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Finding Reconciliation: A Comparative Analysis of Post-Genocide Reconciliation in
Armenia, Germany, and Cambodia

by

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the Department of History

Idaho State University

Fall 2023

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Thesis Abstract--Idaho State University (2023)

The twentieth century marked the worst atrocities witnessed by mankind, among the forefront of this is genocide. Three of these genocides, Armenia, Germany, and Cambodia will be examined in this thesis. Each case is different; however, after these genocides each society reconciled toward a more cohesive whole. Each genocide went through a formal reconciliation, informal reconciliation, and commemoration process. As a whole, survivors and the society showed amazing resiliency after experiencing such horrific tragedy and loss. Many scholars have written about each of the genocides examined. This project is unique because it draws upon primary sources along with work of the scholars who have written about the examined genocides to compare and contrast each genocide and its reconciliation process. Putting different genocides in conversation with one another brings a new aspect to the table in this very full field of genocide studies. This thesis draws upon comparative history, transnational/global history, and memory history. As genocide is studied more as a whole and analyzed for common threads this can then be applied to conflicts around the world. On the side of reconciliation, as it is better understood how societies heal from mass atrocities these lessons can then be applied to societies that are in the healing process. In learning from the reconciliation process of twentieth century genocides, it can help with the twenty-first century conflicts and societies that are mourning and trying to commemorate.

Keywords: Armenian Genocide, Cambodian Genocide, commemoration, genocide, Holocaust, reconciliation

Introduction

Genocide is defined as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.”¹ According to the United Nations, these acts include killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction of the group, imposing measures intended to prevent births, or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.² With this broad definition genocide has happened all throughout history. However, genocide, on a large scale, has been primarily a twentieth century phenomenon. Throughout the twentieth century, we see over and over again the deliberate systematic murder of millions in the form of genocide. Early into the century, we see genocide in Turkey and Armenia in 1915-1923, then again in Germany in 1938-1945, and yet again in 1975-1979 in Cambodia. Several more genocides occurred throughout the century and still genocide continues today. The genocidal cases of Armenia, Germany, and Cambodia were chosen for this study primarily based on diversity of the conflict and of the post-conflict reconciliation.

A variety of primary source documents, testimonies, and personal accounts, along with an examination of the memorials and the details of their construction, in addition to the plethora of secondary source book and journal articles that have already been written about the genocides are used to examine and support the analysis of reconciliation. This thesis leans on the secondary sources of genocide scholars because so much has been written about each genocide. Several

¹ “Genocide,” Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations, last modified 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

² United Nations, “Genocide.”

books on each genocide also outline the post-genocide transition and reconciliation. Testimony and first-hand accounts from survivors was also used heavily to allow the survivors to tell their stories and their individual path to reconciliation. Though much has been written on the topic of genocide and on each individual genocide, the nuance of this thesis lies in the comparison of the genocides and their post-conflict reconciliation processes. Each case is different, however, after these genocides each society reconciled toward a more cohesive whole. Armenia, Germany, and Cambodia each went through a formal reconciliation process with a trial of top leaders and some international recognition of the genocide. They also went through an informal reconciliation process where individual survivors learned to reconcile with the past and move forward. Additionally, all three countries went through the commemoration phase where the genocides were remembered and honored in society. Each country has at least one large museum and monument commemorating the genocides.

In Armenia, the population of Turkey and Armenia dramatically transformed during WWI. Up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed or exiled from the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923. By 1923, virtually all of the Armenians disappeared from the Anatolia Peninsula.³ For years scholars have researched and written on this genocide. Much of the scholarship is focused on the details and perpetrators; not as much research has been done on post-genocide commemoration and reconciliation. The overall theme of reconciliation is vital for the Armenians, as more than one hundred years have passed, and they are still trying to reconcile with the genocide. Themes of formal reconciliation, informal reconciliation and commemoration still hang in the balance as only pieces of each have been accomplished. The lack of formal

³ “Armenian Genocide (1915-1923),” Armenian National Institute, last modified 2022, <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/genocide.html>.

recognition by Turkey has fractured relations between the two countries and holds Armenia back from full reconciliation and healing. Auerbach illuminates this block in reconciliation, "without an apology, without recognition of what happened, the past cannot return to its place as the past. . . . Reconciliation built on mutual apology . . . has no chance against vengeance, unless it can replace the respect entailed in vengeance with rituals in which communities once in war learn to mourn their dead together."⁴ In Armenia, although individuals and the country of Armenia made progress toward reconciliation, it was halted because of the lack of recognition from Turkey.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime were responsible for approximately 12 million deaths during the Holocaust. World War II (WWII) destroyed cities and millions of citizens were sent to concentration camps and murdered. After the conflict ended, it took Germany and Europe a long time to rebuild and come back together. The Holocaust affected all of Europe and many of the victims were from Poland or other countries in Europe; however, this study will look primarily at Germany and how Germany reconciled after the Holocaust. Germany took commendable efforts to reconcile. The German government offered an official apology, paid reparations to victims and descendants, and tried top Nazi leaders and those involved with the conflict. Individual survivors came to their own place of forgiveness and healing from the trauma endured. Survivors and Germans have shown amazing resiliency and been able to bounce back to strong individuals and a strong country. The Holocaust is the most remembered and commemorated genocide with memorials and museums all around the world. It is taught in many schools and largely written about. After the Holocaust, Germany transformed

⁴ Yehudith Auerbach, "The Reconciliation Pyramid—A Narrative-Based Framework for Analyzing Identity Conflicts," *Political Psychology* 30, no. 2 (2009): 292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25655390>.

and tried hard not to return to their Nazi past. They have done their part to reconcile and society as a whole has gone through extensive healing and remembering of the Holocaust.

In Cambodia, Pol Pot's regime and the Khmer Rouge genocide ravaged Cambodia from 1975-1979, decimating the population and completely altering the country and its inhabitants. Almost everyone lost someone they cared about in the genocide, many lost multiple family members. After the genocide, the people were left to put the pieces back together and to repair their lives and society. The question remained how to accomplish this. Cambodia underwent the formal reconciliation process with the military tribunals of top Khmer Rouge leaders as the country and world recognized the genocide, although they were very delayed and inadequate. Individuals and the society had to undergo an informal reconciliation process with individuals using art, music, and other mediums to deal with their grief and loss in the genocide and find a way to live side by side again. Finally, Cambodia underwent and still is undergoing the commemoration phase with the dedication of Choeung Ek Genocidal Center and Tuol Sleng Genocidal Museum along with the current work of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. These phases of reconciliation have brought Cambodia to where it is today, an extraordinarily resilient country with the shadow of the genocide in the past continuing to inform and shape its future.

These three countries each went through a tremendous upheaval during the genocide, yet afterward they were able to come back together and live peacefully again. In some cases it took time and was gradual process. The effects of the genocide are still felt today in each country. How each country went through the phases of the reconciliation process following the genocide greatly shaped the future of the country. The formal reconciliation process demonstrates the

perpetrating government's action taken to provide justice for the genocide. The informal reconciliation process relies more on individual's paths to reconciliation and finding peace, which in turn helps society reconcile. The final phase of commemoration shows how the genocide is remembered and honored in society. For each country examined the phases of formal reconciliation, informal reconciliation, and commemoration were critical for each country and the progress or lack of progress of these phases determined how the nation would heal.

Background of Conflicts

Armenia

The Armenian Genocide had a precursory glimpse of what was to come in the Ottoman Empire. In 1894-96, Kurdish troops known as the *Hamidiye* attacked Armenian villages, especially in the Sassun district and massacred the inhabitants. This was a small war but employed total-war strategy.⁵ They annihilated villages, destroyed property, and killed all in their path. Regular troops, Turkish leaders, and the Ottoman leadership stood by and let it happen. This was an indication to the Armenians what was possible.

In 1915, the total-war strategy was employed again with the Armenians. The Young Turk political movement in Turkey in the early twentieth century led to a drive for Turkism, which was an attempt to establish a Turkish nation and identity in Anatolia. This did not include the large group of Armenians living in Anatolia. Under the Young Turk leadership, the total war doctrine included complete elimination either through murdering or forcibly exiling the Armenian population from Anatolia. The Ottoman Empire was under collapse so there was no help from the Ottoman leaders who looked the other way as the Young Turks ravaged Armenia. They raided village after village and either sent the people on a long march into the Syrian desert with nothing or murdered them. Many died along the way to the Syrian desert. They died of fatigue, starvation on the march, or they were shot because they were too weak to make it. Many of the women were raped by the Turkish soldiers.⁶ After the raids, the villages were easy plunder and wide-spread looting from the soldiers occurred. All of this happened against the backdrop of

⁵ Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 37.

⁶ Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 39-46.

WWI, so it was easy for the Ottomans and Turks to blame it all on acts of war and part of a military operation.⁷ After WWI, Turkey's movement onto Armenian land in Anatolia continued, though now it was largely unoccupied. The Armenian refugees from the desert moved back trying to regain their lives, moved further into Armenia, or migrated to different countries around the world and started anew.

Germany

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews and six million others by the Nazi German regime. The precursor to the Holocaust began in January 1933 when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. At first it started with the Nazis enacting discriminatory laws against the Jews. Antisemitism was common in Europe for hundreds of years and many pogroms and killings of Jews had taken place long before the Nazi regime. A major stepping-stone happened November 9-10, 1938, a night of looting and destruction known as *Kristallnacht* burned or damaged around 7,500 Jewish businesses and 1,000 synagogues throughout Germany.⁸ Jews were soon gathered to Ghettos, where they were later transported to concentration camps where they were forced to do hard labor or were gassed to death. Other groups besides Jews were targeted and sent to concentration camps or killed, these included Romas, communists, political leaders, intellectuals, homosexuals, mentally retarded, physically disabled, emotionally disturbed, and anyone else who posed a threat to the Nazis or was seen as inferior. As Germany invaded Poland, the Balkans, and the Soviet Union special killing units called the Einsatzgruppen rounded up and shot the Jews and

⁷ Hovannisian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 39-46.

⁸ "Holocaust Summary," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Holocaust>.

other targeted individuals into mass graves.⁹ As the Holocaust progressed the Final Solution of the Nazis, or the deliberate elimination of Jews and other inferior people to make more living space for a superior Aryan race, became more systematic and rapid in its progression. More and more Jews and other inferior people were sent to death camps and millions were murdered. Finally, the Holocaust came to an end May 1945, as Allied Powers (Great Britain, United States, and the Soviet Union) defeated Nazi Germany and their troops liberated the concentration camps. Overall, around 12 million, 6 million of those Jews, were murdered, in the Holocaust and German society was forever changed.

Cambodia

The Cambodian Genocide lasted less than four years, yet it played a huge role in the shaping of the country and forever altered its trajectory. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a tumultuous time for Cambodia, they were overtaken by other countries, and internally they switched leadership many times. In 1970 the monarch, Prince Sihanouk, who enjoyed a reign of fifteen years, was forcibly removed from office by his own national assembly. Over the next few years, a civil war and fight for control broke out with the Vietnamese Communists gaining much of the political control. The people were so desperate for stability and to be ruled by their own government of Cambodians. A strong sense of nationalism emerged and ideas rebuilding Cambodia back to its former greatness were at the forefront of citizens minds. Finally on April 17, 1975 Pol Pot's communist regime, known as the Khmer Rouge came to power.¹⁰ They emptied the cities and forced urban residents to migrate to the country where they were forced to do manual agrarian labor. Families were separated and people were forced to regroup

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Holocaust Summary."

¹⁰ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 4th edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008) 233-254.

in agricultural communes. The Khmer Rouge attempted to destroy institutions like the former state, schools, industries, religion, and factories. They executed intellectuals, professionals, and monks. All allegiances were made to the “Angkar” or the organization. Between 1.5 to 2.5 million Cambodians were killed, around 25-30% of Cambodia’s total population.¹¹ They were executed by the state because they were seen as a threat, worked to death, or starved to death from the lack of food produced by the new agrarian state.

Eventually, in early 1979 Cambodia was taken over by Vietnam who then helped establish the People’s Republic of Kampuchea.¹² The Khmer Rouge was forced to flee to parts of Western Cambodia; they still remained a threat to the Vietnamese authority. The Khmer Rouge was supported financially and militarily for the next eleven years by other countries around the world who opposed Vietnam’s control of Cambodia like the United States, United Kingdom, and China. Finally, with the help of U.N. forces the Vietnamese were pushed out and Cambodia was set up as its own country. However, many Khmer Rouge leaders remained in power including the current long reigning Prime Minister Hun Sen. He became the leader of the Cambodian People’s Party in 1985 and maintained a high place in government ever since. He is currently the longest serving prime minister in the world. Cambodia has never really had a free and open democracy and has held on to many traditions from the Khmer Rouge.¹³

¹¹ “Former M-13 prison/ Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (former S-21)/ Choeung Ek Genocidal Centre (former Execution Site of S-21),” UNESCO World Heritage Convention, last modified 2023, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6461/>.

¹² Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 277.

¹³ Casey Quackenbush, “40 Years After the Fall of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia Still Grapples with Pol Pot's Brutal Legacy,” *Time*, January 7, 2019, <https://time.com/5486460/pol-pot-cambodia-1979/>.

Chapter I: Formal Reconciliation

Armenia

Formal reconciliation is perhaps the most fragmented piece of the reconciliation puzzle for Armenia. For over one hundred years, Armenians have been waiting for recognition, admittance, responsibility, and reconciliation from Turkey. Until those things are fully given, there will always be a piece of Armenian healing that is missing. Immediately following the war, there was talk of a tribunal for war crimes. Without fully admitting the scale, there was some acceptance that some of the atrocities that happened to the Armenians should not have happened. July 5, 1919, the top leaders of the Ittihad and Terakki Parties of the Young Turks were convicted for seizing private property and transferring assets to a small group of leaders, causing countless Ottoman subjects to perish from lack of nourishment, and murder. It was verified that, “massacres that took place in Kaza of Boghazlayan, the Sanjak of Yozgat, and the Vilayet of Trebizond were organized and perpetrated by the leaders of the Ittihad and Terakki Pary. ... no steps were taken to prevent their repetition; nor were arrangements made for the punishment of the original criminals.”¹⁴ Talaat Pasha, Prime Minister; Enver Effendi, Minister of War; Djemal Effendi, Minister of the Navy and Dr. Nazim, Minister of Education were sentenced to death while Djavid Bey, Minister of Finance; Mustafa Sheref Bey, Minister of Trade and Farming and Musa Kiazim Effendi, leader of Ittihad Party were sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor.¹⁵ These formal sentences for the top leaders did much for Armenian justice and formal reconciliation. However, they would not bring back their homes or loved ones. This was all that

¹⁴ “Verdict (“Karaname”) of the Turkish Military Tribunal,” July 5, 1919, Armenian National Institute, last modified 2022, <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/genocide.html>.

¹⁵ Armenian National Institute, “Verdict (“Karaname”) of the Turkish Military Tribunal.”

was done after WWI. There was no other form of reconciliation or reparation. In light of losing land, homes, and families for approximately 1.5 million, only seven men were sentenced.

Formal talks and calls for justice were silent for the next thirty years. As the world was busy fighting another world war and witnessing another genocide; there was no talk of Armenia and the suffering of 1915. However, at the conclusion of WWII and the atrocities committed by the Germans to the Jews were on display, the Armenians remembered. It is at this point the community of Armenians, both in Armenia and outside, started to compare what had happened and see the similarities. Armenians called the 1915 massacre *Medz Yeghern* meaning “Great Catastrophe” or “Great Crime” which was kind of an equivalent of the word *Shoah* used by European Jews.¹⁶ In 1944, Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide from the Greek word *genos* meaning “race” and the Latin word *cide* meaning “killing.” This was a new term and concept for the destruction of nations.¹⁷ By the late 1940s, Jews were using this term to describe the Holocaust. Armenians saw the similarities and pushed to have their massacre and forced migration in the early twentieth century included in the definition and be formally called a genocide.¹⁸

Other than the small awaking after WWII and the push for the use of the term genocide, for the first 50 years after the great crime no one really talked about the genocide or what happened at least on a large scale. Armenia was silent about the genocide, and certainly Turkey would not talk about what happened in 1915. The distractions of a second world war and Armenia becoming part of the Soviet Union kept both countries preoccupied. There was also a fear in Armenia to speak out or show nationalism in Stalin’s regime. After Stalin’s death in 1953 and

¹⁶ Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 139.

¹⁷ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 132.

¹⁸ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 132.

the loosening in Soviet State, Armenians felt more comfortable showing a national pride and a push for remembrance. It wasn't until April 24, 1965 that the genocide was publicly commemorated. It led thousands to gather in Yerevan to commemorate the genocide, which turned into massive protests for the Soviet Union to recognize the Armenian Genocide. It also led to terrorist attacks in Turkey.¹⁹ The year 1965 sparked people to publicly talk about the events of 1915 and what happened. Turkey continued to deny the genocide and claimed it was part of the war. Armenians still called for justice and for Turkey to publicly admit their wrongdoings. Relations between the two countries were tense.

Eventually, relations began to improve. In 2000, the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) met; this opened a dialogue between the two countries. They met several times in the subsequent years and agreed the atrocities of 1915 were bad, but the word genocide was not brought up on either side.²⁰ On October 10, 2009, The Protocols were signed by Turkey and Armenia in Zurich with the Swiss and Americans mediating the agreement. The Protocols were to normalize relations between the two countries and reopen the Turkey-Armenian border; however, due to difficulties involving for parliamentary ratification, a year later Armenia announced that it would withdraw officially from The Protocols and put the two countries back in deadlock.²¹

Several countries around the world have stood up and sided with Armenia. They have made formal recognition of the suffering of the Armenian people at the hand of the Turks from 1915-1923, they even used the term genocide. As of 2022, there are 31 countries around the world that formally recognize the Armenian Genocide.²² The international support has helped the

¹⁹ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 140-141.

²⁰ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 211-212.

²¹ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 232-234.

²² Armenian National Institute, last modified 2022, <https://www.armenian-genocide.org/genocide.html>.

Armenian people feel less isolated and find some recognition, but there still needs to be a formal recognition in the form of Turkish acceptance.

Today relations between Armenia and Turkey are tense. Turkey still refuses to acknowledge the genocide and use the word genocide to describe what happened in 1915. Armenia still pushes for reconciliation and acknowledgement from Turkey. There have never been any reparations, no returning of the Armenian land Turkey took, no form of compensation, and no apology. Though there seems to be a recognition from the international community for Armenia and for a time relations between the two countries improved, there is still the acceptance of wrong and recognition that is holding Armenia's public memory from moving on.

Germany

After WWII ended, German society did not simply go back to how things were before the war. The war left society devastated. The existing social structures did not function the way they did prior to the war. There was still shortages of food and other commodities. Rations continued after the war. Many items were still not able to be obtained legally so they had to be gotten on the black market. Looting and stealing also ran rampant.²³ This illegal activity continued for years until imports became more accessible and the German market resumed normal function. Another major problem after was that the freed prisoners that had been released slowly returned home. Many people found that they no longer had homes to go back to. Others were afraid to return to their homes. They became part of a mass group of displaced persons.²⁴ The European countries still trying to recover from the war did not have the capabilities to deal with a mass

²³ Harald Jahner, *Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich 1945-1955* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021), 170-175.

²⁴ Jahner, *Aftermath*, 44-45

group of displaced people. Homes were not able to be built fast enough and there was not a thriving economy to help cover the cost of rebuilding. Some lived in refugee camps for years before they were able to build a home or immigrate to another country. The new state of Israel was created in 1948 giving the thousands of displaced Jews a place to go. This provided a new home free from persecution. The Holocaust completely transformed people's lives and it took years for them to recover from the physical devastation of war.

One of the major problems with the war was the physical decimation it left behind. Many buildings were destroyed and parts of many cities across the country turned to rubble. Jahner describes the massive amounts of rubble, "the war left 500 million cubic meters of rubble behind." "Whole districts had been completely destroyed. There were 40 cubic meters of rubble for each surviving resident of Dresden."²⁵ Rubble became a part of people's everyday life. Some houses were missing walls, and residents climbed through rubble to get to their apartment buildings. Fortunately, volunteers came forward to help clean up the rubble and beautify the cities. In Berlin after the war, nearly two-thirds of its population was now women. These women worked hard to clear the rubble and separate usable brick and construction material from other debris. These women were known as the "Trummerfrauen," or women of the rubble.²⁶ Slowly the German cities were rebuilt, and the physical damages of the war disappeared. Cleaning the cities was one way that Germans began to reconcile with the war and the Holocaust.

Additionally, Germany has taken commendable steps to confront its role as perpetrator of the Holocaust. They have paid restitution and compensation for Holocaust victims and their descendants and tried to restore things wrongfully taken during the Holocaust. From 1945 to

²⁵ Jahner, *Aftermath*, 13.

²⁶ "Trummerfrauen: Women of the Rubble," National Museum of the United States Air Force, last modified 2023, <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/197658/trummerfrauen-women-of-the-rubble/>.

2018 the German government has paid \$86.8 billion in restitution and compensation to Holocaust victims and heirs.²⁷ They have also returned over 16,000 Nazi-looted art works, books, and objects.²⁸

Following WWII the Allied victors occupied Germany, with the United States, France, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom each occupying a zone. In November 1947, the U.S. military enacted Military Law Number 59 which enabled the return of property that had been seized under the Nazi regime to its rightful owners. The French and United Kingdom zones soon followed suit with similar laws.²⁹ 1949 West Germany was given back its county and the Federal Republic of Germany was established, the Soviet Union still occupied the Eastern portion of Germany. In September 1951 German Chancellor Adenauer delivered a historic speech asking for forgiveness for the crimes of Nazi Germany and stating that he was ready to commence negotiations on reparations. The following month more than 20 Jewish organizations met in New York to form the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany which led to the Luxembourg Agreements and provided payment of 3 billion Germany Marks (\$714 million USD) in goods and services to the State of Israel. It also provided payment of 450 million (\$107 million USD) from the Federal Republic of Germany to compensate individuals. In 1956, the Federal Republic of Germany passed the Federal Compensation Act which covered other Nazi injustices not covered by the other laws. It provided payments for physical injury, damage to health, restrictions on personal freedom, harm to economic and professional growth, and damage to personal property. Many claims were settled, and many people compensated under this additional law. As of mid-2019 approximately 25,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide

²⁷ “The JUST Act Report: Germany,” U.S. Department of State, last modified 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/germany/>.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State, “The JUST Act Report: Germany.”

²⁹ U.S. Department of State, “The JUST Act Report: Germany.”

still received a monthly pension for “damage to health.”³⁰ The German government tried to do their part to help Holocaust victims and provided billions of dollars to help ease their burden and repay for the suffering caused by their Nazi predecessors.

In addition to the reparations to victims of the Holocaust top Nazi perpetrators were also tried for their part in the Holocaust. The culmination of these trials was known as the Nuremberg Trials. Nuremberg was chosen as the place for the trials because it was a focal point for Nazi propaganda rallies. The Allies wanted Nuremberg to symbolize the death of Nazi Germany. Twenty-four Nazi government officials and seven organizations were charged by an International Military Tribunal lead by the Allied victors with crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The trials took place between November 20, 1945 and October 1, 1946. Top Nazi leaders and officials were tried. Unfortunately, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler and Robert Ley committed suicide before they could stand trial, with Ley committing suicide the day before his trial. Footage of Nazi concentration camps along with detailed descriptions of the Final Solution were powerful evidence at the trials. On October 1, 1945 the International Military Tribunal convicted nineteen of the defendants and acquitted three. Twelve were sentenced to death, three were sentenced to life imprisonment, and four to prison terms from 10 to 20 years. Following the main Nuremberg Trials, subsequent trials were held. From 1946 to April 1949, 177 high-ranking physicians, judges, industrialists, SS commanders and police commanders, military personnel, civil servants, and diplomats were tried.³¹ The trials provided accountability for the actions of the Nazi period. They helped the victims and country reconcile with the horrors of the Holocaust. They provided some justice and

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, “The JUST Act Report: Germany.”

³¹ “The Nuremberg Trials,” The National WWII Museum, last modified 2023, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/topics/nuremberg-trials>.

helped society confront the past. Fred Silberstein, who was an Auschwitz survivor served as a witness and provided evidence against the Nazi's during the Nuremberg Trials. When asked why he wanted to serve as a witness he responded, "I wanted to prove you won't do this again."³² He did his part testifying against the perpetrators of the Holocaust to ensure it wouldn't happen again. He said standing-up against those that had caused him so much suffering was very important to him and made him feel like he was doing something and making a difference.³³ Like Silberstein many Holocaust survivors saw the trials, whether they participated or not, they realized that the Nazi leaders and guards weren't getting away with the crimes they had committed, thus the trials provided a sense of justice and some reconciliation.

Overall, Germany has done their part in trying to provide formal reconciliation for the genocide. They have held trials of top Nazi perpetrators. They took responsibility for the Holocaust and issued a formal apology. They have paid billions in restitution to victims and their families. They have physically rebuilt the cities, formed a new country and government and moved on. The great progress Germany has made in the phase of formal reconciliation helped victims heal and begin to reconcile with the past.

Cambodia

Following the genocide, the country of Cambodia had to undergo a formal reconciliation process. One of the first things the Vietnamese government did in August 1979 was try Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge, and Ieng Sary, the Khmer Rouge foreign minister. It was called the "People's Revolutionary Tribunal." They heard testimony of atrocities including widespread

³² "Fred Silberstein," *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2023, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/36981?from=search&seg=1>.

³³ "Fred Silberstein," USC Shoah Foundation.

torture and executions committed by the regime. The tribunal convicted the two leaders of genocide and sentenced them to death. However, both men remained at large and were yet to be found. These trials were largely symbolic and a show trial, with neither man actually being put to death. In April 1998, before Pol Pot could ever be brought to justice he died of natural causes. After years of negotiations the United Nations and Cambodia finally created a tribunal in 2003 that would apply both international and Cambodian law. It was six more years before the first leader was brought to trial. By this time thirty years since the fall of the Khmer Rouge many of the leaders had died.³⁴

The first of these trials was Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, a former commander of Tuol Sleng, a large prison during the Khmer Rouge. He was sentenced to life in prison. There were four rounds of trials. The next round convicted the former deputy secretary of the Communist party and again Ieng Sary the former foreign minister. Sary died while waiting to be sentenced. Most of the leaders in the four rounds were found guilty of homicide and crimes against humanity and sentenced to life in prison.³⁵ Justice had been served for a few of the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, but it was only a few top leaders and took years and years before any justice was ever served that many avoided the punishment. It is hard to reconcile while spending years waiting for justice to be served, and for some like Pol Pot justice never was served.

Another major obstacle to Cambodia's healing after the war was the international refusal to recognize and support the Vietnamese government after their takeover in 1979. Since Vietnam had broken international law by occupying another country, there were calls not to recognize

³⁴ "Cambodia," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia/case-study/justice/tribunal>.

³⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Cambodia."

their authority and they were isolated internationally. This prevented vital help that needed to be given to a country that had just experienced genocide. Many refugees were trapped in camps in Thailand afraid to return to their homes in Cambodia and blocked from going anywhere else. To further complicate matters, many countries and the UN recognized the Khmer Rouge still as the official representatives for Cambodia during this time. Eleven years after their fall, they still were the official representative and also received funding and support militarily. This kept the conflict going and left Cambodia in a war zone even though the Khmer Rouge had been overthrown. Finally, in 1989 Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia. However, it took two more years before the UN sent peacekeeping troops in to help the country find stability and reestablish a government.³⁶ That was twelve years since the end of the genocide that Cambodia was in instability and unable to start the reconciliation process.

The Cambodia Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) made a significant contribution to Cambodia's rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development. Immediately following the genocide, NGOs provided urgent relief. Through the 1980s, NGOs provided relief to the country's most vulnerable. They also provided financial and technical assistance to support the rebuilding of the country. NGOs helped in rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and initiated many community development activities.³⁷

Programs and outside partners helped Cambodia turn the country around after the devastation of the Khmer Rouge. The United Nations was a major player. The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia saw the repatriation of 370,000 Cambodians. Most of these spent more than a decade in border camps in Thailand. They also helped facilitate a space for and

³⁶ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Cambodia."

³⁷ Grant Curtis, *Cambodia Reborn? The Transition to Democracy and Development* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 131.

supervised a neutral election.³⁸ Other projects like the Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration Projects of the early 1990s helped with the vital infrastructure that was needed. The Resettlement and Reintegration Project rehabilitated and maintained roads, dug and drilled wells giving potable water to an estimated 250,000 people, and helped with the irrigation and production of nearly 17,000 tons of rice. This project also constructed new schools, rehabilitated old schools, constructed new infirmaries and health centers, along with a variety of other projects.³⁹ Major projects like this one helped Cambodia recover from the ravages of war and give people vital basic needs. Thanks to the help of internal and external partners Cambodia was able to physically recover from the genocide even though they are still much further behind than they would have been without the genocide.

Analysis

Armenia and Germany provide a stark contrast for comparison in formal reconciliation. Armenia never received an apology or any recognition of the genocide from the perpetrating government. They did have a few top leaders stand trial which provided a sense of justice, but that is all. Germany on the other hand did issue a formal apology, they provided billions of dollars of restitution to victims and their families, and had very extensive military trials for perpetrators. Even directly following the Holocaust there was a recognition of what had happened and an international outrage. The Armenian genocide was remarkably silent for fifty years without much recognition.

On the other hand the justifications for the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust were remarkably similar with both groups wanting to make more room for their racially superior

³⁸ Curtis, *Cambodia Reborn?*, 151.

³⁹ Curtis, *Cambodia Reborn?*, 169.

group. Both were hidden behind the guise of a world war, so that it was easy to blame the deaths on war activities and there was not as much investigation into what was happening in the country internally. Tactics were also similar with both using mobile killing units and shooting victims into mass graves they dug themselves. The Turks and the Germans both used concentration camps with deplorable conditions to work and house their victims. One difference being that the Armenians had to walk to their camps in the Syrian desert while the Jews were transported by train. The German concentration camps were also far more advanced at killing with gas chambers and quick systematic deaths upon arrival for many. The Holocaust was far more systematic and efficient with killing. Thus, it was responsible for a far greater number of deaths than the Armenian or Cambodian Genocides. Though the two genocides were similar in location, motivation, time period, war time, and tactics the formal reconciliation for each was dramatically different. This is why the Jews and Germany have been able to more fully reconcile and heal from the trauma. While the Armenians and Turks still have a very fragmented relationship and the Armenians cannot move on from the genocide.

The Cambodian Genocide stands out because it was not racially motivated. It was politically motivated. There were not two racially and culturally different groups living side by side, it was all one nation. The breakdown for the Khmer Rouge was the intelligentsia or the educated upper class versus the working class. It was harder to tell apart the two groups though it remained a critical distinction. The tactics were also different; there were no large killing camps, however, there were work farms where citizens were forced to do hard labor which killed many. Widespread executions of opponents or people seen as threats to the regime was a tactic used in all three genocides. There was also a large element of starvation in Cambodia. This happened in the other two genocides, but not on the same scale as Cambodia. Cambodia starvation was not as

targeted. Unlike in Europe where only those in the camps starved while average citizens had plenty to eat, in Cambodia there was not enough food for anyone but the top elite. The average workers were starving to death on mass scale. The formal reconciliation for the Cambodian Genocide lies somewhere between the dichotomy of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Top leaders were tried and sentenced even though it was 30 years after the genocide and many of them had already died. The long period of political instability in Cambodia after the genocide hindered Cambodia's process to reconcile. It took a long time before a stable government was established that tried to repair some of the damage of the genocide. Thanks to help from NGOs Cambodia was able to physically recover from the setbacks of the genocide and civil war. Cambodia is still reminded and held back in growth from its past, but it is not impeded from moving on like Armenia, yet it is not to a place of power and growth despite its past like Germany.

Chapter II: Informal Reconciliation

Armenia

A big obstacle for each survivor after the war, after procuring basic food and shelter, was coming to terms with the genocide and finding inner reconciliation and peace. Some never would. Overall, survivors went through extraordinary hard circumstances: being forced to leave their homes, many left their families, lost loved ones and friends, marched for miles on end exhausted and starved only to make a new home in a desert. Many moved and started over again and made a new life for themselves in a new country with nothing but the massive barriers facing an immigrant in their way. Despite all of these challenges, many survivors were able to move forward and have fulfilling lives.

One problem after the WWI was the lost generation of parents. There were many children that were able to escape the genocide and go to a refugee camp but were either separated from their parents or their parents had died. These children felt lost and alone. They were usually taken in by another foster family, often Bedouin families in the Syrian desert. Then after the war, they were sent to an orphanage, eventually to be adopted by a foreign family and sent away. One stirring example of this was Lucine who, as a young child, escaped the genocide and was taken in by a Bedouin family. While living with the Bedouin family, she was given tattoos of tribal markings on her face. After the war, she was transferred and grew up in a Danish orphanage. Eventually, she was taken in by a family as a nanny. Lucine remembered in the orphanage being ashamed of the tattoos and painstakingly plucked the tattoos from her chin with her fingernails.⁴⁰ One of the children Lucine nannied wrote “She was an orphan who didn’t know who she was,

⁴⁰ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 95-96.

who her parents were, when or where she was born, or even her real name.”⁴¹ Lucine was not alone in this narrative, there were many Armenian Genocide survivors that couldn’t remember much about a very distant past of where they came from or their real family. The genocide took their identity away from them and they wandered uncertain of who they really were.

Each survivor had to come to a place of reconciliation of what happened during the genocide, and those they lost. They had to go through their personal grieving process and find a way to release the negative emotions and heartache of the genocide. One example of a survivor who learned to channel their grief was the Armenian artist Leon Tutundjian. Tutundjian was forced to leave his mother behind during the genocide when he was sixteen or seventeen and migrate to Paris. His art is prevalent with self-portraits of himself as a young man around the same age he was when the genocide occurred. This shows that throughout his life, he was still haunted with the genocide.⁴² One example is the painting of a yellow mask, believed to be the portrait of Tutundjian as young man, propped up by a baren tree in a desolate land. This image Jean Murachanian believes symbolizes himself, unable to take root and have a self that is connected to the earth by losing his home. He is not even connected to his body, symbolizing the loss of his family and the disconnect in his identity that the genocide caused. He never really embraced his European life and friends, that was shown by the desolate images showing isolation and a void in his life. The color yellow denotes jealousy and his envy of those around him for fitting in and having found their place in the world. In the painting, the face is held up by red poles and sticks, which represent painful wounds or memories for the past, poking up through his mask. His art shows detachment and fracturing, however; over time they begin to

⁴¹ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 95-96.

⁴² Jean Murachanian, “Leon Tutundjian—Trauma in ART,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard G. Hosvannisian (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2007), 122-136.

show subtle positive signs of healing.⁴³ His art facilitated his healing and was a way for him to express himself and what he went through. Through his art, he found personal reconciliation with the genocide. It may not have been art for other survivors, but others like Tutundjian found a place of healing and internal reconciliation for the land, loved ones, and life they lost.

Another trying thing for genocide survivors was the dispersion of their community. Armenians were expelled from Anatolia, hundreds of thousands died along the way to the Syrian Desert. The ones that did survive had nowhere to live. At first, they occupied refugee camps in the Middle East. Then, after the end of WWI, the Armenia community spread throughout the world. Some stayed in the Middle East, some went to what is formally Armenia today, many migrated to Europe, and many migrated to North America.⁴⁴ The diaspora of survivors created a fragmented identity for surviving Armenians. For those that were in Armenia, they had to restart a country devastated by war and the huge loss of territory. With a smaller country and a large group of displaced moving into the smaller country, it was difficult to pick back up where they left off. They, at least for the most part, had existing structures and a common identity, even if it was one that was attacked by the Turks. For those refugees who migrated to other countries around the world it was harder to fit in. There were language barriers, housing, and jobs to overcome.⁴⁵ Their sense of identity had been torn apart and they were forced to restart in a foreign land with nothing. David Waldstreicher writes “For Armenian-Americans, the Genocide adds up to more than a historical tragedy; it remains the shaping event of their lives, and the reason they came to fashion a new life on a new continent. To ask them to forget is to ask them

⁴³ Jean Murachanian, “Leon Tutundjian,” 122-136.

⁴⁴ Ramela Grigorian Abbamontian, “The Diaspora Witness: Reconstruction of Testimony by Contemporary Los Angeles Artists,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard G. Hosvannian (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2007), 122-136.

⁴⁵ Ramela Grigorian Abbamontian, “The Diaspora Witness,” 122-136.

to forget who they are.”⁴⁶ These survivors lived in the constant shadow of the genocide as it marked all that they did and were constantly reminded of their past while trying to forge a new life. In many cities where there were many immigrants from Armenia, they were able to form a small Armenian community and share a collective identity. However, in many places this lacked, and individuals were left to reconcile alone. As the shadow of the genocide encroached their individual lives they were waiting and wishing for a formal reconciliation from Turkey, which never fully came.

Even among survivors there is a strong call for justice for the Armenian cause. Reverend Vartan Hartunian, who is an Armenian Genocide survivor, speaks out on this issue. He calls for truth and that there is a gap in history that cannot be whole without the Turkish government admitting the wrongs committed in 1915-1919. He says, “we love the truth and without the entire truth history will never be able to help us.”⁴⁷ Telling an accurate history and admittance by the Turkish government will help Armenians. He believes that hatred can never be constructive and that he does not hate the Turks, but that they are brothers in humanity. He stands as a witness as a survivor of the genocide. He calls for reconciliation and to stop denying the genocide and revealing all the facts.⁴⁸ Hartunian is not alone. Many of the genocide survivors are seeking justice and calling for Turkey to admit their wrongs and tell the truth about the Armenian Genocide.

⁴⁶ David Waldstreicher, quoted in Ramela Grigorian Abbamontian, “The Diaspora Witness: Reconstruction of Testimony by Contemporary Los Angeles Artists,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard G. Hosvannian (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2007), 122-136.

⁴⁷ “Vartan Hartunian,” *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2022, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/53301?from=search>.

⁴⁸ USC Shoah Foundation, “Vartan Hartunian.”

Germany

The Jews that survived the Holocaust largely immigrated to other countries. The State of Israel was created May 1948. With that establishment brought streams of refugees; around 140,000 Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel.⁴⁹ Others also immigrated to the United States and other countries in Western Europe. Between 1945 and 1952 the U.S. admitted 400,000 displaced persons.⁵⁰ Even though many Jews did not stay in Germany and didn't have to try and live side by side with those who persecuted them they still had to reconcile with their past. It was often difficult to survivors to talk about the persecution of the Holocaust. There was instead an uncomfortable silence. This uncomfortable silence was especially present in Post-WWII Germany as many Germans tried to move on and busy themselves. Jewish survivor and writer Hannah Arendt, after coming back to Germany after some time abroad, described the attitudes of the country as, "widespread indifference." There was a refusal to admit what had actually happened and come to terms with it.⁵¹ She says, "a shadow of deep mourning had settled all over the whole of Europe, but not over Germany. Instead, a feverish manic industriousness served to keep reality at bay."⁵² She described them as zombies trying to occupy themselves to not have to deal with the past.⁵³ For many in Europe there was a big push to move on and not deal with the past, to forget about WWII and all of the atrocities that were committed. Focusing only on the present and the future was one strategy for many survivors trying to rebuild their countries.

Despite the focus on the present there still remained the nightmares of the past. The past simply did not disappear because one wasn't looking at it. In order to deal with the past there had

⁴⁹ "Refugees," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/refugees>.

⁵⁰ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Refugees."

⁵¹ Jahner, *Aftermath*, 303-304.

⁵² Jahner, *Aftermath*, 303-304.

⁵³ Jahner, *Aftermath*, 303-304.

to be some element of forgiveness. Forgiveness helped survivors not be harrowed up in constant anger and allowed them to have peace with the past. Holocaust survivor William Morgan describes his philosophy on forgiveness, “my mind and heart are sort of in conflict, how can you not hate when they have killed you, on the other hand what do I gain by hating, to carry hate in my heart. It is history, I have to forgive. Carrying hate in me takes some of the pleasure and happiness I can give to my children. I am a believer that hate is counterproductive.”⁵⁴ This profound lesson helped many Holocaust Survivors. As Morgan articulated holding on to hatred did not serve anyone and was only hurting the individual holding onto it. Learning to forgive despite how impossible it felt helped those Holocaust survivors who were able to do so. Morgan took it one step further and said that Jews should also be involved in the community. Jews need to promote unity and show the world the good that Jews bring and offer to the world. By and large, they are people that enrich a country and community and it needs to be spread that they lift not put down the community.⁵⁵ Many survivors like Morgan learned to forgive, move on, and helped build up the community wherever they lived.

Part of the problem with forgiveness is that usually those hurt have to forgive without hearing an apology or seeing any remorse from the perpetrator. Many times it is too late and the perpetrators are gone. Jahner says, “There is no mechanism within Jewish law for extending forgiveness to perpetrators who did not and now cannot, repent.”⁵⁶ A gap has been opened by the Holocaust that cannot be bridged nor forgiveness granted. The debt is too big and now the perpetrators are gone to offer such repentance. This gap was almost impossible for survivors to

⁵⁴ “William Morgan,” *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2023, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/55145?from=search>.

⁵⁵ USC Shoah Foundation, “William Morgan.”

⁵⁶ Peter J. Haas, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Jewish Memory after Auschwitz,” in *After-words: Post-Holocaust Struggles with Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Justice*, ed. David Patterson and John K. Roth (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 14.

bridge, yet it had to be bridged and relationships between survivors had to resume. This was an internal battle for many people directly following the Holocaust and extended years after, with the gap or lack of repayment for the atrocities committed never being satisfied. Relationships had to be viewed in shadow of reality, “it cannot be swept away by pious formulas of forgiveness. But this does not mean that future relationships cannot be constructed. In some sense, we really have no choice but to learn to trust each other and live together, even as we always feel a horrid past breathing over our shoulders.”⁵⁷ Despite the debt and the gap from the Holocaust people came back together and started to build relationships again across ethnicities and religions.

Art was also one way for survivors to express what they had gone through. For one artist in particular, Alice Lok Cahana’s art and writing served as a way for her to honor those that died in the Holocaust. Alice was one of the few survivors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. She says that, “all of us who survived took a silent oath, made a promise, to tell a glimpse of the story. My goal as an artist and Holocaust survivor is to affirm life, to build bridges between peoples, and to make others aware of the great danger of prejudice and hate.”⁵⁸ As Cahana used her art to tell others about her past it also helped her deal with the past. It helped her come to terms with her past as she showed others what had happened. She acted as an advocate for other in terrible situations and used art to warn the world of the dangers of prejudice and hate. This helped her feel like she was doing something and making the dark times of her past into something positive. Her paintings capture the dark times at Auschwitz they portray train tracks leading to darkness, people behind bars, prisoner numbers, and darkness and despair. Cahana did very well with her artwork and had several exhibits where she was able to spread her message. Her paintings hang

⁵⁷ Haas, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Jewish Memory after Auschwitz,” 25.

⁵⁸ Shelley Hornstein, Laura Leavitt, and Laurence J. Silberstein, *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 263.

in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.⁵⁹ Cahana used her art to tell her story, remember the past, and educate others about the Holocaust.

Another fellow survivor who found art as an outlet for her trauma was Miriam Katin. She used comics to tell her story. She has published two graphic novels about the Holocaust, *We Are on Our Own* was published in 2006, and in 2014 *Letting It Go* was published. These books are used in schools and are a great way for a younger generation to connect with history and learn about the Holocaust.⁶⁰ Her work has helped her come to terms with her past and all she experienced. She said it snuck upon her gradually, as she was going about her daily life she didn't really think about it, then when she would she would she noticed the pain from her past wasn't as harsh and her feelings weren't as hard. She was gradually healing. Putting herself in her work and processing her feelings through her work really helped. She felt like she was carrying around a heavy load and after completing her second work she noticed that burden was much lighter.⁶¹ She also learned a great lesson about forgiveness from her mother. When asking her mother why she should stay in the country after the Holocaust her mother responded, "you can't live in hatred because it will destroy you. You have to forgive, for the ones that were good to you, the good people. You have to be able to laugh."⁶² Katin was able to forgive and find reconciliation on her own mostly through her art. She was able to let go of the hatred and not be destroyed by it. Katin like many other survivors found her own way to reconciliation and dealing with the past that helped her move on and be able to laugh again.

⁵⁹ Hornstein, *Impossible Images*, 263.

⁶⁰ "Miriam Katin," *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2023, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/57183?from=search&seg=50>.

⁶¹ USC Shoah Foundation, "Miriam Katin."

⁶² USC Shoah Foundation, "Miriam Katin."

The survivor accounts above are just a few examples in an ocean of examples and accounts from the Holocaust. There are many other sources that could also exemplify informal reconciliation after the Holocaust.⁶³ Overall, Holocaust survivors found forgiveness despite all the horror that they endured. They found a way to let go of hatred and progress. They lived for the good people that tried to help and those that did nothing wrong during the Holocaust. While many moved abroad, many did return to their homes in Germany and Eastern Europe and they found a way for society to come back together again and live side by side.

Cambodia

As individuals found ways to reconcile with the genocide, it made it easier for society as a whole to reconcile. As individuals moved on and led happy lives after the genocide, so can society too move on. The following are a few examples from many that exemplify those that were able to reconcile with the genocide and move forward with their lives. One example of a young man moving on after the genocide is Lao Sunthareth. Lao was a student at university when the Khmer Rouge took over. Lao and his family were forced out of Phnom Penh and went to live in an isolated small hut in the Sa-Ang District. Later they were evacuated to the Battambang Province and were forced to be laborers. They ate nothing but rice soup except at harvest time. He watched people starve to death around him. He lost his brother to the Khmer Rouge. Finally, when the Vietnamese took over, Lao and his family were able to return to Phnom Penh. Lao was one of the lucky ones who did not lose as much or as many family members as others. He was

⁶³ See Rebecca Clifford, *Survivors: Children's Lives After the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). Ronald J. Diller, *From Darkness to Light: Testimonies of Six Holocaust Survivors* (Brookline, MA: Cherry Orchard Books, 2021). "Survivor Reflections and Testimonies," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified 2023, <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-reflections-testimonies>.

able to return to school and eventually become a surgeon.⁶⁴ Lao Sunthareth survived the genocide and was able to put it behind him and move forward continuing his school to achieve his goal to become a surgeon. Many of the Cambodians did not have it as easy as Lao, but they too were able to move forward after the genocide and have fulfilling lives.

One survivor, Kong Chamroeun, tells of his experience during the genocide and how he found peace with it. He and his wife were separated, as was the case with most families. Kong writes of his legs being swollen from malnutrition and having so very little to eat. He writes of people all around him dying and he was so afraid he would be killed. His wife worked in a rice mill and caught someone stealing rice; however, when she reported it, the supervisor was a friend of the thief, so instead he sent Kong's wife and his seven month old baby to die. When Kong heard of their deaths, he was devastated.⁶⁵ Over time Kong was able to reconcile and deal with these losses and hardships suffered under the Khmer Rouge. He writes, "Today, I have a good business working as a barber in Siem Reap. ... My second wife is Put Mary. Her husband, a high-ranking Lon Nol soldier, was killed and her two children died during the Khmer Rouge regime. We started a family and had five children. I live at peace now."⁶⁶ The fact the Kong says he now lives at peace with his past shows he has reconciled with the past. As Kong Chamroeun was able to find reconciliation with the genocide and move on, countless others in Cambodian society had to do the same thing. The past is still carried with them and still shapes their present and future, but miraculously somehow they are able to have a new life post-genocide and find

⁶⁴ "Lao Sunthareth, Student," Documentation Center of Cambodia, last modified 2023, <https://dccam.org/survivors/lao-sunthareth-student>.

⁶⁵ "Kong Chamroeun, Postal Worker," Documentation Center of Cambodia, last modified 2023, <https://dccam.org/survivors/kong-chamroeun-postal-worker>.

⁶⁶ Documentation Center of Cambodia, "Kong Chamroeun, Postal Worker."

happiness and peace once again. As individuals move forward and find reconciliation in their personal lives, society as whole is able to do the same.

Music and the arts are a way that some survivors have found healing from the genocide. Rithy Panh and Him Sophy, genocide survivors, wrote “Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia.” The requiem is performed with a mixture of Western and traditional Cambodian instruments. For three movements, the piece shows a mournful lullaby and brutal sounds of the genocide to give way to peaceful healing. It appeared at Brooklyn Academy of Music. Panh also produced “First They Killed My Father” movie with Angelina Jolie about the Cambodian Genocide.⁶⁷ Music and film have been big influences in reconciling with the past for Panh. He is able to create something for others to experience that will allow them to see as he did and feel as he did. His works are deeply moving and tell the tale of his past. As art, music, and film about the genocide are able to be shared with others, other survivors can also mourn and come to terms with the genocide. Jolie said, “Coming to terms with the past is an important part of the country’s ability to move forward. The revival of arts is a powerful symbol of Cambodia’s ability to survive beyond the Khmer Rouge and to recover from their horrific legacy.”⁶⁸ The arts are one way Cambodia has been able to express its loss and come to a place of healing and peace.

Another piece that helped survivors to move forward and find healing was the 2009 play *Breaking the Silence: A New Cambodian Play*. This play brings singers and dancers together for survivors of the genocide to tell their story of what happened to them under the Khmer Rouge. It uses arts to convey what couldn’t be said or talked about for the past thirty years. Though it is directed by a Dutch playwright, Annemarie Prins, Cambodians real stories are at the forefront of

⁶⁷ Joshua Barone, “Genocide Survivors Compose a Requiem for Cambodia,” *New York Times*, December 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/13/arts/music/bam-cambodia-khmer-rouge-genocide-requiem.html>.

⁶⁸ Barone, “Genocide Survivors Compose a Requiem for Cambodia.”

this play. It works with the Documentation Center of Cambodia along with Muslims and other minorities to make sure the stories of minorities under the Khmer Rouge are told.⁶⁹ When the play premiered Youk Chhang, the director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, wrote, “there had been a long silence that had lasted for decades and [been] kept alive by fear, pain, and politics.... Breaking the silence was the most powerful play since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979.”⁷⁰ The power of this play has helped actors and those involved along with the audience viewing the play realize and start to deal with their past. Prins said the goal of the play was to “find a way out of trauma’s silence; contributing to open dialogue as part of the process of reconciliation.”⁷¹ The play provided a channel of communication to talk about the genocide. It provided the dialogue that was needed to help people through the reconciliation process.

Analysis

In summation, across all three countries examined, survivors used the fine arts as a way to tell their story and express their anguish. They found creating something about their past was therapeutic and healing. They also wanted to tell others about what they had experienced and give others a feel of what genocide was like. Art was a way to express emotions otherwise hard to put into words. In return, as others experienced their creations, the artwork, poetry, plays, movies, music, and other creative works, they were able to put themselves in the survivor’s shoes for a moment. Experiencing emotions and creative works stays with someone more permanently

⁶⁹ Alexander Laban Hinton, *The Justice Façade: Trials of Transition in Cambodia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 187-190.

⁷⁰ Hinton, *The Justice Façade*, 191.

⁷¹ Hinton, *The Justice Façade*, 191.

than just reading facts about the genocide. Survivors and others expressing themselves through the fine arts is a powerful way to ensure the memory of the genocide is not forgotten.

In this comparison the case of Germany was unique because of the creation of Israel. After the Holocaust, Jews had an option not to return home. They could move to a new country that was created just for them, free from persecution and start new lives. This was very enticing to many. Thus, not very many Jews returned home to Germany and had to live side by side with those that persecuted them and were responsible for killing their friends and family members.⁷² This is different than in Armenia and Cambodia where many did immigrate after the genocide, but many stayed and had to rebuild and try to forgive their neighbors.

Overall, the informal reconciliation and individual healing process for all three countries was the same. Each individual went through indescribable horrors and lost family members and friends. They had to find a way to forgive and not be consumed by hatred and anger. Those that immigrated post-genocide had to start new lives, leave behind family and friends, move to a new country, often times learn a new language, and completely start over. All of their former life and all they knew vanished during the genocide. For those that chose to stay, these people had to return to their lives pre-genocide, try to pick up the pieces, and continue on. Many had to face people that were on the other side during the genocide, those that turned their back against them, and lashed out in hatred. Facing them, continuing to live a normal life, coming back into society, and becoming a contributing member once again is remarkable. They found a way to live in the same society where they were persecuted and watched so many around them be put to death. Survivors that faced life post-genocide showed great resiliency.

⁷² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Refugees."

Numerous survivors also turned to action as a way to further reconcile with the past. They pushed for justice, rallied around the building of monuments and museums, organized conventions and other gatherings, and told their stories while helping educate others about the genocide. Survivors taking action was a powerful force to be reckoned with and brought about a lot of the commemoration of the genocide. It would have been easy for survivors to stick to themselves and not reach out. They had experienced so much and it would have been easier for them to leave the past alone and not talk about it or remember. This was not the case for countless survivors who became more active after the genocide because they wanted to be sure their story was told. They pushed for the wrongs to be made right and that the genocide would not be forgotten. For them, taking the harder path and becoming an activist was a way to help stop the cycle and prevent future generations from experiencing what they did.

Chapter III: Commemoration

Armenia

A memorial provides a public space for people to gather, remember, and think about the event. It ensures it is not forgotten with the subsequent generations. Commemoration can be an individual endeavor, or it can be something created for the public to share in the memory and give the public a space to come together and remember what happened. Armenia's commemoration happened in phases. At first survivors held their own private memorials or honored the genocide their own way. For the first fifty years the public large-scale commemoration was silent.

Commemoration can take place through personal means like art, music, writing, films, photographs, or any other medium that helps people remember and honor those in the genocide. Following the war, many survivors wrote memoirs, made films, and expressed themselves creatively about the tragedy they went through. This was a way to commemorate what they had gone through and share it with others. This continued in the next generation, with them trying to honor and remember the genocide their parents and grandparents went through. One example of this was the Armenian-American rock group *System of a Down*. Many of their songs have a political agenda and represent a violent and harsh past. In particular, their song P.L.U.C.K. commemorates the genocide for them while calling for restitution from Turkey. Some of the lyrics are "the plan was mastered and called genocide, took all the children then we died, the few that remained were never found, all in a system, down... now it's time for restitution,

recognition, restoration, reparation.”⁷³ For *System of a Down*, this was a way for them to remember and honor the genocide. It was a way to spread remembrance and commemorate the event that affected their families and pushed them to move to the United States. It also carries their political message. Even in the commemoration, individual and collective, there is a push for justice and for Turkey to admit their wrongdoings. The survivors long for it and cannot fully move on until the formal recognition, restoration, and reparation are done.

Though individuals commemorated the genocide their own way it was a long time before there was a big push for collective commemoration. In 1965, fifty years after the Armenian Genocide, the public finally started talking about the massacres and wanted to do something to ensure the genocide was not forgotten. They wanted a public space to show what they had gone through and for people to come and remember. This is when the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex was envisioned. It took a couple of years of planning before it was built and dedicated in Yerevan in 1967.⁷⁴ The memorial was pushed for and led by local Armenians who had survived the genocide and their children who wanted to honor the past. This was brought to the Soviet government and met with support. There was more acceptance of individual countries pursuits under Brezhnev. There was a competition for designing the memorial. Sixty-nine Armenian diasporan and local architects took part. The design from architects Arthur Tarkhanyan and Shashur Kalashyan was chosen. The memorial was dedicated on the 47th anniversary of Soviet rule in Armenia, November 29, 1967, with the whole Soviet party leadership and tens of thousands public supporters present. The event was also broadcasted on

⁷³ Jack Der-Sarkissian, “Musical Perspectives on the Armenian Genocide: From Aznavour to ‘System of a Down,’” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard G. Hosvannisian (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2007), 223.

⁷⁴ Joachim J. Savelsberg, *Knowing about Genocide: Armenian Suffering and Epistemic Struggles*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2021), 70-73, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2rb75hq>.

TV and radio. The memorial is set on a hill for all to see with the tall pillars stretching up conveying the spirit of a nation that survived a ruthless campaign of extermination.⁷⁵ These tall pillars encircle the eternal flame at the center to remember and honor those who lost their life in the genocide.

The memorial complex was finally complete in 1995 when the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute was built. It was built by decree from the first president of the Republic State of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, for the 80th anniversary of the genocide. The two architects chosen for the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial, along with help from some others built a stone like castle underneath the existing memorial structure. The flat roof is a viewpoint looking out at the mountains. On the wall is carved the map of Western Armenia with a 45-meter square where the massacres and deportations took place. The museum has been reconstructed and expanded for a rededication on the 100th anniversary of the genocide, April 21, 2015.⁷⁶ From the complex's beginning hundreds of thousands of people visit on April 24 to pay tribute to the memory of the innocent martyrs. The complex was greeted with open arms and much celebration. During the year the museum is visited by tens of thousands of visitors from all around the world.⁷⁷ The museum provides a place to remember and for the public to visit to learn about the genocide. It is a place to house any artifacts remaining from the genocide and a place to ensure the story of the Armenians during WWI is told.

⁷⁵ Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, last modified 2021, <http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng>.

⁷⁶ Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation.

⁷⁷ Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation.

Germany

Remembering is essential for the reconciliation process, especially having physical monuments and places to remember and reflect. Survivor Roald Hoffman puts it well, “remembering, especially institutional remembering is important before one can forgive. . . . I want people to remember and I will do what I can, at the same time I will not become obsessed by that memory.”⁷⁸ Roald did all he could to help preserve the memory of the Holocaust and help educate others about it. He thought remembering was essential for moving forward. Survivors had to confront their past and remember those that were lost. Yet, they had to try not to become obsessed with the past and try to move on and live in the present.⁷⁹

Shortly after the end of WWII there was a push to commemorate. At Auschwitz in April of 1946 a group of former prisoners sent by the Ministry of Culture and Art came to protect the site and start to set up a museum there. The museum was opened to the public June 14, 1947. The full museum was not opened at this time; however, different exhibits were slowly opened after they were developed. The museum consisted of a different sections showing the story of the prisoners, international sections for each country that had citizens deported to Auschwitz, and a section on the other concentration camps. The museum also featured a mausoleum and tribute to those who lost their lives there. The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism in Birkenau was unveiled in 1967.⁸⁰ The museum has been open to the public ever since and seen

⁷⁸ “Roald Hoffman,” *Visual History Archive*, USC Shoah Foundation, 2023, <https://vha.usc.edu/testimony/52107?from=search>.

⁷⁹ “Roald Hoffman,” USC Shoah Foundation.

⁸⁰ “History of the Memorial,” Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, last modified 2022, <https://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/history-of-the-memorial/>.

millions of visitors. In 2022 alone the museum saw 1 million 184 thousand visitors all looking to remember and commemorate the Holocaust.⁸¹

Other concentration camps followed suite, Dachau opened as a memorial site in May 1965.⁸² After the war Sachsenhausen was used as a Soviet Special Camp to detain former Nazis and political opponents. The camp was closed the spring of 1950.⁸³ In the mid 1950s the Central Committee of Germany's Socialist Unity Party erected three national memorials at Buchenwald, Ravensbruck and Sachsenhausen.⁸⁴ Many of the Nazi concentration camps across Europe were turned into museums or memorials. This helped preserved the history of the Holocaust and provided people several places to learn, remember, and reflect about the Holocaust all across Central and Eastern Europe.

Memorials commemorating the Holocaust throughout the world were created. Today there are numerous monuments to the Holocaust in cities across the United States from small cities like Boise, Idaho to big cities with multiple monuments and museums like Los Angeles or New York City. Countless cities in Europe have monuments to the Holocaust and those that lost their lives, especially in cities where it happened.

One of the biggest monuments to the Holocaust is the one in Berlin. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is 200,000-square-feet square, located in the city center. It is composed of 2,711 concrete slabs of varying heights arranged in a rigid grid.⁸⁵ Each pillar is 95

⁸¹ "News," Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, last modified April 1, 2023, <https://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/1-million-184-thousand-people-visited-the-memorial-in-2022,1595.html>.

⁸² "Historical Site and Memorial Site," KZ- Gedenkstätte Dachau, last modified 2023, <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/en/historical-site/historical-site-memorial-site/>.

⁸³ "1945-1950 Soviet Special Camp," Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen, last modified 2023, <https://www.sachsenhausen-sbg.de/en/history/1945-1950-soviet-special-camp/>.

⁸⁴ "1961-1990 Sachsenhausen National Memorial," Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen, last modified 2023, <https://www.sachsenhausen-sbg.de/en/history/1961-1990-sachsenhausen-national-memorial/>.

⁸⁵ Spencer Bailey, *In Memory of: Designing Contemporary Memorials* (New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2020), 28.

centimeters wide and 2.275 meters long with heights varying from 0 to 4 meters. They are all each 95 centimeters apart. They variance in height forces the spaces to condense, narrow and deepen for a multilayered experience.⁸⁶ It is designed to have the viewer enter into the pillars and walk between them. The multilayers gives the viewer a chance to peel back the layers of the genocide, analyze, and truly dig deep. The monument is dedicated to the Jews of Europe who were murdered in the Holocaust, but much more than to whom the monument is dedicated the meaning of the monument is left to the individual viewing the monument. It purposefully provides a contemplative space for the viewer to reflect on the mass atrocity and what it meant for society and how it could be applied to themselves. Walking between the pillars provides an interactive immersive experience, a chance for the viewer to fully be embodied in the work, It is very different from the surroundings of the city. It would be a big surprise to view if it was not known that it was there. There is a stark contrast between the concrete slabs and that of the busy cityscape and tall buildings. It also disrupts ones feelings, by forcing them to question why it is there and what it is. It breaks up thoughts and causes reflections on the Holocaust and the millions of lives lost. This is a grand moment of dissensus when walking by thinking of the mundane details of everyday life. The memorial is strategically placed in the city to cause this dissensus daily for residents. It is a constant reminder of the disruption that the Holocaust caused in society and the lives that were lost.

One of the other biggest commemorators of the Holocaust is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. On November 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust chaired by Elie Wiesel, a member of congress who was also a Holocaust survivor. When the committee reported back to President Carter on September 27,

⁸⁶ "Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe," Eisenman Architects, 2005, <https://eisenmanarchitects.com/Berlin-Memorial-to-the-Murdered-Jews-of-Europe-2005>.

1979 they recommended a national Holocaust memorial/museum, an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience. In 1980 the United States Congress unanimously voted to form the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. This committee worked for several years on the establishment of a museum. Finally on April 22, 1993 the museum was dedicated by President Clinton and opened to the public.⁸⁷ The large museum has seen millions of visitors. It displays documents and artifacts from the Holocaust and helps the visitor learn about and remember the Holocaust. It is one of the largest collections of Holocaust artifacts and stories and one of the biggest displays about the Holocaust. This museum shows the close relationship between the United States and Europe by having such a large museum dedicated to an event the U.S. was not a direct participant. This museum is also indicative of the large number of Holocaust refugees that immigrated to the U.S. There was a demand for it here and there is also still a great appreciation for it. Furthermore, this museum also goes beyond just telling the history of the Holocaust to partnering with other organizations to help commemorate and prevent genocide. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum provides a great place to remember and learn about the Holocaust to ensure it is not forgotten.

Cambodia

An important phase of reconciliation that helps people remember and heal is commemoration. The largest and most prominent memorial for the Cambodian Genocide is Choeung Ek Genocidal Centre. Before the Khmer Rouge, Choeung Ek was a Chinese cemetery and orchard. The Khmer Rouge transformed it to a large execution site. Nearly every night,

⁸⁷ “History of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/history-of-the-united-states-holocaust-memorial-museum>.

prisoners were taken there by trucks to be killed. Thousands died at the site. In 1980, many remains of the victims were exhumed and examined. Choeung Ek became a protected UNESCO World Heritage Site and opened for visitors on January 7, 1989. A Buddhist stupa was built near the entrance to the compound and houses thousands of skulls from the Khmer Rouge victims murdered there.⁸⁸ The stupa is clear, so the skulls are on display for visitors. This helps visitors physically see those who have lost their lives at the site. Visitors can also walk around and take a personal audio tour of the site. This allows them to have a quiet reflective space to fully comprehend all that transpired there. Boardwalks and paths have been constructed around a large pit where a majority of the bodies are buried; however, human remains are still visible on the ground in many parts of the path, visitors can tell they are walking on the remains of thousands of people executed at the hand of Khmer Rouge. It is a somber contemplative place that helps visitors connect with the genocide and really feel its magnitude. It also provides a place to remember and make sure that the genocide is not forgotten. The genocide is still present in Cambodian society and Choeung Ek is a place to find remembrance and reflection of the past to be sure that it is still part of the narrative of the country.

The other major site of commemoration for the Cambodian Genocide is Tuol Sleng. Tuol Sleng was one of the early prisons that the Khmer Rouge established in two adjacent former schools built in the 1960s. It was used by the Khmer Rouge before they gained control over the entire country. Although they had other prisons around the country, this is the only one that has been converted into a site of memory and learning. An estimated 18,063 men, women, and children were detained at Tuol Sleng. Many were tortured and executed here while many others were taken to Choeung Ek to be killed.⁸⁹ Very few made it out of Tuol Sleng alive, the death

⁸⁸ UNESCO, "Former M-13 Prison."

⁸⁹ UNESCO, "Former M-13 Prison."

rate at this prison was more than 99%.⁹⁰ In January 1979, the site was abandoned and left empty. Eventually the building was turned into a museum and visitors were allowed to come and tour the prison. There are pictures of the former prisoners. Tour guides offer tours telling about the prison and what it was like and how very few made it out of the prison. In 2019, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum was dedicated a UNESCO World Heritage Site and given protection.⁹¹ Again, like Choeung Ek, Tuol Sleng has transformed from a place of darkness and murder to a place of remembering and education. It is a place for Cambodians to come and learn about the genocide and commemorate those that lost their lives there. This helps Cambodians look back as they move forward.

In addition to the two large state-sanctioned memorials several local-level memorials mark former Khmer Rouge prisons and mass graves. They were largely constructed by the municipal, district, or village authorities primarily in the early 1980s. Cook says, “local memorials provide a public space for remains of victims and a location where religious rites could be performed. The building of local memorials, predominately in the form of *stupa*, fused preexistent religious practice with official concern for the maintenance of evidence of crimes against the populace.”⁹² These memorials stand as tributes to the past and a constant daily reminder to members of the community of those they have lost and what they suffered under the Khmer Rouge. Many of the local memorials have been rebuilt since the early 1980s. These are funded by the local community and the labor donated by the local citizens. Cook continues describing the memorials and the connection to the community: “these memorials are also supported by the local people who believe that the sites should be maintained for the education

⁹⁰ UNESCO, “Former M-13 Prison.”

⁹¹ UNESCO, “Former M-13 Prison.”

⁹² Susan E. Cook, ed., *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda: New Perspectives* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 265-266.

of others and out of respect to the dead.”⁹³ This respect for the dead and desire to educate others led to the memorials construction; it keeps the genocide remembrance alive today in Cambodia. Unfortunately, not all the memorials constructed right after the genocide live on today. Many sites have not been maintained and exposure to the elements has caused much deterioration.⁹⁴ This shows the state’s priority is not in commemorating the genocide at least on a small-scale since they have let these local memorials deteriorate and disappear. Despite the lack of governmental support, these local-level genocide memorials have helped the country remember the genocide as they are widespread, many people pass them daily. They instill a remembrance and honor for those lost as well as serve as a way keep the past ever present in the current mind of the country.

One large force of commemoration in Cambodia is the Documentation Center of Cambodia, which preserves documents from the genocide. The mission of the center is, “to research and record the era of Democratic Kampuchea for the purposes of memory and justice.”⁹⁵ They provide training for teachers, preserve documents, produce films, preserve genocide sites, and try to preserve anything related to the genocide. This group is working to ensure the genocide is not forgotten. It is their mission to make sure the genocide is still fresh in the country’s memory. Even though Cambodia is reconciling and healing, places like the Documentation Center of Cambodia ensure that the lessons learned from the genocide are included in the future.

⁹³ Cook, *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda*, 272

⁹⁴ Cook, *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda*, 272.

⁹⁵ Documentation Center of Cambodia, last modified 2023, dccam.org/home.

Analysis

Each of the three genocides examined has undergone a commemoration phase of the reconciliation process. Although they were all in very different places with the formal reconciliation, each country has successfully undergone the commemoration phase. That success is shown by each genocide has been commemorated by the individual survivors making art, music, plays, poetry, and talking about the genocide. These survivors and their children ensure the genocide is not forgotten and is honored and remembered today. More formally, each country has a large museum about their respective genocides. Each country also has a large memorial to the genocide along with several small local monuments and memorials throughout the country.

Overall, the Holocaust has been heavily commemorated around the world. It is the most well-known, studied, and remembered genocide. Kids are taught about it in schools; it is commonplace knowledge for most people. There are numerous memorials and monument for those who were murdered in the Holocaust. It also has the highest number of museums, by far, than any other genocide. It is well-remembered in society. Armenia and Cambodia do not have the international presence nor did they have the international response that the Holocaust did. A majority of their museums and monuments are within their individual countries, whereas Holocaust memorials and museums are located throughout a variety of cities and countries. This heavy commemoration and education of the Holocaust is due to the fact that WWII was so all-encompassing. It also received a lot of attention because Germany was a large world power at the time who was very involved in world politics. Since the U.S. was involved in WWII it is given prominent place in the telling of U.S. history along with it the unfolding of the Holocaust during WWII. The U.S. and Europe have very strong ties and many Jewish refugees immigrated

to the United States, which helped push for the remembering and education of the Holocaust.

These all combine to make the Holocaust a much more prominent genocide on the world stage.

In summation, although Armenia, Germany, and Cambodia have different ways of remembering and commemorating the genocides that took place in their countries, all three countries have found a way to honor those whose lives were lost in the genocide. For all three countries commemoration has been an important step in the reconciliation and healing process. Creating a space to educate, remember, honor, and reflect about the genocides has brought many survivors and community members much comfort and peace. They know that the memory of the genocide will not be forgotten, and perhaps as others take time to remember they will ensure it does not happen there again.

Conclusion

In Armenia, through informal reconciliation and commemoration, the survivors of the genocide have been able to live as normal of lives as possible. They have been able to come to live with the dark shadow of their past. There is an effort to remember the genocide and educate those about it, but without cooperation from Turkey, the reconciliation is dammed. Barken articulates this point, “the memory of the Armenian Genocide, and not its repression, can lead to reconciliation. To reach this point of acknowledgement both sides must participate in the journey willingly and hopefully benefit from it.”⁹⁶ The formal reconciliation was not continued after the military tribunal which has led to a hostility between the two countries. The fragmented Turkey-Armenian relationship still exists, stemming from the genocide, further hindered by Turkey’s refusal to accept blame and label it a genocide. Armenians have persisted in their calls for the admission of guilt from Turkey and for the catastrophe to be labeled a genocide. Until this happens, the Armenians cannot complete their reconciliation despite all that has been done. There will always be a hole in history. In 1966, an Armenian newspaper published the question “‘Can Armenians ever forget? Must the tragedy of the past be forever evoked?’ And the answer must be that they cannot forget or forgive until justice is done.”⁹⁷

Germany, on the other hand, has gone through the reconciliation process the most completely out of the three countries examined. It has had military trials of the top perpetrators, an official apology, and reparations to the survivors. Its country has physically been rebuilt; as

⁹⁶ Elazar Barkan, “Can Memory of Genocide Lead to Reconciliation,” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, edited by Richard G. Hovhannesian (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2007), 407.

⁹⁷ De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, 126.

well as its government and society rebuilt. Many survivors of the Holocaust have learned to reconcile with their past; they have found forgiveness. Art has been one form of healing for survivors. Nazi concentration camps have been turned into museums and memorials. Numerous Holocaust memorials and museums are scattered throughout the U.S. and Europe. The Holocaust is the most talked about and remembered genocide. German society has reconciled the most completely. Today, Germany is a strong independent country that remembers and honors its past while trying hard to not return. It has advocated for and sent aid to countries suffering genocide or tyrannical oppression. Germany has laws against denying the Holocaust happened and an education system that teaches extensively about the Holocaust. In many ways, Germany and the reconciliation that took place following the Holocaust has been a model for other countries coming out of the horrors of genocide.

Cambodia has also had to go through the reconciliation process following the genocide in order to heal and move on. They went through the formal reconciliation with help from external forces like NGOs and the UN helping them rebuild. They also held military tribunals for the top Khmer Rouge leaders. One thing that has held Cambodia back is the lack of justice. Most of the top Khmer Rouge leaders died before they were ever tried. The ones that were tried occurred outside a timeframe for justice. The waiting so long and lack of justice has held Cambodia from healing fully. Individually, Cambodians had to undergo an informal reconciliation process as they learned to deal with the genocide. Some turned to art and creative outlets which in turn helped those who experienced their work to heal as well. As individuals go through the personal process of reconciliation, they are able to reach out to others and help them along. Little by little, as individuals reconcile with the genocide, then society as a whole will be able to reconcile because its individual members have reconciled with their past. Cambodia also underwent the

commemoration phase of reconciliation by building museums and monuments to the dead.

Cambodia tries to ensure that people learn about the genocide and remember those that were lost making the genocide a part of them that they carry with them. There are still many trying to remember the genocide and reconcile even though it is difficult.

One of the main problems with Cambodia moving on is that some of their top leaders, the prime minister included, are leaders from the Khmer Rouge. It is hard to move on when the leadership still holds totalitarian elements from the Khmer Rouge. Cambodia is still reconciling and healing from the genocide; however, they may have stunted growth by the delay in formal reconciliation. The people of Cambodia have shown amazing resiliency as they have moved on from tragedy and live meaningful lives. As Cambodia moves forward, the genocide is ever present and a reminder of where they came from. They can use it to inform their choices and learn the lessons from the past in hopes that that they will not repeat the same mistakes or befall the same misfortunes that have shadowed their past.

These three countries each suffered tremendous losses and had their country turned upside down during the genocide, yet afterward they eventually were able to come back together and live peacefully again. Each country still remembers the genocide today and has been shaped by it. The reconciliation process following the genocide molded the future of the country. The phases of formal reconciliation, informal reconciliation, and commemoration were critical for each country and the progress or lack of progress of these phases determined how the nation would heal.

Although rebuilding happened the weight of genocide never full dissipates. The past still sits heavy with future generations. Crimes of the past are unredeemable and unredeemed. Generations since the genocide have had to sit in this uncomfortable truth. About the Holocaust,

Frede-Wenger wrote, “they experience a dissonance between a feeling of unfulfilled justice because our categories of crime and punishment crumble in the face of genocide; personal innocence because the crime happened before many of today’s Germans were born.”⁹⁸ No matter what steps have been taken to reconcile, the full weight of genocide never can be repaid and it never goes away. The next generation has to find a way to live with the weight, while many of the people that enacted the genocide are gone. There is still a shadow of the genocide, but today’s neighbors and those running the government cannot be blamed for the genocide. This makes it hard to reconcile, but not impossible, as many survivors demonstrated.

One of the major take-aways from this examination of the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and the Cambodian Genocide was the astounding resiliency of the survivors. They experienced so much hardship and witnessed horrific things, yet many were able to come through it, rebuild their lives and find joy. The past was still a part of them, yet most survivors were able to live productive lives again. Each society examined was also able to reconstruct and reintegrate. By and large, people learned to live side by side again without problems. Though the three countries examined were fractured because of the genocides, eventually each country moved forward after as one cohesive whole. Society was able to bounce back because of the attitudes and resiliency of the survivors. Many people felt they had an imperative to forgive and move on. Peter Haas sums up the resilient attitude, “in some sense, we really have no choice but to learn to trust each other and live together, even as we always feel a horrid past breathing over our shoulders.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Britta Frede-Wenger, “Anthropological Remarks on Reconciliation after Auschwitz,” in *After-words: Post-Holocaust Struggles with Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Justice*, ed. David Patterson and John K. Roth (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 117.

⁹⁹ Haas, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Jewish Memory after Auschwitz,” 25.

This study in the reconciliation process for these three countries can have large implications for other countries around the world. As genocide is studied more as a whole and analyzed for common threads, this can then be applied to other conflicts. On the side of reconciliation, as it is better understood how societies heal from mass atrocities, these lessons can then be applied to societies that are in the healing process. Others can see how Germany has benefited from a formal apology, extensive and timely tribunals, and reparations to victims. Countries coming out of genocide can fight for those same steps. Collecting and sharing survivor's stories can be a great source of strength and courage for people suffering through similar circumstances. Museums and memorials commemorating genocide can also be studied and used as examples for other countries. This can make the memorialization process easier and quicker. In learning from the reconciliation process of twentieth century genocides, it can help with the twenty-first century conflicts and societies that are mourning and trying to commemorate. The more that genocide is studied and understood, the more this knowledge can be used as a tool to help countries that are in conflict. This can be used to help prevent genocide before it happens and save millions of lives.

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