

Violence without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers

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The paper identifies a class of violent acts that can best be described as sanctioned massacres. The special features of sanctioned massacres are that they occur in the context of a genocidal policy, and that they are directed at groups that have not themselves threatened or engaged in hostile actions against the perpetrators of the violence. The psychological environment in which such massacres occur lacks the conditions normally perceived as providing some degree of moral justification for violence. In searching for a psychological explanation of mass violence under these conditions, it is instructive to focus on factors reducing the strength of restraining forces against violence. Three interrelated processes are discussed in detail: (a) processes of authorization, which define the situation as one in which standard moral principles do not apply and the individual is absolved of responsibility to make personal moral choices; (b) processes of routinization, which so organize the action that there is no opportunity for raising moral questions and making moral decisions; and (c) processes of dehumanization which deprive both victim and victimizer of identity and community. The paper concludes with suggestions for corrective efforts that might help to prevent sanctioned massacres by counteracting the systemic and attitudinal supports for the processes described.

I hope I will be forgiven if I begin this address with some personal remarks, both about the award that I have just received and about the topic that I have chosen as the focus for my address.

Needless to say, I feel a great sense of satisfaction—as well as humility—as I receive this award. What this award represents to me, however, is more than recognition for my work as an

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action-oriented social psychologist and a research-oriented social activist. It represents a confirmation of the core of my being, for the effort to further, as the award states, "the development and integration of psychological research and social action" has been at the center of my activities and my self-definition from the very beginning of my professional career. These are the concerns that originally propelled me into social psychology and that have guided my various endeavors ever since. I do not take this award as evidence that I have always succeeded in what I have been trying to do. But I do take it as a recognition by my colleagues that I have honestly tried. This is as meaningful a validation as I could possibly ask for and certainly more than I could have envisioned when I started traveling this road more than a quarter of a century ago.

There are three special features of the award that add to the personal meaning it has for me: that it comes from SPSSI, that it honors Kurt Lewin, and that it is presented by Daniel Katz.

First, an award from SPSSI has special significance because SPSSI has been my professional and indeed my spiritual home ever since I joined it (at the suggestion of Daniel Katz) during my senior year at Brooklyn College. I am proud that SPSSI, despite its creeping respectability, has kept the faith throughout the years. It has continued to remain alive and responsive to new issues as these have been arising at an accelerating rate; it has continued to serve as a consistent voice for social responsibility within the profession; it has adapted to change while remaining true to its basic values. SPSSI, for me, is the reference group whose approval really counts.

Second, Kurt Lewin's work and orientation to social psychology have had a strong appeal for me and have been a source of inspiration ever since I first came across his writings. My only face-to-face contact with Lewin was toward the end of my undergraduate years, when I heard him lecture at Brooklyn College on his group decision experiments. I remember having some misgivings about the manipulative aspects of group decision procedures, but the research—with its focus on ways of producing change and its combination of theoretical concerns with action implications—clearly spoke to my preoccupations. Despite my general ignorance about social psychology, the one thing that I was quite certain about when I went to consult Daniel Katz about applications for graduate school was that I wanted to study

under Lewin. I did apply to the Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT, which Lewin had founded in 1945, but within a few weeks after I had submitted my application—in February of 1947—Lewin died and the Group Dynamics program decided not to accept new students. I began my graduate work instead at Yale, but never abandoned my interest in the Lewinian tradition. I read extensively in Lewinian theory, applied both to personality research and to social psychology. I arranged to spend the summer of 1948 at Bethel, which at that time was largely staffed by students and associates of Kurt Lewin. During the summer of 1949, I obtained (again with the help of Daniel Katz) a research assistantship at the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. While there, I spent a fair amount of time at the Research Center for Group Dynamics, which had since moved to the University of Michigan, and I had the opportunity to become acquainted with perhaps half a dozen of the last group of Lewin's students who were then completing their doctoral research or doing post-doctoral work at the Center. At Yale I had acquired a reputation as a Lewinian. At Michigan, however, I was known as a Hullian—among other reasons because of a thesis proposal I developed that summer which was based on a Hullian analysis of group decision processes (a proposal, incidentally, that was never put into action). I have not become a full-fledged Lewinian; I claim it is because I never acquired the knack of drawing a professional-looking life space diagram. But I have always felt a kinship with Lewinians—both theoretically and personally—and in many important respects I see my work as continuing within the Lewinian tradition. This then is another reason why the Lewin Award has a special personal meaning to me.

Third, to receive this award from the hands of Daniel Katz adds an extra dimension of meaning to the occasion. I have already alluded several times to his role in guiding and encouraging me at the beginnings of my career. He was Chairman of the Psychology Department at Brooklyn College when I did my undergraduate work there and I took a course in advanced social psychology from him which greatly influenced my decision to enter the field. He made me aware of the possibility of a social psychology that spoke to the kinds of social issues with which I was concerned. He has remained a friend and a role model throughout. In the 60s I was privileged to be closely associated with him at the University of Michigan as colleague and collaborator and benefited from his unmatched insights into what I see as the central task

of social psychology: investigation of the links between individual behavior and the functioning of social systems. Presentation of the Lewin Award by Daniel Katz is not only a special honor for me, but it contributes a sense of unity and completeness to the occasion, an almost esthetic quality of good fit.

THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE

As I have tried to show, the personal meaning that the Lewin Award has for me can be traced back to the period of 1946-47, when I first began to think of social psychology as a possible vocation. It seems especially appropriate, therefore, to devote my address to a concern that goes back to that same period—a concern with the problem of violence, especially mass violence of an organized and institutionalized nature. It was to a large extent in pursuit of this problem that I had turned to social psychology, hoping that psychological and sociological analysis could help us understand the sources of mass violence and suggest the means of changing both the institutional patterns and the personal dispositions that make such violence possible. In the fall of 1946, I wrote a term paper for my personality course, entitled "Towards an Explanation of Nazi Aggression." The present address is in a very real sense an updated attempt to raise some of the same questions. Unfortunately, there is a new set of experiences on which the present analysis can draw that was not available in 1946: the experiences of My Lai and of United States action in Indochina more generally.

My interest in the problem of violence—which, as I said, was an important factor in my vocational choice—was then and continues to be now an interest in the study of war and peace, of nationalism and militarism, of nonviolent approaches to social change and conflict resolution. But within this broader context the questions raised by the Nazi Holocaust aimed at the systematic destruction of the Jewish people have confronted me most profoundly and persistently. They have special meaning for me because, as a Jew, brought up in Vienna, who managed to get out of Nazi Austria a year after the Anschluss and then to get out of Belgium a few weeks before the Nazi invasion, and who lost countless relatives and childhood friends to the gas chambers and the execution squads, I am only a step removed from the category of Holocaust "survivor," although I would not presume to arrogate to myself the authority of true survivors—those who

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survived the Holocaust in death camps or in hiding within Nazi territory.

The attempts at genocide, of which the Holocaust is the most extreme and grotesque but by no means the only recent manifestation, represent a profound challenge to our thinking about human nature and human society—from both a moral and a sociopsychological point of view. Indeed, I would argue, it is the most profound challenge of our century, but one with which we have barely begun to grapple. Explanations that remain entirely at the psychological level of analysis or invoke a single overarching psychological principle are less than helpful. Social-psychological or psychohistorical perspectives, however, as several diverse writings have demonstrated (Arendt, 1963; Sanford, Comstock, & Associates, 1971; Kren & Rappoport, 1972; Lifton, 1973), can contribute some of the pieces to what is necessarily a multi-faceted quest for understanding, and can throw some light on the question of "how such things are possible." I see my own reflections as a modest and incomplete contribution to such an effort. I do not pretend that I have any answers; all I hope is to develop some of the terms within which questions can be formulated.

Characteristics of Sanctioned Massacres

My focus is on a class of violent acts that can be described as sanctioned massacres. I am speaking of indiscriminate, ruthless, and often systematic mass violence, carried out by military or paramilitary personnel while engaged in officially sanctioned campaigns, and directed at defenseless and unresisting civilians, including old men, women, and children. Though occurring in the course of officially sanctioned activities, the massacres themselves may or may not be specifically sanctioned. The larger context is usually, though not necessarily, an international or civil war, a revolutionary or secessionist struggle, a colonial or ethnic conflict, a change or consolidation of political power. The Nazi atrocities against the Jews and the US atrocities against the Indochinese peoples are prime examples of the kind of mass violence I have in mind, but numerous other cases would clearly fit the description. Within American history, My Lai had its precursors in the Philippine War around the turn of the century (Schinner, 1971), not to speak of the Indian massacres. Elsewhere in the world, one recalls the massacres and deportations of Armenians, the liquidation of the kulaks and the great purges in the Soviet Union, and more recently the massacres in Indonesia and Bangladesh.

in Biafra and Burundi, in South Africa and Mozambique.

There are other types of violence directed against defenseless civilians that would probably fit my definition of sanctioned massacres even though they are qualitatively different in various ways from the prototypes I have cited. These might include bombing attacks specifically aimed at civilian targets (such as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, or much of US bombing in the countries of Indochina), or various acts of terrorism (such as those that have repeatedly been carried out by both Catholic and Protestant groups in Northern Ireland, by Palestinian guerrillas in planes and airports around the world, or by both sides in South Vietnam), or violent suppression of peaceful protests. On the other hand, there are various kinds of violence that have much in common with sanctioned massacres but that do not quite fit the definition I am using—such as lynching mobs or “issueless” riots (see Marx, 1972). In any event, the question of what should be included or excluded is relatively immaterial, since my purpose is not to develop a typology of violent actions but to set some boundaries to the phenomenon with which I am concerned.

It should also be pointed out that the different examples of violence that clearly fall within my definition are by no means entirely equivalent to one another. They may vary on a number of important dimensions. For example, the context of counterinsurgency warfare waged by a high-technology society against low-technology societies, as in the case of US actions in Indochina, provides a unique set of atrocity-producing conditions (see Falk, 1972; also Lifton, 1973, p. 41), in contrast to those situations in which there are no differences in level of technology or in which such differences are less marked. Another important distinction is between massacres that are part of a deliberate policy aiming to exterminate a category of people, and those that are inevitable by-products of a policy which is not aimed at extermination but which contemplates and plans the destruction of vast population groups as a means toward other ends, such as counterinsurgency or consolidation of power. Probably the most extreme example of the former type of situation is the Nazis’ “final solution” for European Jewry, in which a policy aimed at exterminating millions of people was consciously articulated and executed (see Levinson, 1973), in which such extermination was an end in itself, and in which the extermination was accomplished on a mass-production basis through the literal establishment of a well-organized, efficient death industry. United States policies in

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Indochina exemplify the second type of situation. Though I feel that there is overwhelming evidence that the United States has committed monstrous war crimes and crimes against humanity in Indochina (Sheehan, 1971; Browning & Forman, 1972) in pursuit of a policy that considered the Vietnamese population entirely expendable, the evidence does not suggest that extermination has been the conscious purpose of the policy. These various differences may have important moral as well as sociopsychological implications. For present purposes, however, I do not intend to dwell on such differences, but to discuss at a much more general level the common features shared by the entire class of sanctioned massacres.

The question for the social psychologist is: What are the conditions under which normal people become capable of planning, ordering, committing, or condoning acts of mass violence of this kind? Before attempting to answer this question, we must examine the special characteristics of this class of violent acts, as compared to other kinds of violence, particularly other kinds of organized violence (recognizing throughout that there are continuities between the different forms of organized violence and that no sharp line can be drawn between them). Two special features characterize this class of violence, relating to its context and its target.

The context of violence. The sanctioned massacres that we are dealing with here occur in the context of an overall policy that is genocidal in character, in the sense that it is designed to destroy all or part of a category of people defined in ethnic, national, racial, religious, or other terms. In line with the distinctions that I have already drawn, such a policy may be deliberately aimed at the systematic extermination of a population group as an end in itself, as was the case with the Nazi destruction of European Jewry. Alternatively, the policy may be aimed at an objective other than extermination—such as the pacification of the rural population of South Vietnam, as in the case of US policy in Indochina—but may include the deliberate decimation of large segments of a population as an acceptable means to that end. I am not qualified to judge whether US actions in Vietnam constitute genocide in the legal terms of the UN Convention on Genocide, but they can be said to have at least a genocidal dimension. Central to US strategy in South Vietnam were such actions as unrestricted air and artillery bombardments of peasant hamlets, search-and-destroy missions by ground troops, crop denial programs, and mass deportation of rural populations. These

actions (and similar actions in Laos and Cambodia) have been clearly and deliberately aimed at civilian populations, and have resulted in the death, injury, and uprooting of large numbers of that population and in the destruction of their countryside, their source of livelihood, and their social structure. These consequences have been known to the policy makers and indeed intended as part of their pacification effort; the actions were designed to clear the countryside in order to bring the rural population under control and to deprive the guerrillas of their base of operation. Thus, while extermination of the civilian population was not the end of the policy, the physical destruction of large numbers of the population and the destruction of their way of life were regarded as acceptable means. Massacres of the kind that occurred in My Lai were not deliberately planned, but they took place in an atmosphere that made it quite clear that the civilian population was expendable and that actions resulting in the indiscriminate killing of civilians were central to the strategy of the war.

The target of violence. A second feature of the class of violence under discussion is that it is directed at groups that have not themselves threatened or engaged in hostile actions toward the perpetrators of the violence. Usually, the targets of massacres belong to groups that are physically weaker than their victimizers (although massacres are often directed at minorities that may be economically more advanced than the masses of the population within which they live). By definition, the victims of this class of violence are defenseless civilians, including old men, women, and children. There are, of course, historical and situational reasons why a particular group becomes a suitable target for massacres. In this sense, it can perhaps be said that the victims provoke the violence by what they are. It cannot, however, be said, in any objectively meaningful sense, that they provoke the violence against them by what they have done. They are not being murdered because they have harmed, oppressed, or threatened their attackers. Rather, their selection as targets for massacre at a particular time can ultimately be traced to their relationship to the pursuit of larger policies. They may be targeted because their elimination is seen as a useful tool or because their continued existence is seen as an irritating obstacle in the execution of policy.

The genocidal context of this class of violence and the fact that it is directed at a target that did not provoke the violence through its own actions has some definite implications for the psychological environment within which sanctioned massacres

occur. It is an environment that seems almost totally devoid of those conditions that people usually see as providing at least some degree of moral justification for violence. Neither the reason for the violence nor its purpose is of the kind that people would normally consider justifiable.

The most widely accepted justification for violence is that it occurred for reasons of self-defense against attack or the threat of attack. When this reason is extended to the international level, it may refer not only to threats to the physical existence of a nation, but also to threats to its basic values or its vital national interests. Similarly, violence—both at the interpersonal and at the intergroup level—is often seen as morally justified when it occurs in response to oppression or other forms of strong provocation. There is even a tradition that justifies violence in the face of symbolic harm, as evidenced by leniency toward the perpetrators of crimes of passion. In all of these cases, the violence is provoked by actions that cause harm or threaten harm to the perpetrator of the violence, and it is directed at the source of this provocation. Violence under these conditions—particularly organized violence in the form of warfare—is not seen as morally acceptable by everyone and at all times. People may disagree in principle about the precise point at which they would draw the line between justifiable and unjustifiable reasons for violence; in any given case, they may disagree about the justification for violence because of differences in their assessment of the nature of the provocation and the probable consequences of the response. Nevertheless, most people would agree that violence in self-defense or in response to oppression and other forms of strong provocation is at least within the realm of moral discourse; even those who consider violence unjustifiable under such conditions—in general or in any given case—would acknowledge that there is room for legitimate disagreement among moral people on this score. By contrast, violence of the kind that I have described as sanctioned massacres is entirely outside of the realm of moral discourse, in that it does not occur in response to those conditions that are normally accepted as partial or complete justification for violence.

Moral justification for violence depends not only on its reasons but also on its purposes. Again, self-defense presents the purest case. If a violent response clearly blocks an act of aggression, if by taking the life of an attacker you save your own life or the lives of other potential victims, then most people would regard it as morally justifiable. As one moves away from this rather

clearcut case, particularly into the area of organized violence, the issues become much more complicated and moral consensus more difficult to attain. Nevertheless, moral justification for violence usually depends on the extent to which it is seen as serving a defensive purpose, even though that term may be given a rather broad definition. Thus the use of violence by police or troops in the control of riots or the suppression of rebellions is often considered justified even though it may lead to the killing of some innocent bystanders, but only to the extent to which it is necessary to contain the rioters or rebels. Indiscriminate or purely punitive violence would generally be considered unacceptable in this case. In the case of warfare, these considerations are written into international law. Although the rules of warfare are quite permissive even with regard to the killing of civilians, they do impose some definite limits. The degree and kind of violence used must be justified by considerations of "military necessity" (i.e., as steps required for the purpose of defeating the enemy) and the targeting of civilian populations is prohibited outright. In short, the moral justification for violence depends on the extent to which it is related to the purpose of stopping aggression or neutralizing a threat toward one's self or his group. Once again, sanctioned massacres—which are designed to destroy entire segments of a population—occur in the absence of a condition that is normally considered to provide some degree of moral justification for violence.

Whether or not the conditions for moral justification are totally absent in a given case may be subject to different interpretations. In the case of US actions in Vietnam, for example, it may be argued that the killing of civilians in My Lai and elsewhere did involve a legitimate element of self-defense, since women and children were known to help the guerrillas, hiding hand grenades under their clothes. Similarly, it may be argued that air and artillery bombardments against peasant hamlets had a legitimate military purpose, in that guerrillas often used these hamlets as their bases of operation. Even if one grants these possibilities, however, and puts aside the question of what US troops were doing in Vietnam in the first place, it seems clear that the destructiveness of the response was far out of proportion to the conditions that might have justified it. The quantitative relationship between provocation and response and that between ends and means each have an important bearing on the moral evaluation of the action.

I have been saying that the class of violence under discussion

here differs from other types of violence in that the conditions that usually provide moral justification for violent acts are absent. This is not to say, however, that those who participate—actively or passively—in these violent acts regard them as unjustified. They may either find various justifications for them or—for various reasons to which I shall return later—fail to see the need for justification (Ball-Rokeach, 1972; Hallie, 1971). The important point is that the conditions that most people, including the perpetrators of the violence themselves, would normally regard as crucial for the moral justification of violent actions are absent in these situations. Moreover, the absence of these conditions is quite apparent to most outside observers, who are not themselves caught up in the machinery of the sanctioned massacres. These objective circumstances set the framework within which psychological analysis must proceed.

Driving Forces toward Violence

In searching for a psychological explanation of mass violence under conditions lacking the usual kinds of moral justification for violence, the first inclination is to look for forces that might impel people toward such murderous acts. Can we identify in these massacre situations psychological forces so powerful that they outweigh the moral restraints that would normally inhibit unjustifiable violence?

One approach would be to look for psychological dispositions within those who perpetrate these acts. This approach, however, does not offer a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon, although it may tell us something about the types of individuals who are most readily recruited for participation in such massacres. Any explanation that has recourse to the presence of strong sadistic impulses is obviously inadequate. There is no evidence to support the notion that the majority of those who participate in these killings, in one or another way, are sadistically inclined. Speaking, for example, of the men who participated in the Nazi slaughters, Arendt (1963) points out that they "were not sadists or killers by nature; on the contrary, a systematic effort was made to weed out all those who derived physical pleasure from what they did [p. 93]." To be sure, some of the commanders and guards of concentration camps could clearly be described as sadists, but what has to be explained is the existence of concentration camps in which these individuals could give play to their sadistic fantasies. These opportunities were provided with the participation of large numbers of individuals to whom the label of sadist could

not be applied. Moreover, it should also be noted that much of the sadistic behavior observed in massacre situations can be understood most readily as a consequence of participation in mass violence with its dehumanizing impact, rather than as a motivating force for it.

A more sophisticated type of dispositional approach would be one that seeks to identify certain characterological themes that are dominant within a given culture. An early example of such an approach is Fromm's (1941) analysis of the appeals of Nazism in terms of the prevalence of sadomasochistic strivings, particularly among the German lower middle class. Such an approach may be very helpful in explaining the recruitment of participants in sanctioned massacres in a given society, the specific form that these massacres take, and the ideological support for them. It would be important to explore whether similar kinds of characterological dispositions can be identified in the very wide range of cultural contexts in which sanctioned massacres have occurred. However general such dispositions turn out to be, it seems most likely that they represent states of readiness to participate in sanctioned massacres when the opportunity arises, rather than major motivating forces in their own right. Similarly, high levels of frustration within a population are probably facilitators rather than instigators of sanctioned massacres, since there does not seem to be a clear relationship between the societal level of frustration and the occurrence of such violence. Such a view would be consistent with much of the recent thinking on the relationship between frustration and aggression (see, for example, Bandura, 1973).

Another approach to identifying psychological forces directing people toward violence that are so powerful that they outweigh the moral restraints that would normally inhibit such violence is to examine the relationship between the perpetrators and the targets of the violence. Could the class of violence under discussion here be traced to an inordinately intense hatred toward those against whom the violence is directed? The evidence does not seem to support such an interpretation. Indications are that many of the men who actively participated in the extermination of European Jews, such as Adolf Eichmann (see Arendt, 1963), did not feel any passionate hatred against Jews. One of the striking characteristics of the Nazi program, in fact, is the passionless, businesslike way in which it was carried out. There is certainly no reason to believe that those who planned and executed American policy in Vietnam felt a profound hatred against the

Vietnamese population. There is no question, in both cases, that the perpetrators of the violence had considerable contempt for their victims, but the desire to injure and annihilate them was not uniformly high.

Because of the incongruity between the actions and the accompanying emotions in this class of mass violence, I originally referred to it as violence without hostility. The more I thought about it, however, the more I realized that this was a misleading designation, because hatred and rage do play a significant role in sanctioned massacres. Typically, there is a long history of profound hatred against the groups targeted for violence, which helps to establish them as suitable victims. This would hold true for the Jews in Christian Europe, for the Chinese in Southeast Asia, and for the Ibos in Northern Nigeria. There is no such history in the relationship between Americans and Vietnamese, but attitudes toward the Vietnamese were readily assimilated to a racist orientation that has deep roots in American history. Hostility also plays an important part at the point at which the killings are actually carried out, even if the official planning and the bureaucratic preparations that ultimately lead to this point are carried out in a passionless and businesslike atmosphere. For example, Lifton's (1973) descriptions of My Lai, based on eyewitness reports, suggest that the killings were accompanied by generalized rage and by expressions of anger and revenge toward the victims. Lifton points out, incidentally, that he

... encountered conflicting descriptions about the kind of emotion Americans demonstrated at My Lai. Some recollections had them gunning down the Vietnamese with "no expression on ... [their] faces ... very businesslike," with "breaks" for cigarettes or refreshments. Yet others described the men as having become "wild" or "crazy" in their killing, raping, and destroying [1973, p. 51].

In short, sanctioned massacres certainly involve a considerable amount of hostility toward the victims, traceable both to historical relationships and to situational dynamics. Hostility toward the target, however, does not seem to be the instigator of the violent actions. Historical relationships provide a reservoir of hostility that can be drawn upon to mobilize, feed, and justify the violent actions, but they do not cause these actions in the immediate case. The expressions of anger in the situation itself can more properly be viewed as outcomes rather than causes of the violence. They serve to provide the perpetrators with an explanation and rationalization for their violent actions and appropriate labels for their emotional state. They also help to reinforce, maintain,

and intensify the violence. But they are not the initial instigators. Hostility toward the target, both historically rooted and situationally induced, contributes heavily to the violence, but it does so largely by dehumanizing the victims—a point to which I shall return in some detail—rather than by creating powerful forces that motivate violence against these victims.

The implication of my argument so far is that the occurrence of sanctioned massacres cannot be adequately explained by the existence of psychological forces—whether these be characterological dispositions to engage in murderous violence or profound hostility against the target—so powerful that they must find expression in violent acts unhampered by moral restraints. The major instigators for this class of violence derive from the policy process, rather than from impulses toward violence as such. The question that really calls for psychological analysis is why so many people are willing to formulate, participate in, and condone policies that call for the mass killings of defenseless victims. In seeking answers to this question, I submit, we can learn more by looking, not at the motives for violence, but at the conditions under which the usual moral inhibitions against violence become weakened. To put it in Lewinian terms, we need to focus not so much on factors increasing the strength of driving forces toward violence, as on factors reducing the strength of restraining forces against violence. It is to the weakening of such restraining forces that I shall address the remainder of my remarks.

THE LOSS OF RESTRAINT

I would like to discuss three interrelated processes that lead to the weakening of moral restraints against violence: authorization, routinization, and dehumanization. Through processes of authorization, the situation becomes so defined that standard moral principles do not apply and the individual is absolved of responsibility to make personal moral choices. Through processes of routinization, the action becomes so organized that there is no opportunity for raising moral questions and making moral decisions. Through processes of dehumanization, the actor's attitudes toward the target and toward himself become so structured that it is neither necessary nor possible for him to view the relationship in moral terms.

Authorization

Sanctioned massacres by definition occur in the context of an authority situation. The structure of an authority situation

is such that, at least for many of the participants, the moral principles that generally govern human relationships do not apply. Thus when acts of violence are explicitly ordered, implicitly encouraged, tacitly approved, or at least permitted by legitimate authorities, people's readiness to commit or condone them is considerably enhanced. The fact that such acts are authorized seems to carry automatic justification for them. Behaviorally, authorization obviates the necessity of making judgments or choices. Not only do normal moral principles become inoperative, but—particularly when the actions are explicitly ordered—a different kind of morality, linked to the duty to obey superior orders, tends to take over.

An individual in an authority situation characteristically feels obligated to obey the orders of the authorities, whether or not these correspond with his personal preferences. He sees himself as having no choice as long as he accepts the legitimacy of the orders and of the authorities who give them. Individuals differ considerably in the degree to which—and the conditions under which—they are prepared to challenge the legitimacy of an order on the grounds that the order itself is illegal, or that those giving it have overstepped their authority, or that it stems from a policy that violates fundamental societal values. Regardless of such individual differences, however, the basic structure of a situation of legitimate authority requires the individual to respond in terms of authoritative demands rather than personal preferences; he can disobey only by challenging the legitimacy of the authority. Often people obey without question even though the behavior they engage in may entail great personal sacrifice or great harm to others.

An important corollary of the basic structure of the authority situation is that the individual does not see himself as personally responsible for the consequences of his action. Again, there are individual differences, depending on one's capacity and readiness to evaluate the legitimacy of orders received. Insofar as the person sees himself, however, as having had no choice in the action, he does not feel personally responsible for it. He was not a personal agent but merely an extension of the authority. Thus when his action causes harm to others, he can feel relatively free of guilt. A similar mechanism operates when a person engages in antisocial behavior that was not ordered by the authorities but tacitly encouraged and approved by them, even if only by making it quite clear that such behavior will not be punished. In this situation, behavior that was formerly illegitimate is legitimized by the authorities' acquiescence.

In the My Lai massacre, it is likely that the structure of the authority situation contributed to the massive violence in the two ways just described, that is, by conveying both the message that acts of violence against Vietnamese villagers were *required* and the message that such acts, even if not ordered, were *permitted* by the authorities in charge. The actions at My Lai represented, at least in some respects, responses to explicit or implicit orders. Everyone agrees that Lt. Calley, the officer in immediate charge of the operation, ordered his men to shoot all of the inhabitants of the village. Whether Calley himself had been ordered by his superiors to "waste" the whole area, as he claimed, is a matter of controversy. Even if we assume, however, that he was not explicitly ordered to wipe out the village, he had reason to believe that such actions were expected by his superior officers. Indeed the very nature of the war conveyed this expectation: The principal measure of military success was the "body count"—the number of enemy soldiers killed—and any Vietnamese killed by the US military was commonly defined as a "Viet Cong." Thus it was not totally bizarre for Calley to believe that what he was doing at My Lai was to increase his body count, as any good officer was expected to do.

Even to the extent that the actions at My Lai occurred spontaneously, without reference to superior orders, those committing them had ample reason to assume that such actions would not be punished and might even be tacitly approved by the military authorities. Actions similar to those at My Lai, though perhaps not on the same scale, were not uncommon in Vietnam, and the authorities had quite clearly shown a permissive attitude toward them. Not only had they failed to punish such acts in most cases, but the very strategies and tactics that they themselves consistently devised were based on the proposition that the civilian population of South Vietnam—regardless of whether it involved "hostile" or "friendly" elements—was totally expendable. Such policies as search-and-destroy missions, the establishment of free-shooting zones, the use of anti-personnel weapons, the bombing of entire villages if they were suspected of harboring guerrillas, the forced migration of masses of the rural population, and the defoliation of vast forest areas helped to legitimize acts of massive violence of the kind that occurred at My Lai.

The events at My Lai suggest an orientation to authority based on unquestioning obedience to superior orders no matter how destructive the actions called for by these orders. Such obedience is specifically fostered in the course of military training

and reinforced by the structure of the military authority situation. It also reflects, however, an ideological orientation that may be widespread in general populations. It seems that such an ideology—similar to though obviously rooted in different historical experiences and probably differing in many nuances from that suggested for Nazi Germany—is accepted by large numbers of Americans. In a national survey of public reactions to the Calley trial (Kelman & Lawrence, 1972), conducted a few weeks after the conviction of Lt. Calley had been announced, we asked respondents what they thought they would do if they were soldiers in Vietnam and were ordered by their superior officers to shoot all inhabitants of a village suspected of aiding the enemy, including old men, women, and children. Fifty-one percent of our sample said that they would follow orders and shoot; 33% said that they would refuse to shoot. We cannot infer, of course, from their responses to a hypothetical question what these individuals would actually do if they found themselves in the situation described. Our data do suggest, however, that they are prepared, in principle, to engage in mass violence if faced with authoritative orders to do so. They are certainly prepared to condone such actions; they regard obedience to orders under these circumstances—even if that means shooting unarmed civilians—as the normatively expected, the required, indeed the right and moral thing for the good citizen to do. In short, the cognitive and ideological grounding for mass violence in an authority situation seems to be present in large segments of the US population (and very probably of other populations as well; see, for example, Mann, 1973).

From the pattern of their responses to a variety of questions, we can gain some understanding of the differences between those who say they would follow orders and shoot in the hypothetical situation and those who say they would refuse to shoot (Kelman, 1973). Those who say they would shoot seem to feel, by and large, that the individual has no choice in the face of authoritative orders; he has neither the responsibility nor the right to question such orders. They make a sharp separation between authority situations and interpersonal situations in daily life. The moral norms that apply in the latter are, in their view, irrelevant in the former. Within authority situations, they feel unable to differentiate between circumstances under which it would be right and those under which it would be wrong to obey superior orders. Those who say they would refuse to shoot would generally agree that legitimate orders must be obeyed, but their view of the

authority situation is more flexible: Obedience is less automatic; the individual has both the right and the duty to make certain judgments and choices. Thus they are prepared to make certain moral distinctions even in an authority situation; they are more inclined to see that situation as continuous with normal interpersonal relationships.

Respondents who say they would follow orders and shoot, seeing themselves as totally devoid of choices in the face of authority, feel strongly that the individual cannot be held personally responsible for actions that he takes under these conditions. They seem to conceive the relationship between citizens and authorities as governed by an implicit contract. According to this contract, the citizen—at least in such areas as foreign and military policy—obeys without question. In return, the authorities accept full responsibility for the consequences of his actions. This view is consistent with a pattern of involvement in the political system that I have described elsewhere (Kelman, 1969) as normative integration, i.e., integration based primarily on adherence to system rules. Normatively integrated individuals do feel included in the system, but their inclusion is tenuous. They do not see themselves as "owners" of the system and independent agents with regard to national policy, but rather as "pawns" who are obligated to support these policies regardless of their personal preferences.

Theoretically, we would expect normative integration and the conception of the citizen-authority relationship associated with it to be most prevalent among members of the working class and perhaps the lower middle class. Given their socialization experiences and the realities of their life situations, they are not likely to develop a sense of ownership of the system and a sense of power and personal agency within it, even though they are generally integrated in the society. Our survey data are consistent with this interpretation. Respondents who say they would follow orders and shoot Vietnamese civilians and who feel the individual should not be held responsible for actions taken under authoritative orders tend to be lower on several indicators of social class, especially on educational level. Though statistically significant, these relationships are not strong and must be interpreted very cautiously (Lawrence & Kelman, 1973). In any event, our data suggest that, within the population at large, the ideology of unquestioning obedience is related to a sense of political powerlessness.

Powerlessness within the system, conducive to an attitude

of unquestioning obedience to authoritative orders, may help to explain the readiness to condone sanctioned massacres among large segments of the general population and the readiness to participate in such massacres among the lower echelons of the military or bureaucratic organizations involved. Sanctioned massacres, however, require the collaboration of organizational levels across the entire chain of command. What is often striking is the degree of unquestioning obedience to orders shown by officers and functionaries at high levels in the organizational hierarchy, who certainly do not belong to the more powerless segments of the society. When asked to play their part in the murderous enterprise, they seem ready to do so without claiming the right or even feeling the need to raise questions. They too seem to assume that superior orders override the moral considerations that might apply in other situations and free them of personal responsibility for their actions.

The Senate hearings on Watergate have provided some insight into the dynamics of unquestioning obedience among those at middle or moderately high levels within an authority system. Watergate of course was not a sanctioned massacre, but it provides a vivid demonstration of the way in which processes of authorization sweep aside the usual moral restraints against participation in criminal acts. People who should have known better automatically carried out what they saw as authoritative orders without questioning the moral or legal implications. Similar processes can account for the unquestioning participation of large numbers of people, many of them clearly belonging to highly educated and powerful segments of American society, in the formulation and execution of Indochina policy.

There are, of course, many reasons why officers and officials are motivated to go along with policies prescribed by higher authorities. These have to do with holding on to or advancing in their jobs, with protecting or expanding their areas of jurisdiction, with nurturing ambitions for higher office or larger duties. In tightly managed authority systems, success often depends on being a good team player and refraining from rocking the boat. Granting the importance of such considerations, we still need to ask how the voice of conscience is subdued, why the moral restraints that would normally inhibit participation in murderous violence are so hopelessly weak in these cases. I would propose that, in the case of organizational functionaries, there are two ways in which processes of authorization help to make moral restraints inoperative, and that these may act either jointly or

independently. Authoritative demands may elicit an overriding obligation or invoke a transcendent mission.

In certain authority systems, the governing ideology or the operating style places the highest value on the loyalty of functionaries—to the leader as a person or to the organization. Those who are committed to such a system may well see it as their duty to follow authoritative orders regardless of their personal preferences. Within their value system, the order calls forth what they would consider a moral obligation that overrides any other moral scruples they might have. Their reaction is similar to that of the normatively integrated citizen, which I described earlier, in the sense that they also see themselves in a no-choice situation once an authoritative order has been given. The difference, however, is that they have chosen to be in that situation by making a personal commitment to the organization and its leadership. The net effect, of course, is the same in that the usual standards of morality are considered inapplicable. Like the normatively integrated, these functionaries also do not expect to be held personally responsible for the consequences of their actions, but again for a different reason: They see themselves not as helpless pawns, but as agents and extensions of the authorities and thus by definition assured of their protection. Both groups believe they have no choice but to obey: the normatively integrated because they are so far removed from the centers of power that they feel overwhelmed by the authorities; the functionaries because they are so close to the centers of power that they identify with the authority system and are caught up in its glory and mystique. The functionaries thus tend to exaggerate the moral claim that the authorities have on their loyalties. What is interesting, if this analysis is correct, is that the tendency toward unquestioning obedience is most pronounced among two extreme groups: those far removed from the centers of power and those relatively close to them.

The second way in which processes of authorization may counteract the moral scruples of functionaries is by invoking a transcendent mission. By virtue of their relative closeness to the centers of power, the functionaries may share, to a certain extent, a view sometimes held by those in power. According to this view, the authorities are agents of a larger set of corporate purposes that transcend the rules of standard morality. Thus, their actions—and their orders—cannot be judged according to the usual moral or legal criteria. In acting on these orders, the functionaries become part of that transcendent enterprise. They feel justified in over-

coming their moral scruples; indeed they feel obligated to do so. The nature of the transcendent mission may be quite vague. *Himmler*, in giving pep talks to the men in charge of extermination procedures, emphasized that they were "involved in something historic, grandiose, unique ('a great task that occurs once in two thousand years') [Arendt, 1963, p. 93]" without much further specification. He also, incidentally, praised them for their courage and devotion to duty in carrying out repugnant acts. However vague the transcendent mission may be (other examples of vague missions are "national security" or "the containment of Communist aggression"), once the authorities invoke them, the functionaries no longer feel bound by standard moral constraints.

The notion of a transcendent mission brings me directly to the authorities themselves, those who make the decisions and formulate the policies and plans that constitute or lead to sanctioned massacres. I would argue that they too, in their own way, may feel freed of moral restraints through the process of authorization. By virtue of their positions and of the popular mandate that has presumably placed them in those positions, they are authorized to speak for the state. According to a view that is widely held (although it has been challenged by the Nuremberg principles), the state itself is an entity that is not subject to the moral law; it is free to do anything it deems necessary to protect or promote its national interests. The central authorities, in acting for the state, are similarly not subject to moral restraints that might be operative in their personal lives. What is important to note is that, according to this view, the freedom from all restraints devolves on the central decision maker from a higher authority, the state, of which he is merely the servant. (See Kryn and Rappoport, 1972, for a discussion of Bismarck's formulation of this issue.) The state is conceived as external to the decision maker, making demands that must be heeded without question. Since his authority derives from the state, whose pursuit of national interests transcends standard morality, everyday moral considerations do not apply.

According to the logic of this view, justification for the decision maker's actions parallels the justifications used by those lower in the hierarchy. He too claims that he had no choice in that he was responding to authoritative demands. He too makes a sharp separation between personal morality and the overriding requirements of authority situations. He too expects to be absolved of personal responsibility because, as head of state, he was acting under higher authority. It is interesting, in this connection, that

the Nuremberg principles challenged both the claim of "superior orders" and that of "head of state" as ways of avoiding personal responsibility for war crimes (Bosch, 1970). This whole doctrine is, of course, extremely dangerous because of its total circularity. The decision makers themselves determine what the national interests are that are making unchallengeable demands on them. It becomes easy to identify their own interests and inclinations—or at least their own views of the national interest—with "the" national interest, which then acquires an independent status and can be pursued without reference to moral considerations. In effect, this doctrine authorizes central decision makers to use their power without restraint by invoking a transcendent mission that is not subject to principles of personal morality.

Routinization

Authorization processes create a situation in which the person becomes involved in an action without considering the implications of that action and without really making a decision. Once he has taken the initial step, he is in a new psychological and social situation in which the pressures to continue are quite powerful. As Lewin (1947) has pointed out, many forces that might originally have kept him out of the situation reverse direction once he has made a commitment (once he has gone through the gate region, in Lewin's terms) and now help to keep him in the situation. For example, concern about the criminal nature of the action, which might originally have inhibited him from becoming involved, may now lead to deeper involvement in efforts to justify the action and to avoid negative consequences.

Despite these forces, however, given the nature of the action involved in sanctioned massacres, one might expect moral scruples and revulsions to arise at any step of the way. To deal with such resistances, repeated authorization providing renewed justification is usually necessary. Furthermore, and very importantly, the likelihood of such resistances cropping up is greatly reduced by processes of routinization—by transforming the action into routine, mechanical, highly programmed operations. Routinization fulfills two functions. First, it reduces the necessity of making decisions, thus minimizing occasions in which moral questions may arise. Second, it makes it easier to avoid the implications of the action since the actor focuses on the details of his job rather than on its meaning. The latter effect is more easily achieved among those who participate in sanctioned massacres from a distance, that is, from the desks of their bureaus or even from the cockpits of their bombers.

Routinization operates both at the level of the individual actor and at the organizational level. At the individual level, performance of the job is broken down into a series of discrete steps, most of them carried out in automatic, regularized fashion. The bureaucrat or officer concerns himself with making out schedules, keeping accounts, writing reports, assigning personnel, and dozens of other details and trivia that are part of his normal job. It becomes easy to forget the nature of the product that emerges from this process. Even those who cannot fail to see the product may come to see their actions as routine. When Galley said of My Lai that it was "no great deal," he probably implied that it was all in a day's work.

At the organizational level, the task is divided across different offices, each of which has responsibility for a small portion of it. Not only does this arrangement result in a diffusion of responsibility, but it reduces the amount and limits the scope of decision making that is necessary. The work flows from office to office, with each automatically setting the agenda for the one next in line (hierarchically or functionally). At each point, the only decisions that generally have to be made are operational ones. There is no expectation that the moral implications will be considered at any of these points, nor is there any opportunity to do so.

The organizational processes also help further legitimize the actions of each participant. By proceeding in routine fashion—processing papers, exchanging memos, diligently carrying out their assigned tasks—the different units mutually reinforce each other in the view that what is going on must be perfectly normal, correct, and legitimate. The shared illusion that they are engaged in a legitimate enterprise helps the participants to assimilate their activities to other purposes, thus further normalizing them. For example, they may concern themselves with the efficiency of their performance, the productivity of their unit, the prospects for personal recognition and advancement, or the cohesiveness of their group (Janis, 1971). The nature of the task becomes completely dissociated from their performance of it. As they become habituated to their assignment in a supportive organizational context, they come to treat it more and more as if it were a normal job in which one can take pride, hope to achieve success, and engage in collaborative effort.

Normalization of atrocities is more difficult to the extent that there are constant reminders of the true meaning of the enterprise. Moral inhibitions are less easily subdued if the functionaries, in their own thinking and in their communications with

one another, have to face the fact that they are engaged in organized murder. Such moral constraints are augmented by prudential ones when it comes to the writing of memoranda and the issuing of communiqués. The difficulty is handled by the well-known bureaucratic inventiveness in the use of language. The SS had a set of *Sprachregelungen* or "language rules" to govern descriptions of their extermination program. As Arendt (1963) points out, the term "language rule" in itself was "a code name; it meant what in ordinary language would be called a lie [p. 80]." The code names for killing and liquidation were "final solution," "evacuation," and "special treatment." The war in Indochina has produced its own set of euphemisms: "protective reaction," "pacification," "forced-draft urbanization and modernization." Whatever terms they use, participants in the sanctioned massacres are of course usually aware of what they are actually doing. The euphemisms allow them to differentiate these actions from ordinary killing and destruction and thus to avoid confrontation with their true meaning. The moral revulsion that the ordinary labels would arouse can be more readily suppressed and the enterprise can proceed on its routine course.

Dehumanization

Authorization processes override standard moral considerations: routinization processes reduce the likelihood that such considerations will arise. Still, the inhibitions against murdering fellow human beings are generally so strong that the victims must be deprived of their human status if systematic killing is to proceed in a smooth and orderly fashion. To the extent that the victims are dehumanized, principles of morality no longer apply to them and moral restraints against killing are more readily overcome.

To understand the processes of dehumanization, we must first ask what it means to perceive another person as fully human, in the sense of being included in the moral compact that governs human relationships. I would propose that to perceive another as human we must accord him identity and community, concepts that closely resemble the two fundamental modalities of existence termed "agency" and "communion" by Bakan (1966). To accord a person identity is to perceive him as an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices, and entitled to live his own life on the basis of his own goals and values. To accord a person community is to perceive him—along with one's self—as part of an interconnected network of individu-

als who care for each other, who recognize each other's individuality, and who respect each other's rights. These two features together constitute the basis for individual worth—for the acceptance of the individual as an end in himself, rather than a means toward some extraneous end. Individual worth, of necessity, has both a personal and a social referent; it implies that the individual has value and that he is valued by others.

To perceive others as fully human means to be saddened by the death of every single person, regardless of the population group or the part of the world from which he comes, and regardless of our own personal acquaintance with him. If we accord him identity, then we must individualize his death, a sentiment epitomized in the words of the Talmud:

Therefore was a single man only first created to teach thee that whosoever destroys a single soul from the children of man, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed the whole world, and whosoever rescues a single soul from the children of man, Scripture credits him as though he had saved the whole world [Sanhedrin, Chapter 4, Mishnah 5].

If we accord him community, then we must experience his death as a personal loss, a sentiment expressed with beautiful simplicity by John Donne's *Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind*.

Sanctioned massacres become possible to the extent that we deprive fellow human beings of identity and community. It is difficult to have compassion for those who lack identity and who are excluded from our community; their death does not move us in a personal way. Thus when a group of people is defined entirely in terms of a category to which they belong, and when this category is excluded from the human family, then the moral restraints against killing them are more readily overcome.

Dehumanization of the enemy is a common phenomenon in any war situation. Sanctioned massacres, however, presuppose a degree of dehumanization that is considerably more extreme. People may fear and hate an enemy; they may be sufficiently angered, provoked, or threatened by him to be prepared to take his life. They may still be reacting to him, however, as a human being; in fact, they may even respect him and feel a sense of kinship with him, regretting that clashing interests have brought them into conflict. If they kill him, it is because they perceive him as a personal threat. By contrast, in sanctioned massacres as I have characterized them the killing is not in response to the target's threats or provocations. It is not what he has done

that marks him for death, but what he is—the category to which he happens to belong.

In keeping with my characterization of sanctioned massacres as occurring in the context of a genocidal policy, the victims are converted into means in the most ultimate sense possible. They are killed because their deaths serve the policy purposes of their executioners. They are the victims of policies that regard their systematic destruction as a desirable end or a fully acceptable means. They are totally expendable.

Such extreme dehumanization, as I mentioned earlier, becomes possible when the target group can readily be identified as a separate category of people who have historically been stigmatized for one or another reason. There may be a long history of exclusion, distrust, and contempt of the victims by the victimizers. Or the victims may belong to a distinct racial, religious, ethnic, or political group which is commonly regarded by the victimizers as inferior, sinister, or uncivilized. The traditions, the habits, the images, and the vocabularies for dehumanizing such groups are already well established and these can be drawn upon when the groups are selected for massacre. The use of labels helps to deprive the victims of identity and community. Terms like "gook" help to define them as subhuman, despicable, and certainly incapable of evoking empathy. Terms like "Communist" allow their total identity to be absorbed by a single category, and one that is identified by the perpetrators of the massacre as totally evil.

The dynamics of the massacre process itself further increase the participants' tendency to dehumanize their victims. Those who participate as part of the bureaucratic apparatus increasingly come to see their victims as bodies to count and enter into their reports, as faceless figures that will determine their productivity rates and promotions. Those who participate in the massacre directly—in the field, as it were—are reinforced in their perception of the victims as less than human by observing their very victimization. The only way they can justify what is being done to these people, both by others and by themselves, and the only way they can extract some degree of meaning out of the absurd events in which they find themselves participating (Lifton, 1971, 1973) is by coming to believe that the victims are subhuman and deserve to be rooted out. And thus the process of dehumanization feeds on itself.

Continuing participation in sanctioned massacres not only increases the tendency to dehumanize the victim, but it also

increases the dehumanization of the victimizer himself. Dehumanization of the victimizer is a gradual process that develops out of the act of victimization itself. Zimbardo, Haney, Banks, and Jaffe (1973) have dramatically demonstrated, in a simulated prison study, the way in which subjects who were randomly assigned to a victimizer role tend to become brutalized by virtue of the situational forces to which they are subjected. In sanctioned massacres, as the victimizer becomes increasingly dehumanized through the enactment of his role, moral restraints against murder are further weakened. To the extent that he is dehumanized, he loses the capacity to act as a moral being.

The actions of the victimizer make his own dehumanization an inescapable condition of his life (Sanford & Comstock, 1971). Following my earlier distinction between identity and community, I would propose that the victimizer loses both his sense of personal identity and his sense of community.

Through his unquestioning obedience to authority and through the routinization of his job, he is deprived of personal agency. He is not an independent actor making judgments and choices on the basis of his own values and assessment of the consequences. Rather, he allows himself to be buffeted about by external forces. He becomes alienated within his task—to adapt a concept developed by Pravaz (1969) for the analysis of task groups—he is unable to distance himself from the task, to reflect about it, to recognize himself as a responsible agent. He is so caught up in the routine performance of his authorized task that he automatically slides into actions without stopping to make value decisions about them. He does of course make certain decisions, particularly if he is at a moderately high level in the hierarchy, but these focus on details of procedure and on the costs and benefits of various ways of carrying out the task. What they conspicuously fail to focus on are the truly important criteria for human decision making: What effects will these actions have on the human beings involved? From this point of view, even the high-level decision makers are alienated within their task and deprived of a sense of identity. They see themselves as personal agents, often in fact as powerful actors on a global stage, participating in a historical drama, and to a certain extent this perception may well be true. Yet insofar as they operate without consideration of the human consequences of their decisions, their agency is stunted and illusory.

This brings me to the second source of the victimizer's dehumanization: his loss of the sense of community. In dehuman-

izing his victims, he loses his capacity to care for them, to have compassion for them, to treat them as human beings. He develops a *state of psychic numbing* (Lifton, 1971, 1973) and a sense of detachment (Opoton, 1971) which sharply reduce his capacity to feel. Insofar as he excludes a whole group of people from his network of shared empathy, his own community becomes more constricted and his sense of involvement in humankind declines.

In sum, processes of authorization, routinization, and dehumanization of the victim contribute to the weakening of moral restraints, not only directly, but also by furthering the dehumanization of the victimizer. As he gradually discards personal responsibility and human empathy, he loses his capacity to act as a moral being.

PREVENTION OF SANCTIONED MASSACRES

In conclusion, I want to address myself briefly to the implications of my analysis for the prevention of sanctioned massacres. I shall not even attempt to deal with this question in its broad outlines, but merely suggest how one might counteract the processes of authorization, routinization, and dehumanization. These processes are rooted in the structure of our political and social system and reinforced in daily life. It is there that we might concentrate some of our corrective efforts. Let me mention five targets of such corrective efforts that flow directly from the present analysis.

The Habit of Unquestioning Obedience

The relationship of wide segments of the population to political authorities is governed by unquestioning obedience and by ideologies that support it. This habit is built into the structure of authority situations more generally, even in nonpolitical contexts, as Milgram's (1963, 1965) provocative experiments have demonstrated. To counteract this habit, it will be necessary to create the conditions for developing a sense of personal agency in wide segments of the society, which in turn implies a redistribution of power and a thorough reshaping of the mechanisms of public decision making. As more people develop a sense of personal agency, they will acquire the capacity to take personal responsibility for their actions even when these are ordered by superior authorities. Furthermore, the spread of agency and responsibility will make it more difficult for central authorities to invoke overriding loyalties and transcendent missions in the unchallenged pursuit of criminal policies.

The Normalization and Legitimization of Violence

Our society exposes us to innumerable opportunities to observe acts of violence or preparations for violence that are treated matter-of-factly or socially approved. Recent research on aggression (e.g., Bandura, 1973; Berkowitz, 1965) suggests that the desensitizing and disinhibiting effects of such observations facilitate aggressive behavior in the observer (whether in general or toward appropriate targets). The cumulative experience with such socially sanctioned violence makes it easier for participants in sanctioned massacres to accept the normality and legitimacy of the acts they are asked to perform.

The greatest contributor to the legitimization of violence in our society is the maintenance of a massive, powerful military establishment, committed to the use of force, not as a last resort, but as a central instrument of global policy, and extending its influence into broad domains of domestic life. The cheapness of human life is further underlined by strategic thinking that calculates how many millions of deaths (within the strategist's own population) represent an acceptable risk in a nuclear bargaining move. "Enemy" lives need not be considered in the calculus at all; they can be extinguished at will just to convey a message to the other side in a negotiation exchange.

Another example of the willingness of our society to discount human lives, thus contributing to the normalization and legitimization of violence, is the incredible power of the gun lobbies in blocking meaningful gun control legislation. The claim (among others) that such legislation would interfere with the legitimate rights of hunters provides another reminder of the permissive attitude toward killing—in this case, to be sure, of nonhuman victims—that pervades our society. We have witnessed the ways in which the sport can be generalized to human game once the victims have been sufficiently dehumanized. (I might add, parenthetically, that the norms of sportsmanlike conduct on which, I suppose, good hunters pride themselves strike me as highly hypocritical; the minimum conditions for "fair combat," it seems to me, would be to allow the game free choice of participation and parity of weapons—conditions noticeably lacking in the gentlemanly sport of hunting, as they are in sanctioned massacres.)

The extent to which and the way in which violence is presented on the media, particularly on television, may well have a desensitizing and disinhibiting effect and help to diffuse the message that violence is normal and legitimate. Recent research on media effects seems consistent with this interpretation. One interesting

feature of many media stories, fictional or journalistic, is the tendency to define a happy ending as one in which the hero survives, even if countless, nameless, and usually guiltless others lose their lives in the process. The message is clear that ordinary human lives are cheap and their loss merits neither sorrow nor indignation. None of these considerations justifies censorship campaigns, but serious attention to them in media programming would certainly be in order.

Violence is further legitimized by labeling processes that help to dissociate it from its true meaning. The more often we associate killing with honor, with justice, or with sport, the easier we find it to perceive massacres as acceptable and socially approved forms of conduct. Paradoxically, some of the highly selective official pronouncements against violence to which our national leaders occasionally resort only contribute to the perversion of language that helps to dissociate actions from their meaning. When the architects of mass violence in Indochina say (in criticizing Ghetto riots) that there is never an excuse for violence in our society, or (in decrying abortion) that it violates the sacredness of human life, they destroy the utility of these words as aids to moral judgment. People learn to look to official definitions of actions rather than to their human consequences in assessing their legitimacy.

Corrective efforts must take the form of constant challenges to the notion that human life is cheap, that killing or participation in killing is a socially acceptable and respectable activity, that violence is a normal and legitimate enterprise. These challenges must be raised at every point and every occasion in our social and political life at which such assumptions manifest themselves, because failure to challenge them creates the very conditions for their legitimization.

The Sanctioned Definition of Victim Categories

In our society, as in many others, there are certain categories of people who are defined as fair game, whose victimization is socially sanctioned and approved. This establishment of what might be called free-fire zones—in a demographic, rather than geographic sense—lays the groundwork for the dehumanization processes that facilitate sanctioned massacres. Not only do such practices define the groups available as legitimate targets for massacre, but more generally they legitimize the concept that there are categories of people who are less than human and who are expendable.

The research by Kahn and his associates (for example, Kahn, 1972) demonstrates that large proportions of the US male population sampled in their survey consider violence against hoodlums, ghetto rioters, and student protesters—in many cases violence to the point of shooting to kill—to be fully justified, even though the provocation by these target groups consisted only of property damage (as distinct from personal violence). Thus the interests of social control serve to sanction the establishment of victim categories, who are widely regarded as fair game. The consequences of such an orientation, in the context of suppressing political protest, were tragically demonstrated by the killings at Kent State University in 1970.

Thirteen students were shot at Kent State because popular feeling, officially encouraged, held that students were fair game. The Justice Department ignored the results of its own investigation because the President, the Vice President and the Attorney General had all publicly attacked student activists as ideological hoodlums [Powers, 1973, p. 1].

Primary responsibility for the atmosphere that made these events possible must be placed on:

callous and irresponsible behavior of public officials who felt, and who did not hesitate in the heat of the moment to say, that students were fair game. Riding a wave of antistudent ill-feeling for which both the President and the Vice President are at least partly to blame, these officials, from the mayor of Kent to the governor of Ohio, made no attempt to calm the situation at Kent State but instead responded eagerly with steadily escalating force completely out of proportion to the provocation [Powers, 1973, p. 17].

In the context of law enforcement, the consequences of the sanctioned definition of victim categories have been demonstrated recently by the terror tactics and blatant violations of individual rights practiced by narcotics agents. The cases that made the headlines were ones in which respectable families were brutalized "by mistake"; the agents had broken into the wrong house or followed a false tip. However, the issue is not just that totally innocent people were attacked, but that we have an official policy that defines as fair game those who are—for however valid a reason—suspected of drug violations. Tom Wicker (1973) quotes the Special Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement as saying: "Drug people are the very vermin of humanity . . . occasionally we must adopt their dress and tactics." Such statements offer concrete illustrations of the intimate link between dehumanization of the victim and the victimizer.

The victimization of protesters and suspected lawbreakers is most pronounced when these belong to demographic categories that are in themselves defined as fair game. In our society, such categories include blacks and other racial minorities, welfare recipients and other poor people, hippies and other deviants. The extent to which the black community, for example, has been treated as a free-fire zone by law enforcement officers has been demonstrated again and again, whether in raids on Black Panther headquarters, in disturbances on black campuses, or in the questioning or arrests of suspected lawbreakers or people who "behave suspiciously" in black ghettos. The degree to which our society tolerates the killing of blacks and members of other racial minorities in the course of ordinary police operations testifies to the acceptance of their categorization as fair game. Further evidence is provided by the disproportionate application of the death penalty (which itself symbolizes the dangerous principle that society is entitled to determine which categories of individuals have forfeited the right to live) against blacks as compared to whites. The definition of blacks as fair game in our society, it must be noted, has been sanctioned not only in the domain of social control, but also in other areas, such as medical experimentation—witness the recent revelation of an Alabama study in which black men (whose informed consent, of course, had not been obtained) were deprived of treatment for a syphilitic condition so that the investigators could observe the natural course of the disease.

One type of corrective effort against the sanctioned definition of victim categories is to use every opportunity to individualize the targets of violence, at home or abroad. As long as they remain identityless and are described in terms of stereotyped categories, they can more readily be dehumanized. Furthermore, just as we must constantly protest any tendency within the society to treat violent actions as normal and legitimate, so must we protest all implications that there are groups—within our own society or outside of it—that are subhuman and fair game. No attempt to exclude from the human community a group, by whatever criteria that group may be defined, must remain unchallenged. It is particularly important to challenge such attempts when they are made by public officials, and especially by officials who speak with the highest authority. Their pronouncements contribute most heavily to creating the atmosphere and providing the legitimization that make systematic attacks against designated victim categories possible. The president and vice-president do have the right to

criticize practices of which they disapprove, but to single out categories of objectionable people and define them as outside the bounds of the community represents a dangerous abuse of their authority that must be challenged whenever it occurs.

Finally, society must establish the principle that advocacy of genocide against any group of people is not permissible. We may have to reconsider—and I say this with profound reluctance—some of our assumptions about the limits of freedom of speech or at least about the criteria for clear and present danger. The danger of genocide is very real and a permissive attitude toward its advocacy helps to legitimize it and to create the conditions for its occurrence. Whether or not there are to be legal restraints against the advocacy of genocide, we must never allow it to appear legitimate through our silent or expedient acquiescence. Whenever, wherever, and in whatever guise genocide is advocated, we must immediately identify it for what it is and unambiguously condemn it.

The Glorification of Violence

Beyond the disinhibiting forces I have described so far that encourage a view of violence in various contexts and against certain categories of people as normal and acceptable, there are also propelling forces that encourage a view of violence as a glorious activity and a legitimate form of self-expression.

The glorification of violence receives some of its strongest reinforcement from the traditional image of the military as a uniquely noble and honorable enterprise. Within this tradition, killing of the enemy is elevated from the status of a necessary evil to that of a commendable good; productivity and proficiency in its performance are among the marks of the military hero. In the United States, this traditional adulation of the military has suffered some setbacks during the Vietnam War. The elaborately staged homecoming of our prisoners of war was aimed, among other things, at reviving popular enthusiasm for the military by casting these men in the traditional roles of returning heroes. The men deserve our fullest sympathy, respect, and support as human beings who have been subjected to extreme suffering and who have shown a high degree of personal courage. We must also remember, however, that most of these men were not only victims, but also victimizers—active (and in some cases enthusiastic) participants in the massive bombardments of the people of Vietnam. To treat them as military heroes is to honor them in their roles as victimizers and thus to support our political

and military authorities in their efforts to glorify mass violence.

At the other end of the political spectrum, some of the revolutionary rhetoric of recent years has made its own contribution to the glorification of violence (Arendt, 1969; also Kelman, 1968, Chapter 9). Terrorist acts have in some quarters been romanticized and their perpetrators elevated to the status of revolutionary heroes. A revolutionary mystique has evolved in which violence is not merely a means of struggle used as a last resort by oppressed people but a valued end in its own right. Some of the writings of Fanon (1963), in particular, are often cited as intellectual justification for the idea that violence on the part of oppressed people is in itself a vital part of the struggle, serving as a cleansing and creative force.

The glorification of violence among the rank and file—whether in a military or a revolutionary context—may well be a response to the dehumanizing experiences to which they themselves have been subjected. Both regimentation and oppression create a feeling of powerlessness, a loss of personal agency, a deprivation of the sense of identity. Violence can offer a person the illusion that he is in control, that he is able to act on his environment, that he has found a means of self-expression. It may be the only way left to him to regain some semblance of identity, to convince himself that he really exists. The sad irony is that violence is a response to dehumanization that only deepens the loss that it seeks to undo; it is an attempt to regain one's sense of identity by further destroying one's sense of community.

The appeal of doctrines (on the right or the left of the political spectrum) that glorify violence can be understood more readily if we recognize their close relationship to commonly held stereotypes of masculinity. In our culture, as in many others, violence is often taken as evidence of the toughness and aggressiveness, the lack of sentimentality, and the emotional stoicism that males are expected to demonstrate. Thus the readiness to proclaim or endorse the glories of violence is often a response to the perceived requirements of the male sex role; to shy away from violence is to fail a challenge to prove one's manliness. Similarly, those who feel particularly oppressed by their powerlessness and lack of personal agency may resort to violence because they see it as a way of regaining their lost manhood.

To counteract the glorification of violence, we must challenge the concept that killing is a heroic enterprise or a legitimate form of self-expression. We must learn to overcome the reluctance to take a firm stand against the jingoist or terrorist who declares

that violence is the only way, even at the risk of appearing insufficiently patriotic or insufficiently radical as the case may be. More fundamentally, we must find ways of counteracting the rigid sex-role stereotypes that are so deeply rooted in our culture and that have a profoundly dehumanizing influence. Just as commonly held notions of the female role tend to undermine women's sense of identity by restricting them in the development and expression of personal agency, so do commonly held notions of the male role undermine men's sense of community by restricting them in the development and expression of empathy toward their fellow human beings.

The Promulgation of Transhuman Ideologies

Both among the proponents of the status quo and among the advocates of political change, there is a widespread commitment to ideologies that, in the service of some abstract transcendent mission, discount the concrete human implications of political actions. Such ideologies create the political atmosphere in which sanctioned massacres become possible and provide automatic rationales for those who design and participate in these massacres.

This is the issue to which Albert Camus (1968) addressed himself with eloquent simplicity in his essay, "Neither Victims nor Executioners," first published in 1946. He points out that the existence of "a world where murder is legitimate, and where human life is considered trifling" poses "the great political question of our times, and before dealing with other issues, one must take a position on it [p. 3]." He goes on to ask that we:

... reflect and then decide, clearly, whether humanity's lot must be made still more miserable in order to achieve far-off and shadowy ends, whether we should accept a world bristling with arms where brother kills brother; or whether, on the contrary, we should avoid bloodshed and misery as much as possible so that we give a chance for survival to later generations better equipped than we are [p. 17].

All I ask [says Camus in his conclusion] is that, in the midst of a murderous world, we agree to reflect on murder and to make a choice. After that, we can distinguish those who accept the consequences of being murderers themselves or the accomplices of murderers, and those who refuse to do so with all their force and being [pp. 18-19].

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