanied by tens of thousands of subordinates, initiated a campaign that led to the destruction of nationally self-assertive Ukrainian elite, the end of the Ukrainization policy and virtually all Ukrainian cultural self-expression, and the gradual return to the exclusive use of the Russian language in Ukraine’s cities and educational institutions.

The Holocaust Case

What concerns Nazi Germany, the defeat in the first World War resulted in political extremism in this state. As Adam Jones writes, its prime architect and beneficiary was the National Socialist (or “Nazi”) party, founded by Adolf Hitler and sundry alienated colleagues. Hitler, a decorated First World War veteran and failed artist from Vienna, assumed power was far from direct – by 1932, he seemed to many to have passed his peak. The Nazis won only a minority of parliamentary seats in that year’s elections; more Germans voted for parties of the Left than of the

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Right, but divisions between the Socialists and Communists made the Nazis the largest single party in the Reichstag and allowed Hitler to become Chancellor in January 1933. Once installed in power, the Nazis proved unstoppable and within three months, they had seized “total control of [the] German state, abolishing its federalist structure, dismantling democratic government and outlawing political parties and trade unions.” The Enabling Act of March 23, 1933 gave Hitler “carte blanche to terrorize and neutralize all effective political opposition.”

As stated by Adam Jones, immediately thereafter, the Nazis’ persecutory stance towards Jews became plain. Within a few months, Jews saw their businesses placed under Nazi boycott; their mass dismissal from hospitals, the schools, and the civil service; and public book-burnings of Jewish and other “degenerate” works. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped Jews of citizenship and gave legal shape to the Nazis’ race-based theories: intermarriage or sexual intercourse between non-Jews and Jews was prohibited.

According to Donald L. Niewyk, genocide was implicit in Hitler’s ideology, and it became explicit as part of the events surrounding Operation Barbarossa, the attack on the USSR in 1941.21 After Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, emigration of Jews gave way to their extermination. This policy resulted in the mobile killer bands, the death camps in Nazi Germany and in other states. Reinhard Heydrich, the most powerful SS leader after Himmler, submitted his plan at a conference of top Nazi officials in Wannsee in January 1942, which called for concentrating all the Jews under German control in Eastern European ghettos and labor camps.22 Thus, the responsibility for mass murder of Jews was placed by Nazi leaders in the hands of the SS (Schutzstaffel).

The collective intent to commit genocide

The ruling political monopolistic parties in three analyzed cases of genocide played the key role in formulating the intent to commit genocide. That was a “state level” of genocide which might be planned and organized by a few individuals who are acting as highest state organs.23 The concept of “collective intent” is not clearly determined in international law. As stated by Larry May, “[s]ometimes the term is used to mean that a number of people are working loosely toward the same end, perhaps unbeknownst to one another. To say that there is a collective intent in this sense is just to say that a number of individuals all have roughly the same intent to accomplish the same end. Sometimes the term is used to mean that there is concerted action in that the individual acts of many people are coordinated so as to achieve a single end.”24

Following L. May’s view, if to see genocide on the model of the Holocaust, the collective intent element seems to be easily met by showing that Hitler and his henchmen planned the extermination of the Jews in detail and then initiated their plan. “The plan plus the initiation is a form of collective intent in that the plan organizes the acts of many people and directs those acts toward the destruction of a group.”25

It is worth mentioning that the Ruling of the Kyiv Court of Appeal on 13 January 2010 ascertained that the Communist party of the USSR and the Communist party of Ukraine (Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Postyshev, Kossior, Chubar, and Khataievich) with the purpose of suppressing the national liberation movement in Ukraine and preventing the restoration and consolidation of an independent Ukrainian State, masterminded the genocide of a part of Ukrainian national group by creating conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction through the Holodomor of 1932–1933 (emphasis added).26

It was a collective special intent of the leaders of AUCPB to destroy a Ukrainian ethnic group in part. This plan did not appear in 1932 – the national liberation movement in the Ukrainian SSR started immediately after joining Ukraine to the USSR. That is why the time frames of the Soviet genocide in Ukraine should be expanded to the period from beginning of 1920s with the culmination in 1932–1933, following the scheme of the Soviet genocide in Ukraine proposed by the author of the term “genocide” Rafael Lemkin. The intent of the AUCPB to selectively exterminate Ukrainians, according to Rafael Lemkin’s view, appeared from the beginning of 1920s, when in 1920, 1926 and again in 1930–33, teachers, writers, artists, thinkers,
political leaders – the national brains – were liquidated, imprisoned, or deported. Later an offensive against the national churches – the ‘soul’ of Ukraine – was committed, when between 1926 and 1932, the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, its Metropolitan (Lypkivsky), and 10,000 clergy were liquidated. In 1945, when the Soviets established themselves in Western Ukraine, a similar fate was meted out to the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The next step was the starvation to death of a significant part of the Ukrainian peasantry – the repository of the national spirit of Ukraine; followed by the fragmentation of the Ukrainian people at once by the addition to Ukraine of foreign peoples and by the dispersion of the Ukrainians throughout Eastern Europe. In this way, ethnic unity was destroyed.27

Individual intent in genocide of ordinary party members depends upon their knowledge of the collective intent to destroy a group and participation in implementing this plan. “The question is not whether the individual has a genocidal intent, but whether there is a collective plan that the individual intends to participate in and knows the aims of, including the destruction of a group.”28 It is obvious that leaders of a ruling party who plan, initiate, or incite to commit genocide more clearly instantiates the collective intent than a person who is just participating in committing a crime. That is why, as L. May explains, the planners and inciters “should be more clearly responsible for the collective crime than are those who participate, although those who participate can also instantiate the collective intent as well.”29 Put it differently, “the planner plays a more significant role in the sharing of this intent than does the one who merely knows that he or she intends to contribute and knows of what is planned.”30 That means that share of participants is present in the intent, however lesser than share of organizers and inciters who were the leaders of ruling political parties in the three genocides mentioned above.

The connection between individual and collective intent is not always easy to establish. Answering the question if an individual intent can be the same as a collective intent, L. May analyzes putative and likely intentions of Hitler: “As he set out the plan of the Holocaust there seems to have been both a collective intent through establishing a master plan to destroy the Jewish people and also a personal intent to aim at the same end”.31 It is difficult to state whether the main organizer of the Holodomor-genocide, the leader of the AUCPB Stalin was as personally committed to a plan to partially destroy the Ukrainian people during the Holodomor as was Hitler during the Holocaust. Stalin hardly had any personal motives, but his key role in formulating the collective intent through planning and organizing the Holodomor is obvious.32

**Conclusion**

Thus, even this short comparison of totalitarian political regimes in the Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union and in Nazi Germany prove that, in general, the Armenian genocide, the Holodomor and the Holocaust happened because of different “isms,” be it ittihadism, communism, nazism which were the ideologies of ruling monopolistic political parties. In their desire to build a new society from scratch, they led to destruction of national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups as such. There was much in common between analyzed genocides in terms of organizers or the primary agents of genocide which were the organizations – ruling monopolistic parties. Nowadays the analogous ideology is rashism which was recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 2 May 2023 in a resolution which defined Russia’s political regime as rashism and condemned its ideological principles and social practices as totalitarian and hateful.33 Therefore, one may draw to the conclusion that the major source of the crime of genocide might be defined as monopolistic ideologies, and the genocides under comparison appeared to be primarily ideological. Russian genocide against Ukrainians which is ongoing with the culmination after 24th February 2022, no doubt, shares the key common element with other genocides – monopolistic ideology, hegemony of a ruling party and totalitarianism.

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28 May, Genocide: A Normative Account, 121–2.
29 Ibid., 122–3.
30 Ibid., 123.
31 Ibid., 124.
ГЕГЕМОНІЯ КЕРІВНОЇ ПАРТИІ ЯК СПІЛЬНИЙ ЕЛЕМЕНТ У ВІРМЕНСЬКОМУ ГЕНОЦИДІ, ГОЛОДОМОРІ ТА ГОЛОКОСТІ

З розвитком в останні десятиліття порівняльних геноцидних студій як другого покоління геноцидних студій важливо проаналізувати Голодомор як злочин геноциду, вчинений Комунистичною партією Радянського Союзу, у порівнянні з іншими геноцидами. У цій статті авторка пропонує порівняльний аналіз Голодомору з геноцидами першої половини XX ст., а саме Вірменським геноцидом Оттоманської імперії і Голокостом нацистської Німеччини з погляду їхніх виконавців (організаторів). Авторка порівнює ці три геноциди як злочини за міжнародним правом в аспекті одного із суб'єктивних елементів геноциду, що є характерним для кожного з них, зазначаючи схоже і відмінне в керівних політичних партіях як організаторах цих злочинів, які здійснили свої колективні наміри у кожному з аналізованих геноцидів. Саме організатори злочину геноциду, які є лідерами керівних політичних партій, несеять основну відповідальність за злочин геноциду, оскільки їхня роль у поширенні геноцидного наміру визначальна порівняно з тими, хто знає про існування такого наміру і сприяє його втіленню.
Авторка доводить, що гегемонія керівної партії: італьянські, комуністів і націоністів, які піднімали собою державну організацію, була спільним елементом геноцидів в Оттоманській імперії.
Радянському Союзі та Третьому Рейху. Нині аналогічною ідеологією є рашизм, який був засуджений постановою Верховної Ради України 2 травня 2023 р. як російський політичний режим, що характеризується такими соціальними практиками, як тоталітаризм і людиноненавистництво.

На підставі проведеного аналізу авторка доходить висновку про те, що основним джерелом злочину геноциду можна визначити монопольні ідеології, а проаналізовані геноциди були передовсім ідеологічними. У тривалому російському геноциді проти української нації, кульмінація якого розпочалась 24 лютого 2022 р., знову наявна керівна партія «Єдина Росія», яка створює фундамент російського тоталітарного режиму, що організував цей злочин. Геноцид українців з боку російського режиму, що триває досі, також має зазначений спільний елемент з іншими геноцидами – монопольну ідеологію, гегемонію керівної партії і тоталітаризм.

**Ключові слова:** Вірменський геноцид, Голодомор, Голокост, організатори злочину геноциду, гегемонія керівної партії.

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