Disinformation and Genocide

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Sources

Source A

The war itself and the ethnic conflict, which later became the seedbed of a genocide were unquestionably caused by the European colonisers. [...] The Belgians are accused of promoting ethnic hatred. For it was they who created the artificial division of Rwandan society into two tribes: the Tutsi and the Hutu. The distinction between the two was made on the basis of dubious physical criteria – height, skin colour and shape of the nose [...] The Belgians favoured the Tutsi, seeing in them support for their power [...] With the introduction of the ethnic identity card in 1932, they sealed the formal division of the tribes. From then on, each Rwandan's ID card would contain a note about which tribe they belonged to [...] One can easily [...] observe the mechanism Stanton mentions – classification and symbolisation was followed by a stage of dehumanisation of the Tutsi population. Before direct acts of violence took place, a fierce propaganda campaign of hatred had already started against them from 1990. A racist stratification of Rwandan society was carried out, dividing it into 'proud' Hutus on the one hand with Tutsis referred to as 'cockroaches' on the other. There were public calls for the elimination of the latter from public and political life. Importantly, the main role in this process was played by the government-dependent media – RTLM radio and the newspaper *Kangura* [...]. Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines was a private radio station, a substitute for the West for the average Rwandan. Few had a television, so radio was the most important means of propaganda. It won the hearts of listeners with its relaxed style of reporting and simple language. [...] Importantly, RTLM's target audience was primarily young Hutu men, who later became the core of the execution commandos. The aim of these media operations was to indoctrinate and instil hatred of the Tutsi tribe in the Hutus. [...] It was feared that in case of victory, the Tutsis would want to avenge all wrongs. [...] After the

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outbreak of the genocide, the radio encouraged the murder of Tutsis. [...] The perpetrator could be anyone. Neighbour killed neighbour.

Aleksandra Spychalska, 'Mechanizmy zbrodni ludobójstwa na przykładzie Rwandy' [Mechanisms of the crime of genocide on the example of Rwanda], in Łukasz Machaj (ed.), *Varia doctrinalia*, Prawnicza i Ekonomiczna Biblioteka Cyfrowa, Wrocław 2012, pp. 97–109 [accessed 6.12.2020]. Available from the Repository of the University of Wrocław: http://www.repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/Content/41106/08_Aleksandra_Spychalska.pdf.

[...] The division between the tribes deepened more and more. But perhaps the most absurd thing was the news spread by the missionaries working in Africa, which originated in the mind of a John Hanning Speke, who in 1863 claimed that the Tutsis were in fact the lost tribe of Israel. [...] The flashpoint that led to the massacre was the shooting down of the presidential aeroplane in April 1994; on board were not only Hutu Habyarimana, but also Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira. Despite the involvement of the Tutsi in the assassination never having been established, this incident became the perfect pretext for the army and the Hutu militia (Interahamwe) to start a three-month massacre of the population of the neighbouring tribe.

Magdalena Łaszkiewicz, 'Opowieść o rwandyjskiej tragedii' [A tale of a Rwandan tragedy], 14.8.2012 [accessed 10.12.2020]. Available from *Konflikty.pl*: https://www.konflikty.pl/historia/czasy-najnowsze/opowiesc-o-rwandyjskiej-tragedii/.

Source B

One hundred and five years ago, Turkey proceeded to exterminate the Armenian population within the borders of the then Ottoman Empire. [...] To this day, the Turkish authorities have not apologised for the crime. Instead, they have developed large-scale activities to erase the memory of the events of 1915. [...] The pretext for the massacre was fear of Armenian disloyalty in the face of war. A front had developed from Transcaucasia, with Russian troops fighting on its border. Although the Russian Tsar did not intend to bestow independence on the Armenians as part of his state, Saint Petersburg played a double game. On the one hand, it offered the Armenians the hope of liberation from dependence on the Turks; on the other, it did not reveal its real intentions to those concerned. [...] Under the slogan of securing the frontline areas, successive arrests, executions and the formation of death caravans made up of resettled Armenians took place [...] In this way, under the pretext of resettlement, the fate of 1.5 million Armenians in Turkey was sealed. [...]

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Armenians were to disappear not only from Turkey, but also from Turkish history. Turkey defends its version of history to this very day. It objects to calling the events of 1915–23 genocide. After all, the Turkish authorities were only supposed to be involved in the resettlement. […] More than two million victims have still not received any form of reparation. […] Over the following decades, the Turkish authorities have specialised in defending themselves against allegations of genocide: by enlisting some Western historians, by lodging objections with the national authorities over the fact that someone named a street in France after 24 April 1915, by blocking the production of films dedicated to the genocide, by banning books including *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* by the Jewish writer Franz Werfel, and finally by recalling its ambassador after Pope Francis called the events of 1915 a genocide.

Paweł Średziński, 'Ludobójstwo, o którym nie wolno mówić' [A genocide that must not be talked about], 24.04.2020 [accessed 6.12.2020]. Available from *Więź*: https://wiez.pl/2020/04/24/ludobojstwo-o-ktorym-nie-wolno-mowic/.

Source C

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is an anti-Semitic pamphlet describing – in the form of 24 lectures delivered allegedly during the First Zionist Congress in 1897 – the Jewish plans to achieve global domination. In reality, the text was probably fabricated by the Russian secret police, Okhrana, to blame the Jews for causing Russia's political and social problems at the time. The origin of most of the text comprising the protocols comes from a pamphlet published in 1864 by the French satirist M. Joly; it was against Napoleon III […].

[…] *The Protocols…* were treated by anti-Semites as an important testimony to the Jewish conspiracy and also became part of the Nazi propaganda arsenal. In the Polish People's Republic, editions of *The Protocols…* appeared during the period of the anti-Semitic bashing of 1968 staged by the authorities[1] and during the martial law of 1981–83. Today, this text, which casts an extremely unfavourable light on Jews and Zionism, is accepted as true in those areas and circles where critical or even hostile views of Jews prevail. […]

[1] Additional material supplementing the source text on the events of March 1968: https://sztetl.org.pl/en/glossary/anti-semitic-purge-polish-army-1967-1968.

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Witold Sienkiewicz, keyword: 'Protokoły mędrców Syjonu' [*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*] (the content of the keyword was prepared on the basis of source materials from PWN) [accessed 7.12.2020]. Available from POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews Virtual Shtetl portal: https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/slownik/protokoly-medrcow-syjonu.

Source D

The late 19th century, however, led to something much worse. All the previous stories made Jews simply not likeable. Because they were richer, more resourceful [...] This could result in a few kids beating one another up and the Jewish ones fighting back. It could and did lead to pogroms – but only if another self-appointed demagogue mentioned Jews as the universal cause of people's misery. Yet this would not have led to the Holocaust – a pogrom on a mass scale, in fact on an industrial scale, because the means involved were truly industrial. This was made possible by a single document, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[2] A thing invented from start to finish. [...] *The Protocols* ... initially made their dark appearance in Russia, but after the 1917 revolution they also found their way to other countries where the revolution had a similarly dark course [...] Around the same time, *The Protocols* ... found their way to Germany, to the unbounded delight of Adolf Hitler. As he later wrote:

> They are supposedly based on a forgery, as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* constantly whinges – the best proof that they are true. What many Jews do, perhaps unconsciously, is explained here fully consciously. That is what it is all about. No matter which Jewish *keppele* makes these revelations, the decisive point is that they expose with almost frightening certainty the essence and workings of Jewry and elucidate its inner dependencies and ultimate goals.

'In other words: even if they are fake, they must after all be true, because they accurately describe the paranoid delusions of anti-Semites ...,' Hesemann concludes. [...]

Wojciech Lada, 'Korzenie antysemityzmu: Mroczna kariera Mędrców Syjonu' [The roots of anti-Semitism: the dark career of the Elders of Zion] [accessed 7.12.2020]. Available from *Ukorzeni*: https://ukorzeni.pl/ciekawostki/korzenie-antysemityzmu-mroczna-kariera-medrcow-syjonu/.

[2] Underlined by Ł.M., the author.

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