PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM, IDENTIFYING AND COUNTERING HOLOCAUST DISTORTION:

23–26 November, 2021

LESSONS FOR AND FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Edited by the NEVER AGAIN Association

On the cover: Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.
(Credit: Jean Sien Kin)

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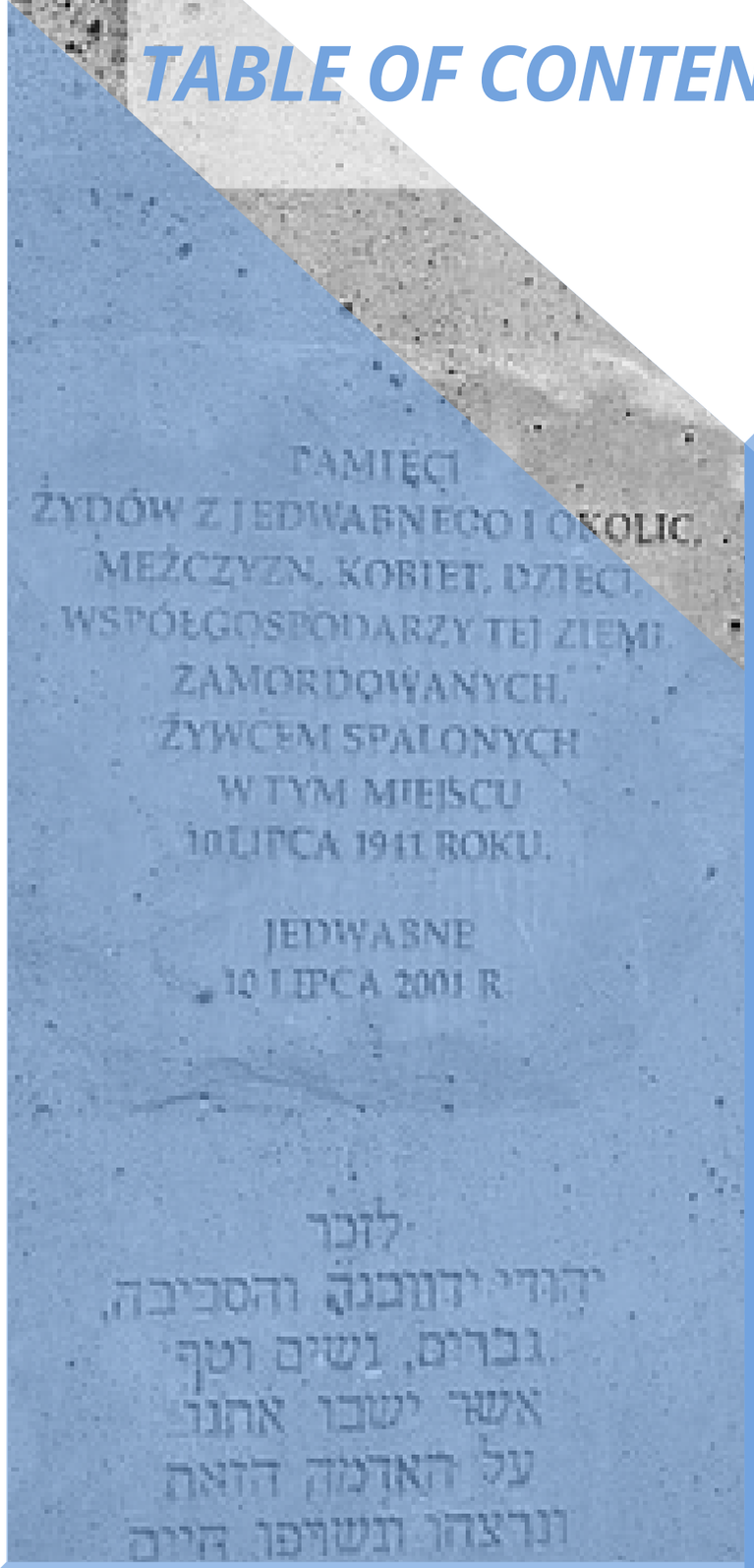

Jedwabne Pogrom Memorial in Jedwabne, Poland.
(Credit: NEVER AGAIN Association)

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The Taukkyan War Cemetery in Myanmar. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

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INTRODUCTION

From November 23 to 26, 2021, an international symposium titled ***Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia*** was held via Zoom. The event lasted twenty-two hours over the four days. It involved over ***1,200 registrants*** and ***800 attendees*** from Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, as well as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, China, Bangladesh, Poland and Germany. Although the event was presented primarily in English, simultaneous translations were also delivered in the Burmese, Khmer, and Thai languages. ***Thirty-one speakers and moderators*** participated in the event. These included scholars and civil society representatives from Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond who specialise in a variety of subjects in Holocaust and genocide education, historical memory, and dealing with the past. They discussed the relevance of the European Holocaust for Southeast Asia. With its growing and diverse population, its own experience of the Second World War and its own instances of genocide and mass atrocities, Southeast Asia is a compelling region in which to hold such an event. Numerous examples of Holocaust distortion also exist in the region.

This symposium was planned as part of a pilot grassroots project with the same title conducted by the NEVER AGAIN Association in cooperation with partners in Southeast Asia. The project has drawn from the Polish and Eastern European experiences and the histories of Southeast Asia. It has been not a one-way transfer of knowledge, but a facilitation of dialogue, exchange on legacy of hatred, conflict and genocide.

The event aimed ***to initiate discussion on Holocaust distortion, exchange knowledge, identify counter-arguments against denial and distortion of the Holocaust and atrocities in Southeast Asia, develop recommendations, and establish a network of collaborators.***

The symposium was chaired by professor Rafal Pankowski (Poland) who has knowledge and experience of working in genocide commemoration both in Central and Eastern Europe, and in Southeast Asia.

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH
STUDY LOCALLY. LIVE GLOBALLY.

BALAC

Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia

Organised by the NEVER AGAIN Association and supported by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia, the Balac Program at Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), and the American University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

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www.neveragainassociation.org
www.holocaustEducation-asia.org
www.holocaustremembrance.com

Keynote lectures were delivered by professors Yehuda Bauer (Honorary Chairman to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem) and Ben Kiernan (founder of the Cambodian Genocide Program at Yale University).

In his speech professor Yehuda Bauer warned:
"All the elements that created the Holocaust and all the elements that created other genocides before it and since exist today. It can happen again. The Jews are not only the Jews to anyone by anyone. It is something that is not a relic. This is not the history of the past; this is the history of the present. We must realise and deal with this as a present problem—dealing with the past and its distortion, but also dealing with the present in order to deal with the future. Not one of us knows what is going to happen in the future. But we can influence the future by dealing with the present and influence the present by dealing with the past. The past is never the past; it is always the present and the present is always the future".

Professor Yehuda Bauer

Professor Ben Kernan in his talk, *Genocide Distortion and Denial in Southeast Asia and Worldwide*, presented a comprehensive overview of antisemitism denial and distortion, but also said:
"Over the twentieth century, Southeast Asia, like other regions of the world, has seen examples of an ugly progression from emulation of antisemitism, through admiration of Hitler and Holocaust distortion and Holocaust emulation, to simple genocide denial. But it is equally important to point out that, just as in other regions of the world, each case in Southeast Asia, from the Philippines to Cambodia, has also produced examples of rescue, resistance and a willingness to face the truth".

Professor Ben Kernan

One of the architects of critical discourse analysis, professor Teun van Djik, delivered a lecture on the technique as a method of studying the Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion on day one of the symposium. Critical discourse analysis is a method for the analysis of political text, which uncovers the hidden (including ideological) motivations of certain discourses or systems of argumentation; for this reason, it is a suitable fit for the study of denialist and nationalist discourses.

Professor Teun van Djik

The three presentations on day two of the event focused on genocide distortion and denial in Cambodia, as well as multideniers: those who deny and distort both the Holocaust and other genocides. Robert Williams of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum outlined various types of Holocaust distortion. Day three involved presentations on the importance of interfaith dialogue for the countering of Holocaust distortion in the region; Nazi fascination in Thailand; Burmese Jews as part of a pluralist society in Myanmar; how techniques of denial and distortion have been weaponised to enable the genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya; and the importance of Holocaust education for Myanmar. A compelling discussion, *Challenging Genocide Distortion*, brought together representatives of museums and intellectuals from Asia and Europe. Two important museum projects in Thailand that engage with difficult elements of the nation's violent past and present were presented on day four: the *6 October Museum Project: Documentation, Archives,* and *Patani Art Space in Thailand's conflict zone in the 'Deep South'.* Burmese intellectual and activist Dr Zarni Maung ended the symposium with a talk titled *From Auschwitz to Myanmar*.

This publication includes transcripts of the symposium presentations and draft recommendations to identify and counter Holocaust distortion in Southeast Asia. These materials could be helpful to policymakers and those who conduct future educational and awareness raising activities in the region.

Read our post-event press release from 29.11.2022:
A SYMPOSIUM ON COMBATTING HOLOCAUST DENIAL IN ASIA DRAWS MORE THAN 1,200 PARTICIPANTS

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Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia, the BALAC Program at Chulalongkorn University, and the American University of Phnom Penh (Cambodia) for their support of the symposium. Our appreciation goes to Professors of the American University of Phnom Penh Raymond Leos and Theresa de Langis (Cambodia); GIZ Advisor to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia Barbara Thimm (Cambodia); Dr. Kunnaya Wimooktanon, Dr Verita Sriratana and Treepon Kirdnark of the Bachelor of Arts in Language and Culture program at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand); Professor Dina Porat of Tel Aviv University and Yad Vashem (Israel); Writer and Interfaith Activist Jeremy Jones (Australia); former Country Director of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia Ali Al-Nasani; and current Country Director of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia Paula Assubuji (Cambodia).

We thank our wonderful volunteers who helped to organise the event and prepare the symposium proceedings: Visal Sorn (Cambodia), Samantha Moreno (Colombia), Alina Scheitza (Germany), Vitalii Boico (Moldova), Monika Praczyk (Norway), Iwona Dettlaff (Poland), Rafal Maszkowski (Poland), Bartosz Pelka (Poland), Anna Tatar (Poland), Alena Fomenko (Russia), Venerable Lablu Barua (Thailand), Nosizo Zondo (Zimbabwe).

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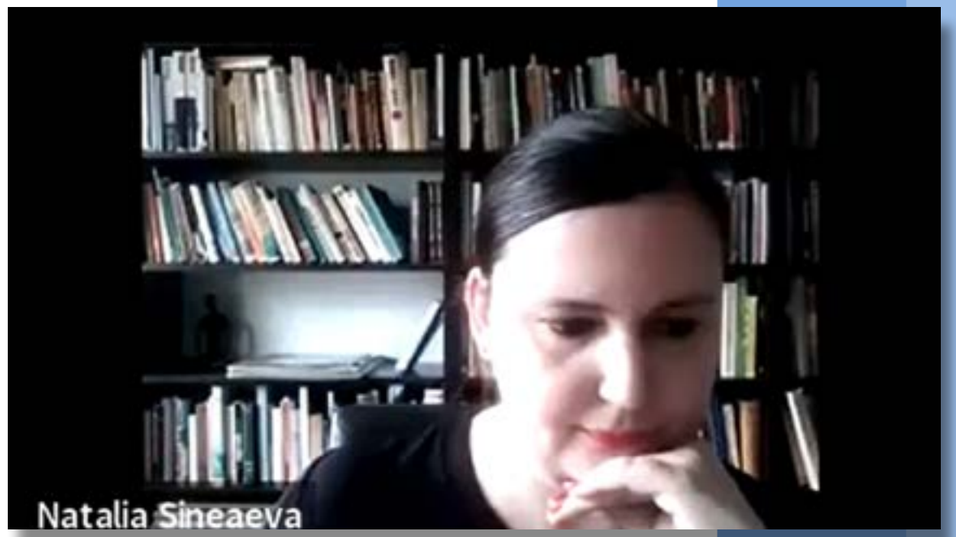
The views expressed by the individual contributors to the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia.

Professor Rafal Pankowski



Natalia Sineaeva

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23 NOVEMBER, 2021
Critical discourse analysis: an approach to the study of anti-minority discourses, racism, and genocide denial

Lecture by Professor Teun A. van Dijk, Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona (introduction by Professor Rafal Pankowski, Professor at Collegium Civitas, cofounder of NEVER AGAIN, Dr Kunnaya Wimooktanon, Director of the BALAC programme at Chulalongkorn University, moderated by Dr Verita Sriratana, Associate Professor at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok)

Rafal Pankowski: Let me, officially, warmly welcome all of the panelists and all of the participants of today's session, which is a part of the symposium, *Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia*. The symposium is part of a project conducted by the NEVER AGAIN Association with the support of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia. The project is being conducted in close cooperation and partnership with our colleagues and friends in Southeast Asia, including the BALAC programme of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, and the American University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Three countries constitute the main focus of the project: Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar. We believe that through discussing, identifying, and tackling the issues of Holocaust distortion and denial—and, more generally speaking, the denial of genocide and human rights violations—we can encourage intercultural dialogue that builds empathy and solidarity.

If you are interested in more information about the past and future activities of the project, we invite you to visit the website of the NEVER AGAIN Association, the website of the project, and our social media profiles, which will be shared throughout this session. I should also stress that today's session is the first of several events that will last until 26 November. I very much hope you will stay with us in the coming days. Today's session has turned out to be very popular, and we have more than 1,000 registered participants from numerous countries in Asia, Europe, and all over the world. I look forward very much to our discussions. You are more than welcome to write your comments and questions in the chat box. Even if we do not manage to discuss all of them, our colleagues are going to collect them, so they can be used for the final report. We have a very distinguished speaker today, professor Teun A. van Dijk. Before he is introduced, I wish to express special gratitude to our friends at the BALAC programme at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. And with that, I invite Dr Kunnaya Wimooktanon, the director of the BALAC programme, to say a few words. Thank you.

Kunnaya Wimooktanon: Thank you very much, Dr Pankowski, for the introduction. The pilot programme, the Bachelor of Arts and Language and Culture programme, is honored to be asked to collaborate with the NEVER AGAIN Association, the American University of Phnom Penh, and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, on this very special event. And, of course, thank you to prof van Dijk. Despite all of the purported advances in human civilisation that we have seen thus far, we often seem to be on the brink of repeating some of the worst mistakes of our past. We seem to think that we are smarter than those who came before us; that we will not make their mistakes and allow for a repeat of the evils of the Holocaust. And yet, every once in a while, genocide has reared its ugly head since the end of the Second World War.

This reminds humanity of its hubris and of our failure to our fellow human beings. In our collaboration here today, and with the help of prof van Dijk as our speaker, I hope that all of us play a small part in breaking that cycle. Perhaps in the critical analysis of what may seem like the ignorable discourse of the extremist fringe, humanity will learn to better spot the warning signs and act against them before it is too late. But, you are not here to listen to me and my hypothetical musings of a better tomorrow. Please allow me to give a very warm welcome to the figurative stage: professor Teun van Dijk of Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona.

Rafal Pankowski: Before prof van Dijk speaks, I wish to express special gratitude to Dr Verita Sriratana, who is a longtime friend of the NEVER AGAIN Association. She is an associate professor at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, and currently a visiting research fellow in human rights at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. On top of that, she is going to be the moderator of this session. So, Verita, would you like to say a few words before we move on to the keynote speech?

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much, Rafal, for your kind introduction. Once again, hello and warmest greetings to everyone. It is my utmost honor and pleasure to introduce our first keynote speaker for *the Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia* symposium. The root of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is remarkably multifold and multidisciplinary, so it is no wonder that it has united so many of us here who represent so many disciplines—be it sociolinguistics, cognitive science, history, literary studies, philosophy, or anthropology. I wish to make full use of this occasion to pay homage to the group of scholars who first discussed the theories and methods of discourse analysis in the 1980s and 1990s, one of whom is here with us today.

Professor Teun Andrianius van Dijk is the cofounder of CDA and director of the Centre of Discourse Studies. He was a professor of discourse studies at the University of Amsterdam until 2004, and is currently a professor at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. After earlier work on generative poetics, text grammar, and the psychology of text processing, his work since 1980 has taken on a more critical perspective, dealing with discursive racism, news in the press, ideology, knowledge, and context. All of these are very important, I think, in this day and age.

Professor van Dijk is the author of several books in most of these areas, and he has edited *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis;* the introductory book, *Discourse Studies* (2nd edition, 2011); as well as the *The Study of Discourse*, a total of five volumes. He has founded a staggering six international journals: *Poetics, Text,* now known as *Text and Talk; Discourse & Society; Discourse Studies;* and *Discourse & Communication*; and the internet journal in Spanish, *Discurso & Sociedad*. He continues to serve as the editor for *Discourse & Society, Discourse Studies,* and *Discourse and Communication*. For more information, please visit the website: www.discoursestudies.org. The subject of prof van Dijk's talk today is the CDA approach to the study of anti-minority discourses, racism, and genocide denial.

We may send a virtual round of applause to our honorary speaker. If anyone in the audience would like to ask a question, feel free to type it into the chat box or the Q&A box. You can do this at any time. Doing so will not interrupt the flow of prof van Dijk's talk and discussion in any way, and your questions will be read out or collected at the end of the talk. So, prof van Dijk, instead of the floor, the Zoom screen is all yours.

Teun A. van Dijk: Thank you very much. It is really a great honour to be with you. I thought I would be speaking only with a few people in Thailand, but it is obvious from the chatbox that people have joined us from everywhere. So, *sawadika (ed.: Greetings in Thai)*, and thank you for this incredible invitation.

Since people are speaking and participating in this event from many countries, I would have to speak many more languages, so I will stick to speaking in English about my work. I am particularly glad that I am now able to talk to you online after visiting many countries in Southeast Asia in recent years. I have been to Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam, so it is nice that I am now able to talk to you directly. Today, I intend to ***present some basics of critical discourse analysis for people who do not know them.***

I would like to say something about my work of the last few years, and how it is relevant. I have to excuse myself, first of all, to all of you for the fact that I have not been working on Holocaust denial; that is not my specialty. I wish I could do so—especially since I have been working with my friend and colleague, and a famous person in discourse studies, Ruth Wodak. She would be much better placed to talk about that subject than I. I worked on denial of racism in the 1990s, so many of these topics are very close to my actual work. I also have some thoughts about how to apply CDA today, as my main message (what discourse analysis is all about) cannot be summarised in a few words.

You can read about that in many of today's introductions. There are many handbooks, papers, and journals that you can read. I would like to encourage all of you who have not yet done so to enter this field. And to apply your knowledge in various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences in such fundamental problems as Holocaust denial, genocide denial, and others, that we, as linguists, discourse analysts, psychologists, and social scientists can apply in the field.

Until the 1960s, linguistics was mostly limited to the study of sentences and words. Later, in several disciplines like linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, it was claimed that language use reached beyond sentences to work with actual text and speech. In linguistics, people developed text grammars. And in anthropology, as you know from the work of David W. Haines and others, people started to study communicative events.

In sociology, people are becoming more focused on conversation and actual interaction—which are both now, and will be for many years, fundamental aspects of the study of discourse.

And within this huge field of discourse studies in many disciplines of humanities and social sciences, towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, people in several countries were saying that a fundamental dimension was missing in discourse study. We should not only study the structure of discourses, coherence, and macrostructures; we should also pay attention to the more critical, sociopolitical aspects of discourse.

Discourse also has to do with power and abuse of it. At the end of the 1970s, Roger Fowler and others edited a book on language and control, which contained the earliest studies of what they called critical linguistics. In the 1980s, researchers in England presented several studies on critical language studies, which afterwards became dominant in the field of critical discourse studies.

Ruth Wodak, whom I have already mentioned, is a colleague in Vienna who was also working at that time on racism, antisemitism, discourse and gender, and many other aspects. If you want to learn more about critical discourse studies, please go and read the works of Ruth Wodak. I, since the 1980s, have worked mostly on racist discourse, and today also on antiracist discourse. And I would like to speak a little bit more about that.

Today, critical discourse studies is a wide domain of studies, of journals, of congresses, and so on. The subject is very popular in Latin America. And I now am hearing that that is also the case in Southeast Asia. Political discourse studies are now being practiced by people in many disciplines. I am very glad to hear that. And later, if you have questions, I would very much like to reply to them. Let me briefly speak about my own work, so that you know my development. If you want to read about that, many of these studies are on my website.

Today, we are fundamentally speaking about subjects as important as Holocaust denial, genocide denial, racism denial, denial of the climate catastrophe, and many other forms of denial and fake news.

I began my studies in the 1960s, while studying French poetry. I focused on a French author called Paul Éluard. It was a very long time ago and very far away from what I am doing now. But I learned from looking at poetry to take each word of the text seriously. And I learned that sometimes, what is ‘this’ and ‘that’ is not exactly explicit. You have to learn to read between the lines and behind the lines. Then, during my PhD, I worked on text grammar; on discourse pragmatics, talking about not just speech acts as we do in pragmatics, but also in microspeech acts, and trying to extend the work in discourse analysis to other fields like pragmatic semiotics.

Another very important point for me is my work on the cognitive psychology of text comprehension, which I did mostly with North American psychologist, Walter Kintch, in a book in 1983. I am not going to elaborate on this very much now, but the important thing is that, differently from many of my colleagues and from many critical discourse studies, I am not only interested in all the strategies or discourses. And not just the structures of society, like forms of abuse, domination, genocide, racism, sexism, and so on. I am also interested in the social cognitive aspects of discourses. Discourse structures are related to social structures through a cognitive interface. And I would like to emphasise the role of knowledge, because if we are going to speak about denial of the Holocaust, denial of genocide, or denial of a crime, or climate catastrophe, the very fundamental notion of knowledge is crucial.

Discourse, elites, and ideology

Discourse is mostly based on knowledge, and opinions are based on the ideology in the discourse. The relationship between all levels of discourse and all levels of cognition is one that I am going to talk about later. At the beginning of the 1980s, I began to study racist discourse—first in my own country, the Netherlands, and then in many other countries in Europe, in North America, and in Latin America. I was specifically interested in the role of what I call the symbolic elites: the people and organisations that control public discourse.

It is extremely important that we talk not only about discourse structures, but also about the production of discourse and the psychology of discourse, and also about the social structures and the people who are responsible for them: the symbolic elites. Very often, people blame people (for example, in populist discourse) and spread all kinds of racism, xenophobia, and sexism on social media platforms like Facebook.

The main thesis of my book of 1993 on elite discourse and racism was that ***the symbolic elites—those who control public discourse in the media, in politics, in education, and in science—are chiefly responsible for this reproduction of oppression and marginalisation.*** They control the discourses, and these discourses partly control the minds of the people. That was the study I began in the 1980s. Many of the teachers of today are much more sophisticated and have the help of many people in many countries. We now know much more about this and about the idea that the symbolic elites, those who control public discourse, play such a prominent role. That remains valid today. Later in the discussion, we may see whether, for example, the emergence of social media has changed that. People would say no, it is not only the symbolic elites who now have access to public minds and public education, but also many other people. And the question is whether that is really true in the sense that they are a majority; if not, maybe the symbolic elites, through powerful institutions, still have a very important way of controlling others.

I also worked in the 1980s on news. In that time, very little work had been done on discourse analysis of news. When we talk today about notions like fake news, its critical analysis presupposes knowledge about news. We also need to understand news production, news comprehension—especially how it is possible that people who are well-educated, well-read, selective, and comprehensive accept fake news. Many books have been published on the subject of fake news. I am interested in profound analysis in many disciplines. Fake news is not only the news we read on social media.

There has been lots of fake news for many years in the tabloids. The ones I studied in the 1980s wrote a lot about immigrants. They produce a lot of fake news about immigrants until this day. Fake news is nothing new; we have had it for many years.

Another subject I would like to discuss is the ***notion of ideology***. As you well know, ideology has been studied in many disciplines—especially in philosophy and social science—and since Marx, Engels, and many others, more than a century ago. In psychology, for example, we have learnt a lot about the structure of the mind, the structure of knowledge, and so on. If you look at psychology, or even cognitive social psychology, there is virtually no study of what ideologies are. So, I wrote a book about it at the end of the 1990s, which, for me, was an introduction to exploring what is going on now. Cognitively speaking, ideologies are in the heads of people. But what is their structure? For example, those that are at the basis of Holocaust denial, or racism denial, or sexism denial, or other kinds of denial? We have to know what the structure of these ideologies is and how it relates to other structures of the mind and the attitudes we have, for example, about immigration, or other subjects that are crucial in everyday life. All of this is just beginning in the sense that we need many more books to understand it better. One of my most recent books is about ***knowledge and discourse.*** And until I started to write that book, I had no idea how crucial knowledge was in understanding and producing discourse. Knowledge is everywhere, at all levels in discourse; not only in presuppositions and definite articles, or in other grammatical structures. Without a fundamental comprehension of knowledge, we simply do not know how discourse works. It is extremely important in communication, in everyday consideration, and so on. I tell many people—especially if they are interested in fake news and distortion—that they cannot understand what that is all about if they do not know what knowledge is. And how knowledge is being shared in epistemic communities is very important. Another notion, which was also ignored for a long time, is context. We typically focus on the actual text, talk messages, and so on in discourse studies and linguistics. This is crucial not only for pragmatics and other disciplines, but also in the communicative context: who is speaking when, where, to whom it will go, and so on.

If you want to understand and explain speech acts; if you want to understand style; if you want to understand use of language, or anything that has to do with the appropriateness of discourse, you have to know what context is. And my point in these books I wrote on ***context*** is that it is not out there. That is the tip of the spear. The text and the context are in separate places. Context is something that we have in our minds. We create mental models of all kinds of situations, including communicative ones. When you are speaking with someone, or writing an email, or participating in this session, all of you in those moments have mental models in your minds of the communicative situation. What are we speaking about? In what kind of situation? Many of the structures of discourse depend on context, as we construct them subjectively in our minds. Each person has a different kind of mental model of the communication situation and different goals, knowledge, aims, and identities. And many of the aspects of discourse—especially those from linguists, like indexical expression and technical expression—are much more pronounced, depending on our mental model to communicate the situation. They control everything we say, how we say it, to whom, when, and where. I am now going to present a little bit of personal history and how it relates to the theory of my books since the 1980s on racist discourse. The next phase for me, at least in the study of CDA, was not only studying dominant discourse and power abuse, but all forms of resistance. It is crucial that we not only study racist discourse, but also antiracist discourse; not only sexist discourse, but also feminist discourse, and so on. Critical discourse studies are not only about power abuse and domination, but also about resistance.

People who are in opposing situations, including us, are critical discourse analysts. We also have a voice in resistance against all kinds of abuse, including discursive abuse. My most recent books are about the history of antiracist discourse. That is the first time I have written on history, which is very important for me—as is the work of my colleague Ruth Wodak, who has worked on history of antisemitic and racist discourse for many years. I had never worked on the historical dimension. So, I studied for several years how in history people have resisted racism in Europe, in the United States, and in Brazil. I focused, of course, on the work of people and on probable cases of people against slavery in many countries. So, the first antiracist discourse in many countries was against that form of racism, and then later, since the mid-twentieth century, against all forms of racism. This included, for example, the civil rights movement and Black Lives Matter in the United States.

And I did the same thing for antisemitism. A chapter of one of my books deals specifically with the history of how people, especially Jewish people, in nineteenth-century Europe resisted the beginnings of antisemitism and antisemitic discourse, which had an influence until the Holocaust of the twentieth century. If you read the history of resistance against antisemitism, you will see how different kinds of structure remained active until the Nazis used them. Antisemitic discourse was popular for more than a century, and not only in Germany. It is less known how many scholars, in Germany and in other countries, resisted and analysed in a very detailed way, what the structures and strategies were of this particular kind of antisemitic discourse. I have already mentioned that I am not a specialist on Holocaust denial, but many of the structures involved there, and the denial of oppression, are very old ones that already were established, for example, among Protestant professors in Germany after 1815 and after the defeat of Napoleon, and against the French Revolution.

By the nineteenth century, there was a tradition of undemocratic, illiberal discourse, against which many (especially Jewish) scholars from then until the twentieth century, including Hannah Arendt, were formulating resistance. I learned a lot about the fact that many of the struggles we have in CDA already existed in Brazil, in the United States, in Europe, and in many other parts of the world to resist this particular kind of racism. Rounding the theoretical dimensions is very important. I have mentioned what I am working on now because it has hardly been published. That is at least one thing you cannot know yet. I have also been working on the discourse of social movements. These books on antiracist discourse were framed in the theory of the discourses of social movements. I am interested in art and in how social movements talk among themselves: how they communicate, how they produce leaflets and manifestos, and many other questions.

Social Movement Discourse

I am beginning to write some papers and also a book called *Social Movement Discourse*, which is about all of the dimensions of discourse that are relevant specifically for people in social movements, antiracist movements, and abolition movements in various countries. To apply this to the situation of today, I specifically focus on the people who have been assisting refugees in Western Europe. We suddenly have what in Europe is called the 'refugee crisis', which is rather a political crisis. And I am interested in how ordinary people, especially women, have been active in helping people at train stations and at the borders with clothes, food, and shelter. I am very much interested in that book in applying this to the situation of today: how refugees in Europe are welcomed in an atmosphere where the prejudices against them in many countries are very dominant—and not only in the poor countries that have no money to support them. This also applies to my own country, the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavian countries, and the United Kingdom, where many official policies, people with lots of power, and the tabloids have been against refugees for a long time.

Much of the work I did on racism in the media many years ago remains relevant today, not only in the tabloids, but also, of course, on social media. All of us should do critical analyses of social media and everyday media, traditional media, and stand in solidarity with the few people who go out and fight and struggle against this kind of thing. With the antiracists, the people who are helping refugees, and the people who, wherever in the world, are participating in social movements and NGOs. There appear to be many, but if you compare it to the majority in parliaments in many countries, I am afraid that so far, we do not have much to say.

Each of us is interested in a specific area of linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, social analysis, pragmatics, and other fields of discourse. I do not intend, for you especially, to give another introduction to my theory of this study, but to ask what we can do today in discourse studies in the face of the major international problems. I think it is extremely important that we do not just continue as usual. A lot of politicians already do, and so do most scholars. We should ask ourselves what we can do at this moment to critically analyse and contribute to solving the fundamental problems of today. I have just mentioned things that for all of you might seem obvious. But they still need to be mentioned.

First of all is the climate disaster. I am not saying climate change because it is already happening. This climate disaster is relevant for all people. Therefore, we should ask how, for example, critical discourse studies are relevant for this particular subject—especially since denial is the key word today. Yesterday, I read in the Guardian that denial of climate change is diminishing.

This does not mean that there are not many websites and social media platforms that continue to diminish and euphemize the climate disaster, which is, of course, relevant for all people. My next point is extremely relevant—particularly for those of you in the global south. We have many books on racism and antiracism now; we have many books on sexism; we have studies of the MeToo movement; and we have many books on how women are being discriminated against. But there is practically no study in discourse analysis and discourse today about poverty. We have many books on many subjects at our Centre of Discourse Studies here in Barcelona, but there is virtually no section of books on how poverty is being studied—even from a discursive point of view. My colleagues in Latin America, for example, in Brasília, are especially interested in discourses about homeless people. But this is only one dimension, and there are many other forms of poverty in the world. Incredible poverty. And we do not have to read the works of Piketty in France to know that since the 1960s, and especially since the 1980s, rich people have been getting richer, and poor people have been getting poorer. And I think it is extremely important for each of you—especially if there are students listening to me—not just to study the traditional way of doing CDA, but to go out there and see how the discourse about poor people influences national politics.

Blaming the victim

One of the typical strategies, as you well know, is blaming the victim. They are guilty of not working hard enough, not searching for a job, or not modernising. Blaming the victim is one of the fundamental strategies of discourse about poverty. Who is poor? What are the causes of poverty? What is being done about it? This is as important as the fundamental problems we should deal with—all kinds of sexism, machismo, and patriarchy—and is relevant for both men and women, but especially women. Happily, we admit that many women contribute papers on all of these aspects of sexism in all dimensions of everyday life.

I am very happy that many women, scholars in many disciplines, are working on them from the perspective of CDA. I have already mentioned the work of Ruth Wodak, but there are many other women in these fields. One woman I would like to mention is my colleague and friend, Michelle Lazar in Singapore, who has been propagating what she calls feminist critical discourse studies. For all of you who are interested in the role of women in critical discourse studies, her work is very important. Hierarchy, together with poverty and classism, is something we need to understand much more about. And the work of people like Norman Fairclough. I have been studying that perspective of critical discourse and it remains very important. Besides poverty, everything that has to do with classism against working people, answered and unanswered.

Recently, many of you have been reading about populism and the extreme right. A colleague of mine and compatriot, Cas Mudde, who works in the United States, is writing very good books. He also publishes articles in the Guardian and so on. He and many others have been writing about what populism is. We are students of critical discourse. If anything is relevant for discourse analysis and CDA, it is the populist discourse. And I am happy to say that many people are now studying this kind of thing. But there are also many misconceptions. Populism very often is spoken about as if it were an invention of the poor. This is a typical strategy: blaming the victim. But populism and populist discourse also comes from the elites and from the extreme right.

This is not only an invention of poor people. We should not blame the poor nor the unemployed. Populism is a typical discourse invented, as we say in Spanish, arriba. You are not up there; populism is formulated and preformulated by the symbolic elites at the extreme right in many countries. These are the kinds of people who have broad access to the internet or websites that present extreme right journals, and some radio stations and television channels. This is precisely why these extreme right elites are studied, especially by Ruth Wodak in Vienna. Understanding populism is not only a question of analysing what everyday people say—even on social media. We need to understand how social media works. ***We first have to know how the symbolic elites, the right, and the extreme right have gained control of social media if we want to study manipulation, fake news, ignorance, and denial.*** We have already mentioned the different forms of denial: of the Holocaust, of racism, and of climate change.

We should know this if we want to study, for example, questions of manipulation, fake news, and ignorance—especially on social media. It is crucial that we study and criticise what has been done lately. Very often on Facebook, in fake news, and in other media, we see incredible ignorance about the causes of the COVID-19 pandemic. If we think about the relationship between structures of discourse at all levels—the main topics, the metaphors, even the structure of sentences, but also storytelling, argumentation—all of these levels and dimensions exist because we know them so well. We need to study them and their relationships to the mind. As soon as we talk about denial of knowledge, denial of scientific knowledge, we talk about fake news. What does it mean that these lies against knowledge can be shared through other media? Manipulation.

Manipulation

I have written a couple of papers on ***manipulation***. How can you define manipulation? It is mostly discursive. But what happens in manipulation? You are manipulating the minds of people. You are manipulating their knowledge. You are manipulating their attitudes towards important social issues. You are fundamentally manipulating their ideologies. But people can say: well, that also happens in education. As a professor, when I teach students, I am trying to influence them, too; I am trying to manipulate their minds. Now, what is the difference between education, teaching, and manipulation? How do we define this difference? That is not so easy because yes, we are, in a way, also manipulating. How do we distinguish that particular kind of manipulation from the kind you see nowadays on social media when it comes to social differences, exclusion, and forms of racism and denial. How do we distinguish them? There is just one dimension, which needs to be analysed much more deeply: manipulation always controls the minds of people in the interest of the person who is manipulating, and not in the interest of those that are being manipulated. Who does it serve and for whom is it good? It can be governments and it can be big companies. We should also analyse in stretches of manipulation who is doing it. I think that of these kinds of critical discourse studies that look at the major international problems, a few relate directly to our field—namely all kinds of public discourse.

That is as important as social media, which has a lot of influence. There are a lot of articles in the press today, if you follow the news, about Facebook. Of course, this is terrible—especially when we know that more than a billion people use it. But we should not forget all of these daily newspapers in which similar things happen. Do not forget that tabloid newspapers, even today, still have millions of readers. That happens in Britain, it happens in Germany, and many of these newspapers are still lying about immigration, about refugees, or ignoring what happens in the rest of the world. Or they will present in Europe, for example, all the good things Europeans are doing for poorer countries without much criticism. I believe that many aspects of critical discourse studies today can be applied not only in criticising Twitter and Facebook, but our 'normal' media and our 'normal' textbooks. One of the dimensions of critical discourse studies that I have hardly mentioned is political discourse: analysing what happens in our parliaments and what our politicians say; what happens in the traditional media, on social media, and in the classroom. I have been interested for a long time in textbooks and what we read in them. In the 1980s, I wrote one of my first books on critical discourse studies. It was a critical study of textbooks in the social sciences and history in the Netherlands. And what these books told the students on immigration was incredible.

It is a little bit better today, but if you look at textbooks around the world, what is being sold as official knowledge needs critical analysis everywhere. I would encourage those of you who are interested in education to think about the curriculum and how CDA can be applied there and in textbooks. There is a lot of work you can do with that. So, what can we do? What can we do to discuss this subject with students? First, always formulate opposition—academically, socially, and politically—to all forms of domination and power abuse. I am not much interested in power; I am interested in power abuse and domination. Second, continue to analyse, to criticise, and to resist all forms of specifically discursive domination. Provide critical analysis and explanation; do not simply say that a lot of people are saying terrible things about minorities and about immigrants.

It is not enough only to analyse what they say: we also need to explain it. Why is it that in so many countries, including here in Europe, so many people are saying these terrible things about minorities or refugees, or about Jews? Why is that happening today? Analysts and linguists are useful in explaining this. And we should not leave this to philosophers or social scientists; we also have our own ways of contributing to this kind of understanding. We should, of course, educate our students as future teachers, and as the future symbolic elites. We must also integrate these things into the education system. In a few weeks in Barcelona, I am starting a masterclass in discourse analysis, and it is extremely important for me and many of my students from all over the world. It is important in the education of the students that I try to translate complex theoretical things. We perform critical analysis and review of textbooks. You should look at the textbooks of your own university of your own discipline, too.

Critical analysis of all media is also very important—always in solidarity with other critical groups and organisations. How do you do political discourse analysis? First, you have to identify your major problem, so that CDA can make a difference. We have to develop a sophisticated, multidisciplinary theory. A superficial theory is not enough; it should be a sophisticated one. We have to really discuss structure, ranging from social structure to cognitive searches. We should improve and develop sophisticated methods at all levels of discourse: grammar, rhetoric, style, argumentation, storytelling, communicative context, epistemic analysis, ideological and multimodal analysis, and images. At all of these levels of discourse analysis, we can begin to study critically. What are the main problems today? I have already talked too much. There is much more to say, but it is time to hand over the floor..

If you cannot ask questions today, you are welcome to contact me using my email address. And as everyone knows, I always reply to all of my questions.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much. It is so inspiring to hear all of this—especially for me, coming from literature. I think that we are now giving you a virtual round of applause in our hearts, for coming from literary studies and dedicating your time to studying how it relates to the real world due to this textual analysis. You consider all the words, all the sentences and phrases thoroughly in ways that lead to the kind of work that you are doing now. And I love the word that you use—solidarity—because it is very important. In the world, we see symbolic elites everywhere—even, of course, in academia. People say: 'But research should be above politics. Literature and linguistics should be above politics. These two things should be divorced,'. Others say: 'Oh, but your research should not have this tinge, this political tinge in it,'. And this is something I have always been against. I think that research is political, and it should be, and we should show our solidarity to those who do not have power; those who are subjected to abuses of power. To hear that from you is truly inspiring. Thank you very much.

Since our symposium focuses on different instances of Holocaust denial, we wish to ask for your opinion: What do you perceive to be the main specificity, or specific traits, or specific characteristics of Holocaust and genocide denial compared to other forms of hate speech?

Teun van Dijk: Thank you for your question. First of all, I would like to say that I do not like the notion of hate speech, and to explain why hate speech incorporates the idea that there is hate, or that it involves some kind of emotion that people do not control; it is something that comes to people that are overwhelmed by emotion; something that is spontaneous. And hate speech has nothing to do with emotion; it has to do with power and its abuse. That is fundamental. Hate speech against Jews, for many centuries, and against refugees and minorities in Southeast Asia, have nothing to do with spontaneity. In the theory of emotion, emotion is something that applies to one person in one specific situation. It can be measured. And that is not the case here. It has nothing to do with people being furious.

The people who caused the Holocaust were not overcome with emotion; they had no feelings about Jews at all. They simply treated them like animals. And even the metaphors in the discourse are very important. So, instead of hate speech, which is a very popular notion, I prefer to use other words like discriminating discourse or dominating discourse. ***It is very important to know that hate speech is not about hate; it is about power; it is about domination; it is about abuse of power. Holocaust denial or any kind of genocide denial has nothing to do with emotion; it is abuse—namely that a specific group does not want to admit that others are just humans. They do not want to admit that to their country, or to their family. It has to do with exclusion. It has to do with dehumanisation.*** If you analyse the different kinds of hate speech, the dominant discourses, you have to look at this kind of thing. The other question is, who is responsible for this particular kind of hate speech? Hate speech is associated with ordinary people who write ordinary posts on Facebook. No, I do not think so. These people often believe these things because they have heard and read them. Political analysis of Holocaust denial, racism, sexism, and so on say that it is not innate, it is learned. And it is learned mostly through all kinds of public discourse. The media, television, books, and social media today, and how these inferences—for example, the attitudes of friends and colleagues towards racism and sexism, and, therefore, antisemitism and Holocaust denial—all of these things are learned. All kinds of discourses circulate. The work of Ruth Wodak on antisemitism shows that concept historically—where these discourses came from. They were circulating in Europe for many centuries. And this kind of analysis emerged through a specific kind of symbolic elite. I am interested in how, in the nineteenth century in Germany, for example, the groundwork for antisemitism was laid, which led to the Holocaust. The people who did that were professors at universities. They were Protestant professors who were against the French Revolution and its ideas after the defeat of Napoleon. People who held power in universities and influenced students. It comes from the symbolic elites. If you do an analysis of the origins of Holocaust denial, you should look there.

I think that is extremely important: whom we are going to analyse, what kind of things we are going to analyse, and that we see all of these myths and lies, distortions at all levels of discourse in the numbers game.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much. I think you have answered my question. How can we promote CDA as a reliable research methodology and framework? This is from the audience.

Teun A. van Dijk: CDA is very well known, and it has been around for many years. I am always interested in who formulates this particular kind of criticism. Why is that a problem, the sudden worry about methods that other kinds of scholars never have? If you do grammatical analysis, do people say that we are interested in cherry picking this example? It doesn't happen. First, one should analyse what happens, but also where it comes from. Why is it that, suddenly, creating a discourse analysis has to show things that other aspects of discourse analysis never asked about? You always have to ask, who is asking? The second thing is the question of cherry picking. Well, you all know that today, CDA is extremely well associated with all forms of corpus linguistics, which affects all of us much more than traditional content analysis, and one could say, of course, that that is good enough.

You also have to do qualitative analyses—just counting words and frequencies is very important, but it is only one part of the solution. Of course, if we do the kind of analysis that is typical of, say, racist discourse, and we do a detailed analysis of some examples, it doesn't say, for example, that this is not happening. You said this is typical. What you have to learn is how it works. And then if you know how it works, it is easy to say how often it works. For example, I wrote a book in 1991, thirty years ago, on racism in the press. I did an analysis of all these examples of racism in the press. But there were also lots of numbers. Many of the people who are working with CDA also work with actual data.

There is no corpus linguistics. You are saying this kind of thing with all of its limitations, but if you study structures, only the frequencies of words, you do not know the structure of the propositions. You can count, for example, the complex syntactic structures of the complex narrative argumentation structures. And there is another point that is very important to mention: we talk about race and people say: 'Well, this is just one newspaper or one editorial that is saying these terrible things,'. But if this is done by an important newspaper, by an important politician, they need only to say one terrible thing against immigrants, minorities, or refugees and it influences millions. Even if you do a critical analysis of some facts of this politician's statement or that newspaper's article, it influences millions of people. Where do all these things come from? They come from the influence of the symbolic elites.

Even if you do a critical analysis of just one tabloid, or one editorial, it is read by many people in the parliament; people who make decisions about limits on immigration. I did that work. I looked at parliamentary debates and how they used the press to argue against immigration, for example. It is just one person speaking. Alright. The quantitative analysis of crucial text in public discourse is extremely important if we want to do that. And with all of this data, this kind of analysis is always replicable. I am not giving a personal interpretation of poetry, as I did in the old days; now, this is a systematic analysis of a particular kind of discourse, and anyone can follow it. The methods are so reliable that it is not just a personal impression. So, to the whole question of cherry picking, I have a lot to say, but not today.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much. With regard to symbolic elites, we have a very interesting question here. It reads: 'Could you please clarify what you mean by symbolic elites and how their role is changing in the age of social media? How can the structuring agency of, for example, Facebook and its community standards for discourse, be understood?'

The notion of symbolic elites has a relationship with sociology. If you think about symbolic power; if we think of the work of *Bourdieu* in France, it relates to this. I define the symbolic elites as those who control public discourse in a multimedia kind of way: images, films, and Facebook, not just text. And I am wondering who, in fact, controls this kind of public discourse in our societies. First, it is all kinds of media—social media, traditional media, newspapers, television; second, the politicians who say and repeat many of the things that the media says; and third, education and science. What can be said and what is being said in societies that are mostly controlled by these symbolic elites?

Teun A. van Dijk: How do influential people and institutions, schools, academies, and politicians control what is being said and read? ***Symbolic elites dominate and control all kinds of public discourse in a broad sense.*** What about social media? If you look at social media, you can say that anyone can write anything on social media and it will be read by millions. I do not know the empirical work about the actual influence of all aspects; whether we have empirical data about the inference about specific things that are being said on social media. I would have to see more data to explain.

Many of the things that are being said in the media are not originally invented by people; they get those things from somewhere. Racism is not innate; it is learned by people from public media and public discourse. Most of the racist, antisemitic, and sexist things that are spread and formulated on social media are not original; they come from other kinds of discourse. And social media does not only pertain to individuals, but also well-known newspapers, organisations, and institutions. I am yet to see what the original contribution is that social media follows or does not follow, criticises or does not criticise the symbolic elites. And my hunch, which began when I was writing my book on the discourse of the elites and racism, mostly comes from above and not from below..

And I think that most of the negative things we read on social media are simply a popular voice that promotes too many kinds of elite discourse. I have seen the same thing many times in racism. I am not an expert because we do not even have the data today on social media. We need to revise, maybe improve the theory of symbolic elites and their influence on social media. But my thesis remains that even on social media, the real influence comes from the symbolic elites and not from ordinary people.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much. CDA has helped me to understand and to analyse epistemic violence, because it is a propagated form that is very hard to pinpoint—especially in the framework of law. You mentioned structural poverty, and I do not know whether anyone here has watched the Netflix series, *Maid*? It is about a single mother, and she has to go through all these structural kinds of poverty. It is a good series on that subject. As a feminist, I believe that we have to rethink equality; not only on the basis of *de jure* equality, but also *de facto* equality. I think that what you have said is inspiring, and we need to go back and identify the symbolic elites and the production of knowledge.

Teun A. van Dijk: Most of the people listening today do not come from Latin America. But, as many of you know, I helped to constitute an organisation in Latin America and I often go there. My wife comes from Brazil, so I am constantly informed about what is happening there. Since you mentioned the films, precisely on poverty and class, there is an excellent film in Brazil about the everyday life of a maid, and another in Chile about the same subject. They depict the everyday lives of maids and how they are treated in middle- and upper-class homes in Brazil and in Chile. And I have seen it happening myself. I have been in all of the countries of Latin America. I have been invited by friends and colleagues, and I have seen how, for example, the children of these rich families ask the maid to get a glass of water from the kitchen. For me, coming from the Netherlands, I thought I was hallucinating! But that does not mean that these things do not happen in the Netherlands, too.

It is good to mention these films because they also form part of the kind of critical discourse studies we can do on resistance and opposition against this form of elite racism. Many more films should be made that depict this kind of situation—and against racism and all kinds of sexism, and many more women directors should take the lead. Today, people from the global south also contribute films and so on. There is a lot of counter discourse happily coming around. And I hope that international platforms like Netflix contribute more space to them.

Verita Sriratana: Wonderful. You have so many people from the Philippines, including my own family. There are also films like *Babae at Baril* (‘The Girl and and Gun’) by Rae Red that fit into this description of rewriting violence through the feminist framework. It is a very good avenue to explore that, and it also leads to others. Thank you very much for all of your questions. I do not know whether we have the time to address all of them, but please let me try. This one says: ‘Many schools around the world try to integrate antiracist discourse in their curriculums. But, in some states of the United States, the discourse of critical race theory is problematic. My question is, do you think if we reframe CDA to antiracism for children to learn, that it will help reduce resistance from rightist parents? I understand that CDA and antiracism share the same goal; the problem is the discourse that each camp produces,’.

Teun A. van Dijk: This is a very important question. My last book, published by Cambridge University Press, on antiracist discourse, says at the beginning that the theory in the data and the history relates very much to critical race theory. And I have made contact with many people in the United States who work in this area. It is a scandal. As you have mentioned, critical race theory is now being delegitimised, accused, and even forbidden in many parts in the United States. One can see this in a positive way or in a negative way. The fact that it is being attacked, threatened, and prohibited all around means that it seems to have influence. If it were totally without influence, it would not be prohibited in schools in many Republican states. Younger people want to read Black Lives Matter studies. The good news is that there are also many people who are pleased that this type of analysis exists.

This is a particular kind of prohibition; a particular kind of criticism against sending data for analysis. The arguments they use in schools in the United States forbid, say, critical race studies. That is a part of the same problem: racism. It means that you are against Black people—especially Black people being scholars, Black people being professors, Black people offering insights that students might want to learn. I think that we must learn at a young age to be critical of any kind of power abuse. It does not even have to be about racism at the beginning. But if you teach young people to be critical of any form of abuse, naturally, they will. It is not automatic because the rest of a person's development depends on their experiences in everyday life, as well as how they are educated at school and out of school.

It is a very complex structure. It is not only this that goes into the heads of people, and there will be automatic discussions. But you still have to offer all of these instruments, which, until very recently, did not happen—even in the textbooks I analysed in the 1980s. I am not talking about the nineteenth century; I am talking about textbooks from a couple of decades ago, which stepped out of all things about immigrants and minorities. Until all of these textbooks have been rewritten, and all of the school curricula have been redone, there is still a lot to do. And part of this will be resistance—the same thing we are talking about now. Why is there so much antisemitism, so much racism, and so much sexism on social media?

What I am saying is that there is a reason why so much of this is around at the moment. It is happening because women are getting more influence, because Black people are getting more and more of a voice. And many of these people can help identify this new power distribution by reacting in this way. The good news is that this is a reaction against the power of gay people, or women, or nonwhite people. This is happening precisely because things are changing. So, of course, we need much more political analysis of the causes of populism and so on. It is good that one of them pertains to this subject. The dominant discourse is changing. Not all newspapers are racist, and some of what is being said now about gay people and Black people shows that the global south is changing and is ready to exert all kinds of natural resistance to the right-wing symbolic elites who influence ordinary people through social media.

Verita Sriratana: We have another question that is very current: 'Can we also do a CDA of the vaccine mandate and the narrative behind it?'.

Teun A. van Dijk: Thank you for that question. It is the kind of question I talk about every day with my wife at the dinner table. Is it democratic to force people to be vaccinated? I have to say that first, we have to see how it works. How many people see where it comes from? The only thing I wonder is how, suddenly, can governments, on the basis of scientific evidence, say that you should do or not do this? In Austria at the moment, people are under complete lockdown again. In many countries, including in the Netherlands, we have all kinds of new rules, and it is the same everywhere in the world. Why, suddenly, is this particular kind of recommendation—because it is not even a recommendation or advice; for example, the obligation to wear a mask and so on—not accepted. People do not protest against the obligation to pay taxes; they do not pay attention to many other obligations to behave in certain ways in everyday life: where you should drive on the road and where you should stop for a left or a right turn.

Why, suddenly, is being vaccinated something we should not be obliged to do? To avoid accidents on the roads, we have traffic lights. Why is that acceptable and telling people to prepare to avoid others getting sick is not? Not only yourself, but also other people. In any society, you have norms and rules. And one of those is that, for example, you should eat this and not this. People prohibit companies now from putting poison in food. There is also prohibition. Nobody protested against this. You should see this kind of protest against obligations in a broader context of sociological, philosophical, and anthropological prohibition. And I find it very strange that for this kind of thing, there are conspiracy theories and protests. People in the Netherlands go to protests against these obligations.

Why, similarly, is the state so powerful that we need to protest against so many other things, much more important things? You can think about the philosophical notion of the common good. Scholars and scientists—not only in biology and in medicine, but also in communication and discourse, in public opinion—they should also be involved in communicating these kinds of things and explaining to people: 'Listen, when you were small, you had no problem—or your parents had no problem—with you being vaccinated against childhood illnesses. What is your problem today?'. This is just an informal reaction to something that is going on now, and I have many questions for an analysis, which would have to be done in a more systematic way. But it is extremely relevant. And, as I said, I want to talk about it with my family every day.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you. I think some of the countries in Southeast Asia have quite a different problem—particularly in Thailand. I think antivaxxers are not the issue, but the mismanagement of vaccine and vaccine policy is, which we cannot even talk about. There are censoring bodies everywhere. I should not talk about that either, but we should name them, I think, as CDA scholars, or literary scholars, or whatever we call ourselves. I think we have time for a couple of more questions. I would like to be direct, since you have just talked about the way we talk about the vaccine mandate. As we see online, troll-generated comments come along with the discourse. And this particular question is fascinating: 'I have always felt that troll-generated comments may be a threat to the validity of CDA, when passing through social media content. Do we know how to discriminate these comments from authentic discourse? Or should we embrace them as part of the discourse to be analysed?'.

Teun A. van Dijk: This is a complex question. I do not have a direct answer about this idea. Yes, it is something that should be analysed. If you have notions like fake news and distortion, it presupposes that there is some kind of objective truth, that someone knows everything, and that all of these other things are just deviations from the real thing. That, of course, is complicated. One of the counter discourses is that we should have more confidence in science and not in what some influencer says. And what science has done is now relevant for state politics. If you look at the history of politics and the history of racism, they were based in the past on scientific research. The genetic policies in Brazil and many other countries: they were based on science.

In that sense, people are right to be critical of that. How can you distinguish, let's say, a scientific consensus today and the history of the abuse of science and its influence in politics? That is a rightful question to ask, and we also have to show why and how today the advice of the WHO is relevant and not just some kind of prejudice. You are not cloaked in science. So yes, it is true that we have to do this particular kind of analysis. Another thing that is important to mention is fake news. In the press, on purely formal grounds, it cannot be distinguished from truthful news. This is not the way lies work. People can lie and there is nothing in a lie that distinguishes it from a truthful statement. That is why people can lie: because it is not obvious that it is a lie. A lie seems right. So much fake news is like real news because there is no structure to the problem. That is why there is not a real programme that we can just apply to, for example, Facebook and distinguish all these things that are fake news from real news.

There is no such thing. So certain things are typical of people who work with Facebook, and there are hundreds of studies about that. But there is no general rule that can distinguish between lies and truthful statements. You have to know things. You have to have truthful sources. You have to know, who am I going to tell? I have specific newspapers that I believe more than other ones, because I know that what they write is more likely to be true. It is extremely important that we look at what kind of sources we use. I do not like philosophies on social media. But one of the most incredible things is that anyone, in principle, can write anything for an audience of millions. Is that real democracy or not?

Does it mean that any crackpot can say anything and can influence millions of people? No, I have to think about freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and many other things when I think about this. To launch a newspaper, you have to have all kinds of licences. Why is it that all these people do not need licences to communicate things to millions of people? And the broad discussion about freedom of the press and so on, which, of course, I also defend; otherwise, I could not publish my website.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much. There is much danger in the fact that everybody can publish and propagate information. But, as you have said, it can be used as an empowering channel, as we have learnt so much regarding the news. I think many people are cynical and they do not want to follow the so-called 'mainstream news'—especially in a country that I know very well, Thailand. Investigative journalism that comes from various and even professional journalists also helps to inform us in a way. So, yes, we should consider that, too. It can also be an empowering tool.

Teun A. van Dijk: Many of you have probably read the news about the elections in Chile. One candidate is a fascist, the son of a Nazi who came from Germany, and the kind of ideas he has are not conservative: they are simply extreme. And how can we explain this, despite the dictatorship? How can some people there want their leader to be like Pinochet? Because in Chile, there is not a single leftist, progressive newspaper. There are smaller things: websites and social media storms. But there is only one big dominant news outlet, *El Mercurio*, which is also a right-wing newspaper. The same thing has happened in Brazil, a country I often visit and know a lot about. Why did millions of people vote for Bolsonaro? The hate speech against Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. I did a systematic analysis a few years ago of the editorials of a major newspaper in Brazil called *O Globo*.

When the former president, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached, I showed how through these editorials, masses of people were motivated to take to the streets and protest against Dilma Rousseff, which was later used in the parliament to impeach her. I have many examples in which the media causes terrible things to happen, like Bolsonaro being elected in Brazil, Trump being elected in the United States, and recent events in Europe. These events happened because of radio, television, and newspapers, which have influence through social media on many, many people. What we need is investigative journalism everywhere. We have the Intercept, and we have many other organisations and teams. Each country should also have, by definition, progressive, critical, and independent newspapers and television channels. Unfortunately, they are not in the majority.

Verita Sriratana: The final question of today brings us back full circle, and it comes from Talia. She says: 'Talking about emotions such as hate is part of how we refer to speech. Would you say that imbuing emotions into the discursive forms in which we refer to different aspects of control like sexism and racism is a form of naturalisation that has been created by heterogenic symbolic systems?'.

Teun A. van Dijk: Emotion involves extremely complex relationships. I commented on the question of hate speech to correct a misunderstanding—namely that people write against men, against women, straight people write against gay people, and so on. They are not questions of emotion, but ***questions of power and its abuse***. To understand things like hate speech, we should also know about emotions. But I am not saying that emotions are unimportant in communication. When people read this particular kind of content, which is not written, there is a lot of hate. But it says something about the situation with refugees or immigrants who take away their jobs and so on. And then in a situation in which you have just lost your job, or you have a miserable income, or you are being discriminated against for whatever, it is easy to blame somebody else.

That particular kind of text, which is produced by some kind of symbolic elites or by their followers on social media, can have an emotional reading and interpretation that people do so in everyday life in a specific situation or context. Emotions are contextual. They are personal. People get mad because in that situation, and in similar situations, emotions can become a vehicle for hate. But do not forget. We cannot debate this today, but in theoretical debates, I think one can share beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies; you have ideological groups. But, strictly speaking, you cannot share emotions because an emotion is always within yourself, within your body. Emotions are embodied. Many people can take part in a demonstration. They can be furious, but each person still has their own emotions. They may share an evaluation; they may share an opinion or an ideology; they can share many things, but the emotion is always personal. That is not something that everyone agrees with; it is a theory. But I think it is very important to distinguish between the beliefs, prejudices, and ideologies that we share, like knowledge. Emotion has a role in the way individuals read, understand, and process these kinds of discourses, and it is relevant in their everyday lives. And if you are in a social situation in which you are prone to have a particular kind of emotion, particular messages can have particular influence.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much, prof van Dijk. You have inspired us greatly today, and I feel privileged to be able to talk to you. On behalf of the organisers of this symposium, I wish to thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise with us. You have given us ideas for our future research work, for ways to show solidarity. You have also encouraged us to examine and question the bombardment of news and information we endure with more critical and inquiring minds, which is necessary in the current political situation—especially in Southeast Asia. Thank you very much once again. We give you a virtual round of applause.

Teun A. van Dijk: Thank you, Verita, for your presentation and for your excellent way of communicating all of the questions.
Thank you for the invitation to speak to you all.

I plan to stimulate the formation of an association of discourse studies in Southeast Asia.
I am delighted to be able to speak to people in Southeast Asia today. I am learning from them and I hope to be back. It has been a privilege, a pleasure, and an honour to speak with you. Read all things critically. Never accept any kind of symbolic elitism. Always be critical. Thank you for being fantastic.

Verita Sriratana: And I believe I can say, on behalf of the audience as well, that you are most welcome in Southeast Asia. We will be very happy to have you. Once again, thank you very much to our audience for all of their pertinent questions. Thank you for your participation.

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24 NOVEMBER, 2021

Opening remarks by Dr. Raymond Leos, acting Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, American University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Natalia Sineaeva: Welcome everyone again, and thank you for staying with us for the next day of the symposium. Yesterday, we had about 800 attendees for the lecture of professor Teun Van Dijk on critical discourse analysis as a key method of studying antiminority discourses, genocide denial, and distortion. We had participants from all over Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, and also some participants from Indonesia and Eastern Europe. This symposium has been organised as part of the *Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortions: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia project.*

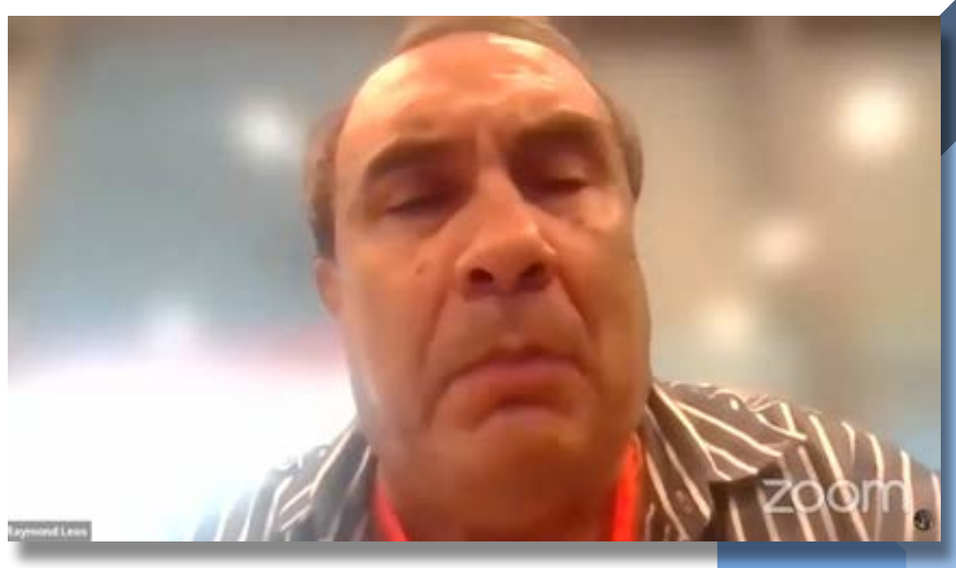
The project aims to identify narratives about the Holocaust in the region—we focus on Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand—and develop counterstrategies and arguments against them. There are many examples of distortion, and we will be discussing them during the next three days. The project also aims to inspire critical memory discourses about local instances of genocide. Last month, we worked with regional researchers in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand to assess the situation in this context. We are now preparing our digital exhibition on Holocaust and genocide distortion in the region, which soon will be available in the English, Burmese, Cambodian, and Thai languages on our website.

This year, we have organised a series of seminars and meetings, at which we discussed what antisemitism is, and what Holocaust denial and distortion is. The speakers included Jeremy Jones and Sarah Lambard from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, among many others. We have established our own network, and we are very proud of the work it has done. This symposium has served to expand this network. We have invited people who have not had opportunities to participate previously.

Our project has been supported by Heinrich Böll Stiftung of Cambodia and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Perhaps I need to say some words about the latter: in the chat window, my colleague is sharing the links to the alliance's website (https://www.holocaustremembrance.com), and its definition of Holocaust distortion and denial, which unites governments and experts to strengthen, advance, and promote Holocaust education, research, and remembrance. We have been using this definition during our work this year. We also refer to it during discussions.

Today, we are going to have a very interesting programme. Dr Robert Williams will present an overview of Holocaust distortion and how it relates to antisemitism; professor Yehuda Bauer will deliver a keynote speech; professor Dina Porat will chair the session. Our colleague from Bangladesh, Foysal Shahriar Ratul, who is a very active participant in our project and has attended all of our meetings and seminars this year, has prepared special questions to share with the keynote speaker and with the chair of the session from the perspective of a person from Asia, where there is not a sizeable Jewish population. Today's evening session will include a discussion on Holocaust denial and distortion in Cambodia, and a second keynote speech by professor Ben Kiernan. Before this, I am going to give the floor to Dr Raymond Leos, who represents the American University of Phnom Penh, which supported us in this project—and particularly with arranging this symposium.

Raymond Leos is associate vicepresident of academic and student affairs at the American University of Phnom Penh. He is a native of the United States, from California. He has lived and worked in Cambodia as a university professor, governmental advisor, and development consultant for many years. He has also worked at other universities in Cambodia, including the University of Law and Economics. We wish to thank the American University of Phnom Penh for supporting our initiative and for inviting its students and professors to this event. It is my great pleasure to give the floor to Dr Raymond Leos. Thank you.



Raymond Leos: Thank you very much, Natalia. It is a pleasure to join all of you. I will be coming in and out of sessions this evening, but I will try to attend as much of it as I can. I think it is just a fascinating programme. I want to thank all of you for joining us, and I am happy that our students are interested in this. Holocaust distortion and denial is very much related to education. We, as educators, have a duty to demand of our students; to ask them in their studies—particularly of history and other subjects—to be rigorous. This means training them to use their thinking skills to look at evidence. The problem we have in this era of social media is that disinformation is widely distributed, and there is no questioning of the factual bases of assertions. The problem that we have had for many years—and it is becoming an even more serious problem with social media—is not holding people accountable when they make decisions. What I mean by holding people accountable is asking them whether they get this evidence, what it is based on. And I, as someone who was also trained in history, have a strong belief in looking at the past, looking at the evidence, what the facts are, and where the facts take us.

I wrote an academic article as a graduate on General John Eisenhower and what he did at the end of the Second World War. He immediately had film units go across all the concentration camps that had been liberated and had everything filmed before there was any opportunity to hide the evidence. And he documented everything on film. We owe a debt of gratitude to General Eisenhower for what he did in terms of ensuring that these events are documented—particularly the visual evidence of what had happened in the concentration camps. These are things that add to our knowledge and provide evidence that we can use to counter these deniers. Basically, what we are dealing with in society is a lack of rigor; a reluctance to look at facts when people present them. This is what I try to teach my students when I teach classes on media literacy: where do you get this information?

I think as an academic, and I know that my colleague, professor Teresa de Langis, who will be involved in the programme later today, can speak on this as well: we guide young people, we train them, we mentor them, and we inspire them to develop the skills that make them not only citizens of their own societies in their own countries, but also citizens of the world. And one of those skills is being able to look at facts. When we talk about the Holocaust, the documentation is overwhelming. But, thanks to General Eisenhower, this has all been documented. These films and documents were used during the Nuremberg trials and were very effective.

I think we are fortunate here in Cambodia, speaking as someone who has lived and worked here for nearly two decades, that in our situation during the Khmer Rouge era, we had several institutions that were able to document what went on between 1975 and 1979. We have the Documentation Center of Cambodia. We have the work of professor Ben Kieran, who will speak later today, and of other scholars who have compiled voluminous material relating to what happened during those years. We have the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, which presents documentation of what happened during that period. And we also have the Bophana Center, which has an incredible collection of audiovisual materials of that period that are combined very carefully. They have done a tremendous job of collecting material. If you ever visit Cambodia, I highly recommend visiting the Bophana Center.

We in Cambodia have done a lot to create this data that can be discussed and is available for scholars and young people to access. I think about the Extraordinary Chambers (Khmer Rouge Tribunal), which is wrapping up right now. People can argue about the outcome of the tribunal, but I think one of its most important outcomes, like at Nuremberg, is the documentation.

The evidence that was revealed is now part of the record; it will be included in archives that the court will create after its mandate ends. And like with Nuremberg, we will have material and we will have facts. I think this is an important aspect of how we deal with it in society—particularly as educators. In closing, I want to thank all of you. I am excited to deliver these opening remarks. We at the American University of Phnom Penh are proud to be part of this initiative. We also are very happy to have professor Theresa be part of this program. I am looking forward to seeing the speakers and hearing from all of you. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much, Dr Raymond Leos, for what you are doing in Cambodia with university students and for your openness to discussing the issues and for supporting us. Our next speaker is Dr Robert Williams, who, unfortunately, is not with us in person because today is Thanksgiving day in the United States. Dr Williams has recorded his presentation, and my colleague is going to share it with you now. He is deputy director of international affairs of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is also on the Steering Committee of the Global Task Force on Holocaust distortion of the International Holocaust Rememberance Alliance. He regularly advises international organisations and governments on antisemitism and Holocaust issues, and is currently overseeing a major initiative on Holocaust and genocide denial laws. Dr Williams's research includes German history, US and foreign policy, and contemporary antisemitism. I now wish to invite my colleague, Samantha from Never Again, to share her screen and show us his presentation. Thank you very much.

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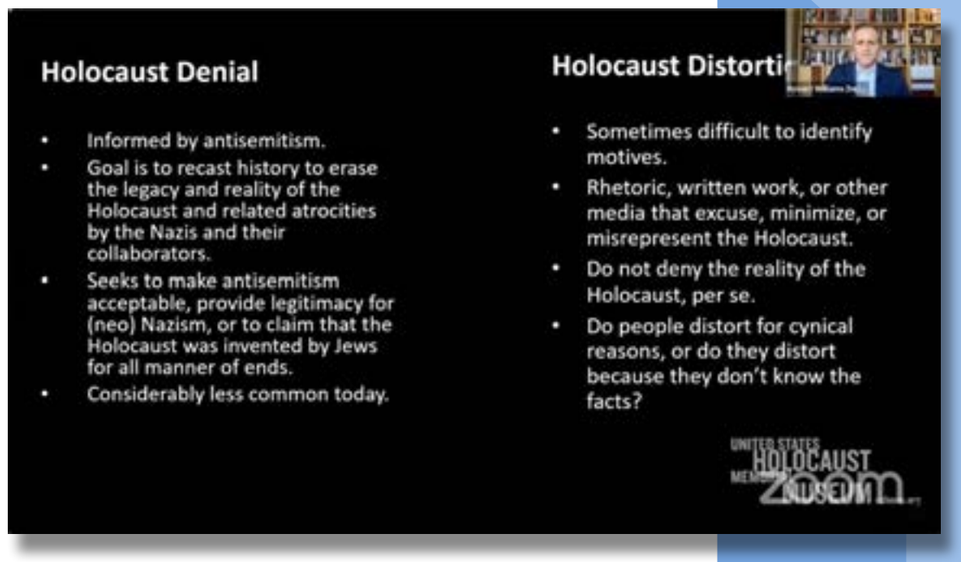
An overview of the problem of Holocaust distortion and how it relates to antisemitism by Dr. Robert Williams, Deputy Director, International Affairs, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Chair of the Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial at the IHRA, Washington DC, USA

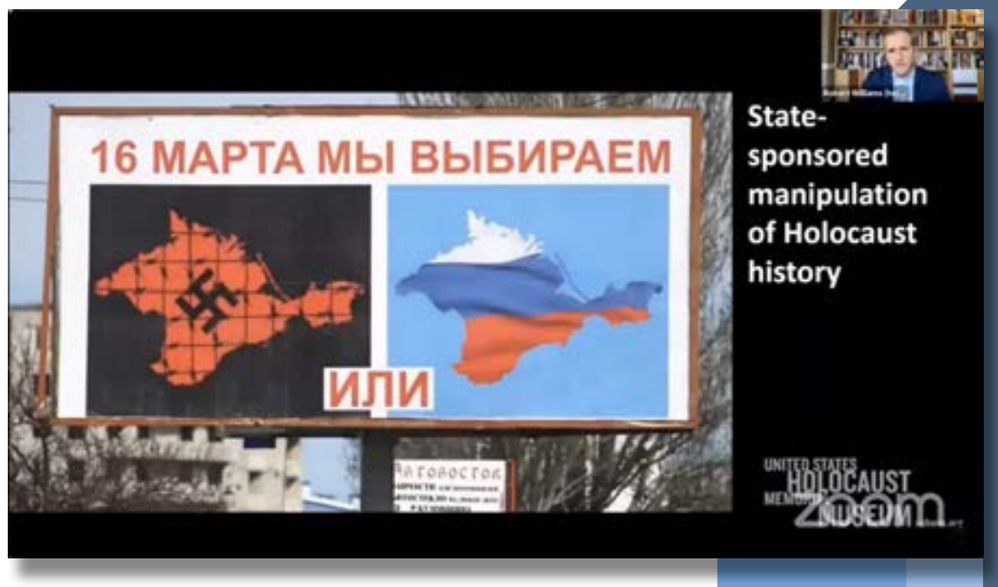
My name is Dr Robert Williams, and I am going to talk about the issue of Holocaust denial and distorion today. I think it is important to remember that as we are talking about Holocaust distortion, there are a number of factors behind its rise as we see across multiple cultures and societies. These include the attempts of many governments, of both the political left and the political right, to create useful pasts that they can use to rally populist support. There is also an increased willingness to believe that facts somehow matter less than one's opinion. Just think of the number of climate deniers around. It is a general environment and a general culture that supports the so-called 'post-truth' trend. There are also more and more people who are to succumbing to biases and hatred in the form of antisemitism. There are indicators that societies at large are beginning to subscribe and believe more in various conspiracy theories—especially antisemitic conspiracy myths. All of these factors influence and are influenced by distortion of the Holocaust. What are we talking about here? How is Holocaust distortion different from the related phenomenon of Holocaust denial? Holocaust denial is easier to define.



Holocaust denial tries to convince people that the Holocaust, and ocassionaly related atrocities, did not take place. Holocaust deniers are ensentially trying to make antisemitism acceptable by claiming that the Holocaust never happened; that it is the product of a great plot. This means that Holocaust denial is antisemitism, which is a significant problem. But in many parts of the world, especially in Europe and North America, it is considerably less common today than Holocaust distortion is.

At the simplest level, Holocaust distortion excuses, minimises, and misrepresents the Holocaust as a historical event and is on the rise today. Holocaust distortion is tricky because most of its forms do not deny the reality of the Holocaust—at least not per se. It is also potentially difficult to identify the motives behind distortion. Some people distort for cynical, hateful reasons; others do so simply because they do not know the facts. It really does not matter in the end, because if you allow for or excuse Holocaust distortion, you contribute to the erosion of understanding of the Holocaust. Morally, Holocaust distortion is an insult to the memories of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Practically, it can act as a gateway drug, if you will, to conspiracy theories, to Holocaust denial, and to more dangerous forms of antisemitism. Older forms of Holocaust distortion and denial used to play havoc with Holocaust history. These forms are often easy enough to counter with historical facts, archives, and documentation. We also see attempts to excuse or minimise the relevance of the Holocaust. This is something that can be seen in some of the countries where the Holocaust occured. It can take the form of suggestions that the Holocaust is either not an important part of national histories, or that locals did not play roles in the crimes against Jews. I want to focus on the second case for a moment. If you live in a country where the Holocaust took place, why might your government, or populist nationalists, or society at large subscribe to the notion that the Holocaust was not an important part of your history? Quite simply because the Holocaust and the reality that it required more than just German initiative presents an uncomfortable truth. The Holocaust was an international act of genocide, and not only because of transgressed national borders. Without the Nazis, the Holocaust would never have happened. This is true: Nazi Germany was the essential factor. But the Nazis also required local collaborators and some of the countries they occupied to assist in the crimes. Sometimes, these collaborators were local townspeople, or local police, or others co-opted into occupation governments. In other cases, Nazi-allied countries like Romania, the independent state of Croatia, or Hungary actively engaged in crimes against the Jews. In fact, one of the first major atrocities against the Jews occurred not in a region under German control, but near Romania between late June and early July 1941. As a result of orders from the head of the Romanian government, more than 13,000 Jews were killed in Iasi. Romania is an exception today because its government has actually taken positive steps to address the realities of Holocaust history in the country. But in many other countries where similar crimes took place, there is, instead, a desire to run away from the past; to obscure discussion of the Holocaust; to avoid uncomfortable questions about the actions of one's grandparents, great grandparents, and others. Instead, a different tale of history is told: one of victimisation under the Nazis in which the dominant ethnic groups were the primary victims. Or, simply, attempts to present the Holocaust as something that happened 'over there'; somewhere else, in a land far away. And ultimately, as I hope you all know, running from the past, telling lies about where you came from, and so on are losing battles because the truth always finds a way out. And invention of the past invites invention of the present and the future—something that ultimately bodes ill for stable democracies. Other forms of distortion are more overtly antisemitic, such as claims that the Holocaust was a positive or humorous historical event. There are also people who accuse Jews of using the Holocaust for some manner of game. We used to associate this form with rhetoric that came from the Middle East. Here, we have, for example, one of the winners of a 2016 cartoon competition in Iran, but this is actually something that happens everywhere.

Blaming the Jews for the Holocaust is a shockingly common phenomenon. This form of victim blaming is distortion because not only is it historically inaccurate, but it also lessens the burden of guilt on the perpetrators, or suggests that the Holocaust was somehow justifiable. Now, at times, there are those who suggest that there is something about the supposedly Jewish character—older antisemitic themes that led to the Holocaust. And in parts of Eastern Europe, you might encounter offhand references to something called Judeo–Communism: the misbelief that Jews were overwhelmingly Communists. This is essentially a coded suggestion that the Holocaust was just an anti–Communist action. Either way, blaming the Jews for the Holocaust is an unacceptable form of bait-and-switch that opens the door to antisemitism.



State-sponsored distortion is also tricky. It can appear innocuous at times, like a museum presenting imagery from the Nazi era without proper historical context. It can also be more overt. Take this billboard that appeared in Crimea right before it was annexed by the Russian Federation in 2014.

It suggests that the people of Crimea had two choices: to be ruled by Nazis in a less than subtle reference to Ukraine, or to strive for peace under the Russian Federation. Is a billboard like this antisemitic? Possibly not, but it certainly links to and misuses imagery that we would associate with the Holocaust, in a way that is cynical.

There are attempts, even today, to honor people whose actions or words helped lead to Holocaust crimes. By this, I do not mean just the infamous Lukov Marches that happen in Bulgaria, or the parades and honouring of SS trends that take place in Latvia—although these are certainly a symptom of what I am talking about. I am talking about a bigger problem: a problem of former perpetrator countries; a problem of countries that were occupied by the Nazis during the war; a problem of countries that were neutral; and a problem of countries that were part of the alliance—including the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, and the lands of the former Soviet Union. There are attempts to rehabilitate, if you will, people who were complicit in Holocaust-related crimes. Sometimes, they are individuals who have their long-passed judicial sentences overturned, even though they are long dead. Other times, parliaments have taken official action to rehabilitate the reputations of people who collaborated with the Nazis, because these individuals became important to national histories for other, unrelated reasons. Sometimes, these individuals have undergone what we might call cultural rehabilitation, because they were well-known authors or other luminaries. Others are venerated and somewhat protected by religious authorities, like the Roman Catholic Church. And some escaped justice entirely and became famous after the war.

In this list, we have to include some of the Nazi scientists brought to my home country, the United States, to work on our rocket programme. Some of these individuals had served in the SS and had overseen programmes that made use of Jewish slave labour. This is what I mean when I say that this is a shared problem and that nobody is able to walk away clean from it. It requires a joint effort to push back.

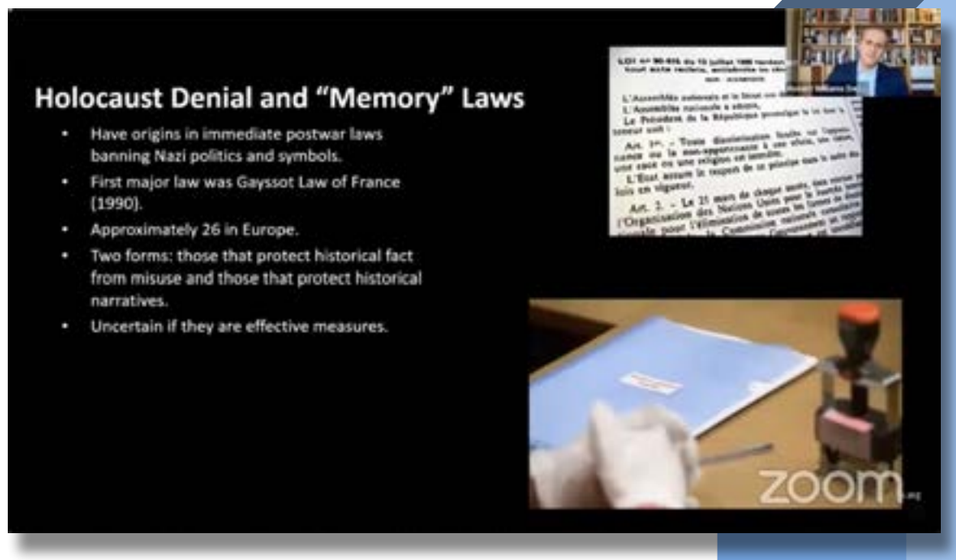
Attempts to fictionalise the Holocaust for the purposes of entertainment or commercial gain can alsobe problematic types of distortion—even when there is no antisemitic content. Here, for example, we have two cases of Russian figure skaters wearing Holocaust-themed costumes. In parts of North America and Great Britain from time to time, you can buy Anne Frank Halloween costumes. There have been Christmas ornaments for sale on Amazon with images from Auschwitz, and you can even buy toys of Adolf Hitler and his inner circle.

I do not think I have to explain why these are problematic to you. The use of Holocaust-related symbols is a somewhat obvious form of distortion. For example, here we have the flag of the Golden Dawn Party of Greece. It is not exactly subtle.

But what about this? You might see something problematic in the flag of the all German heathens from a neo-Nazi organisation that has branches across Northern Europe.

And if you know that flag, you might be able to recognise that something arrived in the flag of the Nordic resistance movement, a different neo-Nazi band founded in Scandinavian countries. Then things can get challenging. Here, we have a group of American white nationalists holding a flag that does not evoke anything specific to the Nazis. Instead, they are holding the flag of the Romanian Iron Guard, the antisemitic and fascist party of Romania that existed between 1927 and 1941. To know why this is a hate symbol, you need a deeper knowledge base to draw upon, and there are even Holocaust scholars who would not recognise this flag when they see it. Even if you know what you are looking for, the symbols can be hidden. So, here we have a flag (bottom right) that occasionally appears on the terraces at Legia Warszawa football matches. It is part of the team kit and I want to draw your attention to those triangles in the back. Those are not sold on the official uniform now. Instead, those are so-called Gibor runes, or a reverse angle, a symbol used by some Nazi SS detachments in the 1940s.

And you say to yourself, well, calm down. Europe has laws against these things, sort of. There are some European approaches that have allowed for at least the hypothetical application of laws to address antisemitism or Holocaust denial in ways that are seen as a threat to public order.



And these are consistent with acceptable speech norms in some countries. These Holocaust denial laws were influenced by another law passed in France in 1990 that sought to protect facts from being misused. But we have seen, since then, that a number of these laws have gone from protecting facts from abuse to protecting narratives from being abused. What is the difference? A fact is a fact, something immutable. But a narrative is the product of an interpretation, and if you are protecting interpretations of history, you open the door to at least potential distortion of the Holocaust.

Things are bad, but there are also signs of progress. There are entire communities at both the grassroots and governmental levels engaging with these issues, talking about the problem, and working to identify solutions. Recently, the government of Sweden convened a major heads-of-state forum in Malmo to talk about how best to ensure a future for Holocaust remembrance in a way that not only fights back against the trends of antisemitism, but also the trends that lead to distortion and denial of the Holocaust and other related crimes.

In addition to the work being done in governments, there are a few more suggestions on ways that society at large might want to respond. First, there is a need to enhance educational opportunities to learn, and not just about the Holocaust—although learning about the Holocaust is an essential component of what I am suggesting. We also need to learn more about the general subject of disinformation and propaganda to avoid fooling ourselves.

Holocaust distortion by itself is an inherently adaptable form of disinformation that can be used for all manner of purposes, including the radicalisation of youth, the sowing of discord in society, or the causing of anger and confusion among multiple audiences. We need to become better consumers of our media to discern truths from half truths. We need to go beyond just teaching this at the secondary school level. Secondary education is an essential foundation, of course, but we need to engage with the Holocaust. And with related topics in our universities, in our trade schools, and in the training of our civil servants.

Similarly, we need to hold our politicians to account and not allow them to misuse the Holocaust for any manner of political or ideological ends. On the side of new media, there has been a lot of talk about social media companies' responsibility to tackle online hate. We need to better use these platforms, so that we can communicate actual facts of the Holocaust to counteract denial and distortion. There are a few practical resources that can help us along the way. These include resources created by the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe under the words, 'Action Program'. And recently, on the Holocaust distortion side of the problem, we have been working with the German Government to publish guidance and recommendations for recognising and countering distortion from a political angle. Three days ago, we *(ed.: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance)* published a booklet titled Understanding Holocaust Distortion that outlines in detail the history and many of the forms of distortion we see today.

There are institutions like my home institution, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, that seek to cater to international audiences with a wide range of international resources available in around twenty languages.

Finally, there are organisations like the NEVER AGAIN Association that can direct you to other experts in the field. I encourage you to view all of these as resources for your development, and I also encourage you to stay in touch with all of us. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: So, thank you very much. If you have questions for Dr Williams, you can share discussions in the chat window, and we can also ask him to respond after the event.

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Keynote talk about the meaning of the Holocaust, its legacy, and challenges for its commemoration by Professor Yehuda Bauer, IHRA Honorary Chair, Professor Emeritus of History and Holocaust Studies at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem, Israel (Introduction by Professor Dina Porat, Chief Historian of Yad Vashem, Tel-Aviv, Israel)

Natalia Sineaeva: Now, I am going to invite professor Dina Porat, the chief historian of Yad Vashem, the founding head of the Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, of the Department of Jewish History, and of the Rosenberg School for Jewish Studies, as well as the recipient of the 'Best Teacher' award at the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, to introduce our keynote speaker, professor Yehuda Bauer. Professors Porat and Bauer have inspired many of us. I will now give the floor to professor Porat.

Dina Porat: Thank you very much to Natalia and Rafal for organising this impressive gathering. And many thanks to the person who invented Zoom. I do not know who he is, but he has solved many problems, and here we are, from so many countries together at this event.

It is not an easy task to introduce Yehuda Bauer. Professor Bauer is a prominent figure today in Holocaust research. He is, I would say, an authority in the field; a person to whom you address questions, and from whom you expect answers. And, as Natalia said, he has inspired many people, many students, and many researchers. In connection with what Natalia and Rafal are doing here, in cooperation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, I want to emphasise a certain aspect of professor Bauer's work. It is not enough to know a lot, to read everything—and, believe me, he reads everything and remembers everything. It is not enough to have many students and people inspired by you and to write a host of books. I think professor Bauer understood at an early stage that on top of research and teaching, you need tools. Indeed, he established the Institute for International Holocaust Research in Yad Vashem and the Institute to the Study of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University, and the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, the first of its kind translated into a number of languages, and on top of that, seminars for researchers. Researchers have come from all over the world for his seminars. These, however, are local tools: what about the international ones?

I think that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is the main international tool (but not the only one) that professor Bauer has developed. He started it twenty-one years ago with the blessing and cooperation of the then Swedish Prime Minister, Hans Göran Persson. It started modestly with five countries, then ten, and today it has thirty-four, and a number of very major international organisations who act as observers. It is kind of a centre, in which diplomatic work takes place, because each delegation is represented by a high level official. Diplomats come to meetings where they discuss problems, and experts come together in working groups that address the major subjects of today that are related to Holocaust research on monuments, commemoration, archives, and, in recent years, definitions.

One of the top achievements of the International Holocaust Rememberance Alliance is its working definition of antisemitism, which was adopted in 2015. It was such an important international forum that adopted it. It is now called the IHRA definition, and it has been adopted since then by approximately 700 governments, universities, municipalities, and football clubs. We have also adopted it. It was a major step in understanding and combatting antisemitism. On top of that, there is also a definition of Holocaust denial and another one on Antigypsyism, or anti–Roma discrimination.

To save the time for professor Bauer's lecture, I wish to emphasise one more point that I think relates to all of us at this lecture: professor Bauer established research tools and the International Holocaust Rememberance Alliance. We should also remember his involvement in two major organisations for genocide prevention—genocides that have continued, unfortunately, since the Holocaust and the Second World War.

One of the main features of his work is his development of public involvement in responses to accusations in the media: in the press, on TV, on the radio. He has put matters on record, straightened complicated matters, and tried to reach out to the general public. He has not closed himself within academic work, and not in these tools that he has developed—although hundreds of people participate today in the International Holocaust Rememberance Alliance. Professor Bauer has taught us—and I think this is really a message for all of us, especially the younger members—to be aware, to be informed, to be ready to answer, to study a lot before you answer, and to be really deeply involved.

I must also say that, on a personal level, he is really fun to be with and has a great sense of humor. He is not just an academic.

For this, he has been given an award that cannot be stolen. He has medals, prizes, and recognitions that have left no deep impression on him. And with this, I will now ask for Natalia's permission to give him the floor and to ask him to speak to us for the next twenty-five minutes about Holocaust distortion and how it can be challenged today. Professor Bauer, we thank you in advance. The floor is yours.

Yehuda Bauer: Thank you very much for your warm introduction. I want to follow up on what Robert Williams has said, and I want to thank him very much for stealing most of my funders! He has said what I wanted to say.

Why should people living outside of Europe: in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere deal with this problem? Because the Holocaust was an era-changing event. It was the most extreme form of something that has been happening for thousands of years: the annihilation of groups of people for all kinds of reasons. All of these events, pragmatic and otherwise, such as the genocide in Cambodia, were based on dreams of economic and social transformation; a pragmatic transformation of society.

The Holocaust, conversely, was an attempt to annihilate a group of people for purely ideological reasons. Reasons that have their source in what we call ancient history, pre–Christian history, in fact. And the history of monotheistic societies in the West: Christianity and Islam. And the Holocaust is something that transforms our understanding of society, of all society. That is the importance of it. When you distort it, when you present it in a way that is contrary to the facts, that distorts the facts. You are attacking your own society.

Distortion does not only pertain to the past: it also affects the present and the future. It prevents us from recognising the dangers of the society that we live in. That is the tremendous importance of denial and the distortion of the series of events that we call the Holocaust—the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of Nazis' advanced collaborators—that Robert Williams talked about.

Denial and distortion, as he put it very correctly, are two different things. Denial says that it did not happen, or that the Nazis had never any intention of killing the Jews, or that the number of Jews killed was minimal, or that there were no gas chambers, or there was no mass killing. That is denial. There was a court case in 1999 and 2000 in London. A libel trial against Deborah Lipstadt, a very important historian of the Holocaust. She had stated that the Holocaust denier, David Irving was a denier and an antisemite. And that he denied something that had happened. And Irving took her to court for libel. And the judge at the end of the trial, a very brave judge, stated that David Irving was a liar. He is not a real historian. He not only distorts the facts, but he also denies them.

After that trial, Holocaust denial continues to exist in the United States. It is dangerous, but it is not really central. In some (but not all) Muslim societies, it has been pushed to the margins; in others, it remains alive and well. In some of these societies, ideologists say that the Holocaust happened, that it was a good thing, and that we will continue to do that in the future. This is the opinion of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a Qatar-based Islamic theologian. He stated in 2009 very clearly: 'Hitler destroyed many Jews, but not enough, and we will continue to do that in the future,'. We have here not only Holocaust denial, but justification of the Holocaust and a promise to continue it.

Distortion is something else. It takes many forms, and Robert Williams mentioned all of them.
The way that people who oppose vaccination against COVID-19 compare themselves to Jews persecuted by the Nazis, because they do not want to be vaccinated. That is something to do with the Holocaust. It is clearly an identification with antisemitism, with supposedly pro–Jewish symbols—yellow stars, or people who say that the whole business of dealing with governments establishing laws to encourage vaccinations on paper, to prevent a pandemic from spreading, can be compared with the Nazis. None of that makes any sense.

This is one kind of Holocaust distortion. It is not based on any facts, but on an antisemitic interpretation of antisemitism. It is based on a parallel between what happened in World War Two and present attempts to prevent a pandemic from spreading.

As Robert Williams mentioned very clearly, nationalism is spreading across the world. Nationalism is now the great danger to any kind of democratic, liberal society that is informed by a kind of morality that we could accept. And in this kind of nationalism, people will have to be educated to be proud of their past to fortify their nationalist ideology. They need a usable past, and that past has to be heroic, wonderful, and supportive of all the good things in the world. When that does not exist, it is invented: a past that never happened. This type of distortion is not always based on lies; it is based sometimes on partial truths.

The distorters in Eastern Europe today say that the majority of people, wherever they were, wanted to save Jews. Yes, and they were real heroes. The problem was that they had to hide the Jews, not only fearing the Germans, but also their neighbors of the same nationality who would denounce them to the collaborators of the Germans, or to the Germans themselves. They did all they could. They tried to help, they tried to rescue, and they very often paid with their lives for it. There is an element of truth in these stories, but the vast majority of the people were not willing to do that. There were dozens of millions of people living in the areas occupied by the Nazis. How many of them helped? The people who did were heroes, yes, but they constituted a small minority. And the vast majority did not care nor help. One example can be found in the trains. They were crossing Europe, and the majority of the people very often knew that these trains were destined for a place from where its passengers would never return. And there were underground movements against the Germans all over Europe. There was one train in Belgium, which was carrying the Jews to their death, that was derailed. The people on the train were members of a small Jewish resistance movement in Belgium. In Poland, Hungary, and other places, people who watched knew more or less where the trains were going, and not a single train was derailed. Without the help of the local people, the German Nazis could never have done it on such a large scale. This is where distortion means something for today in Southeast Asia, where people are persecuted, where people are denied their rights, and where people are killed. Help. Try your best. Go against the majority who look away, who do not want to deal with this.
With regard to the Holocaust, distortion takes the form of creating a past that never was; one of which certain elements exist. But they are contorted and distorted. Distorters tell us that the Jews, more or less, killed themselves. They tell us that the Jewish Councils collaborated with the Germans; that there were Jewish police in the ghettos that the Nazis created who led the Jews to the trains that transported them to the extermination camps. And there is partial truth in that. Jewish Councils were not free. They were forced on the Jews. If they did not obey every order, they were killed. But there were councils of non–Jews around them all over the place: mayors of cities or municipalities, heads of villages, fire brigades, and local police. Non–German, local police. Did they object? Did they resist? Underground, yes.

The size of the underground has been vastly exaggerated since the war. They were very important people. They were heroes. And again, they were a minority. And when they embraced larger groups, they did not help the Jews. Not one of these distorters tries to compare what happened in their own societies, without collaborators. How many were there and how many objected? And how many translated their objections into acts?
And so, when you have distortion, you reach a point where you need a source to make your argument. And in the case of Eastern Europe, liberal historians are the ones who tell us what really happened: that millions of Jews were killed by the Germans on occupied soil in Eastern Europe.

In some places, all of the local administrators, all of the survivors, all of the other people who were around the Jews, helped the authorities to put the Jews onto the trains and to transport them to their deaths at the extermination camps on Polish soil established by the Germans. I think you will see that distortion is a very, very major issue; one that we need to confront, because it is not the past. It is the present. And we must always remember this.

All of the elements that created the Holocaust and all of the elements that created other genocides before it and since exist today. It can happen again. The Jews are not only the Jews to anyone by anyone. The Holocaust is not a relic. This is not the history of the past; this is the history of the present. We must realise and deal with this as a present problem—dealing with the past and its distortion, but also dealing with the present to deal with the future. Not one of us knows what is going to happen in the future. But we can influence the future by dealing with the present, and influence the present by dealing with the past. The past is never the past: it is always the present, and the present is always the future. Thank you.

Dina Porat: Thank you so much for your powerful speech. Professor Bauer is an inspiration to us all for acting, for being involved, for understanding that we are not just in any ivory tower, but in today's reality.
Now, it is time to ask questions.

A question comes from a colleague of the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh, Foysal Shahriar Ratul.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: I have a question for professor Bauer, who delivered a powerful presentation. How do you think the Holocaust can be commemorated in the countries where Jewish populations do not exist. Can popular culture, films, or books be effective media in teaching or commemorating the Holocaust? There is always a possibility of distortion of the Holocaust, or racial politics, or racist law like during the Second World War. What would be the most effective solution to it?

Yehuda Bauer: Thank you. It is a very good question. We get a lot of questions about the Holocaust from the countries where Jews do not live. For example, there are five universities in China where they have departments that teach about the Holocaust. We get requests from India, where there was a large Jewish community in the past, from high schools to provide them with information. We can do this by utilising existing international networks and contacting them. There are major institutions that teach about it, such as the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem in Israel, Memorial de la Shoah in France, and others in other places. There are also many individuals, including very important academics in Poland, who deal with this issue. They can provide you with the necessary information. Yes, I think it is very important in the interest of the global culture, and of mutual respect for people of different cultures and languages, that we offer that. I am glad you raised this question.

Dina Porat: I would like to add something. The beginning of the question was about the future commemoration of the Holocaust in countries with small or nonexisting Jewish communities. I think that the means are developing in such a way that we are asking ourselves not only about Jewish communities, but about what would happen when the last survivors are no longer with us, and we will no longer be able to hear their testimonies. About what is being done to prevent the cooling of interest in the Holocaust. It is important to prepare digital tools. For example, you can tour Yad Vashem online. You can visit their website and find all the information. You can find a survivor who is no longer alive, but who can answer your questions in their own voice. This is taken from the testimonies that they gave before. You should not worry, because there are more and more new tools to make it known. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: There is one more question from Venerable Lablu Barua from Bangkok, a Buddhist monk.

Ven Lablu Barua: Good afternoon from Thailand, our honourable speakers. Professor Bauer had an excellent presentation. We have discovered a lot of knowledge from you. Many cases of communal violence are happening in Asia: in Bangladesh, in India, and in Sri Lanka. In some countries, Muslims are a minority; in others, we Buddhists are a minority. There can be tensions and violence. What would you say: are these cases of genocide (or pregenocide), or simply religious communal violence? How do you define such things?

Yehuda Bauer: I understand the question and one can make a clear statement about it. Humans are primates. Historically speaking, the human race developed because hunters and gatherers killed other animals, and this is part of our make up. It is true when we say that humans are not very nice people. A definition like 'genocide' is very problematic because the United Nations's definition of it is unclear and contradictory, and has not really led to any breakthroughs in the prevention of mass killings. Today, there are countries and organisations that are cooperating to create international tools for prevention of what we now call mass atrocity crimes. What are mass atrocity crimes? Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing when the purpose is not just to remove the population, but to kill it. The United Nations not only defined genocide, but also stated the groups of people who were exterminated for economic or social reasons. Mass atrocity crimes have been the subject of growing interest only since the 1990s, and that interest is led by some academics and diplomats—for example, an organisation called the Global Movement against Mass Atrocity Crimes. It was founded by the Swiss government and numbers thirty-six countries today. Realising that humans are not very nice people, and that not idealistic imagination but solutions to concrete problems and the study of formulas that satisfy humans' desires are necessary, countries within themselves or in their relations with other countries are developing tools to improve the situation. You could look at Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, or a large number of other countries across the world, where problems of denial of human rights, of persecution have arisen. One of the major issues, as you said, is religion. Religion can unite people, but it can also divide people. Radical religion is a danger to society. It is something when great religious leaders make wonderful statements, but on the ground, priests, clerics, and monks kill—despite their faiths forbidding it. This realisation has to be advanced realistically, as it is one of the major problems. Humans exist as a race because we kill; otherwise, we would not exist. We can collaborate, sympathise, and love, but we can also kill. It can be both. Our problem is how to have one side of human nature win the war against the other. The Holocaust is the most extreme example of this type of case. Distortion of the Holocaust prevents us from finding solutions that we can live with.

Dina Porat: We wish all the participants a fruitful discussion. Thank you, Natalia, Rafal, and everyone else.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much, professor Porat for being with us today. Please join us in the coming days.
Thank you very much, professor Bauer, for your contribution today. We have so many questions and reflections from this chat. There are also comments to be made about Myanmar and about the Rohingya. We will have another day dedicated to Myanmar and presentations about how we can use our Holocaust knowledge against distortion of genocide there. There is a question about Eastern Europe and Poland, where governments can support Holocaust distortion. That is an extensive question. But we can take only one question due to our time limit.

Yehuda Bauer: There is one question on the chat from Samantha Moreno, about whether the overuse of victimhood—which sometimes uses nationalism as a strategy to avoid talking about the Holocaust—can be considered a form of distortion. How can we persuade or lobby our governments to revise their methods of teaching the Holocaust? Nowadays, political correctness often prevents it. I completely agree with this question. Overuse of victimhood of the people who are teaching the Holocaust in areas with few or no Jews. Victims are locals. The problem is that the comparison of victimhood is totally wrong, because the fact that, let's say, Hungarians, Lithuanians, or Poles were victims of the Nazi regime, or of a fascist regime, Russia, does not mean to say that we have a scale to measure victimhood. The idea of the Nazis in the Holocaust was to exterminate all of the Jews. This was stated clearly. There is no precedent. The form this took, the way people were victimised, is no different. You cannot say that a Jew who was sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz suffered more or suffered less than a Rwandan who was murdered with a knife, or a Khmer who was murdered in Cambodia. You cannot say one suffered more than the other. Victimhood is always the same. This kind of comparison is totally wrong. It is misused. How can we oppose it? It depends on the regime in your country.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much, professor Bauer, for your powerful contribution. Unfortunately, we do not have time, as another session is about to begin. But we hope you will be staying with us today and tomorrow.

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PANEL ON CAMBODIA

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Dealing with the past in Cambodia in the context of genocide distortion by Sayana Ser, Peace Institute, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Bophana Center's work against the denial and distortion of Khmer Rouge atrocities by Sopheap Chea, Executive Director at Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Visal Sorn: I am very happy to be the moderator today. This session aims to discuss the confrontation of genocide in Cambodia, with our wonderful speakers. We will reflect on a number of examples of how genocide denial has shifted in Cambodia, and identify appropriate ways to deal with it.

We invite participants to leave their comments and questions in the chat box. I will now introduce our first speaker, professor Rafal Pankowski, cofounder of the NEVER AGAIN Association, who is going to speak about the globalisation of genocide denial and a case study of multideniers.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much. I was very impressed by the phrase that prof Yehuda Bauer used in his keynote speech some minutes ago: a global culture of respect. Well, this is very much what we are hoping to contribute through this project. As we have stated repeatedly in the course of this symposium and the previous project meetings, we believe that by commemorating the Holocaust and local instances of genocide, we can contribute to intercultural understanding.

The other important part of commemoration is confronting denial and distortion of the Holocaust and of other genocides. During the course of this research, we have identified that some of the discursive strategies employed by Holocaust deniers and by those who wish to distort the history of other genocides, such as the Cambodian genocide, are actually quite similar. This is not to say that all of those cases are identical, of course. The Holocaust, as a tragic event, has its specificity; all of the other genocides and crimes against humanity also have their specificities, and the strategies of denial are also specific. But those commonalities exist, and I think it is interesting and important to know them. Moreover, we have noted that in many cases the strategies of denial are employed vis-a-vis the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide by the same actors, and I am going to present some examples, very briefly.

Khieu Samphan was the nominal head of state during the time of the Khmer Rouge regime. He has been convicted and is in prison for crimes against humanity. He is responsible for some of the most horrific crimes against humanity of the twentieth century. I was much surprised when, at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, a few years ago, I found freely-distributed copies of his book in English—a book, which, in a way, is a classic example of genocide denial or distortion; one in which the author uses arguments that are very typical of those who deny or distort the Holocaust in Europe. Samphan deflects guilt, a common strategy identified by scholars, such as Michael Shafir in cases of Holocaust denial and distortion. Samphan also attempts to shift the blame to other individuals such as Pol Pot, and other nations, such as Vietnam, claiming that the worst crimes and atrocities were not committed by the Khmer Rouge regime, but by the Vietnamese army.

This kind of blame shifting is also highly characteristic of Holocaust deniers and distorters in Europe.
I do not think Samphan had anything to say about the Holocaust, but some of the other individuals I want to mention have done that. The next example is the French lawyer of Khieu Samphan, Jacques Verges.

Jacques Verges, who is of Thai origin, defended many problematic individuals, including criminals and dictators. As well as representing the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, he also defended Klaus Barbie, a notorious Nazi criminal, who was eventually arrested and sentenced in the 1980s for his role in the extermination of French Jews. In the course of defending the Khmer Rouge leaders, Verges resorted to discursive strategies that were tantamount to genocide denial or trivialisation and minimisation.

There are other cases that we can mention. *Jan Myrdal* was a Swedish public figure, author, and activist. Myrdal displayed a clear antipathy against Jews and, in particular, against Israel. He was fascinated with the Khmer Rouge regime and for many years was involved in denying the reality of its crimes in Cambodia, as well as promoting a radical anti–Zionist version of Holocaust distortion, claiming that Israel was exaggerating the Holocaust for its own benefit.

Another case that is similar in some ways is that of *Israel Shamir*, who is of Russian–Jewish origin, has lived in several countries, including Israel and Sweden, and is a symbol of the contemporary antisemitic movement. He accuses Israel and the Jews of exaggerating the Holocaust for their own benefit. He has also written articles claiming that the crimes against humanity committed by the Khmer Rouge never occurred. He is a prime example of a multidenier who denies or minimises genocides and abuses of human rights, both during the Second World War and in Cambodia in the 1970s.

And, I want to be very clear that I do not intend here to call *Noam Chomsky* a genocide denier. He is one of the most significant intellectuals of our era. However, some of his statements—especially those he made in the late 1970s—can be interpreted as minimisation of the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. He has since partially retracted some of those statements. His role during that time concerning the Cambodian genocide, however, remains problematic, as do several of his statements on Holocaust denial. Chomsky wrote the preface to an infamous book authored by Robert Faurisson, a French Holocaust denier, who was suspended from his university teaching position and brought before a court for denying that the Nazi gas chambers had existed. Chomsky claimed that he offered the preface in the name of freedom of speech; nevertheless, he was criticised heavily for his role in legitimising some forms of Holocaust denial and distortion, as well as distortion of the Cambodian genocide.

I will repeat once more. I am not saying that *William Shawcross* is a genocide denier; in fact, he wrote one very important book about Cambodia and its bombing by US forces in the early 1970s. I think many of us have this book on our shelves. But in the 1980s, he somewhat changed his mind and some of his writings and statements actually justified the bombing of Cambodia, in which, I would like to remind you, up to half a million innocent people died. Shawcross also began to claim that the supposed crimes of the Vietnamese in Cambodia were just as bad as, or even worse than the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. This is not only factually incorrect, but also morally unacceptable. It amounts to a form of historical distortion and distortion of the facts and the scale of the Khmer Rouge crimes.

Very briefly, I want to illustrate that some of the discursive strategies of Holocaust deniers are similar to the strategies of denial and distortion of the Cambodian genocide; in some cases, that denial or distortion is even promoted by the same actors, who can be called multideniers. I think I have run out of time. I will be grateful for any questions or comments. Thank you.

Visal Sorn: Thank you, Rafal. I will now invite the second speaker, Sayana Ser. She is going to talk about the process of dealing with the past in Cambodia in the context of genocide distortion—with particular regard to the Khmer Rouge.

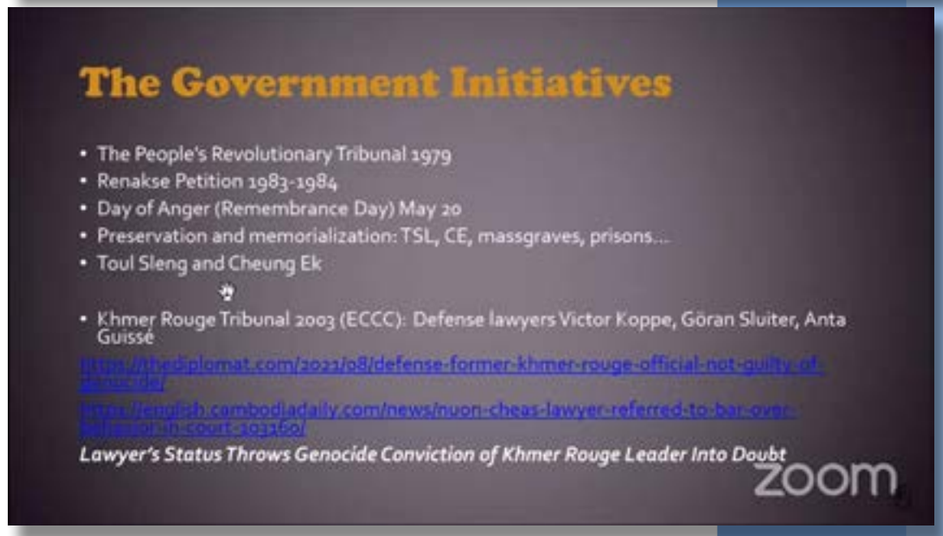
Sayana Ser: Thank you. I was born in Cambodia just a year after the fall of the Khmer Rouge and the liberation, more than forty years ago. Since then, I have lived in Cambodia and I have studied how the country deals with what happened, and how the older generation has dealt with their trauma and the history. I am going to present the background of how Cambodians deal with the past—the work of the government, civil society, and the public.

Cambodia has faced so many issues: its time as a French colony, the civil war, and so many other events that have happened in its history.

First, I will outline the background of how the Cambodians dealt with the situation immediately after the Khmer Rouge fell in January 1979. Seven or eight months after the fall of the regime, the new government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea established a tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge leaders, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, in absentia. In the 1990s, perpetrators such as Ieng Sary received royal pardons and amnesties to achieve peace at that time. The government also established the National Day of Remembrance on the 20 May, which was known as Day of Anger at that time. It was initiated in 1983.

The largest prison, S-21 *(ed.: the present-day Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum)* and Cheung Ek Killing Fields, where many people were brought and killed, serve as evidence of the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge.

In June 2003, the United Nations and the government of Cambodia signed an agreement to establish another tribunal *(ed: the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC))*, which we call 'hybrid', to bring the senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those who were responsible for the crimes committed between 17 April, 1975 and 6 January, 1979 to trial. In November 2006, the ECCC published a draft of the Internal Rules and invited submissions from civil society.



Here I want to discuss a case of distortion. Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, in Cases 002 and 001, were represented by defense lawyers who behaved unusually: Victor Koppe and Anta Guisse asked the court that their clients be found not guilty of genocide. But there was S-21, Cheung Ek, and a large amount of evidence from the victims and their testimonies. Nevertheless, the lawyers told the court that there was insufficient evidence to find their clients guilty of genocide. And that made the public feel it was unfair.

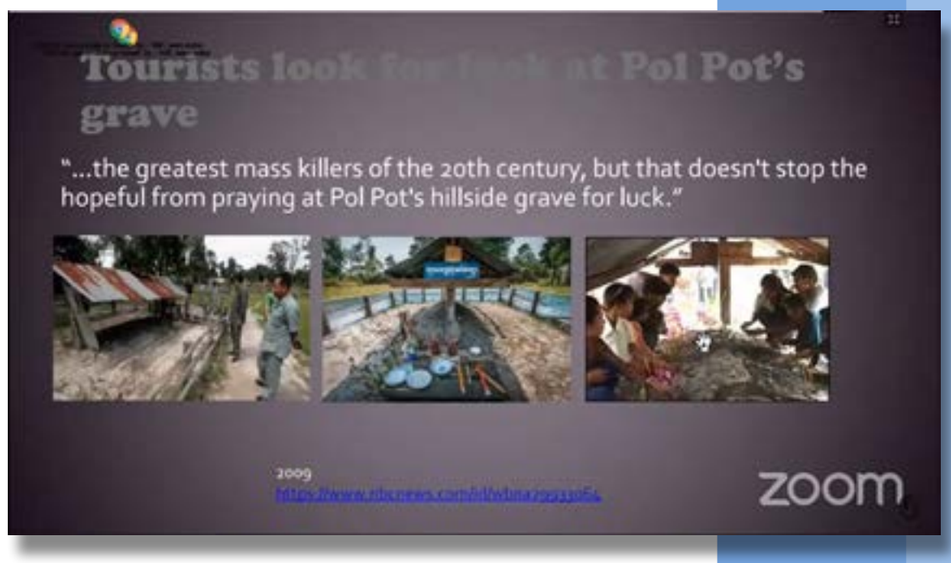
The victims and survivors were unsatisfied with that defence. How can people defend such criminals in such a way?

Let us mention the role of the government. There was also a genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge against the Cham Muslim community, but the government did not put much effort into dealing with it in the beginning because, following the liberation in 1979, Cambodia had just raised from *year Zero.*

The government strived to work on helping the economy to recover, and on building infrastructure and other amenities. The government at the time was using genocide education or history education on the Khmer Rouge for political propaganda. Until 1998, there was the Khmer Rouge guerrilla on the border between Cambodia and Thailand, and because of that, there was little in the textbooks. The whole context of the regime and its crimes were not presented. By 2002, there was no new material about the regime, and no teaching in high schools or senior high schools.

Because of this, civil society played a very important role. People themselves, Cambodians, had suffered these traumatic events. Some claimed that they did not want to talk; that they did not want to be reminded about it because it was painful for them. Psychology says that expressing and reconciling the past can reduce pain. But if they do not talk, how can the younger generation believe it happened?

Civil society played its role to educate, creating a programme to bring this out, and to reach out to those people from the grassroots, survivors, and especially the younger generation to understand. From 2003 until 2006, when the tribunal was established, there were a lot of activities, and many programmes that helped tremendously in education. This was a very good period for education—though some examples of distortion and denial could be found even then.



But before I go into that, I want to talk about *Anne Frank's Diary* and the Cham minority projects. This is an example of the efforts of civil society. In Cambodia, people did not like to talk about the past because it is painful or because they were busy with their recovery, so the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) and its director, Youk Chhang, published *Anne Frank's Diary* in Cambodia to have it serve as a start to the discussion. Cambodians themselves do not want to believe how they could destroy their own people and transfer the blame to others, such as the Vietnamese or the Cham Muslims in Cambodia. That is why DC-Cam introduced *Anne Frank's Diary* as a start.

The diary was a way of introducing the subject and encouraging Cambodians to move on and continue with their lives. The Holocaust has been introduced in Cambodian history textbooks as a comparison. It is only a small part; not specifically about the Holocaust, but mostly about World War II, about Hitler and Nazism, and about Jewish people. But there are no detailed content aspects. The government has also accepted a school textbook on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, but it is supplementary to the curriculum. I think education about the Holocaust and genocide needs to be put in the school history textbooks, and not just as a supplement.

In the Cham Muslim community, there were oral history projects, cultural preservation activities, a collection of outreach programmes, stories, a collection from the Muslim community, and another from the victims and survivors of the Khmer Rouge that was documented between 2003 and 2006, and continues to this day. All of these efforts have been tremendously necessary—before, during, and after the tribunal.

There have also been many serious attempts from Youth for Peace, the Peace Institute of Cambodia, Bophana Center, and Kdei Karuna. Regardless, today there are still people, including younger ones, who do not have access to it or are unaware of the essence or the context of the Holocaust or the Khmer Rouge genocide.

Politicians use the theme quite incorrectly. For example, there were claims that S-21 was not established by the Khmer Rouge, but by the Vietnamese as a stage. Kem Sokha *(ed.: Cambodian politician and activist, who most recently served as the President of the Cambodia National Rescue Party)* was the first to claim that the prison was not the doing of the Khmer Rouge, but of the Vietnamese government. Thousands of people, including survivors, protested against it.

Other cases come from ignorance: the grave of Pol Pot *(ed.: in Anlong Veng)* was included on Tripadvisor as a site of interest. Of course, though, tourists should be educated about it, as well as local people. There is a plan to attract people from Thailand because it is on the border of Cambodia and Thailand where Pol Pot died in 1998. People come here to ask for lottery numbers, to get a promotion at work, or to get a beautiful wife. Can we apply prof Teun van Dijk's critical discourse analysis to this case? Who created this? What is in the background of these people? Do they know who Pol Pot was? Why are they going there to ask for lottery numbers? Tourists go there asking for luck, as well.

During the 2000s, when the tribunal was established, a lot of NGOs and civil society groups were working with it. The work of NGOs and civil organisations is very important in securing access and in reaching out to people who have limited access, such as those in remote areas. This also applies to survivors who are from the Khmer Rouge country and who are former Khmer Rouge soldiers, not only the victims.

It is very important to educate people and to identify the right discourse and the background behind the education, and why the history of the genocide and the Holocaust is relevant.

The passing of time lets people forget, but we must continue to educate. This subject needs to be revisited constantly and needs to be taught at schools—mandatorily, not supplementarily. Thank you.

Visal Sorn: Thank you so much, Sayana, for your information and recommendations. Now, I invite our third speaker, Sopheap Chea, Executive Director at Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He is going to present the importance of his work against denial and distortion. Sopheap, the floor is yours.

Sopheap Chea: Thank you very much. I first would like to thank everyone for attending these discussions, and to thank the NEVER AGAIN Association for arranging this very special event.
I am honoured to be here tonight. I think our previous speaker has already covered a lot about the atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge, so I am not going to talk more about that. I will go straight to the activities that civic organisations and the Cambodian Government have done to educate and raise public awareness about the atrocities.

First, I want to give you a little bit of context about Bophana Center. It was established by filmmaker Rithy Panh,[1] a Khmer Rouge survivor who escaped Cambodia through a refugee camp. He went to France, where, as one of the Khmer Rouge survivors and a sufferer of trauma, it was very difficult for him to speak about what was happening in Cambodia. Instead, he used film as an approach to telling the story of what happened, to his family and to himself. When he came to Cambodia in 1989 to make his first film at a Cambodian refugee camp, he understood a lot about the loss of memory, because many people had been killed. He used to say to me that we should remember that every person has one memory; that we do not count a lot of the stories, and one person–one memory matters. What about a million people? A million stories have been destroyed. That is why he created a place where memories can be collected, stored, and presented to the public. He established Bophana Center, a nonprofit organisation committed to reviving the memory of Cambodia and fostering Cambodian culture through the arts and multimedia. This memory and culture have almost been erased by three decades of war and genocide. Aiming to reconstruct this memory of Cambodia by 'saving and resuscitating yesterday's and today's memories', Bophana Center collects and safeguards audiovisual archives of Cambodia, including films, photographs, and sound archives from around the world; provides public access to this audiovisual heritage; and trains young people in filmmaking to facilitate freedom and artistic expression, as well as archiving the country's history. Rithy Panh believes that these efforts will help Cambodians to restore this priceless heritage gradually and will enable them to understand their past, build their present, and shape their future.

I agree completely with the previous speakers. Dr Raymond Leos said that to deal with distortion of the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, we need keywords; education is very important and we need to continue doing that. Bophana Center has played a role in the commemoration of these atrocities. Tonight, I will present ***four main activities that Bophana Center has been doing to fight against the denial of the Khmer Rouge atrocities.*** The first is the ***creation of multimedia applications called 'App-learning on Khmer Rouge history'.*** This is a very fun project that has been funded by the European Union and Rei Foundation, and is the result of a lot of collaboration between many people.

1 Ed.: Rithy Panh is an acclaimed documentary filmmaker and the most famous Cambodian filmmaker worldwide. After 1975, his family died at the hands of the genocidal Khmer Rouge government (1975–1979). He escaped to Thailand in 1979. His most famous documentary is S-21: *The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) about the torture prison of the Khmer Rouge, Tuol Sleng. His documentary, *The Missing Picture* (2013) was the first Cambodian film to be nominated for an Academy Award, in the Best Foreign Language Film category.

We started thinking about what activity would be most accessible to young people today—because the history of the Khmer Rouge is not really accessible to everyone. Then we understood that Cambodia is a country with a young population: sixty to sixty-five percent are young people. And we understood that the internet is also accessible in the country and that a large number of young people own at least one smart device. We thought that creating a tool that they can use on their smartphones to learn the history would be a very interesting thing, so we created the application. Then we started discussing the other thing: what information should be presented and how accurate that information should be. It was very difficult to make these decisions, so we formed a scientific committee, who work in dealing with the Khmer Rouge history and dealing with the Holocaust. I think that one of the members is with us tonight, prof Helen Jarvis. Another seven scientific committees were formed to ensure that the history is, at least, good enough for young Cambodians.

We understood that much of the work on the history of the Khmer Rouge had been written by non–Cambodians, and we wanted to test whether it could also be written by young Cambodian scholars. Some Cambodian scholars were really willing to contribute. We have one of them here: Duong Keo, a Cambodian historian. He liked our project and agreed to be one of the writers. From there, we started to prepare and write the history, and that was submitted to all of our scientific committees, so that its quality could be verified.

The application has been downloaded by more than 66,000 users. If you want to learn about the history of the Khmer Rouge, you can download the application through our app store and through the Google Play store, using the keyboard, ‘Khmer Rouge history’.

At the time of its creation, the application aimed to educate young people about the history of the Khmer Rouge by using innovative multimedia; to raise awareness about justice, human rights, and peace; and, most importantly, to foster intergenerational dialogue. People do not want to talk about the subject because it is a painful one. But when they start to talk about it, the trauma and the painful stories are released step by step. We understand that and we want to encourage intergenerational dialogue.

After the creation of the application, we launched more activities to ensure that the application was really reachable for everyone. We started to work with the Cambodian Ministry of Education by inviting history teachers to learn how to use the application as a supplementary teaching tool. As you can see in the image, there are history teachers from various high schools in Cambodia learning with our writers how to use the application as a teaching tool.

We have trained around 400 history teachers to use the application, and we continue to teach this history in high schools. Thanks to the support of the Ministry of Education, we are able to offer sessions that teach Khmer Rouge history, and to teach young people how to use the application as a learning tool. We have already reached 66,213 students at 263 high schools. It is not a large number, because young people are still growing up, and if we do not continue doing this, our government will not make the effort to continue it. Young people will not remember or know what happened.
Another important activity is ***'Act of memory'***. It aims to keep the memory of the Khmer Rouge alive by creating space for dialogue between the survivors and their children. The dialogue is filmed as a source for learning. Parents or grandparents are able to share their memories with their children.
Many dialogues have been recorded and are available on the application. They can also be accessed on our website.

Another essential activity is our ***mobile cinema.*** I think that is a very powerful tool, as it brings films on the Khmer Rouge to screen for the public and facilitates discussions with Khmer Rouge survivors or with experts. The mobile cinema is run in partnership with the public. Young people can come and watch the films at night, and they are followed by discussions. We screen films for students at universities and high schools. One example is *First They Killed My Father*. We see a great number of people and they really like learning history using an easy tool that gives them easy access. We also bring the film to people in the countryside to talk about the genocide.

Another important activity is ***film production.*** As Raymond Leos has mentioned, film is a highly powerful medium, so we are working to document survivors' memories and make them into films that are shareable and accessible to everyone. The application contains thirty-eight documentary films on the history of the Khmer Rouge, fifty-two testimonies of Khmer Rouge survivors, and many other fictional films that deal with the Khmer Rouge. These films have become educational tools for young people. Thank you, and I await your questions.

Visal Sorn: Thank you, Mr Chea, for presenting how simple it is to contribute to Cambodia's dealing with the past. In Cambodia, people have started discussing what happened in the past—older people and younger people. I believe that people do not feel safe when they speak out. For example, older people are afraid to talk to the young, and young people are afraid to ask older people, as they are afraid that their parents and grandparents will be traumatised talking about that experience. Many people, including some of my friends and I, have started discussing it—but not freely. People are confused about what genocide is; what it is in Asia and what it is in Europe. In Europe, it is clear that the Nazis killed Jews; in Cambodia, it concerns everyone —including the Vietnamese, the Cham Muslims, and the Buddhists. It is much less clear.

We are talking about the consequences, but not many people are talking about the root causes. And what is the responsibility of the government? In that way, we have started dealing with the past. We have a question from the audience: 'Why are we talking about genocide denial, as the term genocide is not clearly defined in the Cambodian context? The legal framework, the ECCE, has limited the term to include Cham Muslims and Vietnamese. I want to know from our speakers what you referred to in your definition of genocide in Cambodia,'.
Let's start with prof Pankowski.

Rafal Pankowski: This is an important question. I appreciate it. We need to be aware of different interpretations of the term. There is a legal interpretation and there is another interpretation that we can describe as sociological. When I talked about genocide denial and distortion in Cambodia, I was referring to the broader understanding of the term 'genocide'. The legal understanding, which is mostly related to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, is linked to the definition of Rafael Lemkin, a Polish–Jewish lawyer, who promoted the term in the context of the Holocaust and the Second World War. But, of course, it focuses very much on the plight of ethnic minorities, the Cham and Vietnamese in the Cambodian context. It is a rather narrow understanding of the question of genocide. If we want to be more precise, we could talk about denial or distortion of crimes against humanity or the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. I see prof Helen Jarvis wants to say something on this subject, on which she is the most competent person.

Helen Jarvis *(former head of the Victims Support Section at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, genocide scholar):*
Thank you, Rafal. Thank you, everybody, for this evening and for last night as well. There have been some very interesting discussions, and they will continue. I understand, Rafal, your distinction between the legal term and the sociological use of the term. In 2004, when I wrote a book together with Tom Fawthrop, which is called *Getting Away With Genocide? Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*, we contrasted the legal and the sociological. My thinking has since developed beyond that and in a new direction, thanks largely to the work done by some of my colleagues—especially those in Argentina. Prof Daniel Feierstein is the prominent discussant in this new approach. They have opted not to define it as a difference, but to apply the legal, UN definition itself in a broader way. I think this is an extraordinarily interesting development. They want to look at what we mean by the destruction of the national group in whole or in part. This was applied in the courts in Argentina. I was talking to prof Feierstein this morning, and he told me there were more than 200 cases in Argentina that deal with prosecutions from the time of military dictatorship. Twenty-five percent of the courts have ruled that it was genocide using the Genocide Convention definition. I think we do not always need to counterpose the legal and the sociological. Let us use the term and tools we have—the Genocide Convention—but apply it more broadly. Thank you.

Visal Sorn: Thank you, prof Jarvis. Now, we invite Sopheap Chea to comment.

Sopheap Chea: Thank you. I think Prof Jarvis and Prof Pankowski have spoken clearly about this question. We have been discussing it a lot, too. I do not have any further comment on it.

Visal Sorn: Sayana Ser, do you have any comment on this?

Sayana Ser: That is a very good analysis. I would agree, from my perspective, that there are different understandings of genocide. For the Cambodian genocide, in our public discourse, we use the legal term from the United Nations Genocide Convention, as it was committed against the Cham and Vietnamese minorities; we have an additional aspect in Cambodia, however, as it was committed against all Cambodian people.

Visal Sorn: Thank you. Dr Jarvis?

Helen Jarvis: I would suggest people look at the opinion of Judge You Ottara *(ed.: https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/articles/re-assignment-judges-trial-chamber-and-supreme-court-chamber)* who wrote a separate opinion on the question of genocide, in Case 0202. It is very interesting, as prosecutors in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia decided that they would only charge genocide against the Cham and the Vietnamese; they did not want to charge genocide against the Khmer people. Judge Ottara wrote a very interesting opinion, in which he said it was a pity they did not charge it. It could be an interesting discussion for judges, and maybe they will take a broader approach—even using the existing convention.

Visal Sorn: Thank you very much. It is important that we keep talking about the genocides in Cambodia and in Europe, in my opinion. Thank you for all your contributions.

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Keynote talk about genocide distortion and denial in Southeast Asia and worldwide by Professor Ben Kiernan, Professor of International and Area Studies, Director of the Genocide Studies Program at Yale University, USA

Rafal Pankowski: Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome, everybody who is joining us on Zoom, Facebook, and other platforms. On behalf of the NEVER AGAIN Association and personally, I cannot emphasise enough what an honour it is to introduce our keynote speaker, prof Ben Kiernan. Prof Kiernan was born in Australia, with some family roots in Poland. He is the author of a large number of significant books, including *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79,* which I am showing you now. One very important aspect of this book is its subtitle: *Race, Power and Genocide In Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge*. The book asserts that the heart of Khmer Rouge ideology was racism, which is one of the important lessons I drew from reading it. Prof Kiernan has written much more, including a book titled *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur.* Throughout his career, professor Kiernan has emphasised what we are trying to stress in this project: **that we want to note the commonalities, as well as the differences between different instances of genocide in world history. This is something that allows us to build solidarity and empathy, and to contribute to intercultural understanding and dialogue, as well as fighting denial and distortion.** Among his many achievements, prof Kiernan was the founding director of the Cambodian Genocide and Genocide Studies programmes at Yale University. I will now give the floor to prof Kiernan.

The article below was submitted by Prof Ben Kiernan to the symposium organisers, and it is included in this publication in the form of an article. We express our gratitude to Prof Ben Kiernan for his important contribution.

GENOCIDE DISTORTION AND DENIAL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND WORLDWIDE

Ben Kiernan

In Cambodia in 1980 – the year after the overthrow of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime – it was common enough to hear Cambodian survivors remark, *"Pol Pot akró ciang Hitler, pi pruoh Hitler baan samlap tae Juif, ko pontae Pol Pot samlap procheachon khmaer rebos khluon aing"* (Pol Pot was worse than Hitler, because Hitler killed only Jews, but Pol Pot killed his own Khmer people.[1]) This statement was rarely intended to belittle the fate of the Jews in the Holocaust, nor was it often intended to deny what had happened to Hitler's other victims. It was mostly Cambodians' way of drawing attention to their recent persecution and mass murder by the Khmer Rouge, which the United Nations General Assembly was then still ignoring and did not become the subject of international legal prosecutions until over a quarter century later. But such statements did implicitly understate the genocide of the Jews and also overlooked the genocide of the Roma people as well as all the other mass murders committed by Hitler, of both Germans and foreigners.

Nearby in Southeast Asia, there were precedents for distortion of the Holocaust and dismissal of the antisemitism that lay behind it, and even for postwar emulation of Nazi policies. For instance in South Vietnam in the late 1950s and early 1960s, President Ngô Đình Diệm's younger brother, Ngô Đình Nhu, ran the Saigon regime's political party, the Cần Lao. According to Neil Sheehan's authoritative work, *A Bright Shining Lie*, "Nhu was responsible for the hodgepodge of ersatz Fascist and Communist techniques that the regime resorted to in its efforts at political motivation and control. Totalitarianism fascinated him." By the mid-1950s, Sheehan wrote, "Nhu had become an admirer of Hitler." From December 1956, U.S. Lt. Col. Lucien Conein served as CIA liaison to Diệm's Ministry of Interior. "During plane trips to the countryside, Nhu would hold forth to Conein on the magnificence of Hitler's charisma in stirring up the German people and keeping them entranced." The Cần Lao party's official ideology was Personalism, but Nhu also set up its youth wing, the Republican Youth, "and patterned it on Hitler's storm troopers, the so-called Brown Shirts."[2]

A third brother, Ngô Đình Cẩn, ran central Vietnam like his own personal fiefdom, and required all village youth to join the Republican Youth. "Those children who did not attend rallies or assist local military forces were deemed antigovernment, or worse, as 'Vietnamese communists in the region'." According to historian David Biggs, "Cẩn drew globally from such groups as the brownshirts of Nazi Germany to give a logic to his program of destruction."[3] Several CIA and US observers concluded that Diệm's regime was an emerging "fascist state."[4]

1 Similar statements were also made by Cambodian refugees on the Thai border in 1980. See Michael Vickery, *Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome in Cambodia*, 2010, p. 252. Retrieved from http://michaelvickery.org/ on August 14, 2017.
2 Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam, New York, Vintage, 1989, p. 179-80.
3 David Biggs, *Footprints of War: Militarized Landscapes* in Vietnam, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2018, pp. 116, 126, 131.
4 Ben Kiernan, *Việt Nam: A History from Earliest Times to the Present*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2017, p. 408; Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., CIA and the House of Ngo: Covert Action in South Vietnam, 1954-63, United States, CIA, Center for the Study of Intelligence, unclassified, 2000, pp. 90, 206.

In South Vietnam it was not only the Diệm regime, which was overthrown in 1963, that appeared susceptible to Holocaust emulation. On July 4, 1965, the London *Sunday Mirror* published an article by Brian Moynihan quoting Marshal Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, the former commander of the South Vietnamese air force who on June 14 had become premier of South Vietnam, as having stated in an October 1964 interview:

"People ask me who my heroes are. I have only one – Hitler. I admire Hitler because he pulled his country together when it was in terrible state in the early 30s. But the situation here is so desperate that one man would not be enough. We need four or five Hitlers in Vietnam."

In response to that statement, according to the Associated Press, "The British government inquired into the interviews and in July 1965, a month after he became premier, Ky's office said he had been referring to Hitler's qualities of discipline and hadn't intended to praise Hitler in general." On July 16, an anonymous *New York Times* article described Moynihan's "alleged interview" with Kỳ, and printed Kỳ's denial, issued through a spokesman: "When I referred to Hitler during one of my conversations with journalists," Marshal Kỳ said, "I had in mind the idea that Vietnam needed above all leadership and a sense of discipline in order to face the criminal aggression of communism. The idea is far from me of adopting his view, especially when here in Vietnam nobody can forget the inhuman methods he used during the Second World War, methods which the Communists are using right now on our land." A year later, at a press conference in Manila, Kỳ offered a further clarification. According to Reuters, "Referring to earlier reports quoting him as saying Hitler was his idol, Premier Ky said this was not exactly what he meant. He said that when somebody asked him what South Vietnam needed to unify its people, he had answered 'a strong man' and had pointed out that Germany under Hitler was able to rise and grow strong. Besides, he said amid laughter, he did not like Hitler because 'he was not handsome and not a lady-killer'."[5]

Positive views of Hitler persisted under the Nguyễn Văn Thiệu regime (1967-75), at a lower level of the South Vietnamese army. In November 1974-March 1975, James W. Trullinger, Jr. interviewed "most members of the pro-Government minority during the last months of their preeminence" in the village of My Thuy Phuong, seven miles southwest of Huế in central Vietnam. "These were for the most part exactly the *same people*, or from the *same families*, that had been prosperous and influential for so many years."
In a statement, "the captain charged with local security" said:

"Many Vietnamese like Hitler very much. Hitler was a strong leader. He was, above all, a nationalist, and acted in a strong fashion to lead his people. He destroyed all those who did not agree with him. I think that is good. If I could be a good leader like Hitler, I would be very happy."[6]

None of this suggests that the former South Vietnamese regime may be likened to that of Nazi Germany. Yet how did such admiration of Hitler and dismissal of the Holocaust develop in Southeast Asia ?

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5 "Premier Ky, in Saigon, Denies That He Called Hitler His Hero," *New York Times,* July 16, 1965; "Premier Ky has Special Talent for Offending Western Feelings," by Barry Schweid, Associated Press, *Waukesha Freeman*, July 29, 1966, p. 6; Reuters, in *New York Times*, international edition, Aug. 13-14, 1966 (quoted in Edward S. Herman, *Beyond Hypocrisy, Decoding the News in an Age of Propaganda*, Boston: South End, 1992, pp. 216-17).

6 James W. Trullinger, *Village at War: An Account of Revolution in Vietnam*, Longman: New York, 1980, pp. 185-187

The kingdom of Siam was the only country in Southeast Asia not to be colonized by a European power. Before ascending the Siamese throne in 1910 as the country's absolute monarch, King Vajiravudh (r. 1910-1925) had spent many years in England. But he maintained that "my dip in European educational waters has given me but a European gloss; the flesh inside is still very much Thai." The king opposed what he called the Siamese "cult of imitation" of Western influences and he urged his countrymen to "think and act for ourselves," rejecting Western racial prejudices such as the concept of the "yellow peril." He insisted that the Thai were equals to Europeans, and he warned against "hating other nations."[7]

In 1914, after becoming king of Siam, Vajiravudh published an article, entitled "The Jews of the Orient," which began with a thirty-page discussion of "Anti-Jewism" in Europe. "Whilst in Europe," Vajiravudh wrote, "I could not fail to notice the anti-Jewish feeling which loomed so large in almost every country in Europe, notably in Russia, Germany, and France. In England, the feeling was undoubtedly present, though it was not so apparent on the surface as in other countries. I then set myself the question: 'Why this anti-Jewish feeling? What have the Jews done?'" [8]

In Spain in 1912, twenty-two Spanish bishops endorsed the foundation of the National Anti-Masonic and Anti-Semitic League. The Bishop of Almería endorsed "the decisive battle that must be unleashed between the children of light and the children of darkness, between Catholicism and Judaism, between Christ and the Devil." As the historian Paul Preston put it in his book *The Spanish Holocaust,* Spain had few Jews but "Anti-Semitism was central to integrist Catholicism." By the 1930s, persistent reminders of Judas's betrayal of Jesus and of medieval myths about Jewish ritual killings of children, became compounded by Catholic fears of revolution and the idea that all members of left-wing parties were "stooges of the Jews," now dramatized by small numbers of Jewish refugees who were fleeing from Nazism and arriving in Spain.[9]

In August-September 1933, the Spanish politician Gil Robles, Secretary-General of the Catholic-Agrarian National Confederation and leader of the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right, attended the Nazi Congress in Nuremberg. On his return to Spain, Robles re-stated Catholic objections to violence and to Nazi "pantheism." However, he went on:
"In fascism there is much to approve of," including "its exaltation of patriotic values; its clear anti-Marxist significance; its enmity to liberal and parliamentary democracy." He concluded: "All of this provides a guideline for a new order of things, that we are duty bound to pick up, in order to harmonise it with the postulates of the Catholic doctrine." Within a month, Robles was ready to declare "a new reality."

He stated:
"First Italy and then Germany, the two nations that today weigh most decisively on world politics, march with a firm step on the path of anti-democracy... Against corrosive liberalism, germ of all anarchies, a totalitarian conception of the state channelling the maximum energies of a race."

7 Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism,* Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1978, pp. 177, 179, 181-87.
8 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient*, p. 3.
9 Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, London, Harper, 2012, pp. 4-5, 42-43.

In mid-October 1933, Robles announced:
"We have to found a new state, to clean the country of Judaic Masons... What does it matter if we have to spill blood ! Our need is for complete power and that is what we ask for."[10]

Now Gil Robles was no Nazi, not even a fascist; these antisemitic ideas were far more widespread than that. Robles was an influential right-wing interwar leader who often chose to distinguish his Catholic agrarian movement from fascism.[11] He never belonged to the Spanish Falange party, nor ever became a central figure in the regime of General Francisco Franco. But Robles shared and admired many of their ideas, and even those of the Nazis, including their antisemitic and racist goals.

The Francoists did too. In December 1933, Franco's fellow officer and future senior director of the 1936 military coup that launched the Spanish Civil War, General Emilio Mola, wrote that "decadent nations are the favourite victims of parasitical international organizations,... just as unhealthy organisms are the most fertile breeding ground of the virulent spread of pathological germs. It is significant that all such organizations are manipulated if not actually directed by the Jews." Mola then went on:
"The Jews don't care about the destruction of a nation, or of ten, or of the entire world, because they, having the exceptional ability to derive benefit from the greatest catastrophes, are merely completing their programme... The German Chancellor – a fanatical nationalist – is convinced that his people cannot rise again as long as the Jews and the parasitical organizations that they control or influence remain embedded in the nation. That is why he persecutes them without quarter."[12]

Soon after launching the July 1936 coup in Spain, Mola explicitly denounced "parliamentary democratic systems, inspired by the erroneous doctrines of Jews, Freemasons, anarchists and Marxists ... All those who oppose the victory of the Movement to save Spain will be shot..."[13]

Juan Antonio Suanzes joined Franco's circle of "advisers and collaborators" around mid-1937, at the height of the Civil War. Suanzes drafted "guidelines" that Franco made the basis of his "economic programme." This document denounced the "Judeo-Masonic conspiracy against Spain," as well as "Judaism and Marxist International organisations." In several other spheres too, Franco's policies drew upon Italian fascist and Nazi ideology and their implementation.[14] Francoists perpetrated around three-quarters of the murders and executions in Spain during and after the Civil War.

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10 Quoted in Eduardo González Calleja, "José María Gil Robles: The Catholic Challenge to Democracy," in Alejandro Quiroga and Miguel Ángel del Arco, eds., *Right-Wing Spain in the Civil War Era: Soldiers of God and Apostles of the Fatherland,* 1914-45, New York, Continuum, 2012, pp. 61-89, at 62, 69-70, 65.
11 See e.g., González Calleja, "José María Gil Robles," p. 69.
12 Quoted in Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, p. 41.
13 Mola quoted in Preston, *Spanish Holocaust,* p. 180.
14 Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, "Juan Antonio Suanzes: Industry, Fascism and Catholicism," in Quiroga and Ángel del Arco, *Right-Wing Spain in the Civil War Era,* pp. 147-76, at 155-56.

Franco himself firmly believed that Jews, Masons, and Bolsheviks cohabited in a "filthy concubinage" *(contubernio)*.[15] At his Madrid victory parade on May 19, 1939, Franco warned that "the Jewish spirit, which permitted the alliance of big capital with Marxism and which was behind so many pacts with the anti-Spanish revolution, cannot be extirpated in a day."[16] On December 31, 1939, Franco praised Germany's antisemitic laws:

"Now you will understand the reasons which have led other countries to persecute and isolate those races marked by the stigma of their greed and self-interest…We… cannot remain indifferent before the modern flourishing of avaricious and selfish spirits who are so attached to their own earthly goods that they would sacrifice the lives of their children…"[17]

During the Civil War, Franco's forces tracked down and killed Jews in Spain, forcibly baptized others, and deported yet others to Nazi Germany. In 1938, at the suggestion of Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, Franco's regime signed an agreement to hand over to the Gestapo captured Jews, Communists, and Socialists who had fought in the International Brigades in defence of the Spanish Republic. The Gestapo in turn trained Franco's political police. Franco's Spain awarded Himmler its highest decoration, the "Grand Cross of the Imperial Order of the Yoke and Arrows."[18] Hitler himself awarded Franco the Golden Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.[19]

In May 1941, Franco "ordered his officials to draw up a list of some 6,000 Jews living in Spain" for inclusion in "a secret Jewish archive." The list was then handed over to Himmler, *El País* newspaper reported in 2010. The original order, partially preserved in Zaragoza province archives, had instructed provincial governors to elaborate lists of "all the national and foreign Jews living in the province … showing their personal and political leanings, means of living, commercial activities, degree of danger and security category." Governors were ordered to be especially vigilant for Sephardic Jews, descendants of those expelled from Spain in 1492. "Their adaptation to our environment and their similar temperament allow them to hide their origins more easily," said the 1941 order, which referred to "this notorious race" who "remained unnoticed, with no opportunity of preventing their easily-carried out attempts at subversion."[20]

Ireland was another nation on the western fringe of Europe that, like Spain, adopted neutrality during World War Two. In the prewar period, it too failed to escape some of the distinguishing political and ideological influences which marked that global conflict.

In 1927 the Irish Government appointed the Austrian archaeologist Alfred Mahr as Keeper of Irish Antiquities. On April 1, 1933, the month after Hitler attained power in Germany but five years before Germany's annexation of Austria, Alfred Mahr joined the German Nazi Party. A year later, Ireland's Prime Minister Eamon de Valera promoted Mahr to the influential position of Director of the National Museum of Ireland. It is uncertain whether de Valera was yet aware of Mahr's Nazi Party membership.

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15 Enrique Moradiellos, "Francisco Franco: The Soldier who became *Caudillo*," in Quiroga and Ángel del Arco, *Right-Wing Spain in the Civil War Era*, pp. 117-145, at 123; Preston, *Spanish Holocaust,* p. 38.
16 Quoted in Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, p. 471.
17 Quoted in Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, p. 471-2.
18 Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, pp. 175, 490.
19 Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography,* New York, Basic Books, 1994, p. 375.
20 "General Franco Gave List of Spanish Jews to Nazis," *Guardian* (London), June 20, 2010: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/20/franco-gave-list-spanish-jews-nazis. For a different view, see Stanley G. Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany, and World War II*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.

Mahr was already serving as "chief adviser and sponsor" for the Harvard Archaeological Expedition in Ireland (1932-36). The organizer and manager of the Harvard mission, Earnest A. Hooton, a member of the American Eugenics Society, had chosen Ireland for its research in part because he believed that the Celtic language was "an archaic Aryan language." By 1939, the Assistant Secretary of Ireland's Department of External Affairs described Mahr as "the most active and fanatical National Socialist in the German colony" in Ireland. From Dublin he headed the *Auslandorganisation*, considered "useful for propaganda and espionage activities."[21] In the 1930s he certainly reported back to Berlin identifying which of the Germans in Ireland were of Jewish descent. Dublin retained Mahr as Director of the National Museum after his membership of the Nazi Party became public, even after Hitler's conferral of a professorship on Mahr in 1938 and Mahr's return to Germany the next year, technically on a leave of absence to attend a conference. He never returned. In 1944, Mahr attended a joint SS, Propaganda Office and Foreign Office conference, and urged those present to draw up of lists of "pro-Jewish" Freemasons, journalists, writers and economists.[22] He may well also have contributed to the 1942 Wannsee Protocol's inclusion of a figure for Ireland, among countries yet to be occupied by the Nazis, as home to an estimated 4,000 Jews.[23]

After Hitler's suicide in 1945, Eamon de Valera, although neither a fascist nor an antisemite, visited Dublin's German Embassy and signed the condolence book. By contrast other neutral nations, Sweden and Switzerland, presented no condolences. The same was true of neutral Portugal, though flags flew at half-mast on public buildings there.[24] Only Ireland and Franco's Spain offered condolences to Berlin upon Hitler's death.

Meanwhile, the influence of the antisemitic model had spread far beyond the Atlantic fringes of Europe. When in 1914 Siam's King Vajiravudh published, under a pseudonym, his article entitled, "The Jews of the Orient," as the historian Walter Vella wrote, he "borrowed heavily on anti-Semitic thoughts of the West, thoughts the King had certainly become familiar with during his long years in England." In his 1914 article, Vajiravudh asserted that Southeast Asia's ethnic Chinese minority were the "The Jews of the Orient."[25]

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21 Mairéad Carew, *The Quest for the Irish Celt*, Newbridge, Irish Academic Press, 2018, pp. 32-33, 82, 107.
22 Michael Gibbons, review of Gerry Mullins, *Dublin Nazi No. 1: The life of Adolf Mahr* (Liberties Press, 2007), in *20th-century/Contemporary History 5* (Sept./Oct. 2007): https://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/dublin-nazi-no-1-the-life-of-adolf-mahr/
23 I thank Wendy Lower for this information.
24 Gordon Lucy, "Eamon de Valera's 'moral myopia' in offering condolences to Germany over Hitler's death," *News Letter*, May 7, 2020: https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/people/eamon-de-valeras-moral-myopia-offering-condolences-germany-over-hitlers-death-put-ireland-beyond-pale-many-people-2846858
25 Vella, *Chaiyo!*, pp. 177, 179, 181-87.

Western antisemitism fit well into the king's conception of the Chinese in Thailand. The previous year, Vajiravudh had written another essay, in which he "aggressively called for the replacement of Chinese clan names" with Thai ones. In the words of Thai historian Kasian Tejapira, the king's 1913 essay associated Chinese clan names with "belligerent gangster solidarity, archaism, barbarism, group inclusion, national division, and political insubordination."[26] His article the next year struck what would become a familiar vein in antisemitism:

"I have not been actuated by any ulterior motives; nor did I start out upon my investigations as a confirmed Chinaphobe. On the contrary, I had every reason to have friendly feelings for the Chinese, not only because they were fellow Asiatics, but also because of the personal friendship which I have enjoyed since boyhood with many Chinamen personally."[27]

Vajiravudh's explanations of "What have the Jews done?" are an example of the spread of antisemitism across the globe even before World War One. The Siamese king identified three reasons for "this anti-Jewish feeling," each in turn being in his view the fault of Jews. "First of all," he wrote, "the most prominent characteristic of the Jew is Race. No matter where he lives or what nationality he adopts he is always a Jew... and other people are never allowed to forget it either... This element of Race, so strongly and persistently present in every individual Jew, is without doubt the principal reason why they cannot get along in peace with the Gentile inhabitants of the countries where they reside." Of course the king himself was hardly immune to racialist thinking and the increasingly prevalent negative stereotyping of Jews. He asserted that "the Jew will do all he can to evade military duties, though he is never known to have refused the benefits gained as the result of any war. Jewish financiers never have any scruples about trying to bring about wars, or sharing in the profits derived from supplying troops in war time, but when it comes to the question of fighting, they themselves do all they can to evade it." Vajiravudh then added:

"The attitude of superiority and offishness, or worse still, the attitude of grudging condescension adopted by the Jews naturally gives grave offence to their Gentile neighbours. This is reason No. 1 of Anti-Jewism!"[28]

Second, the king argued:

"The black man does not enjoy being called a 'n-----' and, if he is strong enough, will resent the insult. So, in a similar manner, the Christian European deeply resents being called 'Gentile' by the Jew, knowing that the Jew means the word as an epithet expressive of contempt. There then is reason No. 2 of Anti-Jewism 1." Here Vajiravudh had managed to overlook any "contempt" for Jews on the part of "the Christian European," and to contrast (rather than compare) Jews with another victim of prejudice, "the black man." The third and (the king wrote) "I think the most important, reason for Anti-Jewism is to be found in the Jew's extraordinarily acute money-making instinct, and all the evil results arising therefrom;... he is able to close his eyes to the sight, and his ears to the sound, of misery directly caused by the practice of his cult; for would not a Jewish money-lender let his victim starve rather than forego his exorbitant interest on his loan ? All these acts the Jew is able and often willing to do with a callousness which would amaze a Central African cannibal, and all for the sake of the cult of money, which has become as second nature to him."[29]

26 Kasian Tejapira, "Imagined Uncommunity: The *Lookjin* Middle Class and Thai Official Nationalism," in Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe,* Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997, pp. 75-98, at 85, citing King Vajiravudh, *Priab namsakul kab cheusae* (A contrast of family names with clan names), 1913.

27 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient: Reprint of a Paper Published, in four parts, in the columns of the "Siam Observer" in July B.S. 2457* [1914], Bangkok: Siam Observer Press, [1917?], p. 2. (My thanks to Tyrell Haberkorn for locating this publication and for kindly sending me a copy.)

28 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient*, pp. 5-6, 7-8, 10.

29 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient*, pp. 14-15, 17-18.

Vajiravudh then attempted to explain the "slaughter of Jews" in Russia, in the then ongoing pre-World War One pogroms in that country. The king wrote that "I never was in Russia long enough to be able to learn the truth of the matter," but he "conjectured" that it was not the work of the Tsarist government, although it "knows the sufferings caused by the Jews to the Russian peasants." Rather, the king thought, "The peasants, goaded by misery and poverty, break loose and commit violence against the Jews who have been the cause of their misery."[30]

As for the Chinese in Siam, the king wrote in similar vein: "Where money is concerned, the Chinese are utterly without morals, without conscience, without mercy, without pity. They will cheat with a smile at their own cleverness, and rob and murder with utter callousness for the sake of getting a few dollars." They would then send the money back to China, "like so many vampires who steadily suck dry an unfortunate victim's life-blood."[31] In this they were worse than the Jews, Vajiravudh argued, for Jews had no country of their own and spent their wealth in the land in which they resided. On the other hand, he conceded, the Chinese, who did have a home country, at least did not get involved in local politics as Jews did.[32] This was fortunate, the king thought, because otherwise "they might prove very troublesome." The Chinese in Siam, he wrote, were "every bit as unscrupulous and as unconscionable as the Jews," and "no more Buddhists than are the Jews Christians," while Siamese were "no more like the Chinese than any of the European races are like the Jews."[33] Vella observed that after this essay was published in 1914, "the King noted with particular pleasure its good reception by Europeans."[34]

It is important to specify here that King Vajiravudh of Siam, who died in 1925, did not and could not have participated in Holocaust denial. And in describing the pervasiveness of racism in the early twentieth century, Vajiravudh was certainly correct. Its influence and impact were clearly felt far beyond Europe, and in elite Siam it fell on fertile soil. Even antisemitism in particular persisted in Siam beyond the overthrow of its absolute monarchy in 1932. In the late 1930s, the country's defence minister and future wartime dictator Phibun Songkram, who had received high-level military training in France in the mid-1920s, fostered the publication in Thai of books and articles favorable to Hitler and Mussolini. In a 1938 public lecture at Chulalongkorn University, Luang Wichit Wathakan, a close associate of Phibun, compared the Chinese in Siam to the Jews of Germany, and after mentioning Hitler's policies against the Jews, said that "it was high time Siam considered dealing with their own Jews." [35]

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30 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient*, pp. 25-28.
31 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *The Jews of the Orient*, pp. 48-49, 56-57.
32 Vella, *Chaiyo!*, pp. 193-94.
33 Asvabahu (King Vajiravudh), *"The Jews of the Orient, and Wake Up Siam"* (Bangkok, King Vajiravudh Memorial Foundation, 1985), quoted in Kasian Tejapira, "Imagined Uncommunity," 76-80.
34 Vella, *Chaiyo!*, p. 194.
35 Anthony Reid, "Entrepreneurial Minorities, Nationalism, and the State," in Chirot and Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders,* pp. 33-71, at p. 69n61.

Phibun took power in Bangkok later that same year. In 1939 he changed Siam's name to Thailand, and decreed that a new national anthem be sung twice daily throughout the country. Its first line was: "Thailand unites the Thai blood and race." During World War Two, Phibun forged a military alliance with Japan, with Luang Wichit as his foreign minister and ambassador to Tokyo.[36] Japanese wartime expansionism across Southeast Asia in 1942-45 included massacres of many thousands of ethnic Chinese in Singapore and elsewhere,[37] as it had in China itself, for instance in the 1937 Nanking massacre. Taking advantage of Thailand's status as an ally of an expanding Japanese empire, Phibun's Bangkok regime seized large territories from all four of Thailand's neighbors: Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and Malaya.

Thailand was not the only Asian country to encounter the influence of prewar Nazi antisemitism. In 1939 the rightwing Indian politician M.S. Golwalkar wrote in his book, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined:*

"To keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of Semitic races – the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by."[38]

Meanwhile, one emerging Southeast Asian state offered a stark contrast to all this. Having formally set out in 1935 on the road to independence from the United States, the then Commonwealth of the Philippines provided sanctuary in Manila to no fewer than 1,200 Jewish refugees in 1938 and 1939. Their acceptance by the Philippines was a result of cooperation between the U.S. High Commissioner in Manila, Paul McNutt, and the Commonwealth's elected President, the veteran Philippine Nationalist leader Manuel Quezon, as well as the local Jewish community in Manila. One of the Jewish refugees, Frank Ephraim, who had fled Berlin with his family in early 1939, only to endure the three-year Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, later set down his experiences in a memoir entitled, *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror.*[39]

The global backdrop to twentieth-century genocide certainly included the spread of antisemitism, racism, and territorial expansionism, but also examples of humanitarian resistance and at least temporary refuge. The Philippine case also showed that independent nationalism did not have to involve racial persecution.

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36 David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 252-58; *Joseph* J. Wright, Jr., *The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand, Bangkok, Asia Books,* 1991, p. 98; Kasian Tejapira, "Imagined Uncommunity," p. 78. For another view, see Nigel J. Brailey, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution,* Boulder, Co.: Westview, 1986, pp. 67-78, e.g. p. 68.

37 See e.g., Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaya* (Singapore: NUS Press, Fourth ed., 2012), pp. 21-24; Mark Felton, 'The Perfect Storm: Japanese Military Brutality during World War Two,' in Cathie Carmichael and Richard C. Maguire (eds.), *The Routledge History of Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 105-121, at 106.

38 M.S. Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined* (Bangalore [?]: Bharat Prakashan, 1939), quoted in 'Golwalkar drew lessons from Hitler's Germany,' *The Hindu Business Line,* Nov. 27, 2015. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/golwalkar-drew-lessons-from-hitlers-germany/article7924161.ece (accessed Aug. 28, 2021).

39 Frank Ephraim, *Escape to Manila: from Nazi tyranny to Japanese terror*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003; see Jennifer Reeve, "Responding to the Holocaust: Bystanders, colonialism, and conflicting priorities," in Carmichael and Maguire, *Routledge History of Genocide*, pp. 89-101, at 93-94.

In his book *Denial: History Betrayed*, Tony Taylor sets out four categories of behaviour that may appropriately be applied to genocide denial. The first is "simple denial,... despite overwhelmingly contrary evidence that is generally regarded as unassailable." The second involves "deeds, or taking action, to support denial." This may also be described as attempted "cover-up" of the facts of the case. Taylor's third category is "fantasy, in other words maintaining a belief in unsound ideas by creating a fantasy around the object of the denial," for instance the view "that Adolf Hitler was a much-maligned leader." And the fourth category is "the use of carefully chosen words to perpetuate the mistaken belief."[40]

The former Khmer Rouge leaders of Cambodia certainly attempted to whitewash their records and deny their involvement in genocide. As early as 1981, Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's brother-in-law, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, when confronted with copies of 'S-21' prison documents that I and others had published, admitted that they were accurate evidence of his regime's torture and murder, but he then backtracked and had an anonymous aide deny that he had made the statement.[41] In 1988, Pol Pot himself blamed most of his regime's killings on "Vietnamese agents."[42] In 1991, Ieng Sary again rejected the accusations:
"A lie... I am human. I never thought I committed acts of genocide, I shall never recognize that... Yes, I regret I could not efficiently oppose erroneous points of view which prevailed at certain times, I regret I had not the courage to directly oppose some people... Maybe I could not have stayed alive until now."[43] However the diary of an aide to Ieng Sary reveals the following views promulgated at meetings of Sary's Foreign Ministry in July 1976 and January 1977: "In our country, one percent to five percent are traitors, boring in... [T]he enemies are on our body, among the military, the workers, in the cooperatives and even in our ranks...These enemies must be progressively wiped out."[44]

In 2004 Khieu Samphan, for his part, published an evasive memoir in Khmer, French, and English, entitled *Cambodia's Recent History and the Reasons Behind the Decisions I Made.* Though based at Khmer Rouge headquarters in early 1975, Samphan said he had been "profoundly upset" by their forced evacuation of Phnom Penh in April. That was something "I was not expecting at all." Meanwhile the Khmer Rouge had forcibly collectivized the countryside: "Great was my surprise," he claimed, on learning of this soon after their 1975 victory.[45] The minutes of fifteen meetings of the regime's most powerful body—the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)—held between October 1975 and May 1976, record that Samphan attended at least twelve of these fifteen meetings. The Central Committee appointed him head of state on March 30, 1976.[46] In April 1977, Samphan stated publicly: "We must wipe out the enemy [and] suppress all stripes of enemy at all times."[47] Yet in his 2004 book he claimed he knew little of the genocide, blaming it on rarely-specified "Khmer Rouge leaders" who had excluded him and kept him uninformed. This appears to be a clear case of "simple denial."

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40 Tony Taylor, *Denial: History Betrayed,* Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2008, pp. xiii-xiv.
41 Chanthou Boua, Ben Kiernan, and Anthony Barnett, "Bureaucracy of Death", *New Statesman*, May 2, 1980; E. Becker, "An innocent abroad," *FEER*, August 7, 1981; A. Barnett, "NS evidence forces Ieng Sary to confess," *New Statesman*, August 7, 1981, p. 3, and "Don't blame me, it was my brother-in-law," in J. Pilger and A. Barnett, *Aftermath: The Struggle of Cambodia and Vietnam*, London: New Statesman, 1982, pp. 130-31; Unsigned, "Democratic Denial," *FEER,* 11 September 1981, p. 3.
42 Roger Normand, "The Teachings of Chairman Pot," *Nation*, 27 August 1990.
43 *Nouvel Observateur*, 17-23 novembre 1991.
44 See *Ieng Sary's Regime: A Diary of the Khmer Rouge Foreign Ministry*, 1976-79, translation by Kosal Path and Ben Kiernan: https://gsp.yale.edu/ieng-sarys-regime-diary-khmer-rouge-foreign-ministry-1976-79
45 Khieu Samphan, *Prowatttisat kampuchea thmey thmey nih ning koul chomhor rebos khnyom cia bontor bontoap,* Phnom Penh: Ponleu Khmer, 2004, and Khieu Samphan, *L'Histoire récente du Cambodge et mes prises de position,* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004. For a critique, see my review in *The Long Term View* (Massachusetts School of Law, Andover) 6:3 (2005), 32-36.
46 *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977,* D. P. Chandler, B. Kiernan, and C. Boua, eds., New Haven, Yale Southeast Asia Studies Council, 1988, p. 7.
47 Khieu Samphan, speech on Phnom Penh Radio, April 15, 1977, extract in *New Statesman*, May 2, 1980, 675.

The view of Nuon Chea, Pol Pot's No. 2, was extensively recorded in the book *Behind the Killing Fields*, published in 2010, based on 1,000 hours of interviews with him. "I didn't know about the killings and I did not order them," Chea claimed. "People should realise that the Khmer Rouge leaders were not cruel… We didn't frequently inspect the areas… So in some places, the top leaders didn't know what was going on and sometimes the region didn't tell us, so everyone was doing what they wanted and not telling us… I just got reports about good things." He even claimed that in a half-century of warfare and revolutionary activity he "never struck a man down with a fist, an axe, or a gun."[48] This too seems a clear case of "simple denial."

Over the twentieth century, Southeast Asia, like other regions of the world, has seen examples of an ugly progression from emulation of antisemitism, to admiration of Hitler and Holocaust distortion, to Holocaust emulation, to simple genocide denial. But it is equally important to point out that just as in other regions of the world, each case in Southeast Asia, from the Philippines to Cambodia, has also produced examples of rescue, resistance, and a willingness to face the truth.

48 Gina Chon and Thet Sambath, *Behind the Killing Fields: A Khmer Rouge Leader and One of his Victims,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, pp. 147, 4, 98-99, 160.

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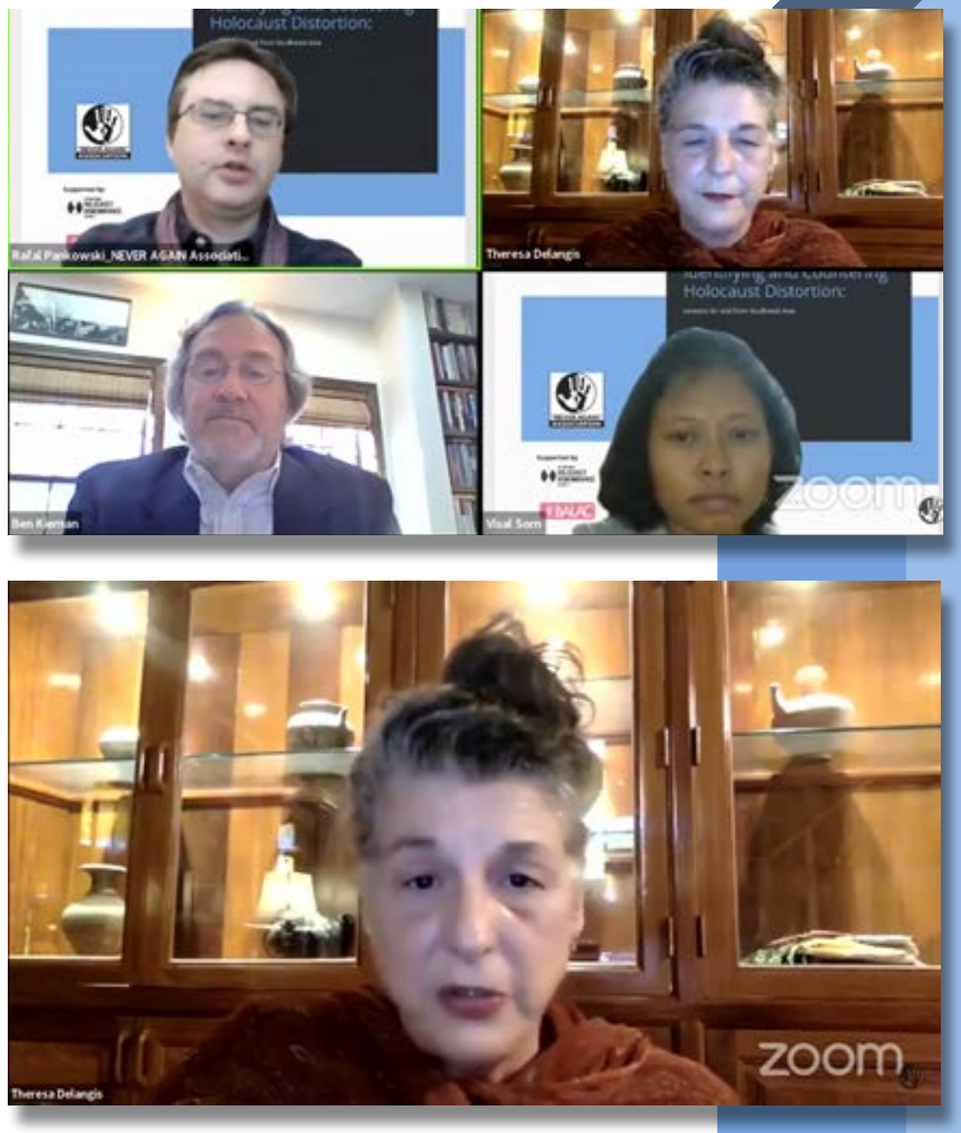
Response by Dr Theresa de Langis, Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the American University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much, professor Kiernan, for your fascinating talk, which highlighted so many intriguing subjects and illustrated a global approach to the history of genocide, of antisemitism and racism, and of fascism as a global phenomenon.

I once again encourage participants to share their comments and questions in the chat box. Before we proceed to the open discussion, I would like to introduce Dr Theresa de Langis, a good friend of the NEVER AGAIN Association, to our discussion. She is the director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies and professor in Global Affairs and Humanities at the American University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which is a partner of this symposium.

Dr de Langis has served in the US Government and as a senior technical advisor to the United Nations throughout Asia. She has been based full-time in Cambodia since January of 2012. She teaches and conducts research on sexual violence during the Khmer Rouge genocide and teaches on subjects as diverse as gender and development, genocide, peace and conflict studies, and the literature and film of Southeast Asia. She was a key organiser of a global conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars that took place in Phnom Penh, which was a very memorable event. Dr de Langis, please, the floor is yours.

Theresa de Langis: Thank you so much for that lovely introduction. It is such an honour to be here and to be in a position to respond to prof Kiernan, whose work has been very important, I think, to anyone studying genocide. I am happy to have this opportunity to thank you for your scholarship throughout these years, professor Kiernan. It is also great to hear from some of our friends here in Cambodia: from Bophana Center, Visal and Sayana. I really enjoyed your comments and I look forward to meeting you in person soon. Thank you also to the NEVER AGAIN Association for making these cross-cultural dialogues possible.



Prof Kiernan, your work has been important to me in terms of my own research in trying to understand sexual violence in the Cambodian scenario. We know that racism always involves some kind of control over the reproductive body, and we see that very explicitly in the Khmer Rouge regime, with its forced marriage and forced consummation. I have always appreciated your use of the personal story and the stories of survivors, refugees, and witnesses—and that you have allowed those important perspectives to help you better understand the depths of suffering under the regime. I, too, use a lot of oral history and personal testimony, and it is great to see younger practitioners continuing that approach.

I was also inspired by prof Teun van Dijk's earlier lecture in this series. I was listening closely, and it brought to my mind some of prof Kiernan's early work, when the speaker discussed what was called 'symbolic elites': those who control the production of discourse and histories, and, therefore, our futures. In those cases, documentation from below becomes much more imperative. And some of the crimes and human rights violations that happened during the Khmer Rouge time, including sexual violence, will only be historicised and preserved because of grassroots documentation and preservation. Uncovering such voices brings a valence to history otherwise lost.

In short, I owe a debt to you, prof Kiernan, in how I think about the Khmer Rouge atrocity as a researcher. I have lived in Cambodia for 10 years now, and since 2016, I joined the full-time faculty at American University of Phnom Penh. I teach the genocide studies class in Cambodia to Cambodian students. I am sure my teaching has been inflected by your teachings as well, especially in prioritising Cambodian voices in your earliest works.

A lot of my comments to your keynote will come from what I will call a rumination. The working of the invitation, Holocaust distortion and denial, has had me thinking deeply. I realise I have more questions than answers, inspired by this gathering and prof Kiernan's paper. And I am so grateful to have this time with prof Kiernan here, to help me work through these questions.

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation for your comments and your remarks tonight—especially for giving us the context and history behind racist ideology and structures, and for helping us understand that how, even before the Holocaust, there was already a discourse that was being mobilised and mutated from Europe to Southeast Asia. Even the change of the name from Siam to Thailand had the racial intention of uniting the Thai race, a nationalist endeavor. It is important to understand and to recognise that continuity, and some of my observations are inspired by this idea—especially your closing comments on the emulation of European antisemitism in Southeast Asia, Holocaust distortion, Holocaust emulation, and simple genocide denial by the Khmer Rouge leaders.

My first observation is really a question. It concerns the colonial project and expansionism, and your paper today reminds us that the colonial project would not have been possible without the import of a racist ideology, and we see that throughout Southeast Asia. Of course, Thailand, the focus of your paper, was not colonised, but it was part of the colonial milieu. And we see the classification of races and division of races used by the French, the Dutch, the English, and all of the colonial powers. In some of those cases, we even have instances of mass atrocities and mass killings. But those events are only rarely classified as 'genocides', perhaps a perfect example of the power of 'symbolic elites'. My first rumination, then, is about these limitations as to what is allowed to be named 'genocide', in particular in the colonial project, and how do we situate that in a conversation about genocide distortion and denial?

But perhaps my central rumination is more sensitive, more controversial. It comes directly from my experience of living and teaching in Cambodia, a post-genocidal society, this past decade: feeling the need to turn our gaze from the West to the East in our histories and examination of distortions and denials, which may in turn entail decentering the Holocaust. If I may refer to my own students in genocide studies and other courses, I think they have an average knowledge of the Holocaust for a university student, and I am comparing even to students in the US, which to our minds might be superficial knowledge at best. At the same time, the event of the Holocaust does not hold the same, I will use the phrase, symbolic collective trauma as for someone schooled in the West as it does for my students. It is an event they know about, but it happened far away a long time ago, and it is very likely they never have had the chance to meet a Holocaust survivor, as you might in the US. Yet, it is not that historical period is void of genocidal history; it is that the period is overwhelmed by the atrocities associated with the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia precisely at the same historical moment, which clearly carries symbolic collective trauma throughout the region even until today. Indeed, the Japanese occupation—and the myriad resistance movements it spawned—is central to the origin stories of national independence of many Southeast Asian countries after the colonial system started to collapse after World War Two. For my students, their perhaps superficial knowledge about the Holocaust—we would not call it distortion or denial—can perhaps be explained in that, in Asia, the history of Asian atrocities closer to home are prioritised, although they are not historicised as genocide. As a Western professor teaching in Asia, I am always questioning my own positionality, and wonder if I participate in a distorted history by these aporia, these differential historical treatments, all pointing back to that important moment, spawned by the horrors of the Holocaust, when the Genocide Convention could give us a definition of these events, based on the 'model' of the Holocaust. I was trained in this circle, and so can I help but to perpetuate it without vigilant self-reflection?

If my students are as knowledgeable about the Holocaust as the average US university student, I would not say the same for US students having any understanding of the mass crimes against humanity committed in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Theater of World War Two by the Japanese.

The Holocaust against the Jews is a primal moment in human history. I take to heart your remarks today about the importance of keeping these genocidal practices in conversation and in relation to each other to understand both their continuity and the disruptions. One of the classes that I teach my university-level students is called *Genocide in Southeast Asia*, and there are a few things that have struck me as interesting about teaching it. As the instructor, I am personally affronted by how poorly Asia as a region is represented in the typical textbook of genocide studies—usually in sidebars or shaded boxes, as case studies that do not quite fulfill the definition of genocide set by the Convention.

Of course my students, almost universally Cambodian, know about the genocide in their country and—especially from the Cambodia Tribunal (ECCC)—they are familiar with the official historical narrative around the genocide. Indeed, Cambodia has had its own story told to it repeatedly, by others, over the decades. What is most interesting to me, as the class progresses, is how unfamiliar the students are with other genocides in the region, how little they actually know about their own genocides in comparison to other mass atrocities around the world, and how strange it is to watch as the Khmer Rouge genocide is itself displaced by an awareness that a whole history of genocides contextualises their own, that there are so many other genocides, that they still happen, and that, still, little is done to prevent or respond to such events.

As a feminist and someone who focuses on sexual violence, I often see how laws exclude certain types of victims. This also applies to the legal definition of genocide, as we have already discussed a little bit tonight (thank you, Helen Jarvis, for your intervention earlier). That definition seems to exclude an entire region. The result is that genocide does not get talked about, is not processed, not recognized. In fact, when we held the conference in 2019 of the International Association of Genocide Scholars at my university, a lot of Southeast Asian countries did not want to be associated because of that word, 'genocide', which is its own kind of genocide denial. We have already decided that many of those mass atrocities do not fit our definition of genocide as based on the Convention. Then, my rumination leads to a question: How did the Genocide Convention integrate mass atrocities in Asia? How were they considered for inclusion or exclusion? Should this be approached as a distortion, as denial, perhaps based on racist tropes as to which victims are worth counting?

The phrase in your paper, prof Kiernan, that you examine so carefully, of the Thai calling the Chinese the 'Jews of Asia', resonates with my question. There are multiple examples of mass killings and persecution of the Chinese throughout Southeast Asia at different times, including at this time of world history. As the most learned historian of genocide living today, prof Kiernan, I am so happy to have this chance to ask, while the Genocide Convention was being developed, were there considerations for the Nanjing massacre, or of Operation Sook Ching ("purge through cleansing") after the Japanese occupation of Singapore which led to the massacre of Chinese civilians? Was there consideration for the comfort women enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Army, women from China, Korea, and all of the native women of the Southeast Asian nations where the stations were established? We know this last consideration had been intentionally excluded from the Tokyo War Crimes Trials because of foreign policy concerns, especially of the U.S., and other "symbolic elites", the victors of the West, of what history would be remembered and accounted for, according to needs beyond justice. What other histories might we learn by turning our gaze to the East, so our view is more holistic, less distorted?

I want to end by saying that, for me, genocide and the memory of genocide—whether that is historical truth, or its distortion or denial—has a life cycle. It changes over time as power changes over time, and those who hold power get to tell the story and produce the discourse, remain the 'symbolic elites'. I end with this rumination and a question. When you drive from Phnom Penh to Kampot, you can see the craters in the earth from the bombs that dropped as recently as the 1970s, as part of the U.S. "secret war." I was told by the abbot of a pagoda that those craters were used as mass graves to bury the civilians who had been killed by the bombing. Later, those same gaping holes were used as the mass graves for the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide who died of starvation, illness, and execution.

Today, when you drive down that road, many of those kettles are filled with monsoon rain like garden ponds, blooming with water lilies. My question—no, actually, this is a rumination—is: When does genocide begin and how does it end? How do we reckon with the bones mixed in a mass grave on a Kampot roadside, now filled with beautiful flowers blooming from the mud? Even within that transformation, how do we avoid denial and distortion?

Thank you for allowing me this time, for your forbearance, to offer my thoughts in response to your provocative paper.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much, Dr de Langis. Prof Kiernan, would you like to respond?

Ben Kiernan: Thank you, Theresa, for these thoughtful, fascinating, and informative comments. I have learnt a lot from what you said. I think you have made a very important point about colonialism being based on racism. It was an issue that I did not touch on: the colonial influence was certainly powerful in contributing to racism. Southeast Asia had a significant amount of racism before colonialism, the influence of antisemitism, or the parallels to antisemitism influencing its residents. There was racial antagonism in Southeast Asia going back centuries, but these were, in some ways, exaggerated deliberately. I think it is true to say that the French colonial regime sought to take advantage of Vietnamese antagonism and differences, and sometimes deepened the divisions.

One example is when the Khmer peasantry in the east of Cambodia started to show an interest in the religion across the border in Vietnam. The French, as well as the Buddhist hierarchy and the royalty in Cambodia, all cracked down on that. They did not like the idea of the Khmer and the Vietnamese worshiping under the same religion and the Cambodians were banned from participating in it—although the Vietnamese in Cambodia were not. This is an example of the colonial regime exacerbating ethnic divisions for its political interest. I made the point that Thailand was the only country that was not colonised by the Western powers, and yet it developed quite a strong influence.

The king was very proud of equality with the Westerners, but, when it came to the Jews or the Chinese, he did not take an antiracist viewpoint, to put it mildly. The lack of colonialism in Thailand did not help, I think, in mitigating the racist ideas that were coming from Europe. They fell on fertile soil, at least among the political elite. You are also right to point out that colonial conquests led to mass atrocities—some of which might have been close to what we would now legally call genocide. Some cases can certainly be classified as extermination. There are also plenty of cases that do clearly fall under the legal concept of extermination—which is not the same as genocide and is much less difficult to prove. It does not demand proof of specific intent to destroy a group, and nor does it have to be an ethnic, national, racial, or religious group; in cases of extermination, it can be a political group, for instance, or a social group. Extermination is the term that was used by the inquiry group sponsored by the UN that investigated East Timor. Although they concluded that the Indonesians in East Timor may well have committed extermination, the inquiry group did not use the word, ‘genocide’—although some people think that it would be justified.

Many mass atrocities were committed by the colonial regimes—although, in many cases, they wanted the minerals or the products. They also wanted the labor of the conquered peoples. They were not necessarily there to commit genocide against them, but may well have committed extermination during the conquest. There were other genocides that took place in the precolonial period in Southeast Asia; the Vietnamese conquest of Champa, some of the mutual atrocities committed by Cambodians against the Vietnamese, by the Vietnamese against Cambodian, by Mons against the Burmans, and by the Burmans against the Mons were all, in my view, genocidal.

In the case of the US bombing, the statement that became publicised, after it was declassified, by Henry Kissinger, on the passing of the order by President Nixon to General Haig to bomb Cambodia in December 1970, Nixon said that he wanted 'anything that flies, on anything that moves'. He wanted an upgraded, extensive bombing campaign. 'Anything that flies, on anything that moves' could be interpreted, I think, as an extermination order, perhaps even a genocidal order by Nixon via Kissinger to Haig. However, in the following months, there was not a huge increase in the bombing—that came in 1973. A substantial increase came in 1972, I believe, but not in 1971. The order was not followed by any major increase in the intensity of bombing in Cambodia, so it is difficult to interpret that as having led to what you might call genocide; certainly, though, the order itself is quite startling. 'Anything that flies, on anything that moves'.

In terms of the Tokyo tribunal and the crimes committed by the Japanese during World War Two, the genocide was neither part of the charges nor the convictions; war crimes and aggression were the main charges. It is quite possible that had charges been pursued, they might have led to convictions of either extermination or genocide—but, of course, genocide was not a crime at the time.

I appreciate all of the comments that you have made. I think you have made a great contribution to the discussion. Thank you again.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much. We have some questions in the chat box, which I am going to read out. This question might seem a little detailed vis-a-vis the global scope of this conversation, but I think it is relevant, and there is no better authority to ask than Prof Kiernan. You mentioned the phrase, 'Holocaust emulation'. In this context and on the basis of all the evidence that you have, how would you evaluate the awareness of European history, World War Two, and particularly the Holocaust among the Khmer Rouge leadership?

I remember finding a book by King Norodom Sihanouk in the library of the American University of Phnom Penh, in which he claimed that Pol Pot himself had had an obsession with Hitler. I think of all the leaders, Khieu Samphan probably had the broadest horizon and intellectual awareness. It is a little-known fact that he visited Poland in the early 1970s. He may have learned something about Polish history and the Nazi Holocaust there. Have you come across any evidence suggesting that it crossed their minds that they were doing something similar to what the Nazis did?

Ben Kiernan: Yes, that is a good question, but my answer is no. I think the emulation that is applicable in the case of the Khmer Rouge is Stalinism and Maoism. The other major factor is racism, but that was homegrown. Nuon Chea *(ed.: one of the Khmer Rouge leaders)* talks about what Pol Pot said to him: 'I have hated the Vietnamese since I was young,'. This was not something that was picked up from abroad: this was homegrown ethnic chauvinism and racism that was part of traditional Cambodian racism. Not all Cambodians shared it, but Pol Pot certainly did, and I think some of the other leaders of the regime did, too.

They also thought that they could use it to whip up support among a certain segment of Cambodian society. When they wanted to resort to that, they thought—perhaps correctly to some extent and incorrectly to some extent—that it would serve them well politically to declare their enmity to what they called the 'hereditary enemy'. Such racial language did not come from Stalinism or Maoism, but I do not think it came from Nazism, either. I do not think that they were influenced by Nazism: their racism was was homegrown, just like antisemitism was in Europe.

When I talked about Holocaust emulation, I was referring to the example I gave from South Vietnam and that specific case. The way the Khmer Rouge denied the genocide, I think, was very similar to Holocaust denial—'simple' denial is what Tony Taylor calls it. The way the Khmer Rouge regime and its leaders entangled Stalinism, Maoism, and racism is what I would call sui generis. It is quite a unique case in global history. That does not mean that it is unfamiliar; its elements are familiar in the way they mingled the various indigenous and external influences that were particular to the Cambodian case.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much. The next question comes from Visal Sorn: 'Prof Kiernan, do you think the US should be responsible for the genocide in Cambodia as well, and in what way?'.

Ben Kiernan: There are two questions: the first is whether the US committed genocide. I think the answer to that is no. The second is whether the US committed war crimes. I think the answer to that is yes. The statement, 'anything that flies, on anything that moves', could be considered not only a war crime, but also a call for extermination. I think it depends on what happened afterwards and the level and intensity of the bombing that followed that order. There were other orders, because the bombing increased in 1973 to the extent that half of all of the bombing took place in the first eight months of 1973; the B-52 bombing began in 1969 at a much lower level. Although civilian casualties occurred in large numbers from 1969 to 1972, the tonnage of the bombing doubled in the next eight months, and so there must have been orders that may not yet have been declassified. We would have to look at those, as well. The next question is to what extent the United States' bombing contributed to the rise of the regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, and, therefore, contributed to the outcome of a genocidal regime. I think it did. I believe the evidence of the victims and survivors of the bombing whom I interviewed and wrote about in an article published in 1989 in Vietnam Generation. There is also other evidence, including that from declassified US government documents.

All of this evidence suggests that the bombing—although it also killed members of the Khmer Rouge armed forces—was so widespread that it killed large numbers of civilians: I would say 50,000 to 150,000 with the likelihood that it was more than 100,000 Cambodian civilians killed. That impact enraged and alienated many Cambodian peasants and made them more likely to join the opposition to the bombing of the Khmer Rouge forces. The Khmer Rouge forces grew in the period of the bombing by successful recruitment.

The Khmer Rouge forces increased from a few thousand troops and militia members when the bombing began in 1969 to more than 200,000 in 1973. There are many witnesses and US documents that testify to the fact that the Khmer Rouge were much more easily able to recruit troops and militia after the bombing had started, due to its impact and popular resentment towards it. The Khmer Rouge used this; they told the people that they would use their armed forces to end the bombing. They told them that the 'killing birds' came from Phnom Penh, which was a lie: they came from the Philippines, Guam, and Thailand. They told the recruits that they were going to overthrow the government in Phnom Penh and that that would stop the bombing.

There is plenty of evidence that the bombing contributed to the the Khmer Rouge's ability to recruit the army that they used to seize power. They also benefited from the political support of Prince Sihanouk, who was very popular in Cambodia—even after his overthrow. The fact that he was on their side helped the Khmer Rouge to recruit and to take power. They also had the benefit of an alliance with the Vietnamese communists, who trained some of their troops and gave them weapons.

One of the three significant factors was the US bombardment of Cambodia. More than half a million tonnes of bombs fell on Cambodia. Wedding parties were slaughtered, funeral processions were bombed, villages were destroyed, and many of the survivors joined the Khmer Rouge army.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much. The last question comes from Samantha Moreno: 'What might the implications be for governments in their decision to use the terms, "ethnic cleansing" or "internal conflict", instead of genocide, with the intent of contravening the legal frameworks that the concept of genocide carries for them?'.

Ben Kiernan: That is a difficult question. The term, 'ethnic cleansing' first came to my attention in the 1990s during the Bosnian conflict, and I used it consonantly with the term, 'genocide'. In my book about the Pol Pot regime, the chapter on genocide is, in fact, termed 'ethnic cleansing'. Since then, the term has become much more precise and ethnic cleansing does not have a legal meaning, whereas genocide does. Ethnic cleansing has now come to imply the use of force to drive people out—including, perhaps, genocide or forcing them to flee and killing large numbers of them. There is a sense that the victims of ethnic cleansing have a reservation or a refuge to go to, and that the ultimate aim is not to destroy the population who are being ethnic ethnically cleansed. That is the distinction between ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Apart from the fact that the term, 'ethnic cleansing' has no legal meaning and is rather imprecise, it does now have this sense of a refuge that people can—as long as they leave the territory from which they are being driven away—have some chance of survival; genocide does not necessarily imply that. Some people and some governments may be reluctant to use the term, 'genocide' and prefer to use 'ethnic cleansing', which does not trigger any immediate obligation on their part. If the signatories of the Genocide Convention use the term, 'genocide', they may have obligations as a result of their participation in convention in five years; ethnic cleansing does not imply any such obligations. There may be different reasons why 'ethnic cleansing' is used.The reason I used it in the book was that it seemed to be synonymous with genocide during the Bosnian conflict.

Rafal Pankowski: A big thank you to professor Ben Kiernan and Dr Theresa de Langis. We are coming to the end of our session today. I appreciate, especially in Southeast Asia, that it is quite late, so thank you to the participants who are still with us. Tomorrow's programme is going to be very interesting. There will be a discussion with Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, moderated by Venerable Lablu Barua, and we are going to have an interesting presentations on dealing with the past in Thailand and Myanmar as well as a panel discussion about challenging genocide distortion. I look forward to meeting you all again tomorrow.
Thank you and goodbye.

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25 NOVEMBER, 2021

Countering Holocaust distortion within the framework of interfaith dialogue in Southeast Asia

by Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, Warsaw, Poland and Venerable Lablu Barua (Thirasattho), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand

Sayana Ser: Thank you to everyone who participated in our symposium yesterday.

Today, we are going to discuss interfaith dialogue and denial. The discussion will be moderated by Venerable Lablu Barua, a PhD student in peace studies and a Buddhist monk from Thailand, with the participation of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich. We will have interesting presentations about Thailand and Myanmar later, too.

Lablu Barua: Good morning, good afternoon, or good evening, wherever you are. I am very privileged to join this symposium. I express my gratitude to the organisers who have managed this wonderful, meaningful, and important project.

I am honoured to talk with the Chief Rabbi of Poland. We are honoured to you, to the Jewish community, and to all of the human beings who are here in the name of peace, harmony, and nonviolence in the world; this is what we need at this moment. I will now introduce our speaker, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, who has a long and rich history of involvement in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe and Asia. As a student in the 1970s, Rabbi Schudrich began his travels to Eastern Europe by leading Jewish groups to those countries and meeting with members of what remained of the Jewish communities there. After receiving smicha (rabbinic ordination) at Yeshiva University, Schudrich served as rabbi of Japan's Jewish community from 1983 to 1989. From 1992 to 1998, he resided in Warsaw, Poland. In June 2000, Rabbi Schudrich returned to Poland as the Rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz. In December 2004, he was appointed to the position of Chief Rabbi of Poland.

I have a few questions for you. Please share your knowledge with this global audience. Genocides can be denied in the countries where they happened by people—and even by governments.

The first question I would like to ask is: Have you personally witnessed cases of Holocaust denial or genocide denial? Did it hurt you personally?

Michael Schudrich: I would like to start by saying *Sawadika (ed.: Greetings in Thai)*. That is all I can say in Thai, but it is not a bad start. If it were Japanese, I could do a little more. Thank you for your wonderful introduction. I have personally witnessed cases of Holocaust denial. My role as a rabbi is not first and foremost about the Holocaust; it is about teaching Judaism to Jews. But, of course, I live in Poland, where most of the Jews were killed when the Germans occupied this country and created six factories of death. It is a very important subject, and I have personally witnessed that Holocaust denial—not so much in my presence, because I think that when I am there, people will not say that to me, but I have heard it.

Here in Poland, Holocaust denial exists alongside what I call Holocaust limitation. Holocaust denial involves stating that six million Jews were not killed. It is very rare to hear that in Poland—partially because non–Jewish Poles also suffered terribly under the German occupation. Of the six million Jews killed, more than half came from Poland, but almost three million non–Jewish Poles were also killed, so there is a sensitivity to the fact that the Germans committed a horrible genocide in our country. Poland has a different kind of problem that is very sensitive today: to what extent Poles collaborated with the German occupiers. And that is a much more difficult subject. Some Poles are very open and want to learn the truth. And like in any other country, there is also a whole group of Poles who say: 'Well, we do not really want to talk about what we did wrong,' or 'We could talk about what the Germans did,'.

There is no Holocaust denial, but we do not want to say that some Poles collaborated. It is clear that when the Germans conquered Poland, they did not set up a puppet government, unlike those in many other countries, such as the Vichy in the south of France. In other countries that were occupied by the Germans, there was still a kind of local administration. This was not the case in Poland: the Germans came in and took over the country, so there was no Polish Government.

In Poland, from 1939 to 1945, there was a Polish government-in-exile, which had fled to London. Its members were quite outspoken about the horrors happening to their Jewish citizens. It should be clear that when we talk about Polish responsibility, we are not talking about the government level. There were individual Poles that collaborated with the Germans; how many is a very big discussion among historians, and my approach has always been to let the historians work on it.

I have a master's degree in history, but I am not a historian today; I am a rabbi. Let the historians work on that question and let's see what they tell us and what they can teach us. There are some people who want to refuse that any Poles did anything wrong, and that is a distortion of the Holocaust; not a denial, but a distortion. That is what you hear much more frequently in Poland, and I have heard that. Has it hurt me? Yes, but it is somewhere between hurt and what I would call anger. Hurt is the first reaction that can lead to anger, and that is the real problem for people who deny what their countrymen did. It is their problem. They have a moral challenge to be able to admit that yes, there were some of us who did horrible things. When they deny that, it is very hurtful to me.

It is also damaging to themselves, because they cannot move beyond it and they cannot heal if they deny that the illness exists.

Lablu Barua: You gave a comprehensive answer about hatred and denial, and how they are connected. Hatred always breeds hatred. Reconciliation is important for all human beings to overcome it.
I would like to ask the next question: From your experience in Europe and Asia, what do you see as common challenges in the two regions, in terms of hate speech and the denial of common humanity?

Michael Schudrich: Of course, all of the world shares humanity; of that there is no question. Judaism speaks not only about Judaism. Many other religions state that we are all the children of God. The Talmud from the famous rabbinic texts—which was written over a few hundred years, but goes back almost 2,000 years—asks why God created only one Adam and Eve. After all, if God was creating human beings, he could have created ten couples; it could have created 100 couples right at the beginning. What do we learn from the fact that God created one man and one woman? And the answer the Talmud gave 2,000 years ago is that no nation can say that it descended from the best Adam and Eve or that any other nation descended from a secondary Adam and Eve. This was very much what Nazi Germany was teaching: that they were the master race, and that the Jews, the Slavs, the Poles, and others were inferior races. It is fascinating, and, to me, inspiring that the Talmud dealt with that problem 2,000 years before any Nazi decided to say that. Of course, we share a common humanity. From my perspective, it is absolutely necessary that we recognise that we are all created equal, that we are all created in the image of God, and that God specifically created one Adam and Eve so that no one would think differently. That does not mean that some people do not think differently, and the worst example was that of the German Nazis who said that Jews and Slavs were inferior. After you have made a second category of human beings, after you have denied or even just limited the humanity of another group, it becomes much easier to persecute them and kill them. That remains a tremendous challenge, even today.

There is a horrible humanitarian crisis unfolding right now at the border between Poland and Belarus. It is a crisis that was created by the dictator of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who is, as far as I can see, a world class criminal. He is a criminal for enticing thousands of people to spend lots of money to try to escape from horrible situations in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo to enter the European Union via Belarus. In fact, they cannot get into the European Union because they do not have visas. The Polish government, for its own reasons, decided to close the border completely. We are not even going to permit people to seek asylum, which is governed by international and moral law. Now the numbers have reduced, but just last week, there were thousands of people stuck between the border of Poland and Belarus.

These people are freezing. They have very little water and very little food. Thirteen people have died from starvation and cold. Just because two governments are playing a game between each other. What is happening is clearly inhumane. But I hear voices saying that the people who are trying to cross the border are not like us. They say that the migrants are terrorists, that they are a threat to us, and other really horrible things in attempts to diminish the migrants' humanity. This seems to be OK, now that we do not treat them as we would other human beings. If you hear anyone, in any place in the world, at any time attempting to say that any group is not really human like we are, that is a huge and immediate red flag. If we have learned anything from the Holocaust, it is that you can never deny the humanity of another group or another human being. I have learned from my experience in Europe and Asia that we must be vigilant against any attempt to say that any group is not really human like we are.

Lablu Barua: Thank you so much for your wonderful answer. I think this will be helpful for our audience.

Do you believe that faith and spirituality can be an inspiration in confronting genocide denial and hate speech? If so, why?

Michael Schudrich: Spirituality and faith inspire the confrontation not only of genocide. People are aware that the person they are talking to is created by the same God that they were, and has the same holiness. Judaism speaks about the holy spark in every soul. The challenge when I meet another human being is not to persuade them to believe what I believe, but to touch their holy spark, to learn from them, and to be inspired by them.

I have learned from my spiritual journey that when I meet another person, I want to learn from them; therefore, any kind of denial of genocide or hate speech is going to undermine the fundamental experience of engaging with that person.

Hate speech can potentially lead to genocide. Hate speech undermines the holiness of the other person: it implies that that person does not deserve our respect; that we do not recognise that they were created in the image of God. My spirituality teaches me that I always have to fight against hate speech because it is fundamentally undermining. Something so basic in faith and spirituality is that we are all created equal by the same guide, and we each have the same potential for holiness.

Lablu Barua: Thank you. Here is a question from the chat box: 'What would be the best symbolic reaction from the state and from the citizens of Poland in response to the extreme manifestations of antisemitism on 11 November?'

Michael Schudrich: Let me first say what has happened. The 11 November is Poland Independence Day. In the last few years, members of the far right, basically neo–Nazis, have started marching in Poland. The biggest march has always been in Warsaw, at which they have made racist, xenophobic, antisemitic, and homophobic statements. They also display banners with these statements on them. This year's march in Warsaw was the calmest of all; however, there was a small one in Kalisz in central-western Poland where they expressed probably the worst antisemitic rhetoric that we have heard. Rafal Pankowski can concur with that. They also burned a book, the Statute of Kalisz, from the thirteenth century, in which the king of Poland granted rights to Jews to live, do business, and make their homes in Poland. That is the first official document in which Jews were officially welcomed by the king into Poland. This was wonderful in the thirteenth century. At the same time, other European countries were expelling Jews; here, Poles were accepting them. And this group burned the book. What kind of symbolism is burning the rights of Jews to be in Poland? It was clearly meant to be provocative. I have always believed that when it comes to absolute antisemitism, it is very important to monitor what is happening and to see the reactions of society. This year, for the first time, there was very strong criticism from the president of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and from others in the government. There was also a very strong statement by the Catholic church, which is the major church here.

Everybody should write to their MPs to say that this is outrageous and cannot be permitted. There was another march the next day against what had happened. Everybody should talk to their friends, talk to ten people, and say that they cannot be quiet while this is happening. Everybody knows that it is horrible. By doing this, we could have thousands of people talking about how it is wrong. Let them talk to their friends and, hopefully, their friends will talk to their friends.

Lablu Barua: Thank you so much.

Here is the next question: From your experiences, have you seen good examples of interfaith cooperation and action of faith leaders against genocide denial and hate speech?

Michael Schudrich: Right now, a major talking point in Poland is the treatment of refugees at the border. We released a letter just a few days ago from seven or eight different key clergy in Warsaw, together with the mayor of Warsaw saying that we need to collect various items to help the refugees at the border. We cannot remain indifferent; we need to do something.

We are not going to touch the political side, but we are very much going to intervene. To do what can be done on the humanitarian side, there was a letter signed by the four top clergy of the country to the president and the prime minister requesting a meeting. We are still waiting for a response to that. These are, I think, very concrete and real examples that have happened in the last seven or eight days.

I think that in many countries, when the clergy speaks in one voice; when they speak together as the rabbi, the priest, and the imam, and are all saying the same thing, it is unusual and people pay attention.

Lablu Barua: Thank you so much. I think that as we are faith leaders, we are in a very good position to talk to people. All of the religious faith leaders have followers who seek their guidance in moral and personal matters. We should be good leaders and work for humanity.

The next question is: What else can be done by faith leaders to counter genocide denial and hate speech? What would you like to see that has not yet been achieved?

Michael Schudrich: I would say that we have already done a lot of important things: we just need to do more of the same. One of the challenges lies in Holocaust denial, along with Holocaust films and Holocaust education. In the Arab world—where, unfortunately, for political reasons, the whole subject of the Holocaust has not really been told yet—that is starting to change. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are beginning to say yes, we need to talk about these very important events. Imam Al Isa who is the head of one of the largest Muslim organisations in the world, visited Auschwitz and came to our synagogue in Poland. That was a very important symbol. We must do more things together and enable our people to know that when it comes to fundamental issues like hate speech or genocide denial, we limit politicians' involvement as far as possible. We do not want politics; we want to face the truth, and we want to face how we can make this world a better place.

Lablu Barua: Thank you so much for your wonderful answers. We are privileged and honoured to have you with us. To conclude, I am going to open the floor for questions to the chief rabbi.

Visal Sorn: How can religious leaders bring peace and social justice to their communities—especially in a country that has committed crimes against humanity, such as genocide?

Michael Schudrich: Let me use the example of Germany in Europe. Immediately after the Second World War ended, Germany's leadership said that it needed to face the fact that the nation had committed the worst genocide ever, and they did. Amazing. The same country that produced mass murderers also produced people who stood up and said: 'We did it; we are responsible and we have to do something to fix the world,'. Since the end of the war, Germany has been at the forefront of trying to find a more moral way. Today, Germany has become the moral voice, in some ways, of Europe. While we will never forget what the German Nazis did, we can also never forget what the post–Nazi Germans are doing: confronting their own genocide that they committed.

If a religious leader participated in genocide and wants to deny their responsibility, then I do not know how we are going to work with that person to bring peace and social justice. But, if a person did something horrible and then admits it and wants to fix as much of the damage as they can, the damage that they have created, then that is something that is very possible and very important.

Lablu Barua: Any other questions?

Rafal Pankowski: I want to comment on a specific case, which may or may not be known to everybody in the room, but is relevant, since we are talking about interfaith dialogue and the role of leaders in combating lies—especially antisemitic ones. It is the case of Fr Wierzbicki. It is probably known to you. The NEVER AGAIN Association has publicly expressed its solidarity and support to Fr Wierzbicki, but I would say that it is shocking that a case like that could be underway from a major religious institution, the Catholic University of London.

Michael Schudrich: Fr Wierzbicki has been very outspoken on subjects that a lot of people in the church are uncomfortable talking about—the position of gay people, antisemitism, and many other things—and now he is being accused by his university on six different disciplinary charges. I and many others have been in contact with Fr Wierzbicki, and we are simply outraged at the way he is being treated.

Lablu Barua: Thank you so much. We are very honoured to have you here.

Today, we are upset that one of our very close friends, Jeremy Jones, who was scheduled to participate in this discussion, is unable to join us due to health problems. We pray on behalf of the Buddhist community, the Jewish community, and all human beings, for his speedy recovery. He is our lecturer of interfaith dialogue, and he introduced us to the history of Jews and Judaism. You can watch his lectures on the website of the NEVER AGAIN Association.

Thank you again for being with us. I am personally honoured to meet a Jewish rabbi for the first time in my life.

Michael Schudrich: The honour is mine. Thank you so much.

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The Land of Smiles, Nazi Chic, and Communist Cool: Personality cult and 'democide & Holocaust indifference' in Thailandby Dr Verita Sriratana, Associate Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, Research Fellow at Raoul Wallenberg Institute, Lund University, Sweden

Natalia Sineaeva: For the next part of our programme about Thailand, I would like to invite Dr David Malitz, a senior research fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo whose doctoral research concerned Japanese–Thai relations at Kyoto University, to introduce our next speaker and facilitate the session.

David Malitz: Thank you for this kind introduction. It is my pleasure to introduce my colleague, Dr Verita Sriratana. She is an associate professor at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, where she also obtained her PhD. She continued her studies first at the University of Warwick and then at the University of St Andrews, obtaining MA and PhD degrees. Her research focuses on modernist literature, gender studies, necropolitics, postcolonialism, and Central and Eastern European Studies. She is currently a research fellow at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. She concentrates on human rights activists in the Thai democracy movement. I will now give the virtual floor to prof Sriratana for her talk, *The Land of Smiles, Nazi Chic, and Communist Cool: Personality cult and 'democide and Holocaust indifference' in Thailand.*

The article below was submitted by Dr Verita Sriratana to the symposium organisers, and it is included in this publication in the form of an article. We express our gratitude to Dr Verita Sriratana for her important contribution.

THE LAND OF SMILES, NAZI CHIC, AND COMMUNIST COOL: PERSONALITY CULT AND 'DEMOCIDE AND HOLOCAUST INDIFFERENCE' IN THAILAND[1]

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Abstract

This article presents a study of the cultural trends of 'Nazi chic' and 'Communist cool', and their implications in Thailand. The nation's romanticisation of World War II 'strongman' leaders, such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin is a reflection of its long history of absolute monarchy's internal colonisation, bureaucratic polity's patronage system, and the military's authoritarianism. Having weathered thirteen 'successful' coups d'état since 1932, discourses exist in the nation in which past and present democides (the killing of people by their government), and the Holocaust are justified in the name of national security. This is frequently credited to past and present leaders, as well as 'semi-divine' figures. Such discourses, which form part of what I term 'democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand' have been supported, reinforced, and propagated by the Thai authorities. In 2012, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said '… and, unfortunately, some people died' in defence of the violent 2010 Thai military crackdown on the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship protests in central Bangkok, which had resulted in more than eighty-five deaths and more than fifty missing persons. In 2014, the ultranationalist leader of an online vigilante group called the Rubbish Collection Organisation, Dr Rienthong Nanna, echoed Vejjajiva's statement: 'I see myself as the person who sweeps the dusty floor. When I first sweep it, the dust will be blown all over the place. But once I get the dust in the same pile, the floor will look cleaner'. This is analogous to *'Wo gehobelt wird, fallen Späne'* ('where there is planing, shavings will fall')—said to be a favourite proverb of Hermann Göring. In 2014, the National Council for Peace and Order under Junta leader, Prayut Chan-o-cha, attempted to indoctrinate school children with the ultranationalist 'twelve core values'. Among the short films commissioned to propagate love for the monarchy and the military was one that featured a child applauding Adolf Hitler. Anti–Communist propaganda since the Cold War has not only affirmed such fascist leanings, but also fuelled rebellion. The consequences of state-approved personality cults of strongman leaders like Hitler can be seen in how the pendulum of revolt by pro-democracy protesters has ironically swung repeatedly towards such leaders—from Karl Marx and Chit Phumisak to Joseph Stalin, as part of the 'Communist cool' counter-reaction. This can be seen in how Marx's portrait and the hammer and sickle symbol have been incorporated into students' pro-democracy campaigns. I argue that democide and Holocaust indifference, which constitutes a vital part of personality cult and of ignorance of World War II history in Thailand, lies beyond the working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion established by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and beyond Michael Shafir's categorisation of Holocaust denial and distortion. Since freedom of speech (particularly academic freedom) is hindered by the current administration and by the *Lèse-majesté* law (which can lead to imprisonment of three to fifteen years), I contend that the most effective solution to the problems specified in this article can by no means be implemented by the Thai authorities unless Thailand becomes a democratic nation and abolishes Lèse-majesté. For the time being, however, I propose that an effective antidote lies in the promotion of Central and Eastern European studies in Thailand to deconstruct romanticised images of the Nazi and Communist regimes. This can be achieved through collaboration between schools, universities, foreign embassies, art institutes, and the private sector in the form of academic and cultural activities in which books and presentations on Central and Eastern European history, and films about the atrocities of World War II (particularly the Holocaust, and the Gulag and Holodomor) are presented to the Thai public.

1 This article has been supported by Chulalongkorn University's Fund for Translation, Interpretation and Intercultural Communication Research Unit.

Background and Context
From the Hitler and Stalin Love Room to 'Restart Thailand': a controversial symbol

The room above, which is located in the Bangkok metropolitan region, was christened 'Communist room' and was known to be popular among guests ('Outrage over love hotel's Hitler Room'). The room contains images and symbols that would constitute an extreme anomaly in Europe—even by the creative standards of the playful kitsch museum in Romania: Adolf Hitler with red stars and the hammer and sickle symbol. The existence of the room epitomises and forms the backdrop to my analysis of the cultural trends of 'Nazi chic' and 'Communist cool' in Thailand. I contend that such trends are indicative of personality cult and ignorance of World War II history in Thailand, and are both a result and a reflection of the country's long history of absolute monarchy's internal colonisation (Girling 388), bureaucratic polity's patronage system[2], and the military's authoritarianism. Having weathered thirteen 'successful' coups d'état since 1932, discourses can be found in which past and present genocides, mass murder, and the Holocaust are justified in the name of national security, and to the credit of the past and present leaders, and 'semi-divine' figures.[3]

Photo from Lovevillahotel.com via Bangkok Post
Source: https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1553074/outrage-over-love-hotels-hitler-room

The 'Communist room' adorned with the Hitler portrait is a transitory place designed to cater to sordid desires; it constitutes a secularised and commodified version of the cult of Hitler and Stalin. Examples of attempts to museumise and enshrine such cults abound. The most striking can be found at the World War II Art Gallery and War Museum in Kanchanaburi province, which was established in 1995 by Mr Aran Chansiri, a jewellery entrepreneur. The museum is located near the 'River Kwai Bridge' that overlooks the Kwai Yai River. As Braithwaite and Leiper highlighted, the bridge was given the 'discordant name' (323) of *'Bridge on the River Kwai'* as an outcome of the Thai government's effort in 1960 to promote and cater a sanitised version of World War II history to tourists familiar with the famous 1957 film, Bridge on the River Kwai. In addition to attempts to erase the Thai government's close collaboration with Japan during World War II and the existence of Asian slave workers from history, the Thai authorities also renamed Kanchanaburi's rivers in 1960 to fit the popular image presented in the film:

> 'In 1957 there was no bridge on the Kwai. There was, however, a bridge carrying the railway across a larger river, the Mae Klong, 2 km above its junction with the Kwai…To get around confusion in the fact that there was another stream named Kwai, the Government changed its name to Kwai Noi ("tributary small") and changed the name of Mae Klong above its junction with that tributary to Kwai Yai ("tributary large"),'
> (Braithwaite and Leiper, 323).

2 In Thailand in Gramscian Perspective, John Girling offers a succinct and accurate analysis of Thai bureaucracy's dominant role in bolstering Thai conservative values, which remains valid in 2021: 'The bureaucracy was the locus of power, the source of status, and the means of access (through business partnerships) to wealth. It was the repository of "traditional" values: respect for power, rank, age, and education; "knowing one's place" in an ordered society; conformity to established ways; avoiding affronts to the dignity of superiors; the maintenance of outward harmony—values that enabled the rulers to rule, and the ruled to acquiesce in that rule, each side confident that existing arrangements were "right and proper",' (394–395)

3 Here, I may only resort to euphemism, since freedom of speech (particularly academic freedom) is hindered by the current administration and by Lèse-majesté law, which can lead to prison sentences of three to fifteen years.

The fabrication of World War II history in Thailand does not end with the Thai authorities' attempts to rename bridges and rivers: the World War II Art Gallery and War Museum is an extension of the oldest museum in Kanchanaburi, problematically called the JEATH War Museum, a historically misleading acronym (that intentionally rhymes with the word, 'death') for Japan, England, America, Australia, Thailand, and Holland[4], built in 1977 by the abbot of a Buddhist temple called Wat Chaichumpol (Lenon 147). In the JEATH section, visitors can walk through a poor model of the huts where, it was envisioned, Burma Railway prisoners of war were held. Among the eclectic hoard of objects on display—which includes stamps, coins, musical instruments, and stuffed dead animals—Buddhist temple-style decorative stucco figures of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin lie scattered in a group of exhibition houses near the shrine that commemorates the Burmese–Siamese wars. Stalin's biography, presented in both the Thai and English languages, fails to mention the Gulag and the Holodomor; Hitler's fails to mention the Holocaust. As an apparent afterthought, news article clippings about Auschwitz concentration camp in the Thai language are pasted near Hitler's stucco figure. The use of biographical text in the museum is telling, as it not only contributes to, but also accounts for the cult of personality.

On the interconnection between biography as a genre and personality cult, David Brandenberger states in his study of the Stalin cult thus:

'Biography as a genre lies very close to the heart of the personality cult. One of the most ancient forms of literary composition, its pedigree dates back to early religious hagiography. In modern times, biography has come to enjoy almost unparalleled popularity within nonfictional literature because of its compelling subjects, its emphasis on temperament, character and accomplishment, and its tight narrative focus on a single protagonist.
Few other genres, it would seem, are so suited to the promotion of charismatic authority,'. (251)

Photographs of Buddhist temple-style decorative stucco figures of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin with news article clippings and biographies at the World War II Art Gallery And War Museum in Kanchanaburi.
©Verita Sriratana, 2020

4 As the JEATH acronym testifies, the museum propagates and artificially reconstructs the myth that the Burma railway claimed only prisoners of war from Allied countries as victims. Thailand's glorification of the Japanese army is also implied by the inclusion of the letter, 'J' for Japan. This narrative obliterates the truth that Asian labourers, coerced or recruited with the promise of higher wages, also suffered and died during the construction of the Burma railway. Such epistemic violence that subjects Asian workers to total silence and erasure is a form of Holocaust distortion in the Thai context. This distortion differs from democide and Holocaust indifference with reference to Hitler's and Stalin's personality cults, as the World War II history of Thai–Japanese relations is based on ignorance and collective historical amnesia. The forgotten Asian labourers comprised not only Chinese, Malays, and Indians from colonial Malaya, but also Burmese, Thais, and Chinese immigrants in Thailand. Though this article is not the place to explore the subject of Asian slave workers on the Burma As the JEATH acronym testifies, the museum propagates and artificially reconstructs the myth that the Burma railway claimed only prisoners of war from Allied countries as victims. Thailand's glorification of the Japanese army is also implied by the inclusion of the letter, 'J' for Japan. This narrative obliterates the truth that Asian labourers, coerced or recruited with the promise of higher wages, also suffered and died during the construction of the Burma railway. Such epistemic violence that subjects Asian workers to total silence and erasure is a form of Holocaust distortion in the Thai context. This distortion differs from democide and Holocaust indifference with reference to Hitler's and Stalin's personality cults, as the World War II history of Thai–Japanese relations is based on ignorance and collective historical amnesia. The forgotten Asian labourers comprised not only Chinese, Malays, and Indians from colonial Malaya, but also Burmese, Thais, and Chinese immigrants in Thailand. Though this article is not the place to explore the subject of Asian slave workers on the Burma Railway, I wish to highlight that many who believe themselves to be knowledgable on World War II history fail to realise that oppression on the basis of race among Asians during its construction in Thailand was complex and multilayered. Subrahmanyan and Sturma demonstrate in their work that 'The Thai government acted to protect Thai workers from the excesses of Japanese employment, but this was often at the expense of Chinese labourers resident in Thailand, outsiders who bore the brunt of harsh treatment' (364) and that the pan-Asianism promoted by Japan was an illusion, as Japan regarded itself as leader—equivalent to the 'Aryans' of all Asian ethnicities.

A popular destination for school pupils on field trips[5], the World War II Art Gallery and War Museum has traditionally been treated by schools and state institutions as an academically-curated museum that offers information on World War II history. It is common for teachers to assign report-writing assignments for students to submit after their visits to the museum. The institution has remained an unchallenged depository of historical knowledge for more than twenty years. Its private ownership and its incomplete or distorted historical and biographical information have never been clarified to its visitors.

It is not the intention of this work to blame a quirky love hotel or a mainstream tourist attraction that presents itself as a museum for Holocaust denial or the ignorance of World War II among Thais. This article rather aims to explicate how the Thai mentality and collective memory is fertile soil from which personality cult thrives and prospers. Personality cult is enriched by the legacy of absolute monarchy and popular Theravāda Buddhism, which espouses supernatural beliefs, such as those in the power of mediums and amulets, and the karma/merit/reincarnation fetish[6]. Irene Stengs, in Sacred Singularities: Crafting Royal Images in Present-Day Thailand, a study of the cult of King Chulalongkorn (1853–1910), also known as King Rama V and *phra piya maharat* ('the Great Beloved King')[8], offers a prime example of the ways in which monarchical figures are bestowed with not only semi-divine, but also divine status of worship:

> 'Popular sentiments surrounding Chulalongkorn became apparent in the late 1980s. In that period, an increasing number of people came to worship the equestrian statue of the king in Bangkok. In September 1992 a famous Thai movie star, Bin Banluerit, sparked further interest in the cult by declaring publicly (both in the Thai Rath, Thailand's most popular newspaper, and on television) that he had survived a terrible car accident thanks to the protective power of an original King Chulalongkorn coin (rian), which he wore as an amulet. After Bin's declaration, the number of people paying tribute to the king at the statue increased dramatically, and other centres of worship arose elsewhere in the country,' (58)

Fig 2 New Year's greetings card depicting King Chulalongkorn (in backdrop) "watching over" his grandson King Bhumibol (in foreground). Photograph: Irene Stengs.

The Journal of Modern Craft Volume 5—Issue 1—March 2012 pp. 51–68

Source: Stengs, Irene. Sacred Singularities: *Crafting Royal Images in Present-Day Thailand.* The Journal of Modern Craft. 5:1. 2012: pp. 51–67. https://doi.org/10.2752/174967812X13287914145479 [7]

5 I recall having visited this museum as part of a fieldtrip organised by my school when I was between 12-13 years of age. The museum was newly opened at that time.

6 Karma, merit, and reincarnation are central concepts of Theravāda Buddhism. Since each action leads to a consequence and karma determines one's reincarnation, achieving merit is viewed as the solution and preferred recourse. Not unlike the accumulation of wealth, the accumulation of merit or 'good deeds' increases one's karma and guarantees a better life, both in this world and after reincarnation. It is, therefore, not uncommon for Thais to view historical leaders like Hitler or Stalin, despite their 'shortcomings', as having accumulated good karma in their past lives (it is also common for women and LGBTQIA+ people to be seen as deficient in good karma), since good karma has propelled these strongman figures to power and historical notoriety.

8 It has been widely taught in schools that King Chulalongkorn 'modernised' Siam by introducing nineteenth-century technology (e.g. railroads, waterworks, electricity), and an administrative and juridical system; that he was the king who abolished slavery and saved Siam from becoming a colony and that 'it is necessary to challenge conservative narratives that Siam/Thailand was "never colonised" by demonstrating the extent to which the country's history in facet conforms to colony-like conditions' (148). King Chulalongkorn, by appropriating the cultures of the geopolitically powerful Western empires, occupied the position of the colonised 'other', whose venture to shape cultural hybridity was, in turn, utilised to 'internally colonise' the local elites and subalterns.

7 It is evident that the sickle in the image is an appropriated symbol intended not only to demonstrate the continuation of the 'Great Beloved King"s cult and legacy, but also to propagate King Rama IX's own personality cult as the down-to-earth king and patron of rice farmers.

From the above extract, urban legends and supernatural accounts add 'aura'[9] not only to the revered figure in question, but also the statues, collectibles, and paraphernalia that have been accumulated, produced, reproduced, and commodified in that figure's honour. The microhistorical fact in this story of adulation lies in Stengs's analysis that 'the hopes and anxieties that resulted from the explosion of Thai domestic consumer market after 1985 made many people turn to supernatural support from holy monks, deities, and deceased kings, among whom the spirit of King Chulalongkorn ranked highly' (54).

The cult of King Chulalongkorn extends to the cult of King Bhumibol, also known as King Rama IX (1927–2016). Constant comparison and projection of King Chulalongkorn (the grandfather and royal predecessor), passing the torch to King Bhumibol (the grandson) can be found in portraits, artefacts, and mass media in Thailand.[10] As Stengs indicates, the Thai authorities have played a major role in propagating this 'extended' personality cult: 'one of the first books to focus on a comparison between the two kings, *song maharat nak phattana* ("Two Great Development Kings"), was published by the Office of the National Cultural Commission in 1988,' (55). This is not the only instance in which the Thai authorities—particularly their ideological state apparatuses,[11] such as schools, religious institutions, and media outlets that base their legitimacy on personality cult— have sought to construct, extend, and bolster personality cult to a fetishistic degree:

'Cults of personality consist of a set of beliefs, values, myths, symbols, and rituals directed at the adulation of the leader. Perhaps the most striking and seemingly irrational aspect of cults of personality is the use of excessive flattery and adulation involving grandiose claims about the infallibility, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and even divinity of the leader,' (Crabtree et al., 411)

In the following section, I discuss examples of the Thai authorities' propagation of personality cult, which leads to and thrives on the Nazi chic cultural trend and counter-reactionary cultural manifestations like Communist cool. I also demonstrate how the Thai authorities' propagation of personality cult contributes to and benefits from what I term 'democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand'.

9 I argue that gender is also an important issue in the concept of 'aura', or *'baramee'* (บารมี) in Thai popular Buddhist culture. Gender shapes the 'branding image' of a venerated figure in any personality cult. In the case of King Rama V, the fact the king had 116 consorts and concubines bolsters not only his (semi-)divine status, but also his (semi-)divine masculinity. In the case of King Rama IX, as Jhitsayarat Siripai argues in *Branding, Masculinities and Culture: Exploring the Branding of Alcohol Product Representations in Thailand,* that the image of the king as a 'good working man' who selflessly toiled for the betterment of his people, was even utilised and propagated in a series of TV adverts for Singha, a leading alcohol brand (156). Siripai also contends: 'The particular brand images that are created to appeal to targets across Thai society include loyalty to the monarchy, Thai nationalism, inspirational capitalism, cosmopolitanism, and socially responsible/caring men following traditional Buddhist norms' (161).

10 The alignment of the two kings' photographs that depicts the continuity of benign rule, with one king clearly 'endorsed' by his royal predecessor, might remind viewers of what Robert C. Tucker calls 'the holy quartet—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin—who together became the symbolic centrepiece of Stalinist thought and culture, replete with the four huge, equal-sized portraits on the facade of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre for May Day, 7 November, and other special occasions,' (352)

11 Here, I turn to Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)* for his definition of ideological state apparatuses:

'I shall call Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions. I propose an empirical list of these which will obviously have to be examined in detail, tested, corrected, and reorganised. With all the reservations implied by this requirement, we can for the moment regard the following institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (the order in which I have listed them has no particular significance):

- the religious ISA (the system of the different churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private "schools")
- the family ISA
- the legal ISA
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties)
- the trade union ISA
- the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.)
- the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.)'

Section One: Nazi Chic

In 2014, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) under Junta leader, Prayut Chan-o-cha, attempted to indoctrinate students up to the age of eighteen in the Kingdom of Thailand with 'twelve core values', a set of 'moral codes' designed to instil ultranationalist sentiments, love for the monarchy, and reverence for the military in students. The authorities utilised media outlets to achieve this—particularly patriotic songs and short films screened for young audiences.[12] Among the films commissioned by the NCPO was one that featured a child painting and applauding a portrait of Adolf Hitler.

When condemned by the then Ambassador of Israel to Thailand, HE Mr Simon Roded, the short film director, Kulp Kaljaruek, offered the following statement in his own defence, as reported by Anadolu Agency:

"'I didn't think [the inclusion of Hitler's scene] would be an issue", he said, attempting to underline that the use of the image was purely to emphasise that the child is "spoilt" and "wealthy".

"Hitler is the character of this child. He has always been 'number one' and he is selfish", he added.

"Hitler is also a 'number one' in a bad way. He was good at persuading a lot of people, but he refused to listen to the majority",'

('Thailand Utilises Nazi Image to Enforce Love of Nation')

An image from the film, 30 shows students posing alongside a portrait of Hitler. The film has since been removed from YouTube. Source: *Bangkok Post* https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/448799/dictator-takes-centre-stage

12 The short propaganda film was screened for free in cinemas across Thailand in celebration of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX)'s eighty-seventh birthday.

The director's statement reflects an unusual attitude towards the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust. At first glance, one may assume that his opinion of Hitler is an outcome of ignorance and Holocaust denial and distortion; however, in the case of Thailand, most people are familiar with Holocaust history. As seen in the respectful display of stucco figures and the selective biographies at the World War II museum in Kanchanaburi, the problem lies in many people's choices to overlook the devastating deaths and, instead, focus on strongman leaders' prowess ('He has always been "number one"' – despite his "shortcomings",'). Although this is arguably a form of ignorance, I define the phenomenon as democide and Holocaust indifference because many, in accordance with the personality cult fetish, deliberately view the *Holocaust and democide with indifference*. My contention is confirmed in statements made by NCPO representatives. To illustrate, then spokesperson of Prayuth's Office, Panadda Diskul, as Liz Fields reports for Vice, commented that 'the film is good, but it has caused a slight misunderstanding in our society', adding that the boy who applauds Hitler in the video is merely making a joke by comparing his mother to the tyrant. Another spokesperson for the Thai Prime Minister's Office, Colonel Sansern Kaewkumnerd, as *Bangkok Post* reports, commented even before having watched the video: 'If I were to make an uneducated guess, it may have been intended to say that democracy has good and bad sides' ('Hitler Surfaces in "12 Values" Video'). Kaewkumnerd only reiterated the discourse that has long been the driving force in Thai political history; his statement is a resounding continuation of the '…and, unfortunately, some people died' statement which then Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva made in defence of the violent 2010 Thai military crackdown on the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship protests in central Bangkok, which resulted in more than eighty-five deaths and more than fifty missing persons. The discourse of 'good democracy', or 'Thai-style democracy' and 'reform-before-election democracy' (meaning 'democracy' hijacked and redefined by the authoritarian regime) versus the discourse of 'bad democracy', or 'foreign democracy' (meaning what the world knows as democracy and the protection of human rights) was used by People's Democratic Reform Committee, a political pressure group led by former Democrat Party parliamentary representative, Suthep Thaugsuban, as an excuse to oust the then Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, between 2013 and 2014. In 2014, echoing Abhisit's statement, the ultranationalist leader of an online vigilante group called the Rubbish Collection Organisation, Dr Rienthong Nanna stated: 'I see myself as the person who sweeps the dusty floor. When I first sweep it, the dust will be blown all over the place. But once I get the dust in the same pile, the floor will look cleaner,' (Yongcharoenchai).[13] This is analogous to the '*Wo gehobelt wird, fallen Späne*' ('where there is planing, shavings will fall') proverb, said to be a favourite of Hermann Göring (Schaffar). Wolfram Schaffar, in *New Social Media and Politics in Thailand: The Emergence of Fascist Vigilante Groups* on Facebook, offers an apt analysis: 'Rienthong combines the features of a *Wutbürger* (enraged citizen) with the determination and ruthlessness of a soldier,' (226).

13 Rienthong Nanna is a medical doctor and former operations director of the Army Medical Department and current director of Mongkutwattana Hospital, which is owned by his family. In 2014, he formed the Rubbish Collection Organisation group as an online vigilante group that aimed to monitor and witch-hunt 'rubbish' (those who expressed anti-monarchy sentiment). The group had more than 200,000 members in 2014 (Wolfram, *New Social Media and Politics in Thailand*). In a 2014 interview, Rienthong referred to himself as the polymath/vampire-slayer Van Helsing, a fictional character from Bram Stoker's gothic horror, *Dracula* (1897) (Yongcharoenchai). This 'rubbish' rhetoric persists even during the COVID-19 pandemic: in July 2021, Rienthong announced on his Facebook page that his hospital would refuse pro-democracy protesters infected with COVID-19.

From these examples, and many more to come, it may now be perceived how democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand lies beyond the working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion defined and adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance,[14] and beyond the main categorisation of Holocaust denial and distortion propounded by Michael Shafir in *Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization': Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, namely, outright denial and distortion,[15] deflective denial and distortion and selective denial and distortion. To better understand the phenomenon in Thailand, Tul Israngura Na Ayudhya's assertions that 'the fascination with Hitler has to be seen in context' and that the country's lack of World War II education is only a part of the problem ('As Europe Battles anti-Semitism, Thailand Grapples with "Nazi Chic"') serve as reasonable starting points. A major component of the issue is Thailand's deep-rooted obsession with personality cult.

The Thai Junta government's endeavour to use Hitler as part of their propaganda is unsurprising. The veneration of strongman leaders and its cultural manifestations (such as the case of King Chulalongkorn trinkets and merchandise) and their supernatural urban legends, had prepared the ground for the Thai version of Nazi chic, a fashion trend that evolved around the use of Nazi imagery and paraphernalia. My emphasis on the phrase, '*Thai version*' is based on the fact that Nazi chic in Thailand differs from the more widely known Nazi chic trend, a subculture of the punk movement in mid-1970s London; while Nazi chic in Britain was intended to shock, challenge the status quo, and criticise contemporary society rather than to express allegiance or sympathy towards the Nazi party,[16] Nazi chic in Thailand is its antithesis. In Thailand, Hitler the icon is used not only as part of an advertising campaign for a brand of laxative tea (with the catchphrase, 'release the demon') and as images on t-shirts, but also as a theme for fried chicken restaurants. According to Jonathan DeHart's report, total ignorance of the Holocaust was not the cause nor the motive behind the restaurant's decision to promote its food using Hitler:

'Bangkok resident Alan Robertson sampled the restaurant's fare. He said, "The place opened last month and nobody quite knows what to make of it,". He added that he "asked the guy behind the counter why it was called Hitler. He just shrugged his shoulders and said the owners had thought it was a good image",'

14 According to the International Holocaust Rememberance Alliance's working definition of holocaust denial and distortion, distortion of the Holocaust refers, inter alia, to:
1. Intentional efforts to excuse or minimise the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany
2. Gross minimisation of the number of victims of the Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources
3. Attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide;
4. Statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event. Such statements do not constitute Holocaust denial, but are closely connected to it as a radical form of antisemitism. They may suggest that the Holocaust did not go far enough in accomplishing its goal of achieving 'the Final Solution of the Jewish Question'
5. Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by placing the blame on other nations or ethnic groups.

15 Though some might argue that Thailand's use of Nazi imagery—particularly the adoption of language and symbols associated with the Holocaust for commercial purposes—is a form of Holocaust trivialisation, which, in turn, constitutes a form of Holocaust distortion, I stand by my contention that Thailand's version of 'Holocaust trivialisation' is driven more by indifference towards Thais who harbour political views considered by the authorities as 'subversive' than by antisemitic sentiment or by Nazi sympathies. The trivialisation is not of the Holocaust *per se*, but rather of Thais who do not subscribe to the ultraroyalist and ultranationalist right-wing ideology. The centrepiece of democide and Holocaust indifference is that the Holocaust (as well as mass murders committed during the Stalinist and Maoist regimes) is used as a pretext to support and sustain the personality cult of strongman leaders, whose crime of killing 'their own people' is seen as necessary and justifiable. Knowledge of Thailand's political history and a particular theoretical framework are required to analyse the appropriation of the Holocaust in contemporary Thai politics. For example, the allegations against George Soros made by Haruethai Muangboonsri, a prominent member of the fascist group, do not simply count as 'antisemitic conspiracy theories' ('Are you serious? Thai royalists blame Jews for political unrest')—particularly when the history of Soros's role in Thailand's financial crisis of 1997 is considered. Soros's name has been invoked to stir hatred against 'nation-corrupting foreign influence', which has the potential to motivate the people to challenge the legitimacy of the present Junta government. The naming and blaming of Soros in Thai collective memory has also been used and hijacked to attack Thailand's ousted former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, whose concocted image of the self-serving tycoon plotting to overthrow Thailand's stability and status quo has been extensively propagated by right-wing groups, such as the People's Alliance for Democracy, since the Thai political crisis of 2005.

16 One may be reminded of the Nazi salute made and the Nazi-themed clothing worn by members of the English punk rock band, the Sex Pistols.

In Thailand, Nazi chic is reflected by the fact that the Nazi uniform and iconography (replicas of black swastikas and the *Reichsadler*, or 'Imperial Eagle') are deemed part of a special event's mascot; a mere accessory for a performer in an entertainment show or a celebratory parade. This was seen in the 2019 Christmas display at a major department store in central Bangkok, shown in the photograph above. In the same year, a member of BNK48 (a domestic franchise of the Japanese band, AKB48), a popular Thai girl 'idol' band, wore a Nazi-themed shirt during a TV broadcast performance two days before International Holocaust Remembrance Day.[17] Though some BNK48 fans defended the singer on the grounds of ignorance, stating that they were also unaware of the meaning of the Nazi symbol ('Thai Girl Band BNK48 Sorry for Nazi T-Shirt Controversy'), it is likely that many used the claim of ignorance as an excuse.

The trend of Nazi chic in Thai popular culture has also become a mainstay in the extracurricular activities of schools and universities. Nazi symbols can be seen in school parades, university activities, and graduation ceremonies, despite basic knowledge of World War II and the Holocaust being disseminated in standard history textbooks.

In Chulalongkorn University's apology letter to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, the institution claimed that the students who had created the superhero mural featuring Adolf Hitler were 'unaware of its significance' and had received a verbal warning (Shuo and Zhaokun). This is another example of the trivialisation of Hitler and the conflation of ignorance, and of the more serious, deep-rooted problems of personality cult, and democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand.

Ironically, traces of Nazi chic in Thailand could be found even in the pro-democracy movement in 2020. Protesters warned each other on social media to refrain from displaying any form of Nazi insignia during an afternoon rally against the current government that took place in front of the German Embassy in Bangkok:

> '"Please avoid any symbol or salutation used during the Nazi era," reads the message. "Whoever sees someone do that, please stop them,". That was the message in a protest Telegram channel this morning, where demonstrators warned each other to resist the urge to go full Nazi at an afternoon rally at the German Embassy today. "Going to the German Embassy, please don't wear a Hitler moustache. Don't dress up in Swastika-patterned shirts. Don't waive [sic] a Nazi flag," @Here_Tuu_ on wrote Twitter' ('No Hitler Mustaches, No Nazi Costume, German Embassy Protestors Warned').

A photograph of Hitler fried chicken, later renamed 'H-ler' fried chicken in 2013.
The chain of restaurants, located in the provinces of Ubon Ratchathani and Chiang Rai, has since closed down.
Source: Shuo and Zhaokun
https://www.chiangraitimes.com/lifestyles/why-hitler-is-hip-in-thailand/

17 The United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/7 on 1 November 2005 designated 27 January of each year, which was the day that Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by the Red Army in 1945, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

A photograph of the SS-uniform-inspired costume worn by a student during a sports day parade at a Catholic school in Chiang Mai, 2011.
Source: Shuo and Zhaokun
https://www.chiangraitimes.com/lifestyles/why-hitler-is-hip-in-thailand/

A photograph of BNK48's member, Pichayapa Natha, wearing a Nazi flag t-shirt on stage.
Source: https://www.khaosodenglish.com/featured/2019/01/26/thai-idol-group-bnk48-member-wears-nazi-flag-on-stage/

A photograph of Silpakorn University students cosplaying as Hitler at a freshers' welcome/hazing event in 2016.
Source: *Washirawit Santipiboon / Facebook via Ruiz*
https://www.khaosodenglish.com/featured/2019/01/26/thai-idol-group-bnk48-member-wears-nazi-flag-on-stage/

A photograph of Thai men dressed as Nazis at a Bangkok department store's Christmas display in 2019.
Source: Twitter (Stickboy Bangkok) https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-24/israeli-ambassador-blames-ignorance-for-nazis-at-bangkok-mall/11826228

A graduating student at Chulalongkorn University poses for a photo in front of a mural of superheroes, which depicts Adolf Hitler, July 2015.
Source: https://www.khaosodenglish.com/politics/2017/01/28/contrition-silpakorns-nazi-chic-stink-falls-short-holocaust-memorial-day/

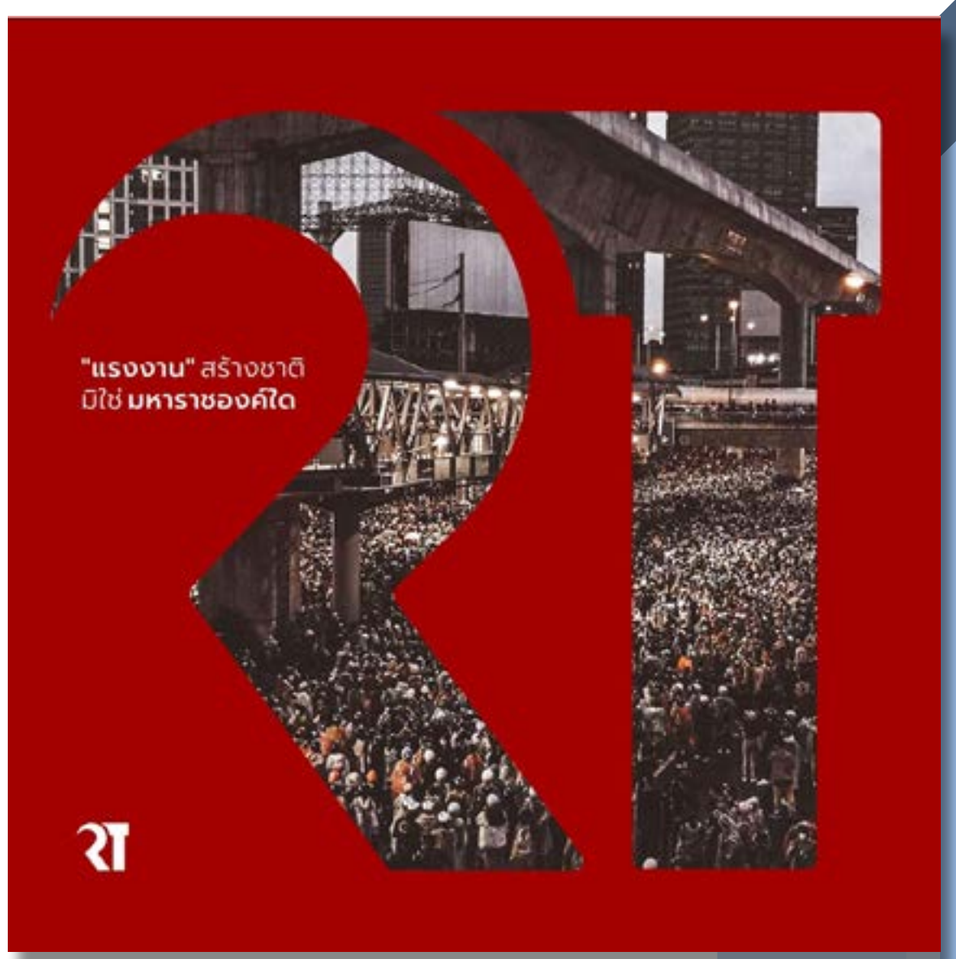
A photograph of a group of students in Red Guard uniforms performing Nazi salutes.
Source: Photo: Washirawit Santipiboon (Facebook)
https://www.khaosodenglish.com/politics/2017/01/28/contrition-silpakorns-nazi-chic-stink-falls-short-holocaust-memorial-day/
Note: The same group of students who organised the freshers' activity featuring the Hitler cosplay. After being criticised heavily, a student representative, Sopanut Somrattanakul, stated: 'We do not harbour such thinking. But the whole thing wasn't thought out well,' (Rojanaphruk).

Section Two: Communist Cool

In the previous section, examples ranging from Rienthong Nanna's fascist 'rubbish' rhetoric to the cult of Hitler in a Thai propaganda film, as well as those drawn from department stores and academic institutions, reveal a common thread that runs through Thailand's particular brand of Nazi chic on all social levels: personality cult, which reinforces and is reinforced by democide and Holocaust indifference. In this section, I demonstrate how Nazi chic and the Hitler personality cult backfired in the form of yet another type of chic and personality cult. The consequence of a state-approved cult of a strongman leader like Adolf Hitler or his local counterpart can be seen in how the pendulum of revolt by pro-democracy activists has ironically swung towards another series of personality cults, in which Karl Marx and even Joseph Stalin are idolised as part of 'Communist cool'. This can be seen in how Marx's portrait and the hammer and sickle symbol have been incorporated into pro-democracy campaigns by young Thais.

On 7 December, 2020, the Free Youth Movement, a student-led antigovernment protest group in Thailand, launched a campaign called Restart Thailand (RT). Its poster, which was posted on the Free Youth Movement Facebook page, features a red background with the letters R and T styled to resemble the hammer and sickle as a homage to proletarian solidarity. The text on the poster reads '**Labour** builds the nation/ not any ***Maha Raja*** ["Great King"],'. The caption reads:

'The Royal Palace was built by the hands of labourers. Every Baht of our tax is from the sufferings of labourers but labourers nevertheless have to struggle under this failed state. They are not even able to live their lives in human dignity. They are seen as only dust under the feet of someone who fails to see that we are equal human beings./Labour builds the nation/ not any Maha Raja ["Great King"]/Stay tuned soon/RESTART THAILAND— #RT #onedemandteam,'[18]



Source: Free Youth Facebook Page (https://web.facebook.com/FreeYOUTHth/photos/a.115688233213576/411549110294152)

18 พระราชวัง เกิดจากน้ำมือของแรงงาน ภาษีทุกบาท มาจากความทุกข์ยากของแรงงาน แต่แรงงานกลับต้องกระเสือกกระสนภายใต้รัฐล้มเหลวแห่งนี้ ไม่แม้แต่จะสามารถใช้ชีวิตอย่างสมศักดิ์ศรีความเป็นมนุษย์ ถูกมองเป็นเพียงฝุ่นใต้ตีน ไม่เห็นคุณค่าความเป็นคนเท่าๆกัน / "แรงงานสร้างชาติ มิใช่มหาราชองค์ใด" / โปรดติดตาม เร็วๆนี้ / RESTART THAILAND — #RT #ทีมข้อเดียว".
All English translations in this article belong to the author.

The post sparked mixed reactions. Among those who spoke against the use of hammer and sickle symbol was Thai studies anthropologist, Edoardo Siani, who wrote on Facebook: 'very disappointed to see this Marxist identity being superimposed onto the movement… First, the association to communism is dangerous. Propaganda in the Cold War served to legitimise state violence against "communists",' ('Hammer and Sickle Campaign May Backfire on Protest Movement'). Many failed to understand why the antigovernment protest movement in Thailand opted to use an outdated symbol—particularly when many Communist parties in Europe, such as the French Communist Party (Todd), have already dropped the symbol to avoid the stigma of oppression and mass murder that the emblem has come to signify for many people around the world. Among those who defended the use of the symbol was General Bunchon Chawansin, a retired general and author on military history, who commented on the Communist cool trend in the Free Youth Movement thus: 'It's like a person who wears a military uniform. It doesn't mean he wants to be a military officer, he may just like the uniform' ('Hammer and Sickle Campaign May Backfire on Protest Movement'). I contend that the above statement reflects superficiality to a degree that is as problematic as the Hitler and Red Guard cosplays in schools and universities; it reflects how symbols tend to be worn or displayed with ignorance and indifference to their global significance and their associations with collective trauma. Similar to the example of the Stalin stucco figure in the World War II Art Gallery and War Museum in Kanchanaburi, which is enshrined with biographies that omit the atrocities of the Stalinist regime, the hammer and sickle symbol was used merely as a 'cool logo' by a group of activists who selectively disregarded its implications. This serves to divide rather than unite people. My contention has been confirmed by the Free Youth Movement co-leader, Jutatip Sirikan who, when asked whether the campaign's objective was to promote Communism, responded: 'I don't know how people see communism, but we focus on equality and rights and freedom. There are several systems of rule in the world, but we think the democratic system is the best. But how it [democracy] is applied is a subject that needs to be discussed,' ('Hammer and Sickle Campaign May Backfire on Protest Movement'). Jutatip added: 'The new logo has no meaning. We want people to interpret and discuss it whichever way they want. You can say it represents communism, but that's what democracy is. It allows people to express their opinion freely,' (Boonbandit). This explanation is puzzling and unexpected, given that this culturally and historically stigmatised logo had been purposely selected by the Free Youth Movement to represent a serious political group that intends to unite all who care about democracy in Thailand. I subscribe to Jasmine Chia's view that the hammer and sickle choice reflects a lack of cultural and historical sensitivity, as it undermines the solidarity fostered between pro-democracy movements in Thailand and those in other countries:

> 'In Hong Kong, Thailand's unofficial sister city of protest, hammer and sickle logos are thrown to the ground—unambiguously a symbol of the draconian Chinese Communist Party. For most around the world, the hammer and the sickle continue to represent the authoritarian one-party rule of the Soviet Union, the DPRK and the CCP—associations which, as the French Communist Party recognised, are deeply stigmatised.
> …
> And to many more, "communism" meant nothing more than the civil wars that ravaged neighbouring Laos and South Vietnam during the Cold War,'.
>
> ('Our Writers Weigh-in on Free Youth's Controversial New Logo')

To date, the rifts and divisions caused by the campaign remain among pro-democracy activists. As Sebastian Strangio predicted in *In Thailand, A Political Movement's Choice of Logo Prompts Controversy,* the RT campaign, which plays with both the phrases, 'Restart Thailand' and 'Republic of Thailand'[19] indeed played into the hands of Thailand's censoring regime: 'giving the government any pretext to delegitimise the protest movement as "communist" seems counterproductive,'.

The Communist cool trend in Thai popular culture and among antigovernment activists can be explained as a counter-reaction to decades of anti–Communist indoctrination during the Cold War. It is also a counter-reaction to the political events of the 1970s—particularly the violent crackdown on leftist workers and university students by right-wing paramilitaries and vigilante groups that harboured a similar mindset to that of the Rubbish Collection Organisation. The crackdown resulted in the massacre at Thammasat University of 6 October, 1976. The romanticisation of the hammer and sickle symbol among young Thais can also be analysed as a by-product of the ways in which the pendulum of personality cult vacillates between right and left. The natural recourse and reaction to an ultraroyalist cult of personality is inevitably a Communist cult of personality. Apart from Lenin or Stalin, Communist cool is built in Thailand upon the foundation of the cult and idolisation of Karl Marx and Chit Phumisak.

Marx, a global figure, lived a different reality from Chit Phumisak (1930–1966), who was born into poverty in Prachinburi Province, Eastern Thailand. Phumisak rose to fame while studying at the Faculty of Arts of Chulalongkorn University, as the controversial editor of the university magazine. The 23 October, 1953 issue commemorated the death on 23 October, 1910 of King Chulalongkorn, the university's royal namesake. It was censored and never permitted to be published due to its Marxist inclination and pro–Communist content. The conservative student body subjected Chit to harsh punishment by throwing him to the ground from the auditorium stage. According to Wichai Naparatsamee's analysis in his book, *Many Lives: Chit Phumisak,* the 'ground-tossing' incident completely changed Chit's life. The violent act was followed by a twelve-month suspension, a punishment imposed on a second-year university student trying to publish a book judged by the authorities as 'veering towards the left' (9).

19 Three days prior to the RT post, the Free Youth Movement had posted a teaser of what the letter R in RT could signify. This comprised a passage about the meaning of the term, 'republic': 'A republic is a popular form of government all over the world. It focuses on decentralisation. A ruler must come from a free and fair election, not through a bloodline. There is no blue blood or blood of any other colour but red,' ('Prayut Asks Legal Team to Look into RT Movement'). This venture resulted in Prayut Chan-o-cha's retort: 'I have no comment because Thailand is not a republic. It's impossible,' (Boonbandit).

Source: 'Comrades! "Restart Thailand" Warms Up Socialist Rhetoric to Maybe Demand a Republic' https://coconuts.co/bangkok/news/comrades-restart-thailand-warms-up-socialist-rhetoric-to-maybe-demand-a-republic/

The cult of Communist idols in Thailand:
The lives of Chit Phumisak and Karl Marx have recently been celebrated on the same day, 5 May each year. This was not only the day that Chit Phumisak was shot to death in 1966, but also the day that Karl Marx was born in 1818.
Source: https://www.sarakadeelite.com/faces/jit-phumisa-and-karl-marx/

His suspension deprived him of eligibility to undertake his BA examination, which, according to Naparatsamee, was equivalent to 'indirect expulsion' (58). Though Chit returned to the Faculty of Arts a year after the incident, and eventually earned his degree in 1957, the censorship and persecution of his university days formed a mere overture to his subsequent arrest in 1958 and six-year imprisonment on the grounds of being an 'accomplice to a crime against the security of the state and Communist acts'. Upon his release, Chit travelled to the jungle in Sakon Nakhon Province, the location of the headquarters of the Communist Party of Thailand.[20] He remained there until 5 May, 1966, when he was surrounded and shot to death near the village of Nong Kung in the Waritchaphum district. His body was burned. No proper funeral ceremony occurred until 1989, when his remains were enshrined in a stupa at the nearby temple, Wat Prasittisangwon in Sakon Nakhon province, upper northeast Thailand.

For many young leftists who stand against far-right ideology and who are critical of the monarchy and the military, Chit Phumisak—described by many as the 'Che Guevara of Thailand'—is remembered and celebrated as a revolutionary icon. This is understandable, given that personality cult has been the 'language register' utilised by Thailand's ultranationalist right for so long that it seems the only way to retaliate is through the same channel. This has backfired as, when political protest movements are based on the same cult of oppression and indoctrination, they tend to affirm and sustain the country's fetish for personality cult. This is what allows Nazi chic and Communist cool to coincide in a political landscape where the authorities endorse the cult of 'semi-divines' who are protected by censorship laws.

20 The Communist Party of Thailand was established in 1927 upon the arrival in Siam of the members of Chinese Communist Party, and banned in 1952 through the Communist Act passed by Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram's regime to incarcerate those who had participated in the Peace movement protests against the Korean war (Yimprasert 76–77), rendering the term, 'Communist' into a witch-hunting 'catchall' word.

Suggestions

Given the ways in which Thailand's Junta government not only propagates, but also makes full use of the cult of personality, the most effective solution to the problems discussed in this article cannot be implemented by the Thai authorities unless Thailand becomes a democratic nation and abolishes *Lèse-majesté*. For the time being, however, I suggest that the promotion of Central and Eastern European studies in Thailand to combat Nazi chic and Communist cool can lead to deeper understanding of World War II history and disillusionment with personality cult. Here, I fully subscribe to the following statement made by HE Meir Shlomo, PhD, Ambassador of Israel to Thailand: 'Education is the best vaccination against the diseases of hatred, intolerance, and xenophobia,'.

The promotion of Central and Eastern European studies in Thailand can help the Thai public to question and to deconstruct its tendency to glorify and romanticise the Nazi and Soviet regimes in the form of strongman leaders. This can be achieved through universities' allocation of resources towards intensive training programmes for Thai teachers and students, and through constant collaboration between universities and foreign embassies, art institutes, and the private sector. This might entail extracurricular cultural activities in which books and talks on Central and Eastern European history or films about the atrocities of World War II—particularly the Holocaust (the extermination of LGBT and Roma communities is not a common knowledge of Thailand), as well as the Gulag and Holodomor—being presented to the Thai public. Democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand can be eradicated through knowledge, understanding, and empathy.

This suggestion has been reaffirmed by the results of an online survey on Nazi and Soviet Union imagery and the representation of Hitler and Stalin in Thailand conducted during July 2021, which involved thirty-four participants aged between seventeen and fifty-four. They included school students, university students, interns, school teachers, university lecturers, academics, private sector workers, market researchers, news reporters, freelancers, translators, entrepreneurs, landscape architects and unemployed people. When asked which insignia of World War II, between the Nazi flag and the Soviet Union flag, was more intensely associated with the stigma of trauma, violence, and mass murder, twenty-six of the participants selected the Nazi flag. Most specified their knowledge of the Holocaust as the reason behind their choice. While five of the participants chose the Soviet Union flag, three—all of whom were involved in academia—refused to choose either option. A male university student aged twenty-four, a female research assistant aged twenty-four, and a female university lecturer aged forty explained that both flags were connected as they symbolised human atrocities equally. When asked which historical figure, between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, was more pardonable as a 'strong leader', despite the attached stigma of trauma, violence, and mass murder, twenty-two of the participants chose Stalin while the same three participants who had refused to answer the first question expressed difficulty in answering the second. Of the twenty-two participants who chose Stalin, most specified that Stalin was nevertheless commendable for establishing stability in the Soviet Union and for 'having fought for the proletariat'.

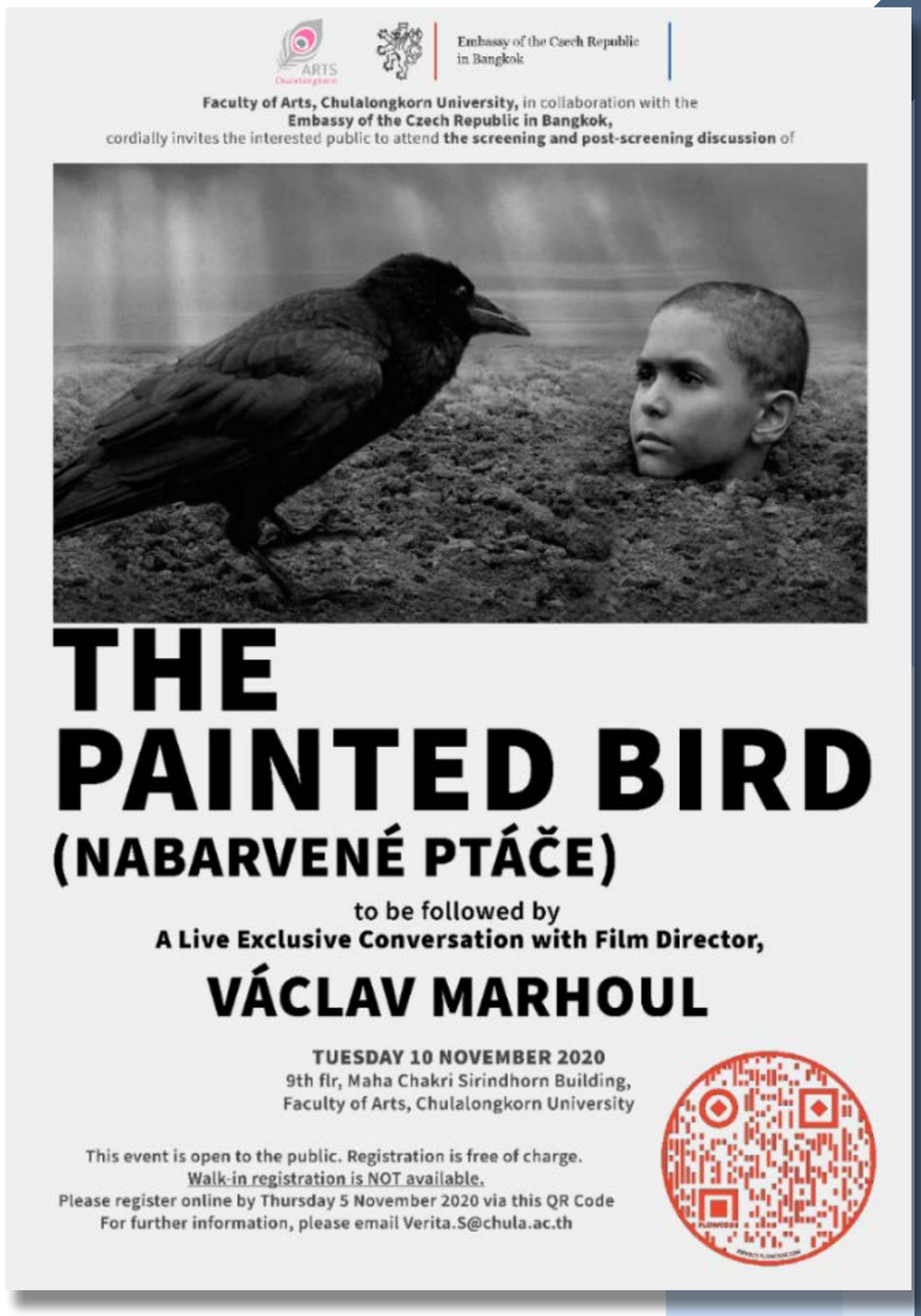
The most fascinating insight of this brief study is the seven participants who chose the Nazi flag for the first question and Adolf Hitler for the second question. A twenty-eight-year-old female freelancer specified that she thought Hitler was more pardonable despite his 'shortcomings' because she 'could not think of one good thing about Stalin, since all of his policies were flawed,'. A twenty-three-year-old university student who identified as nonbinary explained that they chose Hitler because 'Hitler made Germany great in terms of military and industry,'. Similarly, a forty-six-year-old male university lecturer chose Hitler because 'Hitler made Germany rule the world,'. A thirty-one-year-old male homosexual university lecturer chose Stalin because 'society tends to portray Hitler as more terrible than Stalin, but the truth is that Hitler was softer than Stalin (if I remember correctly),'. A twenty-one-year-old male homosexual university student chose Hitler because he did not know anything about Stalin. The remainder, which comprised a thirty-one-year-old female academic and a thirty-six-year-old female private sector worker, declined to offer any explanation. It is evident that Holocaust denial is not the problem in Thailand: democide and Holocaust indifference is. It seems that those who have no qualms venerating Stalin as a revolutionary figure for the proletariat taking arms against the monarchy have overlooked a fact about Stalin that David Brandenberger highlighted in *Stalin as Symbol: A Case Study of the Cult of Personality and its Construction:*

'In the mid-1930s, he commented to M.A. Svanidze that "the people need a tsar, i.e., someone to revere and in whose name to live and labour". Shortly thereafter, Stalin elaborated on the point with Leon Feuchtwanger, contending that the cult did not focus personally on him so much as on his role as the personification of socialist state-building in the USSR. This conflation of the cult with broader Soviet propaganda efforts became so routine over time that Stalin eventually assigned his own Short Biography a central role in the Party catechism. Such gestures, despite their obvious immodesty, reveal that that the cult was designed to serve as a mechanism for political mobilisation by advancing a larger-than-life hero capable of embodying the power, legitimacy, and appeal of the Soviet "experiment",' (250)

Stalin's personality cult intended to render Stalin another 'tsar' and saviour, 'negating the basic tenets of communist theory' (Strong and Killingsworth 410). Subjects that have not been widely taught in Thai schools and universities, such as de–Stalinization in Central and Eastern Europe, should therefore be included in the curriculum and in teacher training programmes.

A recent example of the impact of Central and Eastern European Studies in Thailand on the deconstruction of Nazi chic and Communist cool can be seen in the public screening of the film *Nabarvené ptáče, or The Painted Bird* (2019), at the faculty of arts of Chulalongkorn University. The screening was followed by a discussion with the film's director, Václav Marhoul. A controversial film about the atrocities of both the Nazi and the Communist regimes loosely based on Jerzy Kosiński's controversial novel of the same name, *The Painted Bird* is a story of a Jewish boy who had to find ways to survive in war-torn Central and Eastern Europe. Though *Medžuslovjansky*, or Interslavic language, is utilised throughout the film to avoid pinpointing specific locations (as it is a film about Central and Eastern European collective grief and the universal cruelty of war, which transcends borders), it is clear that the film is equally critical of the violence committed by the Red Army and the Nazi officers and of that committed by local Nazi collaborators.

A popular film review website in Thailand, Film Club published a review of *The Painted Bird* titled *The Painted Bird* นรกบนดิน ['*The Painted Bird: Hell on Earth*'], in which the character of one of the Red Army soldiers is described as one 'who, of course, was the opposite of the Nazis and the film did not treat him as the righteous or good side at all,' [ซึ่งแน่นอนว่าอยู่คนละฝั่งกับนาซีและหนังก็ไม่ได้ทรีตว่าเป็นฝั่งธรรมะหรือฝ่ายคนดีใดๆ]. Although this may signifiy only a small ripple of change and a step towards solving the endemic problems of personality cult, and democide and Holocaust indifference in Thailand, it is the kind of change that Thailand desperately requires. Much more remains to be done.



Source: https://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~balac/v2020/index.php/2020/10/30/4042/

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David Malitz: Thank you very much for your talk, prof Sriratana. We still have some time for a short discussion.
I believe your main point is that the appropriation and commercial use of 'Nazi chic' and 'Communist cool' is not based on a lack of knowledge, nor an actual embrace of the underlying ideologies, but flows out quite naturally from Thai political culture—which focuses on strong leadership and militarism, as well as an indifference towards those regarded officially as 'the other' of the Thai nation.

We already have the first comment, and it is about Thai cinema. You say that it is not primarily based on our lack of knowledge. In the famous mural that you showed us from Chulalongkorn University in 2013, it is striking that Hitler is depicted among superheroes, and that everyone else in the mural is an imaginary person, not a historical figure. There seems to be a fusing in the minds of these students between historical figures and facts, and their depiction in pop culture and how that impacts how people think about it.

Verita Sriratana: I have to say that it is more indirect: what we see is more about militarisation. These characters in uniforms resemble what we see in history, the male protagonists that you see in soap operas in Thailand. There are music videos of singers wearing SS uniforms. Of course, the videos had to be taken down because people were calling them out a lot.

When it comes to cinema, I had a very interesting conversation last week with my colleague from South Korea. We talked about social militarisation in schools and in culture. In Thailand—and I am not sure whether I can say this for other countries in Southeast Asia; maybe, to a certain extent—K-pop is for young people. Whether it is K-pop or a K-drama, the trends you see when you listen, for instance, to some of those girl groups' songs are that it is all about men; it is chauvinism, which is very much connected to militarism. Many of the K-dramas are about men in uniform. There is always this fetish, of course. There is compulsory military training and service in both of our countries, but the culture is stronger in South Korea. I would say that in terms of cinema and in terms of visual representation, we have that in television series. We also import this adulation for the uniform and for the military through K-dramas, K-pop songs, and, to a certain extent for my generation, J-dramas and J-pop songs.

David Malitz: An example from Rafal Pankowski: K-pop band, BTS, used to play concerts using Nazi chic.
One more question from me: Do you see these things in Thai cultural products, and is the adulation of uniform a reflection of political culture, as well? If you look at Hollywood productions, there is great reverence for people who serve in the American military. This is something you cannot compare at all. South Korea is a democratic society. Do you think we have to differentiate more?
There is also a new question: Are there any visible hate symbols or manifestations of Holocaust indifference in the teaching at schools and universities?

Verita Sriratana: I will respond to your question first. I can say that during these current pro-democracy protests, we are unique in that we have a very large cluster of students who have grouped together and called themselves 'bad students'. Why? Because they are sick and tired. This is not about the uniform and its imposition per se. High school students are being arrested in my country. They are being punished for wearing certain hairstyles. Teachers snip their hair off with their scissors, just like that. It shows authoritarianism. This is a unique situation that I do not think we can generalise. It is really a big problem here in Thailand; otherwise, we would not see a group of students group together and call themselves 'bad students' and protest in front of the Ministry of Education to tell them to reform themselves. You do not see this in Germany, nor in Sweden, nor in other countries.

I will now respond to your other question: are there any visible hate symbols. I am from the faculty of arts at Chulalongkorn University, and many people consider this faculty very prestigious in terms of humanities studies. We have only recently introduced a course devoted to Holocaust studies. I have to give my colleague, Tul Israngura Na Ayudhya, credit. He is the only one of my generation who has set up a course like that. As I recall my history books during high school, I think we had maybe two pages maximum dedicated to the Holocaust.

David M. Malitz: Thank you very much for the presentation and discussion. Unfortunately, I think we now have to close the discussion and Q&A session.

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How techniques of denial and distortion were weaponised to enable the genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya, and why education about the Holocaust and its denial must be part of a democratic Myanmar's future by Dr Ronan Lee, Visiting Scholar at Queen Mary University of London's School of Law and the International State Crime Initiative and author of *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*, London, UK

Natalia Sineaeva: I will now invite Foysal Shahriar Ratul, a law student and collaborator of the Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ) at the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh, to introduce our next speaker and moderate this session.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: In this session, we have Dr Ronan Lee. He is an Irish-Australian visiting scholar at Queen Mary University of London's School of Law and the International State Crime Initiative. He researches Asian politics, genocide, hate speech, and migration. Dr Lee's book, *Myanmar's Rohingya genocide: identity, history and hate speech*, was published by Bloomsbury in February 2021. Dr Lee, I invite you to the podium to give your presentation.

Ronan Lee: Thank you for that lovely introduction and thank you to everyone who is attending today. I want to start by expressing how appreciative I am of the work of the NEVER AGAIN Association. This has been a phenomenally good symposium. I have learned so much over the last couple of days. I had an opportunity to read the draft paper (ed.: The presenter refers here to the paper about *The Land of Smiles, Nazi Chic, and Communist Cool: Personality cult and 'democide and Holocaust indifference' in Thailand* by Dr Verita Sriratana), and it is fantastic. I encourage all of you that have an interest in this issue, and particularly in Thailand, to make sure you get a hold of the content of the symposium proceedings.

I did not think I would be delivering a paper like this when I started this research project. As it happened, the more I engaged with issues associated with Holocaust denial, the more convinced I became about the importance of the working definition. My paper will address the importance of the working definition, as well as looking at the Rohingya and their mistreatment as a case study. Techniques of denial and distortion, like those that are outlined in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition, have shown through. The case study will show that these techniques have had powerful and incredibly negative effects for Myanmar and for the Rohingya community. The Rohingya are a mostly Muslim minority within an overwhelmingly Buddhist Myanmar who mark their origins to the Rakhine state area, which is adjacent to Bangladesh.

A key focus of the case study is the distortion of history as a central enabling tool of genocide.
This should stand as a serious warning to others about the dangers of genocide denial, and particularly about the dangers associated with the techniques of denial and distortion that are outlined in the working definition.

For many people, the Rohingya's plight first came to their attention through media reports of the group's violent deportation from Myanmar in March 2017. During late August and early September, soldiers from the Light Infantry Divisions arrived in the Rohingya community in northern Rakhine. These infantry divisions are well known for their brutal actions against Myanmar's ethnic minorities. Their purported mission was a counterinsurgency to undertake a euphemistically named 'clearance operation' to suppress the activities of a newly-emerged militant group; their actions against the civilian populations, however, strongly suggest other motives. What followed was an orgy of genocide, violent crimes against humanity, and war crimes, which were documented in disturbing detail by UN investigators, humanitarian first responders, and human rights groups.

For decades, and with no credible evidence, Myanmar's authorities have justified human rights violations against Rohingya civilians as a necessary response to local militancy, which they contend is linked with transnational Jihadi groups, rather than an understandable response to domestic human rights abuses.

By portraying atrocity crimes as a legitimate response to militancy, Myanmar's military and the country's quasi-civilian government blamed the Rohingya themselves for causing the atrocities. First-person accounts of Rohingya survivors of the forced deportation and killings of 2017 are chilling. They describe widespread use of 'scorched earth' tactics that burned hundreds of Rohingya villages, extrajudicial killings (the military treated any male who had reached adolescence as fair game for extermination), and widespread use of appalling sexual violence against women and girls.

Victim testimonies paint an apocalyptic scene. Victims commonly described being hunted off of their ancestral lands by brutal violence from soldiers and having helicopters rain fire upon their largely wooden villages. In the space of a few weeks, Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh by the hundreds of thousands, and during eight weeks of 2017, the refugee population established what is and continues to be Bangladesh's fifth largest urban center—a camp complex more densely populated than cities like Dhaka or New York, but comprises only single-story structures of Bamboo and tarpaulin.

The Rohingya situation was not always so dire. During the centuries prior to Myanmar's colonial period, the Rohingya's ancestors lived as an integrated part of the Arakan kingdom, an independent trading polity on the Bay of Bengal that occupied lands between Mughal India and the Burmese Empire. Arakan was multiethnic and multireligious, and its political and economic peak dominated lands from the Arakan Yoma mountains to the city of Chattogram. Its rulers, at times, adopted Muslim titles and minted coins that displayed the kalima (the Islamic declaration of faith). They used Persian as their court language.

But when the country was invaded by the Burmese Empire in 1784, Arakan shrunk to control an area that roughly corresponds to the boundaries of modern Rakhine state.

The presence of a specific Rohingya (as opposed to a purely Muslim) population was identified and documented by the British, who sent a delegation to the Burmese court in 1795. East India company employee, Francis Buchanan, documented meetings with people from Arakan who labeled the Arakan Muslim population as Rohingya—a clear reference to the ancestors of the contemporary Rohingya population.

Arakan domination by the Burmese Empire was relatively short-lived, and, within forty years, war between the Burmese and the British led to Burma's recently-acquired Arakan lands coming under British control, starting 120 years of colonial rule.

When Burma became independent in 1948, the Rohingya could exercise full civil and political rights. A recent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that documents the changes in the Rohingya situation, from uncontroversial integration to contemporary genocide.[1]

In 1962, there was a military coup in Myanmar, and the country came to be dominated by a xenophobic Buddhist nationalist military administration. The military aggressively weaponised history, ethnicity, and religion. Myanmar's military rulers were mostly Burmese Buddhists, who used the state apparatus to undertake violent processes of Burmanisation: administrative and military efforts to enforce Buddhist and Burmese hegemony nationwide. This included restrictions on ethnic and religious minorities, their access to education, and their ability to use their own language. Even seemingly benign expressions of ethnic identity like dress, dance, and festivals were frequently regarded by the military authorities as akin to sedition.

Central to the contemporary situation of the Rohingya is the collective stripping of their access to citizenship rights due to the post-1962 military administration's refusal to acknowledge the Rohingya as citizens. This was done to enable the persecution of the group. During the decades after 1962, the Rohingya suffered restrictions in their access to education and healthcare, and their ability to marry, have children, and earn a living. Rohingya travel, even short journeys, was strictly controlled. The military refused to acknowledge the Rohingya as legitimate citizens of Burma and made changes to the citizenship laws of the country to add a sheen of legality to this refusal. The new laws placed recognition of groups' histories at the centre of claims to citizenship rights, which created difficulties for groups regarded as not having a sufficiently lengthy heritage within the country. This was especially true for the Rohingya, who were actively excluded from the political mainstream from the 1960s onwards through travel restrictions and media censorship. This made the Rohingya virtually invisible in public space outside of Rakhine state. The military aggressively portrayed the Rohingya as colonial-era migrants or postcolonial era arrivals from adjacent Bangladesh, and they, at the same time, aggressively confined the Rohingya to the borderlands close to the Bangladesh frontier. Misrepresenting the historic record by portraying the Rohingya as a population made up not of indigenous residents, but of recently-arrived migrants from nearby the Bay of Bengal allowed the military to reject their collective citizenship claims and to claim that this rejection was legal. Actively working to erase the Rohingya's long-term and legitimate residency in Myanmar became a key strategy of military administrations. Sadly, this was a process that was continued by the quasi-civilian administrations that held power between 2011 and 2021, and was strongly encouraged by Burma and Buddhist nationalists.

1 Ed.: Burma's Path to Genocide—This exhibition explores how the Rohingya went from citizens to outsiders—and became targets of a sustained campaign of genocide: https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/burmas-path-to-genocide

Deliberate misrepresentations of history by Myanmar's authorities, combined with the exclusion of the Rohingya from mainstream political life, has had devastating consequences for the Rohingya.

These misrepresentations have diminished domestic political support for Rohingya aspirations and have helped the military leadership and nationalist politicians maintain domestic support for restrictions on Rohingya rights and for brutal military operations against the group, including the 2017 forced deportation.

A key element that I will talk briefly about is the misrepresentation of history and the misnaming of the Rohingya. Misnaming the Rohingya to suggest that they are a foreign group is a practice used by the military to encourage domestic support, and to legitimise anti–Rohingya practices. Military governments aggressively rejected the legitimacy of the Rohingya name and its use, which they believed to represent an unacceptable and implied political play. I have to say, sadly, that this practice has sometimes been repeated in academic settings.

The military, nationalists, and commonly ethnic Bamar civilian political leaders routinely substituted the Rohingya name for the label, Bengali, which they adopted as a slur to tag Rohingya as not being indigenous to Myanmar and, instead, representing a population of recent migrants from Bangladesh. Misnaming the Rohingya was common practice during the military period between 1962 and 2011, and it continued after the quasi-civilian administration took power in 2011.

In 2013, Myanmar's president, Thein Sein, a retired general, aggressively rejected Rohingya claims to indigeneity, telling the media: 'There are no Rohingya among the races; we only have Bengalis who were brought for farming,'. He goes on to say that during the British era, this perspective was mirrored by the serving military leadership. Myanmar's military commander-in-chief and the instigator of the 2021 coup, Min Aung Hlaing, excused his troops' appalling violence against Rohingya civilians by misrepresenting the Rohingya again as colonial-era migrants. He said: 'The Bengalis were not taken into the country by Myanmar, but by the colonialists. They are not the natives,'. He also said: 'The native place of the Bengalis is Bengal,'. These attitudes were often shared by high-profile ethnic Bamar civilian political leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, who served as the state counselor and de facto prime minister from 2016 to 2021, when she was removed by the military coup. She avoided using the Rohingya name and suggested describing the group as 'the people who believe in Islam in Rakhine state'.

Deeply concerning was Aung San Suu Kyi's creation of a false equivalence between the Rohingyas' right to self-identify and other groups' desire to mislabel that group. In 2016, she told visiting US Secretary of State John Kerry: 'The Rakhine Buddhists object to the term, "Rohingya" just as much as the Muslims object to the term, "Bengali", because these have all kinds of political and emotional implications that are unacceptable to the opposing parties,'.

In practical terms, this perspective, I contend, is indistinguishable from that of Thein Sein. Based on misrepresentations of history, attacks on the Rohingyas' right to self-identify undermined the group domestically, but had consequences internationally, as well discouraging foreign governments from recognising the Rohingyas' right to self-identify, and adding credibility to military and nationalist claims about history. Appallingly, from 2014, United Nations agencies operating within Myanmar actively discouraged their staff working in Rakhine state from using the Rohingya name because they suggested it could inflame local tensions.

Rather than reducing local tensions, the United Nations' acquiescence to military and nationalist demands likely emboldened Myanmar's military to enforce even more rights restrictions on the Rohingya community, believing that there would be few meaningful objections from the United Nations; they were correct, of course. It can reasonably be argued that the United Nations' approach contributed to the military's decision to launch the 2017 clearance operation that forcibly deported the majority of Rohingya from Myanmar.

Of serious concern, too, were the genocide crimes, including the high-profile forced deportation of 2017 that took place with scant domestic political opposition. This indicates the power of the false historical narratives that excluded the Rohingya. Throughout the period of military rule between 1962 and 2011, there were few calls for recognition of Rohingya citizenship and human rights from Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the National-League-for-Democracy-dominated civilian opposition.

This situation did not alter once the military ceded some political power to acquise as a civilian administration in 2011. In 2017, Myanmar's quasi-civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi did not call upon the military to show restraint (which might have ended the violence sooner), but rather defended its actions during and after the violence. In September 2017, Aung San Suu Kyi's public statements were strongly supportive of the military's aggressive approach. She played down suggestions of atrocities, labelling them 'a huge iceberg of misinformation'.

Investigators from the United Nations Human Rights Council's independent fact-finding mission in Myanmar were very blunt in their criticisms of this approach. Despite the substantial evidence of brutal military crimes against civilians, the quasi-civilian administration in Myanmar did not subsequently soften its stance, and, Aung San Suu Kyi travelled to The Hague in 2019 to defend Myanmar against accusations of genocide. She stated to the International Court of Justice that the situation in Rakhine state was 'complex'. Portraying the situation as 'complex' and the evidence of atrocity crimes against the Rohingya as 'incomplete and misleading', Aung San Suu Kyi aimed to bring into doubt key evidence about the crimes against the Rohingya—just as she had previously called into question the legitimacy of the group's name. She also portrayed the situation as an armed conflict, rather than a brutal, well-planned massacre of Rohingya civilians by Myanmar's military within the context of a decades-long genocide. Portraying the violence as part of an ongoing conflict aims to diminish the military's responsibility for its actions, which implies that the Rohingya must be partly to blame for the situation.

This continued a long-term process of government figures from both the military and the quasi-civilian administration deliberately misidentifying the causes of the crimes against the Rohingya. The denial of history also contributed to the creation of concentration camps within Myanmar and, in the long term, confinement to urban ghettos and to rural villages.

Rakhine state is among the poorest in Myanmar. This contributed to understandable local tensions, because of resource scarcity. In a state where two-thirds of the population are Buddhists, the authorities fueled tensions by misrepresenting history to portray the Rohingya as illegal migrants and interlopers. During the period of military rule, these tensions were kept under some degree of check, but with the loosening of political and media restrictions around 2011, Buddhist nationalists actively encouraged anti–Muslim and anti–Rohingya attitudes and actions.

During 2011 and 2012, there was strong evidence of rising ethnic and religious tensions in Rakhine state and Myanmar's authorities made little effort to preempt the violence that erupted in 2012. The authorities portrayed this violence as communal, but, in reality—and this was clarified by human rights groups—it was a pogrom against the Rohingya Muslim community. It led to hundreds of deaths and the displacement of 140,000 Rohingya within Rakhine state.

The government's eventual response was to separate the confessional groups; a strategy that, in reality, served to confine the Rohingya to euphemistically named 'displacement camps'. That should accurately be identified as concentration camps. The Rohingya forced into these camps in 2012 remain there today, and they have been prevented from leaving and returning to their home communities. Any of the small number of Buddhists that were displaced in 2012 were quickly rehoused and are not subject to restrictions in their freedom of movement. These camps were fully intended to incarcerate Rohingya civilians. Appallingly, Myanmar's authorities were able to co-opt the international community, notably the United Nations, to help pay for and to legitimise these camps. Of the 140,000 Rohingya confined to those camps in 2012, at least 120,000 remain confined there today. Elsewhere and in Rakhine state, while not confined to concentration camps, Rohingya are effectively trapped in their villages. Those who have not escaped to Bangladesh and those who were not hunted out of their homes in 2012 in the state capital city, Yangon, are trapped in the area of Aung Mingalar, which is an urban ghetto. It is an area of just a couple of square kilometers and there have been approximately 4,000 Rohingya trapped there since 2012. There is no industry. There is no business. They cannot freely move. They cannot go to their businesses that were just a few hundred meters away on the main street in Sittwe. Many of their businesses that have been closed up have been graffitied with anti–Rohingya messages. The Rohingya in that ghetto live in constant fear that the authorities could simply cut off the water or stop food arriving at any time. It must be terrifying.

The existence of the Aung Mingalar, the confinement of Rohingya to their villages, the operation of concentration camps within Myanmar, and the forced deportation of the majority of the Rohingya population to Bangladesh during 2017 were all enabled greatly by the Myanmar authorities' misrepresentation of history. They distorted the historical record to minimise the domestic political opposition to what they were doing and to convince the public that what they were doing was in the national interest. The military also convinced subsequent quasi-civilian administrations of what they were doing and gained their support. Distortions of the historical record for political reasons and the blaming of the victim group also aided Myanmar's authorities in their efforts to limit domestic opposition and to add a veneer of legality to their mistreatment of the Rohingya.

These techniques of denial and distortion will be disturbingly familiar to those who have read [the working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance]. There are striking similarities to the denial and distortion techniques used by Holocaust deniers that are outlined in the working definition. My argument today is that these techniques can readily contribute to the promotion of ideologies that invite genocide and crimes against humanity.

We should be aware, having looked at Myanmar as a case study example, that the techniques of denial and distortion outlined in the working definition are in the working definition because they have value to deniers—because they work.

The really sad thing is that Myanmar provided almost a real-world case study example of the techniques of denial and distortion outlined in the working definition. I did not think I would be writing a paper that was so strongly supportive of the working definition, but I am and I have.

Now, I will outline some quick recommendations for the future of Myanmar. Genocide denial must not be part of Myanmar's future and must not be part of the future of a democratic Myanmar. I think we should encourage the legitimate government of Myanmar—that is the National Unity Government of Myanmar—to engage with efforts to tackle Holocaust denial and genocide denial. We should work with the National Unity Government to encourage them to make materials about Holocaust denial and genocide denial more readily accessible to Myanmar's people and to support the translation of these materials into Burmese and other local languages. We should work with the National Unity Government and encourage them to ensure that education about the Holocaust will be part of the curriculum at schools and universities in a democratic Myanmar's future. That should work in partnership between the National Unity Government and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, to ensure that material is worked up that is in the necessary languages and is culturally appropriate in terms of how it is presented and at what level of schooling it is presented. I contend that this should be part of the primary school curriculum. The National Unity Government should also be encouraged to face up to Myanmar's recent and very problematic past. There are members of the National Unity government who need to be strongly encouraged to do that. If they have not properly faced up to Myanmar's past, Myanmar's future will not be as bright as it possibly can be once we are able to displace what is a brutal military dictatorship with a democratically-elected administration.
Thanks very much.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: Thank you for your fantastic and informative presentation on the Rohingya genocide and the history of the Rohingya people. Genocide distortion is happening currently in Myanmar at the hands of the military government. Now, we will move on to the questions and comments.

The first question is: Does the mainstream media in democratic countries call the atrocities against the Rohingya genocide?
Do you think international discourse about the situation of the Rohingya should be improved? If so, how?

Ronan Lee: That is a great question. It depends on how it is identified and in what context. Perversely, I would say that it depends very much on the knowledge of the journalist who is writing the piece. Sometimes they show greater reluctance to identify the situation as genocide, for the simple reason that they think that they need to apply the United Nations' very narrow legal definition. They feel sometimes that they cannot apply that until a court has come to that determination. Sometimes, you get quite a confused response and confused reporting about what is actually going on. But, it is clear, and the journalists, on the whole, talk about atrocity crimes and talk about the situation that we know is going on. Even using the very narrow definition that the International Court of Justice uses, it is likely that they conclude that it is genocide. My problem with that narrow definition is that although it is great for labelling things after the fact, it is not good at stopping things that are in train.

That is why we should not be afraid to call things what they are. We do not need to wait for the courts to make decisions. If your neighbor assaults you, you do not have to go to the court before you can describe what has happened and identify it as an assault; you can say exactly what has occurred. I would encourage people to call it for what it is. United Nations investigators and the International Association of Genocide Scholars have described it as genocide. There is no debate about what we are seeing in Myanmar: it is genocide. The more evidence we are able to get out of Rakhine state, the more likely we will see the International Court of Justice come to a genocide determination. It is also important to remember that Myanmar's authorities, both the military and the quasi-civilian administration, actively blocked United Nations investigators from gathering evidence within Rakhine state and within Myanmar. They refused to grant them visas and would not let them in. You know you have a question when a perpetrator says you should not be coming in to talk to the victims. You have to wonder why that is. I think at the International Court of Justice, a lot of the Myanmar case rings hollow, because they announced to the court that there is nothing to see there; that everything is fine. The court's question is why they would not let the investigators in. The response will come today or this week at the International Court of Justice, so we will see what the military and the administration are going to present to it.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: Thank you for the answer. We have another question: Why are you promoting education about the Holocaust in Myanmar, in a situation when mass atrocities are ongoing against the Rohingya people?

Ronan Lee: That is an important question. The point of my paper was to suggest that the techniques used to deny and distort history and deny the Holocaust are very similar to those used to deny and distort history to enable the genocide of the Rohingya. I think this is important when it comes to understanding history in a country like Myanmar, which is very political. History has been written by the military government and forced on the people in a way that aligns with the military government's view of it. I think it is important that the people of Myanmar are given the opportunity to engage much more broadly with world history. If the people of Myanmar fully understood the history of the world, the history of the Holocaust, and the issues around Holocaust denial and the distortion of history that goes with that, we would have much sooner seen greater political opposition to the weaponising of history that we have seen in Myanmar since the 1960s. We might not have seen crimes against the Rohingya to the extent that we do. Now, it is too late for the Rohingya who have been murdered, and it is too late for those who have been forcibly deported to Bangladesh. But it is not too late for lots of others. I think it is important that we do not put histories in boxes. I am not one for categorising atrocity crimes and genocides, and saying 'we should look at this one and we should not look at that one,'. I think we have to learn from what has happened in the past, and that is what has been missing from Myanmar's education system and from debate in Myanmar more generally. It is important that both things are done: that we face up to Myanmar's modern history, but we also look at previous history that is available to us. The lack of one, I think, has enabled the other.

I am talking about creating an education system in a future democratic Myanmar, in which the people in the National Unity Government have faced up to the crimes that have been committed against the Rohingya, have reintegrated the Rohingya, and have ensured that their human rights and citizenship is respected.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: Thank you. Do you think that the image constructed by the international media in terms of freedom, genocide, and other forms of Holocaust in Myanmar is extremely negative?

Ronan Lee: Rightly so. You cannot commit atrocity crimes and then complain that people are portraying you as the perpetrators of atrocity crimes and it is making you look bad. There is a simple human reality here: if you commit atrocity crimes then complain that your country looks bad because you have done it, your problem is not that your country looks bad: it is that you have committed atrocity crimes. That has been an issue in Myanmar. There has been a bit of a debate within Myanmar about calling out these problems. Some people have legitimately spoken up for human rights for the Rohingya and for other groups at great personal cost. The Rohingya, too, have done that. One criticism, particularly of those from majority population groups in Myanmar, is that they are making the country look bad and they should be silent about that. That is a serious problem in any society when it is a means of silencing legitimate criticism of crimes; however, it is a powerful means in a situation in which people have been lied to about history for generations. There was a military coup in 1962, and they have been denying the history of the country since then. Three generations of people have grown up in Myanmar with the history that they have been given in school and what they understand is just the reality; it is not reflective of the truth about history. That is not what they have seen, that is not what their parents saw, and, in many cases, it is not what their grandparents learned at school. These are compelling criticisms that serve to silence the opposition of people who wanted, legitimately, to call these things rights abuses and to ensure that people have their human rights respected.
One solution is better engagement with nondistorted history in schools. We should be working in partnership with groups like the National Unity Government, because Myanmar's future, I am convinced, will involve getting rid of that military. They will be gone. It might not be today or tomorrow, but the day will come. And now is an important time to engage with groups like the National Unity Government about what sort of future they want for Myanmar.

I do not think anyone on this call wants Myanmar to return to how it was the day before the coup in 2021. I think they want a better Myanmar. And that is what the National Unity Government, I think, is offering. They are saying that they want to engage more broadly. They have actually engaged with the Rohingya community, which we would not have seen in the same way from the quasi-civilian administration earlier this year. That is a positive thing and we should engage with them, and we should encourage them to put history and the history of the Holocaust into the curriculum. It should be there in Myanmar because the country has a link.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul: Thank you once again for your great and informative presentation. I would like to add a comment: Yes, the Holocaust and genocide offering in Myanmar can be connected in different ways. The racial laws after 1962 in Myanmar and the Nuremberg Laws can be connected, and the propaganda that the military government of Myanmar directed towards Rohingya and the propaganda that the Third Reich directed against the Jews in Europe can be connected. Holocaust education and the history of the Holocaust is necessary in Myanmar and in every country in the world.

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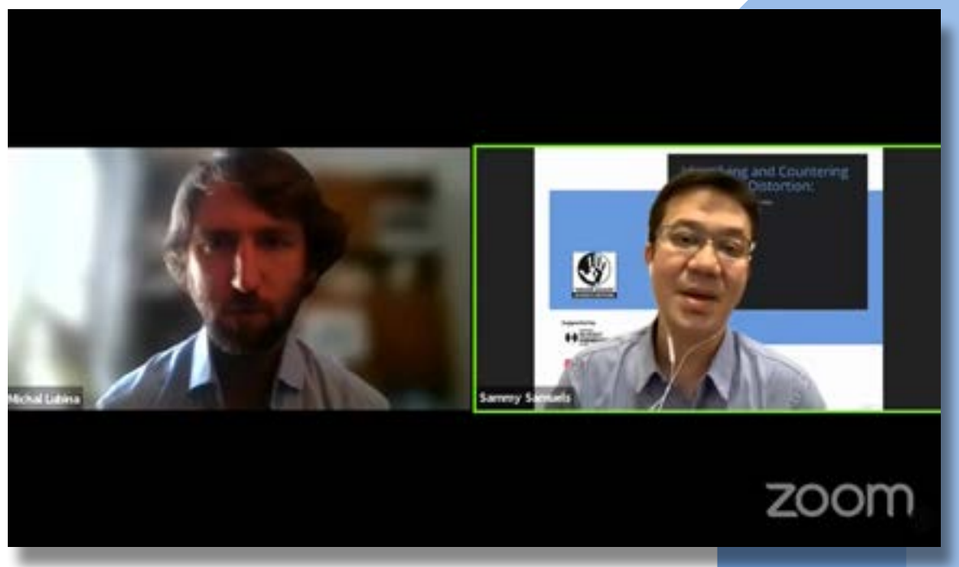
BURMESE JEWS AS PART OF PLURALIST SOCIETY IN MYANMAR
by Sammy Samuels, Leader of Jewish Community, Yangon, Myanmar

Natalia Sineaeva: I will now invite prof Michal Lubina to introduce our next speaker, Sammy Samuels. Prof Lubina is an associate professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, and has written six books on Myanmar. One of them was translated recently and published in Myanmar.

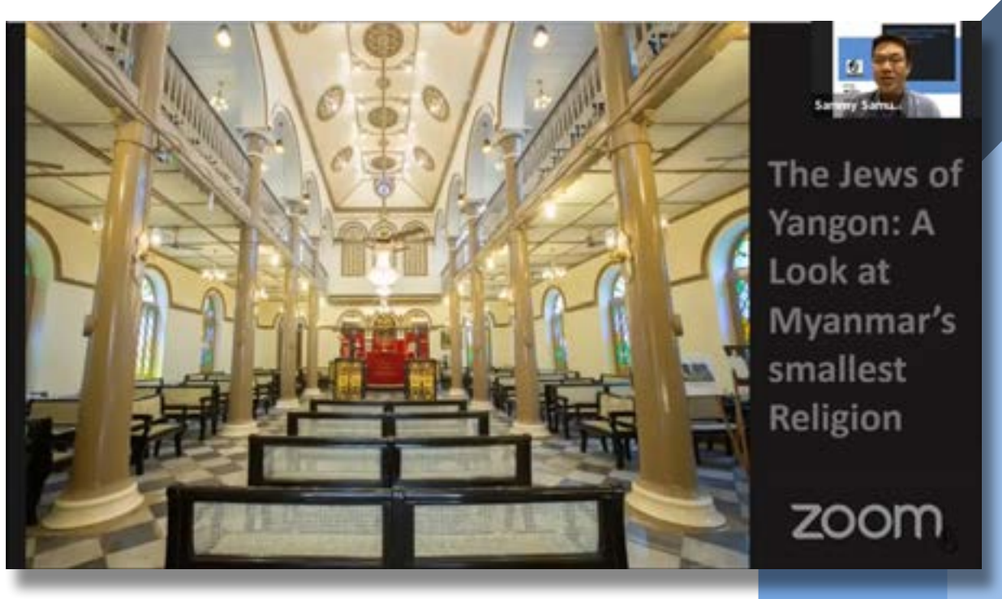
Michal Lubina: Thank you and hello everyone. *Min-ga-la-ba khin-bah (Greetings in Burmese).* I am honoured and privileged to be here today, and I am very happy that I can introduce such a great presenter as Sammy Samuels. Before I do that, I would like to say that I am happy we have a chance here to present the brighter face of Myanmar; to show that Myanmar is not only about genocide, human rights violations, and crimes against humanity; to show that the country is multidimensional and there is a lot of good in it. That includes the very rich heritage of Jews in Myanmar. Sammy Samuels will be able to talk about this more. He is a graduate of Yeshiva University in New York and he has authored articles in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Travel and Leisure*, and many other newspapers. He is a community leader, a leader of responsible tourism in Myanmar, and was also selected as the President Eisenhower Fellow from Myanmar for his work in the tourism industry. His goal is to deliver a programme called Peace Through Tourism. Sammy Samuels, the floor is yours.



Sammy Samuels: *Min-ga-la-ba khin-bah*
Thank you very much for having me here today. My name is Sammy Samuels, and I represent the Jewish community of Myanmar. In Myanmar, we have a very small Jewish community: there are only twenty Jews in the country, so we are the smallest religion in Myanmar. The population of the country is 52 million. Today, I am representing five percent of the Jewish population. But we used to have the largest Jewish population in all of Southeast Asia.

We used to have about 3,000 Jews. The first came from Romania; others then came—mainly from Iraq, Iran, and Egypt—from around 1750. They did business and they traded from Burma to India and from India to the Middle East, and they exported rice. That business grew and more and more Jews started coming from the Middle East.

In 1910, the mayor of the capital city, which was then called Rangoon, was Jewish. A few other smaller cities had Jews, as well. In the centre of Rangoon, we have beautiful buildings, some of which were built by Jewish families. The first Coca-Cola distributor in Rangoon was established by a Jewish family called Solomons. Until 1942, Jewish life in the whole country was wonderful. We had a Jewish school, a Jewish cemetery, and a Jewish club. In 1942, the Japanese arrived. We had a little bit of a problem: the Japanese thought that the Jews were spying for the British because the Jews spoke English and visited the club together with the English. The synagogue was closed down for two months. The Japanese investigated, but found no connection between the Jews and the British.



Although the synagogues had reopened, the Jews started to be scared. They left Burma for India. At that time, India remained under British rule. From there, they travelled to Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia.

After the Independence of Burma in 1948, some Jews returned to the country. Jewish life in Burma at that time was different than it had been under British rule. Jews started leaving the country then, and again in 1962 when the military took over and nationalised all businesses. The Jewish families said that there was no hope and that there was nothing left for them in Burma. Around 1962, they thought they would never see a Jewish community again in Burma.

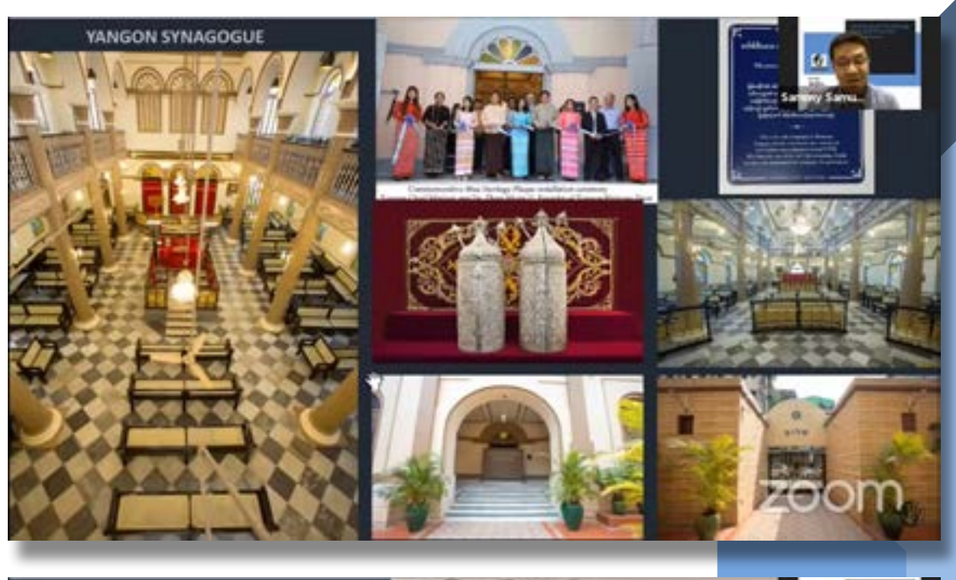
I want to share a story with you from about four years ago. One man and his family came back to Burma from Australia. He had left the country in 1962 when he was very young—about six or seven years old. As soon as he got to the synagogue, he went to one corner and started crying. His wife said: 'Sammy don't go near him. Just leave him alone,', so I left him for ten minutes. After that, they called me over and the man said: 'In 1962, one fine summer day, my father took me to the synagogue, along with my sister, and he said, "Look around the synagogue.
We are leaving the country. There is no hope and no future for Myanmar, so we are leaving. If you ever have a chance to come back, this synagogue will not be standing here, so just look around it," '. The crying man said to me: 'I am crying because, after fifty or sixty years, I have come back and the synagogue is still standing today,'.

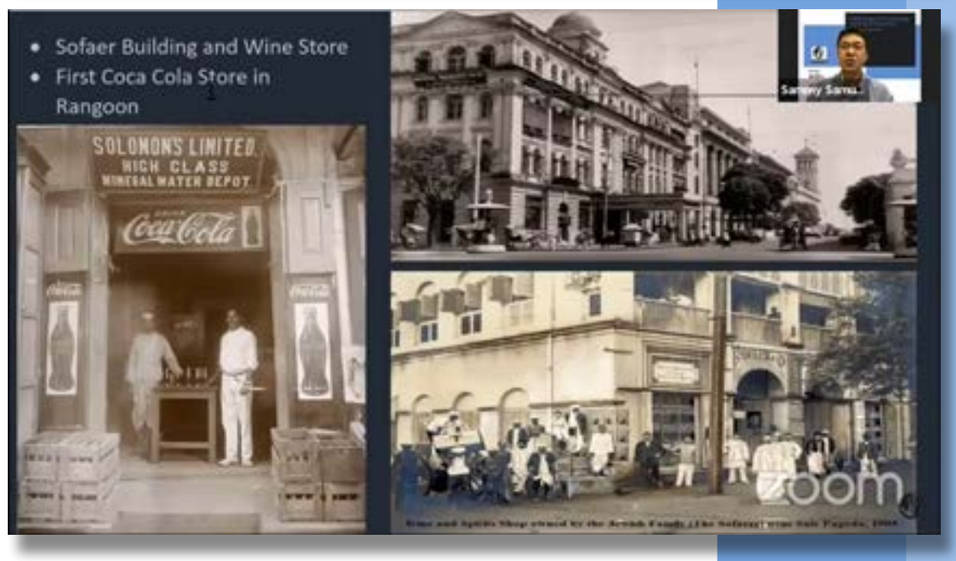
Even though it is a small community, it is still alive. You can see a beautiful synagogue; it was built in 1893. It is a beautiful synagogue, a two-story building. In 2016, it was recognised by the local government as one of the heritage sites of the city. And that shows the diversity of Rangoon. Five blocks away from the synagogue, we have a mosque. And right in front of the synagogue, we have a monastery. Every day at around five or six o'clock, it is so interesting; you will hear the azan from the mosque, and then you will hear the Buddhist chanting from the monastery, and on some Shabbats on Fridays, you will hear singing—very few people singing—at the synagogue. Rangoon is a very diverse city. The synagogue is included as a site of interest on Tripadvisor. It was ranked number three on the list of the top attractions in Rangoon out of 143. All of this can be credited to my father. In other places, if you want to go to the synagogue, there are a lot of restrictions. They ask you why you want to go inside and you often have to undergo security checks. But in Rangoon, my father welcomed everyone.

He said: 'It does not matter what religion you are: Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, or Hindu,'. He explained the rich history of the Jews to them. He said:'If they came here to learn something about the community, it is a plus for us,'. Before COVID-19, we had sixty to seventy visitors every day during the tourist season. People visit to see the synagogue and its beautiful architecture.

Regardless, a lot of people ask: 'If there are only twenty Jews, how do you live? How about Jewish holidays?'. I want to share these photos. In 2011, we started doing the Hanukkah candle lighting. At that time, I was living in the United States. I came back to Burma and I said to my father: 'Let's do the Hanukkah festival and invite others,'. He said: 'There are only twenty Jews in the whole country, and if you count in Rangoon, it is fewer than ten. Who is going to come to our Hanukkah event?'. I said: 'Let's invite the people from the government, the embassies, and the friends of the community,'.

Then, amazingly, about 200 people showed up, including the Minister of Religious Affairs. We also had leaders from the different communities of the Muslims, Christians, and Hindus. Even the Baha'i community showed up. Since then, we've been doing the Hanukkah candle every year—even though it is a small community, and the government could totally ignore us. We have been invited to other religious events arranged by the government, and also some by the embassies.

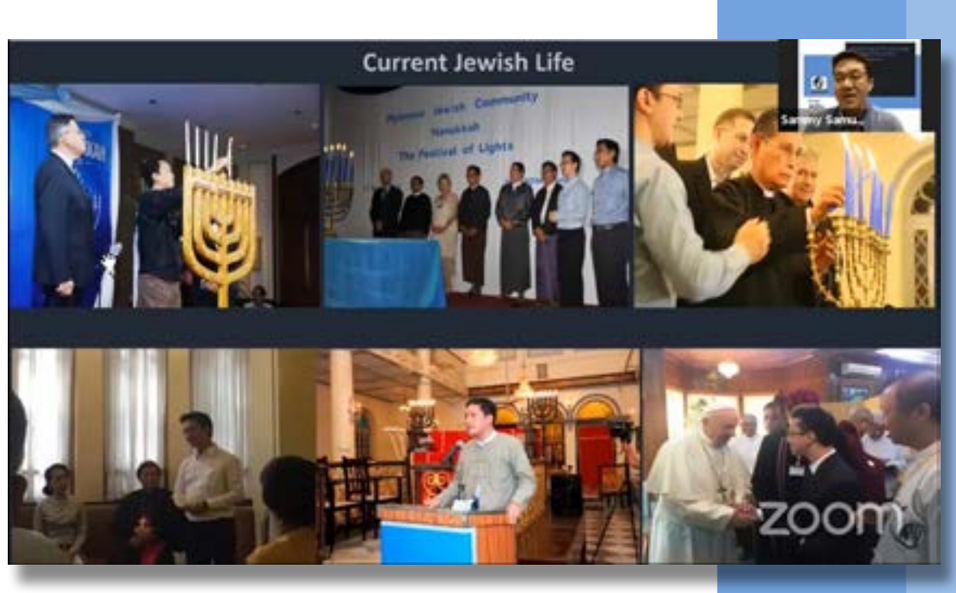




It has been interesting to see that we are keeping our spirit alive in the country. In 2016, we started a campaign called We Remember. I remember a friend of mine saying: 'The community is so small. Why are you doing this campaign in Burma?'. We had collected about 380 photographs of We Remember in all of Myanmar. I said that this is not about remembering the Holocaust for the Jewish community; it is about what is happening now. Sadly, it is happening today in Myanmar with the Rohingya and other ethnic groups being discriminated against and persecuted by this military government. We are saying 'we remember', but we also have to make sure that this is never going to happen again. What Ronan Lee mentioned about education, I think, is very important because, as Burmese when we are young, the only thing we learn about the Holocaust was that six million Jews were killed.

That is the only line that was mentioned in the third grade of war history in the curriculum in Burma. I think it is very important that young people know about what happened during the Holocaust. We need to make sure that people in Burma, especially young people, understand and make sure that it is not going to happen again. Not only in Burma and not only in Europe, but in every country. This is certainly still happening and we have to keep speaking up for those people.

Every year, we have a Holocaust event on the 27 January. It is arranged by the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish community, and of all the places, we chose Rangoon university. Every year, about 400 students come and we talk to them in Burmese and in English about the Holocaust. We invite diplomats to light the candles. Before the pandemic, we invited students from different schools and universities to visit the synagogue to learn about the Jewish community. After that, we used to take them to the mosque to learn about Islam and its basic principles, and then we would go to the church and to the Baha'i temple. I think it is very important to understand each other; a lot of problems and a lot of arguments happen because we do not. Before coming to the synagogue, the students would say that they did not know anything about Judaism or what the Jews believe; before going to the mosque, they would say they did not know much about Islam. I think that what we are doing is very important.



This is just a brief introduction to the history. Not many people know that Israel and Myanmar used to have a very good relationship. Myanmar was the first country in Asia to recognise the state of Israel. The Burmese prime minister was the first head of state to visit Israel after its independence. Ben Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, visited Burma and he stayed for sixteen days. That was his longest trip as a prime minister. He did three days of meditation together with the Burmese prime minister, U Nu.

The relationship with the government since the coup, however, has been very difficult.

Since 11 February, it has been very difficult for all of us in Myanmar. The military has taken over, more than 1,500 people have been killed, and more than 4,000 people have been imprisoned. I hope and pray that the hard-won democracy of Burma will be restored and we will have a unity government with all the different religions and ethnic groups living side by side, together. Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

Michal Lubina: Thank you so much for your speech. For those who are interested in Israeli–Burmese relations, there is an absolutely hilarious and highly recommended debate between Ben Gurion and U Nu on YouTube. If you Google 'Ben Gurion and U Nu', you will find it. Thank you once again, Sammy, for your speech.

For those who want to ask questions, please type them in the chat box. I have some questions, but before I ask them, here is one observation from an audience member: 'Three thousand to twenty—that is a significant reduction in the Jewish population of Burma,'.

Sammy Samuels: Before 1942, we had about 3,000 Jews living mainly in Rangoon and other smaller cities. When the Japanese came between 1942 and 1945, many Jews left. Some came back, but left again after 1962 when the military took over. The main reason was that the military had nationalised all businesses, so the Jews who used to own the Coca-Cola distributor and a few others no longer did.

In 1942, they first went to India, because it was still under British rule. After India, they went to Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia. After 1962, even more of them went to those countries. Slowly, it has become a very small community.

Michal Lubina: I can see that there is a follow-up question: 'Have many Burmese Jews made it to Israel?'.

Sammy Samuels: There are a couple of hundred who have made aliyah to Israel. Also, interestingly, there is a group called Bnei Menashe, and they live on the border between Burma and India. They are said to be the lost tribe of the Jews from Burma. They are trying to make aliyah to Israel. There are 5,000–8,000 of them in the area, and I think about 4,000 have already made aliyah to Israel.

Michal Lubina: Before any new questions, I would like to ask my own ones. You mentioned that when you and other Burmese were at school, you had just one line about the Holocaust: that six million people perished. What is the general knowledge of the Holocaust like in Myanmar now?

Sammy Samuels: There is very little or no knowledge. The people do not know much about what happened during the Holocaust. Around 2012 and 2013, we saw many people wearing Nazi symbols on their t-shirts. They did not understand what they were wearing; it was a trend. The Jewish tourists who visited the country were shocked. They told me: 'Sammy, we have started seeing these people…,'. I said: 'Do they know what it means?'. We started a small campaign and wrote in Burmese language what that symbol meant and what had happened. We distributed our message to some of the stores that sold those t-shirts. Slowly, it has reduced. People in Myanmar, especially young people, have little or no knowledge about what happened during the Holocaust. That is why, as Ronan has mentioned, it is very important to educate and to share knowledge about the Holocaust. It is not only about what is happening in Europe; it is also about what is happening in Myanmar currently, and in other places, as well. We need to make sure that they understand, so it is best to do it in the Burmese language. Short video clips are also very helpful. The Burmese like watching those.

Michal Lubina: Thank you so much for this. There are two more questions in the chat box, but before I ask them, I would like to follow up on my question because it concerns what you have just said. I wanted to ask you whether there is a similar 'Nazi chic' as in Thailand. You mentioned the t-shirts. I once saw a poster in Burma that depicted Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, and two other leaders. Beside their images were the words, 'strong leaders'. It was in Mranmabhasa, the Burmese language, only. The question is a little sensitive, but it is a good opportunity to ask it.

Sammy Samuels: What I have seen is mostly that symbol on t-shirts. I have seen nothing that depicts the people involved. We have asked them, the people wearing the t-shirts: 'Do you understand what that means?'. They have no clue at all. That is why I, along with a few others who have studied abroad, made a kind of a pamphlet, written in Burmese, about what it means and what happened. We started distributing them to some stores, suggesting they do not stock these kinds of t-shirts.

Michal Lubina: Now, I will read the questions from the chat box. This question is from Ven Lablu Barua: 'Does your community have Burmese citizenship, and do you get any problems from the government or from the Buddhist people?'.

Sammy Samuels: The community is very, very small, so we have not really had any problems with citizenship. We were born here.

Michal Lubina: This is good news. I assume the previous citizenship law from the 1940s applied to you. It did not have such bad consequences as the one from the 1980s.

Sammy Samuels: One problem is that they mention the holder's religion on the ID card. In other countries, when you have an ID card, it mentions your name and date of birth, but not your religion; in Burma, it still mentions Muslim, Jew, Christian, and so on. Sometimes, that is a problem in other places: when they look at it, it is a little different. We hope that the future government of Myanmar will do something about not mentioning religion on national ID cards.

Michal Lubina: Which colour of ID card do you have?

Sammy Samuels: I have a pink one.

Michal Lubina: So, you are hassle-free. This theoretical question comes from the chat box. It concerns the first day of our conference: 'After inter-religious observations and visits, what are your realisations in terms of critical discourse analysis?'.

Sammy Samuels: After the inter-religion observations and visits, it is critical, I believe, to take student groups from different universities to the various religious places. All of the basic principles between different religions are great things. That is why people have disagreements: because they do not understand each other. After visiting these places, the students have more understanding about these religions. Sometimes it is not about religion; it is a connection—because they have never been to any such place. Many of these students have never been to any synagogue at all; they do not know what it looks like inside. Some of them even have never visited a mosque before. After visiting and talking to the imam, after talking to the pastor, and then visiting the synagogue, they learn that the basic principles of these religions are the same. I think that is what they understand now.

Michal Lubina: We have a lively debate here with many questions appearing. There are two more questions now in the chat box. The first is from Anastasia Jessica. She says that it was a wonderful presentation and asks: 'Is there any difference in the Jewish community in Myanmar between before and after the military coup?'.

Sammy Samuels: Yes, there is. For many Burmese people, it has been very difficult. All of our lives have been changed completely after this military coup. This applies to the Jewish community, too. As I mentioned, there are only twenty local Jews in the country, but there were also sixty to eighty Jewish expats from Israel, the United States, and European countries living in the country. After the coup, slowly, many left Burma. Sadly, one of our own, the Jewish journalist, Danny Fenster, was also arrested. He had no connection at all, but they detained him for over 100 days, and he was released just last week. For the Jewish community, yes, there has been a decline in the number of Jewish expats; there are probably fewer than ten still here. That makes a difference for the community.

Michal Lubina: I am happy that we have a good internet connection and that nothing disturbs us, which is not always obvious nowadays when connecting with Myanmar. Are there any programmes, governmental organisations, or education institutions that aspire to teach lessons about the conflicts caused by the Holocaust in Myanmar? Are there goals and actions of these organisations that can be subjects for critical discourse analysis?

Sammy Samuels: I believe that there are currently some individuals and others doing that kind of work. Talking about the issues of the Rohingya and of other ethnic groups is very sensitive, so people do not do it; organisations work secretly. The one good thing about this coup is that people have started talking openly about the Rohingya issues and those of other groups, too. In terms of the Holocaust, in 2018, the Embassy of Israel was talking to the ministry of education about adding a small curriculum about the Holocaust to the national syllabus. It did not materialise, I believe. Hopefully, in the future it will.
Michal Lubina: We have two more comments, rather than questions. 'Although there is almost no literature about the Holocaust, several translated books about Hitler have been translated and released in Myanmar. Some young people who have read the books have started to sympathise with Hitler,'.

The other comment is from Rafal Pankowski about a follow-up discussion. Please visit the link in the chat box to access it:
www.NeverAgainAssociation.org

I would like to ask one question about tourism. In the biography you presented, you wrote that you promoted responsible tourism. I sympathise with that very much, but the major question that needs to be asked is: What is the state of Myanmar tourism—not only the responsible type, but any tourism—under the circumstances of both COVID-19 and the coup d'état.

Sammy Samuels: It has been very difficult for large hotels like Shangri-La Hotel and the Rosewood Hotel, which have been shut down for more than a year now, and many tour guides have been out of work for a long time. We hoped that in January 2021, we would start with domestic tourism. Maybe when the pandemic was under control, international tourism would come. That was back in January, when there was a possibility of the offices being reopened. By February, all hope was gone. I think that now, even if the COVID-19 situation gets better, it will be very difficult for international tourists to visit Myanmar—especially Europeans, and Americans—while this military government is in power.

Michal Lubina: I could not agree more. The image of the country is tarnished and there are serious security issues. We have no more questions. Thank you so much, Sammy, for your presentation and for answering all of our questions.

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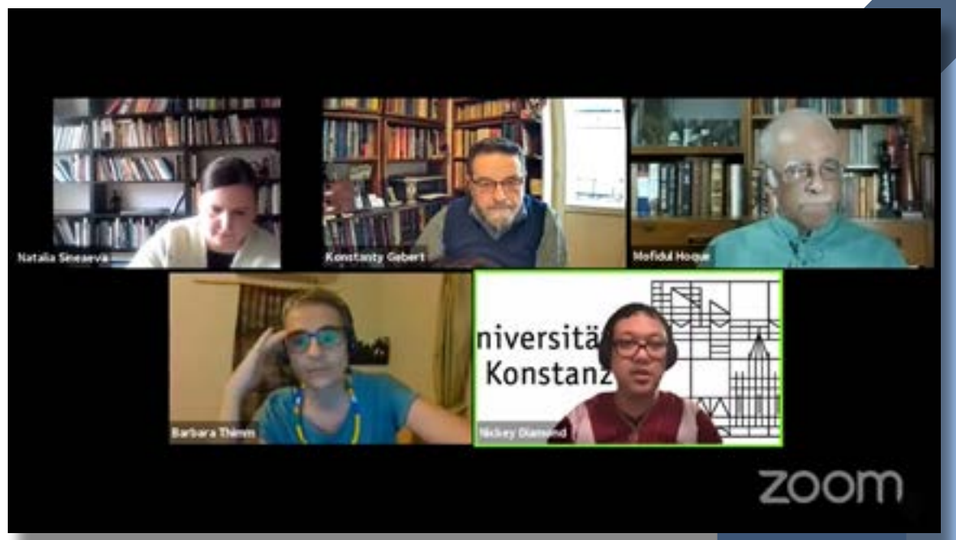
PANEL DISCUSSION:
Challenging Holocaust distortion



Participants: Konstanty Gebert, Barbara Thimm, Mofidul Hoque, and Nickey Diamond

Natalia Sineaeva: Welcome, everyone, to our next panel discussion, *Challenging Genocide Distortion*. For this session, we are honoured to have four panelists here, who represent a diverse group of experts from different countries and who have different experience and knowledge.

We are delighted to have the renowned Polish–Jewish intellectual, writer, and journalist, Konstanty Gebert, with us, who has written several books—including a new one on comparative genocide; Mofidul Hoque, one of the founder trustees of the Bangladesh Liberation War Museum and the director of the Center for Study of Genocide and Justice in Dhaka; Barbara Thimm, a Civil Peace Service advisor at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and our friend and colleague, Nickey Diamond, originally from Myanmar, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Konstanz, Germany, a known Burmese human rights activist, and advisor to Fortify Rights.
We have prepared four questions for our panelists, for which each panelist will have four to five minutes to answer. We will have four rounds of Q&A. All of our discussions are important for drafting recommendations on countering Holocaust denial and distortion. Let's start with the first question:

Have you witnessed a case of genocide denial and/or distortion in your work? If yes, in what way? Can you give an example?

We will begin with Konstanty Gebert.

Konstanty Gebert: Thank you. Sadly, very recently, a worrying example of genocide denial has come from the academic community. As some of you might know, Republika Srpska, the Serb entity in postwar Bosnia, has set up an international enquiry commission to study the events in Srebrenica, which have been declared an act of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Unsurprisingly, the Commission decided that no genocide had taken place in Srebrenica; that a number of Bosnians were killed, and also that a number of Serbians was killed, and that in general, this is what you should expect when there is a war. Much more worryingly, the chairman of the Commission is a highly-respected Israeli historian, Professor Gideon Greif.

The conclusions of the Commission were criticised, including by voices in Bosnia. Greif replied by saying, 'Well, this is Muslims attacking a Jewish scientist,' and on top of that, that 'they come from a country that provided volunteers to the Nazis in World War Two,'.
This is totally unacceptable. First of all, one would assume that the ethnicity and religion of participants in an academic debate is not an argument for or against. Using Greif's language, his critics might then say, well, this is a Jewish scientist who does not want to recognise a genocide committed against Muslims: what else would you expect? This kind of discourse in an academic debate is totally unacceptable.

Furthermore, as Professor Greif certainly knows, the country of Bosnia did not exist during World War Two; the volunteers who fought in the SS Handschar division were young men from what was then the independent state of Croatia. Bosnia came into being as a result of a referendum in 1992—almost half a century after the war. Now, all this would be aggravating and unacceptable, but much less worrying if Professor Greif were not a highly recognised and respected international scholar of the Shoah. He is the world's leading expert on the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz, and a person whose academic credentials are beyond challenge. And yet, for reasons that I refuse to speculate about, Greif decided to join the very unseemly chorus of deniers of the Srebrenica genocide. Professor Greif probably could make a legitimate argument, stating that he simply defines genocide differently from the International Criminal Court and, therefore, he is free to consider that Srebrenica was not genocide. But this is not what he said; he said there was no genocide in Srebrenica, period.
For an outsider trying to make an independent assessment of the situation, you see a highly and legitimately respected international scholar deciding that an issue on which most outsiders know little, the massacre in Srebrenica, was not genocide. It seems reasonable to follow the judgment of a highly respected international scientist. Yet, Greif's opinion, and especially his response to his critics, is beyond obscene. This shows just how highly and, at times, perversely politicised the issue of genocide study is; how dangerous the denial of genocide can be—especially when it comes from academics; and how extremely careful all of us who study genocide should be when making statements about it.

Natalia Sineaeva: This is a very illustrative example, and indeed it is worrying when academics are involved in such things. Now, we invite Mofidul Hoque to respond.

Mofidul Hoque: I think the question is relevant for every nation that went through the traumatic experience of genocide, and, as Gregory Stanton said in his *Ten Stages of Genocide*, denialism is its final stage. When you complete an atrocity, and you have finished with your job, you start denying genocide. And I think this is true for every postconflict society, and for us it is more painful. In 1971, during the nine months of Liberation War, what the Pakistan army did was one of the worst brutalities since World War Two. There were ten million refugees who were taking shelter in India. There are no exact figures of how many really settled in how many camps. At that time, we had a population of 75 million, and during those nine months, three million of them perished in the black hole of genocide. It is difficult to get an exact count and this number has become a point of contention by denialists. I think it is not the precision of the number, but the pattern of the brutality, the atrocities that have been committed, and the victimisation that are very important.

In 1971, the Bangladesh genocide was widely reported in the global press. There were cries in many major cities to stop the genocide and to recognise Bangladesh. There were demonstrations. There were also many reports published, including the famous one by Oxfam, The Testimony of Sixty. After our victory, another tragedy followed. Bangladesh, at that time, was on the wrong side of the Cold War rivalry. Major Western powers and the United Nations did nothing at that time to stop the genocide. On the other hand, the Western governments supported the Pakistani military rulers. There were also many protests against giving them arms when the genocide was ongoing, which shows a similarity with the Rohingua situation we see today.

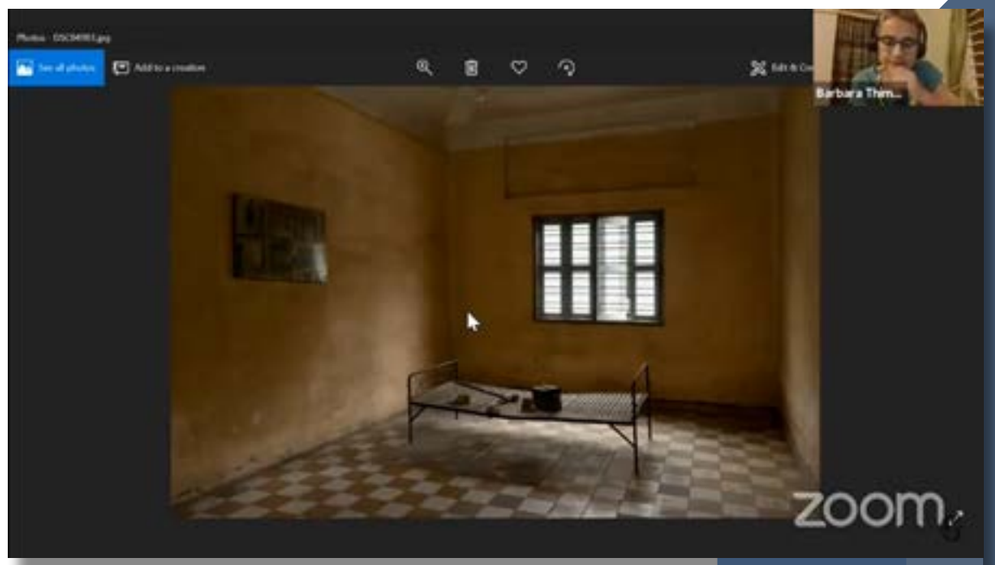
The world after 1948 had, some scholars say, fifty years of silence, before the world was reawakened by the genocides in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, and the international criminal tribunals that followed. But Bangladesh became a victim of silence, a victim of oblivion, and it has fallen off the map of the global history of genocide of the twentieth century. We find that for the victims, for the survivors who went through this traumatic experience of genocide, it is another tragedy when they discover that their suffering is not getting its due recognition because of the political situation or other factors. Bangladesh in the postindependence period tried to raise the demand and also tried to go to the United Nations. A commission was formed by the International Commission of Jurists. They submitted a report in May 1972 in which they recognised that genocide had been committed, that justice should prevail, and that demanded a process to ensure justice.

But it never found any recognition in the United Nations, and, moreover, Bangladesh was not allowed the right to sit in the United Nations, which was similar to the Cambodian situation *(in the 1980s - ed.)*. Only in 1974 did Bangladesh gain entry after they had returned 195 war criminals, prisoners of war of the Pakistani military command in the eastern part, who had been accused of genocide. Bangladesh tried to organise the trial on its own at a national tribunal, but, because of strong international pressure, we could not continue with this process. It was not only a denial: it was a denial of victimisation and of justice, too. We, the victim nation, continued our memorialisation. I think it is important to preserve this process of memorialisation through our literature, memorials, writing, film, and theatre.

Gradually, major demand for memorialisation grew in the nation, but globally, we find that while there are major academic works on genocide—especially in the post-holocaust period—academics easily jump after the Holocaust to the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and to the genocides that are now continuing in different parts of Africa and Asia. This is very painful for us. The Bangladesh Liberation Museum aims to highlight that, and we have found good partners in the academic world. Some of you have been to Bangladesh and we expect that others will do so in the future. They take the experience of that and how the survivors carried the memory. And how we can try to make this memory intergenerational. I think that is very important for every nation—especially victim nations of genocide—to keep the flame of memory burning and to take it to future generations. Denial came not only from the Pakistani perpetrators. As we observe the fiftieth anniversary of our genocide, there has been very little recognition. But there are civil society movements in Pakistan, which are not really strong yet, but they try to bring the truth to their people. I think it is also very important to disseminate the message and to continue the struggle. We think that the denial of genocide is not only a distortion of history, but is also a trampling of humanity, and we all have to fight against it together. We have good partners, and I think this one is also a recognition and a good partnership for the future. Thank you.

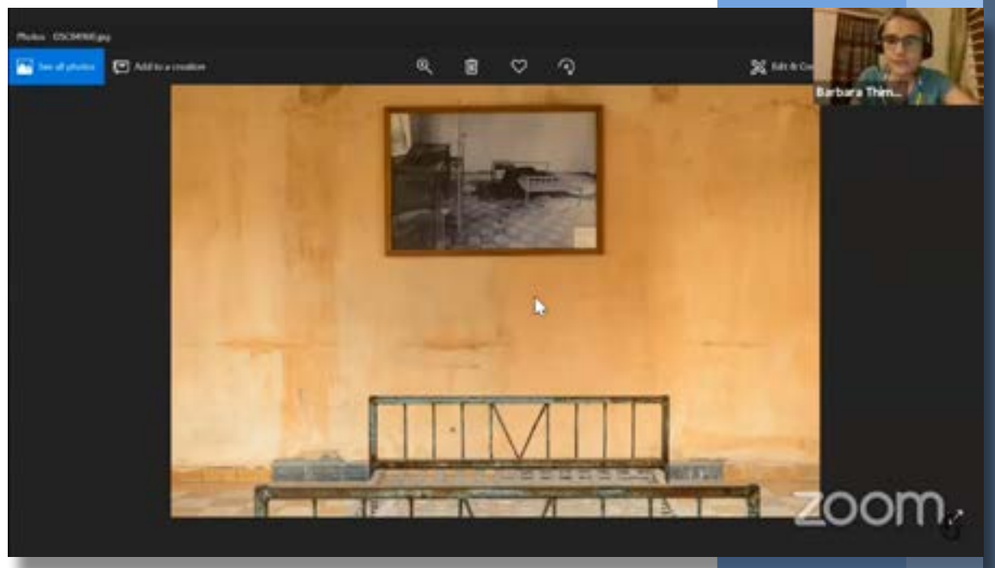
Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you for sharing the experience of Bangladesh with genocide and its attempts to counter denial with us. Now, let's move on to Cambodia. It will be interesting to hear the perspective of Barbara Thimm of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

Barbara Thimm: Thank you for inviting me to this panel. I always feel uncomfortable speaking for Cambodia, as I am very much aware of my German background. I have been working in Cambodia the last five years, at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. I would like to give two examples and while I am talking about the first, I kindly ask Natalia to upload and show us one photograph. It is a difficult image—please be aware of this.



I am going to talk about Cambodia, where the issue is not so much denial. I think there are two motivations that I find much more often in daily conversation, and here is the first: I love talking to the tuk tuk drivers in front of the museum, because I think that when talking to them, I get to know what average people think. They often say 'well, we do not believe what they say in the museum; why would Khmer people have killed Khmer people?'. I guess anybody who is familiar with the Cambodian context will know this sentence. I can hear this question as a rhetorical one saying: 'Well, it is so absurd to believe that Khmer people would kill other Khmer people. This can't be,'. What they want to say is 'somebody else must have been behind it,'. What they normally mean is that either the blame should be given to the Vietnamese or the Chinese.

This photograph shows a room in our genocide museum, and everybody who might have visited our museum will remember one of these rooms. On the wall of this room—it was a former cell—you will see another photograph of the situation in this room in January 1979. For the last thirty years, this photograph has been placed in one of these rooms, but it was never checked whether we would be able to find the position of the cameraman in January 1979. So, only two years ago, we replaced the photographs. You can see that we were able to reset the same photograph, which had been taken in January 1979.



It was difficult to find the right position, but we managed. You can see that the bed is exactly the same and you can see the floor tiles, which are of different colours—as they are today in the museum.

I want to tell you two short stories. When we replaced these photographs, we showed the new setup to several people. One of them was a representative of an NGO in Cambodia who worked on the Khmer Rouge past. When I walked with him towards that building, explaining to him what we had done, he said: 'Well, you must know we have some doubts,'. I said, 'Sorry, what kind of doubts?'. 'Yeah, we are not sure if these photographs are correct; if these people really died in January 1979 at this prison,' and so on. This was said by a representative of a Cambodian NGO who worked on the Khmer Rouge period. This is one example that I would call a politically-motivated questioning of the truth at the former Prison S-21.

The second example I want to share with you is when we show this resetting of the photograph to our colleagues—some of whom have worked at the museum for the last thirty years. A lady turned around to me and said: 'So this really happened here?'. I was astonished by the question because this lady had worked there for so long. The only difference was that she could see with her own eyes that the photograph was the same one that had been placed in the neighbouring room for more than thirty years. Only now could she see that it had been taken exactly there. Even people who work at the museum still have doubts, as they might not trust any governmental organisation.

I want to reiterate that there are two motivations, and only one is political. Some people do not believe the story and blame others for what happened between 1975 and 1979, or they mistrust the information. This, I think, is much more common in Cambodia than outright denial.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much for sharing this example from Cambodia, where one can find guilt transfer—a typical distortion strategy. And now, I ask our fourth panelist, Nickey Diamond to join the discussion.

Nickey Diamond: Thank you so much, Natalia. And thank you, everyone, for our meeting and for this debate on a crucial subject. The question is really important for my country, Myanmar.

Denial, to me, is not only a problem of our society, but is also the absence of any call for international action against genocide. In Myanmar, discussions on genocide vary. Denial means that everybody knows what is happening in the country, but there is no concrete action against the perpetrators and no help for the victims and survivors. So, people suffer while the international community debates. The international community here means the powerful nations that have the ability to intervene in this situation.

When we talk about denial, I see two points: the military—they are the major perpetrators of the genocide in Myanmar; and the civilian government—Aung San Suu Kyi has a moral authority, but defends the perpetrators. She has too much power and her denial has become a societal problem in Myanmar. She has many followers in the country, and whoever follows her will look at her when she denies the facts happening in Rakhine. This affects the whole society in Myanmar. I also see that she is trying to strengthen her political position by denying the reality in Rakhine. That has resulted in a culture of impunity, which has existed in the country for so many decades. She ignores this and tries to defend the military perpetrators. Now, you will see that the current attempted military coup in Myanmar is very much connected to the previous culture of impunity. The military has been committing a host of human rights violations and international crimes in the country with full impunity; now we face the consequences of that.

In the last five years, we have been talking to the government with a focus on transitional justice and so on. But the whole country is in favour of the military and everybody is denying. Almost all of my friends deny the situation in Myanmar. Right now, we are facing those kinds of consequences.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much to our panelists. We can see that there are so many forms and strategies that deniers and distorters can employ, including silencing, transfer of guilt, and many others. We have heard examples from the former Yugoslavia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Myanmar. There is a commonality among these examples, even if they present themselves in different contexts. The second question is also connected to your work and we would like to learn from you:

Do you see commonalities between Holocaust/Shoah denial and denial of other genocides and atrocities in Europe and in Asia?
What qualities do they share and how do they differ?

We will begin with Konstanty Gebert.

Konstanty Gebert: I see commonalities between the Shoah and other genocides, and, to an extent, in their denial. But there is a fundamental difference between them. The Shoah is the only example of a genocide that is universally remembered the way its victims remember it; this has not happened in the case of any other genocide. By and large, the Jewish memory of the Shoah has become the basis of its universal remembrance, and the Shoah is universally seen as the archetypical genocide, the crime of crimes—and probably legitimately so. However, in no other case of genocide has this kind of universal recognition been achieved.

Nor are other genocides as well known, well studied, and well taught as the Shoah is. Therefore, distorters or deniers of the Shoah almost by definition place themselves outside of rational discourse. They find themselves in the company of flat-earthers, anti-vaxxers, and other crusaders for unspeakable truths. By and large, the general consensus is that denying the Shoah is simply intellectually not serious. In every other genocide, challenges of the veracity of the narrative are acceptable as a routine element of intellectual inquiry. This sets the Shoah aside and makes it more difficult to deny it than to deny or distort other genocides.

On the other hand, the basic motivation of genocide deniers is usually, contrary to what they claim, not an academic love of truth, but the political hatred of the victims of the genocide. Antisemitism is much more common worldwide than hatred of the Rohingya, of the Tutsis, of the Roma, or of the Armenians. There is a much more welcoming global audience to deniers and distorters of the Shoah than for deniers of other genocides. Ultimately, the case of the Shoah gets universal attention; denial or distortion of any other genocide gets the attention only of those who are already interested in the subject. The public relevance and the interest of debates surrounding the veracity of a genocide narrative will be different in the case on the Shoah and in the case of other genocides.

And as a footnote to that, it is absolutely legitimate to continue with historical inquiry regarding genocides. In the case of the Shoah, for instance, for the postwar half century, the number of the victims of the camp at Auschwitz was universally accepted to be four million. And then historical research, conducted independently by Polish and by Israeli historians, proved that that number had been widely inflated during the postwar trials, and that the real number of the victims was 1.1 million. Simultaneously and independently, it has been recognised that there were many more victims of what is now called ‘Shoah by bullets’, piecemeal executions on the territory occupied by the Germans, than of the mass murders in the death camps. These kinds of revision are extremely welcome. They bring us closer to the truth; they make us understand better what happened. If somebody comes up with new ideas regarding what happened, this should be welcome. This is the way historical knowledge progresses.

What needs to be resisted, of course, is the imposing of false narratives to replace the one based on the testimony of the victims. And as the victims of the Shoah have, by now, almost all passed away, their narrative has moved from the realm of memory to the realm of history. From something experienced, it has become material that has to compete on the internet with other material. I am not terribly optimistic about that unchallengeable quality of the Shoah narrative once the memory fades. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much. There are so many lessons we need to learn from the Holocaust; to learn what you have learned from the Holocaust. I will now ask Mofidul Hoque what he is doing in that context at the Bangladesh Liberation War Museum.

Mofidul Hoque: I think what Konstanty Gebert has said is very important: that the Holocaust has an impact on almost all countries of the world. In Bangladesh, many Holocaust accounts have been translated. Even now, we have a good play being staged by a young girl on the Anne Frank story; she is of the same age and has this kind of affinity with the victims that I think is very important. The denial that is now going on, mostly in Europe, has a political root, and it does not have much impact on our society. Right from the beginning of our struggle, the people have found affinity with the victims of the Holocaust—not only in the intensity of their suffering, but also in the extreme brutality. I can cite some examples. In the heat of the struggle, there was a documentary made by a leading film maker in our country, Zahir Raihan. It was titled *Stop Genocide* and it was released in late August, 1971, during the struggle. It has many images from the Holocaust, and we found, historically, that when a nation becomes a victim, it finds solace in other victimisations. We also fought for a liberal society. Pakistan, because of the many political complications on the basis of which it was established, highlighted the differences in religious identity between Hindus and Muslims, and other religions on the Indian subcontinent. Our struggle was that we, as Bengalis, may be Hindus, Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists and we all belong to the Bengali national identity. I found it very interesting that during the last days of the struggle, India joined the war, India–Bangladesh joint command was established, and from 3rd December, there was a very quick military onslaught. On 16 December, we got our freedom and the instrument of surrender was signed by General Jagjit Singh Aurora, the Joint Commander of Indian and Bangladeshi Forces. He was a Sikh. The Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, Sam Manekshaw was a Parsi. The person who represented Bangladesh, Vice Marshall Khandaker, is a Muslim and the main planner and architect of the victory was an Indian, General Jacob—and he was a Jew.

I think this shows how inclusive the subcontinent is and that this inclusivity has emerged victorious over the forces of division and exclusivity. After independence, we see that in many cases, we try to highlight the tragedies of the twentieth century. We constructed a memorial site for the killing fields near the city of Dhaka. Now it is within the city and is called Jalladkhana Killing Field, The Butcher's Den. There were people who were taken there, murdered, and put in an abandoned water pump. At that memorial site, we have cited examples of other genocides beginning from the Armenian genocide, as well as highlighting the Holocaust and mentioning different concentration and death camps like Auschwitz–Birkenau, Buchenwald, before continuing with other genocides. When we memorialise, we always find a common thread. In general, there is not much denialism of the Holocaust in our country. There are also books that have been translated: works on Anne Frank, on the concentration camps, and many fiction books, as well as some globally acclaimed films.

So, we do not know much about how common denialism is, but we see that sports events can be sites of extremist manifestations, like what has happened in Poland during football matches involving African players; there is a strong, different apartheid. We also see cricket matches being played between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. There are some groups that try to raise a different voice and render their support for the Pakistani cricket team from a political angle. And we see these kinds of reflections in genocide denial. But within our country, there is more or less a consensus for the kind of universal values that we could claim the nation has inherited because of many factors. Globally, there is a rise of new fanatic Islam, and we sometimes try to raise a strong voice against it, but it is more political and has links with the Palestine problem. We continue the liberal tradition, but we are afraid that, globally, we see a rise of the right, a rise in denial in many different countries, and we think that we have to build a strong coalition of victim nations. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you. And now the next panelist, Nickey Diamond.

Nickey Diamond: Thank you so much for the question. From my understanding, commonality is a strategy and ideology based on state media and propaganda. In Myanmar, the military shares power with the elected civilian government due to the 2008 constitution. They are very famous for brainwashing and using propaganda as a tool to make a case for the hegemony of the whole society, the whole country. That was led by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and it has become like a strategy and an ideology to combine into a contribution to denial in Myanmar. I mean the entire range of hate speech, the full range of hatred.

But these are cases of emotion manipulated by the propaganda machine and state-owned media. One example is Facebook, which has contributed to hate speech in Myanmar and to the investigation into the genocide, and supported denial.

I see genocide denial in Myanmar by the military perpetrators; the real perpetrators, who were involved in the physical violence. But moral authorities like Aung San Suu Kyi are different: I believe that she did not commission the real violence in Rakhine, but she was involved in whitewashing the crimes committed by the military. She is defending the military at the International Court of Justice and against international criticism of what happened in Myanmar. One example of this occurred when she had a conversation with American vice president, Mike Pence. She said: ‘Nobody knows my country. I am the only one who knows my country, better than anyone,’. That kind of discourse and criticism against any country or against any individual who talks about the genocide in Myanmar contributes to commonality. Anyone who denies the past genocide denies contemporary genocide in Myanmar, too.

Natalia Sineaeva: The next question is relevant to my own experience as someone who works on the Holocaust, but tries to relate and to work with other genocides. There are certain challenges in this.

Do you think it is useful to refer to the Holocaust/Shoah when we are discussing other genocides and crimes against humanity in an intercultural context? How can it be done without trivialising and/or relativising the Holocaust/Shoah and other genocides? How can we be more sensitive when discussing it and avoid trivialisation or other distortions?

I will invite Konstanty Gebert to respond first.

Konstanty Gebert: We have two separate questions here. It is obvious that we need to compare. Science is built on comparison. If there is a unique event that cannot be compared with anything else, then it cannot be scientifically studied, because we do not know what its specific qualities are, what its connections with the rest of the universe or the universe of human experience are. So, if we want to study genocide, we need to compare. But there is another reason why we need to compare if we say that the Shoah is unique and incomprehensible. This was the position taken by, for example, Elie Wiesel—somebody whom I admire immensely, as I am sure many others in this discussion do. On this, however, I disagree with him. The reason why, apart from the rational argument given earlier, is that if we say that the Shoah cannot be compared or comprehended, we relegate all those involved into a separate moral universe. If we say that, we are really saying that they are not us, and, therefore, we do not need to challenge ourselves in the light of their experience. I believe we do. I believe we need to accept the historical perspective in which any of us could be victims, perpetrators, or bystanders to a genocide. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of indifference: it concerns us. So, for those reasons, I think that comparison is necessary and desirable. But when we compare, there is a tendency to forget about the individuality of each event that is being compared and just to look at the commonalities.

And then, yes, there is a risk of trivialisation and banalisation of the horrors we are speaking of—be it the Shoah, be it any other genocide. Which is why I believe that on that purely semantic level, it is so very useful to ascribe a different name to each of the genocides we study.

The Shoah has a name. The Shoah of the Roma and Sinti has its own name, The Porajmos; the Armenian genocide has a name, the Medz Jeghern. And when we attribute or recognise a proper name given to these events, we recognise by the same token that we are not speaking only about the umpteenth example of something overriding. We are describing a separate phenomenon, the way that when test participant number 73 becomes John Smith, we tend to treat him differently. So, we are obliged, as researchers and as human beings, to treat genocides and their victims with the utmost respect; to be extremely careful of anything that might trivialise or banalise the ultimate horror they experienced. Yet at the same time, we need to compare these horrors with other ones. If we do not, not only can we not comprehend, but we also deny the victims our basic solidarity as human beings who are involved in similar or potentially similar experiences.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much for your response. I ask Barbara Thimm from the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum to share her experience with us. In relation to the Holocaust or when discussing other genocides in your work at the museum and when discussing the Cambodian genocide, how can it be done without trivialising, relativising, or distorting the Holocaust/Shoah and other genocides? Do you have your own way to deliver this message in the Cambodian context?

Barbara Thimm: Thank you for the question. And I will try to answer questions two and three together.
For me, on the question about commonalities or differences, the more important question is the motivation behind them. We find the full range of denial, distortion, justification, identification, and so on. In different countries, you will have different levels and, in Cambodia, I think distortion in the sense of excusing, minimizing, or misrepresenting is the most common one.

Why does somebody deny or want to misinterpret history, or show it in a different way? And there you will find a lot of similarities. Sometimes, it is simply missing knowledge; sometimes, it is the inability to include historical facts into our personal or historical narratives; sometimes, it is politically motivated. I would answer the third question in a similar way.

So the question is: is it useful to refer to the Holocaust? I would say sure, but again, why are we doing it? Comparing is legitimate, but why are we referring to it? Do we do it to reach a deeper understanding, or to minimise another experience? That is why we always need to be very careful—to check our own motivations. To add historical knowledge to that? Sure. The more we know from each other, the better—and this is the main experience in Cambodia. Many Cambodians do not know much, from my experience, about other genocides and the Holocaust. When they get to know more, one very important—and kind of touching—experience is that they have the feeling that it is good to know that it is not something that happened only to them. That makes it easier to deal with and to communicate with the world, and to understand why these kinds of things could happen in their own country and in other countries.

I heard you, Konstanty, say that remembrance of the Holocaust has become universal. Having been now for quite some years in Asia, I would put it a little bit differently because I have seen that not much is known about the Holocaust. What followed the Shoah, though, is the creation of the term, ‘genocide’, which is universally known and referred to. We all know that mass crimes in the world are only recognised when they are labeled as genocide, and that is why this term has become so prominent and so problematic. We are all discussing this term, and countries are requesting that mass atrocities be labelled as genocide simply to be recognised in the world.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you for your interesting observations. I think we will have some time to discuss Cambodia later, and we have some participants who could probably share their experiences—for example, on the translation of *Anne Frank's Diary* in Cambodia. It will be interesting to hear also and to discuss this. I will now ask Mofidul Hoque from the Bangladesh Liberation Museum to respond to the question in the context of Bangladesh.

Mofidul Hoque: I think what Konstanty Gebert has said, that a coalition of humanity of the victims is very important, is correct. As a victim nation, there is an affinity, and there are references being drawn in many different ways from the experience of the Holocaust. There are two main areas now where we have to learn from the postconflict scenario of the Holocaust. One is the justice process. We initiated our own justice process after a long struggle for forty years in the courts. Outside of the courts, there were many references to the justice process that the allied forces in the global community could impose on the perpetrators. Another important thing is the psyche of the perpetrators. References are made here in many ways to the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Different cases come up in different scenarios. We recently hosted an exhibition at our museum with photographs by Marc Riboud, the famous French photographer who captured the last days of our liberation struggle with these atrocities and the victory in November and December. In that exhibition, we also showed the photographer's experience of meeting Klaus Barbie in the court. Barbie was in the resistance and he knew about the victims, and so it was a very difficult moment for him. Riboud found that Barbie otherwise looked like a common gentleman. The Eichman trial also made an impact in our country, and there are references in some poems to his personality and his role in the brutality. I think that is an important question, and one has to refer to the past experience—especially of the Holocaust. The Holocaust victim survivors may also inspire people in many ways.

I can cite one example of a five- or six-year-old girl. Her father had been brutally murdered, and the family had to move from one village to another. One day, when they were attacked by local collaborators with the Pakistani military, a few members of her family were also brutally murdered. And then she grew up and was educated, and she was studying and working in Sweden. She was always thinking how she could recollect her memory, which was incomplete; it was a broken memory. She was working at an old people's home, and there was a genocide survivor there, an elderly lady who had survived the concentration camp. Her experience of serving this survivor and the conversations they had inspired her to write her own memoir. That is a very powerful book. The inspiration came from a Holocaust survivor. In many other ways, I think there is a commonality among the victims and survivors, and also those who want to confront genocide and learn the lessons from past genocides. Comparisons will always be there, references will always be made, and comparative studies should always be welcomed.

These do not trivialise or cause relativism. I think that comes from genocide deniers. They will always try to put one genocide in such a comparison, but I think that victim nations, the survivors, always look for the healing process. When they learn about the suffering of other people in other times, in other places, they find their own commonality. So, I think that the more we work on such memorialisation and bring the experience of one nation to another, the more we can take a proper perspective. The victims always show us the real path; denialists have their own political motives and agendas. Sometimes, it is very crude—raising some conspiracy theory, a conspiracy to control the world or others—and it has nothing to do with academic or historical study. So, we think that this process should be restrained in whatever way it can be. *Anne Frank's Diary* is an all-time bestseller and there are more than five or six translations. One of our leading poets has done a good translation of *Anne Frank's Diary*. Young girls, especially, know her name. We at the Liberation Museum, in collaboration with the Anne Frank House Museum in Amsterdam, also maintain a knowledge exchange every year at our museum. It has been stopped for the last two years, but we will continue with that.
I think affinity, comparison, and reference should always be welcome.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you. Now, I will invite a friend and colleague, Nickey Diamond, from Myanmar, who works on hate speech against the Muslims in Myanmar and against the Rohingya. Nickey has also visited Poland, where he visited the Jewish museum and had a guided tour. We discussed the Holocaust and Jewish life in Poland. Nickey, given your experience here, how would you respond to this question?

Nickey Diamond: Thank you so much. I think this is a very important question to me because sometimes, when I talk to the victims of genocide in Myanmar, I understand their suffering. But, sometimes, we cannot comprehend the level or the degree of it. Comparison is important, but not who got more or less, or who suffered more or less. I think any genocide is a case of power abuse. The people in power try to manipulate their followers, their fellow citizens, to violate their rights. Preconditioning happened before the real killing by the people in power in Myanmar, like political and religious leaders. They manipulate and they try to collaborate with the propaganda machine and to promote or manipulate hatred against minority groups. In this sense, I am not in favour of promoting a comparison of the suffering. History, and what we can learn from it, is lesson led.

Some of my colleagues are already talking about the lack of education in Myanmar that has contributed to improper understanding of the Holocaust. A lot of people enjoy talking and participating in the propaganda, and they also enjoy sharing their hate speech on social media. Sometimes, they ignore the lack of education and the lack of awareness that contributed to that kind of situation. If we have education about history; if we have lessons in our curriculum, this will contribute much more to genocide prevention. That is why one of our colleagues, Ronan Lee, stated that the national government should recognise what happened in the past and introduce the curriculum for the whole country. Then we can enable prevention. Sometimes, I have felt like denying all these genocide deniers, but right now, people realise what happened to the Rohingya because of the military's brutal crackdown against the unarmed and peaceful protesters in the country, and all of their military actions—in the past and in the present. In the past, I was one of the people who spoke out, and when we talked to the government about human rights and minority rights in the country, only a few people listened to me. But writing down what happened, what the military contributed, has enabled everybody to understand human rights and the right to life. When people suffer, their sense of realisation increases. My point is that comparison should be focused more on preventive measures, so that we have a holistic understanding of the past and do not continue the genocide. This type of comparison will contribute to the prevention of genocide. So, my final word, prevention, is a must for everyone in this world. In this world, the reality is that we have failed on the prevention side throughout our history. To overcome this reality, we must have better education and better messaging in our curriculum, and then we will promote the prevention of future genocides.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you, Nickey. And thank you to all of the panelists. The third question, I think, is very important. Before we open the floor for a broader discussion, the last question is:

What do you consider the most effective strategy against genocide denial and distortion? Legal, educational, documentation of evidence, museum work or other? What is the most effective strategy, and what ought to be the arguments against denial and distortion?

I will begin with Konstanty Gebert.

Konstanty Gebert: Sadly, I'm not convinced that any strategy is effective. The denial and distortion of genocide will, I think, remain part of the public discourse. What we can try to do is limit its noxious impact. And from that point of view, probably all of the methods that you have mentioned in your question play a role, and all of them have their own problems.

The legal prosecution of genocide denial is very uneven and unequal in different countries. In many European countries, denying the Shoah is a criminal offence, but this does not apply to other genocides. Furthermore, the idea of prosecuting people for denying a historical event has already been creatively employed by nondemocratic governments, such as the one in Russia, which has made it a criminal offence to criticise the role that the country played in World War Two, like reminding others of its alliance with Hitler in the first two years of the war. So, it might well turn out that legal prosecution is, overall, more damaging to the interests of historical truth than protective of it.

Education. We tend to believe that education is the panacea: the ultimate method to prevent people from saying and doing evil things. This is based on what I believe to be an enlightenment illusion that says that if people do wrong, it is because they do not know what is right. I think that most Holocaust deniers, most genocide deniers, definitely know that what they're doing is wrong; but they do it to do something that they think is right, which is hurting their victims. They hate their victims, they want to hurt them, and they know that by denying the reality of their suffering, they will inflict psychological damage on them that is incomparable to any other. I am not sure that educating them that hurting people is a bad thing will change much in this situation.

The problem with museums is, of course, that the very existence of a museum is already a message. We go to museums as safe places where we can visit the past. If something is in a museum, almost by definition, it is not part of our reality, something that happened. The problem with genocide is that it is never over. Therefore, when we make museums of genocide, we tend to produce a false calming effect because the visitors will say, 'well, it was horrible, but it is over', and the best proof is that they have built a museum to educate us about it. I do not feel safe with the kind of safety message that museums tend to send. So, ultimately, I believe that we are doomed to face genocide distortion and denial as part of public discourse. The best we can do is to limit the damage those phenomena inflict—both on the victims and on everybody else—by subverting historical truth without falling into the lyrical trap that we can eliminate evil. At best, we can try to contain it. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much. We have two museum representatives on the panel, so I would like to ask Barbara Thimm to respond next.

Barbara Thimm: Thank you. I must say I can only follow the same line of being very sceptical, as Konstanty Gebert said. And I think part of it is that when we believe that we are working against denial, we hope that we are also doing something for nonrecurrence.

I do not believe that these are so close together. I am sure this is what we hope. But working at a museum—you can have museums and genocide in the same country. This is not what will really prevent genocide. At the same time, from working now to explain genocide at a museum, and before, when I worked in Buchenwald in Germany, I strongly believe that documenting the evidence is very, very important because the historical sites and the historical documents are our strongest, let me use this word, weapon against denial and against those who say this was all a fabrication by the Americans, or by the Vietnamese. The historical sites are of extreme importance.

But these museums are nothing if we do not have the knowledge in place. I learned in Buchenwald that 'memory needs knowledge'; the memorial site chose this as their motto. I am realising here in Cambodia that it is not good if we do not really have the knowledge in the team at the museum about what happened at Prison S-21, so that we can share it in a way that students get interested in it. I would add that having the knowledge or the education, the way we talk about history must be inviting, must be participatory, and must be presented in a way that we are not lecturing young people, but making them interested in this history. Sure, this is a very, very difficult history, but we have to share it. You can either frighten people and make them not want to come again, or you can talk to them, be interested in their view on this history, and how we deal together with this history. These young people will be the next generation to deal with it. It is not a surprise that, coming from a museum, I am strengthening this part. But the legal part is also very important for the really strong deniers. There is, I think, no other way. That is it for the moment. We can talk more in the discussion.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you. And now, we will return to Mofidul Hoque from the Liberation War Museum.

Mofidul Hoque: Well, we can share our experience, in which we have had to face the official distortion of history, the denial of history. After our victory in December 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent country, but it was a devastated land and we started almost from ground zero. In 1975, the founding father of the nation who had led the struggle, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was brutally murdered along with his family members. The military took power and the perpetrators of genocide became part of the ruling quarters. So, there was a long lineage of denial and distortion. The nation had to go through this and other traumatic experiences, and the museum was established in 1996. Thirty-five years after our independence, we found that there had not been much effort made to collect, conserve, and present the memories of our history. We made a call to the community that we wanted to do it from a neutral position. We wanted to highlight the people's participation in the whole struggle, and the suffering and adversity they went through. It started as a small museum at a rented house, but we were soon overwhelmed by the support we got from the community. We have felt very strongly since 1975—and we started in 1996, at a time when there was an official negation of history, as well as denial and distortion—that the main strength was memory. People were carrying their memories and doing whatever they could to pass them on to others. One of the major upsides we have seen is that a lot of memories have been written, and those memories have become very popular with the readers. We find that memories written by women have a greater attraction and power. There are many women who have become nationally known and respected because of their memories: what they have written about their families and their suffering during the nine months. There are also films, theatrical productions, and documentaries being made. So, art is one direction we consider for memorialisation. While we have lost everything, nobody can snatch memories from the hearts of the people. I think that is the main strength of whatever you want to confront: memory and memorialisation. Community memorialisation happens in many small ways; maybe with a humble construction, or some kind of public art, or some other way. People never allow their memories nor their right to justice to be forfeited. These two things go together, and I think that other things follow. To control, we think that it has to be a holistic approach; that we have to embrace an education system that museums and many other ways promote; the legal way. But, when you have nothing, then you have memories. We at our museum have found this to be the greatest strength. Almost every family suffered during the nine months of atrocities, so every family has a story to tell. We have an oral history program in which we try to engage the young generation to interview senior citizens, write it down, and send it to our museum. Now, we have a nationwide display and many, many human stories we can accumulate.

Through the museum, we can reflect the people's voices and stories, and I think that creates a bond with the visitors—especially the younger ones. Now, we are in a better situation. The government is introducing various education reforms. A justice system has been imposed and a trial is going on. There is a lot of support from the government. We have been able to build a permanent museum with the support of the government and of the community. Our journey has shown us that memory is the strength and community is the power, and we should integrate those in any kind of reform. We think that, of course, there is no particular prescription or solution, but it has to be a holistic approach, and it has to address the youth of today, since the atrocity happened fifty years ago. It is very important to reach out to the young generation, and their hopes and aspirations, in their own way. We think that engaging the new generation into the memorialisation process can create a new dimension. We think that every nation has great strength in its victimisation, in its suffering, and that gives us the strength to stand up and carry on the struggle and to learn lessons from the past. We are facing many brutal religious fundamentalist acts; attacks against cultural manifestations, liberal political groups, and top academics. It is not an easy struggle. We are in the thick of it, but we feel that history is on our side and that memory is our power and strength.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much. I see that we are out of time, but we can maybe stay a few minutes longer, if possible, because we started later. Nickey, maybe you can respond very quickly.

Nickey Diamond: Thank you so much, Natalia. I will speak very briefly. My background is in documenting human rights violations in Myanmar. I am really in favour of seeking justice and accountability for the Rohingya without impunity in the country; otherwise we cannot move forward. This does not mean that our education or our memorialisation are not important. To move forward, to bring lessons and a curriculum into our education, we must first show nobody should get away with genocide. We need a cancellation of impunity in Myanmar. The genocide perpetrators are getting smarter and smarter. In the past and in the present, they know how to, for example, defend genicide, violations, and war crimes. The legal cases are providing them with a space, an opportunity to deny and to get away with the genocide. Ending impunity and making them accountable is important. And then we can move on with education and memorialisation by building a museum and working on that. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much. I see we have several questions and comments on the chat, and I will read some of them: 'Thank you so much, Barbara Thimm, for your concerns about Cambodian genocide—especially the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. But the question is, who is really behind this genocide?'. The second one reads: 'It seems that governments with experience of instigating genocide created the art of denial and legitimise these atrocities to buy benefits. How can people assert legislation that will safeguard minorities and disadvantaged groups against the genocidal tendencies of some governments?'.
I ask the panelists who would like to respond, comment, or reflect on this question.

Barbara Thimm: Well, I can try to answer the first question. I am not 100% sure whether I have interpreted it correctly. There was nobody behind the Cambodian mass atrocities. Pol Pot and his comrades were all Cambodians. The other question: by whom were they influenced? By whom were they supported? That is another question, but if the question is, 'was there somebody behind, in the meaning of "were they ordered to do so" ', then I can only say no.

Natalia Sineaeva: Perhaps you would like to reflect on all of the discussions and to say some last words. We will begin with Mofidul Hoque.

Mofidul Hoque: When I think of the ongoing Rohingya genocide, it has a link with the Bangladesh genocide of 1971, and our nation stands with the Rohingya refugees because of our past experience. We were refugees in 1971. The issue of justice is also very important—especially so for the ongoing genocide. For us, during the nine-month genocidal brutality, no steps were taken by the international community for justice, but there were demands raised both nationally and by civil society. With the Rohingya, it is quite interesting that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have taken up the case. The ICC has done that because Bangladesh is a signatory to the Rome Statute, but Myanmar is not. They made an interesting observation that since Bangladesh is a signatory, and the Rohingya were attacked and pushed back into the territory of Bangladesh, Bangladesh is a party to the relevant UN Gonvention, and so they can take up the case. I think it is very important to stand behind that justice process very strongly. We have also found that we have to struggle for justice, but memory has given us strength to carry forward that struggle. It took us almost forty years to bring the local collaborators and perpetrators to trial. We still have major war criminals, Pakistani executors of genocidal brutality, outside of our jurisdiction. I think there is a logistical question about how you address genocides that happened before the Rome Statute was adopted. The ICC will not go for past justice, but society and the international community needs to impose justice and unity.

There are many questions around genocide. I think that what is very important, but not addressed much, is the politics of genocide. Who was behind that Pol Pot regime? It was during the Cold War, and there were others who actually stood behind them. Genocide does not happen in a vacuum. This is also true for the genocide of Bangladesh and also for the Rohingya genocide. I think that it is important to understand the politics of genocide, the power play, and we still have a lot to learn from our experiences. This also applies to ongoing genocidal brutality, which is unfortunate, but we need to take more action and more determined steps.

Natalia Sineaeva: I also think that responsibility is very important when we talk about genocide: not only saying that someone is guilty, but also thinking about our own societies. Maybe I am sharing my own experience, as someone from Eastern Europe, where we have difficult debates about the past, about the role our own people played during the Holocaust, and about the different types of collaborators, upstanders, and bystanders. It is also important to think critically and assess yourselves, not only others. It is a very complex and difficult discussion, so I will ask our panelists to comment.

Barbara Thimm: As an educator, I think we need to go beyond always saying 'we have to learn from the past, draw lessons from the past,' and we need to be more precise. We are not going to convince young people or others by always repeating this, but not saying what we mean by it. I find different answers in different countries. One country says 'for us it means democracy,', for others it means peace, for yet others another answer. What do we mean by that, and how do we really want to achieve it in each country? It is most important where the minorities or whichever group is more secure than they were before. How precisely do we want to achieve that? If we cannot answer that question, we cannot be convincing in our attempts.

Konstanty Gebert: May I follow up on this?

Natalia Sineaeva: Yes. Before that, I will read a brief comment from the chat, from Sharon: 'I am a survivor of the Cambodian genocide, and I believe it happened. I am a living witness to the situation. I saw it. And I'm asking for justice for my people, so that the world can see it,'. So, please, Konstanty.

Konstanty Gebert: On Barbara's very important comments, I think that the answer to the question you raise is not talking, but doing. I would like to offer a very simple example from Milan in northern Italy. There is a Holocaust memorial on the railroad station, that is track 21, the track that was used under the German occupation to send off trains of Italian Jews to Auschwitz. After many years, the Italian railroad operators agreed to allow the Jewish community to set up a Shoah memorial at track 21, and it was what you would usually expect: there is a railroad car, photographs, and recorded testimonies—the stuff that you always find at this kind of educational institution. The one strange thing there is a huge sculpture standing on the railroad track. It is a three-dimensional representation of just one word: 'indifference'. Because, as Liliana Segre, an Italian Jewish survivor of Auschwitz had said: 'What sent us away to Auschwitz was not hatred; it was indifference. The hatred would not have been enough,'. During the heyday of the migration crisis in 2015, if you were to visit that particular centre, at the time it closes at 19:00, you would see some strange activities. As visitors were escorted out, volunteers would show up and pull out beds and tables. The Shoah memorial would transform for the night into a reception centre for refugees. This was done at the insistence of the survivors against some scepticism in the Jewish community. Eventually, since most of the refugees were Muslims, the centre was run jointly by the Jewish community and a Muslim charity. I am pretty sure that the people who found their beds for the night at that centre had no idea where they were. And it doesn't matter, because the practical educational lesson went beyond the help that was given over time to 8,500 people at the centre. The message to everybody was: we refuse to be indifferent.
I believe that, in this sense, this was a much more powerful educational experience than if they had built a huge museum on the spot, which would attract a million visitors per year. Ultimately, it is doing, not talking.

Natalia Sineaeva: Any other reflections from the panelists?

Mofidul Hoque: Well, I think that is a great example. As Barbara has said, it is not only that you have learnt from the past, but what the lesson is for us, too. It is very important that we promote our liberal values, and also that we accommodate religious diversity. We think that our history has proved that you must respect the needs of other people. Pluralism, diversity, and respect for otherness: these are the lessons we try to promote. But, it is very important how, in practical ways, you transform that as an educational exercise. I think that creativity is an essential component of that. As Konstanty Gebert has said, it is the bridge to creativity and it is bringing the community together. Thus, I think respect for diversity and inclusivity are the most important lessons we need to promote. We think that when we talk about lessons from the past, we go beyond that two-nation theory that divided the Indian subcontinent; that Hindu and Muslims are different and belong to two nations. We work for ethnic, national, and linguistic identity, and we work with great inspiration from our language struggle. We continue that struggle, but I think we all have to learn from each other. That is really important and I have found this panel really fascinating for us. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much. I think that Sayana Ser wanted to say something from Cambodia.

Sayana Ser: Yes, thank you. I want to respond to the first question. I would like to add to what Barbara, professor Pankowski, and the other panelists have said. There are so many questions, but I come back with the following:
Several years ago, Cambodians still found it unbelievable that Khmer had killed Khmer. They are all people. Maybe they found a reason to believe that it was the other from the outside—maybe the Thais, but mostly the Vietnamese and Chinese. But I would say it is more that there is a game of this kind in our written education and in critical discourse analysis, and that is why the efforts of the NGOs should focus more on this kind of education and outreach programmes—especially with the International Criminal Court, as we also have the Cambodian hybrid tribunal. That is how we can find truth and justice, I think. This is also playing an important role in the legal system in Cambodia. There should be more awareness among the people about this tribunal. I think it has been a success to some degree—especially with the legal structure in the country. Justice has a very different meaning for the public. Different people define justice differently. To find the truth, I think the answer is with the International Criminal Court, the tribunal, education, the documentation that we have, and the evidence from the testimonies. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum has added many testimonies, some of which have been shown there. Maybe this is a bit of a challenge, a difficult way to accept the truth, but what is truth and reconciliation? Nowadays, we still have people who believe otherwise. They worship Pol Pot in the border areas that were the former strongholds of Khmer Rouge. I want to strengthen this and add to it. Education is very important, as it is the motive behind this belief. It should be compulsory to study comparisons between the Shoah and other genocides to have more insight and understanding into the different-but-similar nature behind the motives and the people. What is the right thing to do? Is killing people the right thing to do?
This really is a challenging subject, but we need to have more education, more awareness, and more consensus to raise concern. I think we need to continue even more with this kind of education in our region to raise awareness. Thank you.

Natalia Sineaeva: Thank you very much, and thank you to all of our panelists: Barbara Thimm of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Mofidul Hoque of the Bangladesh Liberation Museum, Konstanty Gebert, and Mickey Diamond. Thank you very much for joining us today and for the session, and I hope we will continue the discussion.

Today, I think there have been many points that we can discuss further. Within our project, we will have a postsymposium publication in which we will refer to many of these points, and we will come back to you soon and invite your cooperation. Thank you very much. We are honoured to have all of you here. We have had a wonderful panel during this symposium. I wish to remind you that tomorrow, we have a presentation of two museum initiatives in Thailand. We will discuss the inquiry into the past in Thailand: the 6th October Museum project initiative and Thailand's Patani Art Space. The Thailand's Patani Art Space will be presented by its director, who is also of Muslim background. It is important for us that we are inclusive; that we have diversity in our speakers, and so we also wish to invite all of you.

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Outlining Discussions

Presentation of two museum initiatives in Thailand and discussion of the 6 October Museum Project: Documentation, Archives, and Patani Artspace in Thailand's conflict zone in the 'Deep South' by Patporn (Aor) Phoothong, Researcher of the 6 October Museum Project, Bangkok, Thailand and Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh, Founder and Director of Patani Artspace, Patani, Thailand

Verita Sriratana: Welcome to the first session of the final day of the symposium. I am deeply honoured to be your moderator today. We are going to hear two presentations by two experts about two museums, as well as cultural space initiatives in Thailand. I will introduce each of the speakers in the English language before their presentations. Each of the presentations will be in the Thai language, and we have an interpreter with us—Mr. Sareun. The first presentation about the 6 October Documentation and Archives project will be delivered by Patporn (Aor) Phoothong, who is one of the cofounders of that initiative. The second presentation, on Patani Artspace in the conflict zone in Thailand's Deep South, will be delivered by Dr Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh, who is the founder and director of Patani Artspace. Everyone is invited to submit their questions in the chat box.

Please allow me to introduce the first speaker, Patporn (Aor) Phoothong, a professional researcher whose work focuses on museums and archives of past political violence and ongoing violent conflicts. Her current research involves a study of the establishment of a peace museum connected to the Deep South. She is one of the cofounders of the October 1976 Massacre Museum that commemorates some of the most atrocious events in Thailand's history at Thammasat University. She is a working team member for the documentation of the October 6 Archives. She is also a team member of the Deep South Museum and Archives in Thailand, which aims to use the museum and archive as a sociopolitical space to confront human rights violations, injustice, inequality, and the culture of impunity. Please give a round of applause for Patporn. The screen is yours.

Patporn (Aor) Phoothong: Hello. First of all, I would like to thank Natalia very much for inviting me here today. I feel honoured, happy, and excited to exchange knowledge and to talk to everybody. Before we talk about our museum project, I would like everyone to look at these two photographs. I apologise for the rather horrifying pictures, but these are the evidence that indicates how Thai society has lived with a culture of impunity, how we have lived in silence of our traumatic history, and how important it is for us to communicate through a museum that handles the subject of political violence.

This photograph was taken on 6 October, 1976. It depicts the cremation of four bodies. We do not know how many women and men were among these four. Upon scrutinising this photograph, we can see that there were many children, and the photograph indicates what was happening: the cremation of students' bodies, of ordinary people's bodies, which occurred in the morning in front of so many people. And likewise for the second photograph.

This is one of a set that won a Pulitzer Prize. It also depicts an event that occurred on the morning of 6 October, 1976. And when we scrutinise it, we can see what was happening: what we are seeing in front of us happened amid the background of this photograph, which is Wat Phra Kaew, or Grand Palace, a holistic temple that is central to Thailand. The building on the right is the Supreme Court, and the treeline on the other side is Thammasat University. We can see people smiling and laughing. We can see many children. And, forty-five years later, we have no idea who these people were—in either photograph. We still do not know, forty-five years after the 6 October event, who the victims were. We cannot identify the people in these photographs. The victims have never received any amelioration and nor have the culprits received any punishment. If we consider the documental evidence, we can see that. There is information that indicates a lot of people were involved in the event, which we call a massacre. There were many people, including ordinary people. We have evidence to support this. There is evidence that a particular institution was involved, and this made Thai society believe that discussion of the event was a taboo subject; a sensitive subject; a subject that should not be talked about; if you talk about it, it might bring back conflict and violence. And I believe that this silence reflects not only the community of museums in Thailand, but also the structural, legal, and regulatory issues that our country continues to face, the education system of the country, and the political intentions of those who are in power. And this is the reason why we chose to do a museum project: we want the museum to be a sociopolitical space that can relate to such issues. And we decided to prioritise the discussion of the massacre on 6 October first.

This is the creative team and the founders. When we talk about the museum that addresses the 6 October events, it comes not only from me, but also from our friends who share the same ideology and those with whom we work. Some are featured in this photograph.

Many of you may not be familiar with the events of 6 October. I am going to summarise them briefly. Police officers, the border police, and right-wing activist groups surrounded students who were holding a peaceful protest at Thammasat University. The students were protesting against the return of a military despot, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who had left the country after 14 October 1973. In Thailand, that was considered a powerful moment for democracy. And when he wanted to re-enter the country in the middle of 1976, the students and the public did not support it, which led to protests across Thailand. In Nakhon Pathom, many activists led the demonstrations, and two electricians, who were displaying posters that opposed Kittikhachorn's return, were arrested. Both of them were murdered and hung in public to show the people that if they protested or committed any act of rebellion, they too would end up like that. The protesters' bodies were hung at a gate in a deserted area. The deaths led to protests for justice and an uprising against the return of Kittikachorn simultaneously. The result was the protests between 4 and 6 October, 1976. They were suppressed in a manner that was extremely violent for Thai society. It was not only the shooting at a group of students and the public, but also the assault of their corpses and lives in front of a large number of spectators in the middle of the day. There were photographs and evidence that showed how many corpses were assaulted. The students' corpses were stripped naked as if to condemn them. In some cases, individuals urinated on the dead bodies.

We try to use the museum's status as a sociopolitical space to address such abnormal issues through the presentation of facts, and to invite the audience to question the abnormality of Thai society. We are in an area that witnesses deaths. We are under a kind of structure and law that is problematic. How is it that the authorities can enforce excessive violence repeatedly, for decades? How is it that the sufferers, victims, or victims' families continue to live in silence? Why were they incapable or did not have the opportunity to speak out? We want to invite the public to address these questions and to join us in the fight against the culture of impunity.

Our project is new and small-scale. It is voluntary and we receive funding from private entities. We have projects, activities, and seminars, and we organise training in collaboration with other organisations. We have had two exhibitions that I would like to use as examples.

In 2019, we held an exhibition that was very simple. We showed three pieces of evidence. The first was the gate where the event occurred; where they hung the two electricians from Nakhon Pathom.

The second was the jeans stripped from one of the students who died on 6 October. This student had worked as a security guard for friends and people who had joined the meeting that morning. His family had kept his jeans in good condition.

The third piece of evidence was a megaphone, which, as you can see, is full of bullet marks. This exhibition displayed only three seemingly mundane objects that were not new compared to other exhibitions or museums overseas. But in Thailand, we had barely had any presentation of concrete evidence such as this. For these three pieces of evidence, we found that there were many interested people. Thousands visited our exhibition. We simply disseminated brief facts and let the three pieces of evidence initiate dialogue directly with the audience regarding what happened. The power of the evidence reflected that the deceased existed and had families. It showed that the event actually happened. Our first exhibition helped people understand what we, the 6 October Museum Project, were thinking and what we will do next.

We started to tell more complex stories when we held the second exhibition. We wanted to use augmented reality to transport visitors back to see what happened on 6 October and before that day by showing the evidence, the witnesses, and the photographs. It is like we replicated the past and put it on a tablet.

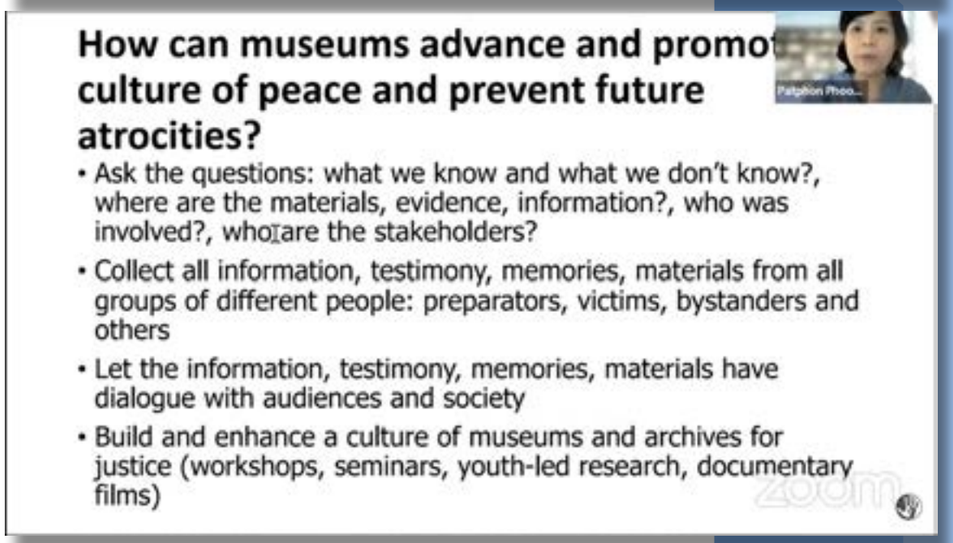
Here you can see that previously it was a normal photograph of a tree line. On 6 October 1976, that tree line was where the protestors' bodies were hung. We have managed to identify at least five bodies. When we watched it on a tablet, we could see the black shadows replicating the events that occurred on the day. We tried to use technology to enhance communication.

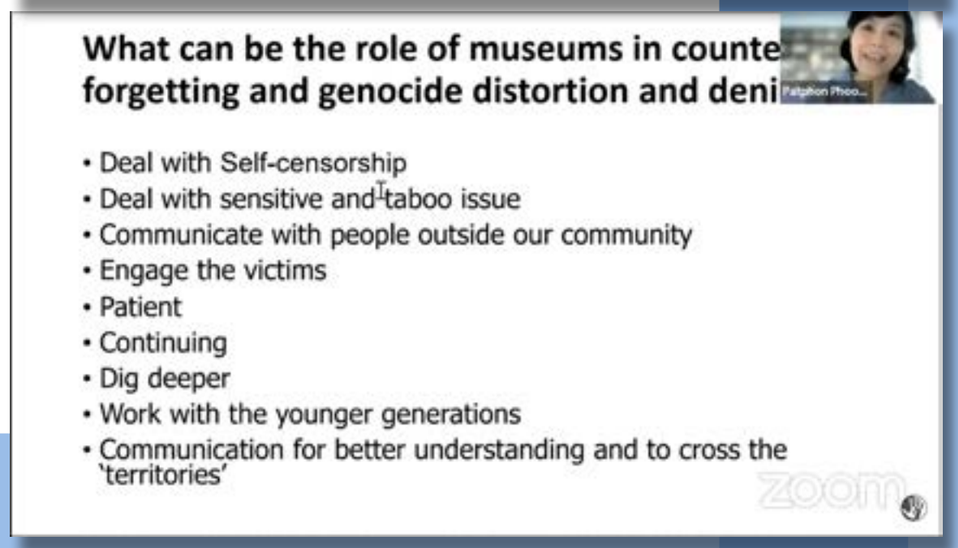
And this is the red gate—the gate that we brought back for the second year of the exhibition. We could see that it was just an ordinary gate. But when we looked at it through augmented reality, we could see the images of the event: murder, loss, and violence occurred on this gate.

These are examples of our work, which we communicated using evidence to share facts.

We have been working with Thai society for the last seven years. This reaches beyond the present: we look back many years, even decades, Thai society is the kind that features a solid military culture. The military infiltrates every dimension and every section of society.

As a result, some stories cannot be told. Some stories become sensitive issues and are controlled in the name of national stability. We can see that Thailand does not have space for the history of ordinary people. If you come to Thailand, you can see that there are museums and national archives. Our country does not lack a museum culture; however, we are significantly limited in telling the stories of ordinary people—especially regarding loss and violence—in public spaces like museums. We even have limitations in recording and keeping documental evidence—both the documenting and the gathering of it — for communicating with the public. In terms of violence-related issues, we do have discussions about them, but we are limited, and only a few groups have begun to address them. We can see that many more groups will start to work in a similar way in the future. Thailand also has a strong culture of impunity. It is significant and extremely powerful. And with such a culture, we see that authoritarian officers rarely get punished when political violence occurs and sufferers do not get amelioration. Rarely is there any concrete action. Even if there is some kind of amelioration for the sufferers, the action taken against the officers is unclear. And these things—the military culture, perspectives, and views, in addition to certain political issues that are deemed forbidden or taboo—ultimately lead to silence and ignorance. And this is a crucial factor in the deteriorating capability of sufferers, victims, and even representatives of the civil society sector like myself to talk about such issues.





From my experience establishing the museum for two years and from my past research and experience working in Southern Thailand, the team and I learned that we wanted to work on a museum and archives that will achieve our ultimate goal of challenging and fighting the culture of impunity. We started to think about how to begin. First, we need to keep asking questions so that our work becomes clear. We have to ask ourselves what we ultimately want to achieve, what we are communicating, in what direction we are striving, what we are collecting, and what we are facing. We need to gather evidence and documentation from all groups of people: victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. There is literature on this; however, we can see its limitations. And there are also challenges in working, collecting data, and interviewing the victims. Ultimately, this is how we intend to secure justice for the victims. And we think that Thai society needs to have a dialogue on the difference between understanding and granting justice to subjects. And this is what I have been telling myself when I think that I have to collect data on victims or those on the other side of the political spectrum. We believe that museum work is not a one-person job. We need to build networks and alliances with those who share our views and ideology while working on our museum. This will strengthen our work even further.

How can work against the forgetting and distortion of data when working on the museum project or the national archives? From our experience, we need to believe that there are many people out there who are mature. If we believe this, we will choose to do less self-censoring, and we will be able to communicate with the target group with respect—no matter who they are. We achieve that by sharing facts and by expressing our emotions. Believing in the maturity of people leads to mutual respect; our communication will be polite, not judgmental. This type of communication will lead us to understand those on the other side of the ideological spectrum. At the end of the day, we cannot avoid them—even though we might not be able to collaborate with them, or not want to interact with them, or continue to hold certain ideas; ultimately, however, we must accept that no matter what they do, we have to live together. We cannot go anywhere. How can the museum transcend ideological differences and, at the same time, invite the other side to get to know us? This is challenging. I cannot quite do this either, and I still hold certain prejudices that I have not overcome yet. But I think this is the approach that the museum should take. We are trying to work with the victims and inviting them to participate. We listen to their perspectives and experiences, as some subjects are vulnerable and traumatic. When we listen to them and allow them to participate, they will be able to share information and observations, and make us more careful in how we work. We believe, most importantly, that change—what we are fighting for and how we are dealing with the challenges—does not occur overnight; it is an ongoing process that requires patience and continuous effort. We believe that museum work needs to dig deep and keep going, and that requires patience. Working with the younger generations, we believe that political violence and traumatic history are not personal losses; nobody owns the subjects nor the space. We must invite people to join this space and pass down the work. We must also think about how to increase their skills and potential to work in this field. For the last point, amid the changes and the current regression of Thai society, we think that working on archives, data, and museums represents a restoration of the hope that one day we will see, speak out, overcome, and restore something that is lost; the hope that one day, the culture of impunity in Thailand will gradually lessen; and the hope that we will meet friends who share the same ideologies and similar thoughts, making us feel that we are not in this alone. Thank you very much.

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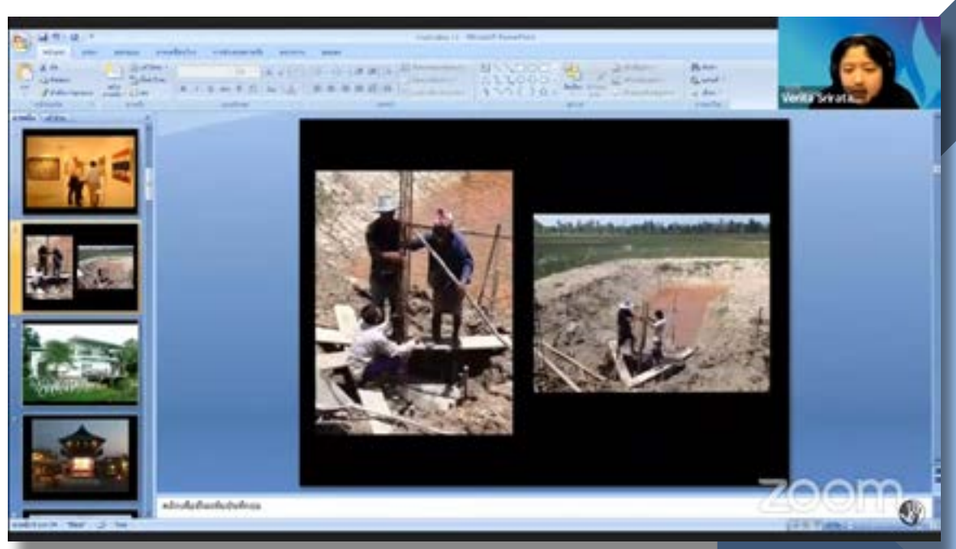
Verita Sriratana: Thank you for this insightful and inspiring presentation. I can say, as someone who had an opportunity to visit the exhibition in 2020, how virtual reality brought the past alive in front of my eyes. What you do is very important.

Next, allow me to introduce Mr Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh, who was born in Patani Province in Thailand in 1983. He holds a BA degree in visual arts from the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Prince of Songkla University as well as a Master's Degree in Visual Arts (Thai Arts) from the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University. Currently, he works as an art teacher at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at Prince of Songkla University. The screen is yours.

Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh: I am a teacher and an artist who works on contemporary arts in Patani. I established Patani Artspace after violent events in the three provinces of Southern Thailand in 2014. We use the artistic process as our driving force by using arts, artists, and creative space to initiate dialogue between local people and beyond. The unrest has made people wary of each other—whether that is between Muslims and Thai Buddhists, or even among local Muslims. Nonlocal people, in particular, cause wariness to increase. Many people do not dare visit the three southern provinces. We established our art space to organise activities that balance out people's feelings, allowing them to understand the perspectives of the three provinces in terms of culture and activities.

Initially, we rented the space to run our activities. We converted it into an art gallery. Due to our limited budget, we financed the project from our personal funds. Since then, we have expanded into the village where I was born.

Now, we have moved out of the city centre and expanded the space into the community. These photographs show the atmosphere of how we, the artists, built up the museum and art gallery ourselves. We hold seminars, exhibitions, and other artistic activities. We invite curators, collectors, and artists to discuss local subjects. I think it is crucial that this space generate conversations and send a message to the people—especially on events happening in the local area. This is because people from outside largely access news from mainstream sources, which is mostly about violence. This makes people feel that this space is so terrifying that they cannot see the beauty of its context—even local people. That is why I use this space to invite everyone to express themselves and run activities freely, in the form of seminars, political societies, communal activities, and local games. We are trying to bring people together instead of being wary of each other.

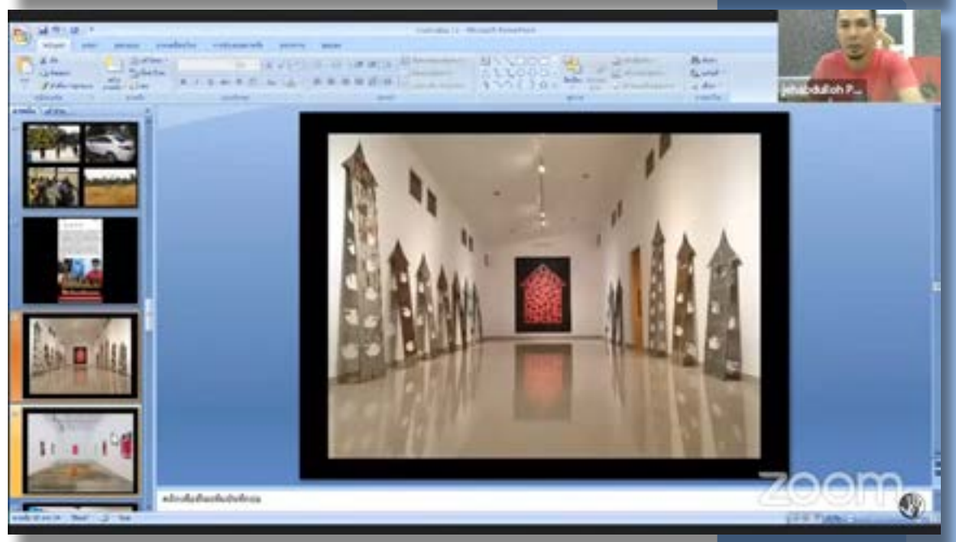


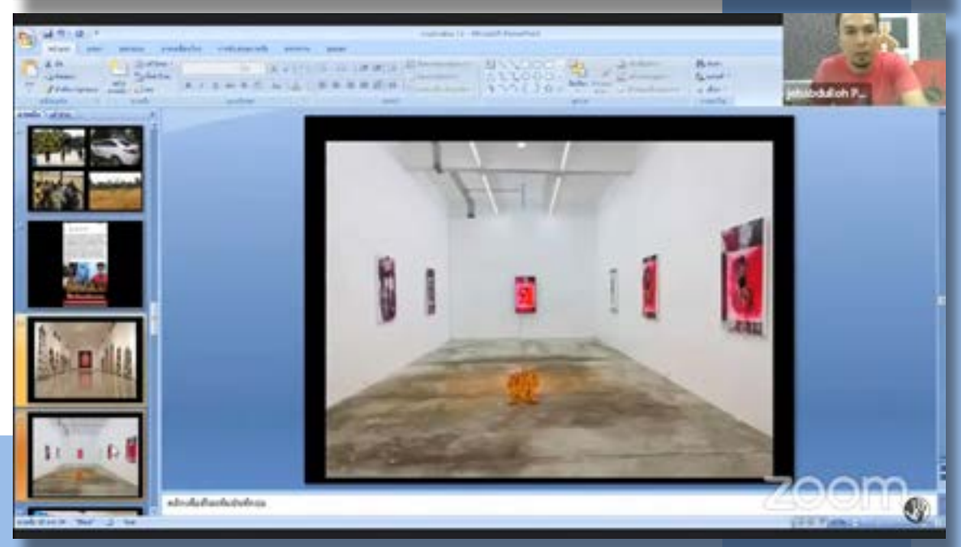
We hold musical events. This is sensitive for the government—especially when the events concern violence and injustice that has occurred in the local area. I have been threatened occasionally; officers from the security services who came to ask about the events that we held. But there are also many groups of people who have been trying to help us. Previously, the International Committee of the Red Cross helped sponsor and encourage us. These difficulties, of course, discourage us from doing the work, but we think it is necessary to hold these events to convey important truths about violent situations that have occurred locally.

The latest exhibition was a campaign against government officers committing assaults. I was in trouble with the military's Information Operations (IO), who quite discredited me. Many people were worried that I would be harmed. I was trying to use my status as an academic at the university and run activities that would tell the truth. I think that IO is part of the effort to prevent the right things that should happen in society from happening. We understand this.

This exhibition shows torture. Recently, we tried to conduct a campaign by inviting local artists to express and communicate that such events did happen and did not only happen in the three provinces; rather, they happened across Thailand. The issues in the three provinces are quite extreme; so much so that many people have died, and this has happened continuously. The exhibition was initiated by the Duy Jai Group, which interviewed and invited those who had been tortured to express themselves through art. They could not tell their stories using their voices, but they could through their paintings that depicted how and where they were tortured. This is an event that I found very traumatic, and it affected their ways of life. This is the poster from our latest exhibition. We tried to replicate the event based on the interviews of those who were tortured. It showed the torture processes, how they were performed. We used artistic symbols.

Recently, we arranged an event at which artists involved themselves in live performances that led to the audience participating interactively in the torture.

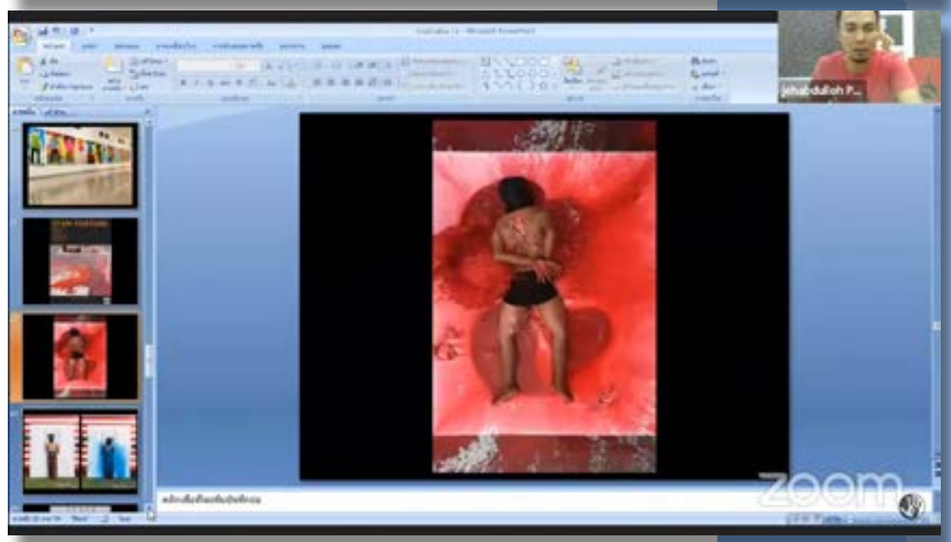


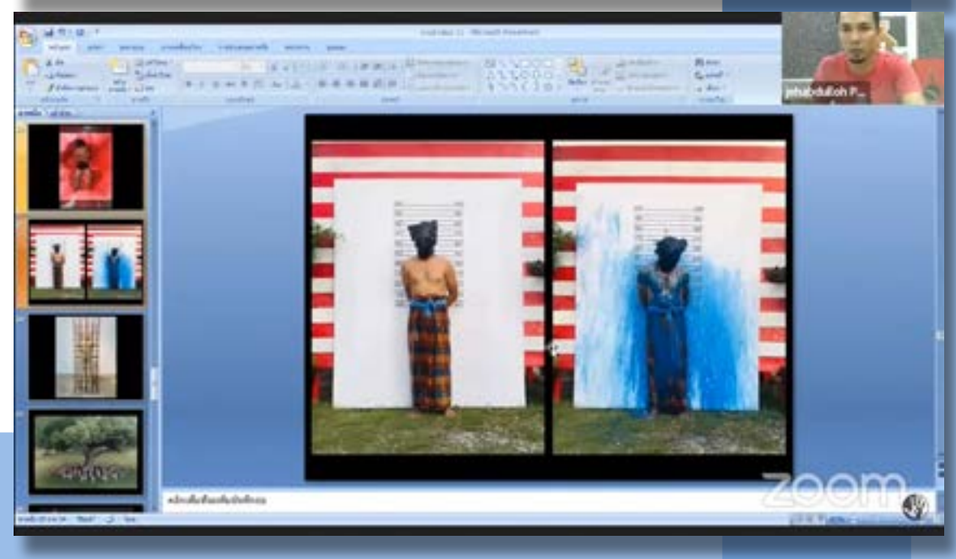


This is one artist's work that we displayed. And this is another one—it is my piece. I did this at the time of the Tak Bai incident in 2004[1], and it was displayed at the university. Eventually, it was removed because it conveyed a different perspective. We are trying to present it so viewers can become aware of the problems that using violent force to dissolve demonstrations causes. Looking from the other perspective—of those who think differently—they saw this as provocative and ineffective; it should not be displayed, so it got removed. This is how we encounter those who have different views. Nevertheless, our key goal is to present the truth about what happened in the local area.

It is local artists' responsibility to present these stories. They are key messages that stimulate society. This work addresses the martial and special law that has been persistently applied to the three provinces, affecting how the locals live their lives. Officers can threaten local people; they can enter their homes and arrest them whenever they want. This makes us feel uncomfortable. The thousands of checkpoints in the local area also affect how people live. The authorities check our identification cards and information, violating the freedom in how we live our lives. It also causes road accidents, sometimes fatal ones, which occur as a result of having so many checkpoints.

I believe that these are all connected to the problem-solving process, which we have to re-evaluate with those who hold the legal power. These are pieces of work that attempt to reflect how violence affects women whose husbands have died. They have to take care of their families. They are under a huge burden to take care of their children. This misery makes the villagers feel that what happened in the name of the 'men in black' led to violence in their lives. Here is some of the work in the local area.



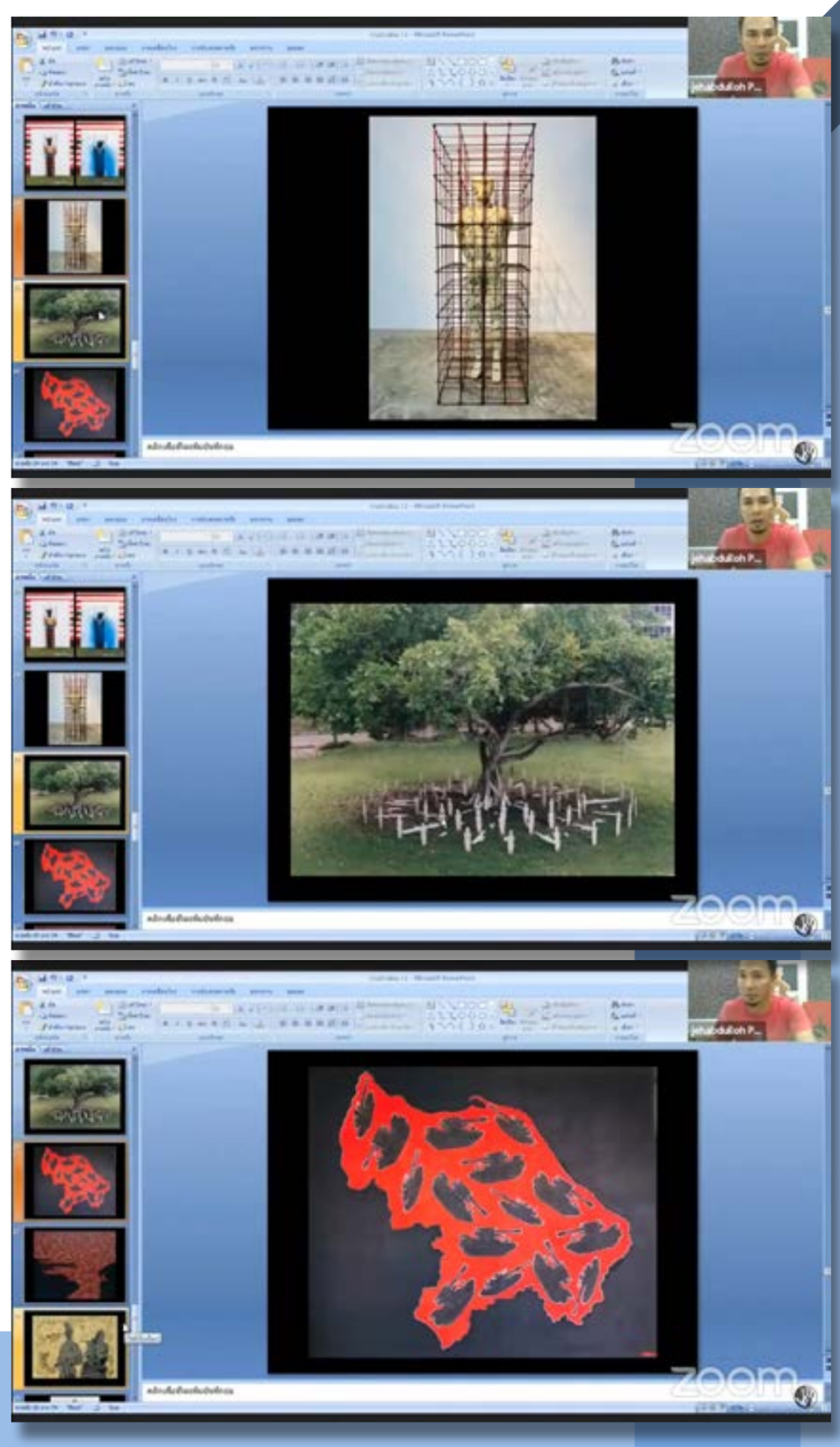


1 Ed.: Learn more: https://holocausteducation-asia.org/chapter-iv-thailand.

At the same time, we present works that represent local identities, of the Malay and of minorities. There is beauty in the tradition and culture. For example, this work depicts the Goh-Laeh boat. It received a national award, and the contest panel said that they should censor the name because it was a threat to national security. I was quite confused as to why they had to go so far as censoring the name. The name says 'local Malays of Patani', but they wanted to replace it with 'Thai–Malays', which reflects that even a positive cultural issue made them wary of otherness. This impacts the people who live here. They are trying to use centrality to subjugate local people—those who come from a different culture. The artworks we display represent negative and positive issues, including violence and cultural beauty. Our main aim is to reflect the truth about what happened in the past, what is happening in the present, and what will happen in the future. We want to communicate this to people to balance the area's barbaric and violent image. Actually, there is such a beautiful culture here. What makes such violence occur? We try to raise questions and bridge the gap between people and the local context.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you so much, Mr Jehabdulloh. What you are doing is so valuable, and I really like how the artworks relate to women's experiences. It is very touching. We will talk about issues of threats in detail later. Before we proceed to the Q&A, I would like to add to Mr Jehabdulloh's presentation in English. He is a political artist, as well as the founder of Patani Artspace. You may be interested to know that in February 2021, an exhibition called the Patani Art of Struggle that showcased his art in the span of fifteen years was held at the German Embassy in Bangkok. It was remarkable. We need international support for this. We really commend the German embassy in Bangkok for their support. Mr Jehabdulloh is currently curating an exhibition, Stop Torture, that involves seven artists and himself raising awareness of torture as human rights violation. Go and visit it at Patani Artspace. Now it is time for the Q&A.

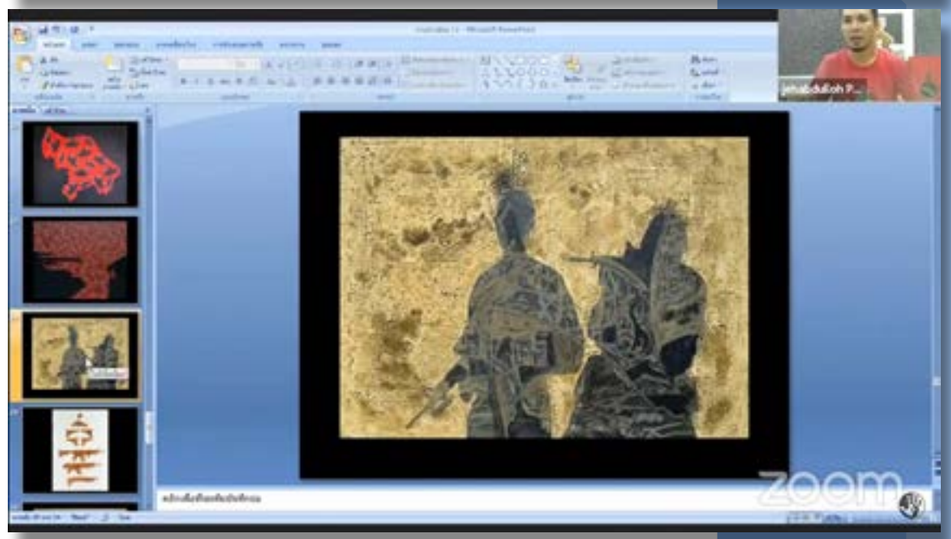
Our speakers have talked about challenges, threats, and the trouble caused by the IO. The name on the artwork was changed for a trivial reason. It is an extreme nationalism discourse or something of the sort. I would like you to share with the audience the positive feedback from those who visited your exhibitions that shows there is still hope. Perhaps it is the younger generations who told you about how it changed their lives. What were the visitors' reactions?

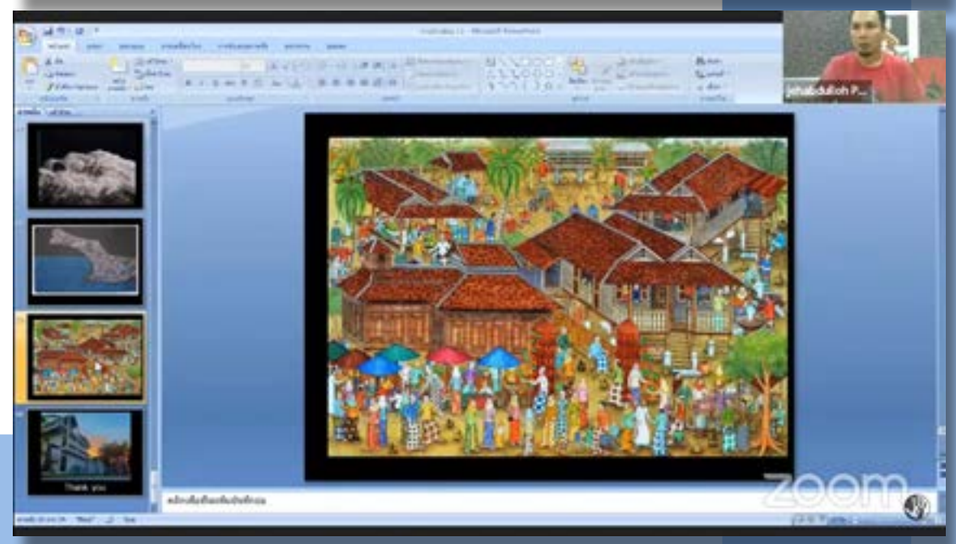


Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh: What keeps us going and gives us encouragement is the people who come to our exhibitions. Mostly, they are glad to have this kind of space to express themselves. They say that they want this kind of space. It is tough for us to have a safe space. Communicating messages via artworks is an act of storytelling through pure wisdom: expressing ourselves with no violence. We use soft power. The fight in the present should be fought using wisdom, in a way that does not involve violence. This reflects the civilisation of the country. I feel encouraged by this. It makes me feel that younger generations—and even older people who are uncomfortable with such processes—are glad to have this kind of space, so that they can relax. More importantly, nonlocal people are thankful for the space attracting visitors to Patani. When they go through checkpoints, they arrive at Hat Yai airport—they have to go through Hat Yai to get to Patani. Once they enter Patani, there is a checkpoint and they see more along the way. They have to go through countless checkpoints before reaching the gallery. And they are terrified when they see the checkpoints. But when they see the art space, it balances out their feelings. The space revolutionises and changes their feelings, making them eager to learn from it.

Verita Sriratana: That is great. I have never been, but it is definitely a must. Thank you. I wish you all the best. Perhaps this is a gradual change, but it represents hope for those who are doing the work. Thank you for sharing. Ms Aor, please.

Patporn (Aor) Phoothong: Last year, when we held the ten-day Kwean exhibition in which we used augmented reality, it was very crowded. There were 10,000 visitors. We were pretty surprised by such a large number. It was also mentioned in the media. This kind of exhibition rarely receives much attention. We met a lot of younger people. Initially, we were worried about the violent photographs, so we wrote a warning that children under eighteen should be accompanied by a parent or a teacher. But, there were a lot of pre-highschool as well as highschool students. And I told them it was rather scary and that I would show them around. And they said they knew, to a certain extent, about what happened on 6 October. Some knew quite a lot because they had found it on Google. Of course, the information was not new to them; we merely presented it in a visual, concrete, and accessible way. The information is already on the internet and on the project's website. But this space is for generating dialogue; for meeting friends who share the same thoughts and similar ideologies; for exchanging their experiences. Perhaps we are lucky in arranging this kind of exhibition under the current political society, within the past seven years. Young people in Thailand are being driven to ask older people more questions and discover more information on what happened. It is not that our work is good or new: we are lucky to be able to host this kind of work in times of frustration, which make people eager to discover more, to make friends, and to have dialogues with each other.





Verita Sriratana: Thank you so much. As far as I understand, what you and your team have created is not only an exhibition; rather it is a space—just like the Patani Artspace. It is a shared space where we feel safe and meet like-minded people. It is like we are the same family, we are friends. I think that that is very important. We have a question from Rafal about the challenges faced connected with denial of violence. What are they? How do you deal with them?

Patporn (Aor) Phoothong: Many people and institutions were involved in the 6 October event. All of this took place under Thai law, which neither supports nor is conducive to freedom of speech. This is an important obstacle in discussing and communicating structural or cultural violence in a public space. And we think that we are lucky to work with artists, architects, and editors. When we talk, we do not censor ourselves, but choose how to represent ourselves. If you read the captions or look at the photographs in our exhibitions, we present themes between the lines. For example, the photograph I showed you at the beginning of how a person was hung in the presence of the public crowd. When we look at it—we bought the photo from AP, so it is clear—we can see Wat Phra Kaew, which is symbolic. We can also see the legal building and the area near the educational institution. These things indicate that the exhibition might not say things straightforwardly, but the visitors can see and connect the dots. And I think the critical challenge is that we live under such a law. We have to overcome the challenge by hiding it or finding a way to communicate while protecting our safety.

Verita Sriratana: True. That is very important and very risky—especially at the moment. There are things we cannot say. We have to use jargon from Harry Potter. What about you, Jehabdulloh?

Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh: I think that this issue applies to everyone. We cannot speak wholeheartedly, like we are chatting inside the house. Luckily, artists can achieve this via their artworks and let the people make their own interpretations. That is fortunate because they do not appear too noticeable. At the same time, of course, we have to be careful about how we drive the movement. At the very least, I believe that if we speak the truth, that thing will protect us. If we fight in the dark, we cannot protect ourselves; if we fight in the open, people who share our views will help and protect us. Even during our talk here today, I genuinely believe that we share mutual feelings. If one is in trouble, I believe that everyone will help speak up.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you so much. What you have said is very touching. The courage to speak the truth in these conditions. Speaking the truth should be a common thing in a normal situation; it should not be an act deemed highly courageous. But in this situation, with all the difficulties, the courage to speak the truth becomes necessary for our lives, country, and compatriots. We have a question from Ven Lablu Barua: ‘Both projects seemed very difficult due to the political conditions; both speakers have talked about the many challenges that they have faced. Did you face any problems from the government or other sectors while working on these projects?’.

Arjan Jehabdulloh Jehorhoh: I mostly faced national security services, who kept visiting me or occasionally calling me to ask about the subjects of the activities. We explained and made them understand, but I have no idea how comprehensive their understanding was. At least it let society know who was speaking the truth and who was telling lies. When I drove the campaign against torture, we were speaking the truth. But when they discredit me about how I told lies to provoke conflict, society will voice out what it knows. This is particularly true at present, when one can share images easily and everything gets leaked. This makes society understand who is causing conflicts.

Verita Sriratana: Thank you very much on behalf of the organisers. Thank you both for sharing your knowledge, experience, and expertise with us. Thank you for your inspiring presentations. We will continue to work on eradicating hatred and eliminating violence with hope in our hearts. Since this is our last day, we will have a presentation by Dr Maung Zarni, an exiled Burmese activist and advisor to Genocide Watch, and closing remarks. Please do not miss our final events.

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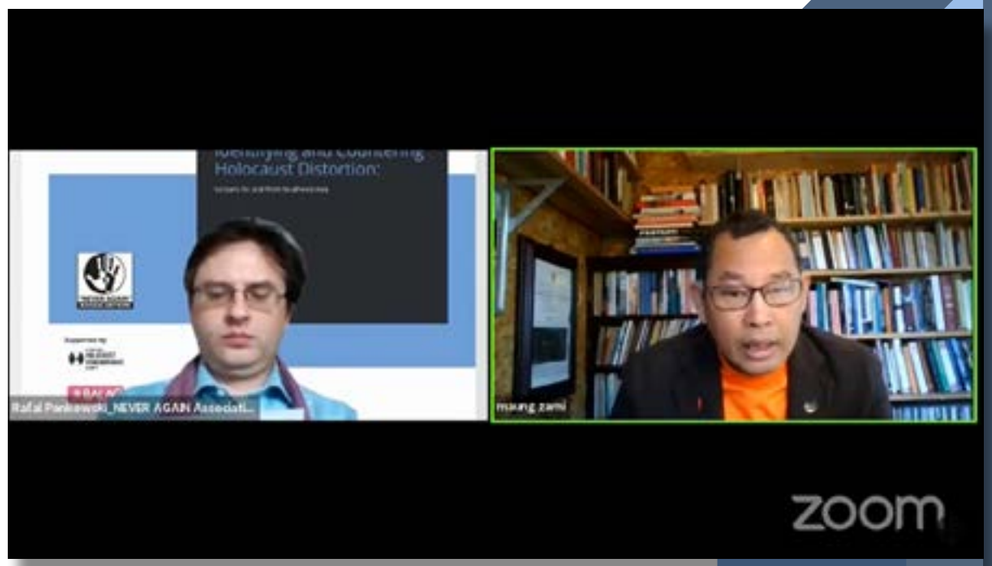
From Auschwitz to Myanmar by Dr Maung Zarni, Research Fellow at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM) and Cofounder of FORSEA

Rafal Pankowski: That was a very interesting conversation. I think we all appreciate it.
Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr Maung Zarni, who is a research fellow at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM). He is also a cofounder of FORSEA, a progressive, activist, and intellectual platform for Southeast Asian activists, and is the Burmese coordinator of the Free Rohingya Coalition.



He has thirty years of engagement in activism. He is also an advisor to Genocide Watch, the author of numerous articles and books that focus on the history and the present of Myanmar—especially on the Rohingya genocide. He was educated at Mandela University and the University of California, and he obtained his PhD from the University of Wisconsin. I met Dr Zarni for the first time in South Korea in 2019 when he organised a conference on the Rohingya genocide at the local Catholic University. The next day, he led a demonstration in front of the Myanmar embassy. This is quite characteristic for him, because he is one of those outstanding intellectuals who combines high-level scholarship with a passion for activism, justice, and solidarity. I think it is also appropriate to mention that his travels have repeatedly brought him to Poland—especially to the site of the former Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz.

Not accidentally, his talk today is titled *From Auschwitz to Myanmar*. Dr Zarni, the floor is yours.

Maung Zarni: Thank you very much and good evening to all of you, if you are in Southeast Asia. I want to thank prof Rafal Pankowski and Natalia Sineaeva, as well as the organisers from the two universities in Cambodia and Thailand. It is not merely a pleasure, but also a great honour for me as a Southeast Asian and a Burmese to be asked to share my thoughts.

I have listened to Thai scholars, artists, and NGO executives talking about Pattani and the 6 October, 1976 memorialisation project. I have a really close friend, Thongchai Winichakul, a young professor who had just arrived in Madison, Wisconsin when I started my PhD. We bonded and I have followed the activist movements in Thailand since the early 1990s. It is heartwarming to see the new generation of Thai scholars and activists who are trying to honour and memorialise the victims of 6 October. I have also taken a keen interest in what happened, or what has been going on in the Pattani region, so thank you to Jay Abdullah. I do not have prepared remarks, but I have sketched several key points that I want to share with you. One returns to the crucial question of what genocide is.

We need to know what is legally considered genocide and what, in fact and in practice, genocide is as it is experienced by the victims: those who perished, and also who have survived these extremely antihuman processes and practices. We must move away from the narrow legal definition of genocide, because the Genocide Convention was adopted by the United Nations three years after the Second World War ended on 27 January, 1945. The Soviet Red Army defeated the Nazis in Poland, which was occupied by the Nazis and liberated the Auschwitz Birkenau death camp where one million—mostly Jews, but also Roma or the old racist term, 'gypsies', as well as Poles and Soviets—were systematically murdered. Almost three years after the closure of Auschwitz, the original founders and the fresh members of the United Nations adopted what later came to be known as the Genocide Convention on 9 December, 1948. Most people know that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted a day later, on 10 December. On the same day, the Nobel Committee in Oslo chooses to hold its Nobel Prize award ceremony. These are important dates.

The title of this presentation is *From Auschwitz to Myanmar*. I want to take a step back and show why it is important not to be wedded to the idea of genocide as it is defined by the Genocide Convention. Rafal Pankowski and other scholars in this symposium know Raphael Lemkin—the Polish–Jewish lawyer and legal activist to whom we owe a great debt for having the term, genocide, as well as the Genocide Convention—formulated the idea of identity-based, state-mobilised attempts at intentional destruction and not just simple killing—whether it is the mass killing or mass destruction of groups, and whether it is ethnic or racial, religious or national. Lemkin's idea was identity-based group destruction; it does not have to be only national, ethnic, or religious; it could be political identity, it could be communist, it could be progressive, or it could be LGBT. That is why it is important not to allow ourselves to be stuck on the narrow, technical, legal definition: that is one of the major barriers in getting people's and states' attention, and getting them to do something concrete and effective to prevent and punish genocide. The Genocide Convention is not part of the International Criminal Court nor the International Court of Justice that addresses the issue. The Genocide Convention of 1948 has about 150 signatory state parties. The convention is not about only holding perpetrators and their regimes accountable, but also about prevention. That is why the title itself is the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We should push not only to end international impunity, but also the cultural impunity that other speakers have discussed this morning. We also need to resort to normal mainstream schooling, as well as aggressive antiracist and pro-tolerance opinion mobilisation. It is not enough to teach genocide awareness courses. Genocide awareness and antiracism curricula must be incorporated into essentially every national curriculum if we are to end these heinous crimes.

Genocide is often mobilised by the most powerful political organisations. We know that the most powerful economic organisations are corporations. And the most powerful political organisations, which we call states, are massive bureaucratic monsters. They have the power to mobilise and shape public opinion in a particular direction.

Genocides are often seen as state crimes, but here I will go further: genocides are state crimes committed with the popular backing of mainstream society—be it in Germany in the 1940s or in Indonesia in 1965. There are two genocides, as far as many sociologists of genocide are concerned, that the Suharto regime committed. One was a genocide against a group with a political identity, the Indonesian communists; the other was against the Indonesian-born Chinese community in Indonesia. Neither of these crimes has been recognised and neither has been processed nor memorialised by the Indonesian state nor Indonesian society. These are crimes in which the state and society collaborated at different stages. This is where the notion of civil society must be treated with a degree of suspision; in every single genocide, civil society is involved. That should touch our conscience and that should trouble us as activists and scholars, who see civil society as a moral counterpoint to immoral and criminal state behaviour.

That is why we are now looking at Southeast Asia, the ten member states of ASEAN plus Timor Leste, which has not yet been admitted as a member state. Of those eleven countries, atrocity crimes have been committed in about half of them. Cambodia is the most obvious one and the next contender is the Rohingya genocide in my own country, Myanmar, which likes to be known as Buddhist by the military and by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. I am not going to give Aung San Suu Kyi or the National League for Democracy antimilitary party a moral pass because they happen to be victims of military persecution.

Then there is Indonesia in 1965 and the massive state-mobilised violence by the dominant Malay community against the minority Chinese. Then there is Mindanao, which is the identity-based conflict with the Catholic majority in the Philippines. Then there is Pattani in southern Thailand, where the Muslim minority has been subject to decades of persecution at the hands of the predominantly Buddhist Thai kingdom and its military and its state. We have about 500 million inhabitants in the region, and it is shocking that half of them have been implicated in or somehow contributed to genocidal crimes against their own countrymen and women. Genocides touch every one of us. Genocide is considered a crime against humanity, a crime against all human communities, so we must not step back and say: 'Well, this is happening to Muslims in Thailand or to the Rohingya in Burma, or to the Chinese in Indonesia or Malaysia, or to the communists in the Philippines,'—it concerns all of us.

Yesterday in the United States, a lot of people celebrated Thanksgiving, the last Thursday of November. Genocide Watch issued a tweet that has not got much attention, talking about thanksgiving as an occasion to educate Americans about the civil genocides that the Native Americans suffered at the hands of the white settler colonialists. A few years ago, prof Angela Davis, the iconic Black revolutionary feminist and intellectual, noted something that has stuck in my head: the phenomenon of formerly-persecuted communities and individuals becoming perpetrators themselves. The white settler colonialists who had fled prosecution in England in the fifteenth century were known as the puritans. They arrived in a place in Massachusetts, which they named Plymouth because they had left Britain from a port of the same name. This was in 1492, so their crimes were not declared as such in international nor national law. The term, 'genocide' was not coined until the early 1930s, and did not become part of international law until 1948. Genocides have been going on for centuries.

I would not say that it is part of the human DNA to be violent, to be hateful, to be racist, or to be intolerant; we are all taught to love certain groups of people, certain types of human, and to hate other types of human. I believe that we should acknowledge that these crimes cannot be committed solely by states—the prime mobilisers of racism, anti–LGBT sentiment, intolerance, and populist right-wing murderous ideologies—without society allowing itself to be influenced by racist and other devastating ideological mobilisation. Finally, I want to say something about the international, or interstate, system. A few years ago, I had a conversation with the current foreign minister of Malaysia, and I asked him: 'Why do you want to get active on the Rohingya issue? Are you politically motivated?'. He said: 'No. We failed as an original member of ASEAN, when the Khmer Rouge regime committed genocide against its own Khmer, Vietnamese, and Cham Muslim minorities. And we are failing again when Myanmar, which has been a member state since 1997, is committing genocide against the Rohingya people,'. I think domestic impunity is not the question, because the state, which administers the criminal justice system, ensures that genocidal crimes do not get perpetrated within its territory. When the state itself becomes a perpetrator, the question of domestic impunity does not arise, because the state has morphed into a criminal perpetrator. Why do 150 signatory states or state parties to the Genocide Convention allow this kind of crime to recur, despite the slogan, 'Never again'? Never again will the United Nations allow a repeat of the Nazi genocide. When genocides happen anywhere in the world—the fact that genocides happen is actually the loudest, clearest indictment of the United Nations system—the the five veto wielders of the Security Council have the ultimate authority to intervene politically, diplomatically, or militarily to prevent any type of genocidal atrocity from recurring. When we live in a world order where the most powerful Veto wielders—the United States, Russia, and China—themselves display criminal behaviours through war crimes or genocide, disrespect and disregard for international law, the rejection of the International Criminal Court; when these most powerful state actors dictate or influence international affairs—this regards international law, of course—international impunity continues. These genocidal regimes enjoy both domestic impunity and international impunity that arises from the impotence of the Security Council.

Where does that leave us small individuals: scholars, activists, artists, and musicians, who are mainly concerned about fellow humans being decimated intentionally? That is what symposia like this want. That is what activism, speaking out against your own society, or speaking up against any community, group, or network that is about to commit international crimes against vulnerable communities—whoever they are and whatever they are—wants. Because the interstate system has failed categorically since the Genocide Convention was adopted in 1948, we are looking at an unfinished and ongoing genocide of the Rohingya in Burma. We are looking at the genocide of the Ughur people unfolding in China. We are looking at the Tigray region in Ethiopia. We must band together as fellow humans to fight against crimes against humanity—crimes that attack all of us.

Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much for your powerful and inspiring speech. I really appreciate it.

Now, our programme is coming to an end. Of course, we have not exhausted all aspects of the wide subject of Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion. One important field that needs to be addressed in this context is the spread of Holocaust denial and distortion online. Another project in which the NEVER AGAIN Association is involved, Get the Trolls Out, aims to address antisemitism and islamophobia, as well as other forms of hatred in online spaces. I believe that we have covered quite a lot of subjects during the last four days. Now, I would like to invite two of our colleagues, friends from Germany and from Russia, to share their reflections on the basis of our discussions during this symposium: Alina Scheitza from Bundeswehr University in Munich and Alena Fomenko from the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow. The floor is yours.

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CLOSING REMARKS

Rapporteurs: Alina Julia Scheitza, Research Center RISK, Universität der Bundeswehr München, Neubiberg, Germany and Alena Fomenko, Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow, Russia

During the last four days, we have had opportunities to listen to many remarkable lectures about Holocaust distortion and Holocaust denial, with a focus on Southeast Asia. To reduce those lectures into two words, I have chosen ‘why?’ and ‘how?’. Two questions about reasons and methods. Why did the Shoah take place? How did Shoah take place? Guests from different countries and with different backgrounds have searched together for the origins and methods of the Shoah and of other genocides. This search for causes, mechanisms, and methods should enable us to understand past genocides and to prevent present and future ones.

Dr Kunnaya Wimooktanon explained that the feeling of ‘never again’—the feeling that the Shoah will never be repeated, because we are wiser now—can be exactly the feeling that makes new genocides possible. The question is: how should we proceed to make the words, ‘never again’ remain true? In the presentations and discussions, there were two prominent groups of arguments. The first group pertained to how we deal with our own history and with history in general. The second group addressed the question of how we deal with the narratives, discourses, and ideologies of the present. These two groups are inseparably linked. History is reflected in discourses and ideologies; the discourses and ideologies of the present often reshape or distort history.

Prof Teun van Dijk discussed in his lecture how discourses can be used to spread xenophobia, antisemitism, and Holocaust denial; however, through critical discourse analysis, scholars can produce knowledge to seek and act against such discourses. It is important to analyse the sociocognitive aspects of discourses and to remember that the context of discourse is never objective. We must always consider who is speaking to whom, when, and where; who is producing the discourse and what are their aims. Moreover, we must reflect on who is criticising the discourse. Thus, we come to the question of how we can contribute through critical discourse analysis to the solution of the significant problems of the present. We must look critically at the discourses on these problems and search for their roots and producers—even if they are to be found in the past. Discourses circulate. They are often passed down through families, schools, and friend groups. The key to understanding them often lies in the past.

How the past of a country shapes the discourses of its present inhabitants and contributes to the development of new discourses was discussed in the lectures of Rabbi Michael Schudrich and Dr Verita Sriratana. Although the lectures were about two different countries with different histories, we can see the lack of critical engagement with those histories reflected in the discourses of the present in both cases. Rabbi Michael Schudrich spoke of the complicated relationship between Poland and the Shoah. He called this condition not 'Holocaust distortion or 'Holocaust denial', but 'Holocaust limitation'. In Poland, people who deny the Shoah can hardly be found, but it is difficult for Poles to deal with the fact that among their own ancestors were not only victims or heroes, but also perpetrators. Rabbi Michael Schudrich explained that this refusal to deal with its own history makes it impossible for a society to look forward and to move beyond.

Dr Verita Sriratana discussed the handling of national socialism and communism in Thailand. In her presentation, she showed disturbing images of places in Thailand where Hitler or Stalin and the associated symbols have been commercialised and become separated from their historical significance. This—at first glance, an ignorant approach to history—has its roots in the historical cultural background not only of Thailand, but also other countries in Southeast Asia. This historical background did not make the Shoah possible, but does enable its distortion and trivialisation. The atrocities of Hitler and Stalin, because of this particular cultural background, are less important in Thailand than their charisma as strong leaders. This cult of personality, and fascination with the military and strong male leaders are apparent in Thailand's contemporary pop culture. Although national socialism is not part of Southeast Asia's past, it does shape, in a sense, its present.

The postulate of 'never again', that the Shoah must not be repeated, has not prevented further genocides. Currently, we are witnessing the displacement and genocide of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. It is the genocide that Dr Ronan Lee is concerned with. He analyses the techniques of distortion and denial that have made the genocide possible. The distortion of history of Myanmar made it possible to turn the Rohingya into strangers in their own country, to dehumanise them, to displace them, and to commit genocide against them. These are the same techniques that paved the way for the Shoah in Europe.

The power of dehumanisation and exclusion was also highlighted by Rabbi Michael Schudrich. He warned that we should be sensitive to these phenomena in our observations and research. To prevent future genocides, we must focus not only on analysis of history and of the present, but also on the power of the knowledge we pass on (or fail to pass on) to further generations through education.

Conclusion: Recognition of the importance of education, critical engagement with the past, and a consistent critical approach to discourses support the counteracting of distortion and denial of the Shoah, and, thus, potentially prevent future genocides.

A series of extremely informative events has taken place over the last four days. The topic, *Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia*, opened a large scope for discussion about genocide, the distortion of historical memory, and the difficult lessons of the past for everyone.

Southeast Asia—with its increasingly diverse population, its own experience of WWII that is different from that of Europe, and its own difficult context of genocides and mass violence—is an interesting region in this context.

This appeared in many of the discussions during the symposium: How can educating the public about the Holocaust can help Asia to deal with its own problematic stories? Why study the Holocaust?

Konstanty Gebert quite rightly stated that we need to study the Holocaust and compare it to other genocides if we want to learn lessons from it. The exoticisation of any story or event makes any lessons drawn useless in understanding different stories; however, to prevent future horrors, we must compare one horror to another.

In his brilliant lecture, prof Teun Van Dijk provided another important answer to this question. Critical discourse analysis shows us that to recognise a denying discourse, we should study other denying discourses.

It is not a secret that the Holocaust is one of the worst tragedies of the twentieth century. It is a unique example of a universally-known tragedy. Even in countries like Myanmar—where people know very little about what, exactly, happened to Jews in Europe during the Second World War, as stated by Mr Sammy Samuels—Holocaust Memorial Day is a visible event. And this wide visibility has triggered a wide spectrum of possible reactions, including all kinds of denying and distorting discourses. Studying how these discourses are generated and how they spread can teach us lessons about similar discourses on other genocides and violence.

A wide spectrum of political reactions to the Holocaust (and antisemitism more generally, as some of our great speakers suggested) in different countries with different political situations over decades has provided a wealth of research material.

What really matters, however, is that the results of decades of academic work not only feeds scientific curiosity, but also allows for in-depth studies of other genocides. As mentioned by Dr Theresa de Langis during Wednesday's session, the historical memory of a genocide has a lifecycle. Understanding the mechanism of this cycle is helpful in recognising the situation of any given event in collective memory. Like medical diagnosis helps to heal physical trauma, this kind of diagnosis helps to heal traumatic memories.

One of our amazing moderators, Visal Sorn, stated that it is important that we keep talking about genocide; nevertheless, the problem of traumatic memory is sadly too well-known. When the trauma is too severe, people neither want to discuss it nor share their thoughts. This happens for many reasons: they want to forget, they want to protect the younger generations, or they are afraid or ashamed.

Mr Sopheap Chea, who represents Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center in Cambodia, also told us about this problem in relation to intergenerational dialogue. But what is the solution? I believe that deep study of the mechanisms of traumatic historical memory may offer us some clues.

I have noticed during this week's fruitful discussions that many of our speakers who presented the situations in their regions told us about the distortion of memory—each painting very different pictures at first glance.

Dr Robert Williams introduced us to the problem: distortion caused by politics, which includes victim blaming, manipulation, honouring the people who were involved in crimes, half-truths, and the distortion of facts.

Prof Teun van Dijk's advice tells us more or less where this leads: studying the context of a speech. Who is speaking, when, to whom, and—very importantly—for what purpose? With a little luck and analysis, we can find who benefits from the distortion.

On the other hand, our speakers from Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Bangladesh gave us examples that are not particularly valid for the United States or Europe. The history of the Shoah does not have such a strong political dimension when it comes to Southeast Asia. Romanticising 'Nazi chic', 'communist cool', and the Hitler cult—or simply wearing clothing with Nazi symbols without knowing what the symbols actually represent—clearly indicate the very limited scope for politicisation of the phenomenon. This hints at education as a means to avoid distortion, trivialisation, and banalisation—which has been highlighted many times this week. Through educating the public about history, we necessarily arrive at subjects like justice, human rights, the causes of tragedies, and violence.

During Thursday's session, one question triggered some reflection about what the future of genocide studies might hold. What can we really do even if we already know the reasons for distortion, or for the politicisation and romanticisation of tragic moments in history; if we know the names, benefits, and instruments of the symbolic elites; and if we also know who the victims and the perpetrators are? What should our next step be? Can museums and memorials play a role in taking action against new tragedies? Can we really prevent future catastrophes?

My personal answer is yes. We cannot only decide for ourselves that a tragedy should not be repeated; knowledge, imagination, and compassion should open up future avenues. I have heard so many wise and priceless ideas during this symposium that give me hope—in spite of all the tragedies that humanity has been through.

There are very old, yet valid truths. Prof Yehuda Bauer noticed that there can only be one line of action: you shall not kill. Everyone knows this in their heart. From history, research, and analysis, we know that genocide remains possible—but not because of emotion. Emotion is not the root of manipulation that leads to denying and distorting theories. The notion of inadmissibility, illegality of violence, exists in every culture, in every religion, and in every moral code. And we need to call for this idea—in everyone, in every community, and in every society. And yes, I really believe that every small step we can afford—every memorial initiative, lesson, guided tour, film, book, and piece of art—is a step against ignorance.

I really loved the story told by Konstanty Gebert about the memorial that opened its gates to become a shelter for the refugees at night. I believe that this is a perfect example when it comes to 'what next'.

These sessions have also provided us with valuable advice. I tried to write down some of them:

- **We must study history and analyse different discourses, dominant and opponential, to understand where distortion comes from;**
- **We must educate people about history at all levels;**
- **We must protect knowledge from manipulation, half-truths, and politicisation;**
- **We must be informed and ready to be involved in action against the distortion of memory;**
- **We must maintain international and intergenerational dialogue;**
- **We must avoid the banalisation, exoticisation, and trivialisation of genocide**

And I will repeat after the speakers: we must keep talking and reflecting on the difficult elements of our histories.

Prof Rafal Pankowski: Thank you very much for these very interesting and thoughtful remarks. Now we truly come to an end of this symposium but it is not the end of our cooperation and not the end of the project *Identifying and countering Holocaust distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia*. The next stages will include publications as well as an online exhibition. Please watch out for more news. We have a broad network of colleagues and friends, experts and activists in Asia, in Europe and elsewhere. We certainly intend to continue our communication and cooperation. We look forward to staying in touch with all of you. Please stay in touch by email and social media profiles of the NEVER AGAIN Association. You are also welcome to watch previous discussions on our website. On this note, thanks once again to all the speakers, moderators and participants. I would like to thank the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia, the BALAC Program of Chulalongkorn University and the American University of Phnom Penh. I would like to thank our Khmer and Thai interpreters. I would like to thank members of our technical support team in Poland and in Moldova and all members of the NEVER AGAIN Association. Let's stay in touch.
Thank you very much and goodbye.

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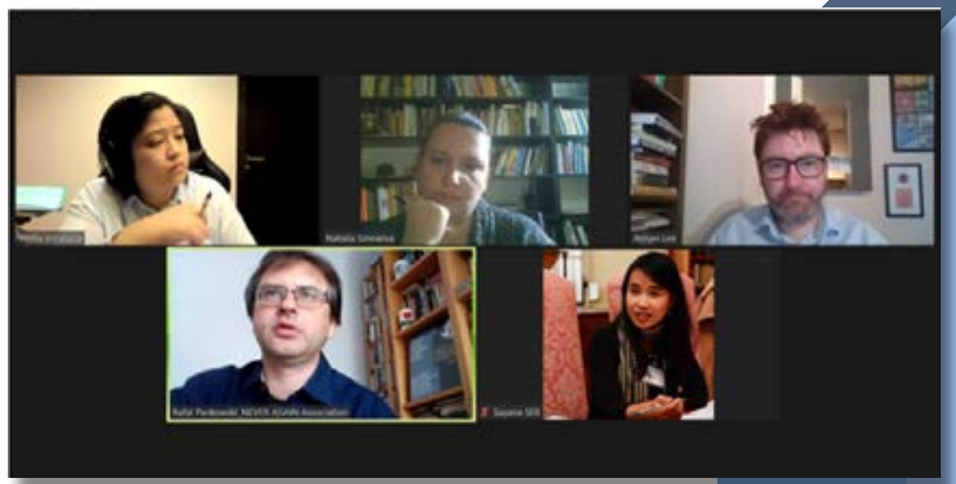
RECOMMENDATIONS, COUNTERARGUMENTS, AND STRATEGIES



These recommendations, which include counterarguments and strategies, were drawn from the country assessment overviews prepared by the project participants, as well as from discussions during the symposium, *Identifying and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Lessons for and from Southeast Asia* organised on 23–26 November, 2021. The recommendations aim to counter the narratives of Holocaust and genocide deniers in particular Southeast Asian contexts. They focus primarily on Buddhist countries (Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand), and apply the lessons of the Holocaust in work against genocide and Holocaust distortion. These recommendations may be helpful to policymakers and to organisers of future educational and awareness-raising activities in the region. They are presented, along with the symposium proceedings, as part of a single publication to potential partners in the region and beyond.

We have idenified various examples of Holocaust and genocide distortion in Southeast Asia. This project is the first of its kind that tackles the issue in three particular countries of the region. Our discussions and assessments have concluded that regional knowledge about the Holocaust is limited. Little to no knowledge about the Holocaust is taught in schools, and most of the populations' fragmented knowledge comes from popular culture, including the movies *Schindler's List* and *Life is Beautiful*. *The Diary of Anne Frank* was translated into local Burmese, Khmer, and Thai languages. Embassies, including those from Eastern and Central Europe, have become key sources of information about the Holocaust and the Second World War through their organisation of commemorations, exhibitions, and lectures.[1] In some cases, however, they present their own selection and interpretations of the facts, which suit their national (or nationalistic) narratives and focus exclusively on positive aspects of their citizens' actions (chiefly, Righteous Among the Nations[2] awards) and own victimhood and suffering. They avoid discussing the complexity of the Holocaust, including the varying nature of the roles played by local populations during it.

We aim to initiate more complex discussion, to provide recommentations and tools on sharing and delivering fact-based knowledge about the Holocaust and its complexity, and to counter its distortion in this specific regional context. This is also an opportunity to inspire critical memory discourses about local instances of genocide and mass violence, to assess and draw attention to the denial and distortion of these events, and to engage in activities with local educators and activists.

1 'Poles and Jews during the Second World War: The Good Samaritans of Markowa Exhibition', https://www.arts.chula.ac.th/en/index.php/2016/03/11/polesandjews/, retrieved on 20.11.2021.
2 The title, Righteous among the Nations is awarded by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, to all those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

1. Our methodology to study Holocaust denial and distortion

Our recommended and applied methodology is critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is an appropriate method for the analysis of political text and uncovers the hidden (including ideological) motivations of discourses and systems of argumentation. We recommend this method for studying the phenomenon of Holocaust denial and distortion in various contexts.

CDA deals primarily with social problems and political issues, and proposes a different approach to analysis. It relates closely to the concepts of *power* and *ideology*. In CDA, language is not a powerful force on its own; it is a means of powerful actors gaining and maintaining their power through its use. *Power* is an asymmetric relationship among social actors who assume different social positions or belong to different social groups. *Text* is a site of the social struggle for ideological hegemony and dominance. An *Ideology* is defined as a one-sided perspective or worldview composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, and evaluations. Ideologies are shared by the members of specific social groups. They serve as an important means of establishing and maintaining power relations in discourse. Holocaust denial and distortion are ideologically motivated. CDA aims to critically assess the ideologies of those who use their power to make their discourses *dominant/hegemonic*.

CDA does not take the meaning of any text or speech for granted, but assesses it in a more sophisticated manner. It focuses on the *context* rather than the direct meaning of text or speech. Context incorporates the surrounding environment, time, and place in which the discourse appears, as well as the relationships between the participants, in addition to who produced those words, what their position in society is, what they said, why they said it, and who else has said it.

Prof Ruth Wodak and the Vienna school of discourse analysis developed an important tool in critical studies, the ***discourse historical approach (DHA)***. As Ruth Wodak explained, it is impossible to perform CDA without knowing the historical background. She writes:
'The distinctive feature of the DHA is its attempt to integrate all available background information systematically into the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a text. Relating individual utterances to the context in which they were made, in this case, to the historical events that were being written or talked about, is crucial in decoding the discourses of racism and antisemitism[3],'.
She developed this approach through studying historical antisemitism in postwar Austria and investigated its interconnectedness with the contemporary discourse of the extreme right. It is necessary to study twenty to thirty years of history to understand contemporary discourses and rhetoric. DHA suggests decoding words and uncovering hidden messages and concepts, including those from the past. Holocaust deniers and distorters often develop coded and implicit discursive methods of denying and distorting the Holocaust; explicit forms of Holocaust denial are banned in many countries, or are easily recognised and condemned. Deniers can manipulate language by using code words. For example, they use the term 'revisionism' instead of 'denial', and they call themselves 'revisionists'. They take words out of context, employing them according to their own agendas and framing them to their own ideologies. They often allude to existing stereotypes about Jews (and other minorities), such as 'Jews are rich and powerful'. Antisemitic messages frequently reach only those who know the background or the genesis of the allusion. Prof Wodak stated: 'Through allusions, one can suggest negative associations without being held responsible for them[4],'.This also enables deniers to justify themselves by asserting that their meaning was different than was understood.

Deniers may silence or ignore some aspects of an event, but draw attention to others. They can use repetitive keywords, underlying themes, word selection, certain graphic designs, information management, voice, tone, and their intended audience to achieve this. They deploy various discourse strategies of justification and legitimisation with the aim of attaining legitimacy and credibility.

Holocaust trivialisation is another form of distortion. It involves using Holocaust terminology and symbols to compare the Nazi Holocaust to much less severe events, or describing any undemocratic or unfair behaviour as Nazism, or diminishing the importance of the Holocaust, or diminishing its significance as an essential part of modern Jewish history. Prof Wodak explains, 'Such comparisons serve to deny guilt in the sense that all of them are doing or did terrible things; thus, nobody is worse than "the Jews[5]",'.

3 Wodak, Ruth. 'Suppression of the Nazi Past, Coded Languages, and Discourses of Silence: Applying the Discourse-Historical Approach to Post-War AntiSemitism' in Austria in WILLIBALD STEINMETZ (ed.), Political Languages in the Age of Extreme, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 359.
4 Ibid., 366.
5 Ibid., 371.

2. Existing types of Holocaust distortion in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has its own experience of the Second World War, and its own instances of genocide and mass atrocities, as well as experience of colonisation. The actions of the Japanese military are the most immediate prism through which many view the region's wartime history. Indeed, Hitler's rule had its main impact in Europe and the Holocaust was mainly organised there. Nevertheless, Southeast Asia experienced the Second World War as much as Central and Eastern Europe (this is one commonality between the two regions), and the conflict forms part of global history. Very few Jews have ever lived in the region. Historically, Jews have lived and contributed significantly to society in Myanmar (formerly Burma), as well as some countries in the broader region that are beyond the scope of this project: Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Japan, and India. Nevertheless, Jewish history and identity is also a part of regional Asian history and identity.

There are several types of identified Holocaust distortion in the region, not limited to the following:

I. Use of Nazi imagery and the normalisation of the images of Hitler and Nazi Germany in popular culture

Examples can be found of fascination with Hitler and Nazi Germany in Southeast Asia. It is possible to buy items of clothing that depict Nazi symbols, including the swastika, in the region. The images of Hitler and of Nazi Germany are used publically and fail to attract widespread criticism. This is rooted in the region's particular cultural background. Hitler's atrocities are less important in Thailand and other countries of the region than his charisma as a strong leader is. Hitler and the associated symbols have been commercialised and have become separated from their historical significance. Although fascism and national socialism is not part of Southeast Asia's past, it does shape, in a sense of extreme rightwing political culture, its present. This historical background did not make the Holocaust possible, but does enable its distortion and trivialisation.

This example, among many other cases we have documented, is characteristic:

'Commander General Sao Sokha, who heads the paramilitary Royal Gendarmerie and sits on the Central Committee of the ruling Cambodian People's Party, said that states that wanted to maintain social order should look no further than the wartime Nazi Chancellor of Germany. "Speaking frankly, I learned from Hitler," Sao Sokha said, according to the Cambodia Daily. "Germany, after the First World War, was not allowed by the international community to have more than 100,000 soldiers, but the Nazis and Hitler did whatever so they could to wage the Second World War". Hegm claimed the Third Reich's rise during the 1930s was an invaluable example for Cambodia, after its bloody civil war of the 1960s and 1970s[6].'

The swastika is an important symbol in the Buddhist and Hindu communities of the region. It is an old symbol in Southeast Asia and Europe—appropriated as a political symbol, and its meaning transformed and modified. It is a symbol of crime, of evil, and of the Holocaust. Both the religious (regional) and the political (global) meanings of the swastika need to be taken into account when assessing its presence in public spaces in the countries of Southeast Asia.

The Burmese version of Hitler's Mein Kampf.
Credit: Maung Zarni

6 Cambodia's Internal-Security Chief: 'I Learned From Hitler', https://time.com/3671082/cambodia-hitler-sao-sokha-hun-sen, retrieved on 20.11.2021; See more examples: https://holocausteducation-asia.org/chapter-iv-thailand/

II. Comparative trivialisation

Comparative trivialisation can be observed in Southeast Asia. The region has faced its own genocides and examples of mass violence. The danger is when the amount of suffering and the numbers of victims are compared without sensitivity, which may lead to competitive victimhood.

Prof Ben Kiernan writes: 'The claim that Pol Pot was worse than Hitler implicitly understated the genocide of the Jews and overlooked the genocide of the Roma people, as well as all of the other mass murders committed by Hitler—of both Germans and foreigners[7]'.

III. Myths of a Jewish conspiracy

Common global prejudices exist in Southeast Asia, too—for example, that Jews are part of a global conspiracy (for example: blaming American Jews for political turmoil in Thailand by royalists[8]). Conspiracy theories always result in scapegoating, often of the Jewish minority. It is a global phenomenon. People often turn to conspiracy theories in crisis situations, such as pandemics or political or economical instability. Attempts to blame minorities in certain communities have a long tradition and history. Antiminority propaganda and fake news are often spread in Southeast Asia through social media. Sometimes, religious leaders are among the victims; other times, they are among the perpetrators. The issue of responsibility of the big social media platforms can be mentioned here, too, e.g. in the context of hate speech directed against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar which contributed to genocidal acts committed against the targeted community.

IV. The globalisation of genocide denial, including the rise of 'multideniers' who distort both the Nazi crimes and other cases of genocide and atrocities, such as those in Cambodia. Deniers and distorters employ similar discursive strategies, and there is a danger that they can be replicated in other situations. This is presented by prof Rafal Pankowski in his symposium speech[9].

V. In Southeast Asia very little is known about the Shoah (Holocaust) and the Jewish plight, and almost nothing is known about the Roma, LGBT people, or other groups that suffered during the Holocaust. This point was highlighted by our researcher, Dr Verita Sriratana. These aspects are not included in any textbooks throughout the region.

7 Keynote speech about genocide distortion and denial in Southeast Asia and worldwide by prof Ben Kiernan, Whitney Griswold Professor of International and Area Studies and director of the genocide studies programme at Yale University. Symposium, 23–26 November, 2021.
8 'Are you serious? Thai royalists blame Jews for political unrest', https://www.ucanews.com/news/are-you-serious-thai-royalists-blame-jews-for-political-unrest/90213#, retrieved on 20.11.2021
9 Pankowski, Rafal,, 'Globalisation of genocide denial. The case of genocide multideniers', Symposium, 23–26 November, 2021.

3. Counterarguments

I. Holocaust distortion is a form of hate speech that dehumanises individuals and groups, and is used to justify discrimination and violence. It is as dangerous as other forms of hate speech and should be opposed across the world.

II. Many countries in Southeast Asia have complex relationships with ‘strongman’ leaders who are sometimes wrongly applauded as nationalist modernisers. Dr Verita Sriratana suggests that this fascination results from political culture, a history of strong leadership, and military regimes holding power in countries in the region. Numerous examples exist of fascination with Hitler and related symbols. This is born from a mixture of personality cult, lack of profound knowledge about the Second World War in Europe, and ignorance. Hitler was not a moderniser nor a role model for a strong leader, but a perpetrator who was responsible for the most destructive war in Europe, as well as the extermination of six million Jews and members of other groups.

III. Aspects of regional Jewish history—Jews have lived in Southeast Asia for centuries, and they are an integral part of local histories, not only of Europe, America, the Middle East, or others. Southeast Asia has its own regional Jewish communities in Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other communities. Those Jews also hold broader Southeast Asian identities.

IV. Diversification of Jews—Jewish communities are socially, religiously, linguistically, and politically diverse, including the ones in Southeast Asia. Myanmar’s Jewish history is an interesting example that exemplifies the diversity of Jewish identities.
Pre- and postwar Jewish history may be viewed in parallel with that in Eastern Europe.

V. Religious contexts in the process of dealing with the past—for example, overcoming the feeling of injustice will be challenging for many Cambodians, as it must be weighed with their belief in karma. Questions have arisen about what the genocide and its aftermath tell them about their own karma. Can they forgive bad karma? These questions must be handled so that the country may proceed with reconciliation and continue to rebuild its broken society.

4. Counterstrategies

I. Holocaust distortion can be counteracted through education and through tools that enable individuals to acknowledge the difference between true and false information, encourage critical thinking, recognise information that is fact based with testimonies and research, and encourage the embrace of different perspectives to find reliable sources of information. Students of history and other subjects need to be trained to use their critical thinking skills when engaging with evidence. Educational opportunities to learn not only about the Holocaust and other historical facts, but also about the general subject of disinformation and propaganda through workshops, lectures, or cocreating and learning from existing exhibitions, must also be encouraged.

II. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) and discourse history approach (DHA) methodologies should be promoted in the region. The study of public and media discourses, and the development of the skills necessary to identify distortion by applying the methodology should be encouraged. Understanding that distortion and denial can be used for political and ideological ends, as well as knowledge and skills on how to decode hidden messages, and to understand *context, hegemony, power relations,* and *ideology*, should be developed. CDA should not only be applied in academic contexts, but also be used more broadly to improve people's analytical and critical thinking skills so that they are able to recognise denialist and nationalist discourses, which are mediated by hegemonic ideologies and power relationships.

III. Media literacy learning—Engaging in strategic communications, the internet, and social media. Critical perception of news and people's ability to be selective must be developed. This relates to points one and two.

IV. The promotion of Central and Eastern European Studies in Thailand and, more broadly, in the region of Southeast Asia as a way of deconstructing romanticised images of the Nazi regime. This can be achieved through collaboration between schools, universities, art institutions, civil society actors, and the private sector in the form of academic and cultural activities in which books and talks on Central and Eastern European history or films about the atrocities of the Second World War are presented to the public.

V. More exchange and sharing between Central and Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia is needed, in the form of exchange study tours and joint initiatives and projects. Eastern Europe has endured occupation, the Holocaust, totalitarianism, and difficulty with dealing with some aspects of the past—including the diversity of the roles of its own populations under different circumstances during the war and the Holocaust, when some saved their neighbours while others harmed or remained indifferent to their suffering. By using the example of Polish debates about the Holocaust and antisemitism (e.g. around Jan T. Gross's seminal book, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*), we encourage critical discourses on dealing with the past and the legacy of genocide in Southeast Asia.

VI. Examples of dealing with the past and confronting the legacy of genocide and mass atrocities from other countries can be useful as an inspiration for debates in Southeast Asia. Important examples can be found in Germany (as well as other European countries, such as France), but relevant debates could also be identified in other regions of the world, e.g. the discussions about historical responsibility for the wartime crimes which have taken place in Japan. Moreover, global debates about the legacy of colonialism and decolonization can be relevant as points of reference in the broader context of dealing with the past in Southeast Asia.

VII. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is an important and useful educational and awareness raising tool, in addition to being a key legal document. Its historical link with the work of Rafal Lemkin provides an important connection with the legacy of the Holocaust. The Genocide Convention is highly relevant and widely referred to in the context of the history of the Southeast Asian region as well.

VIII. The ***IHRA*** working definition of ***Holocaust denial and distortion*** is virtually unknown in the region of Southeast Asia even among those interested in the issues of genocide commemoration and combating genocide denial. Therefore it is important to promote the definition through various educational channels. The definition has been translated into the Burmese, Khmer, and Thai languages, and published on the project's website.

IX. The interfaith dialogue framework is integral in the presentation of these subjects, as faith leaders and Buddhist monks are considered to be key figures of morality in Asia, and people follow them. Special attention should be paid to cooperation and the joint actions of the representatives of the religions co-existing in the region. In the words of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich: 'When the clergy speaks in one voice; when the rabbi, the priest, and the imam are all saying the same thing, it is unusual, so people pay attention.'

X. Social media companies, civil society and authorities need to cooperate on effective responses to the phenomenon of online hate speech, conspiracy theories, disinformation and genocide denial on the social media platforms. Cooperation with specialised organisations (such as the Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism) needs to be encouraged.

XI. The swastika should be studied in the context of interfaith dialogue and symbols. We live in one symbolic space, and we should consider the symbol's use in its various contexts. The swastika is an old symbol in Southeast Asia and Europe that was stolen as a political symbol, and whose meaning was transformed and modified. It is a symbol of crime, of evil, and of the Holocaust. In the context of Buddhism and Hinduism, it has different meanings. It is a challenge for interfaith dialogue to discuss such symbols. They are important, as they help people to understand history, and represent what people believe. Are there alternative symbols that can be used in place of the swastika? The context is important when a swastika is shown; it has a different meaning when it is seen in a Buddhist or a Hindu temple, and another when it is shown on a shirt sleeve. There are also slight differences in its orientation—see pictures 1 and 2[10].

Pic.1: A Buddhist temple inside the walled city of Chongwu. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Pic.2: Detail on the sleeve of the uniform jacket of the Hitler Youth (Youth organization of Nazi Germany 1933–1945) on display at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, Germany. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

10 We can refer here to an example from Australia—the State of Victoria and the State of New South Wales have passed legislation that outlaws the public display of the Nazi swastika. Extensive discussions were held with representatives of eastern religions to ensure that the legislation did not interfere with religious beliefs or cultural practices. The New South Wales law specifically states that 'the display of a swastika in connection with Buddhism, Hinduism or Jainism does not constitute display of a Nazi symbol,', https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/2022/public-display-of-nazi-symbols-banned-in-nsw-1.html, retrieved on 19.08.2022.

XII. Cooperation between various parties—including governments (in the case of Myanmar, this should be the legitimate democratic government of Myanmar, i.e. the National Unity Government), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), as well as academic institutions and civil society groups—is essential. Genocide denial must not be part of the region's future. We must ensure that education about the Holocaust and other instances of genocide becomes part of the curriculum from primary school to university. In the case of Myanmar, the National Unity Government should also be encouraged to face up to the country's recent and problematic past, in particular the atrocities committed against the Rohingya community.

XII. Holocaust materials:

- **Should be presented in local languages—including those of minorities and indigenous groups in the region, such as the Rohingya, the Karen, and the Cham—so that they are accessible to those groups.**
- **Cultural appropriateness and local histories, contexts, and traditions should be considered. For example, in Cambodia, oral tradition and arts are strong. As stated by Youk Chhang: 'Solid efforts are necessary in the forms of legal justice, outreach programmes, and genocide education in high schools in Cambodia. Their success should be measured on the emotional and psychological components of tolerance and healing. Art can make a significant contribution to the Cambodian way of life; it is our soul'.**
- **For young people (who constitute the majority of the region's population), it is helpful to engage with and learn about the subject through videos or animated films, art performances, online applications, and interactive exhibitions at museums and other venues.**
- **Different local analogies and references are highly relevant. In Cambodia, these are issues of responsibility for and resistance to the genocidal crimes of the Khmer Rouge; in Myanmar, there are issues with the history of local resistance, from the Antifascist League during the Second World War to the White Rose Campaign that supports persecuted Muslims in the predominantly Buddhist country, or from its Jewish heritage; in Thailand, there are issues of local resistance during the Second World War, the plight of Asian slave workers used during the war to build the railway in Kanchanaburi, and dealing with the legacy of postwar political violence.**
- **Additional attention should be paid to the Romani genocide during the Second World War and to the extermination of other groups, alongside the Jews as the main victim group. This should be included in teaching materials alongside the** Shoah.
- **Comparative studies of historical genocides and other educational materials related to the subject should be presented not by comparing the amount of pain and suffering or the number of deaths, but by the root causes, the nature of each significant matter that catalysed the events, and the losses incurred from the destruction. That is why students should study the Holocaust and the** Shoah **as the paradigmatic genocide, and learn the concepts and definitions.**

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SPEAKERS SYMPOSIUM 'IDENTIFYING AND COUNTERING HOLOCAUST DISTORTION: LESSONS FOR AND FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA' 23-26 NOVEMBER 2021

Keynote Speakers

Prof Yehuda Bauer, Professor Emeritus of History and Holocaust Studies at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem. He is the Honorary Chairman of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. He was the founding editor of the journal Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and served on the editorial board of the *Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust*, published by Yad Vashem in 1990. Bauer is fluent in Czech, Slovak, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, English, French, and Polish. He was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1926. His family migrated to Israel in 1939. After completing high school in Haifa, he attended Cardiff University in Wales on a British scholarship.

Prof Ben Kierman, Whitney Griswold Professor of History; Professor of International & Area Studies, MacMillan Center; Founding Director of the Genocide Studies Program (1994-2015); Chair, Council on Southeast Asia Studies (2010-15). He is the author of 'Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur' (2007), which won the 2008 gold medal for the best book in the History category awarded by the Independent Publishers association, and the U.S. German Studies Association's 2009 Sybil Halpern Milton Memorial Book Prize for the best book published in 2007-2008 dealing with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust in its broadest context, covering the fields of history, political science, and other social sciences, literature, art, and photography.
He is a member of the editorial board of 'Critical Asian Studies'.
He was founding Director of the Cambodian Genocide Program (1994-99) and Convenor of the Yale East Timor Project (2000-02).
For more information please visit: https://history.yale.edu/people/ben-kiernan.

Prof Teun A. van Dijk, Cofounder of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Director of the Centre of Discourse Studies, Teun A. van Dijk was professor of discourse studies at the University of Amsterdam until 2004, and is at present professor at Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona. After earlier work on generative poetics, text grammar, and the psychology of text processing, his work since 1980 takes a more critical perspective and deals with discursive racism, news in the press, ideology, knowledge, and context.
For more information please visit: http://www.discourses.org.

Speakers and moderators

Venerable Lablu Barua (Thirasattho), Spiritual teacher and mindfulness meditation expert. He is a PhD candidate in Peace Studies at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Ayutthaya, Thailand. He is an Ambassador of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). Venerable Lablu Barua is working with various organisations to promote inner and outer peace. He is engaged in interfaith dialogue, such as Hindu-Buddhist and Buddhist-Muslim dialogue. In January 2019, on behalf of NEVER AGAIN he promoted the World Jewish Congress' WeRemember Campaign on the occasion of the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Thailand and Bangladesh. In November 2018, he had a study visit to European museums, cultural and research institutions, including the Peace Museum in Vienna, the Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin, and the NEVER AGAIN Association.

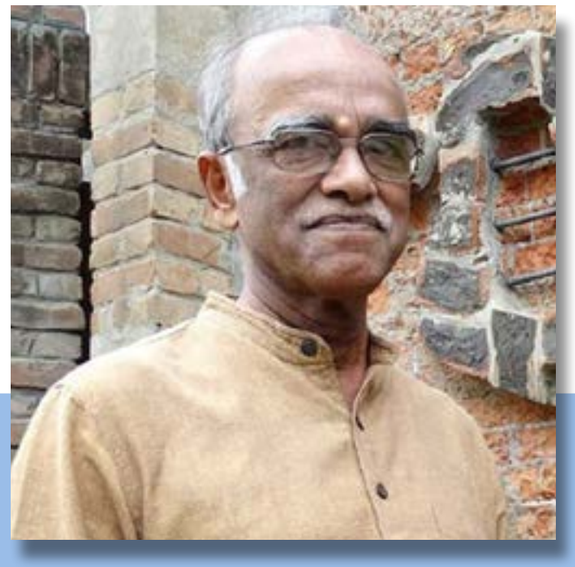
Sopheap Chea, Executive Director of Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, where he has worked for more than a decade, and a project manager for the KR-App project in Cambodia. He holds a critical view of knowledge-sharing in the digital era: with information from different sources being thrown onto various internet platforms, recognising valid sources is difficult and makes some users susceptible to manipulation.

Nickey Diamond *aka* ***Ye Myint Win***, PhD candidate in political and legal anthropology at the University of Konstanz, Germany, and an advisor to Fortify Rights, an international human rights organization in Southeast Asia. His PhD research is devoted to studying 'Anti-Muslim Hate Speech in Myanmar'. In June 2021, he became the first fellow of the newly established 'Students at Risk' Hilde-Domin programme of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Nickey is a human rights defender and an academic activist in Myanmar. He founded Youth for Social Change Myanmar (YSCM) in 2007 and served as the organization's Executive Director until October 2013. In 2013, he received a scholarship from the Government of Norway to help build institutions in Myanmar.
In 2014, he received a President George W. Bush Fellowship and completed the Liberty and Leadership Forum (2014-2015). He holds a BA in Economics from the University of Distance Education and an MA in human rights from the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand.

Alena Fomenko works at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow. As a content manager at the museum's Research Center, she is engaged in developing and updating interactive objects for the core exhibition. She is also a methodologist, curator, and educator of the museum's School of Guides. For the School of Guides, Alena lectures on the situation of Soviet Jews in the first years after World War II and the emergence of the anti-Jewish policy of the USSR in the last decade of Stalin's rule.

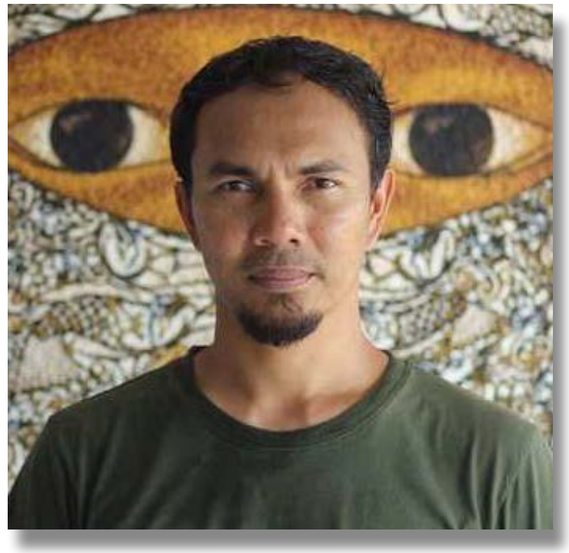
Konstanty Gebert, Lecturer and journalist. He was an international reporter and columnist for Polish and international media covering Polish Round Table negotiations in 1989, the wars in Bosnia, the Middle East, and the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda. He was a democratic opposition activist in the 1970s, and underground journalist (pen name: Dawid Warszawski) in the 1980s in Poland. Gebert was also cofounder of the underground Jewish Flying University and the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, and founder of the Polish Jewish intellectual monthly 'Midrasz'.
He is author of eleven books, in Polish, about Poland's Round Table negotiations in 1989, the Yugoslav wars, Israeli history, commentaries on the Torah, and a panorama of the European twentieth century. His latest book, on comparative genocide, was in Polish by Agora Publishing House in 2022. Gebert served as visiting professor at UC Berkeley, Grinnell College, and Hebrew University.

Mofidul Hoque, Researcher, publisher and essayist. He is one of the founder trustees of the Bangladesh Liberation War Museum. He is the Director of Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGS) of the museum. In the past, he organised six international conference on Bangladesh Genocide and Justice. He participated in many international events to highlight Bangladesh Genocide and its recognition. At present he and the CSGS are actively pursuing the cause of justice for the persecuted Rohingya minority. He is a recipient of numerous awards including Bangla Academy Literary Award (2013) for essays, Ekushey Padak (2016) and Shaheed Altaf Mahmud Medal.



Jeremy Jones, Director of International and of Community Affairs for the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council and Senior Contributing Editor for the Australia Israel Review. He is a Life Member and Former Vice President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, he is a Human Rights advocate who has lectured and participated in high level conferences on human rights in more than 30 countries, represented the Australian government and the World Jewish Congress at a number of intergovernmental forums and chairs formal Interfaith Dialogues in Australia while participating in international interfaith activity as a member of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.
Amongst his honours, he has been conferred membership of the Order of Australia, was the 2007 winner of the Australian Human Rights Medal and the 2016 winner of the State of New South Wales highest Award for Community Harmony. Born in Melbourne, he is a graduate of Sydney University of History and Government.

Jehabdulloh Jehsorhoh was born in 1983 in Pattani province in Thailand. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in visual arts at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Prince of Songkla University, as well as a master's degree in visual arts (Thai arts) at the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts of Silpakorn University. Jehabdulloh currently works as an art teacher at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts of Prince of Songkla University. He created Patani ArtSpace as an area to hold one of the most famous art events in Thailand. His artworks are inspired by the image of local Malay Pattani in the Deep South of Thailand. Through another of his works, *The beauty in the dark at Pattani*, he attempts to spark discussion about faith in Islam. He incorporates objects that are used in the daily lives of Muslims, such as the hijab and *batu nisan* (headstone) in his artwork. Jehabdulloh is interested in the unrest and violence in the Deep South of Thailand, Syria, and Palestine. This can be seen in his artworks, *Budu Bomb* and the *Born in the war* series. His works reflect the political situation in three southern border provinces and nationally in Thailand.



Drawing on two decades of teaching, research, and practice within government, the United Nations and academia, ***Theresa de Langis***, PhD is the Director of the Center of Southeast Asian Studies and Professor in Global Affairs and Humanities at American University of Phnom Penh. She completed her doctoral degree at the University of Illinois at Chicago in Literature and Gender Studies (2001) with highest distinction, and her teaching specializes in genocide and gender, especially in cross-disciplinary conversation with literature, film and the humanities. Her research focuses on women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict, and she is one of 125 individuals worldwide honored by the Gender Justice Initiative for its Legacy Wall at the International Criminal Court.
Published in a variety of international scholarly journals and anthologies, she is currently writing a book on sexual violence during the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime in Cambodia (1975-1979) based on original oral histories with survivors, now deposited for public access and historical preservation at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Dr Ronan Lee, Irish-Australian Visiting Scholar at Queen Mary University of London's School of Law and the International State Crime Initiative. From 2022, he will be taking up a Doctoral Prize Fellowship at Loughborough University London. He researches Asian politics, genocide, hate speech and migration. Ronan's book *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech* was published by Bloomsbury/IB Tauris in February 2021. He was formerly a Queensland State Member of Parliament and served on the front bench as a Parliamentary Secretary in portfolios including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Justice and Youth.

Ronan's doctoral research involved in-depth interviews with Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State, in Yangon, in the Bangladesh camps, and among the Rohingya diaspora. Ronan was awarded the 2021 Early Career Emerging Scholar Prize by the International Association of Genocide Scholars, and won Deakin University's 2015 Neil Archbold Memorial Medal for his journal article *A Politician, Not an Icon: Aung San Suu Kyi's Silence on Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya*.

Prof Raymond Leos, US native, and a resident of Cambodia, where he has lived and worked for nearly 20 years. He is currently the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at the American University of Phnom Penh. Previously he was a lecturer in the International Public Law and International Business Law graduate programs, as well as a lecturer in the International Relations undergraduate program at the Royal University of the Law and Economics (RULE). He was also the Dean of the Faculty of Communications and Media Arts at Pannasastra University of Cambodia and a Senior Advisor to the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Recently, Prof Leos served as a legal advisor to the Access to Information Technical Working Group (TWG), which worked with the Ministry of Information of the Royal Government of Cambodia in the drafting of Cambodia's first freedom of information law. He is currently at work on two book projects—one examining the history and the social, political and economic underpinnings of propaganda, and another focusing on Cambodia U.S. relations and the role of the international media during the Indochina War of the 1960s and 1970s.

Dr David M. Malitz, Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo. He obtained a dual master's degree in Business Administration and Japanese Studies from the Universities of Mannheim and Heidelberg and a doctoral degree in Japanese Studies from Ludwig-Maximilian-University of Munich. He conducted his doctoral research on the history of Japanese-Thai relations at Kyoto University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies with a JSPS fellowship and at Thammasat and Chulalongkorn Universities in Bangkok. In between he briefly worked in finance in London and Düsseldorf. From January 2015 to July 2021 David held teaching positions in Bangkok, first in Business Administration at Assumption University, since 2017 in Global Studies at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Arts. In Bangkok, David pursued research on Japanese-Thai relations and the modern history of Thailand.

Dr Michał Lubina, Associate Professor at the Jagiellonian University, Poland. He is the author of six books on Myanmar, including *A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi: A Hybrid Politician* (Routledge, 2020) and *The Moral Democracy* (2019), translated into Burmese and published in Myanmar just before the coup.

Prof Rafal Pankowski, Professor at the Institute of Sociology of Collegium Civitas in Warsaw, Poland. Pankowski received his MA in Political Science from the University of Warsaw. He also studied at the University of Oxford as an undergraduate. Prof Pankowski received his PhD and Habilitation in Sociology of Culture from the University of Warsaw, Institute of Applied Social Sciences. He has published widely on racism, nationalism, populism, xenophobia and other issues including the books *Neo-Fascism in Western Europe: A Study in Ideology* (Polish Academy of Sciences, 1998), *Racism and Popular Culture* (Trio, 2006), and *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots* (Routledge, 2010). Prof. Pankowski was a visiting professor at the Centre for European Studies of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, and at the International Buddhist Studies College of Mahachulalongkonrajavidyalaya University, Ayutthaya, Thailand. He is a cofounder of the NEVER AGAIN Association.
He is also a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

Patporn (Aor) Phoothong is a Researcher who focuses on museums and archives of past political violence and current violent conflicts. She is conducting a feasibility study for the establishment of a peace museum connected to the Deep South of Thailand. She is a cofounder of the October 1976 Massacre Museum, which communicates the 6 October, 1976 Massacre at Thammasat University. Aor also works as a team member on the Documentation of October 6 archives of the Thammasat University massacre on October 6, 1976 (https://doct6.com/). She is also a team member of the Deep South Thailand Museum and Archives Project, which aims to use archives and museums as sociopolitical spaces to confront human rights violations, injustice, inequality, and the culture of impunity.

Prof Dina Porat, Founding Head of the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, served as head of the Department of Jewish History, of the Rosenberg School for Jewish Studies, and as incumbent of the Alfred P. Slaner Chair in Antisemitism and Racism, all in Tel Aviv University. Serves as the Yad Vashem chief historian since 2010. She was awarded prizes for some of her publications including the National Jewish Book Award for her biography of Abba Kovner, published by Stanford UP, and the Bahat prize for her new book on Jewish revenge after World War II. She was also TAU's Faculty of Humanities best teacher for 2004, got the Raoul Wallenberg Medal for 2012, is on the 50 leading Israeli scholars the Marker Magazine list of 2013 and on the 50 leading women in Israel list of the Forbes in 2018. She was a visiting professor at Harvard, Columbia, New York, Venice, and the Hebrew universities.

Foysal Shahriar Ratul, Law student of the Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has been working as a volunteer Researcher at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ), Liberation War Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh. His academic and research interests are in International Criminal Law, Genocide/Holocaust Denial Laws, Memory Laws and Post-Colonial Approach to Criminal Law.

Sammy Samuels, Managing Director of Myanmar Shalom. Graduate of Yeshiva University in New York City, Sammy Samuels has promoted his country, Myanmar and small Jewish community to all who know him. That's why some of his friends and colleagues call him the "Ambassador of Myanmar." Through Myanmar Shalom, Samuels creates travel programs, products and services that include local communities of all religions and ethnicities to improve the lives of those in the remote areas of Myanmar. In 2017 he was selected as a President Eisenhower Fellow from Myanmar for his work in tourism industry. His goal is to provide a program called "Peace through Tourism," which involves bringing tourists to areas once affected by conflict in order to revitalize the local community.
In addition, as leader of the smallest religious minority in the country – Samuels is dedicated to advancing religious freedom and tolerance. Sammy's unique role in the Jewish community of Myanmar & his company has been chronicled in articles in the New York Times, Washington Post, Jerusalem Post, Travel + Leisure, and other newspapers.

Visal Sorn, Project Officer for the Forum, Civil Peace Service/forumZFD International in Cambodia. She is currently working to detect key people within rural communities and to collect their personal narratives. By critically reflecting on individual and collective stories, people are motivated to share their life histories within and outside their local communities. The goal of the project is to empower people and let their voices be heard to increase multicultural understanding and help prevent prejudice. From 2017 to 2019, Visal volunteered with the United Nations Development Programme to assist with the equitable development of Cambodia. Between 2009 and 2016, Visal worked as a research assistant and translator for Dr Matthew J. Trew, an anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In this role, Visal organised events with local governments, conducted interviews, and helped with Dr Trew's ethnographic research. She has also assisted with a year-long statistical analysis of tourist sites in Battambang, Cambodia, and performed archival research. Visal has worked for both national and international organisations in Cambodia and Bangladesh. She advocates for the rights of vulnerable populations, such as women, children, LGBTQI+ communities, and the elderly.

Alina Scheitza, Scientific Coordinator of the Research Center RISK at the Universität der Bundeswehr München in Neubiberg. The RISK Research Center focuses its research on the connection between risk, infrastructure, security, and conflict using a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach. Her dissertation project investigated the processes of dealing with the past after 1989 in Eastern Europe. She has been studying and majored in political sciences at Silesian University in Katowice, Poland, and at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich, Germany. Currently, her research focuses on Transitional Justice, Transformation, and Memory Studies.

Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland/Nozyk Synagogue, has a long and rich history of involvement in the Jewish communities of both Eastern Europe and Asia. As a student in the 1970's, Schudrich began his travels to Eastern Europe by leading Jewish groups to those countries and meeting with members of what remained of the Jewish communities there. After receiving smicha (rabbinic ordination) through Yeshiva University, Schudrich served as rabbi of Japan's Jewish community from 1983-1989. From 1992-1998, he resided in Warsaw, Poland. In June 2000, Rabbi Schudrich returned to Poland as the Rabbi of Warsaw and Lodz, and in December 2004, he was appointed to the position of Chief Rabbi of Poland.

Born in Phnom Penh to parents of Javanese and Cham descents, ***Sayana Ser*** grew up listening to her family's stories of the suffering inflicted on them and other Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge. She lost three of her grandparents and many other relatives during the regime. Sayana started working for the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in 1997 as a volunteer and has compiled an extensive collection of poems, songs, and slogans of the Khmer Rouge. She has also assisted in the production of DC-Cam's magazine *Searching for the truth*, which has been distributed to villages around the country. She obtained a master degree from Wageningen University, the Netherlands in 2006. She has worked on museum exhibitions and in history classrooms at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, on performing arts projects with survivor artists and students, on documentary films and radio programmes, on teacher training on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, and on genocide educational tour programmes. She also translated *The Diary of Anne Frank* into Khmer language.

Natalia Sineaeva-Pankowska, Holocaust and genocide scholar, educator, and mediator. Her forthcoming PhD dissertation deals with genocide distortion and identity in Moldova and Eastern Europe. She has extensive experience in the field of memorialisation and dealing with the past both in Europe and Asia. Her recent experience includes work at the POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland, as well as cooperation with the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and other museums and sites of memory in Europe and Asia. She has also worked with organisations monitoring racism and xenophobia such as the NEVER AGAIN Association.
In 2018, she acted as a European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Fellow at the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Bucharest, Romania and Rotary Peace Fellow at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

Dr Verita Sriratana, Associate Professor of Literary Studies at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. She is currently Visiting Research Fellow in Human Rights at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI), Lund University, Sweden, where she researches on the topic of offline and online gender-based violence against female activists in Thailand's current pro-democracy movement as well as the movement's feminist and intersectional retaliation against patriarchal epistemic violence. Her publications span modernist literature, gender studies, necropolitics, postcolonialism and Central & Eastern European Studies.

Barbara Thimm, Museum practitioner who has been working as an advisor for the Civil Peace Service (GIZ) at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) since 2015. Barbara studied cultural pedagogy, engaged in civic education and worked in different roles within the memorial sites Buchenwald and Dachau, two major former Nazi concentration camps. In a joint project, professionals from Polish, Austrian and German memorial sites developed a training named *Disconcerting Past. Education at Memorial Sites* which was inspired by the Israeli BEZAVTA democracy concept. In the following years Barbara offered this training in Germany, Belarus, Bangladesh and Cambodia, which brought her to Phnom Penh.
As she believes in memorial site Buchenwald's motto 'memory needs knowledge', her work at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum focuses on supporting preservation of the site and documentation, fact-based research/ exhibitions/ publications, developing the archive, and supporting long-term planning.

Dr Robert Williams, Deputy Director for International Affairs at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, on the steering committee of the Global Task Force on Holocaust Distortion, and served for four years as chair of the Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. He regularly advises international organisations and governments on antisemitism and Holocaust issues, and is currently overseeing a major initiative that assesses European Holocaust and genocide denial laws. Robert's research specialties include German history, US and Russian foreign policy, propaganda and disinformation, and contemporary antisemitism. He is currently coediting a volume for Routledge on the history of antisemitism and preparing a separate monograph on antisemitism and politics.

Dr Kunnaya Wimooktanon, Director of the Bachelor of Arts in Language and Culture program at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. He received his PhD in Sociology from the University of Manchester. His current research focus are technology & social change, and social distinction within Thai society.

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