

Chapter 9

From the Breeding Ground of Social Tensions to Genocide

From the Breeding Ground of Social Tensions to Genocide: A Resistible Spiral

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Les Milles Camp Memorial Site. A digital interactive tool is available on <http://www.campdesmilles.org/mur-interactif/>.

The world is a dangerous place to live;
not because of the people who are evil,
but because of the people who don't do anything about it.
Albert Einstein (1957, 11)

Introduction

Les Milles Camp is the only French internment and deportation camp still intact. Through a rich and compelling collection of displays, audiovisual pieces, and illustrations, the 15,000 m² museography presents the complex history of Les Milles Camp, and the 10,000 men, women, and children who were interned there between 1939 and 1942, among them 2,000 Jews who were deported to Auschwitz. The Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp intends to be a relevant link between the past and the present. Indeed, today and tomorrow depend widely on people's ability to understand, on the one hand, how the Holocaust happened and how similar human mechanisms may lead again to the worst, and, on the other hand, how people are able to resist such dangerous spirals. The Memorial site houses a large history museum with a strong focus on citizen education in an original and innovative "reflective section" based on the relevant results of a 15-year multidisciplinary research program.

These results are based on a specific scientific approach, a "convergence approach," which aims to identify the common mechanisms revealed through the study of several genocides (individual, collective, and institutional mechanisms). From this scientific hypothesis — thus validated by this method — some of the fundamental human mechanisms uncovered in the Shoah are then universal. As a corollary, unearthing mechanisms common to different histories and continents can be considered as "recurrent and universal" in human societies and, therefore, potentially at work also in the current time. The museum's action then aims to promote vigilance and responsibility in the face of the recurrent spirals of racism, antisemitism, and/or extremism of any kind.

Opened in 2012, the site now welcomes more than 100,000 visitors and almost 60,000 students per year. Training sessions are also organized for police officers, firefighters, civil servants, non-profit govern-

mental organization (NGO) members, company managers, social workers, students, and others. The history of Les Milles Camp seemed to lend itself to such an effort and to citizen-focused pedagogy, the fundamental objective of which is to keep alive the critical values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, dignity, and secularity — words that can be seen at the entrance to the site. Les Milles Camp was not an extermination camp waiting for the victims at the end of their deportation; rather, it was the beginning of their agony.

Such a place makes us realize that the genocidal processes started at ordinary locations, with ordinary individuals, situated just next to their daily routines at the end of Main Street. Moreover, the Les Milles Camp was a site of not only successive and growing persecutions targeting foreigners, opponents, and Jews, but also of various and efficient rescue and resistance acts, including the use of art and creativity. According to the founders of the site, history has demonstrated the exceptional explosive and contaminating potential of racism and antisemitism. These elements threaten the fundamental Republican values of public order and peace. As such, they amply justify not only a duty of memory but also an exceptional vigilance and firmness, embodied in a renewed effort to analyze the situation and to educate today's and tomorrow's generations. This is amply demonstrated by the site's team of young people who share and convey the values and the missions of the Memorial Site.

A Research Project Widened to Other Genocides

Major points of analysis were drawn from the Holocaust historical process (See Grynberg 1995; Bensoussan 1997) and then confirmed by the scientific analysis of processes that led to other serious genocidal crimes — against Armenians (see Trenon 1977; Marchand and Perrier 2013; Kévorkian 2006; Bozarslan, Duclert, and Kevorkian 2015; Dadrian 1996), Sinti and Roma (See Lewy 2003; Bordigoni 2013), and Tutsis in Rwanda (See Guichaoua 2013; Chrétien and Kabanda 2013; Bouhlal and Kalisa 2009; Des Forges 1999). The choice was made primarily to “validate,” as part of good research practice, some of the results obtained from the study of the Shoah. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that one of the greatest difficulties in human and societal sciences is the

impossibility, unlike in the so-called hard sciences, to “carry out experiments” and then reproduce them in order to ascertain the interpretation of reality. No researcher is likely to start a war in order to validate some hypotheses. It is, therefore, essential to study actual historical situations to validate hypotheses.

In the case under discussion, the analyses of genocidal processes carried out by the Shoah needed to be compared with the observation of other genocidal situations, even if the usual methodological caution must be applied due to the specificity of each situation. Such a “convergence approach” shows that the lessons from the Shoah are universal and that they provide keys for understanding some recurrent themes of humankind’s functioning. Therefore, we can say that the present can be precisely enlightened by historic experience and multi-disciplinary analysis.¹ This “convergence approach” has been notably developed in the UNESCO Chair “Education for Citizenship, Human Sciences and Convergence of Memories” (shared with Aix Marseille University). The memory of the Holocaust may then be “a reference for the present” and not only “a reverence to the past.” This specific approach points out some widespread individual factors (rejection of others, the group effect, passivity, blind submission to authority, conformism, egocentrism, jealousy, fear, etc.). It also defines the steps of the societal processes that, combined with individual factors, and on the basis of a common societal breeding ground, can possibly lead to such crimes.

A Process that can be Resisted

The breeding ground represents the general condition of any society that, to various degrees, experiences permanent tensions between different situations, interests, and opinions that are normally managed by the democratic system. These include racism, antisemitism, xenophobia, fears, etc. When democracy weakens or when such tensions

¹ The analyses are based on research led by the research team of the Camp des Milles Foundation-Memory and Education, in sociology, political sciences, history, philosophy, law, psychology, etc., and conducted in order to build the contents of the Museum. See also Arendt 1966; Semelin 2005; Welzer 2007; De Swaan 2016; Ternon 2016; Ricoeur 2003; Sironi 2017. See also Office of the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide 2014.

become exacerbated, typically due to economic, social, political, or moral crises, a societal spiral can be triggered — in a three-step movement.

In the *first* step, groups get organized to spread racist ideas and violence. These groups are then allowed to thrive, thanks to the apathy of the rest of the population, and they proceed to exploit crises, loss of references, individual or collective failures, and the need for scapegoats generated by difficult times.

In the *second* step, the main momentum is institutional. Measures are taken to restrict liberties, and extremists may even seize power through force, provocation, or election. A new “legal” system is developed that enables the government to further accelerate the process. Provocations, disorder, and even resistance are used as reasons to harden the measures. Counter-powers, the Justice system, the media, and NGOs are first denounced, and then they are clamped down on or even eliminated. At that point, the regime may turn completely authoritarian, or even totalitarian. Racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia are easy and effective tools that powers facing difficulties can use to gain leverage. Violence is used as a State instrument. Even if elected, the Power becomes illegitimate with respect to human rights, since democracy cannot be merely reduced to an election process.

The *third* step comprises wider persecutions, or even mass crimes, that target not only the initial scapegoat group, but also opponents, “deviant individuals,” democrats, freemasons, homosexuals, the disabled, as well as numerous artists, journalists, and intellectuals whose freedom of thought and expression is a problem for the government. By then, every member of the society is under threat (including the Power’s own supporters), and there are many active or passive accomplices.

Breeding Ground: Prejudices and Social Tensions

*Stereotypes • Prejudices • Fear or rejection of others • Racism •
Antisemitism • Jealousy • Discrimination • Divergent interests*

Stereotypes and prejudices: From a simplification of the world to the exclusion of others

“The French are dirty ... the Swiss are slow ... and women can’t drive.” The human mind willingly seeks out stereotypes: as fixed connections between ideas that have often crossed the centuries, stereotypes offer a simplified first approach to the world and to others. Such

well-founded or ill-founded stereotypes draw their often dangerous strength from their ability to satisfy the basic natural movement of the mind. Reality is represented in a way that makes it easy to cope with; it is divided, categorized, and classified. The list of such categories is long, and their fields of application are many: origin, gender, religion, physical appearance, place of residence, etc. Not all of them stem from bad intentions, even if they sometimes tend to give a depreciative representation of human groups, leading to prejudices and even discrimination. Prejudices are generally based on stereotypes.

Stereotypes are a form of *a priori* judgments that reflect a certain ignorance about, mistrust of, or even hostility towards a given group of people. Everything that can be used to fuel a given prejudice comes to be regarded as its confirmation, and everything that may challenge it remains ignored. This willed blindness constitutes a major obstacle in the struggle against prejudices, preconceived ideas, and all discourse of exclusion (See Légel and Delouvé 2008).

As demonstrated by instances of racism and antisemitism throughout history, targets of prejudice may fall victim to exclusionary processes or to violence directed at the individual or the collective. But this type of behaviour can equally affect homosexuals, women, foreigners, and anyone who falls victim to prejudices. Prejudice often translates to a fear of the unknown fed by ignorance, or drawn from various kinds of fantasies or jealousy.

Racism and antisemitism: An explosive and contagious potential

Racism is the belief in the existence of human “races” and of some sort of inequality between them (See Ben Jelloun 1998). Such belief contradicts both the recent developments in genetics and the principle of the unity of mankind as professed by the major schools of thought, religious or otherwise. Racism is the result of confusing the concept of difference with the concept of inequality; that is to say, of confusing the legitimate affirmation of observable differences between human beings with the unacceptable belief in a hierarchy of races and of how to treat them. Based on the idea that certain races are superior to others, racism entails judging individuals according to their real or supposed belonging to a certain “race.” Even to this day, social or cultural differences are being demagogically exploited in a racist context, which leads to the transposition of complex social issues into dangerous stigmatizations. Among the many causes of human conflicts, history has shown that in

all societies, racism and antisemitism represent an explosive potential, warranting permanent watchfulness and reactivity. Thus, racism has been at the root of many mass atrocity crimes.

Antisemitism (Isaac 1956; Poliakov 1994; Rosenbaum 2006) can be considered as a specific racism regarding Jewish people. But its numerous specificities often lead to mentioning it separately. It is based on deep-rooted prejudices and vested manipulations. Throughout history, Jews have been an easy scapegoat for the world's evils. Depending on the times and circumstances, Jews have been called revolutionaries or capitalists, cowards or warmongers, lousy or extremely wealthy. Antisemitism has been fueled by a number of factors, some of which stem from the fact that the Jews have always remained a minority and, as such, an easy target for the majority. The concentration of Jews in a number of different professions, which resulted from the discriminations imposed upon them during the Middle Ages, has given rise to the idea of the existence of deliberate and coordinated Jewish action within certain key sectors of society, such as finance, politics, the media, and intellectual professions.

In the wake of World War II, the creation of the State of Israel opened a new era in antisemitism, even as that state became a refuge for a majority of Jewish survivors of the Shoah and of the most violent antisemitic movement in history. The territorial conflicts between Israel and its neighbours resulted in the multiplication of different discourses against the Jewish State. Opinions are divided on the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Anti-Zionism (the hostility to the Jewish State) is supposed to be different from antisemitism (hostility to the Jews). In fact, Anti-Zionism is often used in order to bring new or age-old antisemitic accusations to the fore including that of some “global Jewish conspiracy.” Additionally, Anti-Zionism is also sometimes given as a kind of “excuse” to antisemitic behaviour. We can see this illustration of antisemitism when anti-Israel gatherings become punctuated with “Death to the Jews!” slogans or when attacks on synagogues and Jewish children are explicitly based on hate against Israel. This long history of antisemitism demonstrates the strong adaptability of such a compulsive yet deep-rooted phenomenon whose many recurring signs serve as reminders of its dormant dangers.

Step One: The Devil Is in the Everyday

*Active minority/Passive majority • Crises and destabilizations •
Scapegoats • Insults and threats • Rumours and accusations
of conspiracies*

The first step of this process leading to the worst situation commences within a context of societal destabilization. Social, economic, or moral crises impact society and lead to fear of the future, loss of references, identity-based tensions, and aggressive demagoguery. Organized groups spread racist ideas and violence. It is the passivity of the majority of the population that allows an acting extremist minority to exacerbate tensions within the breeding ground. This minority can utilize crises, social frustrations, and jealousy to single out the scapegoats that are often produced in such situations. During a crisis, it is easy to pinpoint a culprit, and it is always the “other,” the minority, the foreigner — different or perceived as such — who is targeted.

Language manipulation and discourse inversion

One of the ways in which acting minorities spread their ideas is through the manipulation of language. Jews, Roma and Sinti, the Tutsis, and the Armenians — all have fallen victim to rumours or have even been accused of conspiracy. For example, in 1915, in one of his speeches, Talaat Pacha, Minister of the Interior of the Ottoman Empire, officially accused the Armenians to justify the massacres. Another example is the Protocol of the Elders of Zion (see Taguieff 1992). The Tsarist police forged this document to justify the ensuing pogroms. It supposedly proved the existence of a plot by a Jewish council to take control of the world. Hitler often referred to this document as propaganda material, and it continues to circulate in certain countries. In 1909 in New York, as has often been the case since the 19th century, the press reported so-called massacres of children kidnapped by the Roma. Later, in Rwanda, a false document attributed to the Tutsis was used to excite Hutus against them.

The aggressive lies become the truth and the victim is portrayed as the offender

The demagogic discourse pleases the part of society looking for certainties. But the majority is unaware of the danger and does not feel

concerned by it. And so that which was unthinkable yesterday becomes normal today. In Germany, in the 1930s, antisemitic slogans multiplied, such as: “No Jews allowed in my restaurant” or “Germans, stand up against Jewish propaganda. Only buy from German shops.” Therefore, passivity turns the majority into accomplices, and cracks appear within the community of people.

Being able to resist as a citizen and as a person

Hence the question of an everyday resistance comes up, of one person to another, as well as that of the citizen within the political domain: to acknowledge and recognize within oneself the mechanism of blindness, of fear, of cowardice, and of violence. We are all involved, unwillingly, often unknowingly and unseeingly.

Step Two: From Democracy to Authoritarian Regime

Loss of references • Attacked and weakened institutions • Elites are rejected • Institutions are confiscated • Legal instruments are put to the service of crime • Counter-powers are weakened or eliminated • Domesticated security forces • Manipulation of media • Promotion of new values • Freedom of expression muzzled

The second step is accomplished when the acting minority gains power either by force or by elections. It relies first on the general loss of society’s bearings and values, and then it attacks and weakens the institutions. Crises spiral out of control, trouble and aggressions intensify, reactions become uncontrollable, violence becomes an ordinary part of life.

State Propaganda promoting new “values”

Propaganda is biased information designed to shape public opinion and behaviour. Among its goals: to spread truths and half-truths and even to lie; to spread selective information; to simplify complex issues and ideas; to promote new “values.” For instance, in 1937, Hitler promoted the idea that “the German man should be slim and sprightly, fast as a rabbit, solid as leather, and hard as iron.” He continued by saying that they were “determined to create a new race.”

Preferring order to freedom, many are ready to follow a charismatic leader or a fanatical doctrine. The comfort of the crowd prevails over individual freedom. Then, at the institutional level, a new legal framework serving the ideology may be implemented, and even the minority may seize power legally or illegally. The former restricts liberties and leads public authority to open or even accelerate the path leading downwards and downwards. The regime becomes authoritarian or even totalitarian. Racism is declared legal; violence becomes State violence; and it is only a matter of months before democracy is suppressed. During the last democratic elections of Germany in November 1932, Hitler and his extreme-right party won no more than 34 per cent of the vote. In January 1933, the German Parliament committed a form of collective suicide when voting full power of the State to Hitler for four years. Due to allegiance or to fear of reprisals, 444 Members of Parliament cast favourable ballots. Only 94 socialists had the courage to vote against the measure. There were no longer any communists in the Parliament since most of them had been sent to concentration camps. On February 27, 1933, the German Parliament building, the Reichstag, burned down; this event was later utilized to put an end to democracy and to intern tens of thousands of opponents. Seven years later, on October 24, 1940, Hitler shook the hand of French Marshal Pétain, who himself had just abolished democracy in France after having been granted full power by the French Parliament on July 10, 1940.

Law is put to the service of intolerance and persecution

Freedom of expression is muzzled. The media and radio especially are used as key vectors to spread racist ideas. This was the case in Nazi Germany, in Vichy France, and in Rwanda of 1994.¹ The legal framework

1 For example: "I took three puffs, it's strong, really strong, but it seems to give you the courage, really, so take care to watch the gutter so that tomorrow no cockroaches (name given to Tutsis) pass, that you would be enraged, that we will be able to fight for our city, for our country, dear brothers" (Radio Mill Collines 1944). In 1944, the newspaper, *Toute la vie* (All of Life), published an article that praised the quality of housing in the internment camp of Montreuil-Bellay and insisted on the comfort that they allegedly enjoyed. In the news, during the exhibition "The Jews and France" (Paris, 1941), a journalist declared: "Statistics, graphics, deranged charts followed one after another. They proved how much France, victim of its generosity and its traditions of hospitality, had become Jewified, especially since 1936. It finally went on to demonstrate that all positions of power in France were in the hands of Jews. The result is well known: defeat." For more information on the use of the media in Rwanda as a genocidal tool, see Chrétien 1995.

also legalizes discrimination. The mention of “Jew” or “Tutsi” on identity cards, and the anthropological documents for the Roma and Sinti, are two examples of this kind of legalized discrimination.

In order to resist, democracy must defend itself

In crucial times, women and men were able to show insight and courage, each in their own way. Following the signing of the Armistice, General de Gaulle declared on June 24, 1940, on BBC: “There has to be a sun, there has to be hope, because there has to be a part that sparkles and burns with the flame of the French Resistance.” In the very midst of the Armenian genocide, four brave German school teachers installed in Aleppo signed a letter that was sent to their superiors: “It is our duty to alert the Office of Foreign Affairs to the fact that our work as teachers will be failing its moral principles and lose all authority if the German government is incapable of lessening the brutality that is taking place here. Unfolding before our very eyes, daily, are scenes of such a horror that our work as teachers becomes a challenge to humanity. How can we teach our Armenian pupils when beside our school, their kinsmen are dying of starvation.” Inversely, Colonel Luc Marchal, former commander of the MINUAR in Kigali (UN Blue Helmets), blamed the international community for its passivity during the Tutsis genocide in Rwanda: “Between mid-January and mid-March, whether for the Rwandese population or the extremists, the MINUAR did nothing. This behavior encouraged the development of a structure that, in early January, was probably still embryonic and could have been neutralized, stopped, had action been taken at that stage.”

**Step Three: The Extension of Persecutions and Threats
Includes Everyone**

Disappearances of opponents • Arbitrary detention • Denial of foreign observers • Mass surveillance and informers • Mass crime • All threatened • Exclusion and discrimination become the law • Dehumanization • Powerful paramilitary groups

The third and final step includes the systematic exclusion of targeted individuals or groups, but also the extension of the range of targeted groups and of a banalization of crime. A reign of terror is installed, backed up by the omnipotence of the paramilitary groups, and accom-

panied by a forced discrimination and a will to dehumanize people. Even though we find countless accomplices in a society, in the end it is everybody who ends up threatened by arbitrary authority and denouncement. Actions then target not only the initial scapegoats but everyone, and mass crime replaces targeted violence.

Dehumanization and systematic attacks on human dignity

The victims are seen either as animals to be tattooed and herded into cattle cars, like at the Les Milles camp, or simply to be shot down. Dehumanizing adversaries allows the killer to no longer see them as fellow human beings.²

The mighty power of the paramilitary groups

The paramilitary groups become all-powerful and even sometimes spiral out of control. Leslie Davies, American Consul during the Armenia genocide in 1915, explained the role of the military police: “This chore was not only accomplished by the Kurds, but most often by the military police who circled the convoys of deportees, or by armed companies called ‘the Tchetas’. These were prisoners who had been freed for the sole purpose of killing Armenians” (Chouraqui 2015). In Rwanda, Théodore Sindikubwabo, the Hutu Rwanda President, referred to the Interrahamwe paramilitary groups on national Rwandese radio as “traitors who want to exterminate us; you know them better than I. Point them out so we can take care of them” (Chouraqui 2015).

Overcoming fear so as to be able to act

Resistance takes many forms — among others, moral, practical, humanitarian, intellectual, artistic, armed — and their convergence induces efficiency. Joséphine Dusabimana, a Rwandese Hutu, gave this testimony: “When I would hide someone, I would say to myself: “If he dies, I too will die,” and as long as the person was there, I was terrified. The death that could take him could also take me. It’s for that reason that most people refused to shelter Tutsis” (Chouraqui 2015). Félicia Combaud tells of the actions the Roma conducted in the camp where she was held: “There were Roma there. These Roma did wonderful things for us Jews. Because there were a number of escape attempts;

2 As such, the “Mille Collines” Radio (1994) broadcasted that Tutsis were cockroaches: “If we exterminate the cockroaches one for all, no one in the world will be able to judge us.”

and to escape wasn't easy because we were guarded. So the Roma had thought of this method: they'd come together, simulate a fight, and during this time some Jews would be able to escape" (Chouraqui 2015).

Everyone can react, everyone can resist, everyone in their own way.

How does an ordinary person turn into a torturer or an accomplice?

Human behaviours can lend themselves to dangerous societal processes, sometimes potentially genocidal ones; these include blind submission to authority,³ the habituation to violence,⁴ passivity and non-assistance to endangered people,⁵ group-pressure, and a tendency to conform.⁶ Here the reference is not to deviant or mentally ill individuals but to ordinary men and women, who may nonetheless become torturers or accomplices in atrocities. Some knowledge of scientific experiments dealing with such human mechanisms may reinforce our personal ability to avoid the traps of deresponsibilization. And even if the results show that a large proportion of people succumb to such dangerous mechanisms, they also show that a significant number of people "resist" and do not yield to mental conditionings.

A thousand ways to not remain passive

In opposition to the human processes that can lead to mass crimes or to passivity, some other mechanisms may enhance the capacity to resist: autonomy in thinking, openness to and respect for others, moral values and consciousness, civic standards and values, critical capacity, interest

3 To go further, see the American psychologist Stanley Milgram's work, and particularly the still-famous experiments realized during the 1960s (Milgram 1974). See also the study of Christopher Browning (1992) related to the real behaviour of the members of a reserve battalion of German police sent to assassinate Jewish inhabitants of villages occupied by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front who, under orders, also rapidly became criminals.

4 To test the effects of prison life on the psychology of prisoners and guards, the American Social Psychologist Philip Zimbardo carried out experiments at Stanford University. See Zimbardo 2007.

5 In New York in 1964, thirty-seven people watched the murder of a woman in the open street from their windows without intervening. Subsequent to this event, psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latané decided in 1968 to study assistance behaviour in critical situations. See Latane and Darley 1970. Editors' comment: Even though the reported circumstances surrounding this case may have been fabricated to a certain extent by the newspaper that reported it, the case did enter mainstream psychology at that time.

6 In 1951, the American psychologist Solomon Asch asked a group of volunteers to take part in an experiment purportedly on visual perception. The group of eight included, in fact, seven accomplices of the experimenter and one naïve subject who knew nothing of the real purpose of the experiment. See Asch 1951.

in education, memory and culture, and the ability to see the possible difference between legality and legitimacy. Such “righteous acts” are first of all acts of resistance or of reaction against discrimination, injustice, or persecution. They can take a number of forms: individual or collective, spontaneous or organized, public or clandestine. From artistic creation (see Galerie Espace d’art 1999) to armed struggle, from the printing or distribution of pamphlets to performing acts of sabotage, resistance makes use of a multitude of approaches whose outcomes are often uncertain. During all genocides, many individuals, men and women of all origins, and of all ages and professions, have acted, saved, resisted, each in their own way, often modest, always efficient — among them, the “Righteous among the Nations,” recognized by Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, and so many non-recognized rescuers. All of them are role models for today and tomorrow.

“Righteous acts” to oppose all genocides

The history of genocides contains countless “righteous acts” in the very midst of barbarity (see Semelin, Andriev, and Glensburger 2008). What do we call a “righteous act”? It is any action carried out to help another person or fight an unacceptable situation. Such disinterested individual or collective action can appear as trivial or even passive — it can be violent or heroic — it may be a simple gesture of temporary support or it can be some decisive rescue action or that of armed resistance. Righteous acts have saved tens of thousands of lives, have been a major obstacle to criminal policies, and in some cases have even managed to reverse the situation through the use of force.

Some “righteous acts” are described below, from the hundreds proposed on the *Mur des actes justes* or “Wall of Righteous Acts,” which ends the visit to Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp.⁷ But these short stories are only a minute part of countless and varied acts carried out by women and men from all walks of life, in the widest range of tragic

7 Extracts from the “Wall of Righteous Acts”: The Véséli Muslim family sheltered a Jewish family throughout the war; Franciscan sisters asked to share the lives of the Roma in the Montreuil-Bellay camp; Max Ernst organized the exhibition “Free German art” in Paris (in 1939, he was detained in Les Milles Camp); the Minister Henri Manen and the guard Auguste Boyer sheltered several Jewish inmates, after having helped them to escape from Les Milles Camp; the head of a Turkish village saved an Armenian child and raised him as his own son; Frodouald, a Hutu bricklayer, hid Tutsis in his home for over a month and saved their lives; the Bielski brothers, renowned Polish Jewish resistance leaders, saved 1,200 Jews by hiding them in the forest and giving them military protection.

circumstances. They tell of the women and men — and sometimes even adolescents; of soldiers or simple civilians; of many members of the clergy; of shop owners or civil-servants; of heads of villages or monarchs; who, in some of the most amazing ways, figured out how to spread information, to speak out, to resist, and to save others. In order to stand up against an unjust or illegitimate legal system, they protected, sheltered, supported, cared for, disobeyed, accompanied, saved, or helped victims of genocide to escape. We can consider that such acts express the humanistic dimension inherent in every man and woman, and they are examples of the active and efficacious implementation of vigilance and responsibility.

Finding support in education, moral values, courage and the memory of humankind's experiences

Before taking the struggle to the Courts, it is by educating minds that one may counteract the most harmful ideologies, with their groundless fears, their identity-based mistrust, their fanatic and extremist tendencies, and their demagogical rhetoric. Such education begins with the development of critical thought to oppose manipulative rhetoric, and, above all, with the affirmation of the existence of universal values that have the potential to unify all humans, regardless of their differences. Education in humanist values also includes the teaching of history and of the past tragedies that form the collective experiences of humankind. As long as these remain poorly understood, some can be tempted to minimize their negative impacts and to see a solution to their problems in the extremist discourse that has proven disastrous in the past.

It is by learning from past mistakes that we can avoid making these mistakes again, and also ignore the calls to violence inspired by ignorance and fear.

The responsibility of choosing to let things take their course or to react

We are equally responsible for what we do and what we do not do. Etymologically speaking, being responsible means being able to answer for our actions. Responsibility applies to our choice to follow a certain course of action or not. It assumes that a person's action always bears consequences, which may be positive or negative. This suggests that all human situations put our responsibility into play, in more or less decisive ways. Even when knowing how to choose is difficult, or when choosing

involves a certain amount of risk, our power to choose still remains, and our actions as well as our inactions always engage our responsibility. **Therefore, taking action is more than an option; it is a duty.**

To alert without creating cause for alarm

Often, we are told that we should stop referencing the past “because this isn’t the 1930s anymore.” Yet, this time dimension hides the many fundamental points to the benefit of presenting differences that do exist, for better and for worse. It is a common mistake to confuse *the call for alarm* with *the need to alert*. *The latter* gives people the means to assess the situation and make informed choices.

And yet, the survivors do alert us, before passing away, one after the other. And we know that the victims wanted us to remember so that it would never happen again. The Camp des Milles Foundation — Memory and Education project benefited from the support of major figures in the memory of genocides: Simone Veil, Elie Wiesel, Serge Klarsfeld, Robert Badinter, Denise Toros-Marter, Dafroza Mukarumongi-Gauthier, Ovsanna Kaloustian, Louis Monguilan, Sidney Chouraqui, and many others. They shared with us their concern, and sometimes their anger, and always their resolve in the face of the return of ancient nationalistic and sectarian demons that could easily turn a healthy patriotism and legitimate fears into hatred and a source of conflict. And this is especially possible in those nations whose political leaders play a dangerous game with racist passions and thus lay grounds for future violence.

Memory as a reference for today

A memorial site can function as a long-term reference since it anchors collective representations. Both by its physical presence, and by the quality of its intellectual content, it can provide essential keys to understanding the genocidal process. Such tools are particularly important in today’s context of ideological and practical destabilization, caused, notably, by mighty technological power and rampant globalization — two phenomena on the verge of escaping human control. In this respect, the Internet is becoming the illustration of untamed might, of one of the numerous modern-day golems that humans have unleashed and now struggle to harness.

Faced with this unstable and menacing situation, but based on the principle of caution and respect for the past, we must take care not to confuse the present situation with the fundamental elements that led

to the Holocaust. Nonetheless, we must heed what our seniors tell us, and in the light of the converging analyses made possible by our interpretative framework, it would be a serious mistake to forget these terrible experiences. Their memory opens the way to a universal lesson and represents our strongest reference in modern history to react rapidly to hazardous mechanisms.

Today we know, and we know we can.

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