

II GENOCIDE

- (i) **During the past century a third force, the human rights movement, has emerged which combines the energies of compassion embodied in the non-violent tradition and the structural energies of the just war tradition.** In the generation following the Second World War the crime of genocide - the systematic killing of large groups of human beings because of their race or belief - was largely identified in public consciousness with the Holocaust. During the Second World War the Nazi regime in Germany, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, undertook the destruction of the Jewish people in Europe. Destruction of the Jews in concentration camps was proclaimed as the final solution of the Jewish problem. During the war over six million Jews - men, women and children - were killed in accord with the deliberate policy of the Third Reich and in pursuit of this 'final solution'. Images of piled-up and wasted human bodies: the living hardly distinguishable from the dead, waiting to be fed into the furnaces of Auschwitz, were seared into the consciousness of our society and left an indelible mark. Genocide was identified with the Nazis and, more broadly, with the Fascists, the defeated enemy of the triumphant allies.
- (ii) The victorious powers initiated criminal proceedings against the vanquished, and established a new category of '**Crimes Against Humanity**', in which genocide was included, and the surviving leaders of the Third Reich were duly tried and punished by the International Tribunal in Nuremberg.
- (iii) **The Nazi regime functioned for a while as a suitable scapegoat, but in the past half-century many other images of genocide have forced their way into our consciousness.** One of the victorious allies, the regime of Joseph Stalin, turned out to be responsible for the deaths of between 500 000 and 1 100 000 of his own Soviet people, tortured and executed and often starved to death in the frozen wastes of Siberia because they were politically incorrect. In 1988 Saddam Hussein's henchmen (still in power) dug holes in Northern Iraq ten meters square and three meters deep; then lined up Kurdish people (equal in dignity and rights) beside the pits, shot them, and bulldozed the mass graves without checking that all were dead (the rare survivors bear witness). In 1994, a genocidal war erupted in Central Africa between the Hutu and the Tutsi in the course of which between 500 000 and 1 000 000 Tutsis (1993, 50 000 Hutu) were systematically massacred. A Catholic Church in which thousands of terrified women and children had taken refuge in 1994 was turned into a slaughterhouse from which there was no escape. Ten years later, a similar tragedy was enacted in East Timor, where a church full of East Timorese were massacred and incinerated by Indonesian militia as part of a systematic scorched earth policy to 'teach the East Timorese a lesson' for voting for independence.