DESCENT INTO DARKNESS: THE LOCAL PARTICIPATION OF THE *WEHRMACHT* IN THE HOLOCAUST IN BELARUS, 1941-2

Waitman Wade Beorn

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Approved by:

Christopher R. Browning

Joseph T. Glatthaar

Karen Hagemann

Konrad H. Jarausch

Donald J. Raleigh

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ABSTRACT

Descent into Darkness: The Local Participation of the *Wehrmacht* in the Holocaust in Belarus, 1941-2
(Under the direction of Christopher Browning)

This study examines how and why the German army become involved in the murder of Jews in the Soviet Union in the context of the Holocaust. Focusing on the involvement of the *Wehrmacht* in genocide in six local areas, this work details a progression of complicity from improvised participation to the internalization of anti-Jewish measures. Moreover, it explains in detail the myriad ways in which German soldiers aided in and benefited from the murder of Jews in Belarus.

This work highlights the critical importance of unit culture and the complex *interaction* between situational factors, values, and social-psychological forces. It also demonstrates that the antipartisan war (or threat thereof) was intentionally and successfully mobilized to increase the participation of the German Army in the Holocaust. Finally, this dissertation examines in detail the many different relationships between German soldiers and Jews that occurred in the context of the Nazi genocidal project in the East.

DEDICATION

To my parents without whose love of history and belief in the power of language I would not have chosen this path.

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I. Introduction

On a bitterly cold morning in November 1941, fourteen-year-old Lisa Derman's mother brought her and her sister to the barbed wire fence surrounding the Slonim ghetto and told them to hide with a neighbor. They escaped the ghetto but were refused refuge in the town. Instead, the two girls hid in the nearby woods. As they ran into the dark pine forest, they stumbled across the site where 10,000 Jews of Slonim were being shot by an SS unit, assisted by German soldiers. They then fled "from the blood and the screams and the shrieks to the opposite part of the forest to hide." A Polish forest ranger stopped them but the girls said they were simply gathering wood for the winter. After having seen the killing site, however, the ranger returned and angrily accused them of being Jews escaping the action. He took them back to the road where most of the Jewish population of Slonim was slowly marching to the murder pits and told the two girls to get in line with the rest. Lisa's sister grabbed her hand and screamed to run and the two sisters ran away from the column across an open field. Surprisingly, the German soldiers escorting the Jews did not fire at them. The forest ranger hit Lisa's sister in the leg with an axe but the two managed to escape. After running from little children in Slonim who had screamed "Jewesses, Jewesses, you took off your yellow stars," Lisa and her sister collapsed in a nearby barn. The barn belonged to a local Christian woman who found them and told the frightened children, "You do not have to

tell me where you are coming from. I know. God has brought you to the right house." She fed them, bandaged their wounds, and hid them in her sofa during the killing.[1]

The next morning a different journey to the killing site began. German Army Private Anton N. marched out of the town of Slonim with his squad. The men were tasked with covering the grave where between eight and ten thousand Jews had been killed the day before. As they marched through a small wood, the squad came upon several Jews who had been wounded during the execution and had escaped. One of them had been shot through the jaw. All were returned to the mass grave and shot by these German soldiers. When the squad finally arrived at the actual killing site in the Czepilow forest, it was apparent that other Jews had also managed to crawl out of the trench. As a result, Private N.'s squad leader, Sergeant Martin Wörndle, led the men on a search of nearby villages for escaped Jews.

Twenty years later, Anton N. found himself sitting in the local police office of the village of Sandebeck deep in the ancient German Teutoberger Forest. He described the results of that patrol to the prosecuting attorney. "We picked up a man, a woman, and a twelve year old boy. We took them all back to the grave. There, these three were also shot." Of course, he said that no one from his group actually shot; this was taken care of by a volunteer firing squad. As he and his fellow soldiers shoveled dirt on the grave, "it still moved because those Jews who were wounded had not received a killing shot."[2]

Similar acts of complicity in the Holocaust were repeated over and over across the occupied Soviet Union between 1941 and 1944. While the SS and SD may have been tasked

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[1] "Derman, Lisa," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 23224, Visual History Archive, 2009).

[2] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 145-46.

officially with the murder of Jews, the German Army made itself, in many places, deeply complicit. German soldiers rounded up Jews, guarded them, marched them to killing sites, and, in some cases, pulled the triggers themselves. They appropriated Jewish property, sometimes sending it home to their own families. Some soldiers even engaged in sexual relationships with Jews. Yet others evaded participation and, in a very few cases, actively sought to aid or rescue Jews. It is this multiplicity of experiences that form the subject of this study.

Many scholars of the Holocaust have demonstrated that various organizations, including the German Army, were complicit in the crimes of the Nazis. They have unearthed agreements and described common aims and mindsets among the leaders. However, few have been able to present the end result of these more general acceptances of Nazi policy. What did "*Wehrmacht* complicity," really look like at ground level?[3] In what ways did units and individual soldiers actually take part in Nazi genocidal policies? How did this participation change over time and with increased familiarity with killing? Why did some soldiers choose to participate (and not to participate) in the ways that they did? In addition, how and why did the *Wehrmacht* become so involved in the murder of civilians? These are the central questions that I seek to answer in this study. By focusing in detail on a series of cases, all of which occurred in the territory of present day Belarus in the autumn and winter of 1941, I seek to provide a more cohesive narrative and analysis of the *Wehrmacht's progressive* complicity.

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[3] The term *Wehrmacht* technically refers to all fighting arms of the German military during World War II. When discussing the complicity of the military, especially from a historiographical standpoint, in atrocities committed during the war, I will use the term "*Wehrmacht"* as the discussion of such atrocities generally centers on land forces, specifically the Army.

How did German soldiers go from uncertain guarding of killing sites to grave robbing to sadistic "Jew Games" in less than six months? This study will present the development of *Wehrmacht* complicity through four stages: 1) Improvisation, 2) Clarification, Exhortation, and Execution, 3) Routinization, and 4) Internalization. This investigation follows the evolving participation of the *Wehrmacht* in the Nazi genocidal project through five roughly chronological cases throughout Belarus. It begins in September 1941, when the 354th Infantry Regiment directly aided in the murder of 1,000 Jews in the town of Krupki, near Minsk. The improvised manner in which this unit assisted *Einsatzkommando* 8 characterizes the initial stage of *Wehrmacht* complicity.[4] Next, I examine a little-studied but vital antipartisan conference that took place a week later in Mogilev and explicitly connected the murder of Jews with day-to-day operations against partisans. Resulting directly from the Mogilev conference was the murder of over a hundred Jews in the village of Krucha by the 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment on October 10. The Army carried out this action completely on its own. This chapter explains the explicit idenification of Jews as targets, the incitement to kill Jews in the course of operations, and the ensuing execution of these policies. In it, I argue that the Jew-Bolshevik-partisan construct was intentionally used to bring the manpower of the *Wehrmacht* to bear against Jews in smaller areas that posed logistical problems for the *Einsatzgruppen*. I then move to the towns of Slonim and Novogrudok where, in November and December of 1941, two companies of the 727th Infantry Regiment assisted civilian authorities with ghettoization, expropriation, and the murder of 10,000 and 5,000 Jews, respectively. These companies exhibit the routinization of

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[4] *Einsatzkommando* 8 was a subordinate killing squad from *Einsatzgruppe B* which operated predominantly in what is now Belarus. Specifically, the 354th assisted *Teilkommando Schönemann* which was subordinated to *Einsatzkommando 8*.

complicity within the framework of established relationships with the SS and civil authorities. Finally, the case of the 12th Company in Sczcuczyn demonstrates the last stage in this process: internalization of guidance to murder Jews. While not involved in any large massacres, this unit continually murdered Jews in small groups in the course of regular patrols and specialized "Jew hunts," in which they reported the dead as "partisans," thus demonstrating the continued influence of the antipartisan war as subterfuge for genocide.

Three important arguments explaining the depth and manner of *Wehrmacht* involvement in the Holocaust run throughout this work. First, leadership was vital in both participation and non-participation of German soldiers and units. Some units, led by particularly brutal men such as First Lieutenant Glück, in Slonim became particularly brutal. The example of Josef Sibille, who refused to comply with an order to murder Jews also highlights the power of leadership at the local level in the commission of mass killing. Second, almost from the beginning, the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus and the greatly exaggerated antipartisan threat was used to justify the participation in the *Wehrmacht* in the murder of the Jews. The modes of this involvement extended far beyond the "logistical" support detailed in prewar agreements. The manpower and increased territorial reach of the Army was explicitly leveraged to alleviate difficulties the killing units such as the *Einsatzgruppen* encountered in the East. German Army units killed Jews independently and then reported the victims as dead partisans. Lastly, it was extended contact with the Holocaust that led to increased participation, not some large difference in ideological fervor. Not all German Army units were placed in a position to become involved in genocide but a great many of them would have been disposed to participate given the opportunity. By

examining the specifics of soldiers' behavior on the ground, relationships with Jews and with German civil authorities, we can see that soldiers typically became *more* complicit over time.

Both the temporal and spatial boundaries of this study are important. With fewer local collaborators (due to Belarus' less well-developed nationalist movement as compared to the Baltic States and the Ukraine), German forces were required to take more of a leading role in Nazi genocidal policy. In addition, the large numbers of Jews living in this region made the "Final Solution" in this region of particular significance. Lastly, the German perception of a partisan threat (even if of questionable reality) added an additional factor in the calculus of *Wehrmacht* complicity. The timing of these actions in the autumn and winter of 1941/42 is also helpful in narrowing the scope of this investigation. The general tenor of the opening campaign in the East for the Germans was one of rapid advances and stunning victories. This continued relatively unabated until November when the Germans were stopped at the gates of Moscow and the offensive ground to a stalemate. With the most brutal and savage fighting yet to come, explanations based upon a "barbarization" of warfare leading to increasing violence by German forces can, for the most part, be discarded. Likewise, the partisan movement in Belarus did not become a real military threat until mid-1942. Thus, while as an imagined threat it played a decisive role in the mentality of the *Wehrmacht* and its willingness to engage in atrocities, arguments suggesting that genocidal violence was a reaction to a difficult guerilla war can be set aside for this period.

Naturally, in an organization whose numbers reached over 17 million, the search for the "Holy Grail" of representativeness can be frustrating. Germans served in many different types of units and in many different locations. Several cases obviously cannot speak for all soldiers in all places. Thus, I will endeavor to explain how several units came to be

involved in the ways they were as well as how the microhistorical approach to these selected case studies illuminates the larger phenomenon of *Wehrmacht* atrocities in other areas. In many cases, this speaks to the *potential* for atrocities by the German Army as a whole, given certain situations. Where this study differs from others in this scholarship is its focus on the lowest levels. Taking into account the larger structural environment, I hope to reconstruct the daily lives and decisions of *Wehrmacht* units complicit in mass killing in a way that has so far been neglected by most historians. In so doing, we venture deeper into a myth of honorable and apolitical *Wehrmacht* behavior already deeply challenged by historians.

The Many Lives of the Wehrmacht: Public Controversy and Academic Investigation

> "I can't believe that. I can't believe it. They were shot at, they had to defend themselves,…they had to. I don't believe these pictures of arbitrary shootings and hangings. I don't believe my uncles were murderers…I don't believe my grandfather was a murderer either. I can't believe it. Otherwise I would have to hang *myself*."
>
> Visitor to the *Wehrmacht* Exhibition, Vienna, 1995[5]

> "The 'innocent Wehrmacht' was always nonsense….People say 'We didn't know'. But there are hundreds of thousands of letters home. There is a lot of self-protection among older people."
>
> Heinz Denicke, 75, visitor to *Wehrmacht* Exhibition, Hamburg, 1995[6]

At 4:40 am on the morning of 9 March 1999, a bomb exploded outside an adult training center in Saarbrücken, Germany. While causing extensive damage to the building and shattering the windows in a nearby church, the bomb did little damage to its intended

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[5] Gabriel Fawcett, "The Wehrmacht Exhibition," *History Today* 52, no. 4 (2002): 2.

[6] Steve Crawshaw, "Germans Own up to Horrors Committed on Eastern Front," *The Independent*, 17 April 1995, 8.

target: an exhibition depicting the complicity of the *Wehrmacht* in the crimes of the Nazis.[7] Yet, the anger, shock, and public interest in the traveling exhibit funded by German tobacco magnate and philanthropist Jan Reemstma and organized by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research demonstrated the powerful position that military collaboration in the Holocaust still held in the German psyche.

The eruption of public response manifested itself in protests and violence from all sides of the political spectrum. A demonstrator from the right-wing NPD carried a sign reading, "If all soldiers were criminals and murderers, then I am one of the latter. I do not feel guilty. It was not a humane war."[8] A conservative historian wrote a volume in response called "Crimes *against* the Wehrmacht" in which he documented the war crimes committed against German forces by the Red Army, implying that the exhibition suffered from a misplaced emphasis.[9] In the four years after it opened, the exhibit traveled to thirty-three Austrian and German cities and hosted over 800,000 visitors.[10] If it highlighted the highly emotionally charged elements of the subject, the exhibition also demonstrated but did not master its historical complexity. In 1999, three historians contested the attribution of several photographs, arguing that they depicted victims of the NKVD and not those of the *Wehrmacht.* This led to a suspension of the exhibition as a panel of historians painstakingly examined every photo. The exhibit reopened in 2001, with far fewer photographs, leading it to be accused of presenting "consensus history" and having "banished the emotions to the

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[7] "Nazi War Crimes Show Bombed - Police Suspect Extremists ", *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 9 March 1999.

[8] Jan Phillipp Reemtsma, Ulrike Jureit, and Hans Mommsen, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht : Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 : Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger,2002), 697.

[9] Franz Wilhelm Seidler, *Verbrechen an der Wehrmacht : Kriegsgreuel der Roten Armee 1941/42* (Selent: Pour le Merite, 1998).

[10] Jan Phillipp Reemtsma, Ulrike Jureit, and Hans Mommsen, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht : Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 : Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger,2002), 687.

footnotes."[11] It had raised critical questions which were necessary for German society, but had provided no answers.

While the exhibition was successful in raising public awareness, challenging conventional beliefs, and provoking violent emotional responses and debates, its overall historical value was debatable. Questions of representativeness and of internal motivation remained unanswered. In many ways, the format of the first exhibition precluded a methodologically rigorous approach to such questions for it entailed (by necessity) the "cherry-picking" of particularly egregious or emotive examples of Holocaust complicity. The exhibit further challenged the academic community through its use of sources. The several errors of attribution regarding photographs as well as the inclusion of diaries and letters spawned important questions about what documents should or could be relied on and what these sources are able to tell historians (as well as what they cannot). In the end, the *Wehrmacht* exhibition brought the crimes of the German army into public view and caused strong emotional reactions, but its "sound and fury" left many, if not most, of the questions regarding the complicity of the *Wehrmacht* unanswered.[12] Chief among these was the level of participation among German soldiers and how this unfolded over time.

The history of the German Army (and its relationship with the Nazi regime) has followed a somewhat torturous path since the end of World War II. For much of this period, this issue evolved in the separate yet connected spheres of public and academic discourse. For many if not most Germans, any involvement by the *Wehrmacht* in the crimes of the

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[11] Hannes Heer, *Vom Verschwinden der Täter : der Vernichtungskrieg fand statt, aber Keiner war dabei* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2004), 36.

[12] For more on the *Wehrmacht* Exhibition and associated debates, see Helmut Donat and Arn Strohmeyer, eds., *Befreiung von der Wehrmacht? : Dokumentation der Auseinandersetzung über die Ausstellung "Vernichtungskrieg--Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944" in Bremen 1996/97* (Bremen: Donat,1997).

Third Reich remained a taboo subject, individually and collectively. The large number of Germans served in the *Wehrmacht* at some point between 1939 and 1945 dwarfed the numbers who served in the SS, the only military organization to be officially condemned as criminal at the Nuremburg Trials. Because most Germans knew a relative or close friend who had served in the military, there was understandably great reluctance to consider their participation in atrocities. Very quickly this personal discomfort, among other things, led to what has become known as the "*Mythos der sauberen Wehrmacht*" or "Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht." In this formulation, the German Army fought a purely conventional war against the Red Army, to protect the homeland. The genocidal crimes and excesses of the Third Reich, while regrettable, were committed by the SS and police apparatuses. The Army, if it knew of them, was deeply disturbed but unable to intervene. The very real violence carried out by the Red Army when it conquered Germany, most notably the systematic mass rapes of German women, further validated the sacrifice and service of veterans.

The political exigencies of the immediate postwar era also worked to place any discussion, let alone prosecution, of *Wehrmacht* crimes beyond reach. As the Cold War became hotter, America increasingly focused on Germany as a bulwark against the Soviets rather than the land of the Nazis. Donald Bloxham notes that "between 1945 and 1953, Allied policy shifted rapidly from enforcing the idea of collective German guilt to differentiation between Germans, then, somewhat more gradually, to appeasement of German indignation at the earlier punishment of war criminals."[13] None other than General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower, distancing himself from earlier more critical comments,

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[13] Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: The War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11-12.

declared in 1951 that "the German soldier fought bravely and honorably for his country."[14] Such exonerating statements served both the larger Cold War need for *Bundeswehr* recruitment and the public need to minimize the possible guilt of a large part of the male population. Indeed, in 1953, when asked if they thought "German soldiers could be reproached for their actions in the occupied countries", 55% of Germans said "no", 21% said "in some cases," and only 6% answered with an unequivocal "yes."[15]

Political engagements in the public sphere merged with a focus on the return of POWs in the postwar years and by a tendency by Germans to focus on the effects of Allied bombing, the experience of German POWs, and the crimes of the Soviet Army, rather than addressing issues of complicity in the Third Reich. Indeed, for many Germans, the debate over the return of POWs from the Soviet Union and emphasis on those Germans driven out of the East served to highlight the role played by the *Wehrmacht* in "saving" Germany from further Soviet depredations. This had the secondary effect of both minimizing any participation of the Army in the Holocaust while simultaneously allowing the German people to view themselves as the real victims of the war (as POWs and refugees fleeing the Red Army as well as of the Allied bombing campaigns).[16]

The first published works on the German army after the war were similarly myopic. These books were often written by the generals themselves. They were sterile, largely self-serving military histories, full of dates, locations, and tactical decisions, but eschewing any

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[14] David Clay Large, "Reckoning without the Past: The HIAG of the Waffen-SS and the Politics of Rehabilitation in the Bonn Republic, 1950-1961," *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 1 (1987): 111.

[15] Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann, *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966* (Allensbach: Bonn, Verlag für Demoskopie, 1967), 202.

[16] For an excellent discussion of this postwar construction of collective memory, see Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories : The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

mention of the darker side of the Nazi regime and the participation of the Army in it.[17] The U.S. was particularly interested in these memoirs, given its new interest in defeating the Soviet military. Former generals were brought to the United States to coach American military men on tactics used against the Red Army in preparation for a future World War III in Europe. Indeed, American fascination with the *Wehrmacht* persists to this day, as evidenced in popular culture.[18] Even renowned historians such as Gordon Craig were not immune from seeing little complicity between the German Army and the Nazis. While he was certainly critical of the German Army and its relationship with the Nazis and covered very briefly the Nazi genocidal project, he was—like others—more interested in the military's role in the failure of democracy in Germany and in furthering Hitler's expansionist policies.[19]

However, beginning in the 1960s, a newer generation of scholars began exploring the Holocaust itself more deeply. Historians such as Raul Hilberg examined the massive Nazi machinery of killing, to include the high level cooperation between general officers and the regime. The masterful studies in *The Anatomy of the SS State* by Hans Buchheim, Martin

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[17] See, for example, Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories* (Chicago,: H. Regnery Co., 1958), Günther Blumentritt, *My Military Career* (Karlsruhe, Germany: Historical Division, Headquarters, United States Army, Europe [Foreign Military Studies Branch], 1946), Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (Washington: Zenger Pub. Co., 1979), Wilhelm Keitel and Walter Görlitz, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel*, Keitel, Wilhelm, 1882-1946. Generalfeldmarschall Keitel, Verbrecher oder Offizier? English (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000).

[18] For a fascinating study of this dynamic, see Ronald M. Smelser and Edward J. Davies, II, *The Myth of the Eastern Front : The Nazi-Soviet War in American Popular Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[19] Craig briefly covers genocidal plans in his seminal work on Germany, 1866-1945. In his work on the army's political history, he doesn't treat it at all, choosing instead to focus on historical junctures where the military failed to resist Hitler. These shortcomings aside, Craig still deservedly stands as a giant of German history. Gordon Alexander Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), Gordon Alexander Craig, "Germany, 1866-1945." (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.00821.

Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick figure as some other seminal works from this period.[20] They first discussed, for example, the role of discipline in following orders, the Commissar Order, and the intentional murder of Soviet prisoners of war. Important in this regard was also Manfred Messerschmidt's volume discussing the Nazi indoctrination of the *Wehrmacht.*[21] The 1960s also witnessed the spectacle of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt (among many German trials) which again focused attention on the Holocaust and its perpetrators. However, both the Eichmann trial and the larger German trials focused almost entirely on SS perpetrators and omitted the complicity of Wehrmacht personnel entirely.

Later scholars began building upon the foundations laid for them by historians like Hilberg, exploring the Holocaust in more detail. By the 1970s and 1980s, the breadth and depth of both Holocaust research and research into the crimes of the *Wehrmacht* had greatly expanded. Christian Streit's massive and path breaking book illuminated in detail the systematic and intentional murder of Soviet prisoners of war.[22] Krausnick and Wilhelm also probed deeper into *Wehrmacht* complicity in genocide with their work on the *Einsatzgruppen*.[23] Other historians followed, investigating different areas of *Wehrmacht* complicity and its behavior. One of the more decisive of these works was the research of Israeli historian, Omer Bartov. Focusing directly on the German Army on the Eastern Front,

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[20] See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, 2 vols. (München: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1967).

[21] Manfred Messerschmidt, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat; Zeit der Indoktrination* (Hamburg: R. v. Decker, 1969).

[22] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden : Die Wehrmacht Und Die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978).

[23] Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges : die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1981).

Bartov first recognized and then sought to explain its abnormal brutality.[24]

Academic study and public awareness of the Holocaust had briefly merged during the famous trials of the early 1960s. They crossed paths again with the debut of the miniseries *Holocaust* in German in 1979, which brought Germany's role in the crimes of the Nazis into virtually every living room. While the television event may have pushed the Holocaust again to public consciousness, the impetus for trials of Nazi war criminals in Germany was waning as perhaps the outcome of the trial of Majdanek concentration camp personnel in 1981 indicates. Out of sixteen defendants, only eight were convicted. Their sentences, apart from one life imprisonment, averaged to six and a half years in prison. Overseas, however, other nations began taking a greater interest in denaturalizing and prosecuting potential war criminals living within their borders.

More recently, several trials of German war criminals in the SS and *Wehrmacht* as well as local collaborators such as John Demjanjuk have reminded the public and historians alike that complicity in the Holocaust remains an critical and relevant issue today.[25] Most notable among these is the case of Josef Scheungraber who, as a *Wehrmacht* lieutenant ordered the deaths of at least eleven Italian civilians by locking them in a barn which was then blown up. The killing was in revenge for a partisan attack upon his soldiers. He was

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[24] Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45 : German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

[25] Apart from John Demjanjuk (accused of being a prison guard at Sobibor), other cases have come to light. Former *Waffen-SS* trooper Adolf Storms has been charged with the execution of Jewish slave-laborers in 1945. Another *Waffen-SS* member, Heinrich Boere, a Dutch volunteer, was convicted of the murder of three Dutch civilians in 1944 and sentenced to life in prison. For Demjanjuk, see Nicholas Kulish, "Man Tied to Death Camp Goes on Trial in Germany," *New York Times*, 1 December 2009. For Storms, see Roger Boyes, "Ex-SS trooper Adolf Storms charged over mass shooting of Jews," http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article6920433.ece.For Boere, see Roger Boyes, "Laughing SS Hitman Finally Faces Court for Murders," *The Times*, 29 October 2009, Victor Homoloa and Alan Cowell, "Ex-Nazi Guilty in Wartime Murders," *New York Times*, 24 March 2010.

sentenced to life in prison at the age of ninety.[26] In Germany, the prosecution of these cases is a result of renewed interest by a younger generation of prosecutors which is certainly partially driven by the reaction to the *Wehrmacht* exhibition of the 1990s. Yet even today, there is a divide between public and private memory of the Nazi period in German households as sociologist Harald Welzer demonstrates. While most recognize and condemn the crimes of the Third Reich and may even admit that the *Wehrmacht* participated, they do not accept that *their* family members could have been involved. Often, stories of the war within families privilege acts of resistance and disagreement with the regime, not admissions of guilt.[27]

Scholarly studies are now beginning to focus on the army's actions from a regional perspective, beginning with Walter Manoschek's path breaking work on Serbia (pre-*Wehrmachtausstellung*) and continuing to Poland and the occupied territories.[28] Theo Schulte has written a study of one rear area administrative unit in the Soviet Union, *Korück 582*.[29] Mark Mazower treats the German occupation of Greece, while Karel Berkhoff focuses on the occupation of Ukraine.[30] Two regional studies particularly useful for this project are Bernhard Chiari and Christian Gerlach's studies of the German military occupation of

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[26] See Judy Dempsey, "Former Nazi Officer Convicted of Murdering Italian Civilians " *New York Times*, 12 Aug 2009, Nicholas Kulish, "In Germany, Whispers of 'Enough' at a War-Crimes Trial," *New York Times*, 8 February 2009.

[27] For an excellent study of this phenomenon in Germany, see Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *Opa war kein Nazi : Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002).

[28] Walter Manoschek, *"Serbien Ist Judenfrei": Militärische Besatzungspolitik Und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1993).

[29] Theo J. Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

[30] Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair : Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

"White Russia."[31] Local studies of atrocities have also been conducted by several historians. Rafael Scheck has researched the treatment of French colonial troops by the *Wehrmacht* and Sarah Farmer has studied the massacre of civilians at Oradour by SS troops.[32] Rossino and Böhler's studies of the German invasion of Poland are useful monographs in this vein as they prove the Army's proclivity for atrocities in the spirit of Nazi ideology over two years before the invasion of the Soviet Union.[33] H.F. Meyer's study of the 117th Jäger Division and its participation in atrocities and Ben Shepherd's book on the 221st Security Division are examples of two valuable unit-level works.[34] One of the most recent and useful works is Christian Hartmann's detailed comparison of five different divisions (two infantry, one panzer, one security, and one rear area command).[35] Hartmann seeks to compare and contrast how these different kinds of units experienced the war on the Eastern Front as well as their interactions with prisoners of war, commissars, and the Holocaust. It is an enormously informative work but, focusing at the division level, is often unable to explore in detail the internal dynamics of killing units.

As this growing body of historiography ably demonstrates, the *Wehrmacht* can hardly

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[31] Bernhard Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front : Besatzung, Kollaboration und Widerstand in Weissrussland, 1941-1944* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1998), Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).

[32] Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims : The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Sarah Bennett Farmer, *Martyred Village : Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-Sur-Glane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[33] Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity*, Modern War Studies. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003).

[34] H. F. Meyer, *Von Wien nach Kalavryta : die blutige Spur der 117. Jäger-Division durch Serbien und Griechenland* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2002), Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East : The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[35] Christian Hartmann, *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg : Front und militärisches Hinterland 1941-42* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2009).

claim to have been "clean," not only in the occupied Soviet Union, but throughout Europe. Many of its crimes have been documented, though historians are continuing to bring to light new areas of responsibility and modes of complicity. This excavation has raised important, fundamental questions: Why did the German army participate to such an extent in Nazi racial policy? In the end, the German Army's involvement in murder devolved onto individual decisions of soldiers on the ground. How willingly did these soldiers participate? What roles did ideology, the combat environment, leadership, and group dynamics play in the ways and extent of complicity? The debate over these questions appears far from settled.

Historians and researchers have sought explanations for the behavior of perpetrators since the crimes of the Nazi state were uncovered. Approaches have varied from ideological to psychological to experiential, from identification of specific characteristics of German culture to connection with universal aspects of human nature. Some explanations stem from an ideological approach. Historians and researchers have argued that, as a product of Nazi society, the *Wehrmacht* reflected the high level of racial and ideological indoctrination that the civilian population experienced as well. Perhaps the most influential of these historians is Omer Bartov. His path-breaking work, *Hitler's Army*, argued first that the *Wehrmacht* was Hitler's army, that it was highly indoctrinated and maintained a high level of belief in the Nazi system. He further contended that the situation on the front led to the destruction of the "primary group" of comrades and that this primary group was replaced with ideology as the motivating factor and source of cohesion. Bartov went on to explain that soldiers were allowed (and even encouraged) to commit atrocities as a way to release the tension created by the Army's draconian system of discipline. Finally, he concludes that as the situation on the Eastern Front deteriorated, soldiers clung more and more desperately to the ideologies

they were being fed, making them view the war in more and more extreme ways.[36] In a later work, he wrote,

> It is quite possible, of course, to stake out a third position, one which stresses a crucial factor neglected both by Browning's circumstantial interpretation and by Goldhagen's essentialist view, namely the powerful impact of ideology and indoctrination on the perpetrators.[37]

Daniel Goldhagen lies at the most extreme end of this spectrum. Eschewing any short-term, situational factors, he argued that a special German "eliminationist" anti-Semitism was present. Shaped by centuries of German culture rather than years of Nazi indoctrination, soldiers, like all Germans, were eager to kill Jews and simply waiting for the opportunity to do so.[38]

Other scholars have employed a psychological approach to explain perpetrator behavior in general. One of the first to do so was Theodor Adorno, who attempted to explain such inhuman behavior with his conception of the "authoritarian personality," a personality type particularly disposed to complicity in an authoritarian state, given the right conditions.[39] In 1944, sociologists Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz began conducting hundreds of interviews of captured German soldiers. They focused on the "primary group" as the essential factor behind soldier motivation and combat effectiveness. The "primary group" refers to a cohort of soldiers who have known each other often for a long period of time and

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[36] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army : Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[37] Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust : Disputed Histories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 130.

[38] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners : Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

[39] Theodor W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950). Most discussions of psychological explanations for perpetrator behavior have moved beyond Adorno's "personality profile" approach to become more situational in nature.

have developed strong bonds of comradeship from both their civilian upbringing and military experiences. Retreating from earlier assertions, the two sociologists argued that

> it appears that a soldier's ability to resist [to fight] is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group…to avoid social disintegration....The capacity of the primary group to resist disintegration was dependent on the acceptance of political, ideological, and cultural symbols (all secondary symbols) only to the extent that these secondary symbols became directly associated with primary gratifications.[40]

The experiments by Milgram and Zimbardo on deference to authority and role adaptation respectively have further informed this topic.[41] These studies showed in their subjects a remarkable degree of acceptance of authority and susceptibility to peer pressure and that such peer pressure can form quickly and have a decisive impact on behavior and the decision to stand up to perceived wrongdoing. Philip Zimbardo's disturbing "Stanford Prison Experiment" demonstrated in shocking form that individuals quickly adapt to assigned roles, and seek to exhibit the skills and characteristics they believe define these roles. His experiment was so "successful" that it had to be stopped after six days as it became too violent and degrading for the participants. Zimbardo argues that the social groups in which we find ourselves "define what is right, socially appropriate, or 'in,' and produce adherence to these ideas through such techniques as social rewards, threats of punishment or ostracism, and various other pressures toward conformity."[42] In addition, the theory of cognitive

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[40] Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War Ii," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1948): 281.

[41] See Stanley Milgram, *Obedience* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University,, 1969), videocassette, Stanley Milgram, *The Individual in a Social World : Essays and Experiments*, Addison-Wesley Series in Social Psychology. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1977), Philip G. Zimbardo, Ken Musen, and John Polito, *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Study* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Instructional Television Network,Stanford University, 1992), videorecording.

[42] Philip G. Zimbardo, Ebbe B. Ebbesen, and Christina Maslach, *Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behavior : An Introduction to Method, Theory, and Applications of Social Control and Personal Power* (New York: Random House, 1977), 42.

dissonance holds that most individuals are distressed by discrepancies between their beliefs and action, and often alleviate this distress by altering their beliefs. Browning's example of the policeman who justifies his murder of children as a mercy killing, because their parents had just been murdered is an example of such an explanation in action.[43] Harald Welzer, too, employs this approach via his discussion of a new Nazi " morality of killing."[44] In the end, all this research in social psychology indicates that human beings are profoundly influenced by the social pressures within groups.

These findings have also influenced the historiography. In his book, *Ordinary Men*, Christopher Browning arrived at a much different conclusion than Bartov or Goldhagen as to why reserve policemen participated in atrocities. He argues convincingly that social psychological factors within the context of group dynamics played a pivotal role in motivating middle-aged reserve policemen to commit atrocities and that, at least in these cases, ideology was not the primary motivating factor.[45] The men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were neither specially indoctrinated troops nor men young enough to have been shaped by Nazi schooling and youth groups. They were middle-aged men, with families, who killed more often due to peer pressure and obligation to duty than out of malice.

In his study of Reserve Police Battalion 45, Harald Welzer, too, argues for a social psychological approach. He writes "even when we examine ourselves, substantial

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[43] Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 73.

[44] See Harald Welzer, *Täter : wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2005).

[45] See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

discrepancies appear between our moral demands and actions; depending on the situation, we are capable of extremely different ways of thinking, acting and speaking."[46] Welzer also contends that a new Nazi "morality" governed the behavior of these men. Thomas Kühne goes a step further. In his study of comradeship, he maintains first that "the threat of social death, exclusion from the mutual welfare and communication network, was the cement of military group culture."[47] Indeed, he describes a "shame culture" which exerted a very real and powerful peer pressure, also incorporating elements of a conception of masculinity that viewed noncompliance as weakness.[48] Kühne then claims that atrocities themselves served as an initiation into the group. Killing, then, became an act of collective act of bonding.

Thus, while the crimes of the *Wehrmacht* in their various forms have been laid bare, questions of scope, scale, and motivation remain conclusively unanswered. The variety and breadth of the crimes of the *Wehrmacht* demand not only a comprehensive and comparative look at policy and institutional decision-making, but also a micro-historical examination of how individual soldiers participated in these violent policies. The latter examination of the *Wehrmacht* in particular has only recently begun to be attempted. Put plainly, what does complicity actually *look* like on the ground?

One of the reasons that this line of inquiry remains elusive is that approaches that have worked well for other studies are often less useful at this scale. Studies relying on large samples of letters, for example, may be enlightening in telling us about some soldiers'

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[46] Harald Welzer, *Täter : wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2005), 22.

[47] Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft : die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), p. 273.

[48] For more, see Thomas Kühne, "Male Bonding and Shame Culture: Hitler's Soldiers and the Moral Basis of Genocidal Warfare," in *Ordinary People as Mass Murderers : Perpetrators in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Olaf Szejnmann Claus-Christian W. Jensen (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008).

mentalities. However, they often tell us little about participation in atrocities. Even when soldiers write about such things, their letters are often vague and avoid any details about their participation. Studies at the regional level looking at policy decisions are valuable, but again often cannot reveal much about individual cases.

This study will focus on five specific, unit-level microhistories of *Wehrmacht* participation in the Holocaust in Belarus. It will seek to reconstruct the internal unit dynamics of these units as well as the details surrounding these killings. Only by focusing on the micro level with regard to *Wehrmacht* complicity in genocide can one really begin to weigh the influences of factors such as antisemitism, social-psychological pressures, guidance from above, and situational or positional factors. This study will also attempt to incorporate an understanding of the spatial characteristics of killing, specifically the impact of positionality on the killers and their responses to killing. By positionality, I mean a person's physical location in space and their relation to their surroundings. For many soldiers, their positions during killings can provide insight into their personal attitude toward those killings. It is almost impossible to accurately reconstruct this past when relying on only one source base. Thus, this work is based on a variety of different, sometimes contradictory sources that serve to correct and to corroborate each other. These are postwar judicial interrogations, military archival documents, survivor testimony, and physical site surveys.

Shards of Stories: Sources

> The reconstruction of worlds is one of the historian's most important tasks. He undertakes it, not from some strange urge to dig up archives and sift through old paper, but because he wants to talk with the dead. By putting questions to documents and listening to replies, he can sound dead souls and take the measure of the societies they inhabited.
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> - Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*[49]

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[49] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), v.

Explaining the experience of the Holocaust in the East requires reliance on diverse sources, all of which have their own strengths and weaknesses. For the historian, the first step is understanding these benefits and limitations and incorporating this evaluation in the employment of these texts. The sources for this work fall into roughly four categories: postwar German testimonies, German wartime military documents, survivor testimony, and site visit fieldwork.

Judicial statements given by former soldiers form, in many ways, the foundation of this study. They constitute both one of the richest and also most problematic of the sources used. The Central Office for the Investigation of Nazi Violent Crime was founded in 1958 to act as a central agency for the coordination of all investigations of German citizens involved in Nazi crimes. As such, it also became a repository for records relating to these investigations and trials. Housed perhaps fittingly in a former prison in the small, baroque town of Ludwigsburg outside Stuttgart, this archive contains a wide variety of documents from legal memoranda to court judgments to interrogation statements. It is the last of these that sheds the most light on the development of complicity by German soldiers. These documents are the records of interrogations and interviews conducted by German police and prosecutors of former members of the *Wehrmacht* and SS. The vast majority of these men were called as witnesses rather than as accused. Therefore, they are at least *less* likely to obfuscate than those who were testifying at the risk of their freedom.

The challenges of these sources are apparent. First, the investigatory environment in which these discussions took place was, by its nature, adversarial. Witnesses were quite aware of the legal risks involved and certainly reticent to implicate themselves. Second, they were often concerned with protecting their former comrades. Investigators did not always

ask the questions that historians might be most interested in nor did soldiers always volunteer that information. Especially with those accused, but also with witnesses, the nature of the questioning could lead to a great deal of obfuscation, evasion, and outright lying. How does one make sense of such documents? In his discussion of Eichmann, Christopher Browning provides us with four useful tests to help determine the relative truth contained in these types of testimony. They are:

> 1. The Self Interest Test: When a witness makes statements against his self interest or where telling the truth is in his self interest.
> 2. The Vividness Test: When the witness describes events with "an unusual attention to details of visual memory."
> 3. The Possibility Test: When a witness' claims "are not contradicted or proven impossible."
> 4. The Probability Test: When the accounts "coincide with or fit a pattern of events suggested or established by other documentation."[50]

It is, therefore, surprising how much valuable information can be gleaned from these often seemingly contradictory and self-serving testimonies, especially when reading them against other types of sources.

First, these witnesses provide a great deal of information that is of no legal significance but is incredibly useful in understanding both the nature of the unit and the nature of their crimes. As these descriptions carried little judicial risk, they also did not receive the same level of careful consideration that other subjects may have. These men tell us much of what these killings looked like to those on the ground and how soldiers participated. Second, the very manner in which witnesses and the accused attempt to explain or evade answering can be instructive. Word choice, even after the fact, can be a valuable way of interpreting how these men understood their participation in these atrocities. Of

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[50] Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories : Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History. (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 11-12.

course, what is *not* said can often also be a valuable piece of information. Finally, despite all these possible reasons for dissembling, many witnesses *do* provide detailed accounts, even of potentially incriminating activities. Like any source, when one has read a critical mass of the same kinds of documents, patterns emerge and it becomes easier to discern "truth" from obfuscation.

Alone, however, these documents still can present a skewed view of the Holocaust, reflecting both a perpetrator perspective and a judicial environment. For this reason, the second source base, military documents, provides a necessary corrective. Military maps, orders, and memoranda are not tainted by postwar reflection or judicial concern. They represent to a degree contemporary policy and actions. They can show us where units were and, in some cases, who was being killed. Military documents also can elucidate what policies and guidance were being disseminated to the troops. These elements add an important contextual and organizational background that tempers the often apologetic nature of judicial statements.

Military documents, of course, come with their own bias. While specific about some things, they can often be infuriatingly vague about others, particularly the nature of killings and Jewish policy. As a result of the fortunes of war, the mass of documents surviving in archives often comes from the higher levels of the military and, thus, does not always tell us what the lower level units were doing. Finally, military documents function under their own logic and contain specific language that can misinterpreted unless carefully read.

Survivor testimony gives us the very important survivor perspective and offers a further corrective. Obviously, these sources go a long way toward filling in the very physical void left in the sources by the absence of the victims. These testimonies also correct the

tendency of judicial statements to minimize mention of cruelty and antisemitism. They also add details and contexts that were beyond the scope of legal investigation. These survivor testimonies come in several forms such as legal witness statements, written memoirs, taped oral histories, and Yizhkor or memory books.

Each is a different kind of source created under circumstances that influence how they are best used. Legal statements given to German prosecutors by survivors are, like the interrogations of the accused, narrowly focused on points of law and the facts of the case and, thus, often lack a larger human context. However, as the witnesses are often interviewed relatively more recently after the war, their testimony is less likely to be affected by the effects of memory and collective storytelling. Written survivor memoirs have all the benefits and limitations of any form of memoir writing and are also affected by things like author self-censorship, backward-looking analysis, and faulty remembering. Taped oral histories such as those found in the Fortunoff or Shoah Archive collections are very valuable in their great length and the ability of the interviewer to interact with the witness. Of course, the historian cannot himself interact with the subject and is thus limited to relying on the skills of the interviewer who may or may not be asking the questions most useful to that research. Lastly, survivors of many Jewish communities compiled Yizhkor or memory books to memorialize both the life and the death of their hometowns. While these documents are certainly of an amateur nature, to overlook them as a valuable source would be shortsighted. They often provide details about the people in these communities which are absent from legal investigations and at times even corroborate statements made in these investigations.

Lastly, visits to the sites of murder and conversations with those mainly non-Jewish inhabitants still alive who witnessed killings add perspectives that cannot be gained from an

archive. Walking the ground and visiting the villages where the *Wehrmacht* killed adds a sense of space and place that textual sources cannot provide. Taken together and read against one another, these four types of sources offer us the opportunity to explore for the first time the participation of German soldiers in the Holocaust on the ground in Belarus.

Nations, Partitions, and Shtetls: Belarus and the Jews

> On the earth, this is the last part of the Jewish people that has created and kept alive its own songs and dances, customs, and myths, languages and forms of community, and at once preserved the old heritage with a vital validity.
> - Arnold Zweig, *Ober Ost* cultural administration[51]

> By starving Soviet prisoners of war, shooting and gassing Jews, and shooting civilians in antipartisan actions, German forces made Belarus the deadliest place in the world between 1941 and 1944.
> -Timothy Snyder[52]

Belarus is truly—as sociologist Andrew Savchenko noted—a "perpetual borderland."[53] No Belarussian state as such even existed before the 20th century. It is a generally flat country, heavily forested with large marshy areas to the south. The rivers Dnieper and Beresina were highways through the region from Roman times as was the Pripyat River to the south, connecting the Dnieper to the Vistula and Poland. With major population centers in Minsk, Gomel, Mogilev, Vitebsk, Brest, and Grodno, Belarus is now home to around 10 million people.

Yet for over a thousand years, the region was a part of several different nations and empires, beginning with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that expanded to include all of

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[51] Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front : Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 191.

[52] Timothy Snyder, "Holocaust: The Ignored Reality," *New York Review of Books* 56, no. 12 (2009).

[53] Andrew Savchenko, *Belarus : A Perpetual Borderland* (Boston: Brill, 2009).

modern day Belarus in the mid-thirteenth century. Belarus remained a part of the Grand Duchy for 500 years before becoming part of the Russian empire in the 18th century. The important Magdeburg Statutes, which granted self-rule to certain Belarussian cities, were important in establishing them as centers of commerce, beginning in the 14th century. This fostered contact with Western Europe that in turn "ensured a fertile reception in Belarus of Renaissance and humanist ideas and values" and led to a "historical exposure to diverse intellectual currents…and traditional religious tolerance [which are] a major source of cultural difference between Belarus and its eastern neighbor, Russia."[54] The multiethnic and multilinguistic nature of the area is indicated by the 1897 census that lists nine separate nationalities (Belarussians, Jews, Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Germans, and Tatars.)[55]

Jews began arriving in large numbers from western Europe in the 14th century, many as a result of the expulsions there. Their skills in trades and finance were valued by the rulers of the region and they enjoyed considerable freedoms. However, Jews were limited in their economic opportunities, being forbidden to own land and join certain guilds. Here, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, much of Jewish life was centered around the shtetl. Jews lived together in towns and villages where they traded with and provided services to non-Jewish peasants. In towns and cities, where they often formed a large percentage or even a majority of the urban population, Jews lived in a Jewish street or quarter. This concentration geographically and by occupation persisted until World War

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[54] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus : At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 37.

[55] Ibid., 62-3.

By 1795, Belarus had become part of the Russian empire in the wake of three Great Power partitions of Poland. In the context of a struggle between Russia and its subject peoples in the region, several nationalist uprisings were put down by the empire in the 19th century. Particularly in western Belarus, the tsars attempted to repress Belarussian national consciousness and to "russianize" these areas. For Jews, annexation into the Russian Empire meant forced concentration in the Pale of Settlement, an area that stretched from Lithuania to the Crimean and included Belarus. According to the 1897 census, over 97 percent of Russian Jews lived inside the Pale.[56] The Jewish settlements in Belarus, while much different, more isolated, and more traditional than those in the West, were nonetheless vibrant and diverse communities. They were marked, for example, by a commitment to education (Jews in Belarus had a literacy rate of 94% in 1939.)[57] This was due in large part to the large number and high quality of Yiddish schools. As elsewhere, the shtetl contained a variety of charitable organizations from loan organizations to aid for the elderly that supported the members of the Jewish community in a nation that had marginalized them. Belarus was also an important center of Jewish religious life, with famous yeshivas for Torah study in many towns such as Minsk, Bobruisk, Slonim, Lida, Novogrudok, and Baranovichi.[58] Under the Tsars, Jews suffered periodically from both governmental oppression in the form of anti-Jewish laws and informal pogroms such as those following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.

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[56] Zvi Y. Gitelman, "Soviet Jewry before the Holocaust," in *Bitter Legacy : Confronting the Holocaust in the Ussr*, ed. Zvi Y. Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1.

[57] Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust : A Social and Demographic Profile* (Jerusalem: Centre for Research of East European Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 104.

[58] Shalom Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Pub., 1998), xx.

During the First World War, the Germans occupied practically all of Belarus until 1918. They were confronted there with a complex ethnic, religious, and linguistic landscape. As historian Vejas Liulevicius writes, "the terms of national identity seemed unfamiliar and dangerously unstable to the newcomers."[59] The German military administration sought to bring *Kultur* to the region in the form of education, economic improvements, and cultural events. Though certainly paternalistic and sometimes heavy-handed, the World War I experience was at most an ambivalent one, which resulted in some very real improvements. For example, in Borisov near Minsk, electric lighting arrived for the first time with the German occupation troops.[60] While latent German anti-Semitism occasionally presented itself, the occupation was not on the whole hostile to Jews: cultural authorities in *Ober Ost* took pains to protect Jewish "sacred objects" and artifacts, such as seventeenth and eighteenth century wooden synagogues.[61] The character of this occupation would color the expectations and reactions of Jews and non-Jews alike to the arrival of the Nazis often leading them to expect experiences of occupation similar to those they remembered from the First World War.

The Bolshevik revolution and the post-World War I battles with Poland resulted in the division of Belarus between the Soviet Union and Poland at the Treaty of Riga in 1921. This left a small, largely powerless Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic, which had been formed in 1919, while the remainder of Belarussian territory was incorporated completely

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[59] Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front : Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 121.

[60] Daniel Romanovsky, "Nazi Occupation in Northeastern Belarus and Western Russia," in *Bitter Legacy : Confronting the Holocaust in the Ussr*, ed. Zvi Y. Gitelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 235.

[61] Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front : Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 132.

into Poland without any recognition of its own particular demographic composition and historical background. This partition had significant impacts for both Jews and non-Jews. Indeed, this was a tale of two lands. By 1926, the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) had more than doubled in size to 48,500 mi^2 and quintupled in population to almost 5 million. This territory came from the inclusion of Belarussian "ethnographic areas" that had remained within the Russian republic. However, 82 percent of Belarussians lived in rural areas and 91 percent were peasants.[62] The Bolshevik New Economic Policy began to slowly change this, increasing industrialization, commerce, and urbanization. Education also improved. In addition, in the 1920s and 1930s, emigration of younger Jews from the more traditional shtetls to the cities increased. However, to a large extent, these shtetls "preserved [their] unique character right up to the outbreak of the war with Nazi Germany."[63]A 1924 decree established equal language rights for Russian, Belarussian, Yiddish and Polish.[64] Hebrew was outlawed and Hebrew schools and language education were repressed. Still, Yiddish enjoyed a resurgence as the Soviets viewed it as a proletarian language.

The Bolshevik Revolution was a mixed blessing. It officially outlawed antisemitism, and while Lenin opposed any concept of Jewish nationality, Jews rose to high positions in Soviet leadership, though in doing so they would not have identified themselves as Jews. The attraction of Jews to socialist and communist ideology is not surprising, given that they were often excluded from nationalist and conservative parties and socialism and communism at

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[62] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus : At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 78.

[63] Arkady Zeltser, "The Belorussian Shtetl in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Revolution, Repression, and Revival : The Soviet Jewish Experience*, ed. Zvi Y. Gitelman and Yaacov Ro'i (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 105.

[64] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus : At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 81.

least purported to offer equality and freedom from antisemitism. However, Jews also suffered along with their neighbors from the purges and terror of the Stalinist era. Soviet authorities under the NKVD continuously shot Belarussians, both Jews and non-Jews, in the Kurapaty Forest near Minsk from 1937-1941. An estimated 250,000 were killed.[65] In that Stalinist purges particularly focused on older followers with residual memory of and loyalty to Lenin and Trotsky, the first generation of Jewish communists were severely decimated and replaced by new recruits and supporters of Stalin, who were much less often Jewish. Jews were thus both less conspicuous and less numerous among the Stalinist leadership than earlier.

For the area of Belarus incorporated into Poland, the next eighteen years were markedly different. The conservative Polish government under Jozef Pilsudksi was not interested in any real Belarussian political consciousness. As he wrote in 1920, "I am in favor of some significant concessions to the Belarussians in the field of their cultural development but I do not wish to make any political concessions favoring a Belarussian fiction."[66] In the end, not even these concessions were made and for the former Belarussian areas in Poland, the reality was increased oppression and further attempts at Polonization. In 1935, Poland refused to recognize protections for minorities. Jews here suffered relatively greater oppression and official antisemitism.

On 17 September 1939, Stalin invaded eastern Poland, fulfilling his agreement with Hitler. For many Belarussians familiar with Poland's repressive nationalist policies, Soviet occupation promised relief. The two years of Soviet rule proved to be repressive as well,

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[65] David R. Marples, "Kuropaty: The Investigation of a Stalinist Historical Controversy," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 516 ff.

[66] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus : At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 82.

though less so than previous Polish rule. For Jews in these regions, the arrival of Soviet power brought with it the hope that conditions would improve, compared to earlier discrimination they had experienced under Polish oppression. Above all, they preferred occupation by the Red Army rather than the German army. Many refugees fleeing the Nazis also arrived in western Belarus. This, too, explains the often warm welcome that the Red Army received. About 300,000 people were deported by Soviet authorities before the German invasion in 1941.[67]

For Jews in both eastern Poland and Belarus, the experience of Soviet rule was, on the whole, a painful one. The nationalization of businesses, redistribution of land, and imposition of purges is reflected in much survivor testimony and many survivors speak of an almost constant state of fear that they would be deported to Siberia. A 1944 study cautiously estimated 1.25 Polish citizens (in what would become western Belarus) were moved into the Russian interior; while those drafted into the Red Army, seeking jobs, or voluntarily leaving were included, 900,000 were deported as prisoners or "special settlers."[68]

While the eastern Poles and Belarussians were not gently handled by the Soviets, their treatment was both objectively and subjectively less violent than that endured by the Ukraine and the Baltic states. These areas suffered far harsher Soviet repression due mainly to both their well-developed national consciousness and the accompanying nationalist organizations which the Soviets saw as clear threats to their rule.[69] Past experiences under

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[67] Ibid., 91.

[68] Jan Tomasz Gross, *Revolution from Abroad : The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 194.

[69] For a study of some of the anti-Jewish violence in 1919 in Ukraine, see Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government : Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For more on the effects of Soviet policy on Holocaust collaboration, see Karel C. Berkhoff,

the Soviets (and the perceived role of Jews in them) would play a decisive role in the form that Nazi occupation took in those areas. Because they had a far less developed sense of national identity, the Belarussians were much less traumatized than their neighbors to the north and south. Moreover, it was in the hopes of a realization of nationhood through their German occupiers that many locals in the Baltic States and the Ukraine came to collaborate. This relative lack of a national sentiment meant that the scale of this collaboration in Belarus was smaller. Nonetheless, as Henry Abramson adroitly indicates, "history…is better understood as the unfolding of events based on perceptions rather than as the linear progression of facts."[70] The perception that Jews were behind the comparatively greater suffering in the Baltic and the Ukraine had a powerful impact on later treatment of Jews in those areas, an impact lessened in Belarus.

The massive army that crossed the Soviet border on 22 June 1941 was, in many ways, an instrument specially forged for the war of annihilation that would follow. It was a volatile mixture of a longterm organizational culture and memory with a new infusion of Nazi racial ideology. Before we turn to how this weapon was wielded, particularly against the Jews of Belarus, it is informative to take a look at how this institution developed and how it became more and more a tool of Nazi policy.

Harvest of Despair : Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

[70] Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government : Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 112.

II. A Weapon of Mass Destruction- The German Army

The German Army had a history of harsh treatment of civilians, extending at least back to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, its colonial experience, and certainly through the First World War. Isabel Hull, in her study of the institutional and doctrinal development of the Imperial German Army, describes an organizational history of violence that is helpful in explaining the behavior of the *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union.[71] First, in the period of *Kaiserreich*, the Kaiser firmly held the reigns of military control, limiting interference by the civilian government to intermittent reviews of budgetary matters. The constitution itself "thwarted policy coordination" not least by removing the "political, legal, economic, diplomatic, and social considerations a civilian chancellor and a cabinet ought to have brought to military thinking."[72] Earlier in its history, German civilian thinking tended to be relatively more moderate than the military, and this became the cultural norm to which the Army became accustomed. In the Nazi period, this dynamic would be reversed. While the German army had earlier been used to defending itself from civilian interference in its

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[71] Hull devotes a small portion of her conclusion to the suggestion that the greatest gift of German Army history to its Nazi descendants was in the realm of standards of behavior. Her argument concerning these norms and institutional memory is a powerful and convincing one. For two viewpoints on this debate see Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction : Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Cornell University Press, 2005), Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Der Holocaust als "kolonialer Genozid"? Europäische Kolonialgewalt und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungskrieg " *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33, no. 3 (2007). Birthe Kundrus confronts this same debate with a conclusion that a focus on continuing "mentalities" can provide useful comparisons. See Birthe Kundrus, "From the Herero to the Holocaust? Some Remarks on the Current Debate," *Africa Spectrum* 40, no. 2 (2005).

[72] Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction : Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 107.

exercise of excessive violence, it was not prepared to deal with a situation where it was the civilian government itself that was driving the military into ever more violent actions. Combined with the increasing deprofessionalization of the Army, this impulse would contribute to a much more brutal force.

The actions of the *Wehrmacht* in Belarus are reminiscent of atrocities committed by German soldiers in World War I. John Horne and Alan Kramer note three dimensions that led to the myth of the *franc-tireur* or partisan in this war and thus to the violence inflicted upon the local French and Belgian civilian populations that resulted in 6,500 civilian deaths.[73] They argue that "first, a set of fictional representations of the enemy crystallized in the first few days of the war…portraying the enemy as the exact opposite of the German soldier and the qualities he embodied." The "circumstances of the invasion" imposed by the Schlieffen plan and the "exhaustion and nervousness of troops in a hostile land" were the second dimension. Lastly, "the defining feature of the *franc-tireur* fear of 1914 was its capacity to convince large numbers of people that something which was an illusion was actually happening."[74] The evidence of German behavior toward civilians in general and Jews in particular demonstrates that a very similar dynamic was in operation in the Soviet Union in the fall of 1941, ultimately on a far larger scale over a far longer period of time. Finally, as Omer Bartov points out, one must take into account the tradition of draconian discipline in the German Army. He notes, "the strict obedience demanded from the troops,

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[73] John N. Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 : A History of Denial* (Yale University Press, 2001), 430.

[74] Ibid., 138.

and the draconian punishments meted to offenders, doubtlessly played a major role in maintaining unit cohesion under the most adverse combat conditions."[75] This discipline and cohesion combined with a mythic association of Jews, Bolsheviks, and Partisans as contributing factors to participation in atrocities.

One must, however, be careful not to draw too straight a line from colonial or imperial German military practices to Operation Barbarossa. Certainly, the *Wehrmacht* was different from these earlier organizations. It was larger, increasingly less professional, and more highly ideologically influenced. It also fought under the banner of an openly racist regime and in arguably more desperate conditions. Yet, one cannot also discount the important influence of institutional memory and culture on the decision-making of the Army, at both high and low levels. Militaries, like other large bureaucratic organizations, tend to be conservative, resistant to change, and likely to retain practices from previous eras. They are even more likely to do this as, given their specialized tasks, they are less susceptible to intervention by civilian authorities. However, as we have seen, the German Army actually became *more* susceptible to interference by the Nazi civilian government, at least when this interference exhorted even more violent and heavy-handed actions by the military. Thus, it seems fair to argue that the *Wehrmacht* entered the Soviet Union with a set of baseline practices and default responses to dealing with civilians which already tended toward the extreme.

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[75] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army : Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 59.

Faustian Bargain: The Army and the Nazis

> Every army is but a part of its own people.
> - General Gunther von Blumentritt[76]

The military collapse in 1918 was a crushing defeat, both physically and emotionally, for the German Army. It was catastrophic not only in its material effects but also in its lingering impacts on German military culture and organization. Principally, the loss of World War I created three loci of discomfort in the German military leadership. The first was the loss of prestige suffered by military decision-makers. Throughout German history, military leaders had directly advised the Kaiser on foreign affairs as well as military. After the abdication of Wilhelm II and the bankrupt advice that had gotten Germany into the war, the military felt keenly its loss of sovereignty in this area during the immediate postwar era. One of the most obvious symbols of this loss was the Versailles Treaty which clearly sought to make the German Armed forces a deliberately neutered one. Connected to this loss of influence, was the very real loss of a military German empire in the East. While the war on the Western Front was predominantly a conventional military endeavor, in the East, the Imperial Army under the command of Erich Ludendorff had created what was very nearly an autonomous military empire in which the Army controlled all aspects of life for the occupied population.[77] For a staunchly anti-communist and conservative officer corps especially, the loss of this Eastern empire was particularly painful.

Lastly, the "Stab in the back" myth (*Dolchtoßlegende*) served as a unifying explanation for the German defeat in the war and the accompanying losses mentioned above.

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[76] Matthew Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-1945 : Its Political and Military Failure* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), 26.

[77] For a very detailed study on this phenomenon, see Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front : Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Under this formulation, advanced by Ludendorff himself as well other right-wing groups, the German Army had been brought down, not by force of arms, but instead had been betrayed at its moment of victory by a combination of Jews, Socialists, democrats, and liberals who had sabotaged the war effort. The manner of the war's end did not help. While the military (and the Kaiser) had been responsible for directing all aspects of the war, a civilian government was only brought in to supervise the surrender, though it had had little to do with the defeat. Thus, the end of the First World War left Germany with millions of military men who were conservative, staunchly anti-Communist, anti-Jewish, anti-democratic, rabidly nationalistic, and angry. This generalization does not apply to all the men, particularly the rank and file, but it holds for the officer corps and leadership.

Perhaps a liberalization and reformed German military could have occurred in a relatively stable postwar state. However, postwar Germany was anything but. It was very quickly thrown into a chaotic battle between paramilitary groups of the left and the right. The massive numbers of men in uniform, under military control, stood as a powerful force for whomever they chose to support. To this end, the Quartermaster General of the Army, Wilhelm Groener, approached the new chancellor of the fledgling republic, Friedrich Ebert, on 9 November 1918 offering military support of the government in return for guarantees that the government would continue to support the military and essentially preserve it from revolutionary reforms. However, when the German Congress deliberated a series of radical reforms to the military, General Groener threatened to withdraw military support from the government in the face of increasing violence from the communist Spartacists and the right-wing *Freikorps*. The civilian government was forced to abandon these reforms and continue to rely on the old military institutions for support and legitimacy.

This uneasy partnership was also an unequal one. Given its strong nationalist and anti-communist leanings, the Army was more than willing to crush socialist and communist groups, even actively enlisting the technically extra-legal *Freikorps* in this endeavor. This zeal did not often extend to uprisings from the right as evidenced by the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch of 1920. In this uprising, military units resisted demobilization and were joined by *Freikorps* units in an attempt to take over the government. However, when the civilians turned to the Army to suppress the revolt, they were denied. Perhaps the ultimate expression of this betrayal was famously summed up in Hans von Seeckt's statement that "Troops do not fire on troops….When *Reichswehr* fires on *Reichswehr*, then all comradeship within the officer corps has vanished."[78] Only a general strike called by socialist leaders eventually brought the coup to an end. It therefore became clear that the civilian leadership could not rely on the military to support a constitutional government. Instead of honoring the Ebert-Groener agreement to support the government, the military—steadfast in its commitment to the stab-in-the-back legend, having at least partially recovered its nerve from the recent military debacle, and then capitalizing on widespread resentment against the Versailles Treaty—refused any true loyalty to the Weimar Republic.[79]

In 1921, the new Reichwehr was created. This smaller force was to be a new, reformed military only suitable for national defense. However, in keeping with the Ebert-Groener Pact, the law that created a provisional Reichswehr, though putatively requiring it be

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[78] Gordon Alexander Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 377.

[79] Some historians view this pact as a critical failing that doomed the Weimar Republic. While one could perhaps take this view in hindsight, Ebert had little choice at the time but to accept the support of the only viable military force around to prevent what he saw as a devastating communist revolution. But this presumes the Spartacists represented an imminent and real threat that was not vastly overblown in Ebert's fears and perceptions, an assessment that is at the heart of the controversy.

"built on a democratic basis," in fact dictated that its leadership be drawn from the ranks of the Imperial officer corps and *Freikorps* veterans.[80] Throughout the Weimar period, the military remained a deeply suspicious and anti-democratic organization, but also one that was interested in honor and stability. Thus, when Hitler attempted his Putsch in 1923, the military stood behind the government and supported the rightwing but less radical Gustav von Kahr.

In the internecine bureaucratic maneuvering that characterized the end of the Weimar Republic, military leaders were an ever-present force. They were concerned with supporting civilians they believed they could control or who would at least not step into the realm of military decision-making. When Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, the Army remained neutral and probably agreed with Papen's contention that he could be controlled.

Even so, Hitler had to actively work to win the Army's support for his party, though he had certainly gained a following, particularly among the younger demographic. General Beck, chief of the General Staff from 1933-38, wrote a friend in 1933 welcoming the Nazi "political transformation."[81] However, Ernst Röhm, the leader of the paramilitary arm of the party, the SA, increasingly sought to erode the military's unique role in the German government. The leadership of the *Reichswehr* was not at all happy about the possibility of a rival military organization. In order to solidify future military support, Hitler purged the SA in June 1934 during the "Night of the Long Knives," thereby ensuring that there would be no threat to military supremacy…except from Hitler himself. A month after the "Night of the

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[80] Gordon Alexander Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 362.

[81] Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism, 1919-1945 : A Documentary Reader*, vol. 3 (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 637.

Long Knives," all servicemen swore an oath of allegiance to Hitler himself, rather than to the government.

In March 1935, military conscription was reintroduced and the military enlarged. Hitler also undertook a project of rearmament that was certainly viewed favorably by many. Yet, as his aggressive foreign policy aims became more and more clear, there were military leaders who disagreed and wished to limit Hitler's power. Despite the protests of his military advisors, Hitler carried out the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936 and the annexation of Austria in 1938 while repudiating the Versailles Treaty. As he turned to Czechoslovakia, his senior advisors balked. Hitler, benefiting from Himmler and Goering's own quest for more power, was presented with an opportunity to remove them. Key generals Blomberg and Fritsch found themselves discredited and driven from public life as Hitler gradually sought to recenter military control in his hands alone. General Ludwig Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, resigned in protest. However, at Hitler's request he did so in secret which largely eliminated any value Beck's protest might have had. With the appointment of the compliant Wilhelm Keitel as the highest Army commander, Hitler had effectively made himself the both the titular and actual head of the German Armed forces, a move that would have serious implications as war loomed in 1939.

If German military leadership eagerly embraced rearmament and had mixed emotions about Hitler's foreign policy, what of his racial ideologies? The evidence indicates that the military was at least passively supportive. The old German military establishment was no stranger to antisemitism. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this was the infamous "Jew Census." In 1916, the Imperial High Command commissioned a census ostensibly to "prove" that Jews were underrepresented in the war effort. In order to further support the

"stab-in-the-back theory," a version of the results was released to antisemitic publications after the war. A more systematic study in the 1920s demonstrated that it was "the greatest statistical monstrosity of which an administration had ever been responsible."[82] After Hitler took power, the Army applied the Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service to its ranks as well, removing Jewish service members and requiring proof of Aryan heredity for its members.[83]

Dress Rehearsals for Genocide? The Polish and French Campaigns

> It can be assumed that only weak police forces will be available in enemy territory [therefore] Sipo *Einsatzgruppen* will be employed in rear areas fighting all anti-German elements. The Quartermaster of the Eighth Army will oversee the deployment of *Einsatzgruppe* III.
> - Special Order for Army Logistics, 8th Army Corps, 16 August 1939[84]

The first real combat test for the *Wehrmacht* was the campaign against Poland beginning on September 1, 1939. While it was not so much a test of the Wehrmacht's combat prowess, the Polish campaign *was* a test of how deeply the military would become involved in the Nazi genocidal project. Poland would be the first nation to fully experience the first iteration of the traveling execution squads called the *Einsatzgruppen*. While the scale of violence may not have been immediately apparent, the leadership could have had "no illusions about the general criminal character of the coming actions of the

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[82] Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 75.

[83] For more on antisemitism in the *Reichswehr*, see Jürgen Förster, ""Aber Für Die Juden Wird Auch Noch Die Stunde Schlagen, Und Dann Wehe Ihnen!" Reichswehr Und Antisemitismus," in *Deutsche, Juden, Völkermord : der Holocaust als Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Jürgen Matthäus (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006).

[84] Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity*, Modern War Studies. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 16.

Einsatzgruppen."[85] As early as July, Generalquartermaster Eduard Wagner had coordinated with Heydrich for liaisons between the Ic (intelligence) sections of *Wehrmacht* units and the *Einsatzgruppen*. The five *Einsatzgruppen* would be responsible for "combating all enemy elements in enemy territory behind the fighting troops."[86] The higher leadership of the *Wehrmacht* was also aware of what this meant. Keitel, chief of the *OKW*, informed his head of military intelligence Adm. Canaris on September 12 that "the matter [of the execution of polish elites] had already been decided by the Führer; the commander of the Army had been informed that if the *Wehrmacht* refused to be involved, it had to accept the pressure of the SS and the Gestapo. Therefore, in each military district, civilian commanders would be appointed who would carry the responsibility for ethnic extermination [added in pencil: political cleansing.]"[87] After the annexation of western Poland in October 1939, Hitler told the Supreme Commander of the *Wehrmacht* (OKW) Field Marshal Keitel in October 1939 that the occupation of Poland would allow them to "purify the Reich territory also of Jews and Polacks."[88] Knowledge of the intent of the *Einsatzgruppen* did not initially translate to a good understanding of how this was to play out between the Army and SS on the ground.

The military, particularly at the lower levels, was (at least initially) shocked at the scale of violence. The discomfort felt by both leaders and soldiers is evident in several written complaints. In February 1940, General Ulex in command of the southern sector wrote

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[85] Jochen Böhler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg : die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006), 202.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination : Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 13.

[88] Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism, 1919-1945 : A Documentary Reader*, vol. 3 (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 928.

to his commander that "the acts of violence by the police forces, which have increased recently, demonstrate a quite incredible lack of human and moral feeling, so that it can be called sheer brutalization."[89] An indication of perhaps some of the attitudes among the men can be gleaned from an order issued in July 1940 by an Army commander in which he wrote: "I wish to emphasize the necessity of ensuring that all soldiers of the Army and, in particular, the officers refrain from any criticism of the struggle being waged with the population in the General Government, for example, the treatment of the Polish minorities, the Jews, and Church matters." It is, however, telling that General Ulex above also observed in his memorandum that "it seems as if the superiors privately approve of this activity and do not wish to intervene."[90]

In fact, a policy of non-intervention accurately describes the evolution of the Army's collaboration with these first *Einsatzgruppen*. As Dieter Pohl rightly states, "among the generals themselves the repudiation of mass killing was not very widespread. At the most, they were directed against crimes that were not remotely justified by " 'military necessity' [even by the military's own expansive understanding of that concept]...or were accompanied by excessive cruelty."[91] In his pathbreaking work, Jochen Böhler calls the Army's actions in Poland a "prelude" to the war of annihilation. He demonstrates both participation in the extensive killing of civilians and especially in the massive violence against suspected *Freischärlers* or partisans that was already occurring in 1939.[92] In Poland, with the coming

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[89] Ibid., 939.

[90] Ibid., 941.

[91] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht : Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 53.

[92] See Jochen Böhler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg : die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006).

of civilian government, the Army was relieved to wash its hands of Nazi racial policy, which was the clear purview of the SS and Gestapo, in preparation for the war against France.

The campaign in France beginning in May 1940, fought against a less denigrated racial opponent on territory not targeted as future German *Lebensraum*, was not generally characterized by mass violence against civilians, either from a security or racial standpoint. It was a more conventional, far less racialized, war than the one fought in Poland. There certainly were atrocities, such as the Vinkt massacre in Belgium. Crucially, however, there were no *Einsatzgruppen* sent into France seeking to conduct mass executions as in Poland. This is not to say that no racially motivated killing took place. In contrast to Poland, when it occurred, racially motivated killing was conducted almost solely by the *Wehrmacht*. Rafael Scheck's innovative research on the fates of French colonial troops captured by the Army demonstrates a disturbing continuity of racism. He shows that between 1,500 and 3,000 black African soldiers fighting for the French were summarily executed by the *Wehrmacht*, because they were black.[93] Though some generals had initially disagreed with the recklessness of the Führer's invasion plan, one of the most important repercussions of the French campaign was an almost universal "recognition" of Hitler's strategic brilliance in the face of military misgivings; indeed, many generals "no longer wished to remember their previous skeptical criticisms."[94]

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[93] Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims : The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 165.

[94] Jürgen Förster, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat : eine strukturgeschichtliche Analyse* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 168-69.

Continuity and Break: Operation Barbarossa and *Wehrmacht* Complicity

> Weighted down with heavy cares, condemned to months of silence, I can at last speak freely—German People! At this moment a march is taking place that, for its extent, compares with the greatest the world has ever seen. I have decided again today to place the fate and future of the Reich and our people in the hands of our soldiers. May God aid us, especially in this fight.
> -Adolf Hitler's Proclamation to the German People, 22 June 1941[95]

> [Your] sense of justice has to take second place behind the necessity of war….One of the two enemies must perish; bearers of the enemy view are not to be conserved, but liquidated.
> - Lieutenant General Müller to General Staff officers and Military Judges, 11 June 1941[96]

It was apparent from the beginning that the war with the Soviet Union would be fundamentally different (and even more violent) than the Third Reich's previous campaigns. The war with the USSR was to be a "war of annihilation," a clash in which only one ideology, Nazi or Bolshevik, and one race, German or Slav, could triumph. As Hitler himself had written eighteen years earlier in *Mein Kampf*, "Germany will either be a world power or will not be at all."[97] Nothing more epitomized this all or nothing mentality than the invasion of the Soviet Union.

The roots of the yearning for land in the East extended far back into the German past.[98] The desire for an Eastern empire had several components. One was nostalgia for a return to a romantic era when Teutonic knights ruled fiefdoms in the East. Another was a desire for additional territory (*Lebensraum*) which, for Germans, naturally lay in the

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[95] Alan Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-45* (New York: W. Morrow, 1965).

[96] John N. Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 : A History of Denial* (Yale University Press, 2001), 406-7.

[97] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), 950.

[98] For a discussion of the earlier roots of the desire for eastern discussion, see Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards : A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front : Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

underdeveloped and racially inferior lands to the East as they had no chance at overseas colonies. Finally, in more modern times, an intense, intertwined fear and hatred of the Bolshevik menace in the Soviet Union led to a desire for both buffer territory and the total destruction of this enemy. For the Nazis, Bolshevism was more than a political ideology; it was a disease that merged with Jewish domination of the Slavic race and could not be easily cured except by total destruction.

Hitler expressed these themes clearly in *Mein Kampf*. Harkening back to prior Germanic glory, he proclaimed "We take up at the halting place of six hundred years ago."[99] On the necessity of space, he wrote "Only a sufficiently extensive area on this globe guarantees a nation freedom of existence."[100] Regarding the racial component and Bolshevik, Hitler stated, "The struggle against Jewish bolshevization of the world requires a clear attitude toward Soviet Russia. You cannot drive out the Devil with Beelzebub."[101] Even if Hitler's more rabid antisemitic beliefs were not always shared by the military, these concepts held great sway.

This conceptual framework for Operation Barbarossa was operationalized into very real plans for a decimation of the occupied East. In the first place, Hitler was committed to avoiding any significant negative impact of the war on the home front through economic deprivation or severe rationing as had happened in World War I. To that end, the military was expected to feed and supply itself generally from the land it conquered. This was but one element of what became known as the "Hunger Plan" that quite openly recognized that

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[99] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), 950.

[100] Ibid., 935.

[101] Ibid., 961.

"without a doubt umpteen millions of people will starve when we extract all our necessities from the land."[102] Accompanying the Hunger Plan was the brutal *Grünen Mappe* (Green File) economic plan. Together, these documents outlined the systematic starvation, deportation, expropriation, and depopulation of the occupied East in preparation for Himmler's Germanic settlers who would occupy the region. Some Nazi administrators circulated the number of 30 million as the likely death toll.[103] As the numbers of Jews under German control increased almost exponentially with the occupation of the Soviet Union, the Final Solution was also part of this destructive dynamic in the East. The military, which would be wielding a great deal of power, at least initially, was also expected to play its part in all these policies.

To highlight this fact, the Army High Command disseminated three important documents *before* the invasion. These had been written at the instigation of Hitler himself beginning in the spring of 1941. The first was a 13 May 1941 Führer Decree, which suspended prosecution of German soldiers for most actions in the East. It clearly states, "punishable offenses committed against enemy civilians do not, until further notice, come any more under the jurisdiction of the courts-martial and the summary courts-martial." This decree removed enemy civilians from protection of military law, giving German soldiers legal impunity in their treatment of civilians. A later clause authorized "punitive measures" against villages on the authority of battalion commanders. [104] Any prosecution of crimes was

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[102] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 46.

[103] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht : Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 66.

[104] "Decree for the Conduct of Courts-Martial in the District "Barbarossa" And for Special Measures of the Troop, 13 May 1941," (Nazi conspiracy and aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. III, 1946: Document 886-PS), 637.

to be considered only if "necessary for the maintenance of discipline or the security of the troops."[105] Thus, German soldiers were not only given the freedom to do as they pleased, but they were also encouraged to be violent. This decree even provided a justification for this violence, blaming "the break-down in 1918, the time of suffering of the German people after that, and the numerous blood sacrifices of the movement in the battle against national socialism" on "Bolshevist influence" and instructs the troops to defend themselves "ruthlessly against any threat by the enemy civil population."[106] The effect of these orders was to release German soldiers from the constraints of "civilized" warfare and to both rationalize and promote brutal behavior toward civilians and "enemies."

In the second document, the "Guidelines for the Behavior of the Troops," issued to company level prior to 21 June, soldiers were informed that "Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the German people" and that "this war demands ruthless and aggressive action against Bolshevik agitators, snipers, saboteurs, and Jews and tireless elimination of any active or passive resistance."[107] Jews were thus explicitly targeted as enemies to be eliminated by the military. The order went on to note that the "Asiatic soldiers of the Red Army are obtuse, unpredictable, underhanded, and unfeeling."[108]

A third directive, the so-called Commissar Order or *Kommissarbefehl,* instructed the troops that the political commissars who accompanied the Red Army were to be shot out of hand by frontline troops and if encountered in the rear areas were to be turned directly over to the *Einsatzgruppen* for similar treatment. Hitler's pronouncement that the Communist is

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[105] Ibid., 638.

[106] Ibid., 637.

[107] "Richtlinien für das Verhalten der Truppe in Russland, 29 May 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-91), 33.

[108] Ibid.

"*kein Kamerad*" was immediately accepted by those crafting the order. The order in one stroke both explicitly authorized an abandonment of the laws of war and encouraged closer cooperation with the SD. The Commissar Order stated that "political representatives and commissars are to be eliminated" and that "the decision rests with an officer of disciplinary power whether that person is to be eliminated. Identification as political functionary is sufficient proof."[109] This blanket execution order directly violated all previous laws of armed conflict and sent a powerful message to all in the military that they would not be bound by such codes.

A personal message from Hitler to the troops on the eve of the invasion reinforced the antisemitic message from the "Guidelines." "Alone for over two decades," the Führer claimed, "the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers from Moscow have sought to set fire to not only Germany but all of Europe. It was not Germany but the Jewish-Bolshevik rulers in Moscow that have steadfastly sought to force their domination not only spiritually but above all physically upon ours and other European peoples."[110] These, then, were the explicit messages and justifications that German soldiers carried with them into the Soviet Union.

In addition, groundwork had already been laid for cooperation between the *Einsatzgruppen* of the SD and the *Wehrmacht*. This relationship was to be far better defined than it had been in Poland. On 13 March 1941, OKW Keitel informed the military in the often quoted *Richtlinien auf Sondergebieten zur Weisung Nr. 21 "Fall Barbarossa"* that the *Reichsführer SS* had received from Hitler the "authorization to carry out special tasks" in the

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[109] *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. Supplement A (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1947), 352.Document 884-PS

[110] "Soldaten der Ostfront," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-7), Anl. 67.

Army rear areas.[111] The Generalquartermaster of the Army Eduard Wagner was the Army's representative to the SS and SD in ironing out the details of this relationship. Discussions over the proposed use of the *Einsatzgruppen* began in the spring of 1941. After a month of talks between Wagner and Heydrich, an agreement was reached in the form of a draft memorandum circulated on 26 March 1941.[112] Wagner met with Daluege, Wolff, Heydrich and Himmler himself on 16 April to further iron out relationships between the police and Army.[113] The final version of the agreement was disseminated to the Army on 28 April under the signature of General Brauchitsch, Army commander. In it *Wehrmacht* units were tasked with "march, quartering, and supply" support of the *Einsatzgruppen* and that the "combating of enemies of the state and Reich" was the general responsibility of Army Group Rear area commanders.[114]

This agreement was reflected at lower levels as in a directive of 15 June 1941 in which the 28th Infantry Division (assigned to Army Group Center (Rear) or *Rückwärtige Heeresgebeit Mitte (rHGM)*) informed its units that "the Reichsführer SS is carrying out special tasks in the rear areas with his own organs and under his own responsibility. In the rear army areas, only a small group of Security Police and the SD (*Sonderkommandos*) is to be used to carry out certain tasks specified at the outset of operations…*Sonderkommandos* of

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[111] Jan Phillipp Reemtsma, Ulrike Jureit, and Hans Mommsen, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht : Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 : Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger,2002), 56.

[112] Peter Witte et al., eds., *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42* (Hamburg: Christians,1999), 139 ff.

[113] Ibid., 150.

[114] Jan Phillipp Reemtsma, Ulrike Jureit, and Hans Mommsen, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht : Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 : Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger,2002), 58-60.

the Security Police and SD work together with the Army Ic."[115] *rHGM* itself stated clearly in an order dated 24 June 1941 that the *Einsatzkommandos* were "subordinate to the commander [of Army Group Center (Rear)] concerning march, supply, and accommodation."[116] Though Wagner said in a meeting in May 1941 that OKH had refused "real support of all these units [presumably meaning in actual operations] and the execution of political tasks," the true nature of this relationship between the Army and the *Einsatzgruppen* would quickly encompass far more than logistical support.[117]

The mass death of Soviet POWs was also foreshadowed by the absence of any preparations for their care. Though the Army envisioned a series of giant encirclements that would by necessity result in massive numbers of prisoners, the man responsible for planning for the welfare of prisoners of war, Generalquartermaster Wagner, made no adequate plans for POW camps to accommodate them.[118] Prisoners were to be held with minimal supplies in open air prisons. While postwar apologists would claim that the Army was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of captured Russians and was unable to properly care for them, the truth is that they were intentionally neglected. A telling indicator of this is a directive from the 4th Army Corps on 9 June 1941 *before the invasion* that clearly stated that "prisoners of war are to be fed with the most primitive rations (for example horse flesh.) High quality and

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[115] "Besondere Anordnungen für den Fall "B" über militärische Hoheitsrechte, Sicherung, und Verwaltung im rückwärtigen Gebiet, Beute, Kriegsgefangene, 15 June 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-28-18).

[116] "rHGM Korpsbefehl Nr. 18, 24 June 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-12b), Anl. 193.

[117] 19 May 1941 Meeting notes taken by Major Schmidt von Altenstadt with General Wagner in Jan Phillipp Reemtsma, Ulrike Jureit, and Hans Mommsen, eds., *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht : Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944 : Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger,2002), 61.

[118] In a further illustration of the complexity of perpetrator decision-making, Wagner would be forced to commit suicide in 1944 as part of the plot against Hitler.

scarce food and luxury foods may not be given out to them."[119] Streit's survey also found that from the beginning the daily caloric intake of Soviet POWs was not enough to sustain life.[120] The military also fully collaborated with the "selection" of its prisoners for execution by the SS and *Einsatzgruppen*.[121] As Streit points out, "the military leadership of the OKW through its willing cooperation in the creation of a hierarchy of POWs placed itself in a situation in which active collaboration with Nazi extermination policy [*Ausrottungspolitik*] was a logical result."[122]

In the predawn hours of 22 June 1941, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, over 4 million German soldiers invaded the Soviet Union. As the less numerous armored formations advanced rapidly, the slower moving infantry formations followed behind, mopping up immense pockets of thousands of encircled soldiers. Accompanying the faster moving formations were the approximately 3,000 men of the *Einsatzgruppen*, Himmler's mobile killing squads. Each group operated in an Army Group rear area, with A behind Army Group North, B behind Center, and C and D behind South. Tasked with the elimination of "enemies" including Jews and communist functionaries, these men and especially their leaders had been highly indoctrinated and specially trained at SS training centers prior to the invasion. To support their tasks, they were also well equipped with wheeled vehicles to facilitate their rapid deployment. They were followed by units of Order

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[119] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden : Die Wehrmacht Und Die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978), 79.

[120] See table Ibid., 138-9.

[121] See Alfred Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa"* (Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller Juristischer Verlag, 1981).

[122] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden : Die Wehrmacht Und Die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978), 72.

Police, *Waffen-SS,* and Einsatzgruppen zbV ("for special assignment") to assist them in killing. Higher SS and Police Leaders (HSSPF), such as Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski in *rHGM*, were responsible for coordinating operations between the SD/SS and *Wehrmacht* and, later, for carrying out antipartisan operations.

Operation Barbarossa would eclipse any suffering Belarus had previously endured. German troops, part of the over 100 *Wehrmacht* divisions committed, crossed the 1939 Polish frontier and advanced deep into Belarus, covering over 200 miles and reaching Minsk in two weeks. By 22 August, most of the region had been occupied and with it 30 percent of the Soviet Union's Jews.[123] Huge pockets of Red Army soldiers were surrounded and captured, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Even so, thousands of bypassed Soviet soldiers escaped Nazi encirclements, some attempting to return to Soviet lines, some to continue the fight in the German rear, and some merely to return to civilian life. The much-lauded partisan bands of 1943 did not exist in 1941, as Stalinist planners had steadfastly refused to consider the possibility of Soviet land under foreign occupation and, thus, had made no preparations for guerilla warfare.

Evidence of the cooperation between the *Einsatzgruppen* of the SD and the *Wehrmacht* in Belarus appears early on. In a directive from 15 June 1941, the 28th Infantry Division (also assigned to *rHGM*), informed its units that "the Reichsführer SS is carrying out special tasks in the rear areas with his own organs and under his own responsibility. In the rear army areas, only a small group of Security Police and the SD (*Sonderkommandos*) is to be used to carry out specific tasks specified at the outset of

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[123] Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust : A Social and Demographic Profile* (Jerusalem: Centre for Research of East European Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 17.

operations…*Sonderkommandos* of the Security Police and SD work together with the Army Ic."[124] In late August, the *Einsatzgruppen* could already speak of "pleasant cooperation with the Army authorities."[125] The true nature of this relationship between the Army and the *Einsatzgruppen* would quickly encompass far more than logistical support. This combination of sanctioned brutality toward civilians, official antisemitism, and organizational cooperation with the SD, along with the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus, permeated the environment in which the campaign would progress.

Wehrmacht units in Belarus also had already established that Jews were a different category of civilians, an inferior one. Jews, for example, were the first to be identified and used for forced labor. In July 1941, the 350th Infantry Regiment (which would be represented at the important Mogilev antipartisan conference) "evacuated" the male Jewish populations of the Bialowiezer Forest, which was to be Goering's private hunting preserve.[126] The division order specified that "all Jewish men [were] to be placed in a camp and to be concentrated into work details."[127] An Army Group Center Rear order concerning pay of road repair crews specified that Jews "*may* only be compensated in the form of food."[128] The 221st Security Division (also stationed in Army Group Center Rear) ordered that Jews be rounded up and forced to gather straw and clean houses in preparation for a Wehrmacht

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[124] "Besondere Anordnungen für den Fall "B" über militärische Hoheitsrechte, Sicherung, und Verwaltung im rückwärtigen Gebiet, Beute, Kriegsgefangene, 15 June 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-28-18).

[125] "Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 73, 4 September 1941," (USHMM: 1999.A.0196 (Reel 1)), 2-722180.

[126] "rHGM Order: Creation of Game Preserve, 18 June 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-12a), Anl. 387.

[127] "221 SD Div. Befehl: Versprengte Truppen, 8 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-12a), Anl. 309.

[128] "rHGM Memo: Wichtigkeit Der Straßenzüge Und Ausbesserung Der Straßen, 19 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-224), Anl. 156.

unit's arrival.[129] The 403rd Security Division's intelligence section observed that "not all soldiers have the proper attitude towards the Jews. They do not approach the Jewish laborers with the desirable ruthlessness and the distance that should be self-evident for national socialist soldiers. Emphasis must be given to intervene against this thoughtlessness."[130] Such a statement demonstrates both that some military authorities conceived of a "proper" attitude of brutality to be taken with Jews and, at least in this division, were intent on imposing it. In the first months of the war in Belarus, *Wehrmacht* units were already killing Jews; 20 were killed in Lida, 73 in Baranovichi, and 30 in Slonim.[131]

Participation in genocide developed over time. However, the *Wehrmacht* was immediately and, for the most part, in agreement with the execution of the *Kommissarbefehl* and POW policy. In his thorough study of the *Kommissarbefehl*, Felix Römer painstakingly recreates both the creation of the order and its execution.[132] He shows that some units took it more seriously than others. Yet the numbers are damning. More than 100,000 serving political officers in the Red Army were lost during the war, according to Soviet statistics; 57,608 were killed as a result of military action and an amazing 47,126 were "missing."[133] The vast majority of these missing were likely executed in accordance with the *Kommissarbefehl.* The victimization of POWs did not end with commissars. Anti-Jewish policy was carried out in the POW camps as well. An operations order issued to the SD

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[129] "221 SD Memo, 11 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-13b), Anl. 488.

[130] "403 Ic Tkb, Juli 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-403-4a).

[131] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 537.

[132] See Felix Römer, *Der Kommissarbefehl : Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (Paderborn : Schöningh, 2008.).

[133] Christian Hartmann, *Wehrmacht im Ostkrieg : Front und militärisches Hinterland 1941-42* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2009), 487.

operating in POW camps on 17 July instructed that "all Jews" found among the captured soldiers were to be executed.[134]

There is evidence that some leaders objected to the order and that its enforcement across units was not uniform; however, on the whole, commissars had a short life expectancy in German captivity (if they even made it there.) As Jörn Hasenclever notes, even those refusing to execute the order did not always do it out of moral reasons but were often more concerned with the pragmatic effect it would have on the combat ahead of them.[135]

The POW policy was met by some with shock and concern, particularly those who as professionals took seriously their task of providing for them as well as those who simply saw the policy as inhumane.[136] Christian Streit's work on German POW policy exposed the dreadful conditions under which captured Red Army soldiers suffered.[137] Most POWS found themselves in *Dulags* (*Durchganglagers* or transit camps) which consisted of little more than open fields surrounded by barbed wire and sentry posts. The men were underfed, exposed to the elements, and in need of medical attention. Indeed, the army itself radicalized its own policy, ordering that "mainly" Russian medical personnel and "only" Russian medical

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[134] Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden : die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1991), 91.

[135] Jörn Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik in der Sowjetunion : die Befehlshaber der rückwärtigen Heeresgebiete 1941-1943* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 69.

[136] Konrad Jarausch's edited collection of his father's wartime letters provides a glimpse into the mindset of a man attempting to care for POWs with hopelessly insufficient support. Konrad Jarausch, Klaus Jochen Arnold, and Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Das stille Sterben ... : Feldpostbriefe von Konrad Jarausch aus Polen und Russland 1939-1942* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008).See also Klaus Jochen Arnold, *Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion : Kriegführung und Radikalisierung im "Unternehmen Barbarossa"* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), 397-404, Christian Hartmann, "Massensterben oder Massenvernichtung? Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im "Unternehmen Barbarossa" aus dem Tagebuch eines deutschen Lagerkommandanten," in *Der deutsche Krieg im Osten 1941-1944*, ed. Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, Peter Lieb, and Dieter Pohl (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009).

[137] See Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden : Die Wehrmacht Und Die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978).

supplies were to be used to treat wounded prisoners.[138] The mortality rates were enormous. Of the 5.7 million Red Army soldiers, almost 57.9% did not survive the war.[139] Two thirds of the three million prisoners captured in 1941 did not live out the year. More Soviet soldiers died *daily* in the hands of the *Wehrmacht* than American or British prisoners did in the entire war. Only toward the end of 1941, when the disastrous POW policy had already had devastating effects, did the Nazis realize the growing labor shortage and the potential utility of Red Army POWs as slave labor. Non-Russian ethnicities, however, were often released to join German auxiliary forces and the Army itself soon realized that it would need to release some soldiers to help bring in the harvest. A few officers even suggested that mistreating POWs made defeating the Soviets more difficult. While issues of military utility led to a change in POW policy, such factors had no effect on anti-Jewish policy.

As the *Wehrmacht* became more stationary in Soviet towns, it also became more directly involved in promulgating Nazi antisemitic policy. Because military administration was the first form of German government across the occupied East, they were also the first to initiate restrictions against Jews. Local military commanders instituted the wearing of the Star of David, curfews for Jews, and various other regulations. They also created ghettos, sometimes on their own initiatives. On 19 August 1941 an order from Army High Command, for example, specifically ordered the creation of ghettos in towns with large Jewish populations provided it was "necessary and possible given the local situation and

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[138] Christian Streit, "Das Schicksal der verwundeten sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen," in *Vernichtungskrieg : Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995), 79.

[139] Interestingly, in the First World War, the death rate was only 5.4% Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann, eds., *Vernichtungskrieg : Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition,1995), 188.

assistance at hand."[140] The Army also became quickly involved in the expropriation of property and forced labor of Jews in its jurisdiction.[141]

Belarus was partitioned again as the front stabilized east of Mogilev, this time between military and civilian authority. An area of some 225,000 km^2 with over 9,850,000 inhabitants roughly west of Borisov to the border of the General Government became the "White Russian" region (*Weissruthenien*) of *Reichskommissariat Ostland* under the control of Heinrich Lohse.[142] The area east of Borisov to the beginnings of Army rear areas was under the control of Army Group Center (Rear), a corps level unit commanded by General of Infantry Max von Schenckendorff.

As these rear-area units began settling into their jurisdictions, the *issue* of the "partisan threat" became more and more pressing, even if the *threat* itself did not. On 3 July, Stalin addressed the Soviet people via radio. "The enemy," he said, "must be hunted down and exterminated, and all his plans foiled."[143] This angered Hitler and perhaps prompted his statement made on 16 July that "the Russians have now ordered partisan warfare behind our front. This partisan war again has some advantage for us; it enables us to eradicate everyone who opposes us." Regarding the security situation in the East, Hitler went on to advise that

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[140] Klaus Jochen Arnold, *Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion : Kriegführung und Radikalisierung im "Unternehmen Barbarossa"* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2005), 500.

[141] For more on the German Army as occupier and collaborator in anti-Jewish policy, see Theo J. Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), Wolfgang Curilla, *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust im Baltikum und in Weissrussland, 1941-1944* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2006).

[142] Shalom Cholawsky, *The Jews of Bielorussia during World War II* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Pub., 1998), 47.

[143] Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East : The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 73.

"the best solution was to shoot anyone who looked sideways."[144] This exhortation to more brutal behavior was then echoed and refined by Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, head of the Armed Forces. On 12 September, he published a memorandum whose subject was "Jews in the newly Occupied Soviet Territories." He informed the troops that "the fight against Bolshevism necessitates indiscriminate and energetic accomplishment of this task, especially also against the Jews, the main carriers of Bolshevism" again reinforcing a drive toward increasing violence.[145]

High-level exhortations and directives found their expression in low-level orders and policies prior to September 1941 as well. In July, units were instructed that captured partisans (in civilian clothes) were to be treated as *Freischärlers*, that is, summarily executed; in addition, civilians who in any way supported these partisans were also to be treated in this way.[146] *rHGM* ordered that all former Soviet soldiers found west of the Berezina River were to be summarily executed if they had not turned themselves in by 15 August.[147] Female Soviet soldiers were to be shot out of hand. In the early days of the war, however, the German army's contact with "partisans" consisted mainly of identifying and capturing bypassed Soviet troops. Though not presenting a general military threat, these bands could be locally dangerous and may have helped to fuel rumor and over-reaction. These partisans were certainly not the partisans of 1943-44. The inflated fear of partisan activity, eerily reminiscent of the summer of 1914 in Belgium, would have disastrous

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[144] "Meeting Notes by Martin Bormann, 16 July 1941," (Nazi conspiracy and aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. VII, 1946: Document L-221), 1087, 91.

[145] "Okw Order No. 02041/41, 12 September 1941," (Nazi conspiracy and aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. III, 1946: Document 878-PS), 636.

[146] "rHGM Befehl: Partisanenabt. Der Sowjets, 26 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-224), 177.

[147] "rHGM Befehl: Kollektive Gewaltmaßnahmen, 12 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-224), Anl. 502.

consequences for the Jews of the Soviet Union.

The *Wehrmacht* and the Final Solution

Developing along a parallel path that soon intersected with the *Wehrmacht*'s area of responsibility was the escalation of Nazi genocidal policy. As mentioned earlier, the *Einsatzgruppen* were designed to follow along behind frontline Army units and to execute "enemies of the state." This broad category included Commissars, communist functionaries, and intelligentsia. At least initially, there was no order to exterminate all Jews in the Soviet Union.[148] Heydrich's 2 July order specified only "Jews in the service of the party or the government."[149] Soon Jewish POWs were also included, and in some places virtually all male Jews of military age were targeted.

In the summer of 1941, however, the targeting of Jews continued to expand until it encompassed the systematic killing of all Jews regardless of age or sex (or actual government or communist affiliation). As a specific order from Himmler to this effect has yet to have been discovered, historians can only track this shift through the actions of various killing units on the ground. It is most likely that this change in policy was passed through a verbal order from Himmler and his top subordinates.[150] Christopher Browning was one of the first to look at this issue also from a manpower issue, showing that the reassignment of Police

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[148] Yaacov Lozowick, "Rollbahn Mord: The Early Activities of Einsatzgruppe C," *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 2, no. 2 (1987): 234.

[149] Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death : The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 17.

[150] Christopher Browning has laid out in detail how this may have occurred and how the changes in killing patterns in the summer of 1941 reflect a change in policy. See Christopher R. Browning, "Beyond "Intentionalism" And "Functionalism": The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered," in *The Path to Genocide : Essays on Launching the Final Solution*, ed. Christopher R. Browning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Battalions to "frontline" duty against Jews in late July also signaled this change to killing all Jews.[151] The SS Cavalry and Infantry Brigades as well began conducting this expansive form of killing in late July. The SS Cavalry Brigade under Hermann Feglein reached Baranovichi on 27 July 1941. After a meeting there with Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the Higher SS and Police Leader for Army Group Center and Himmler's representative, Kurt Knoblauch, Fegelein ordered his men to "handle all Jews [with the exception of skilled workers, doctors, etc] as plunderers," that is to kill them.[152] Soon, this killing extended to woman and children as well. Himmler had ordered on 31 July that "all Jews must be shot. Drive the female Jews into the swamps."[153] Gustav Lombard, commander of the 1st Regiment, had then informed his troops that "in future not one male Jew is to remain alive, not one family in the villages."[154] The 2nd SS Cavalry Regiment reported in the same period, "We drove women and children into the marshes, but this did not yield the desired result, as the marshes were not deep enough to drown them. In most places, the water was not more than three feet deep."[155] One of the features of this targeting shift was that it appeared at different places in different times, culminating in the massive killing of 33,000 Jews at Babi Yar at the end of September 1941.

At the same time, important decisions regarding the Final Solution were also being

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[151] Ibid., 105.

[152] Martin Cüppers, *Wegbereiter der Shoah : die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 139.

[153] Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 281. The order was passed on on 1 August.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Philip W. Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The Ss and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 58.

made. Reinhard Heydrich had already been authorized by Göring on 31 July 1941 to begin preparing plans for a comprehensive mass murder of European Jews beyond that taking place in the Soviet Union. Yet this plan had not yet crystallized. Regarding European Jews, Hitler, in a meeting on 19 August would only promise Goebbels to begin deportations of German (and, thus, European Jews) "immediately after the end of the campaign."[156] However, Hitler had been personally receiving the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* beginning on August 1.[157] By mid-September, he had changed his mind regarding the onset of deportations. On the 18th, Himmler recorded that "The Führer wishes that the Old Reich and Protectorate be emptied and freed of Jews from west to east as quickly as possible."[158] The first deportations to the East began on October 15th.[159] Thus we can see a parallel radicalization of both overall genocidal planning and its execution in the Soviet Union.

The reactions of both Belarussian Jews and non-Jews to the initial stages of German occupation were of a wait and see variety. The prospect of liberation from the repressive Stalinist regime was appealing to many non-Jews. Some Jews managed to flee further east, but most were quickly trapped by the speed of the German advance. While some news of German antisemitic actions in Poland had reached Belarus, most Jews knew very little of past German behavior much less plans for the future and were unwilling to abandon property and family on what they considered unfounded rumors. When the war struck, many Jews fled to

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[156] Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 320.

[157] Ibid., 312.

[158] Ibid., 325.

[159] Christian Gerlach, however, argues that these deportations did not necessarily mean a decision to kill German Jews, that this decision was not made until December 1941. See Christian Gerlach, "The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998).

the countryside to escape the immediate effects of combat upon their cities. Many of them, finding themselves quickly far behind the lines, then returned to what was left of their homes. The summer and fall of 1941, then, found large populations of Jews trapped by the German advance, many of whom resided in smaller towns, still waiting for their first encounter with the conqueror. The Jews of Krupki were one such population.

III. Improvisation- the 354th Infantry Regiment and the Jews Of Krupki

On an overcast Thursday afternoon in September 1941, the Jews of Krupki in central Belarus wound their way out of town, across the highway.[160] Somewhere in this group was a female opera singer from Minsk. Military trucks followed slowly behind carrying the elderly and the infirm. SS men from *Einsatzkommando* 8 awaited their arrival about two and a half kilometers away, as storm clouds gathered overhead. German Army soldiers guarded this column as it marched. Here and there, they beat the Jews with rifle butts when they did not move fast enough.[161] Among the soldiers guarding this column was twenty-year-old private Walter K.. As he walked, he noticed a small child whose pants had fallen down around his ankles. Though his mother tried to help him keep up, the child was in danger of being trampled by those behind. Walter K. pulled the mother and child out of line and allowed her to pull up his pants. They then rejoined the column and are soon shot in an open pit. K. remembered twenty-five years later that this incident caused him "great distress" as he was already married and had two children of his own.[162] In this way, the entire Jewish

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[160] "Krupka" is the German transliteration of "Krupki." "Krupki" will be used throughout except in places where German documents or speakers are being directly quoted.

[161] "M., Bruno Statement, 24 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 102, "R., Georg Statement, 25 January 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548).

[162] "K., Walter Statement, 9 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 534.

community of Krupki (1,000 people and over half the town) disappeared, on a Thursday afternoon.

In Krupki, we see an example emblematic of the Army's first encounter with mass murder. The 354th Infantry Regiment's participation in this "action" was an improvised affair, with the leadership operating without a set procedure. Beyond the vague guidelines mandating logistical support, there were no agreed upon tactical instructions for supporting an *Einsatzgruppen* killing. Yet, even in this early stage, there was a great deal of involvement in all aspects of killing and a surprising number of close interactions with the Jewish population itself. Moreover, the Krupki killing gives us the opportunity to *detail* the actual complicity of one *Wehrmacht* unit on the ground. Specifically, how did this become so deeply involved in executing racial policies?

September 18, 1941: Death of a Community

> As we were just about ready to leave, a Russian came running after us. He apparently had the task of covering the grave. He said something in Russian that was translated and one of us was sent back. I myself had a look around and saw a three-year-old child sitting on the pile of bodies crying. The child was shot by the man who had been sent back.
>
> -Willi Kr., member of SS-Teilkommando Schönemann[163]

Krupki remains a small town today. The name means "grist" in Russian, which likely alludes to its early history as a mill town. Located sixty-nine miles northeast of Minsk on the main highway to the regional capital of Mogilev, the town is situated on a gentle rise, surrounded by fields on three sides and forests to the north. Small, brightly colored houses line the streets leading from the formerly Jewish quarter to the nondescript main square.

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[163] "K., Willy Statement 1 March 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3291), 266.

Behind a red and white fence made of scraps from a metalworking factory, lies an open lot where Krupki's synagogue once stood. A few hundred yards north is a bright red school building as well as the house of a nineteenth-century nobleman situated in a shady park. Krupki's Jewish community was first recorded in the 1700s. In 1939, approximately 870 Jews lived there, representing 25 percent of the total population of 3,455.[164] According to Yad Vashem, approximately 40 percent of the Jewish population consisted of craftsmen and laborers.[165] The majority lived on Lenin and Sovetskaya streets.[166] Beyond some moderate growth, the town seems little changed from the mid-summer of 1941 when the 3rd Battalion of the 354th Infantry Regiment entered the town.

The 354th was formed in August 1939 as part of the 213th Infantry Division with the 1st and 2nd Battalions coming from reservists in Upper Alsace and the 3rd from Bunzlau in modern-day Poland (though this part of Silesia remained part of Germany after World War I). The unit is interesting in that it was drawn from two border regions, one east and one west. It is likely that the geographic distribution (and the ages) of the soldiers meant that they were less exposed to Nazi ideology; certainly, the regions from which they hailed were not hotbeds of Nazi activity in the interwar years. The soldiers were mainly blue collar laborers while the officers were a mixture of lower middle class officials, professionals, and reserve officers. The average age of the regiment's soldiers, which was 32 in 1941, reflected

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[164] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

[165] Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of The Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR," http://www1.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/krupki/Krupki.html.

[166] "Kosenkova, Margarita Interview, 8 July 2009," (Author's Personal Archive). Interpreter: Vadim Ovsyanik

its second-rate quality as the better quality units received younger and more fit men. Officers and NCOs averaged 36 and 34 respectively. In short, there was nothing exceptional about these men from a training or demographic perspective. However, their coming from two different border regions of Germany is. Coming from Silesia and Alsace, these men would not have been exposed to as strong Nazi ideology perhaps. However, the Silesians may have also brought certain negative feelings toward Slavs with them to the unit.

From September 1939 to May 1940, the 213th Division provided occupation troops in Poland. In December, the 354th Regiment was reorganized into battalions of four companies each. The 4th, 8th, and 12th were machine gun units, each with one heavy mortar platoon. The infantrymen were then placed on leave from July 1940 to February 1941.[167] In March 1941, the regiment was remobilized and transferred to the 286th Security Division, which would be tasked with rear area security in Army Group Center (Rear). The 354th would form the Division's main combat power, its "Response Force." Training guidelines for security divisions published in March 1941 stated that "the Response Troops are the strong combat reserves of the commander. They will be held available for the commander at key points on supply routes and will be employed offensively against enemy forces that threaten the supply routes."[168] Along with the rest of the 286th Security Division, the 354th Infantry Regiment left its staging areas in Parczew, Poland, north of Lublin and moved along Highway 1 toward Brest, Kobryn, and Sluzk.[169]

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[167] Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945*, vol. 8 (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1979), 58-9.

[168] "Richtlinien für die Ausbildung der Sicherungs-Divisionen und der dem Befehlshaber des rückwärtigen Heeres-Gebiets unterstehenden Kräfte, 21 March 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-3), Anl. 12.

[169] "Befehl für die Bereitstellung zum Vormarsch, 20 June 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-3), Anl. 38.

After helping secure the Bialystok pocket against breakout attempts, Major Johannes Waldow's 3rd Battalion arrived in Minsk at the beginning of July. Waldow was a forty-eight year old veteran of World War I, who in that war had seen action in Poland, Romania, and France. In the interwar period, he had worked as a school teacher until his activation in August 1939.[170] There is no evidence that he was either particularly brutal or particularly antisemitic. He was remembered by his soldiers as "correct," "decent," "conscientious," "respected," and "beloved."[171]

From 6-17 July, the battalion guarded the immense POW "camp" just outside of Minsk, likely the massive Drozdy camp.[172] Drozdy was an important precursor to events in Krupki as it may have been the site of the first exposure of the battalion to the harsh realities of Nazi policy and the "war of destruction" in the Soviet Union. It was also the site of the unit's first participation in those crimes. Over 100,000 Soviet POWs were confined in an open area, surrounded by barbed-wire and bounded on one side by a stream, which lay outside the wire. A quartermaster officer in 4th Panzer Army wrote that the conditions in the camp were "untenable" and the prisoners were "completely exposed to the searing heat." Moreover, as transports of prisoners to the rear (which had only been allowed in open railway cars) had been discontinued by the 4th Panzer Army due to "hygienic reasons" (the cleanliness of the cars), the numbers of prisoners continued to rise on a daily basis.[173] A

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[170] "Waldow, J. Statement, 28 January 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 183.

[171] See the following testimonies: "G., Konrad Statement, 11 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 519, "Gänsler, W. Statement, 3 August 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 563, "K., Werner Statement, 13 June 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 646.

[172] "Korück 559 Kriegestagebuch, 8 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 23-124), 7.

[173] "Erläuterungen zur Übergabe des Gefangenen-Durchgangslager 127 von Kdt. r.A.559 an A.O.K. 2/O.Q.2, 14 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 23-124), Anl. 24.

lieutenant in the 354th Infantry Regiment remembered that "the conditions in the camp were indescribable" and that "there were rumors that the prisoners had eaten each other."[174] As part of their guard duty, soldiers often killed prisoners, either when the starved men rushed the field kitchens or when they crossed into off-limits areas. A soldier on Waldow's staff recalled that a prisoner was found in possession of a nail or a straight razor and brought to Waldow, who remarked that there were already enough POWs and ordered his execution. When the prisoner broke down crying and could no longer finish digging his own grave, soldiers shot him in the vicinity of the battalion headquarters.[175]

The men of the 3rd Battalion witnessed more than these abuses. Drozdy was, in many ways, their introduction to the genocidal policy in which they would become more and more complicit. This camp was also divided into sections for commissars and Jews containing both Jewish Red Army soldiers and civilian Jews from Minsk.[176] A survivor from Minsk remembered that all military-aged men from the city were briefly interned there until the Jews were separated out and the rest released.[177] The Jews remaining were permitted water only twice a day.[178] The soldiers witnessed the SS conduct frequent selections among these prisoners. In one of these, all professional Jews were asked to step forward in order to

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[174] "F., Gunther Statement, 10 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 524.

[175] "R., Georg Statement, 25 January 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 47-8.

[176] "H., Erhard Statement, 17 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 496.

[177] Miriam Tokarski and Ron N. Levitan (transl.), "A Motherly Poem: Miriam Aygas' Story," in *Minsk, Ir Va-Em (Minsk, Jewish Mother-City, a Memorial Anthology)*, ed. Shlomo Even-Shushan (Jerusalem: Assoc. of Olim from Minsk and its Surroundings in Israel, 1975-85).

[178] Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 24-25.

register for jobs. Instead, they were taken out and shot.[179] Men from the 3rd Battalion also witnessed these killings and visited the open graves. Knowledge of these shootings was widespread as was the participation of the *Einsatzgruppen* in these killings.[180] An *Ereignismeldung* from 4 September reported, for example, that 733 "inferior elements" had been culled from POW camps and liquidated.[181] A diary from a 3rd Battalion soldier, Richard Heidenreich, states that the unit itself shot Jews in the camp. This diary entry appears in a Soviet book published after the war, but despite its problematic origin, is likely accurate.[182] The brutalizing impact of the Drozdy camp may be best seen in a report from a Nazi official on 10 July 1941 which noted "the limited guard force, which bears the burden of guarding, without being replaced for days on end, turns to the prisoners in the only possible language, and that is the language of weapons, and they do this mercilessly."[183]

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[179] Miriam Tokarski and Ron N. Levitan (transl.), "A Motherly Poem: Miriam Aygas' Story," in *Minsk, Ir Va-Em (Minsk, Jewish Mother-City, a Memorial Anthology)*, ed. Shlomo Even-Shushan (Jerusalem: Assoc. of Olim from Minsk and its Surroundings in Israel, 1975-85).

[180] The camp near Minsk is mentioned specifically in an *Einsatzgruppen* report from 13 July 1941 describing the selections, daily executions, and the murder of 1050 Jews. See Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 22.

[181] "Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 73, 4 September 1941," (USHMM: 1999.A.0196 (Reel 1)), 2-722198-99.

[182] *True to Type: A Selection from Letters and Diaries of German Soldiers and Civilians Collected on the Soviet-German Front*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1945), 29. The problematic nature of this source warrants a brief note. The diary alluded to belonged to a Private Heidenreich. The entries cited appear only in this book that apparently originated in the Soviet Union and was a collection aimed at portraying the crimes of the German Army. It is not impossible that the entries were edited to that aim by Soviet authorities as the original diary has apparently never surfaced. German authorities interviewed Heidenreich's sister and widow, neither of whom knew of him keeping a diary. However, Heidenreich was a soldier in 12th Company (as stated in the book and confirmed by soldiers from the unit). He was captured in 1943, according to a member of the unit. Moreover, he writes that his battalion guarded a POW camp in Minsk in July 1941, which is correct. Many of the details he mentions (for example, the weather on the day of the mass execution, a partisan action in which a soldier is shot in the leg and the Christmas celebration that was cancelled when the unit was forced to move to the front) are corroborated by other soldiers' testimony. While some dates appear to be inaccurate, in the final analysis, it appears that, regardless of the circumstances under which this text was written, whether an actual diary or something Heidenreich himself wrote (willingly or perhaps unwillingly in Soviet custody, the portions of the published entries that can be checked against other sources have proven to be accurate.

[183] Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 152.

Thus we can see that the men of the 3rd Battalion were already becoming progressively more violent and experienced with the execution of Nazi racial policy.

Around 28 July, the 3rd Battalion arrived in the vicinity of Krupki.[184] Its mission there was the security of Highway 2 and the railroads between the towns of Borisov and Bobr, a distance of some thirty miles.[185] The 11th Company appears to have been stationed outside of town and not involved in the subsequent killing, but the 10th and 12th companies were quartered in and around Krupki. The battalion used the town as its operating base for patrols in the surrounding countryside, combating sporadic partisan attacks on the road and railways and rounding up any bypassed Red Army troops. At least one soldier, however, testified that these patrols often had as their target Jews as well.[186] On 19 September, the 3rd Battalion reported on an operation in which it had worked alongside Police Battalion 317. Major Waldow's men captured 164 people of whom 16 were "shot as snipers [*Freischärler*] or while attempting to escape after capture."[187] The unit was clearly carrying out the harsh "antipartisan" policy to the letter.

Particularly active in patrolling was Oberfeldwebel Schrade, platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, 12th Company. Schrade submitted an experience report on antipartisan patrolling on 13 October that was so well received at the highest levels that it was forwarded to all units in Army Group Center (Rear). Among the recommendations was that "women and children be ruthlessly prohibited from leaving the village" and also that "because the Russian fears the

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[184] "Map: Einsatz Der Sich. Div. 286, 28 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-3), Anl. 61.

[185] "Tätigkeitsberichte Nr. 1 über den Einsatz der Eingreifgruppe vom 26.7- 1.8.1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4), Anl. 67.

[186] "M., Richard Statement, 2 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 136.

[187] "HGM Ib Report, 19 September 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 655-1-1).

club more than the gun, beatings are the most effective method." He added, "recently, women have been found in [partisan] camps. In almost every case, these were Jewish women whose task was to determine whether villages were free of the enemy. It is also women who do not appear Jewish."[188] Schrade also recommended that these patrols be conducted by soldiers disguised as civilians. A member of his platoon recalled that they outfitted themselves from clothing belonging to the murdered Jews of the nearby village of Kholoponichi; the soldiers picked their clothing from piles stored in the local synagogue that the mayor referred to as "Jewish rags."[189] There is, therefore, substantial evidence that the 3rd Battalion was already involved in anti-Jewish measures on its own initiative before the visit of Werner Schönemann's *Einsatzkommando* 8 in September 1941.

Werner Schönemann, commander of *Teilkommando Schönemann* of *Einsatzkommando 8* was a thirty-year-old Berliner and Gestapo officer.[190] During his second semester of law school at the University of Berlin, he was ordered to Pretzsch where the *Einsatzgruppen* were assembling.[191] Here, he joined *Einsatzkommando* 8, whose task was the murder of the Jews of central Belarus. Schönemann was an intelligent, yet crude man who bragged of his sexual relationships and who sent an eleven-year-old "Aryan-looking"

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[188] "Erfahrungsbericht über die bisherigen Unternehmungen mit Panje- Spähtrupps, 13 Oct. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4/2), Anl. 117.

[189] "H., Erhard Statement, 17 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 499-500.

[190] EK 8 was assigned to *Einsatzgruppe B*, commanded by Arthur Nebe.

[191] Irene Sagel-Grande, H.H. Fuchs, and C. F. Rüter, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XX (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam,1979), 165-66. Schönemann returned to Berlin in October 1941 and resumed his law studies. He then served with *Einsatzkommando* 13 in Slovakia and was involved in killings of civilians there in connection with Slovakian partisan movements. After the war, he was briefly punished by the Austrians before fleeing the continent. He lived in Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Spain, and Switzerland before being arrested by the Germans in 1961.

Belarussian girl home to live with his parents in Berlin.[192] Yet in his work, he was cold, single-minded, and without compromise. He often began the shootings himself, jumping into the pits and firing the first shot "to set an example and to show that he did not shirk his duty."[193] He was not a sadist. Uncomfortable with his task of mass murder, he required that the killings take place very quickly and efficiently.[194] Schönemann appeared glad when killings were over, and was "on edge" and "hardly approachable" afterward.[195] Upon his return to Berlin in October 1941, he attempted suicide twice by slitting his wrists.[196] These suicide attempts might indicate his emotional state after prolonged participation in murder.

It was this enigmatic, yet effective killer who arrived at Major Johannes Waldow's headquarters in Krupki a few days before the massacre to make arrangements for support from the *Wehrmacht*. Understanding the nature of the negotiations and Schönemann's reception at battalion headquarters is the first step in both recreating and explaining the unit's participation in the Krupki massacre. The evidence seems to indicate that this was not the first time Waldow had worked with Schönemann. A memorandum from the *Einsatzkommando* leader reported on 5 August that due to reports of partisan attacks, he was making contact with the 286th Security Division…represented by a Major Waldow of the III Battalion.[197] The nature of their earlier meeting and collaboration is unclear but multiple

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[192] "L., Robert Statement 27 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 240.

[193] "K., Kurt, Statement 14 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 209.

[194] "K., Willy Statement 1 March 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3291), 268.

[195] "K., Kurt, Statement 14 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 210.

[196] Irene Sagel-Grande, H.H. Fuchs, and C. F. Rüter, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XX (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam,1979), 166.

[197] "Einsatzkommando 8 Report, 5 August 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 655-1-1).

testimonies by soldiers in the battalion headquarters help recreate the scene when the two met again in Krupki. Schönemann and another SS officer were met in the orderly room by Waldow and his adjutant, Lieutenant Werner Speth.

They then went into Waldow's office. Schönemann apparently informed the major of the planned killing of the Jews of Krupki and requested two companies for support.[198] Waldow himself testified that Schönemann revealed that he was there to kill the Jews but his group of only about twenty men was far too small to carry out the operation on its own. Waldow said he would not participate in any shootings, to which Schönemann replied that he would not have to supply shooters but merely provide security for the operation.[199] Schönemann also requested additional ammunition, which Waldow claimed to have refused. On his way out, Schönemann allegedly turned to Lieutenant Speth and said, "We have to carry out this unhappy task, shooting all the way to the Urals. As you can imagine, it's not pretty and one can bear it only with alcohol."[200] It is, perhaps, important to note here that the tendency of many accounts of first encounters with mass killing is to be apologetic and to allege reluctance and regret. The dilemma for the historian, of course, is to attempt to determine which cases of these responses are legitimate and which are fabricated. That the interviewee is testifying about a third party lends this account more credence as does the fact that Schönemann here is still not professing much moral resistance to his job, only that it is disagreeable.

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[198] Alternately, both Speth and Waldow claimed that they were only asked to support a "resettling" of the Jews. However, this is clearly a postwar attempt at avoiding responsibility (and is itself contradicted by Speth's later remembrance of his conversation with Schönemann).

[199] "Waldow, J. Statement, 28 January 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 186-87.

[200] "S., Werner Statement, 11 March 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 221.

Major Waldow, apparently still uncomfortable with this looming task, called regimental headquarters for clarification and perhaps to avoid participation. The regimental commander of the 354th, Colonel von Rekowski, was not available, but Waldow spoke to the regimental adjutant, Captain Meyer-Schöller.[201] Waldow asked whether he should participate, to which Meyer-Schöller replied, "Jawohl!" [definitely].[202] Lieutenant Speth provides a possible explanation for this decision, noting that "there was an order that Army units should support the SS."[203]

After the departure of the SS, preparations in the 3rd Battalion began in earnest. Waldow stated that he held a meeting with the company commanders where he informed them of the coming shooting and allegedly added that the individual soldier "was not to come into contact with Jewish civilians" or to "enter the wood where the killings would occur."[204] Sometime later that day the commanders of the 10th and 12th companies, First Lieutenants Braun and Liehr, met with their platoon leaders and passed on the order.

Likely the next day, Lieutenant Nick, a platoon leader in 12th company, ordered Corporal Franz M. to saddle two horses, and the two rode wordlessly out of town. After about half an hour, they arrived in a swampy open area near the Starozhevitsa River and the

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[201] Much postwar testimony revolves around whether or not Meyer-Schöller was actually the Regimental Adjutant at the time. He claimed to have already been the commander of the 11th Company and that another officer had taken over. The documents and testimony are not conclusive, but given Waldow and Speth's conviction that it was Meyer-Schöller it is likely that he was the adjutant. In any case, contrary to von Rekowski's statements, the most important conclusion here is that the 3rd Battalion's support of the *Einsatzgruppen* in this massacre was both known and condoned by its higher headquarters.

[202] "Waldow, J. Statement, 28 January 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 187.

[203] "S., Werner Statement, 11 March 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 221. SS, SD, and *Einsatzgruppen* are meant here. Himmler's pre-invasion agreement with the *Wehrmacht* specified logistic support, and in practice this seems to have been understood as manpower in addition to materiel.

[204] One company commander claimed not to have been notified at this meeting that the goal of the action was the shooting of the Jews. However, this is a common attempt at self-exculpation.

village of Lebedevo. After inspecting an existing trench two meters deep, where peat had been harvested earlier by the locals, the lieutenant remounted and the two rode back. He then turned to Franz and asked him to estimate the distance to the site, which he guessed was about 800m.[205] Lieutenant Nick had just selected the Krupki execution site. Clearly, Schönemann had left his new *Wehrmacht* partners with far more responsibility in preparing for the massacre than they cared to admit after the war. Certainly choosing a murder site far exceeded any planned cooperation between the Army and SD.

Early on the morning of 18 September 1941, the soldiers of the 10th and 12th companies assembled. They were told of the task ahead of them or had already been told the night before (as in the case of Lieutenant Kerker's 4th Platoon, 12th Company). "Men," Kerker had allegedly announced, "we have a serious task ahead of us tomorrow. Whoever doesn't trust himself to handle a sensitive and serious assignment does not need to be ashamed and can back out."[206] According to a soldier in headquarters, the Jews of Krupki had also been notified by the mayor the night before that they were going to be resettled in the morning.[207]

At first light, soldiers tasked with conducting the outer *Absperrung* or cordon took position outside of Krupki. They were told that no Jew was to be allowed to leave the village and that any who tried were to be shot.[208] Though no one admitted personally shooting, several soldiers remembered hearing isolated shots all morning. Paul W. recalled a fellow

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[205] "M., Franz Statement, 25 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 480-1.

[206] "K., Walter Statement, 11 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 165.

[207] "M., Richard Statement, 10 March 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 420.

[208] "L., Wilhelm Statement, 5 March 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 410.

soldier telling a Jewish man driving his cattle out of town to turn around.[209] The First Sergeant of 12th company, Hans H., heard from his men that night that "young Jewish women ran to the sentries begging for their lives and pleading that they were too young to be simply shot."[210]

After the cordon had been established around 7 that morning, Schönemann's *Teilkommando* of killers arrived in the small market square. One of his men remembered that Schönemann spoke briefly with a *Wehrmacht* officer and then said, "Let's get started."[211] As the mayor of Krupki rang a bell, the round up of the Jewish inhabitants of the town began.[212] Lieutenant Nick and a group of 15-20 volunteers reported to the SD men and began pulling Jews from their houses.[213] Slowly, the market square filled with people. They arrived in family groups with their belongings. They had been told to take only money and valuables, to leave their houses unlocked and surrender their keys to the mayor.[214] German soldiers guarded them in the square. Once the approximately 1,000 Jews of Krupki were assembled, an SS-man or possibly the mayor stood on a platform and read out a list of names.[215] This registration lasted around two hours, after which the Jews were formed into

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[209] "W., Paul Statement, 28 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 157.

[210] "H., Hans Statement, 10 March 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 228-9.

[211] "L., Robert Statement 27 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 235.

[212] "Schier, H. Statement, 1 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 351.

[213] "N., Hermann Statement, 18 March 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 234.

[214] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

[215] "H., Bruno Statement, 1 November 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q234/3548), 32, "K., Walter Statement, 9 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 532.

columns to be marched out of town. The elderly and infirm were roughly thrown onto waiting trucks and wagons supplied by the *Wehrmacht*.

In the late morning, the Jews began marching out of town along Sovetskaya Street, escorted by German Army soldiers. During the 45-minute walk, SS men *and* soldiers drove them on with rifle butts when they did not move fast enough. As they neared the execution site selected by Lieutenant Nick, soldier Bruno H. recalled that "someone told them they could throw away their things as they were going to be shot anyway. Some did this and the people became very agitated. Someone else then said that they had to take their things with them anyway."[216] The execution trenches were located in a field, bordered on the east by a swampy area and a forest. As the Jews arrived here, they understood what was to happen. As one soldier remembered, "many started to scream and cry. The SS-men beat them until order was restored."[217] Margarita Kosenkova was five years old and lived in the village of Lebedevo. She remembered that the "procession was peaceful but once they reached the pit they started to scream. There was an awful scream that they could hear in Lebedevo."[218] Walter K. who had escorted the toddler and its mother to the killing site observed a "panicked state among them, but the guards kept the Jews together."[219]

However, the 3rd Battalion's work was not yet complete. *Wehrmacht* soldiers were also responsible for guarding the execution site along with local Belorussian police while the SS shot. The *Einsatzgruppen* men selected groups of ten from the mass of Jews forced to sit or kneel in a meadow a short distance away. Erich S., in the *Absperrung,* watched as the

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[216] "H., Bruno Statement, 1 November 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q234/3548), 32-3.

[217] "M., Bruno Statement, 24 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 486.

[218] "Kosenkova, Margarita Interview, 8 July 2009," (Author's Personal Archive). Interpreter: Vadim Ovsyanik

[219] "K., Walter Statement, 11 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 165-6.

Jews approached the grave. He saw an SS man shouting, "Undress and give up your jewelry."[220] The Jews then removed their shoes and outer coats, throwing them onto a pile near the trench, and were forced to deposit their jewelry and watches in a nearby box.[221] S. continued, "finally, most of them were pushed into the pit because they were afraid to go on their own."[222] The brutality of the scene was so great that even the German court noted that the Jews "spent the time which separated them from death in agonizing fear and despair without any opportunity to escape their fate."[223]

Soldiers surrounding the graves watched as men, women, and children were forced to enter the pit, lay down on the bodies of those already shot, and then were themselves shot by a squad of SS men standing above.[224] The SS men, who were drinking as they worked, would hold babies up by their legs and then shoot them.[225] A local Belarussian bystander, Petr Bulakh, observed the killings. He was twelve at the time and was so shocked by what he saw that he spoke with a stutter for the rest of his life.[226] Schönemann explained the process in a bizarre attempt at appearing more humane. "I ordered," he said, "that each time, the next group would lay their heads on the backs of the previously shot people so that they wouldn't

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[220] "S., Erich Statement, 3 November 1966," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3547), 105.

[221] "R., Georg Statement, 25 January 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 103.

[222] "S., Erich Statement, 3 November 1966," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3547), 105.

[223] "Einstellungsverfügung ZSt Dortmund 45 Js 9/64 gg. Waldow u. A., 9 September 1969," (BA-ZS: B162/3911), 741.

[224] Some testimonies indicate victims were forced to enter the pit while others state that the victims were shot outside of the pit. Schönemann testified that they entered the pit so this is likely the most reliable explanation.

[225] "K., Erwin Statement, 21 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 269.

[226] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

touch the gunshot wounds [of the dead]. I must say frankly that I tried, under the circumstances, to find the relatively best method of shooting."[227] The soldiers had set up machine guns around the site to secure it. One witnessed several Jews stand up and attempt to run away, but they were beaten with clubs.[228] One who did escape was Maria Shpunt. She first attempted to convince the Germans that she and her baby were not Jewish. Apparently, she fell into the pit alive after the rest of her group was shot. When the shooters went to get the next group of victims, she crawled out and ran into the brush. Though the Germans (likely from the 3rd Battalion) shot at her, she managed to escape.[229] Watching all of this from a small rise were a collection of officers from the battalion, including the commander Waldow, adjutant Speth, and 10th company commander Lieutenant Braun.

While the participation of soldiers in most of the operation is well-documented, one area remains only dimly illuminated: participation in actual killing. It is likely that the battalion killed Jews attempting to escape both the town and the shooting site; moreover, it also appears that some of its soldiers participated in the pit shooting alongside Schönemann's SS men. Determining this kind of participation in the actual killing is difficult, as very few former soldiers are willing to discuss such participation. What is clear from the documents is that some men *did* shoot.

Testimony points to two ways in which Waldow's soldiers ended up shooting. The

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[227] "Schönemann, W. Statement, 5 April 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3291), 376-7. It is likely that this was a feeble effort to avoid the legal repercussions of having his actions deemed "cruel," namely that this would make him eligible for prosecution.

[228] "S., Erich Statement, 3 November 1966," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3547), 106.

[229] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

first comes from Heidenreich's diary. In it, he claimed that he volunteered for a special task. The lieutenant asked for "fifteen men with strong nerves." He accurately described the execution site and the rainy weather. Finally, he wrote that this group also shot Jews in the execution ditch.[230] Some soldier testimony supports this possibility. Herbert C. of 12th company testified that he was certain that "shootings were carried out by the 2nd Platoon led by Master Sergeant Schrade." Moreover, he continued, he had seen photographs taken by a sergeant in the company in which Schrade was seen pointing a pistol at a group of ten Jews kneeling before a ditch.[231] One soldier testified during his initial questioning that Schrade had indeed sought "fifteen men with strong nerves" the night before (though in later questioning, he said only that Schrade had sought volunteers; in any case, he did not admit participating in any shooting).[232] Perhaps, while not intending to provide the bulk of killers, Waldow had agreed to provide a "reserve" squad of men. This would explain the fifteen-man squad mentioned by Heidenreich and others which was identified the night before. Then, when time or ammunition dictated, this group was added to the pool of available shooters. There is no conclusive evidence in the postwar testimonies to support this; however, it is also the last thing to which most men would have admitted. It remains unclear whether this premeditated participation took place. The statement of one soldier leaves us wondering: he testified that a fellow company member "freely told me after the shootings

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[230] *True to Type: A Selection from Letters and Diaries of German Soldiers and Civilians Collected on the Soviet-German Front*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1945), 31.

[231] "C., Herbert Statement, 17 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 153. Some testimonies obscure the participation of Schrade's platoon by claiming that the "volunteers" were actually for an antipartisan operation and that Schrade's platoon was on such a mission the day of the execution. It is true that Schrade took only volunteers on his antipartisan patrols, but his platoon was in Krupki the day of the shooting, as confirmed by several men.

[232] "H., Bruno Statement, 15 January 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 378.

that he himself had shot several Jews at the grave. I did not have the impression that he did this unwillingly."[233]

Another possible scenario and one strongly supported by the evidence is that those soldiers tasked with the *Absperrung* (cordon) of the execution site were then included in the shooting in the course of the action. It appears that, perhaps as a result of Waldow's refusal to supply the *Teilkommando* with ammunition, Schönemann's men were running short of bullets, and *Wehrmacht* soldiers were then asked or ordered to assist with their rifles.[234] Another reason that the men of the 3rd battalion were included may have been to speed up the operation. Schönemann stated "it went incredibly fast, in order to avoid any delay, in the interest of both sides, the victims as well as those participating in the execution."[235] Certainly he did not have the victims' interests in mind, but he was, as noted previously, uncomfortable during these operations and wanted them to go as quickly as possible. In addition, the weather was deteriorating.[236] Storm clouds approached, and it had begun to rain. A member of the SS *Teilkommando* testified that "clouds appeared and a thunderstorm approached. Schönemann therefore had things proceed very quickly."[237] The battalion surgeon, Dr. Konrad G., reported that he and a platoon leader in 12th company, informed the adjutant, Lieutenant Speth, that 3rd Battalion soldiers were shooting Jews, in response to

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[233] "L., Reinhold Statement, 22 February 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 92.

[234] "L., Wilhelm Statement, 5 March 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 410, "S., Gustav Statement, 2 March 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 398, "G., Konrad Statement, 11 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 518-9.

[235] "Schönemann, W. Statement, 9 March 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/3277), 618.

[236] A soldier in the 9th Company, Friedrich Scholz, described the weather for the period as *Sauwetter* with strong wind and heavy rain. Scholz was related to a soldier in 10th company as well. He was killed on 27 December 1941. See "Friedrich Scholz Diary," (Author's Personal Collection). This diary, which ends in December 1941, was supplied to me by a family member.

[237] "L., Robert Statement 27 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 235.

which Speth allegedly became angry and replied that "the participation of *Wehrmacht* soldiers in the shooting had not been ordered."[238] In the final analysis, *Wehrmacht* soldiers in Krupki took a direct hand in the work of the *Einsatzgruppen,* either according to plan, in an improvised, ad hoc sort of way, or in a combination of both.

Around five in the afternoon, after the last Jew had been shot, Schönemann collected the victims' confiscated valuables and along with his men drove away. The grave was likely then strewn with lime and covered by local Soviet citizens.[239] Both here and in the town, the non-Jewish inhabitants took the possessions left behind by the Jews.[240] The soldiers who had been tasked with guarding the execution site marched back to the town, where the Jewish community of Krupki was no more. As the local men were covering the grave, they discovered twenty-one year old Sofia Shalaumova still alive. She had fallen into the trench unhurt and survived. She asked the laborer, whom she knew as an acquaintance, not to bury her alive, and he allowed her to escape.[241] Local civilians remembered that individual Jews caught in the area after the shooting were also shot.[242] Margarita Kosenkova visited the site soon after the killings with a group of other children from her village. "The ground was moving," she said, "and blood was coming out of the ground. For two years after, there was

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[238] "G., Konrad Statement, 11 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 519.

[239] "K., Erwin Statement, 21 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 269, "Waldow, J. Statement, 28 January 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 187.

[240] "S., Helmut Statement, 1 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 351.

[241] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

[242] Ibid.

blood there."[243]

Schönemann reported the killing to *Einsatzkommando* 8 and a month later the following summary appeared in the operational report of *Einsatzgruppe* B to Heinrich Himmler: "Two larger actions were carried out by the unit [*Einsatzkommando* 8] in Krupka and Sholopenitsche [sic]. In the first town 912 Jews were liquidated and in the second 822. With this, the Krupka region can be seen as *Judenfrei*."[244] The killings in Kholoponichi, which resulted in an additional 822 victims, had been supported by two platoons from the 10th Company.[245] A report from the 354th Regiment on the next day did not mention Krupki, nor did any other report from either the 3rd Battalion or the regiment.[246] The whole incident either had passed apparently without notice or was intentionally not reported in writing.

Explaining *Wehrmacht* Complicity: From Berlin to the Forest

The events in Krupki were the end result of both Nazi genocidal policy at the highest level and its negotiation and implementation at the lowest. Representing the bulk of the division's combat power, the 354th Infantry Regiment was assigned the most important task of protecting the vital logistical rail and road links behind Army Group Center. How, then, did the 3rd Battalion become so deeply involved in executing the racial policies of the Third

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[243] "Kosenkova, Margarita Interview, 8 July 2009," (Author's Personal Archive). Interpreter: Vadim Ovsyanik

[244] "Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 124, 25 October 1941," (USHMM: 1999.A.0196 (Reel 2)), 2-723043. The nearby town of Kholoponichi was also the site of a large mass shooting that was, again, supported by soldiers from the 3rd battalion.

[245] The Kholoponichi killings are less well-documented than Krupki. However, the 1st and 3rd platoons of the 10th Company appear to have assisted TK Schönemann's killers here as well. See for example: "S. Martin Statement, 9 January 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 365-6, "Nier, E. Statement ,23 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 494.

[246] "Tätigkeitsberichte Nr. 10 über den Einsatz des verst. IR 354 in der Zeit vom 4.9.-14.9.41, 19 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4), Anl. 95.

Reich on the ground?

The answer lies at many levels. One must begin with the Army High Command, which had agreed before the invasion to support the killing units. A November 1941 order from another division under Army Group Center (Rear) laid out the areas of responsibility of the various security organizations, including the SD (*Einsatzgruppen*). It identified as keywords for the SD: "Politically suspect civilians, Bolsheviks, Jews, and Gypsies" and under SD missions listed "Solution to the Jewish Question" and "the Gypsy Question."[247] In addition, the well-known "Guidelines for the Behavior of the Troops" demanded "ruthless and aggressive action against Bolshevik agitators, snipers, saboteurs, and Jews and tireless elimination of any active or passive resistance."[248]

The Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus played a vital role in spurring *Wehrmacht* participation in genocide. Coupled with the *Führerbefehl* of 14 May 1941, which suspended prosecution of *Wehrmacht* soldiers for any crimes committed against civilians in the Soviet Union, these high-level orders not only condoned, but encouraged brutal action against civilians in general and Jews in particular. In this calculus, all Jews were pro-Bolshevik, all Bolsheviks were partisans, and hence all Jews were partisans. (i.e. not all partisans and Bolsheviks were Jews but all Jews were Bolsheviks and partisans or sympathizers). Army Group Center (Rear) informed its units that "cooperation with the SD and GFP is to be made even closer in all actions by the divisions and their subordinate staffs….Requests for local operation of individual squads of SD *Einsatzkommandos* are to be submitted to the

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[247] "Merkblatt über Zuständigkeit, Unterstellung, und Aufgaben, 2 November 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-339-5), Anl. 13.

[248] "Richtlinien für das Verhalten der Truppe in Russland, 29 May 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-91), 33.

commander."[249] The support provided to the *Einsatzgruppen* can also be seen at the division level. In its summary for the period from September to December 1941, the intelligence section of the 286th Security Division (the 354th's parent unit) appeared happy to report that "constant contact was maintained with the Security Service, specifically the *Einsatzgruppe* of *Gruppenführer* Neumann, the *Einsatzkommando* 8 of *Sturmbannführer* Dr. Bratfisch [sic], and in particular with *Untersturmführer* Reschke's Orscha-based squad."[250] This statement hints at much more than merely a logistical relationship.

In addition to supporting the mobile killing squads, *Wehrmacht* organizational culture and that of Army Group Center Rear also propagated the message that Jews were a group distinct from the general civilian population, inferior and expendable. Jews were already targeted this way in the "Guidelines for the Behavior of the Troops." On 18 July, the same Division ordered "hostages (particularly Jews)" to be rounded up in reprisal for an attack on a German sentry and a messenger.[251] The 354th Infantry Regiment itself reported on 7 September that, in conjunction with a signal battalion, the entire Jewish population of Tschereja was killed in reprisal for an attack on German troops.[252]

Finally, all these factors combined under the aegis of the antipartisan war. In this calculus, all Jews were Bolsheviks and partisan supporters. Thus, the Jewish population was "militarized." That is, they were transformed into combatants (as partisans or partisan supporters) and thereby speciously deemed legitimate targets for military action. This type

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[249] "rHGM Korpsbefehl 55, 29 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 95.

[250] "286 SD Ic Tätigskeitbericht, Sep-Dec 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5). Neumann assumed command of EG B from Nebe in November of 1941.

[251] "221 SD order to FK 549, 18 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-12a), Anl. 381.

[252] "286 SD Memo: Vorgänge in Boguschewskoje, 7 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4), Anl. 88.

of broad targeting occurred in the 3rd Battalion. In the 354th Regiment's area of operations, little *real* antipartisan war was occurring. Personnel records indicate that, in the period from 22 June to 30 September, only 17 men were killed and 32 wounded in the entire division of 7,500.[253] It is likely, therefore, that the unit was involved in the far less dangerous task of rounding up bypassed Red Army soldiers, communists and, perhaps, Jews. One soldier remembered, "We often carried out so-called raids, mostly at night. The resident Jews would be rounded up and assembled in the town. After they were assembled, a site would be chosen in the surrounding woods and they would be shot. Sometimes non-Jews would be taken along to dig the graves and they took the Jews' possessions with them."[254] Major Waldow's selection as a speaker and trainer at a corps-level antipartisan conference in Mogilev a week after the Krupki massacre is evidence that the actions of his battalion in supporting the action there were in no way condemned by his superiors, but on the contrary were viewed as an accomplishment that qualified him for special assignment.

In addition to the overall policies ordained from above, the local geography and conditions on the ground as well as the military situation led to the battalion's participation in this massacre. Because Krupki was located on the main artery between Minsk and Mogilev, it likely served as a small center for trading and commerce and this would explain the large Jewish population. For the same reasons, it was an excellent base of operations for securing 3rd Battalion's stretch of road, given its access to the highway and the buildings available to house soldiers. Finally, Krupki's location likely ensured that it was a target of the *Einsatzgruppen* before more distant, out of the way places. Thus, while later Jewish

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[253] "286 SD Personnel Report," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5).

[254] "M., Richard Statement, 2 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 136.

"actions" would be coordinated with civilian authorities, *Ortskommandanturen*, and local militias, the Krupki action was a relatively early action carried out with only the first units to arrive.

Why did Major Waldow agree to allow his battalion to participate to such a degree? It is possible that he was reluctant to provide his soldiers as firing squads, at least in the initial meeting. He did call his regimental headquarters for clarification on whether he should assist Schönemann. It is unclear whether this was a result of his objection to *any* participation or merely his desire to have the action approved by his superiors. It is probably the former, as little evidence exists to suggest that Waldow was an extreme antisemite or pushed for the action on his own initiative. One cannot necessarily, however, assume that his objections were based on any moral grounds. No evidence exists explaining his reluctance except that he found the whole thing distasteful. He stated during his questioning that "my concern was to avoid members of the battalion coming into immediate contact with the Jewish inhabitants of Krupki or the SD."[255] Such concerns that the killing of women and children was a dirty job and not the mission of the regular Army were common but did not necessarily represent disagreement with the policy itself. In any case, these reservations did not prevent him from fully assisting *Teilkommando* Schönemann, down to choosing the execution site for them. Finally, there is evidence that Krupki was not the first time he had worked with *Einsatzkommando* 8. A report from Schönemann to Army Group Center (Rear) noted that he had made contact with Major Waldow regarding antipartisan operations on 8 August.[256] In any case, his support was vital, for the 10-20 men of the *Teilkommando* could

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[255] "Waldow, J. Statement, 10 February 1969," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3549), 65.

[256] "Einsatzkommando 8 Report, 5 August 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 655-1-1), 40.

never have carried out such a large action without the manpower of the Army.

Among the Living and the Dead: Local Experiences of the Krupki Killing

> I want to mention here that those in the *Absperrung* were so depressed that evening that they wouldn't eat anything. I had to really persuade them that they had to eat. I added, "Eat, men. Don't worry about it because there are many atrocities in war. We are not responsible for it."
> - Lieutenant Hermann Nick, platoon leader, 12th Company[257]

> I didn't want to witness this. I was married then and had four children. I remember clearly that I thought of my family and felt that the imminent events were wrong. I simply couldn't witness the shooting of these people. I went then to Lieutenant Mangelsdorf and told him he should release me from any further escorting of Jews to the shooting site. I know I told him I couldn't watch it because I had four children at home. Mangelsdorf told me I could go and do guard duty.
> - Martin S., soldier, 10th Company[258]

As we have seen, the majority of *Wehrmacht* soldiers participating in the Krupki "action" were not volunteers. How then did they approach this experience and what does their experience and that of the victims tell us about such killings? We may start with their knowledge of the intent of the operation. Did these men realize that their actions were directly responsible for the murder of a thousand human beings?

Naturally, most soldiers claimed to have had no idea that they were participating in the killing of the Jews, that they thought the Jews were to be deported to labor camps. This must be, for the most part, a postwar construction. Waldow and the company commanders certainly knew that the Jews were to be shot. It is almost certain that they passed this information on to their soldiers. In any case, a sufficient number of soldiers confessed knowledge of the real goal to cast serious doubt on any claims of ignorance. For example, Erich J. described a conversation with a fellow soldier on the day of the shooting. "The stated

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[257] "N., Hermann Statement, 18 March 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 237.

[258] "S., Martin Statement, 29 March 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 113.

reason for the registration was only a pretext," he admitted, "from the way the conversation went it was clear to me that the Jews would be shot."[259] Another soldier, recalling executions of Jews the unit had already witnessed in Minsk, said it was obvious these Jews were to be "liquidated" too.[260] Finally, Sergeant Paul D. related: "Supposedly we knew that these Jews were to be resettled. However, all *Wehrmacht* members, including me, would have known that these people were going to their deaths."[261]

Why, then, out of 130 former officers and soldiers questioned after the war, did only Private First Class Martin S. testify later to refusing to participate and requesting a different assignment?[262] There are several explanations. First, many soldiers saw no way out or perhaps did not realize the full meaning of their participation until they were committed. Corporal Paul L.'s statement is typical: "In this moment, it was clear to me that the Jews I was escorting would be shot and I had no further task. I would have not been able to change anything."[263] Another said, "I didn't dare do or say anything because I was only a simple soldier and couldn't have changed anything."[264] Many refer to their station as "simple soldiers." Others refer to military discipline and orders. For example, Bruno H. stated, "when I am told that at the latest I must have known at the execution site that the civilians

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[259] "J., Erich Statement, 26 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 475.

[260] "S. Martin Statement, 9 January 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 364.

[261] "D., Paul Statement, 23 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 274-5.

[262] The 10th Company commander also reported calling Major Waldow and requesting to be released from the order to support the execution. It is possible that this occurred. However, as a commander, First Lieutenant Braun, was much more vulnerable to a charge himself and, therefore, more likely to invent some form of reluctance or resistance. In addition, Waldow does not corroborate this phone call. Finally, Lieutenant Braun 's presence at the execution site does not support his discomfort with the mission. "B., Paul Statement, 17 September 1968," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 37.

[263] "L., Paul Statement, 18 April 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 146-7.

[264] "S., Erich Statement, 3 November 1966," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3547), 106.

were to be shot and that it had nothing to do with war, this is true. I didn't have the courage at the time to do anything against it or to refuse the order because I certainly had to count on being shot myself."[265] Such statements are certainly in part a result of the postwar situation of the witness and the ubiquitous "obedience to orders" excuse, but there is also likely an element of truth in them. The men of the 3rd Battalion were not experienced in these sorts of mass killings and perhaps had not discovered the methods of evasion and refusal that other soldiers would later use.

Secondly, as Omer Bartov notes, "the strict obedience demanded from the troops, and the draconian punishments meted to offenders, doubtlessly played a major role in maintaining unit cohesion under the most adverse combat conditions."[266] Though this was *not* a combat environment, the argument likely holds. While it was probably clear to most that soldiers would not be shot on the spot, the specter of other types of punishment was undoubtedly present. Some men describe a fear that the SS men would shoot them for refusing to participate. This, too, was highly unlikely. German units (of any ilk) simply did not shoot each other out of hand, especially when the offender was not even a member of the unit. However, military culture functions by necessity under increased disciplinary pressure and, for some, this pressure may have been enough to mute any evasion, especially as, unlike in later situations, those opposed to such participation had not yet discovered successful ways to evade.

Lastly, the division of labor provided some psychological protection for these men. First, the tactics involved were almost identical to those employed against partisans in terms

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[265] "H., Bruno Statement, 1 November 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q234/3548), 34.

[266] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army : Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 59.

of surrounding towns and identifying suspicious persons. This "tactical muscle memory" may have allowed some soldiers to tell themselves that this operation was no different than previous operations of which they had been a part. Except for those who may have actually been shooting, soldiers could claim (both to themselves at the time and after the war) that they had not *actually* participated in the shooting. As one man stated after the war, "We merely had to carry out the *Absperrung*. At this time, we didn't know what was actually going on."[267] As we have seen, it is highly unlikely that many soldiers would not have known what they were enabling. However, such separation of tasks likely allowed some of them to believe or convince themselves that they were not assisting murder. The dichotomy is particularly clear in the following statement: "We soldiers were merely employed in the *Absperrung*….We had nothing to do with the killings."[268] Soldiers attempted to consciously divorce their actions from the whole, to intentionally avoid acknowledging that their participation was directly connected with the final killing step. Former corporal L. told police, "I could not have changed anything. In answer to your question, I must say that as a result I found myself in no moral conflict…I am therefore not aware of being guilty of anything."[269] One is forced to wonder here whether L. is protesting too much and whether he is telling this more to himself than to his interrogators.

However, if some soldiers were reluctant participants swept up in the operation, others were very willing. We have already seen that volunteers were sought and found for the more distasteful duty of rounding up the Jews from their houses and possibly for

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[267] "K., Erwin Statement, 21 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 269.

[268] "M., Bruno Statement, 8 September 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 49.

[269] "L., Paul Statement, 18 April 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 145-46.

shooting. There were soldiers in the unit whose antisemitism made these killings welcome. Private Reinhold Le. recalls that one soldier aimed his rifle at a Jewish girl "for fun" a few days before the execution.[270] Certainly men such as this were not uncommon, but the testimonies do not contain many references to them. However, witnesses do describe two junior officers who stood out as *Draufgänger* or go-getters of two different varieties and who likely had their counterparts among the non-commissioned officers and men.

The first was Master Sergeant Schrade, who led the 2nd platoon in 12th company. He was described by one soldier as "an arrogant person (*Windhund*)" who "didn't have any time for his people."[271] He often led "partisan hunts" and "always had 'his' people who went with him."[272] Schrade used volunteers for these missions, which he conducted often in civilian clothes. As mentioned, he published a treatise on small-unit antipartisan tactics that was disseminated throughout Army Group Center (Rear). Clearly, he was an active and avid fighter. But what of his participation in anti-Jewish actions? Heidenreich was apparently in Schrade's platoon, and another 2nd Platoon soldier supported his contention that it was Schrade who sought the fifteen men with "strong nerves." He was also placed at the execution site by several witnesses. It appears that Schrade was certainly a dedicated soldier and an ambitious leader. He may have been involved in anti-Jewish shootings during his partisan patrols and during the execution. In any case, he ranks high as a likely suspect in the commission of *Wehrmacht* atrocities against Jews.[273]

Another platoon leader in 12th company was noted for his extremity as well. While

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[270] "L., Reinhold Statement, 26 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 284.

[271] "C., Herbert Statement, 17 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 154.

[272] "S., Walter Statement, 24 November 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 317.

[273] Schrade did not survive the war so no testimony from him exists.

Master Sergeant Schrade appears as a diehard and zealous soldier, Lieutenant Hermann Nick is remembered more as a brutal and fanatical man. He was "unpopular with all the soldiers because of his ruthless behavior. He tormented those who gave him any opportunity."[274] One of his soldiers recalled that during one antipartisan operation, Nick had approximately twenty-thirty men pulled from their houses and shot on the spot, allegedly because shots had been fired from the village the day prior.[275] Sometime after the Krupki shooting, he tortured a local mayor for information regarding partisans by first repeatedly hanging him from a balcony and then forcing him into a freezing lake until he talked.[276] On a different operation, the lieutenant allegedly burned down a house with a woman in it who was suspected of sheltering partisans. He and his men watched as the house burned to the ground with the woman inside, at the window.[277] Finally, one soldier reported that he had personally seen Nick shoot five or six children who peeled potatoes in the kitchen for extra food.[278] It is probably no coincidence that it was Lieutenant Nick who found the execution site and who was one of those responsible for the *Absperrung* there; he likely participated in attacks on Jews as well.

Unlike the *Einsatzgruppen* unit that swooped into a town, conducted its killings, and left, the 3rd Battalion had been present in Krupki for over a month before the killings. This unit had, regardless of Major Waldow's intentions, some contact with the civilian population

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[274] "S., Fritz Statement, 5 August 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 569.

[275] "L., Richard Statement, 9 December 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 131. It is worthwhile noting that even under the already harsh guidelines for the treatment of civilians, reprisals could only be ordered by battalion commanders.

[276] "K., Erwin Statement, 10 November 1966," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q234-3547), 124.

[277] Ibid., 125.

[278] "S., Fritz Statement, 5 August 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 569.

including the Jews. The speed of the German advance, arriving only six days after the invasion, ensured that most of the town's Jews were trapped under German occupation. A ghetto had already been established in July for approximately 1,000 Jews, but likely was not closed or guarded.[279]

Like *Wehrmacht* units elsewhere, the 3rd Battalion used Jews as forced labor for various tasks. One lieutenant recalled that they were used for repair work.[280] However, most soldiers particularly remembered the Jewish girls who were "employed" as maids or janitors in the headquarters or barracks. Daily contact with these Jewish women likely bred familiarity, for it is almost exclusively these women who represented the victims in the minds of the perpetrators.[281]

A clerk in the 10th Company related the following encounter. On the morning of the execution, he looked on as a twenty-year-old Jewish girl stepped outside to empty the trash. A Soviet civilian appeared and gruffly spoke to the girl. He concluded, "the girl was very frightened and returned to Krupka. I thought to myself that this girl would now certainly be shot."[282] Yet, the clerk apparently did nothing to prevent this. A private on battalion staff recalled watching two twenty-year-old girls who cleaned for them leaving the village to be shot.[283] He, too, did nothing.

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[279] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

[280] "F., Gunther Statement, 10 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 526.

[281] Very few Jews survived the September 18 Action. Thus, practically the entirety of what we know of their experiences comes from German soldier postwar testimony.

[282] "J., Erich Statement, 26 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 476.

[283] "L., Helmut Statement, 25 July 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 591.

The battalion ordnance officer, Lieutenant Werner Koschwitz, told investigators that Major Waldow lived in the house of a Jewish pharmacist.[284] Waldow's orderly testified that the major had tried to convince the pharmacist to escape because he would be shot the next day. However, the man apparently refused and was likely killed along with the rest.[285] This incident adds more to our understanding of Waldow himself. He appears to have been a man with reservations about killing Jews, willing to warn those with whom he had personal contact, but, as an officer, prepared to fully cooperate with the killing when it was asked of him.

Familiarity did not always breed empathy, however. It also bred contempt. As mentioned earlier, one soldier pointed his rifle at a Jewish girl apparently in an attempt to frighten her. According to the witness, the girl told this soldier, "Go ahead and shoot! Whether today or tomorrow, doesn't matter to me."[286] The witness concluded from this that she knew of the impending execution. Two weeks after the killing, a soldier in 9th company wrote in his diary: "The local Russian police brought us bacon which the Jews had set aside. These Jews were shot. There the mayor had them annihilated."[287]

Perhaps the most intriguing and most puzzling of the interactions these men had with their victims concerns a Jewish opera singer from Minsk. This woman was shot along with the others. She appears to have been well known amongst the 3rd Battalion soldiers. When speaking with an eyewitness of the executions, Sergeant Erwin K. asked whether all the Jews

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[284] "Koschwitz, W. Statement, 13 June 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 641.

[285] "M., Richard Statement, 12 January 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q124/3548), 44, "M., Richard Statement, 10 March 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 420.

[286] "L., Reinhold Statement, 26 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 284.

[287] "Friedrich Scholz Diary," (Author's Personal Collection).

had been shot, even the pretty women. The other soldier replied, "Yes, all shot. Also, the singer from Minsk."[288] Another soldier, asking about the fate of the cleaning women, was told that a girl from the theater, who was "pretty as a picture" was also shot.[289] It is even more unexpected that two SS members of the *Teilkommando* also remembered that this opera singer had been among those murdered.[290]

What is the significance of this woman in the memory of the perpetrators? Who was she? Why was she so well known (and so well remembered)? Unfortunately, the story of this opera singer from Minsk raises more questions than answers. It is likely that she fled Minsk, perhaps because she had relatives in Krupki. It is possible that she even performed for the soldiers in Krupki. It is doubtful that the Germans became aware of her only on the day of the shooting. Moreover, how did the SS find out about her? Did the soldiers tell them? If so, under what circumstances? It could be that women in general figure so highly in soldiers' memories because they highlighted most clearly the extreme nature of this action. In any case, the opera singer from Minsk reminds us both of the individual lives and stories that came to an end in Krupki and that to these men, their victims were not necessarily faceless or nameless but were killed all the same.

Endgame

> Trying to conceal the vestiges of their crimes, German thugs burned the bodies of killed Jews before retreating. Burnings were carried out with the involvement of arrested Soviet citizens who were brought from prison in Borisov. They were also burnt afterwards. I can't give you the exact number of bodies burnt, but the number of Jews was about 2,000.
>
> - Vladimir Antonovich Baranchik, Belorussian inhabitant of Krupki, 28

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[288] "K., Erwin Statement, 21 October 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3875), 507.

[289] "J., Erich Statement, 26 May 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 476.

[290] "K., Kurt, Statement 14 February 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3290), 214, "K., Willy Statement 1 March 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3291), 266.

December 1945[291]

> I am hearing today for the first time that, in the fall of 1941, the Jewish population of Krupki was rounded up and escorted, with the assistance of the 3rd Battalion, to an execution site where they were then shot.
>
> - Colonel Siegfried von Rekowski, commander of the 354th Infantry Regiment, 30 March 1967[292]

In the fall of 1943, an SS-Lieutenant Müller in Minsk began preparing cards listing locations of mass killings in occupied Belarus.[293] These lists were then handed over to *Sonderkommando* 1005, a unit whose task was eradicating the evidence of Nazi crimes before the Red Army re-captured the territory. In Krupki, as elsewhere, Soviet prisoners were forced to dig up corpses and burn them. Margarita Kosenkova remembered that the "smell was terrible and the villagers saw [the burning operation] from the roofs of their houses."[294] The Red Army entered the town on 28 June 1944.[295] As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the crimes of the "fascist occupiers" including the murder of the Jews of Krupki was uncovered.

Major Waldow had taken command of the 354th Infantry Regiment by November 1941 and on 11 December the entire Regiment was transferred along with all the other infantry regiments in Army Group Center (Rear) to the 221st Security Division and thereby

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[291] "Baranchik, V. Statement, 28 December 1945," (BStA- Minsk: 1363-1-1919), 23b.

[292] "von Rekowski, S. Statement, 30 March 1967," (LA-NRW: Münster: Q234/3548), 119.

[293] Schmuel Spector, "Aktion 1005--Effacing the Murder of Millions," *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 5, no. 2 (1990): 164.

[294] "Kosenkova, Margarita Interview, 8 July 2009," (Author's Personal Archive). Interpreter: Vadim Ovsyanik

[295] Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, "The Untold Stories: The Murder Sites of The Jews in the Occupied Territories of the Former USSR," http://www1.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/krupki/Krupki.html.

became part of the reserves for the 2nd Panzer Army.[296] Shortly thereafter, it found itself in bitter winter combat against a major Soviet counter-offensive which began on 6 December 1941. Between then and the end of March 1942, Army Group Center had sustained over 700,000 casualties.[297] By January 25th, for example, 2nd Battalion, made up of the 5th and 7th companies, had to be consolidated into one company (between 100 and 200 men) led by a lieutenant and with one lieutenant transferred from another unit. The two companies had lost 99 men killed, wounded, or missing. A further 26 were too sick or frostbitten to continue. Among the casualties were five officers. The battalion supply trains had been largely "shot to pieces" on 24 December 1941.[298] Comparing these losses in less than a month to a total of 18 killed and 50 wounded (of whom 22 were not evacuated) between June and December of 1941 starkly demonstrates the difference between killing innocent civilians and actual combat.[299]

The Krupki killing site is little changed today, a large meadow on the edge of an evergreen forest sloping gently down to a marsh alongside the Starozhevitsa River. It lies off a gravel road running north of the town and across the highway, likely the same road that the Jews were forced down in 1941. Still visible are the remnants of the peat pits and excavations. In 1969, a memorial was constructed at the site, funded by relatives of the

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[296] "286 SD Div. Sonderbefehl, 23 November 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4), Anl. 141, "rHGM Korpsbefehl Nr. 74, 11 December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 233.

[297] Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts : A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991*, vol. 2 (Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland, 1991), 819.

[298] "Verluste der ausserhalb der Division eingesetzten Einheiten, 21 January 1942," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5).

[299] "286 SD Personnel Reports, 22 June- 31 December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5).

murdered.[300] However, because the Soviet authorities would not allow any mention of Jews in order to minimize any specially Jewish suffering, the inscription reads only "buried here are 1,975 peaceful Soviet citizens, brutally murdered by the German Fascist occupants, September 18, 1941." A few trees have been planted around the monument. It is a humble memorial, but the grass is kept trimmed as is the meadow where the Jews were assembled. The Belarussians throughout the region seem to quietly remember their Jewish neighbors by maintaining execution sites and even Jewish cemeteries.

The investigation of the Krupki killing gives us a window into another Holocaust. The sterile numbers in the *Einsatzgruppen* Reports return to real places and re-form into real lives destroyed. It also corrects a prevalent depiction of these killings as routine and without incident. On the contrary, we see that horrible scenes of misery, brutality, and sadism occurred on an intimately personal level. The victims did not go quietly to the pits, resigned to their fates; they cried, they screamed, they pleaded. And the German Army was there—guarding, escorting, and also shooting.

Here, in Krupki, one sees the end product of the high-level staff coordination and promises of support and cooperation between the *Einsatzgruppen* and the *Wehrmacht*. This was not just an agreement on paper, but one that on the ground resulted in German soldiers loading sick people onto trucks to be killed, guarding them in their last moments, and, in some cases, killing innocent men, women, and children themselves. *Wehrmacht* collusion in the Holocaust has often been described as haphazard rather than systematic and of secondary rather than of primary importance. Yet, Krupki shows how incredibly important this

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[300] "Krupki," entry by Leonid Smilovitsky for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, vol. 2 *German-Run Ghettos*, ed. Martin Dean (forthcoming, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

participation actually was and how coordinated it was, even in the early stages. Regardless of how the soldiers viewed their part, the Army was essential in the murder of this community and provided the manpower, the force, and the intimidation that allowed a small group of SS shooters to kill 1,000 people. Moreover, as this and other cases show, the soldiers of the German Army did not remain aloof but instead pulled triggers themselves.

There was an afterlife to the Krupki massacre. Just one week after the massacre, Major Waldow traveled to the regional capital of Mogilev to participate in a conference on the antipartisan war in the *rHGM*. He brought with him the lessons of his collusion with the *Einsatzgruppen*. Along with other officers, he would share these experiences as the *Wehrmacht* codified its role in the anti-Jewish policy and deliberately began to target Jews. In this way, the lessons learned by Major Waldow became part of the blueprint for future *Wehrmacht* collusion in the Holocaust by bullets. It is to this conference that we now turn.

IV. Exhortation, Clarification, Execution- The Mogilev Conference and *Wehrmacht* Targeting of Jews

Introduction: From Conference Table to Execution Pit

> In October 1941, it was said that the Jews of this town were to be liquidated. Because they did things with the partisans. Who said this first, I can't say. It spread by word of mouth.
>
> - Sergeant Leopold W., 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment[301]

On October 10, 1941, the soldiers of the 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment were uneasy because the task ahead of them was something new: they were to kill the entire Jewish population of Krucha, a village in central Belarus.[302] A few hours later, Private Wilhelm Magel stood with another soldier in front of four Jewish women and an old man with a long white beard. The company First Sergeant, Emil Zimber, ordered the Jews to turn away from the shooters, but they remained facing the German soldiers. Zimber gave the order to fire but Magel and his colleague, a former divinity student balked, intentionally missing their targets. They requested to be relieved from the execution detail and were assigned to guard the remaining Jews waiting in the village square.[303] This German Army unit without assistance of any other organization murdered a minimum of 150 Jewish men, women, and children as a result of an antipartisan conference that had taken place over a

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[301] "W., Leopold Statement, 29 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 326.

[302] The 691st Infantry Regiment was part of the 339th Infantry Division, a regular infantry unit.

[303] "M., Wilhelm Statement, 8 August 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 172.

week earlier at the headquarters of Army Group Center (Rear) in Mogilev.[304] Two officers from the 1st Battalion (of which 3rd Company was a part) had returned from this conference with the message "where there is a Jew, there is a partisan." A week later, the battalion commander, Major Alfred Commichau, ordered that all Jews in his area of control be killed.

The Mogilev Conference offers us the rare opportunity to investigate the relationship between the antipartisan war and the *Wehrmacht's* participation in the Holocaust on the ground. This little-studied conference was an important turning point in the *Wehrmacht*'s participation in the Holocaust, at least in Belarus. The evidence strongly suggests that, at least in Army Group Center (Rear) or *rückwärtige Heeresgebiet Mitte (rHGM)*, the antipartisan war was used as a vehicle (and a willing vehicle) by which to enlist greater support from the *Wehrmacht* in executing Nazi genocidal policy. Jews were added to an approved list of enemies to be systematically eliminated. This chapter will examine how the Mogilev Conference accomplished this expansion of *Wehrmacht* responsibility into genocide and present evidence of its increased complicity in the murder of Jews throughout *rHGM* and Belarus.

As explained earlier, *Wehrmacht* complicity in the Holocaust occurred in the context of a military campaign and of long term cultural and organizational inputs such as latent antisemitism, military discipline, and social-psychological pressures. The intent of this chapter is not to discount these long-term contextual factors, but to investigate how the antipartisan war and the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan construct were used to more fully incorporate the Wehrmacht into the Nazi genocidal project.[305] Many historians have noted

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[304] This area encompassed most of modern-day Belarus.

[305] For an excellent summary of recent historiography in this area, see: Ben Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht, the War of Extermination, and Beyond," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 02 (2009). For more on the antipartisan

and stressed the connection between the antipartisan war and the killing of Jews. However, what is less clear is how this argument was instrumentalized at the unit level, that is, how it influenced behavior on the ground. The nature of the partisan threat was intentionally mobilized to provide useful ideological, psychological, and tactical expedients with which to bring the substantial manpower of the *Wehrmacht* to bear against the Jews. The Mogilev Conference, which has not received much treatment historically, is a very significant event in this regard.[306] It is evidence of an intentional effort to include the *Wehrmacht* in the Holocaust.

The Mogilev Antipartisan Conference, 24-26 September 1941

The town of Mogilev is a provincial capital, located on the Dnieper River in eastern Belarus. Founded in the 13th century, the city functioned mainly as a center for commerce between Russia and Western Europe.[307] The Germans entered the largely destroyed city on 26 July after almost a month of stiff resistance. On 7 September, the staff of *rHGM* set up the corps headquarters in the city.[308] The *Wehrmacht* quickly conquered the wooded and swampy region, advancing over 280 miles from Warsaw to Minsk in less than two weeks.

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connection and killings of Jews, see Truman Anderson, "Incident at Baranivka: German Reprisals and the Soviet Partisan Movement in Ukraine, October-December 1941," *The Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 3 (1999), Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East : The German Army and Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht : Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), Theo J. Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

[306] This conference is not unknown to historians. Indeed, it has often been mentioned in passing or briefly summarized. However, a detailed analysis and discussion of the consequences of this meeting has not yet been conducted. For some (but certainly not all) previous citations of this conference, see Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

[307] Jan Zaprudnik, *Historical Dictionary of Belarus* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 152.

[308] "rHGM Stabsbefehl 56, 6 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 29-30.

While the armored spearhead rushed forward, infantry units followed more slowly behind to reduce the huge pockets of encircled Red Army units. However, given the sheer numbers of soldiers involved, large groups of *versprengte* (dispersed or bypassed) Red Army soldiers remained at large in the countryside.

While most of these groups were leaderless and probably seeking either to return to Soviet lines or simply to their civilian lives, some armed groups carried out minor attacks on German infrastructure and units. The popular image of the partisan movement, however, is the 1943-44 experience of substantial units of agile, vicious, well-armed, and well-organized guerillas harrying German troops in the snows of Russia. The effectiveness of the partisans in German rear areas is still under debate; only now can much of the triumphalist Soviet historiography of the partisan effort be more evenly evaluated. Certainly, as time passed the partisan movement had increasingly greater impact on the German war effort by tying down troops, destroying communications, and interrupting logistics efforts. Though Russia had a history of effective partisan units such as the Cossacks, Stalin's prewar refusal to countenance any thought of combat behind the lines left the Soviet Union woefully unprepared for the occupation of its territory. In the summer of 1941, large-scale, organized partisan resistance had not yet developed, and only fifteen regular or security divisions were employed in the rear areas out of 100+ divisions fighting the Red Army.[309] Even by October 1943, of 2.6 million men on the Eastern front, only 100,000 were concerned with security

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[309] Leonid D. Grenkevich and David M. Glantz, *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944 : A Critical Historiographical Analysis* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 323. Grenkevich argues that almost 10% of German forces were arrayed against the partisans, even in 1941. Notwithstanding that all units stationed behind the front were not fighting partisans, the dubious quality of Security divisions and police units in fighting a conventional war likely minimizes the overall effects of their absence from the front. By the summer of 1942-43, however, the partisan units in Belarus became far more deadly, controlled large amounts of territory, and certainly had a negative effect on the German war effort.

behind the lines, and this can be seen as an indication of the relative threat level the partisans posed, even at their most dangerous.[310] One historian goes so far as to argue that the "fragmented and largely unpopular partisan movement posed no major threat to the German occupation" through the end of 1941.[311]

In the summer and fall of 1941, the partisan organization and combat ability remained "rudimentary at best" as the rapid advance of German forces occupied large amounts of territory, leaving little time to organize.[312] The effect was that, in the vast areas of occupied Soviet territory hundreds of miles behind the front lines, resistance was at first left to spontaneous and scattered groups of NKVD, die-hard Communists, so-called "destruction battalions," and dispersed Red Army soldiers willing to carry on a fifth column war in the enemy rear. Indeed, at this point in the campaign, one can reasonably argue as Hannes Heer does for an "antipartisan war without partisans."[313]

Thus, the actual partisan threat in *rHGM* was still low in the summer and fall of 1941, which makes both the *Wehrmacht* paranoia about it and the use of the civilian "danger" as a cover for more direct genocidal policies more apparent. In July 1941, for example, *rHGM* already warned of "partisan detachments" and ordered that they and any civilians supporting them be treated as *freischärlers*, that is, summarily executed.[314] However, German casualty

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[310] Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire : How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 144.

[311] Timothy P. Mulligan, "Reckoning the Cost of People's War: The German Experience in the Central USSR," *Russian History* 9 (1982): 31.

[312] Leonid D. Grenkevich and David M. Glantz, *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944 : A Critical Historiographical Analysis* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 71.

[313] Hannes Heer, "The Logic of the War of Extermination: The Wehrmacht and the Anti-Partisan War," in *War of Extermination : The German Military in World War Ii, 1941-1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 97.

[314] "rHGM Memo: Partisanenabt. Der Sowjets, 26 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-224).

figures do not support the depiction of a lethal partisan movement. *rHGM* reported a total of 1,993 German soldiers killed in the period between June 1941 and March 1942, which equates to 200 soldiers a month.[315] The 286th Security Division in the same area recorded a total of 18 killed between June and December of 1941, out of an average strength of 5,700.[316] Yet from August through December, the same division reported 598 enemy combatants killed in action and 8,131 prisoners taken. This works out to roughly 30 partisans killed for every German and one German killed for every 451 prisoners taken. These casualties hardly indicate a vibrant and dangerous insurgency.[317] Ratios such as these would be extraordinary for actual combat, let alone for fighting against an elusive enemy like the partisans. This begs the question, who were the Germans fighting? Along with bypassed soldiers and questionably suspect civilians, unarmed civilian Jews were killed as well.

Implicit in the killing in the summer and fall of 1941, especially on Soviet territory, was the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus. In this formulation, all Jews were Bolsheviks, all Bolsheviks were partisans (or at the very least supporters of partisans), and thus, all Jews were also partisans or partisan supporters. This formula is important in explaining the murder of Jews under the guise of the antipartisan war. The Jew-Bolshevik conflation was a well-worn trope of Nazi propaganda. However, its extension to partisans was something

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[315] Timothy P. Mulligan, "Reckoning the Cost of People's War: The German Experience in the Central USSR," *Russian History* 9 (1982): 32.

[316] "286 SD Personnel Reports, 22 June- 31 December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5). This is out of an average strength of 5700 men. Compare this, for example, with the 78th Infantry Division which suffered 255 killed in action on July 22nd alone in the battle for Mogilev. See "78 Id Casualty Charts, June- December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-78-27).

[317] For a more extreme case, consider the 707th Infantry Division in Western Belarus which reported 10,940 prisoners shot while losing two Germans killed and five wounded in October 1941. Jürgen Förster, "The Wehrmacht and the War of Extermination against the Soviet Union," *Yad Vashem Studies* 14 (1981): 32. In addition, these ratios skyrocket when one adds all reported enemy casualties to all reported German casualties. For a nicely detailed discussion of these issues, see Timothy P. Mulligan, "Reckoning the Cost of People's War: The German Experience in the Central USSR," *Russian History* 9 (1982).

newer. Indeed, this construction had been used by many Russians themselves during the Russian Civil war to justify violence against Jews.[318] Emphasizing the communist and "enemy" nature of Jews likely helped activate in the *Wehrmacht* a greater support for genocidal policy based on latent anti-communist feeling and the appearance of a legitimate military threat. In effect, this construction along with the criminal orders "militarized" the Jewish population of the Soviet Union and allowed them to be "legitimately" targeted by the Army. The units represented at the Mogilev conference already had been conflating Jews and partisans and had also been working with *rHGM* and General Schenckendorff. Schenckendorff himself was fully aware that the majority of killings reported to him as partisans and "plunderers" were primarily Jews.[319] These killing operations are important as a prehistory to the conference for their key commanders, Fegelein and Lombard, would participate in the conference.

The regional characteristics of Belarus or the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic as it was called at the time are critical to both the nature of the Mogilev Conference and the events that followed. In many ways, this region was fundamentally different from the regions occupied by the Germans to the north and south, the Baltic states and the Ukraine. As we have seen, unlike the Baltic and the Ukraine, Belarus had no highly developed or long-running nationalist movement. Thus, it had far fewer local inhabitants willing to support the Nazis in response to promises of or even just wishful thinking about eventual sovereignty.

Partially due to the lack of a more polarizing nationalist influence, relations between

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[318] Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government : Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 112.

[319] Martin Cüppers, *Wegbereiter der Shoah : die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 201.

Jews and non-Jews were comparatively better in Belarus, decreasing the appeal of Nazi antisemitic propaganda. Indeed, in some instances this led to notable support and rescue of Jews. Barbara Epstein notes in her study of the Minsk ghetto that "if the Germans assumed unanimous local support, they turned out to have been wrong."[320] Moreover, "the large numbers of Jews and Byelorussians who engaged in resistance from outside the organized underground also played a crucial role, creating a solidarity between Jews and non-Jews."[321] The reticence of locals to collaborate caused an even greater manpower problem for the killers, to the extent that units of Lithuanian and Latvian collaborators were often brought in to fill the roles that local auxiliaries performed in the Baltic and Ukraine.

On September 16, *rHGM* requested that officers who "as a result of their performance and experience in the battle against partisans can provide a valuable experience report" participate in a three day "exchange of experiences."[322] Gen. Max von Schenckendorff, the commander of this rear area, welcomed the officers who represented units from across *rHGM*.

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[320] Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto, 1941-1943 : Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 12.

[321] Ibid., 18.

[322] "rHGM Korpsbefehl 53, 16 Sept. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225).

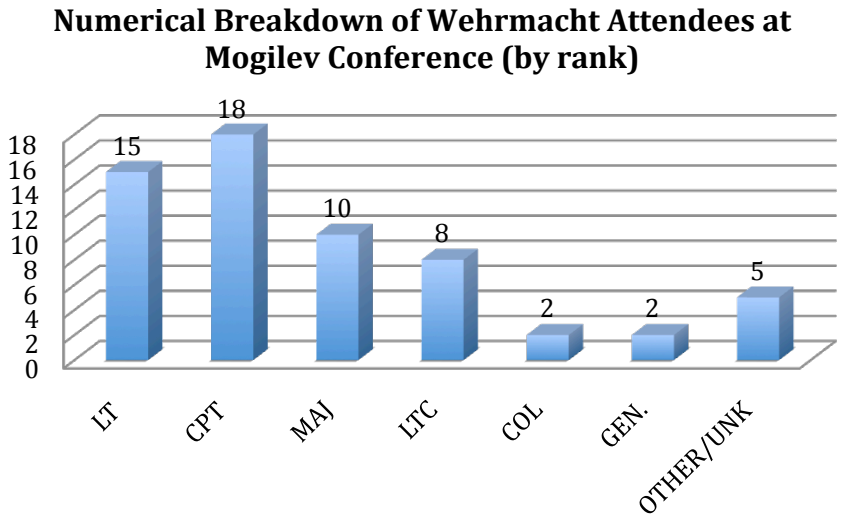

Figure 1. Mogilev Conference Wehrmacht Attendees by Rank

An analysis of the participants yields some telling clues about the nature of this conference. Sixty-one officers from various units in *rHGM* traveled to Mogilev. *Wehrmacht* personnel represented an overwhelming 82% of the participants and came mostly from the three major divisions in *rHGM* (221st, 286th, and 403rd Security Divisions) as well as *rHGM* staff. There was also one representative of the Army High Command (*OKH*). Also notable is that 38% of the officers attending were commanders at the battalion or company level.[323] Over half of the Army officers were captains or lieutenants. Thus, the attendees were heavily *Wehrmacht,* largely junior officers and low-level commanders who were responsible for executing policy rather than making it. In this context, we see another example of the center-periphery dynamic in Nazi policies, with local actors contributing directly to what became higher level policy.

Some of these men had already distinguished themselves as particularly violent or complicit with genocidal policy. Major Waldow, of the 354th Infantry Regiment is a prime

[323] These were officers in command positions (23/60).

example as his battalion had directly supported *Einsatzkommando 8* and participated in the murder of 1,000 Jews in the town of Krupki less than a week earlier. Captain Balitzki of the 350th Infantry Regiment also attended. This regiment had already assisted in the removal of Jews from the Bialowiezer forest to create a private game preserve for Herman Goering. An officer in this regiment also had earlier recommended that "the Jewish Question must be more radically solved. I recommend the collection of all the Jews living in the countryside in guarded detention and work camps. Suspect elements must be eliminated."[324] Indeed, Michael Wildt's description of the leadership of the RSHA as "flexible, mobile, eager, able to fulfill their job everywhere" could be applied to these men with a high degree of accuracy.[325] Thus some of the *Wehrmacht* officers attending had likely been chosen *for* their extreme and brutal records and certainly not *in spite* of them.

The non-Army attendees are also critical in understanding the tenor of the Mogilev Conference. First among these was Arthur Nebe, the commander of *Einsatzgruppe B*, the mobile killing unit assigned to murder the Jews overtaken by Army Group Center. Nebe had "promptly" volunteered for service in the East with the *Einsatzgruppen* in an attempt to advance his career and "curry favor" with Heydrich.[326] He had also arranged for 100 people to be shot as a demonstration for Himmler on 15 August 1941 and had experimented with

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[324] "350 IR Bericht, 19.8.1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-221), 295.

[325] Michael Wildt, *Generation of the Unbound : The Leadership Corps of the Reich Security Main Office* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 19.

[326] Peter Black, "Arthur Nebe: Nationalsozialist im Zwielicht," in *Die SS : Elite unter dem Totenkopf : 30 Lebensläufe*, ed. Ronald M. Smelser and Enrico Syring (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2000), 371. Nebe was executed for his participation in the July 20th Plot. Some have argued that he deliberately inflated the numbers of Jews he reported killed. Yet all evidence indicates that he was quite content to play his role in Nazi genocide and that his subsequent displeasure with the regime may have stemmed from the imminent Nazi defeat and not an aversion to killing. See Peter Black, "Arthur Nebe: Nationalsozialist im Zwielicht," in *Die SS : Elite unter dem Totenkopf : 30 Lebensläufe*, ed. Ronald M. Smelser and Enrico Syring (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2000), 372.

dynamite and exhaust gas as killing methods on mentally disabled people in September.[327] By the end of the year, over 190,000 Jews had been murdered in Belarus, most of them by units under Nebe's command.[328] The presence of an *Einsatzgruppen* commander indicates that the conference's focus would not remain a purely military one.

Nebe was joined in Mogilev by the Higher SS and Police Leader (HSSPF) for Army Group Center, SS-*Obergruppenführer* Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski. Philip Blood describes him as obsessed with restoring family honor after the disgraceful death of his uncle and most of his unit at the hands of HeHe tribesman in German East Africa and as a man who "behaved like the champion of all the Nazi rhetoric and dogma that punctuated the SS cult. His frequent meetings with the head of the SS would bear out this close relationship. He was a driven man motivated to exterminate Jews and Communists in the name of Lebensraum."[329] After some early criticism for not being sufficiently radical, Bach-Zelewski strove to be more extreme and won the patronage of Himmler himself.[330] Interestingly, the brutal nature of his work took a psychological toll on him as well and Bach-Zelewski had a breakdown in the winter of 1941/42.[331] In any case, by September 1941, he had already proven himself a great supporter of anti-Jewish actions. It is not surprising then that he would go on to become the Chief of Antipartisan Warfare where he would again preside over the

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[327] Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.), 206.

[328] Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 289.

[329] Philip W. Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The Ss and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 57.

[330] Andrej Angrick, "Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski: Himmlers Mann für alle Fälle," in *Die SS : Elite unter dem Totenkopf : 30 Lebensläufe*, ed. Ronald M. Smelser and Enrico Syring (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2000), 36-37.

[331] His physician, Ernst Grawitz noted that Bach-Zelewski "suffers from flashbacks connected with the shootings of jews which he himself conducted." Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death : The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 226.

wholesale slaughter of civilians and Jews during massive sweeps and the creation of "dead zones" in Belarus. Bach-Zelewski would also direct the large "antipartisan" operations such as Hamburg and Bamberg in the summer of 1942 which would murder huge numbers of Jews.

The cast of experienced killers was rounded out by men like the commander of the SS-Cavalry Brigade, Hermann Fegelein, and the commander of its Cavalry Regiment 1, Gustav Lombard. Interestingly, the other regimental commander, Franz Magill, was not invited to participate. He was, perhaps, viewed as the less extreme officer, having mainly restricted himself to killing Jewish men.[332] This brigade began killing Jews in early August in the Pripet marshes and would kill over 11,000.[333] Along with the Police Battalions, it also presided over the turn toward killing all Jews regardless of age or sex. Christopher Browning has convincingly argued that, at the end of July/beginning of August 1941, Himmler verbally notified subordinates that now all Jews, regardless of age or sex would be targeted for execution.[334] Shortly after, Jewish women and children who had been previously excluded from mass shootings were now included. Himmler had ordered on 1 August that "all Jews must be shot. Drive the female Jews into the swamps."[335] Lombard had then informed his

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[332] While Magill's regiment did kill women and children in Pinsk, his reports indicate that he interpreted his orders more narrowly and generally killed only men. Martin Cüppers, *Wegbereiter der Shoah : die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 177, Martin Cüppers, "Vorreiter der Shoah: Ein Vergleich der Einsätze der beiden SS-Kavallerieregimenter im August 1941," in *Krieg und Verbrechen : Situation und Intention: Fallbeispiele*, ed. Timm C. Richter (München: Meidenbauer, 2006).

[333] Martin Cüppers, "Vorreiter der Shoah: Ein Vergleich der Einsätze der beiden SS-Kavallerieregimenter im August 1941," in *Krieg und Verbrechen : Situation und Intention: Fallbeispiele*, ed. Timm C. Richter (München: Meidenbauer, 2006), 92.

[334] Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 312.

[335] Ibid., 281.

troops that "in future not one male Jew is to remain alive, not one family in the villages."[336] The 2nd SS Cavalry Regiment reported in the same period, "We drove women and children into the marshes, but this did not yield the desired result, as the marshes were not deep enough to drown them. In most places, the water was not more than three feet deep."[337] Also present was the commander of Police Regiment Center, Lieutenant Colonel Max Montua, and the commanders of Police Battalions 307 and 316, which had already conducted numerous mass killings of Jews in Bialystok, Brest-Litovsk, and elsewhere.[338]

It was, then, both these experienced killers who had already been dealing with the "Jewish Question" and *Wehrmacht* officers—some with proven records of violence and complicity—who arrived in the regional capital of Mogilev on the morning of 24 September 1941.[339] General Max von Schenckendorff encouraged them to participate in a "frank discussion because the war against the partisans is completely new to all of us."[340] He informed them from the outset that "townspeople will be used [by the partisans] as guides, scouts, and informants. Particularly the elderly, women, and adolescents, because they are

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[336] Ibid.

[337] Philip W. Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The Ss and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 58.

[338] "Teilnehmer-Verzeichnis am Partisanen-Lehrgang vom 24.9.1941, 23 Sep 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 76-7. Max Montua was the commander of Police Regiment Mitte which was made up of Police Battalions 307, 316, and 322. For more on Montua and Police Battalion 322, see Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 13-14, Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Wolfram Pyta, and Volker Riess, eds., *Deutscher Osten 1939-1945 : der Weltanschauungskrieg in Photos und Texten* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft,2003), 136-42.For the actions of the 307th and 316th, see Peter Longerich, *Holocaust : The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 203-5.

[339] The agendas for the conference remain in the archives. Unfortunately, minutes (if any were taken) do not appear to have survived the war.

[340] "Einleitungsworte zum Partisanenbekämpfungs Lehrgang, 24 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 81.

least suspicious, will be utilized for reconnaissance."[341] The commanding general thus convened the conference by immediately placing women, children, and the elderly in play as enemy combatants.

The morning was taken up by fifteen minute presentations of lessons learned in the antipartisan war by various high-level commanders, including SS-Cavalry Brigade commander Fegelein, Lieutenant Colonel Montua of Police Regiment Center, and Colonel von Rekowski of the 354th Infantry Regiment.[342] At 11:30, *Einsatzgruppe* commander Arthur Nebe gave a presentation covering three areas: first, cooperation between the troops and the SD during antipartisan operations; second, the selection and employment of local collaborators; and third, and most ominously, the Jewish question with particular consideration toward the antipartisan war.[343] While we do not know what exactly was said here, it is safe to assume that the importance of the killing of Jews, and the growing participation of the *Wehrmacht* in this endeavor were stressed. Nebe had already reported in July that "a solution of the Jewish Question during the war seems impossible in this area [Belarus] because of the tremendous number of Jews."[344] Certainly he is referring here to the insufficient numbers of *Einsatzgruppen* killers available. Nebe must have been interested in leveraging the manpower of the *Wehrmacht* in solving this problem.

This manpower problem originated from a convergence of several factors. First, the decision to kill all Jews naturally increased the number of Jews to be shot to such an extent

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[341] Ibid., 79-80.

[342] "rHGM Tagesordnung für den Kursus „Bekämpfung von Partisanen" v. 24-26.9.41, 23 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 72.

[343] Ibid., 70.

[344] Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide : Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 104.

that the *Einsatzgruppen* and SS foresaw problems in accomplishing this mission, as Nebe indicated. Secondly, Hitler's decision to allow deportations of Jews from Europe to the East before any death camps had been constructed meant that room would have to be made for the deportees. This would entail killing operations directed at the main ghetto cities, one of which was Minsk. These operations would then occupy much of the SS/SD killing manpower, leaving little for other areas. Third, with the advance deeper into the Soviet Union beyond what had been the Pale of Settlement, Jews were more geographically dispersed, making operations against them more manpower intensive. Christian Gerlach argues that an early October killing of women and children in Mogilev marked the "start signal" for the general murder of Jews in *rHGM*.[345] Certainly, as we have seen, this massacre had already begun. However, Gerlach is correct in marking an important surge of Police Battalion activity in killing, particularly in the countryside, which is further evidence of an expansion in targets.

Nebe was followed after lunch by Bach-Zelewski who spoke on "The Capture of Kommissars and Partisans in 'Scouring-Actions.'"[346] The HSSPF had already been particularly active in such operations with the SS Cavalry Brigade in the Pripet marshes. In the afternoon, the officers observed an exercise conducted by Police Regiment Center, which demonstrated the occupation of a village by surrounding it, and also the dissemination of

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[345] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 587.

[346] "rHGM Tagesordnung für den Kursus „Bekämpfung von Partisanen" v. 24-26.9.41, 23 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 70.

leaflets. In the evening after dinner, the participants adjourned for a concert of Russian music in the headquarters building.[347]

The next morning, the exchange of experiences continued with SS Cavalry Regiment 1 commander Gustav Lombard leading off. Then, various company grade officers gave short classes or led sand table exercises on a variety of tactical situations, such as the entry of a battalion into an unsecured area, securing a stretch of highway, and reacting to the murder of a mayor by the partisans.[348] In the afternoon, the collection of officers observed an actual operation conducted by 7 Company, Police Battalion 322. Approximately 14 km northwest of Mogilev a town was searched and its inhabitants interrogated. A summary written afterward states: "Suspicious strangers to the village (*Ortsfremde*) and a few Jews were discovered. (32 executions)."[349] Supporting the police was a 16-man detachment from the SD.[350] The war diary of Police Battalion 322, which carried out the operation, provides more telling detail. "Strangers to the village, in particular partisans, could not be found. Instead, the investigation of the population revealed 13 Jewish men, 27 Jewish women, and 11 Jewish children. Of these 13 men and 19 women were executed with the help of the SD."[351] Here the participants were provided with an actual demonstration in which the murder of Jews was carried out as a default targeting option in the antipartisan war.

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[347] Ibid.

[348] "Vortragsfolge für den Kursus," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 74.

[349] "Aktennotiz über Kursus "Bekämpfung von Partisanen" beim Bef.rückw.H.Geb.Mitte (25. u.26.9.1941), 2 October 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 655-1-1), 279.

[350] "Pol. Rgt. Mitte Befehl für Partisanenlehrgang, 24 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 88.

[351] "Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1: Polizei Bataillon 322," (BA-ZS: Dok. Sammlung CSSR 396).

At dawn the final morning, the participants observed another actual operation, executed this time by Security Regiment 2. According to the operations order, the goal was to "practically experience not only the registration of a town but also the seizure of partisans, commissars, and communists and the investigation of the local population."[352] The order contained descriptions of the individuals targeted who appeared to be mainly former communist functionaries, though four individuals were suspect because they apparently spent large amounts of time in the forest.[353] After the suspects were rounded up, the participants were to observe the interrogation of these suspect civilians and a subsequent "instruction" of the population.[354] It is unclear exactly what was meant by "instruction." This could have been some kind of political statements or even the killing of suspects. Upon completion of this operation, the participants left to return to their units.

The final product of this conference was a sixteen-page summary of the lessons learned under the signature of Gen. Schenckendorff. This document began with a discussion of the history of partisan warfare and discussed mostly organization, equipment, and tactics of the partisans as well as recommended techniques for combating them. Much of the document was devoted to the nuts and bolts of conducting various forms of antipartisan operations. Other recommendations, however, advocated far more extreme measures. Readers were advised that the elderly, women, and children were used for enemy reconnaissance.[355] Moreover, streets were to be kept free of "wanderers," who were to be

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[352] "rHGM Tagesordnung für den Kursus „Bekämpfung von Partisanen" v. 24-26.9.41, 23 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 73.

[353] "SR 2 Befehl für das Unternehmen "Kussikowitschi," 26 Sep. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 92.

[354] Ibid., 93.

[355] "rHGM Entwurf-Der Partisan seine Organisation und seine Bekämpfung, 12 Oct. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 122.

handed over to the GFP [*Geheimfeldpolizei* or military secret field police] , SD, or civilian labor camps. The guideline was to have "streets free of any Russian."[356] Individuals not native to a village, for whom the mayor was not willing to vouch, were also to be turned over to the GFP, SD, or nearest transfer camp.[357] The most chilling statement introduces the section on fighting the partisans. "The enemy must be completely annihilated," it declared. "The constant decision between life and death for partisans and suspicious persons is difficult even for the hardest soldier. It must be done. He acts correctly who fights ruthlessly and mercilessly with complete disregard for any personal surge of emotion."[358] This document was distributed to the company level in all units in Army Group Center (Rear) which meant that its lessons both became approved policy and reached units that had not had representatives in Mogilev. Even more telling, it appears that this same document was retransmitted to the police battalions in November 1941.[359] It is certainly interesting that police units were instructed in brutality by the Army. Moreover, the conference led directly to participation by the *Wehrmacht* in the murder of Jews.

License to Kill: The Impact of the Mogilev Conference on *Wehrmacht* Participation in The Holocaust in Army Group Center (Rear)

> In the fall of 1941 around the end of September, a training course was held in the city of Mogilev. As far as I remember, the Regimental commander and an officer from each battalion took part. From my battalion, I/691the

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[356] Ibid., 124.

[357] Ibid., 125.

[358] Ibid., 122.

[359] Edward B. Westermann, "Partners in Genocide: The German Police and the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 5 (2008): 787.

> adjutant, Lieutenant Großkopp was sent….The subject of the training was primarily: Jews and Partisans.
>
> - Josef Sibille, former commander of 1 Company, in a letter to the court, 1953[360]

> Reports indicate that large partisan bands remain in the large swampy forest near the village of Moschkowo. Further, regular traffic takes place of strangers to the region who possess no identification and that also in the entire region non-native Jews roam around.
>
> - Report of 1st Company, 354th Infantry Regiment, 30 October, 1941[361]

Jews were not mentioned specifically at all in this executive summary of the Mogilev conference. What, then, was the impact of the conference on the *Wehrmacht's* participation in genocidal policy? It seems that a goal and a result of the conference were to more fully incorporate the Army in killings of Jews, in conjunction with an increasing brutality toward civilians in general. What evidence supports this? First, it is no great leap to assume that Nebe's presentation regarding the "Jewish Question" and the partisan war contained exhortations for the killing of Jews both during and outside of antipartisan operations. He was, after all, presiding at the time over the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Belarus. Indeed, the very composition of those attending strongly suggests that the inclusion of Jews as targets was an experience to be shared and emphasized. Second, the demonstration operations carried out reinforced the messages from the conference: Jews were clearly both targeted and executed in the operation carried out by Police Battalion 322. In this action, the murder of Jews present in the village was obviously a default position when other "suspects" could not be found. Finally, throughout the conference (and in meetings afterward at Corps level) greater cooperation with the SD was encouraged. In several subsequent operations, this cooperation entailed *Wehrmacht* support of the *Einsatzgruppen* in mass killing.

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[360] "Sibille Letter, 2.2.1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. III), 599a.

[361] "1/354 IR Report, 30 October 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4), Anl. 130.

The most damning evidence appears a little over two weeks after the conference. In the small town of Krucha, soldiers of the 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment rounded up and executed all the Jews in their area. The order to do so originated from their battalion commander. The battalion adjutant, Lieutenant Großkopp, had just returned from the Mogilev conference with the message that "where the Partisan is, there is the Jew. Where the Jew is, there is the Partisan."[362] The commander of the 1st Company, Josef Sibille, who refused to carry out this order, wrote after the war to the prosecuting attorney, testifying to this connection in the 3rd Company case. He recalled that an antipartisan conference had taken place in Mogilev and further contended that "the main subject was Jews and partisans." He further believed that the conference and the battalion order to kill all the Jews in the area in early October were connected.[363] The battalion commander, Major Commichau, upon receiving this message from the conference, ordered his battalion to carry out mass shootings of all Jewish men, women, and children in his area of operations. This is significant because it is a rare documented case of the German Army independently carrying out Nazi genocidal policy. It did not merely assist other killing units, but instead carried out all aspects of the mass killing on its own, and by all accounts, as a result of the Mogilev Conference.

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[362] "Nöll u.a. Urteil, 8 May 1954," (BA-ZS: B162/14058), 543.

[363] "Sibille Letter, 2.2.1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. III), 599a.

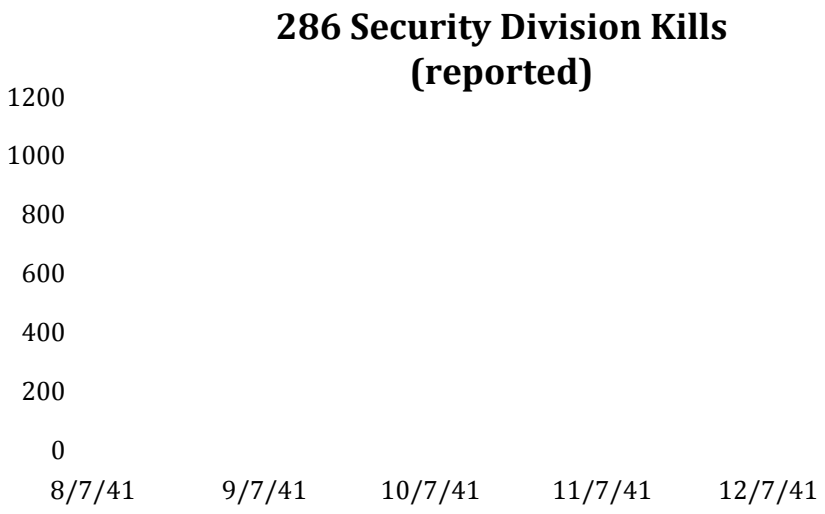

Figure 2. Kills Reported by 286th Security Division, August-December 1941

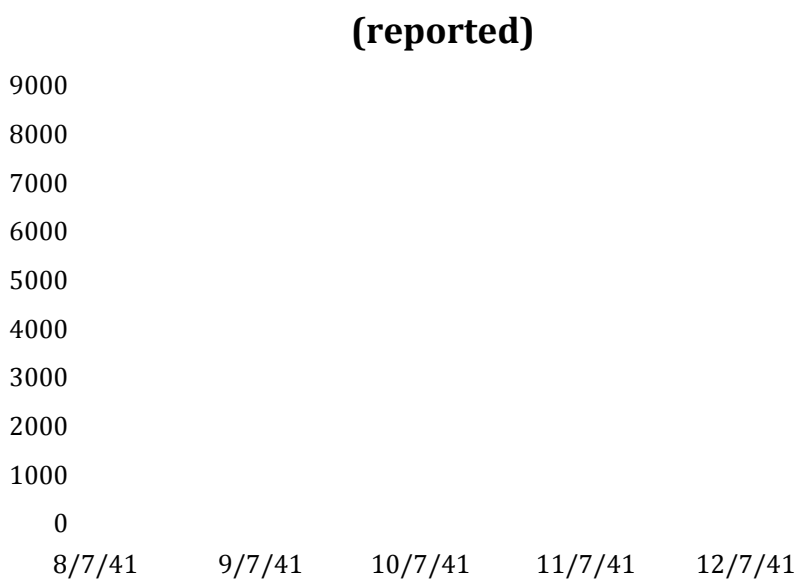

Figure 3. Prisoners reported by 286th Security Division, August-December 1941

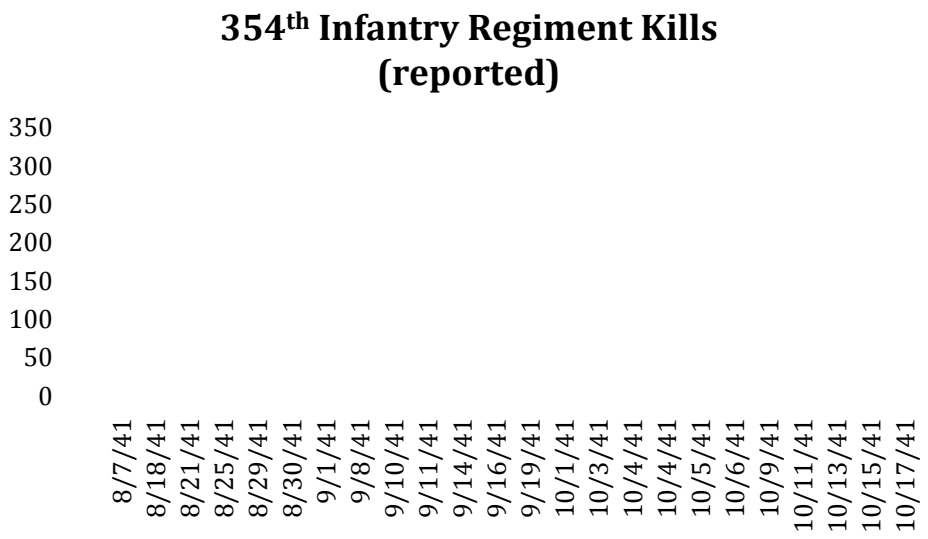

Figure 4. Kills reported by 354th Infantry Regiment, August-November 1941

A survey of operations reports across Army Group Center (Rear) also provides quantitative evidence for a deadlier turn in "antipartisan" operations. We can see the stark increase in individuals reported killed by the 286th Security Division beginning in October. The 354th Infantry Regiment was the main combat force in this division and had three attendees at the conference. The 1st Company reported that it had shot three Jewish families and two young women of Jewish appearance it termed "*Flintenweiber*" or female soldiers, though they were shot trying to flee and there is no indication they were armed.[364] It is important to note that with typical euphemistic language, the racial identity of many *Wehrmacht* victims remains intentionally unclear. Categories such as partisan, partisan-helper (*Partisanenhelfer*), suspect civilian (*verdächtige Zivilisten*), stranger to village (*Ortsfremde*), wanderer (*Wanderer*), and civilians without identification (*Zivilisten ohne Ausweis*) could easily be applied to both Jews and non-Jews.

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[364] "354 IR Meldung, 30 Oct. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-4, Anl. 130).

Yet the numbers for the last three months of 1941 are striking and demonstrate a marked increase in violence against civilians, as partisan activity had not risen to the same extent and German casualties do not indicate any real combat. In the October reports from the 350th Infantry Regiment (which also had attendees at Mogilev), every Jew mentioned was formulaically noted as "shot while trying to escape."[365] Captain Balitzki, an attendee at the conference from the 350th Infantry Regiment, wrote on October 14th that "it is unacceptable that officers have to shoot while the men watch. The majority of the men are too soft. This is a sign that they have never or only poorly been instructed about the meaning of the 'Partisan War.'"[366] This officer, a leading figure at Mogilev, apparently found some of his men had not yet absorbed its lessons, though he and his fellow officers were attempting to model this brutal behavior for them. It is also worth noting that the numbers of those captured skyrocketed as well. This was no benign activity either, as these people were handed over to the SD or transfer camps (*Dulags)* with typically lethal results, their deaths merely being delayed.

Another observable effect of the conference was greater collaboration with the SD by *Wehrmacht* units. Westermann notes that Himmler "placed great emphasis on maintaining a cooperative relationship" with the Army and had already on 2 August encouraged his leadership to "maintain the 'greatest amity' with" the *Wehrmacht.* [367] This cooperation was manifested after the Mogilev conference in two ways: first, increased utilization of SD

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[365] See for example: "350 IR Bericht, 16 October 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-22b), Anl. 483, "350 IR Bericht, 18 October 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-22b), Anl. 486, "350 IR Bericht, 22 October 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-22b), Anl. 499.

[366] "221 SD Bericht, V-A IR 350, 14 Oct. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-22b, Anl. 475).

[367] Edward B. Westermann, "Partners in Genocide: The German Police and the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 5 (2008): 788-9.

detachments in interrogations of suspect civilians and vetting of local auxiliaries, and second, more active support of those SD units directly involved in anti-Jewish measures that went far beyond mere logistical support. Three days after the conference, *rHGM* instructed its units that "cooperation is to be still more closely organized between the divisions and the SD and GFP….Requests for local [*ortsfesten*] operations by individual troops of the *Einsatzkommandos* of the SD are to be requested from the commander."[368] "Cooperation with the SD" was also on the agenda for the *rHGM* staff meeting with its subordinate division staffs on September 30th as a lesson from the conference.[369] In its report for the period from September to December 1941, the intelligence section of the 286th Security Division appeared eager to report that "constant contact was maintained with the Security Service, specifically the *Einsatzgruppe* of *Gruppenführer* Neumann, the *Einsatzkommando* 8 of *Sturmbannführer* Dr. Bratfisch [sic], and in particular with *Untersturmführer* Reschke's Orscha-based squad."[370] In November, the 339th Infantry Division (which contained the 691st Infantry Regiment) published a guide to the duties and responsibilities of the Security Forces. Under the SD, listed as "keywords" were "politically suspect civilians, Bolsheviks, Jews, and Gypsies." Among the SD responsibilities were listed "Solution of the Jewish Problem" and the "Gypsy Question." Finally, the memo instructed that "the troops must shoot Jews and Gypsies only if they are proven to be partisans or their supporters. In all other cases, they are to be handed over to the SD."[371] Thus, we can see both a clear knowledge of the mission of

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[368] "rHGM Korpsbefehl Nr. 50, 29 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 95.

[369] "rHGM Besprechung Mit Den Generalstabsoffizieren Der Divisionen, 30.9.1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 98.

[370] "286 SD Ic Tätigskeitbericht, Sep-Dec 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-286-5).

[371] "Merkblatt über Zuständigkeit, Unterstellung, und Aufgaben, 2 November 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-339-5), Anl. 13.

the SD and an emphasis on improved cooperation and coordination with it. In its most extreme form, the 707th Infantry Division to the west in the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, on the orders of its commander, explicitly targeted Jews in the countryside, freeing the SD to focus on cities. The Division Commander, General von Bechtolsheim, published orders in November 1941 that clearly stated that "where larger or smaller groups of Jews are encountered in the countryside, they may either be executed [by the units themselves] or consolidated in ghettos in designated places where they will then be given over to the civil administration, that is, the SD."[372]

The preponderance of the evidence surrounding the Mogilev Conference and the turn in *Wehrmacht* "security" operations that followed demonstrate that these three days were an important galvanizing moment in deepening the complicity of the German Army in the Holocaust in Belarus. The conference instructed the *Wehrmacht* to intentionally target Jews in its antipartisan operations. This verbal transmission of guidance regarding Jewish policy was not without precedent, as we have seen already regarding Jewish policy. On July 8 in Bialystok, Himmler himself met with Bach-Zelewski, General von Schenckendorff, Colonel Montua of Police Regiment Center and the commanders of Police Battalions 322 and 316. That same night the police began killing Jews there.[373] Given the attendees at the conference, the nature of the presentations, and the actions that followed, it appears that such a discussion also occurred in Mogilev.

Why? As previously mentioned, anti-Jewish policy had changed radically the month before and the numbers of Jews to be killed had now greatly increased. It was this

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[372] "Kdt. In Weissruthenien, Befehl Nr. 24, 24 Nov. 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 378-1-698).

[373] Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 120-1.

exponential growth in targeted victims that spawned the deployment of more police battalions to the East and the systematic recruitment of native auxiliaries. It seems logical, then, that the SS desired greater participation of the *Wehrmacht* in this process as well. Nebe himself had already noted that manpower limitations would prevent him from killing the many Jews in Belarus. A second factor could also have been the changing demographics of Jews in eastern Russia. As the Germans moved out of the area of the former Pale of Settlement, communities of Jews became less densely populated and more dispersed. The difficulties this settlement pattern caused for the smaller *Einsatzgruppen* and Police Battalions could also be alleviated by a further inclusion of the *Wehrmacht*. Given the prior history of the German army regarding civilians and the already well-established belief that the Jews were behind Bolshevism, the antipartisan war was the perfect vehicle for harnessing the combat power of the army to help solve the "Jewish Problem." The commander of the German Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, published "Guidelines for the Fighting of Partisans" to the entire Army one month after the Mogilev Conference. An indication of the importance and far-reaching impact of the conference is that he copied word for word the closing text of Schenckendorff's summary: "The constant decision between life and death for partisans and suspicious persons is difficult even for the hardest soldier. It must be done. He acts correctly who fights ruthlessly and mercilessly with complete disregard for any personal surge of emotion."[374]

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[374] Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution : The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 506, ff. 239.

Antipartisan War as Anti-Jewish War

> Because throughout the "Triangle" region enemy mines are to be expected, "Minesweeper 42s" (members of Jewish labor battalions or captured bandits with hoes and rollers) are to be available in sufficient quantities. Units are to equip themselves with cords to use as leashes with which to control the Jews or bandits.
>
> - Operations order for antipartisan Operation "Dreieck-Viereck." 11 September 1942[375]

> 2nd Battalion, 727th Infantry Regiment which was employed as the lead battalion, broke the enemy resistance in a quick attack, in spite of the fact that the advance proceeded slowly due to heavy mining. 4 "Minesweeper 42s" were blown up into the air, thereby sparing any losses of our own troops.
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> - After-Action Report, Operation "Dreieck-Viereck," 19 October 1942[376]

How and why did the German Army become so deeply involved in enacting Nazi genocide? Clearly, from the perspective of those like Nebe and Bach-Zelewski, additional manpower was necessary in the fall of 1941 to accomplish the murder of the expanded number of targeted Jews resulting from the inclusion of women and children. Including Jews under the aegis of the antipartisan war was intended to ease and expand the participation of the Army in the Nazi racial project. Indeed, the SS/SD lacked the ability to systematically search for Jews in small villages in the countryside. By killing Jews in the course of its normal antipartisan patrolling in these areas, the *Wehrmacht* relieved the *Einsatzgruppen* of this difficulty.

While the *Wehrmacht* was not in opposition to the execution of the Final Solution in the East, it was reluctant to dirty its own hands in it. Incorporating Jews into an already hyperaggressive anti-civilian policy likely eased this transition and paved the way for greater

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[375] "Befehl Nr. 1 für Unternehmen "Dreieck," 11 September 1942," (BA-MA: RH 23-25), 63.

[376] "Gefechtsbericht über Unternehmen "Dreieck" und "Viereck" vom 17.9-2.10.1942, 19 October 1942," (BA-MA: RH 23-25), 25.

complicity by the Army up to and including shooting. Raul Hilberg explained some of this complicity, writing that "the generals had eased themselves into this pose of cooperation through the pretense that the Jewish population was a group of Bolshevist diehards who instigated, encouraged, and abetted the partisan war behind the German lines."[377] Not everyone bought this argument. An inspector in the Army Economic and Armament Office in the Ukraine, for example, reported to his boss in December 1941 that "there is no proof that Jewry as a whole or even to a greater part was implicated in acts of sabotage."[378] For both officers and soldiers who may have been reluctant to kill women and children, explicitly connecting all Jews with a developing antipartisan movement would have both partially allayed these concerns as well as lessened inhibitions by placing anti-Jewish actions (and any resistance to them) in the context of "legitimate" combat operations. The statements above demonstrate that in a little over a year, the *Wehrmacht* had become comfortable with using Jews and other civilians as human minesweepers.

Testimony from former soldiers of 3rd Company supports this conflation of antipartisan operations and Jew killing. One soldier claimed "it was generally known that Jews made up the lion's share of the partisans and that the partisans were constantly supported by the Jews in the villages, particularly the women."[379] Another noted that "at the time of the shooting, many attacks by the partisans had taken place and that the battalion had suffered losses." He continued, "the members of the company were of the opinion that the

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[377] Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 301.

[378] "Memo from Armament Inspector, Ukraine to Chief of Industrial Armament Department (Gen. Georg Thomas), 2 December 1941," (Nazi conspiracy and aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. V, 1946: Document 3257-PS), 995.

[379] "V., Adam Statement, 7 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 271.

Jewish shooting was a reprisal and preventative measure as a result of partisan attacks….Any harmless civilian could be a partisan. There were observations of Jews supplying the partisans."[380] However, again, there is little indication that the unit had taken any serious casualties. From September to December 1941, the 339th Division reported only 20 killed and 37 wounded.[381] While at some level these statements certainly reflect the postwar environment and attempts at self-exculpation, they are also likely echoes of justifications that the soldiers found convenient to believe in 1941. In many ways, remarks such as these parrot similar ideas from the Mogilev Conference.

Antisemitism among the officers and men also likely eased this conflation of Jews and enemy combatants. This prejudice could come from a variety of sources. Certainly some men carried anti-Jewish feelings from home.[382] The official sanction of discriminatory measures and then outright collaboration in mass killing by the Army inevitably allowed those with racist predilections to act on them and normalized anti-Jewish brutality within an organizational climate that prescribed excessive brutality against civilians as a matter of course. Instances of *Wehrmacht* participation in killing throughout Belarus repeatedly featured officers and men who stood out in the memories of their comrades as particularly

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[380] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 341.

[381] "rHGM Casualty Reports," (BA-MA: RH 22-228), 61.

[382] Some examples from letters are instructive of some soldiers' beliefs, including antisemitism. See for example: Walter Manoschek, *Es gibt nur eines für das Judentum : Vernichtung : das Judenbild in deutschen Soldatenbriefen 1939-1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger, 1995), Anatoly Golovchansky, *"Ich Will Raus Aus Diesem Wahnsinn" : Deutsche Briefe Von Der Ostfront 1941-1945 : Aus Sowjetischen Archiven* (Wuppertal: P. Hammer, 1991), Karl Fuchs, Horst Fuchs Richardson, and Dennis E. Showalter, *Sieg Heil! : War Letters of Tank Gunner Karl Fuchs, 1937-1941* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1987), Ortwin Buchbender and Reinhold Sterz, *Das Andere Gesicht des Krieges: deutsche Feldpostbriefe, 1939-1945* (München: Beck, 1983), Walter Bähr and Hans Walter Bähr, *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten, 1939-1945* (Tübingen: R. Wunderlich, 1952).

virulent antisemites, convinced Nazis, or simply as brutal men.[383] A soldier in 3rd Company remembered, for example, one sergeant who was "radically opposed to partisans and Jews."[384] Racist soldiers and officers were often tasked or volunteered to carry out Jewish killings, thus minimizing the necessity of compulsion within the unit and potential disruption of morale.

Finally, the tactics of participation allowed soldiers to compartmentalize and minimize any psychological trauma associated with the murder of people who did not fit the conventional image of the enemy. Consider the tactics and procedures involved in capturing partisans in "small operations" that were demonstrated at Mogilev and disseminated to the units in *rHGM*. Villages were to be surrounded in the last hour of darkness or shortly before dawn. Assault troops were then to enter the village and assemble the population and the mayor. Those who were not native to the village (*Ortsfremde*) or who supported the partisans were to be identified and handed over to the SD, GFP, or nearest transfer camp.[385] If Jews were by definition partisan supporters, the import of these tactics was clear. Moreover, in operations where the *Wehrmacht* assisted in the murder of Jews, these were the same tactics used to identify and round up the victims. The use of these tactics had a secondary effect: it could help minimize the psychological discomfort inherent in these

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[383] One of the limitations of postwar testimony as a source is that soldiers are most reluctant to discuss antisemitism, either their own or that of their comrades. Due to legal definitions of the time, these men were often very careful to avoid any implication of racism or acknowledgment of Nazi genocidal ideals. Even so, there is sufficient evidence from these sources (as well as from survivors) to indicate that these types of leaders and men were prevalent.

[384] "B., Josef Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 310.

[385] "rHGM Entwurf-Der Partisan seine Organisation und seine Bekämpfung, 12 Oct. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 124-6.

actions, which was one of the reasons the *Wehrmacht* had attempted to limit or avoid direct participation in mass killing

Assisting in this process was the use of vague and euphemistic terminology in both reporting those killed and describing those targeted. Terms such as "stranger to village," "wanderer," "suspect civilian," "partisan helper," and "civilian without identification" demonstrate the inexact and elastic nature of these categories. Moreover, consider the equally fluid "evidence" used to prove collusion with the enemy and the very real situations of Jews. German persecution of the Jews inevitably induced behaviors among the victims that were then cited as evidence justifying the necessity of the persecution. Women, children, and the elderly were particularly suspect as supporters; in many areas, Jewish men had either been killed or had fled, leaving a majority of women and children. Behavior such as running or hiding was treated as highly suspect if not incriminating, and Jews naturally often attempted to flee and hide from the Germans, particularly in the forest. Similarly, civilians without identification were immediately suspect, and Jews did not receive identification cards from German authorities (with the exception of work permits, which also clearly identified them as Jews.) Thus, if they were caught outside of their villages, they would likely have forged identification or have no identification at all. Finally, the SD was to be employed in ferreting out suspected communists and partisans as well as finding and killing Jews. The cumulative effect of these similarities was that Jews were easily merged into categories in which inclusion amounted to an automatic death sentence.

This "tactical muscle memory" from other actual antipartisan actions created at least a semblance of familiarity and an illusion of legitimate military operations to those who wished to take comfort in it. A similar type of emotional refuge could be found in the

compartmentalized nature of these operations: sentry duty during the encirclement, searching houses, escorting victims, and cordoning off the execution site. Every action save actual shooting offered soldiers the opportunity to tell themselves they were not really participating in murder. This was decisive because many soldiers recognized that these killings did not fall under the category of conventional combat. Private Magel admitted that "we also knew that the Jews hadn't done anything and that the shooting represented an injustice, at least as far as it concerned women and children."[386] It is also interesting to note here that Magel appears to have still believed that male Jews deserved to be shot. The illusion of a standard military operation and the false justification of Jews as partisans may have helped soldiers relieve the cognitive dissonance resulting from their knowledge that these actions were beyond the bounds of conventional warfare. A comment from a soldier involved in the Krupki shooting a week before the conference is instructive. "We soldiers were merely employed in the encirclement, "he said, "We had nothing to do with the killings."[387] Surely this is postwar self-exculpation, but it also likely demonstrates a conscious distancing from the act itself that was in effect at the time as well. Given the well-known concerns of both the SS and the *Wehrmacht* regarding the psychological impact of face-to-face killing on their personnel, the utility of exploiting the similarity between antipartisan and anti-Jewish operations was not lost on Army leadership.

The Mogilev Conference is not a smoking gun proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that the *Wehrmacht* was specifically ordered to increase its complicity in the Holocaust, but few decisions regarding the evolution of the Final Solution are clear and simple. The

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[386] "M., Wilhelm Statement, 8 August 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 173.

[387] "M., Bruno Statement, 8 September 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/3876), 49.

conference and the events that followed provide a convincing convergence of evidence highlighting the Mogilev conference as an vital turning point in the German Army's participation in the Holocaust, at least in Belarus. The prior records of the conference participants, the messages and "demonstration" operations observed, as well as the subsequent sharp increase in divisional "body counts" and in anti-Jewish killings are all signs pointing to the significance of this event.

The conference by itself cannot be seen as the sole cause of increased *Wehrmacht* complicity in the Holocaust, but more as a point of convergence, a lens that focused a variety of existing factors and influences to mobilize the support of the Army in genocidal policy. Extant antisemitism and anti-Bolshevik fervor combined with a history of paranoia and excessive brutality toward civilians. Hitler himself had remarked in a meeting on 16 July 1941 that "the partisan war has its advantages: it gives us the opportunity to exterminate those who oppose us."[388] In Mogilev, men like Gen. Schenckendorff, Nebe, and Bach-Zelewski intentionally blurred the line between the "Jewish Question" and the methods of antipartisan war which--however excessive by international standards--were at least deemed legitimate within German military tradition. They instructed lower-level officers, men at the sharp end of the spear, at least some of whom had been selected intentionally for their past record of brutality and/or extreme beliefs. These men of action then brought this message back to their units, resulting in an observable change in behavior of the *Wehrmacht* in Belarus.

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[388] "Meeting Notes (Hitler, Rosenberg, Lammers, Keitel, Göring) 16 July 1941," (Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 1949, vol 38: Document 221-L), 88.

In order to better understand the larger context of the Mogilev context, the Serbian experience provides a valuable comparison. In the Balkans in the fall of 1941, the *Wehrmacht* faced a very real insurgency and a dangerous movement that inflicted real casualties, even though they were not connected to the partisan groups. Here, too, the German military viewed the local population through a racial lens and adopted the most extreme of measures to subdue them.[389] Military-aged male Jews and Gypsies were routinely executed in reprisal for German casualties. On 23 September 1941 (the day before the Mogilev Conference began), *Wehrmacht* troops launched a "punitive expedition" in Serbia, executing 1,127 "suspected communists" and interning over 20,000 men.[390] After this operation, the key divisional commander, who was not as brutal as the commanding general in Serbia Franz Böhme demanded, was demoted for being "too slack."[391] It appears that the more violent interpretation was rewarded professionally. After a concerted and ruthless campaign against partisans and civilians alike, the Balkan insurgency was, in fact, brought to heel. However, as Christopher Browning notes, "if the policies of the *Wehrmacht* did not yet constitute the "Final Solution"…the killing of adult male Jews and "Gypsies" simply because of the ethnic identity was quite simply genocide."[392] The Tribunal in the Hostage Trial at

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[389] Given a choice between a 1:50 and 1:100 ratio of hostages per German soldier, Army commanders routinely chose the 1:100 number.

[390] Christopher R. Browning, "The Wehrmacht in Serbia Revisited," in *Crimes of War : Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov, Atina Grossmann, and Mary Nolan (New York: New Press, 2002), 36.

[391] Ibid., 37.

[392] Ibid., 40.

Nuremberg concluded emphatically that "pre-existing international law has declared these acts…unlawful."[393]

Thus, Serbia provides an critical pre-history and continuity for the Mogilev Conference. Before Barbarossa, we can already see a *Wehrmacht* tendency to incorporate racial thinking in its attitudes toward local populations. The Army also demonstrated its ready acceptance of Jews and other "racially inferior" groups as legitimate targets for execution. In addition, German commanders were already being recognized positively for their extreme brutality. Mogilev, then, represents both a continuation of these trends and a departure: no longer were only male Jews targeted and no longer were these killings associated with a legitimate counterinsurgency. Instead, though the antipartisan war had a an important rhetorical purpose, the *Wehrmacht* was harnessed directly to the Nazi genocidal project in killings that even commanders in Serbia would have recognized had no connection to the war.[394]

It is a sad tribute to the effectiveness of the intentional conflation of Jew, Bolshevik and partisan that the instrumentalization of this concept on the ground has not been more deeply explored. The view that the antipartisan war was a simple counterinsurgency action is one perpetuated by the killers themselves. Phillip Blood rightly describes this process as

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[393] "Judgment in the Hostage Case (*United States of America* vs. *Wilhelm List, et al*)," (Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. XI, 1950), 1240.

[394] For more on the *Wehrmacht* in Serbia, see Walter Manoschek, *"Serbien Ist Judenfrei": Militärische Besatzungspolitik Und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1993), Christopher R. Browning, "Wehrmacht Reprisal Policy and the Murder of the Male Jews in Serbia," in *Fateful Months : Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991), H. F. Meyer, *Von Wien nach Kalavryta : die blutige Spur der 117. Jäger-Division durch Serbien und Griechenland* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2002).

"how the fallacy of antipartisan warfare expunged the record of *Bandenbekämpfung*."[395] The Nuremburg Tribunals did not uncritically accept the term as one synonymous with a "clean" antipartisan war, as some argue. During the High Command Trial, the Tribunal categorically dismissed any legality of German reprisal killings stating that "the safeguards and preconditions required…were not even attempted to be met or even suggested as necessary." Referring to the Hostage Case, it termed the killings in the Balkans where "hostages" were overwhelmingly Jews, to be "merely terror murders."[396] While the court recognized the theoretical legality of reprisals and hostage killings after a lengthy list of requirements had been met, it noted that such a case of the correct use of reprisal could not be found in the war and roundly condemned the German Army for its actions. It is, perhaps, more correct, that the police battalions found that "the destruction of the Jews could be semantically disguised as *Bandenkampf* and later after the war used with initial success as an exculpatory myth for the perpetrators."[397] This was not a successful legal strategy at the Nuremburg hearings but may have had more success in later trials and certainly in the constructed memory of veterans. It appears that the *Wehrmacht* benefited from a similar mythmaking strategy. If the German Army used the antipartisan war as an excuse to murder Jews, historians of the Holocaust must examine and deconstruct this justification. Victimization of Jews was not

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[395] Philip W. Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The Ss and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 276. Blood correctly distinguishes between *Partisanenbekämpfung* (antipartisan war) and *Bandenbekämpfung* (Bandit fighting, the term which quickly replaced *Partisanenbekämpfung.*) While the former could be considered a traditional counter-insurgency between armed combatants, the latter encompassed mass killing of civilians, including Jews.

[396] "Judgment in the Hostage Case (*United States of America* vs. *Wilhelm List, et al*)," (Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Washington, U.S. G.P.O., Vol. XI, 1950), 529.

[397] Wolfgang Kahl, "Vom Mythos der 'Bandenbekampfung': Polizeiverbande im zweiten Weltkrieg," *Die Polizei : Fachzeitschrift fur das Polizeiwesen*, no. 2 (1998): 53.

due to frustration or losses in the vein of the My Lai massacre, but instead to a conscious, deeper incorporation of the *Wehrmacht* in Nazi genocidal policy.[398]

One prominent historian has suggested that "evidence for the motivation of central and regional [Army] commanders in the murder of Jews is lacking" but contends that the food shortage played a decisive role.[399] While these economic concerns were certainly important factors for some leaders, particularly in the civilian realm, the Mogilev conference and the events surrounding it offer an alternative and more convincing explanation for the motivation of Army decision-makers at the regional (and local) levels. It seems that the military leaders involved were primarily concerned with perceived security considerations where Jews were all supporters of the Bolsheviks and thus partisan accomplices. This justification dovetailed nicely with existing *Wehrmacht* violence against communists and Red Army soldiers. However, one cannot overlook the very real possibility that at Mogilev these leaders were informed of their role in the overall Nazi genocidal project and at least some of them needed no additional justification as camouflage for their actions.

The Holocaust and the antipartisan war have long remained separated in the historiography of the period with anti-Jewish actions remaining part of a history of Nazi genocide and the antipartisan war a part of the military history of the war on the Eastern Front. This is a false division. As Edward Westermann concludes, the "fact that the Jewish

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[398] Joanna Bourke notes that many men at My Lai were veterans of real combat and that, for them, the role of the actual guerilla war in Vietnam was very significant in their behavior. Dave Grossman describes some characteristics that German units had in common with the U.S. unit at My Lai. However, he adds that the very important ingredients relating to actual casualties and frustration caused by the insurgency were vital in this atrocity. For the distinction, see: Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing : Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 171-214, Dave Grossman, *On Killing : The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2009), 190-91.

[399] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 601-2.

population of the Soviet Union became a major target of the antipartisan campaign is indisputable."[400]The Mogilev Conference shows that these two were never separate, but intentionally connected in an effort to more efficiently include the combat power of the *Wehrmacht* in Hitler's genocidal projects in the East. The behavior of the 691st Infantry Regiment provides us with an example of just how these two efforts were conjoined.

62 km from Mogilev to Krucha: One Remarkable Case

> These things can only be judged in light of the situation at the time, where the troops had to live in the worst conditions for weeks on end and were exposed to constant treacherous partisan attacks.
>
> - Colonel Erich Müller, commander 691st Infantry Regiment, 19 September 1952[401]

> It is inconceivable that one could now describe us old soldiers as murderers….I am also of the opinion that a civilian court cannot pass judgment on a wartime event.
>
> - Emil Zimber in letter to the office of the German Delegate for Security, 10 March 1954[402]

In May 1951, forty-three-year-old master joiner Wilhelm Magel returned to the apartment building where he lived above his estranged wife. He was accompanied by the mayor and a police officer. Magel confronted his wife about her refusal to give their son suitable clothing. He further accused her of hoarding the good clothes for their daughter who lived with her. Not surprisingly, an argument ensued. As Magel, the mayor, and the police officer left, Magel's wife leaned out the window with, in his words, a "smirk on her face" and screamed at him, "You murderer, you dirty murderer, what else do you want?" Magel

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[400] Edward B. Westermann, "Partners in Genocide: The German Police and the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 5 (2008): 774.

[401] "M., Erich Statement, 19 September 1952," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 74.

[402] "Zimber, E. Letter to the Office of the Delegate for Security, 10 March 1954," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 495-6.

yelled back, "Watch out, you lying bitch! Shut the window!"[403] With his daughter and many of the neighbors looking on, the three men beat a hasty retreat. Magel then filed a libel charge against his wife and, in the process, was forced to explain about a shooting that had occurred in Krucha, Belarus, in 1941 by the 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment, 339th Infantry Division.

The 339th Infantry Division was formed in Thuringia in central Germany in December 1940, with the 691st Infantry Regiment created out of a fortress infantry regiment.[404] The Division was nicknamed the "Kyffhäuser Division" after a mountain range in Thuringia, and the unit patch featured the turn of the century Kyffhäuser monument.[405] In an ironic twist, this monument sits atop the mountain where, according to legend, Frederick Barbarossa sleeps, waiting to be awakened in Germany's hour of need. From May to August 1941, the division performed occupation duty in the Loire Valley in France.[406] By 7 September, however, the 339th was just north of Minsk, moving to take over the duties of a security division in Army Group Center (Rear), which it did officially on 19 September.[407]

By 9 October, the 1st Battalion, 691st Regiment found itself in the small town of Krugloje, in what had once been the 354th Infantry Regiment's sector.[408] The 3rd Company, commanded by Captain Friedrich Nöll, was stationed in Krucha, just 29 km from Krupki.

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[403] "M., Wilhelm Statement, 16 June 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 162-3.

[404] Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945*, vol. 1 (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1979).

[405] See Horst Müller and Hans-Dieter Kluge, *Der Kyffhäuser* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 2002).

[406] See "Map: 339 ID Dispositions in France," (BA-MA: RH 26-339-3).

[407] Klaus-Jürgen Thies, *Der Ostfeldzug: Heeresgruppe Mitte, 21.6.1941 - 6.12.1941 ; ein Lageatlas der Operationsabteilung des Generalstabs des Heeres* (Bissendorf: Biblio-Verl., 2001), 75, "rHGM Korpsbefehl 54, 19 Sept. 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-225), 68.

[408] "Map: rHGM, 9 October 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-14b), Anl. 885.

Nöll's company was the only German unit in the town and was quartered in the local school house.[409] In 1941, Krucha had a Jewish population of approximately 150 out of a total population of around 500.[410] 3rd Company soldiers remembered that the Jews lived together in a particular part of town, but there does not appear to have been a closed ghetto.[411]

Around 6 or 7 October, the company messenger, Sergeant B., walked into the company headquarters bearing a verbal order from the 1st Battalion instructing the unit to kill all the Jews in its area. It seems that upon receipt of this order there was a discussion among the company leadership about what to do. Present in the company office were the commander, Captain Nöll, First Sergeant Emil Zimber, and, likely, the platoon leaders. Another soldier present testified that, from the discussion, he "gathered that ties existed between the partisans and the Jewish population and that the Jews had supported the partisans. The discussion centered upon how the order should be interpreted, namely whether the Jews should be shot."[412] According to Nöll, this order caused him "great confusion and agitation."[413] He then testified that, after meeting with Zimber and the platoon leaders, he intended to ignore the order. However, shortly thereafter a second written order arrived stating: "To 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment: Jews in [Krucha] are to be shot." This order was signed by the battalion commander, Major Alfred Commichau.[414]

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[409] "B., Emil Statement, 26 March 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 246.

[410] "M., Erwin Statement, 16 February 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 235.

[411] "S., Willi Statement, 9 August 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 178.

[412] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 335.

[413] "Nöll, F. Statement, 11 February 1952," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 11.

[414] "Nöll, F. Statement, 25 April 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 32.

The decision was evidently made to proceed, for one of the platoon leaders stated that Nöll had asked for volunteers to carry out the killing but none had stepped forward.[415] Company tailor Adam V. had his workshop in the same building as the headquarters and recalled hearing a "loud argument" from the office regarding the order to shoot the Jews. He recalled hearing Captain Nöll saying that he had until the next day to report to Major Waldow that the order had been carried out, but because he did not want to do it himself, he would have to assign this mission to someone else.[416] That someone else appears to have been his co-defendant Zimber. Nöll claimed after the war that Zimber "in his capacity as First Sergeant took over the assembly and disposition of the company"[417]. Zimber, however, vehemently denied that he had volunteered to carry out the shooting order.[418]

Regardless of whether he volunteered or not, Zimber did take over the organization and execution of the killings in Krucha. Soldier Wilhelm Magel described what happened next. His platoon, the first, had just returned around noon on the 10th from an overnight operation. After the soldiers had cleaned their weapons and eaten, they were resting when they received the order to assemble without helmets and gear, only field caps, rifles, and ammunition belts. When the men had formed up, First Sergeant Zimber read out the order that all the Jews in the village were to be shot. Magel remembered that there was apparent "indignation" among the soldiers. Zimber reacted to this by saying, "we can't change

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[415] "H., Josef Statement, 7 May 1952," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 44.

[416] "V., Adam Statement, 7 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 271.

[417] "Nöll, F. Statement, 25 April 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 32.

[418] "Zimber, E. Statement, 19 June 1953," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 258.

anything. Orders are orders." Zimber then divided the men into four kommandos: shooting, guarding, evacuation, and cordon.[419] Local police would also assist.

The evacuation kommando then moved to the Jewish quarter and began rounding up the Jews. One soldier remembered that the Jews of Krucha "who in the beginning did not know what was going on came voluntarily out of their houses."[420] In the end, approximately 114 Jews had been assembled in the small square where they were guarded by German soldiers.[421] Once the roundup was complete, another kommando began leading the Jews in groups of about thirty to an execution site in the forest.[422]

A member of the *Absperrung* described the operation at the shooting site. "The Jews," he remembered, "were taken from us in groups of four to five and led about 200m away where they disappeared into a depression."[423] This depression was likely an excavation for an alleged munitions bunker that the Jews had been forced to dig.[424] Here Zimber was in full command of the executions. Two German soldiers were paired off with each Jew and then Zimber gave the order to fire. Some soldiers remembered that he also walked among the victims, shooting those still alive.[425] Because the executions took place so near the village, the Jews heard the shots and screams from the forest and "cried out for they had

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[419] "Magel W. Statement, 16 June 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 163.

[420] "S., Willi Statement, 9 August 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 178.

[421] Kruchanski sel'savet," in *Pamiats': Belarus'* (Minsk: Resp. kn., 1995), p. 450; GAMO, 306/1/10. See also: *Pamyats: Kruhlyanski raion* (Minsk: Belaruskaya Entsyklapediya, 1996), pp. 369-70. Some sources give the number of victims as 156. As cited in the forthcoming Martin Dean, ed., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945*, Vol. 2 *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming in 2011)

[422] "S., Karl Statement, 5 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 382.\

[423] "S., Karl Statement, 16 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 390.

[424] "F., Mathias Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 304.

[425] "Z., Adolf Statement, 24 September 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 360.

concluded what stood before them."[426] One Jewish woman asked a soldier before she was shot "is this German culture?"[427]

After all the Jews had been shot, the soldiers returned to their quarters. Local Soviet civilians and possibly militia were also likely present. One soldier recalled hearing that the killing "ended horribly" with Soviet civilians "eagerly" beating to death those Jews who were not already dead.[428] These civilians also were tasked with covering the grave but had left arms and other body parts protruding from the ground. Once this task was complete, they were "allowed to plunder the homes of the murdered Jews."[429]

One out of Three: Reactions to the Krucha Killings

> "A certain unease was noticeable in the company the whole day."
> - Sergeant Adolf Z., 24 September 1951[430]

> "Not much was said in soldier circles about the execution. The events rushed ahead so that one had no time to indulge his own thoughts."
> - Private Karl B., 5 December 1953[431]

In contrast to the Krupki killings, the responses of the soldiers in the Krucha action are well-documented. It is important to note that, while statements of regret and disagreement with such actions are common in postwar testimonies, the detail and variety in the 3rd

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[426] "S., Willi Statement, 9 August 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 178.

[427] "V., Adam Statement, 7 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 272.

[428] This is partially a trope in postwar German testimony. There was a tendency to highlight the behavior of the locals as especially brutal and gratuitous as compared to the professional behavior of German soldiers.

[429] "B., Josef Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 310. It is worth noting that former German soldiers were far more willing to discuss atrocities committed by local populations than by their own comrades.

[430] "Z., Adolf Statement, 24 September 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 359.

[431] "B., Karl Statement, 5 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 379.

Company case are exceptional and, thus, lend a greater degree of credibility to the statements. Perhaps due to its intimate nature, the action appears to have caused intense emotional reactions among the men. One man remembered that he "could read on the faces of my comrades that they detested this method of dealing with the Jews."[432] The company clerk presented a more even differentiated analysis of the company's reactions. "Overall," he testified, "I had the impression that the larger part of the company carried out the order with reluctance and felt its rationale to be poor. However, there were also people who found the order, while brutal, necessary with regard to the experience with the partisans."[433] Another man reported that "the shooting was derided amongst the men because it had been people who had not fought and were only being shot because of their race."[434] The experience was both collective and deeply personal. Willi S. explained, "we were all so shocked that as we sat down together that evening, hardly anything was said about the incident. In particular, no one related what he personally had done."[435]

One soldier who had been in the shooting detail told a comrade that he would never forget what he saw.[436] Another told a friend that it "affected him so much that he couldn't eat."[437] Wilhelm Magel, who had also been at the shooting pits, wrote his brother that evening that "this had been the most terrible day of my life and that it was said that an evil

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[432] "S., Karl Statement, 16 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 390.

[433] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 336.

[434] "S., Karl Statement, 5 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 383.

[435] "S., Willi Statement, 9 August 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 178-9.

[436] "Schäfer, W. Statement, 29 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 392.

[437] "S., Willi Statement, 9 August 1951," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 178.

seed had been sown."[438] Many who had been in close proximity to the shooting were "completely shaken and very close to a nervous breakdown."[439]

The men of 3rd company demonstrate a wide variety of emotional reactions to this killing. Clearly most men felt some form of shock. By all accounts, this type of operation was not something that they had been exposed to before, certainly not in the Loire Valley. The men were upset, uneasy, and disgusted. However, the reasons behind this reaction are varied and often unclear. For many it simply felt wrong. Some soldiers thought that this was not a job for the army or that the Jews were not legitimate targets. For others engaged more intimately in killing, the violent scenes and physical revulsion were traumatic. There also seems to have been a sense of shame and denial for some who did not wish to speak about or recognize what they had participated in. It is not apologetic to recognize the stress and emotional trauma the killings caused. These emotional reactions do not by themselves signal disagreement with the policy in principle or an increased tendency to resist or evade participation. They do, however, at the very least indicate that, at this point in time, these men were neither zealous killers nor numb to the gravity of what they were doing. "If I was asked today," one former soldier stated, "what my comrades said about the execution, I can only say that everyone back then said that they would never do something like that again."[440]

This case does contain two examples of men who made the decision not to participate in the first place. One of them, Wilhelm Magel, had been selected by First Sergeant Zimber

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[438] "M., Wilhelm Statement, 8 August 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 173.

[439] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 337.

[440] "L., Wilhelm Statement, 5 February 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 215. The trauma and distress relating to first time participations in kiling is not uncommon and can be seen in other killing units, even those tasked explicitly with murder such as Police Battalion 101.

as part of the shooting detail. Magel found himself walking next to a sergeant who was also a doctor of theology. He stated that as they walked they discussed "how they could get out of the situation as quickly as possible.[441] At the shooting site, Magel was paired off with the theologian, and a soldier brought five Jews to stand in front of the ten-man firing squad. While a local policeman yelled at the Jews to face away from the soldiers, the theologian asked Zimber if they could be relieved from this detail. He replied that as soon as the next two soldiers arrived to relieve them, they could return to guarding the Jews in the square. Zimber then gave the order to aim and fire. Magel fired as well, though he claimed that he closed his eyes and did not aim, and that "his" Jew had not been hit. At Zimber's order, the local policeman shot this remaining Jew, and Magel and the theologian returned to Krucha for guard duty in the square.

While Magel was one of the defendants in this case with a vested judicial interest in denying direct involvement in the killing at Krucha, there was supporting evidence that he was telling the truth. He told his brother of this occurrence while lying wounded in a hospital in 1942, as well as his wife after the war . One soldier supported Magel's claim of being released from shooting. Magel was certainly disturbed by the action and wrote that evening in a letter home, "Here, a bad seed was sown."[442] Another man, Sergeant Leopold W., stated that Zimber had told him the night before the execution that he would be in the shooting detail. W. replied that "this wasn't my thing and there were enough people who would do this voluntarily." Zimber then reassigned Winter to guard duty.[443]

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[441] "M., Wilhelm Statement, 8 August 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 172.

[442] "1941 in Rußland: Befehl zu Erschießungen verweigert," *Abendpost*, 3 May 1954, 6.

[443] "W., Leopold Statement, 29 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 326.

If we accept Winter's version of events, Magel's story raises several crucial points. First, clearly there was an opportunity to withdraw from the shooting without any negative consequences. Second, if this opportunity was apparent at least to Magel and the theologian, then it would presumably have been apparent to others as well. This, then, raises another question. Given the general unease and discontent with this operation, why didn't more soldiers ask not to participate? Of course, it is possible that others did and their stories did not make it into the record. However, it seems more likely that most did not. One significant factor in the men's reaction of traumatized compliance may have been the paralyzing effect of the newness of the operation. This was a unit recently on light duty in France and not yet accustomed to the brutalities of the eastern front. Indeed, the use of two soldiers for each victim speaks of a traditional military firing squad, not the more economical one bullet, one victim technique of killers experienced in mass executions.

However, one man chose to refuse, not just for himself but for his entire unit. This most remarkable example of a refusal to participate in killing comes not from 3rd Company, but from the 1st Company, commanded by forty-seven-year-old Josef Sibille. Sibille refused the order outright. In fact, what makes the 3rd Company case so unique is that the historian is confronted with a situation in which three companies of the same unit in the same area were presented with the same order to kill Jews and that this order resulted in three different outcomes. The 2nd Company, under First Lieutenant Kuhls, thirty-three, who was both a party and SS member and considered to be "radical and anti-religious" and an outspoken anti-Semite, complied immediately and eagerly with the order, executing Jews in its nearby

area of operations.[444] The officers of 3rd Company hesitated, but eventually complied, yet the commander of 1st Company, Sibille (also a Nazi party member), refused.

There is frustratingly little information about why this commander took this action. He briefly explained himself in a letter written to the senior prosecutor in February 1953. In it, he states that on 6 or 7 October, he received a telephone call from the battalion commander, Major Alfred Commichau, in which he was ordered to kill all the Jews in his area. Sibille testified at the Nöll/Zimber trial that Commichau had told him "as long as the Jews are not eliminated, we will not have any peace from the partisans. The Jewish action in your area must therefore be completed in the end."[445] Sibille relates that this order caused him "anxious hours and a sleepless night" until he made his decision. After repeated urgent phone calls, he informed Commichau that "my company would not shoot any Jews." He explained that he could not "expect decent German soldiers to dirty their hands with such things."[446] Major Commichau then asked Sibille when he would "be hard for once," to which the lieutenant replied, "in this case, never." Commichau then said, "Enough. You have three days to carry out this order." Again, Sibille refused, saying he would never carry it out and that he would not besmirch his honor or that of his company.[447]

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[444] Fritz Bauer, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1968), 374, Ulrike Jureit Mikael Wildt, and Birgit Otte, *Crimes of the German Wehrmacht: Dimensions of a War of Annihilation, 1941-1944. An Outline of the Exhibition*, trans. Paula Bradish (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS Verlasges. mbH, 2004), 29. Fritz Bauer, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1968), 377.For characterization of Kuhls, see "B., Josef Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 310.

[445] "Bataillonskommandeur gab Erschießungsbefehl," *Darmstädter Tagblatt*, 3 May 1954.Josef Sibille kept a series of newspaper clippings from the trial. His family was kind enough to share them with me.

[446] "Sibille Letter, 2.2.1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. III), 207-9.

[447] Fritz Bauer, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1968), 377.

There appear to have been no real consequences to Sibille's disobedience. He wrote that "as a result of my behavior, I later heard that I had been judged as too soft."[448] Indeed, First Lieutenant Sibille saw Major Commichau five days later, and Commichau did not mention the incident at all.[449] Sibille attributed this to and considered himself vindicated by a later alleged Army order forbidding the participation of the *Wehrmacht* in Jewish shootings. This is likely a misinterpretation of Army policy forbidding soldiers to participate without orders. As the Mogilev Conference indicates, the Army was certainly willing to do so when the antipartisan rationale was marshaled.

Beyond his honor argument, we know very little about Sibille's motivations. Were his objections based solely on some form of honor and professionalism or was that a standard cover for a deeper moral objection? There is some evidence from the his family to support both. As a World War I veteran who had fought on the Western Front, Captain Sibille would likely have found the conduct of World War II in the East disagreeable. According to his granddaughter, he was also a religious man who refused to allow his two sons to attend Hitler Youth gatherings because they conflicted with church. He only acquiesced after he received pressure in the school where he taught.[450] Sibille's membership in the Nazi party seems less instructive in this context. What is undeniable is that First Lieutenant Sibille refused openly and repeatedly to carry out an order to kill and that he suffered no repercussions for this behavior. If Sibille and Kuhls represent the extremes of response, then Nöll and Zimber likely represent the norm (and the reactions of the majority of soldiers and officers in similar

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[448] "Sibille Letter, 2.2.1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. III), 208.

[449] Fritz Bauer, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam, 1968), 377.

[450] "Correspondence with Christiane Sibille, 3 October 2010," (Author's Personal Collection).

positions). Therefore, understanding their response is vital. Given the hesitation and debate, how did they come to the decision to obey rather than to choose Sibille's path?

A Leadership Dilemma: Nöll and Zimber's Partnership in Murder

When examining any unit's participation in mass murder, one must begin with the leaders themselves, for it is improbable that 3rd company soldiers would have killed had *their* commander, like Sibille, refused. Captain Nöll was forty-four and, like Major Waldow, a school teacher. He had served in World War I and joined the reserves in 1919. Characterizations of him by his soldiers are mixed. One soldier judged him to be "respected and beloved due to his correct and fair attitude."[451] Another, however, described him as "ruthlessly strict and bureaucratically minded," an officer who "had only his favorites but was otherwise not well liked by us."[452] One noted that, "like many schoolteachers who became officers, he was excessively correct, one could say exaggeratedly so, and considered all orders to be carried out with pedantic accuracy."[453] His nephew recalled that he tolerated no "back talk" from the children and was very strict even in his own family.[454] Nöll does not come across as a particularly strong leader. He "mostly remained in his quarters" while sending squads out on antipartisan operations.[455] Indeed, Nöll himself claimed that on the day of the shooting he stayed in the company office.[456] Subsequently, as a battalion

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[451] "F., Mathias Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 303.

[452] "B., Karl Statement, 5 December 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 379.

[453] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 330-1.

[454] "Correspondence with Dr. Wolfgang Nöll, 23 August 2010," (Author's Personal Collection).

[455] "F., Mathias Statement, 29 June 1953," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 304.

[456] "Nöll, F. Statement, 25 April 1951," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 33.

commander, he apparently was accused of cowardice before the enemy and only escaped execution when the Russians overran the German position.[457]

Nöll, a weak and indecisive man, felt perhaps that he personally should not participate, but instead of refusing also on behalf of his men, he chose to delegate the unpleasant assignment to his subordinate. During his trial, Nöll stated that one of the reasons for his failure to protest the order was that he did not want his actions to be "interpreted badly" by others.[458] He did not want to appear weak or disloyal…and because of this he allowed at least 150 people to be murdered. He further attempted to minimize his responsibility as a decision-maker under oath regarding Commichau's order, "as a company commander, I didn't need to know the details. It was enough that the Major knew them."[459] Certainly this was partially a desperate attempt at self-exculpation but also reflected Nöll's unwillingness to take any ownership of his actions.

In many ways, First Sergeant Emil Zimber was the perfect complement to Nöll. Zimber was born in Switzerland but moved to Freiburg, Germany, at the age of seven after his parents divorced. In 1934, he joined the state police in Freiburg. Zimber entered the *Wehrmacht* as a non-commissioned officer with a twelve-year commitment in 1937.[460] By the time 3rd Company arrived in Kovno, he was the First Sergeant, the highest ranking enlisted man in the company. His soldiers, however, did not hold him in high regard. Adam Veit was Zimber's orderly and knew him well. "He was very timid," Veit remembered. "I

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[457] "K., Helmuth Statement, 28 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 318.

[458] "Bataillonskommandeur gab Erschießungsbefehl," *Darmstädter Tagblatt*, 3 May 1954.

[459] "Als Kompaniechef brauchte ich das nicht zu wissen," *Darmstädter Echo*, 2 March 1956.

[460] "Zimber, E. Statement, 9 January 1952," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 8.

also don't believe he was a good soldier at the front. From my perspective, he lacked courage. He had, however, a good appearance."[461] Company clerk Hans Wallenstein confirmed this opinion, and his characterization bears repeating in its entirety.

> If I remember correctly, he was a career soldier. When I first met him, he was still a sergeant. His single ambition was to become a First Sergeant, which he finally had achieved. He was very ambitious. From outward appearance he came across as extremely tough and brusk. One could tell that he took great pains to give this impression to the outside world. In reality, however, he was of a weak disposition. As a result, he sometimes hazed us. For example, when minor infractions occurred within the company, he was anxious to cover them up so that they wouldn't come back on him as First Sergeant. This had the effect that he would avenge offenses that he couldn't officially punish through petty treatment, extra duty, etc. The weakness of his character explains how he could quickly become enraged but in a few minutes be reconciled and calmed by a few appropriate words.[462]

Zimber's character is vital to understanding how the Krucha shooting took place. He was an ambitious, career soldier, but a small, petty man, concerned about keeping up appearances. Zimber's nature cast serious doubt on his claims of great reluctance in organizing the action. It seems clear that when Nöll could not passively evade following the order, he delegated it to Zimber and withdrew from the situation. Zimber, ambitious but also intent on hiding his weakness, then took charge of the operation to such a degree that his orderly who had followed him to the execution site observed him "walking through the bodies when the shooting was over."[463] Actions such as these, as well as choosing to personally lead the shooting detail (rather than one of the other two) and giving the fire commands, do not indicate merely carrying out orders, as Zimber later protested. He claimed that he thought the killing to be a mess [*Schweinerei*] at the time; However, the judge in his trial referred to a

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[461] "V., Adam Statement, 7 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 271.

[462] "W., Hans Statement, 26 August 1953," (LA NRW-H: H-13 Darmstaft, Nr. 919 I, Bd. II.), 331.

[463] "V., Adam Statement, 7 July 1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. II), 272.

letter he had written in reference to his prosecution that wondered why people were "seizing on these old war stories."[464] However, perhaps Zimber was telling the truth when he lamented, "if Captain Nöll would have found the courage, his subordinates would all have been relieved. He has burdened all our consciences."[465]

The discussion of the Krucha killing must also be viewed in the context of the organizational culture of the unit. Why were these orders given? The first stop after the Mogilev Conference must be Major Alfred Commichau. Those soldiers who testified about him remembered him as a good superior. There was no mention of antisemitism. However, it seems clear that Commichau's orders were tolerated if not approved by the regiment despite the regimental commander's protestations that "Jewish shootings were neither ordered nor carried out in my regiment."[466] Indeed, the commander, Colonel Erich Müller, had the temerity to claim that he had reprimanded Commichau and had him transferred from the regiment. Even then he couched it as telling Commichau that he had "gone too far" in a "reprisal measure."[467] However, if Commichau was to have been transferred for bad behavior, why was he still in the regiment five months later and why did Müller himself rate him as an officer of "impeccable character" who demonstrated "agility and vigor in the leadership of his battalion?"[468] The answer is that Commichau's actions were neither deemed objectionable nor condemned at the time, and that Müller's postwar account is a

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[464] "Bataillonskommandeur gab Erschießungsbefehl," *Darmstädter Tagblatt*, 3 May 1954.

[465] "Zimber, E. Statement, 7 May 1952," (LA-NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 49.

[466] "M., Erich Statement, 19 September 1952," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. I), 74.

[467] Ibid.

[468] "Major Alfred Commichau Evaluation, 26 February 1942," (BA-MA: PERS 6-11125).

transparent fabrication, possibly aimed at deflecting attention from an organizational participation in genocide in which he was also complicit if not responsible.

In a 15 November memo to *rHGM*, the 339th Division commander, General Hewelcke, noted that the employment of Ordnungsdienst units "led to unpleasant incidents during the execution of the Jews of Borissow [sic]. Local actions should only be carried out with simultaneous coordination with the troops. Instructions of the SD for the Ordnungsdienst may only be given through *Orts*-, *Standort*-, or Section commanders."[469] Far from distancing the *Wehrmacht* from anti-Jewish actions, this memo directed that they be more closely integrated. In the same memo, General Hewelcke suggested that some of the possessions taken from the murdered Jews of Borisov be handed over to the local civilian populations. The November operational summary from the 339th Infantry Division contained even more telling evidence of an organizational anti-Jewish stance. It noted, "in places where a cleaning up of Jews by the SD has not yet taken place, a greater reticence of the population can be detected. In such areas, pacification actions only rarely lead to full success because the approach of the troops is betrayed in time."[470] The lessons of the Mogilev Conference could hardly be more clearly articulated than in this entry: Jews were the enemy or, at the very least, supported the enemy and their removal made things easier and safer for the *Wehrmacht*.

For the men, the situation was at least in some ways similar to Krupki. These were men unaccustomed to such actions and, by extension, they were as unpracticed in methods of

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[469] "Ordnungsdienst" here is a term that likely means local auxiliaries or militia. Often, these were volunteer forces from the Baltic States or local militias. "339 ID Lagebericht, Abt. VII, 15 November 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-339-7), Anl. 6.

[470]"339 ID Tätigkeitsbericht für November 1941, 3 December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-339-7), Anl. I/10.

evasion as they were in the techniques of mass executions. However, the nature of the environment also undoubtedly intensified some important social-psychological pressures. First, 3rd Company was isolated, alone in the village, ten miles from its headquarters. The unit was also still in the process of adapting to the nature of the war in the East, having only two months before been in France. While the threat from partisans was low, patrolling the hostile environment of Belarus with its dark forests and swamps must have created a degree of apprehension. Secondly, here the antipartisan justification was explicitly used to play upon these fears and to justify killing Jews. Finally, the same compartmentalizing division of labor was used as in Krupki with the crucial exception being that there were no SS units present to carry out the actual killing. 3rd Company carried out the Krucha execution completely on its own. However, while these pressures perhaps made evasion or refusal harder for individual soldiers, it was clearly not impossible, as the Magel and Winter examples demonstrate. Moreover, it is possible that First Lieutenant Sibille interpreted these same conditions of isolation as giving him the space to ignore the order, knowing that his commander could not easily check up on him or personally confront him.

The Krucha killing is highly instructive in a variety of ways. First, it demonstrates the dissemination of the Jewish-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus as formulated in Mogilev, from the highest level to the lowest. It is a rare example of a *direct causal link* between such exhortations to increased violence against Jews as partisans and actual killing actions. Secondly, the case of 3rd Company demonstrates the intense emotional impact of these killings on soldiers, the factors leading to their participation in spite of these responses, but also the real opportunities at both the soldier and officer level to *avoid* this participation without adverse consequences. Moreover, we see the importance of leadership at the ground

level in determining whether units would participate or not participate. In other words, the draconian discipline of the *Wehrmacht* worked both ways. Finally, the progression from the Mogilev Conference to the Krucha action to the November reports from the 339th Division demonstrate, at least for this unit, a movement from ad hoc complicity in genocide to a more regimented habitual form. It is this further routinization of *Wehrmacht* participation in genocide, then, to which we now turn.

V. Routinization- Daily Participation in the Nazi Genocidal Project in Slonim and Novogrudok

Introduction

> My cousin Hanna Eilender from Suwalki was at the 14 November 1941 shooting. She was among the few— perhaps 60—who were considered already shot, but in reality not dead. A few were completely untouched. My cousin had not been hit. She lay under a few bodies and worked her way out of the grave later in the night. She told me as soon as she returned to the ghetto that Lithuanian auxiliaries had been left behind at the grave, who were completely drunk. In this way, a few others also were able to escape. My cousin Hanna Eilender was still alive when I left the Slonim ghetto. I have not heard anything of her whereabouts since.
>
> -Kasriel Eilender, Slonim survivor[471]

> I had been given a silver cigarette case by a Jew as a gift that had a Czarist eagle engraved on it. I took it to a Jewish jeweler to have it made into a locket for my wife. The jeweler asked to see my hand. I showed it to him. He then said something to his wife that I didn't understand. I asked him what he had said. He had said to his wife, "He wasn't there." Upon my further questioning, he said, "at the digging of the mass graves meant for the Jews."
>
> - Franz L., 20 March 1961[472]

On the evening of 14 November, Franz L. climbed out of a truck on the outskirts of the town of Slonim. The darkness was broken only by a series of campfires built by the soldiers there. L. was met by his sergeant, Hans R. "Franz," he said, "it would be better if we just put a bullet in our heads now." Together they walked to the edge of one of three mass graves, where Sergeant R. explained that several thousand Jewish men, women, and children had been forced to strip naked and were shot in the pit. By the firelight, Franz could see

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[471] "Eilender, K. Statement, 11 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2205-6.

[472] "L., Franz Statement, 20 March 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 130-1.

thousands of naked bodies. He noticed that several containers of alcohol stood near the grave. Piles of clothes divided by age and sex lay nearby. As Sergeant R. spoke, tears ran down his cheeks.[473] Soldier Karl M. was also tasked with guarding the Slonim execution site. He remembered that the scene was "terrible and ghastly to see. The air stank of blood and sweat." Suddenly, he heard a child's voice cry out several times for "Mama." The voice, it seemed to him, "sounded buried, crying out from the depths." Then all was quiet.[474] At dawn after spending an icy night keeping watch over the murdered Jews of Slonim, the soldiers of the 6th Company, 727th Infantry Regiment returned to their barracks.

The actions of the 6th Company in Slonim (and of other 727th soldiers in surrounding areas) are emblematic of an escalation in *Wehrmacht* collusion in the Holocaust. German soldiers were no longer merely assisting in killings in towns they happened to be in while advancing. The units in the following cases lived side by side with the Nazi administration and its victims and found themselves deeply complicit in their deaths. The behavior of German army units in Slonim and Novogrudok demonstrates the depth of this cooperation, in particular how the role of the Army in the Nazi genocidal project was negotiated and the extent to which it became routinized.

The 707th Infantry Division was created on 2 May 1941 in Bavaria. It had two infantry regiments: the 747th and the 727th Infantry Regiment coming from the Munich area.[475] The division was intended to function as a second-line occupation unit, and the average age of thirty reflected this. At the same time, however, it was made up of a large

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[473] Ibid., 131-2.

[474] "M., Karl Statement, 7 July 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2741.

[475] Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945*, vol. 12 (Osnabrück: Biblio, 1975), 156.

number of elite mountain troops from the 1st *Gebirgsdivision* and had, perhaps, been envisioned for action in the Balkans. Indeed, its future commander had been getting a "refresher" in troop leading on the staff of the 99th *Gebirgsjägerreiment* in Serbia in April 1941.[476]

This commander, fifty-two year old Generalmajor Gustav Freiherr von Mauchenheim gennante Bechtolsheim, was a Bavarian whose father had also been a general.[477] As in Krupki and Krucha, leadership was vitally importantly, at all levels. Gustav Bechtolsheim had fought in World War I from beginning to end. An infantryman, he had been wounded at Verdun and then again in Macedonia, and had seen extensive action, fighting on the Western, Eastern, Serbian/Macedonian, and Italian fronts.[478] After World War I, Bechtolsheim served in various positions in the Reichswehr.

Bechtolsheim was a dedicated Nazi. An evaluation report in 1939 credited him with "a high sense of responsibility and a positive attitude toward the National Socialist state."[479] In 1943, he was evaluated as someone "embodying the major ideas of National Socialism" who "understands to communicate the national socialist body of thought to others."[480] Part of this body of ideas was a rabid antisemitism. As a fervent racist and Nazi, Bechtolsheim was certainly a driving force behind the behavior of his division, as many of his directives

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[476] Hannes Heer, "Extreme Normalität: Generalmajor Gustav Freiherr von Mauchenheim gen. Bechtolsheim-Umfeld, Motive und Entschlussbildung eines Holocaust-Täters," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51, no. 8 (2003): 731.

[477] "Generalmajor Gustav Freiherr von Mauchenheim gen. Bechtolsheim Personal Nachweis," (BA-MA: PERS 6-1616).

[478] Ibid.

[479] "Generalmajor Gustav Freiherr von Mauchenheim gen. Bechtolsheim Officer Evaluation, 15 April 1939," (BA-MA: PERS 6-1616).

[480] "Generalmajor Gustav Freiherr von Mauchenheim gen. Bechtolsheim Officer Evaluation, 26 February 1943," (BA-MA: PERS 6-1616).

indicate.

The 707th Division arrived on the Eastern front in August 1941 with the 2nd Battalion, 727th Infantry Regiment reaching the Baranovichi region on the 14th.[481] A number of companies of the 727th were stationed in the area: the 6th Company in Slonim, the 7th Company in Novogrudok, the 8th in Baranovichi and Stolpce, the 12th in Sczczuczyn, and the 10th and11th Companies in the vicinity of Lida. On 1 September, the region of Belarus roughly from Borisov west to the Polish border became part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland (RKO)*. This division marked the boundary between continued military and newly-established civilian administrative control, with everything to the east remaining part of *rHGM*. The *RKO* fell under the control of the Ministry for the Occupied Territories led by Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German and one of the Nazi party's chief racial theorists. While four *Reichskommissariats* were envisioned, the circumstances of the war allowed only for the establishment of two, *Ostland* (which included the Baltic states and Belarus), and the Ukraine.

The *RKO* was under the command of Heinrich Lohse. Lohse was a forty-five-year-old politician, a heavyset party functionary who also served as the *Oberpräsident* of German Schleswig-Holstein. Though he claimed to be guided by a dedication to "construction and culture," in reality he was "neither a significant personality nor a dynamic leader."[482] Indeed, at times his more economic approach to Jewish policy conflicted with the more annihilationist bent of the SS. Within *RKO,* the territory Lohse presided over was divided into four administrative units called *Generalbezirken*.

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[481] "rHGM Tagesmeldung, 14 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 22-226), 36.

[482] H. D. Handrack, *Das Reichskommissariat Ostland : die Kulturpolitik der deutschen Verwaltung zwischen Autonomie und Gleichschaltung 1941-1944* (Hannover-Münden: Gauke, 1981), 83.

Of these, we are most concerned with the *Generalbezirk Weißruthenien* governed by Wilhelm Kube, a fifty-four-year-old Prussian bureaucrat. However, for the Nazi administration, White Russia was not nearly as important as the Baltic States or the Ukraine. Kube had been removed from his position as president of Brandenburg due to corruption in 1936. Fortunately, Hitler felt "sympathetic toward him and fingered him for a position in the occupation administration in the East.[483] Kube saw this appointment as a new start and sought to "optimize the economic exploitation of the region through cooperation with the population."[484] His attitude toward the Jews was pragmatic but certainly not beneficent. He stated in July 1942, for example, that he would "prefer to eliminate the Jews in *Generalbezirk Weißruthenien* once and for all as soon as the Jews are no longer needed by the *Wehrmacht* for economic reasons."[485] Kube would be assassinated in 1943 when a bomb was placed under his bed by a partisan. The final civilian administrator of interest was Gerhard Erren, *Gebietskommissar* for the Slonim region. It is to Slonim that we now turn.

Zyrowice and the Czepielow Forest: Two 6th Company Killing Operations

> Esther Fuchsman (herself a nurse)... and her younger sister, half-naked in the cold, had been standing at the edge of the ditch. A bullet had gone through her hand and into her sister's head. Both of them fell into the ditch. Still in possession of her faculties, she had struggled to keep her head high enough to breathe, but her moving body out of sight of guards. Her sister had died instantly….Meanwhile, the astounded guards who reported for duty at the ditches, found traces of blood going from the graves to the woods and concluded that during the night some of the corpses had escaped.
>
> - Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry*[486]

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[483] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 161.

[484] Ibid., 162.

[485] Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, *"The Good Old Days" : The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, 1st American ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 181.

[486] Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 93.

The 6th Company was stationed in the town of Slonim in western Belarus by 21 August.[487] Slonim is a very old town, first mentioned in medieval chronicles around 1040. As the town rests in a valley along the Sczara river, its name Slonim likely derives from a Slavic word for valley or lowland.[488] By 1551, there was a Jewish community there.[489] This Jewish community was a large portion of the town itself. In 1897, the total population of Slonim was 15,893 of whom 10,588 were Jews.[490] According to Gerhard Erren, in 1941 there were around 25,000 Jews in the surrounding area with 16,000 in the town itself.[491] However, this number greatly increased after 1939 as Jewish refugees from Warsaw, Lodz, and other cities under Nazi occupation flowed into the area around Slonim. The town itself had a vibrant Jewish life with at least seven synagogues, the largest of which remains today in a semi-ruined state. Slonim was the center of an important Hasidic dynasty as well. Down a small alley from the main synagogue is the Old Marketplace, where the Jewish merchants would gather to sell their wares. The river provided the basis for a relatively brisk economy centered around Slonim's breweries, tanneries, and brick factories; the monopoly for brewing in Slonim, in fact, had been held by Jews since 1558.[492] One historian noted that

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[487] "Map: Vorläufiger Einsatzraum 707 ID, 21 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-221-13b), Anl. 570.

[488] Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 3.

[489] Slonim Entry *The Jewish Encyclopedia; a Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907), 408.

[490] Herman Rosenthal and J.G. Lipman, "Slonim," in *The Jewish encyclopedia; a descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907), 409.

[491] Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, *"The Good Old Days" : The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, 1st American ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 178.

[492] Herman Rosenthal and J.G. Lipman, "Slonim," in *The Jewish encyclopedia; a descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day* (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1907), 409.

even though Slonim developed into an industrial locale near the railroad junction of Baranovichi, it became even more a "Jewish shtetl."[493]

Slonim was occupied by German troops on 24 June 1941, likely by elements of the 47th Panzer Corps.[494] Killings began almost immediately. Located along the R2 main logistical route, the town was frequently visited by various *Einsatzgruppen* units. Elements of *Einsatzkommando* 8 were stationed in Slonim on 3 July.[495] On 17 July, the 252nd Infantry Division reported that "police roundups" had netted a large number of "communists and unsafe elements."[496] This was likely the first major action by *Einsatzkommando* 8 that killed approximately 2,000 Jews, including some of the leading inhabitants of the town. Police Regiment Mitte reported this killing to Berlin, writing: "During yesterday's 'cleansing action' [*Sauberungsaktion*] 1,153 Jewish plunderers were killed by Police Regiment Center.[497] On August 12, *Einsatzgruppe* B reported killing 52 "followers of Bolshevism" and "looters.[498]

The commander of the 6th Company, First Lieutenant Fritz Glück, set up an *Ortskommandantur* to administer the town upon his arrival. Several men of the company

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[493] Hans-Heinrich Nolte and Ljuba Israeljewna Abramowitsch, *Die Leere in Slonim* (Dortmund: Internationales Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk GmbH, 2005), 29.

[494] "Wolkowyski, S. Statement, 17 July 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5663, Klaus-Jürgen Thies, *Der Ostfeldzug: Heeresgruppe Mitte, 21.6.1941 - 6.12.1941 ; ein Lageatlas der Operationsabteilung des Generalstabs des Heeres* (Bissendorf: Biblio-Verl., 2001), 7.

[495] EM 11- 3 July 1941, Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 5.

[496] "252 ID Kriegestagebuch, 17 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-73), 56.

[497] Hans-Heinrich Nolte and Ljuba Israeljewna Abramowitsch, *Die Leere in Slonim* (Dortmund: Internationales Bildungs- und Begegnungswerk GmbH, 2005), 47.

[498] EM 32- 24 July 1941, EM 50-12 August 1941 Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 45, 83.

were permanently employed in this capacity. Glück was a Nazi party member and rabid antisemite. A 6th company soldier described him as a "Jew-hater" who "drank lots of schnapps and was often drunk."[499] Another painted him as a "fanatic National Socialist."[500] His top NCO in the *Ortskommandantur* remembered he was a wearer of the prestigious "Blood Order" medal and was "mostly drunk."[501] This witness had also heard that a drunken Glück had dragged two Jews out of a house and shot them. Franz L. recalled that "not a day went by that he didn't stagger around the kaserne courtyard in a very drunken state, firing wildly with his pistol."[502]

It was this man and his soldiers who governed Slonim until the civilian administration became fully operational. During this time, Glück carried out at least one killing operation on his own authority. One early morning sometime before mid-November 1941, Glück mobilized at least one platoon (likely the 3rd) and read them an order whereby the Jews in the region were to be liquidated.[503] In a letter alerting the Ludwigsburg authorities, former soldier Robert Re. said that the order to kill the Jews had been justified due to Jewish support of the partisans, which he termed "an out-and-out lie."[504]

Glück and the 3rd platoon leader, Lieutenant Hauck, then marched their men to the small town of Zyrowice, four miles south of Slonim. Zyrowice is distinguished by a beautiful and massive Eastern Catholic monastery. In the shadow of its bright blue dome and

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[499] "E., Kurt Statement, 15 May 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2754.

[500] "L., Franz Statement, 1 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 108.

[501] "H., Johannes Statement, 6 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 128.

[502] "L., Franz Statement, 20 March 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 134.

[503] "M., Michael Statement, 9 August 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1154.

[504] "Robert R. Letter to Ludwigsburg, 22 October 1959," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 28-9.

green metal roofs, some of the soldiers of 6th company searched homes for Jews.[505] Others surrounded the town in a cordon or *Absperrung*. Glück and Hauck stood on the square as the Jews were assembled. Private Otto Stocker wrote, "that during the round-up of the Jews force naturally had to be used."[506] Once the round up was complete, the Jews were loaded onto trucks. Soldiers rode along to make sure no Jews jumped out on the way to the killing site.[507]

The trucks drove about 4 km north of the town into a forest where they met a detachment of Lithuanian soldiers.[508] Glück ordered his men to dig a grave, which they did. It appears that the Lithuanians did the bulk of the shooting, making marks on their rifles for each Jew killed.[509] It is unclear, but probable, that some 6th company soldiers also joined in voluntarily. As in other executions, the Jews were forced to strip and hand over valuables. A day or so after the killing, driver Franz L. retrieved two truckloads of clothing from the shooting site. He estimated the number of dead at two to three hundred.[510]

The Zyrowice action represents a relatively decentralized and self-initiated action and also the depth to which Glück was committed to the murder of Jews. It was undertaken under his authority and using mostly his soldiers. Indeed, many men remembered that the Lithuanian unit was under Glück's control as well. Also, his choice of one or two platoons suggests that he had already identified junior leaders and soldiers ready and willing to

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[505] "F., Johann Statement, 22 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 75-6.

[506] "S., Otto Statement, 2 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 114.

[507] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 144.

[508] It is unclear from the statements exactly what kind of formation this is, but likely it consisted of a volunteer unit.

[509] "L., Franz Statement, 1 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 107.

[510] Ibid., 106-7.

participate in these types of killings.

The November action in the Cziepelow forest by contrast represents *Wehrmacht* participation in mass murder as a highly coordinated, more complex, comprehensive, and organized operation in conjunction with local civilian authorities. Sometime before 14 November, a meeting took place between the *Gebietskommissar* Gerhard Erren, First Lieutenant Glück, SS *Unterstürmführer* Waldemar Amelung, and the platoon leader of a unit from Reserve Police Battalion 69, which was also stationed in Slonim.[511] Amelung was head of the SD office in nearby Baranovichi. The outcome of this meeting appears to have been a relatively detailed plan of action, in which the 6th company played a vital role.

First, soldiers of the company were responsible for digging the graves. A few weeks before the shooting, the men were marched into the Czepielow forest, several kilometers south of Slonim, on the road to Baranovichi. Here trucks met them with shovels. The men then dug three or four trenches, approximately 100m long, 3 m wide, and 3 m deep with a few sloping entrances.[512] The work took two to three days but was "not hard due to the sandy ground."[513] At least one Jewish survivor stated that sixty Jews were taken to dig graves and did not return.[514] One soldier claimed that the men thought these were to be antitank ditches. However, it is unlikely that many soldiers believed this; at the time Slonim was over 700km behind the front and anti-tank ditches do not require sloped entrances for people.

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[511] Wolfgang Curilla, *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust im Baltikum und in Weissrussland, 1941-1944* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2006), 613.

[512] "M., Karl Statement, 7 July 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2737-8.

[513] "S., Georg Statement, 24 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 66.

[514] "Eilender, K. Statement, 11 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2205.

The men of the company, assembled in the early morning hours of 14 November, would follow a routine procedure similar to that first used at Krupki and Krucha. First Lieutenant Glück appeared along with an SS officer. Several soldiers recall Glück telling the men that a large *Aktion* against the Jews of Slonim would take place.[515] "We knew then," stated one, "that the Jews would be shot."[516] A company cook, Alexander L., recalled that the SS officer informed the company "the Führer has ordered the extermination of the Jews. Because the SS will be occupied with the execution, our company would have to take over the *Absperrung*. The shootings would be carried out by a Lithuanian company that already had experience in this area. However, soldiers from the company could also volunteer for this duty." L. was then ordered to fall out and prepare coffee and breakfast by 2 am.[517] Several soldiers remember this call for volunteers.[518] According to at least two witnesses, 6th company men *did* volunteer to participate in shooting.[519]

The operation began shortly thereafter and followed what is now a familiar process. Some soldiers conducted the outer *Absperrung* of Slonim. Unlike Krupki or Krucha, Slonim was a large, populous town and many Jews attempted to flee. This time, the *Absperrung* soldiers were to check for specially issued IDs. Some Jews did try to pass the cordon, but were turned around and sent back to town. One Jewish resident of Slonim, Zvi Szeptynski,

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[515] "A., Erich Statement, 16 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 92, "F., Johannes Statement, 23 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 69-70.

[516] "M., Ivo Statement, 30 May 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 803.

[517] "L., Alexander Statement, 6 December 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2666-7.

[518] See "R., Hubert Statement, 28 June 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/1551), 82, "G., Ludwig Statement, 31 May 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 198, "H., Xavier Statement, 30 May 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 194-5, "O., Ernst Statement, 22 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 80.

[519] See "R., Hubert Statement, 28 June 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/1551), 82, "R., Hubert Statement, 6 January 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 204, "N., Anton Statement, 28 November 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2115.

remembered that he was stopped on his way to work by police and *Werhmacht* soldiers and told to return to his house and remain there for the rest of the day.[520] A 6th Company private recalled a Jew who approached him and offered in "perfect German" to give him 50,000 RM to be allowed to pass. The soldier turned the man back, he later claimed, because he was being observed by his squad and platoon leader.[521]

In the town itself, other soldiers, along with police, Lithuanians and SS, rounded up the Jews and guarded them in the marketplace. During the round up, worker identity cards issued by the *Gebietskommissar* were of vital importance. Only those holding these so-called "life cards" were spared. Dietrich Hick, head of Jewish Affairs for the region, had submitted a list of names, which Erren had personally edited and approved. All those not on this list were targeted for extermination. This led to tragic scenes. Eighteen-year old Rachel Klenicki stood with her uncle and her cousin as German soldiers sorted out those with work cards. She described what happened next. "When my uncle became aware of what was going to happen," she remembered, "he leapt into the Sczara river. His daughter jumped in after him and both drowned."[522] German soldiers were firsthand witnesses to scenes such as these and must have understood the nature of their actions, if only through the reactions of the Jews.

Gerhard Erren, Hick, First Lieutenant Glück and countless soldiers from the *Ortskommandant* stood in the marketplace observing the selection process. Erren himself

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[520] "Szepetynski, Z. Statement, 24 June 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5714.

[521] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 143.

[522] "Klenicki, R. Statement, 5 February 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2473.

carried a whip with which he struck the Jews.[523] The marketplace was the scene of countless horrors. Nachum Alpert survived the ordeal and reported that his cousin, Chemke, refused to be separated from his family, though he had a work permit. After being forced off the truck carrying his family, Chemke climbed on again and was allowed to accompany them to their deaths.[524] The elderly and infirm were roughly shoved onto trucks, dressed only in nightgowns. 6th Company soldiers participated throughout.[525]

As in previous cases, the soldiers escorted the Jews to the killing site. Some rode in trucks with them while others walked beside the long columns moving out of town in the direction of Baranovichi. Accompanying them was a company of Lithuanian ”volunteers.”[526] At the killing site, the Jews were unloaded from the trucks and forced, along with those arriving on foot, to sit within sight and earshot of the execution pits. Cook L. was ordered several times to deliver food to the killing site. As he was passing a column of women and girls, several women pleaded with him, “Mr. German soldier, save my life! I will give you money and gold.”[527] But L. kept driving.

What was now a standardized routine at the execution pits followed. Here we see that the participation of soldiers was neither distant nor uninvolved. Indeed, they themselves demonstrated brutality and a willingness to kill those trying to escape. The Jews were forced to sit and wait their turn while others were shot in groups of ten. They were required to take

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[523] Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 372.

[524] Ibid., 90.

[525] "P., Friedrich Statement, 18 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 121.

[526] It is unclear from the testimony who exactly these Lithuanians were. It is likely that they were volunteers from Lithuania, brought in to serve as auxiliary military units.

[527] "L., Alexander Statement, 6 December 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2677.

off any valuable clothing and place gold, money, and jewelry in a box. 6th Company soldiers surrounded the execution site and guarded the waiting Jews. Even at this late stage in the operation, it was necessary to guard against escape. One sergeant admitted that he and a comrade shot at two escaping Jews (though they claimed not to have aimed at them.)[528] Further violence occurred at this site. According to one soldier, the Jews were "roughly pushed out of the trucks and driven to the pits. They were beaten with rifle butts and there were heartbreaking scenes between the men and the victims."[529] These behaviors strongly suggest that the men exceeded the minimum requirements of the operation and approached their tasks with a certain dedication.

The shootings themselves appear to have been carried out mainly by the SS and a Lithuanian unit attached to the 6th Company. We know that First Lieutenant Glück, however, was on scene because we have the testimony of a private who delivered several bottles of schnapps to him there around eleven o'clock.[530] SS-*Untersturmführer* Amelung was in full command of the shooting, but *Wehrmacht* men also shot the Jews of Slonim. A private stated clearly after the war that "there were also company members in the shooting kommando, who had voluntarily responded to First Lieutenant Glück's request. No one was ordered."[531] Soldiers of the company "held up Jewish infants in the air and shot them with pistols."[532] The men drank to the point of inebriation, and shot alongside the Lithuanian and SS soldiers. As one soldier described the macabre scene, it was a "real massacre. The

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[528] "F., Johannes Statement, 23 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 71.

[529] "L., Franz Statement, 1 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 107-8.

[530] "R., Hubert Statement, 6 January 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 202.

[531] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 142.

[532] "P., Friedrich Statement, 18 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 121.

shooting was somewhat haphazard [and] the shooting kommandos were very drunk."[533] Some Jews were not killed and screamed out. Some soldiers who were shooting "felt ill" and were given more schnapps.[534] The killing of between eight and ten thousand people continued until the late afternoon, so late in fact that the graves could not be covered that night but instead lay open, the murdered Jews exposed to the open air;

The 6th Company soldiers' mission was not over. They were required to spend the night at the execution site to prevent unhurt or wounded Jews from escaping. Campfires were lit to warm the men who were not patrolling around the graves. One soldier cried out in fright when a Jew crawled out of the grave near him.[535] Despite the guards' presence, a few Jews did manage to escape, aided by the drunkenness of the soldiers, as one survivor observed.[536] Patrols during the night and the next morning did result in the recapture of some escaped Jews. Private N. was part of the detail that marched out of Slonim the next morning to cover the grave. They found "a few wounded Jews, one of whom had been shot through the jaw." These people were returned to the grave and killed. At this point, N. relates that there they learned that many Jews had managed to flee. His squad leader, Sergeant Wörndle, then led the men on a patrol of the surrounding areas searching for escaped Jews. N. remembered that he and his squad captured a woman, a man, and a twelve-year old boy and returned them to the gravesite where they were murdered.[537] Other patrols were also conducted, searching for Jews who had escaped from the pit. This search also led back to

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[533] "D., Ferdinand Statement, 21 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 84.

[534] "M., Karl Statement, 7 July 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2740.

[535] "A., Gabriel Statement, 8 May 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1469.

[536] "Eilender, K. Statement, 11 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2205.

[537] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 144-5.

Slonim, where wounded survivors were dragged out of the hospital where they had sought treatment and were shot by German civil officials and police.[538] These post-execution patrols are incredibly powerful indications that these soldiers took their role in the murder of the Jews very seriously. Indeed, it would have been incredibly easy to avoid this kind of killing, which was individual, decentralized, and far from supervisory eyes.

Gerhard Erren would report in January 1942 that "Slonim was very overpopulated upon my arrival, the housing situation catastrophic. The Jewish Aktion of [14 November] provided a tangible relief…This Aktion carried out by the SD freed me of unnecessary eaters and the 7,000 Jews remaining in the town are completely engaged in the labor process. They work willingly under constant fear of death."[539] He should also have recognized the 6th Company, 727th Infantry for the pivotal role it played in facilitating and carrying out this massacre, for the large role these men played in the rounding up, shooting, and guarding of the Jewish victims.

A month later in Novogrudok, the 7th Company of the 727th Infantry Regiment commanded by forty-eight year old Captain Johann Artmann, assisted in another murder of a Jewish community, killing approximately 5,000 Jews there.[540] The participation of this Army unit was a virtual mirror image of that of the 6th in Slonim. It is further evidence of an emerging standard routine for involvement in this phase of the Final Solution. On 7 December, the night before the executions, 7th Company soldiers assisted in the round-up and

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[538] "Goldberg, S. Statement, 16 August 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2437.

[539] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde : die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 623.

[540] The primary focus of this chapter is Slonim. However, the case of the 7th Company in Nowogrudok , though less well-documented, demonstrates similar qualities and supports most of the contentions made about Slonim.

imprisonment of the victims in several buildings in a judicial complex. They stood guard outside and cooks from the company were even responsible for feeding the Jews. The cook recalled they were only fed kraut and potatoes once a day.[541] The next day, the men of the company escorted the Jews of Novogrudok out of town to a densely forested area known as Skridlevo. One soldier saw *Wehrmacht* trucks loaded with Jews heading to the execution site.[542] Also in the column were all the girls of the local Jewish orphanage, dressed in their best clothes.[543]

As in Slonim, soldiers guarded the execution site and witnessed similar scenes of terror and misery. One exceptional scene was described by Private First Class Anton H. was a medic assigned to the soldiers surrounding the shooting. As such, he was able to wander around the site at will. He watched as one Jewish man attacked a policeman with a knife, wounding him in the face. The man was then "handcuffed, thrown into the snow, and beaten to death. He was beaten between the legs, on his genitals. When he was dead, he was dragged to the grave and thrown in."[544] He also observed one of the killers who shot infants and kicked them into the grave, saying, "You are going to Abraham."[545] Again, the employment of *Wehrmacht* personnel reflected what had come to be a routine division of labor.

German soldiers likely participated in the actual shooting in Novogrudok as well.

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[541] "K., Alois Statement, 17 September 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 270-1.

[542] "W., Anton Statement, 21 August 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 395.

[543] Chaim Leibovich, "Schokdey Melocho' Ort School," in *Novogrudok : The History of a Jewish Shtetl*, ed. Jack Kagan (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 62.

[544] "H., Anton Statement, 11 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 311.

[545] "H., Anton Statement, 4 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 525.

The traveling 7th Company blacksmith reported hearing that a sergeant and a private had actively participated in the shooting and then bragged about it to him.[546] Another remembered that a Private Kasberger was "brutal" and "ruthless" and along with several other soldiers had volunteered to participate in shooting Jews.[547] Lieutenant Martin, the 1st Platoon Leader, was particularly active in this and other Jewish shootings. One of his platoon members described him as "fanatic" and remarked that "the Jews did not suit him."[548] By ghettoizing, guarding, and shooting Jews, the 7th Company (like the 6th) assisted the *Einsatzgruppen* and their Lithuanian auxiliaries in completing the murder of 5,000 Jews in two days. Major Schmitz, the battalion commander responsible for both 6th and 7th Companies, had nicknamed Novogrudok the "El Dorado of Jews" which was certainly an indication of his disdain for the Jews.[549]

"Girlfriends," Gold, and the *Gebietskommissar*: Deepening Complicity on Daily Basis

> We *Wehrmacht* officers were indignant over these measures and took the position: why not put these people to work?
> - Ludwig Greiller, Ordnance Officer 727th Infantry Regiment, 5 June 1961[550]

> If members of my company stood sentry duty at the execution site, then someone must have ordered them to do so. I was certainly not that person. I ordered nothing of the kind and had no knowledge of it…I am aware of no guilt. I have done nothing that would justify the charges leveled against me.
> - Johann Artmann, 7th Company Commander, 22

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[546] "K., Joseph Statement, 2 August 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 373.

[547] "W., Anton Statement, 21 August 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 396.

[548] "K., Alois Statement, (Undated)," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 536-7.

[549] "A., Johann Statement, 22 September 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 542.

[550] "G., Ludwig Statement, 5 June 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1523.

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1964[551]

Unlike the German units in Krupki and Krucha, the 6th and 7th companies were stationed in Slonim and Novogrudok for a relatively long period of time, approximately seven months. This lengthy occupation led in many ways to a much deeper and much more normalized complicity in the Nazi genocidal plan. Geography played a crucial role. As Slonim and Novogrudok were deep in the *Generalbezirk Weißruthenien* of Reichskommissariat Ostland, these towns fell under the jurisdiction of Nazi civilian authorities. This situation placed the *Wehrmacht* units stationed there in a triangular relationship with both the civilian authorities and the SS/SD. Officially, the *Wehrmacht* authorities were responsible for security issues and for managing critical logistical operations that impacted the military. The *Wehrmacht* was, in fact, a major player in all policies of occupation and did not confine itself to simple security concerns. One such area was the disposition of Jewish property. In addition, the long stay led to some interesting and bizarre personal relationships between Jews and the German soldiers. Finally, the longer duration of stay in these towns allowed the small minority of soldiers who wished to aid and perhaps even rescue the Jews with whom they came into contact the opportunity to do so. These personal relationships between occupier and occupied, especially Jews are rarely seen in scholarship yet are very important in our understanding

An examination of 727th units, mainly the 6th Company in Slonim but also the 7th Company in Novogrudok, yields examples of such behavior that are instructive for two reasons. First, they offer rare documentary evidence of issues that both survivors and former

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[551] "A., Johann Statement, 22 September 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 544-5.

soldiers were loathe to talk about, particularly regarding theft and personal relationships. Indeed, sometimes these situations are actually corroborated by testimony from both victim and perpetrator. Second, these areas complicate our picture of soldier motivations. In the course of postwar investigations, most soldiers claimed that their involvement in killing resulted from superior orders and that they participated only to the minimal extent that they were required. While this is itself a tendentious argument, examining German soldiers' relationships to Jewish property offers what may be clearer insights into attitudes toward participation in the Holocaust. If some element of duress induced soldiers to participate in the killing process, no such pressure existed to handle Jewish goods or engage in personal (and sexual) relations with Jews. Before moving to relationships between Jews and soldiers, however, we must first explore the complicated relationship between the *Wehrmacht* and the local civilian authorities who came to roost in this area of the occupied East.

The first real structures of occupation established by the Army in the newly conquered eastern territories took roughly three forms: direct rule by the local military commander, control by the local commander via an ad hoc *Ortskommandantur* (OK) comprised of personnel from his unit, and control by an actual numbered *Ortskommandantur* unit deployed for the express purpose of governance. In larger towns and cities, a *Feldkommandantur* (FK) would be erected to which the OKs would report. These initial military governments were responsible first and foremost for the security of the local area and of logistical routes, but quickly found themselves involved in economic and racial matters as well. These commanders wore two faces, looking out for the interests of the native inhabitants in their area while also "participating in the massive terrorization the

population."[552] On 1 September, the area of Belarus west of Minsk came under civilian control as *Generalbezirk Weißruthenien* of the *Reichskommissariate Ostland* administered by Alfred Rosenberg. The addition of a third power center along with the military authorities and SS created a different dynamic in this region than that in the previous cases. This tripartite relationship added additional power struggles and competing interests and personalities.

First Lieutenant Glück had been in control of Slonim for several weeks by the time the *Gebietskommissar*, Gerhard Erren, arrived in the beginning of September 1941. Erren was representative of the so-called "Golden Pheasants [*Goldfasanen*]," named for their brown uniforms, medals, and strutting, arrogant behavior. Erren was a teacher of history, geography, and biology at a *Reichswasserschutz* academy and later a *Freikorps* fighter. In 1936, he began his training at a NS-Ordenburg school for future Nazi elites, where he later became an instructor. He participated in the French campaign in 1940 and was appointed *Gebietskommissar Weißruthenien* in August 1941.[553] Erren was an outspoken antisemite who had once remarked after personally killing a Jew working on his headquarters building, "when one has done it once, it is as easy as jumping over a piece of straw."[554] A man named Polenz was a member of the civil administration in Slonim. He killed himself before standing trial in 1961 and described Erren in his suicide note as "intelligent, a very good speaker, musical, unfortunately without morals, extremely refined, and without a doubt an

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[552] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht : Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008), 107.

[553] C. F. Rüter and D.W. De Mildt, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1999*, vol. XXXIX (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press,2008), 678-9.

[554] "Polenz Suicide Note, 10 May 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1477.

alcoholic."[555]

Erren was assisted by Dietrich Hick, his *Referent* (or special assistant) for Jewish Affairs. One survivor recalled that Hick had a large dog that he had named "Jew." He liked to walk into the ghetto and shout "Jew!" When a Jewish inhabitant appeared, thinking he had been called, Hick would beat them mercilessly and walk away.[556] Another Jewish inhabitant of Slonim termed him simply a "fanatic" and a "psychiatric case."[557] Assigned to the civilian authorities were two branches of the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei* or Orpo): a *gendarme* detachment commanded by Lothar Schulz and a local urban police post [of the *Schutzpolizei* or Schupo] under Lieutenant Walter Bonke. The leader of the SS/SD station responsible for Slonim was SS-*Untersturmführer* Amelung, based out of nearby Baranovichi.

Like many power dynamics in the Third Reich, the official relationship between the military and the civilian authorities in *Reichskommissariats* was somewhat ambiguous. For example, a *Führer* order dated 25 June 1941 detailed the duties of the *Wehrmacht* in civilian administered areas. In addition to security concerns, the Army was expected to "support the *Reichskommissars* in their political and administrative tasks and represent them to the military, particularly regarding the exploitation of the land for the provision of the fighting troops. Given a risk of delay, the Military Commander has the right, also in civilian areas, to order measures that are necessary for the execution of military tasks. The Military Commander can temporarily delegate this right to the local commander."[558] Clearly, in areas

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[555] Ibid.

[556] "Klenicki, R. Statement, 5 February 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2475.

[557] "Goldberg, S. Statement, 16 August 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2438.

[558] "Führer Erlaß über die Ernennung von Wehrmachtsbefehlshabern in den neu besetzten Ostgebieten, 25 June 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 370-1-49), 5.

of logistics, reprisals, and even participation in racial policy, this decree allowed the Army in the *Generalbezirk* authority that overlapped and on occasion even superseded that of the civilian administrators. This could cause friction when the interests of the civilian authorities and those of the military differed, particularly regarding logistical issues. A memo from the Military Commander in *Reichskommissariat Ostland* gives an indication of the prevalence of this tension. Apparently, German soldiers had not been showing proper respect to civilian authorities, for General Walter Braemer wrote "In view of the close connection and cooperation between German soldiers and German administrative organs, moreover, in uniform, it is forbidden that they pass one another without taking notice….Every German has the duty to outwardly document the unity of the Germans….It is a rule of politeness and comradeship, not to wait long, but to greet."[559] It is apparent from documents such as these and testimony of soldiers that often some level of irritation or disrespect existed between the military and the civil authorities. However, when the military commander was a man like Bechtolsheim, ambiguity over what was considered "military necessity" also allowed for initiative taking in the escalation of policy. Subordinate leaders could choose to participate in activities against Jews for exactly this reason, given the lessons of the Mogilev conference.

In Slonim, civil and military authorities were bound together from the beginning. Glück had established an *Ortskommandantur* upon arrival in mid-August 1941. Though company members later claimed that their mission had been limited to security (read: antipartisan operations), this is largely a postwar fabrication. The men of the unit were actually engaged mainly in guarding and operating key commercial and factory sites in and around Slonim, among other things a tannery, sawmill, warehouse for appropriated goods, an

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[559] "Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Ostland Memo, 2 August 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 370-1-49), 14-5.

oil depot and a munitions dump. While the handover of authority to the civilian administration officially occurred on 1 September, the *Gebietskommissariat* in Slonim was in no position as yet to actually govern. When Erren moved into his headquarters, a large stone building on Zamkowa street, he had only three subordinates, including his driver. The early days of civilian administration were thus plagued by shortages of equipment and personnel. Erren noted in a report that he had to send two officials back to Germany to get supplies and equipment. Two of his key officials arrived four weeks late and one returned to Germany two days later due to illness.[560] By the end of October, however, Erren had received more personnel and equipment, including several female German civilian secretaries, and could finally begin to administer his new realm, which in turn encroached upon practices to which the military administration had now become accustomed to controlling.

Many soldiers after the war commented upon the strained relations between the *Wehrmacht* and the civilian administration, particularly during the long transition. There appears to have been reluctance on the part of the Army to hand over the logistical operations it controlled to the *Gebietskommissariat* and the civil administrators who "carried themselves as little kings."[561] Erren himself testified to the initial tensions between the military and the civilian authorities. "The *Wehrmacht*," he said, "completely refused in the beginning to hand over administrative authority and it took a while before we were completely in operation."[562] The military perhaps correctly feared that the political authorities would be less efficient and more corrupt, resulting in poorer logistical support. Certainly, given the

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[560] Gerhard Schoenberner and Mira Schoenberner, *Zeugen sagen aus : Berichte und Dokumente über die Judenverfolgung im "Dritten Reich"* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1988), 133.

[561] "B., Ernst Statement, 1 June 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 205-6.

[562] "Erren, G. Statement, 2 November 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 17.

Gebietskommissariat's dearth of personnel and equipment, Erren and his office frequently requested or demanded support from the military. Indeed, one soldier reported that upon arrival Erren demanded that the company's soldiers vacate a building so that his staff could live there. This allegedly so enraged Glück that he deployed a light antitank gun in front of the building in order to "dissuade" them.[563] In these areas, perhaps, the relationship between the two was, as one soldier described, "tense."[564] While sensationalistic reports that Glück had placed the *Gebietskommissariat* under house arrest or deployed artillery are likely gross exaggerations of the friction between the military and civilians, the records clearly point to tension between the military and civilian authorities.[565] These tensions should not, however, be mistaken for principled opposition to Nazi policy.

It is not, perhaps, surprising that differences would arise between the military men and the civilian officials. These Nazi bureaucrats were not the best that Germany had to offer. Often, they were posted to the East as a form of organizational exile, or they volunteered believing that it was the only place they could earn advancement in an otherwise stalled career. These were not all-stars. They spawned the nickname *Ostnieten* (Eastern nobodies or failures). The commander of *Einsatzkommando 2*, Eduard Strauch called them "'blockheads and ass-lickers, whose careers for the most part had depended on that of the Gauleiter".[566] A Nazi press officer described them in a private memo in detail:

> Now in the expanses of the East, with pretentious uniforms, titles, salaries, daily allowances and rations…a type who decks himself out with revolver and whip or

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[563] "O., Ernst Statement, 22 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 80-1.

[564] Ibid.

[565] "D., Ferdinand Statement, 21 March 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 84.

[566] Jonathan Steinberg, "The Third Reich Reflected: German Civil Administration in the Occupied Soviet Union, 1941-4," *The English Historical Review* 110, no. 437 (1995): 621.

> whatever he feels will lend him a natural mastery, superior bearing and genuine manliness. The idle and worthless type of …bureaucrat…the eternally hungry 'Organizer' with a swarm of like-minded Eastern hyenas, his whole multitudinous clique, recognizable by the two big 'Ws'—women and wine…people who enjoy Eastern luxury in food, lodgings and transport all the more the more modest their original circumstances.[567]

Thus, it is understandable that professional soldiers would take an instant dislike to these kinds of political hangers on.

However, if bureaucratic and personal disagreements were commonplace, they did not extend to Jewish policy in Slonim. In a letter to Erren dated 4 December 1941, Glück writes "according to a Regimental order from 29 November 1941, the countryside is to be cleared of all Jews. Jews in villages of less than 1,000 inhabitants are to be ghettoized in the nearest towns and forbidden to return to the countryside." Glück addressed Erren directly, "I am not personally in the position, due to a lack of transport to carry out this order. I request from you written response regarding this issue."[568] Erren's reply, that same day, is instructive. After expressing similar logistical difficulties on his end, he wrote to Glück, "You have supported me up till now in my political and racial tasks in an extremely praiseworthy fashion. I would not have been able to accomplish it with my weak police forces alone. I must therefore ask…that you seek to work with your higher headquarters so that you can continue to support the German mission in the East by making your forces available."[569] While Glück and Erren both bemoaned their lack of resources and attempted to avoid overextending their own limited manpower in moving mid-sized Jewish populations into the Slonim ghetto, the civilian administration and military authorities were in agreement

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[567] Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire : How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 152.

[568] "Letter from Oblt. Glück to Geb. Komm. Erren, 4 December 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 1450-2-38), 563.

[569] "Letter from Geb. Komm. Erren to Oblt. Glück, 4 December 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 1450-2-38), 564.

on Jewish policy in principle and had been for a significant time. The exchange between Erren and Glück shows that the frequent protestations of Glück (and others) regarding poor relations with the civil authorities did not extend to the "Jewish Question." Moreover, this letter is documentary evidence that the 727th Infantry Regiment was *directly* involved in rounding up Jews. Finally, this order falls nicely in line with General Bechtolsheim's order at the end of November, directing that his soldiers kill Jews in the countryside, freeing up the SS and police to kill Jews who had been collected in ghettos.[570]

In Novogrudok, military interactions with the civil authorities were a bit more complicated. Relations between them were "cool" and Captain Artmann was "not amenable to the wishes of the *Gebietskommissar*" about which he remained "stubborn."[571] As in Slonim, there were initial frictions regarding the handover of "different tasks" in which Artmann "held back."[572] Unlike Glück, however, Artmann does not appear to have been overly energetic in leading his company against the Jews of Novogrudok. His soldiers described him as "a good-natured fellow", as "friendly toward the Jews," "no Jew-hater, in fact, the opposite."[573] Moreover, the 7th Company cook recalled that as they left Novogrudok, Artmann rode with him in the field kitchen on the train to Bobruisk. Artmann told the cook that the killings in Novogrudok "had nothing to do with the war" and that he could "hardly bear it." It appeared that "the whole Jewish persecution cut very close to

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[570] "Kdt. In Weissruthenien, Befehl Nr. 24, 24 Nov. 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 378-1-698).

[571] "N., Arthur Statement, 21 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 581.

[572] Ibid., 579.

[573] "B., Georg Statement, 3 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 519, "D., Ludwig Statement, 16 September 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 256, "E., Lorenz Statement, 19 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 561.

him."[574] Certainly, we cannot take these comments completely at face-value, but the 6th Company case does indicate that former soldiers were often not hesitant to characterize their officers as racist or fanatical.

While the depth of Artmann's regret can be debated, he does not appear to have been an eager or aggressive commander. One of his men had the impression that he would "rather be at home."[575] Another depicted him as a man who would "rather be 100 meters behind than in front."[576] There is no evidence that he led any actions on his own initiative in the manner of Glück. However, if Artmann was not pro-active in either killing Jews on his own or in collaborating with the civil authorities, his second in command, Lieutenant Martin, was. Martin was the 1st Platoon Leader, the "elite platoon" as one soldier called it.[577] He was a "fanatic" who had once remarked "there was nothing better or gave greater pride than being in the party."[578] He was described as more "energetic" than Artmann and as an "arrogant" man who "did not have a particularly affectionate relationship with the company."[579] Perhaps this is reflected in the willingness of former soldiers to testify against him.

Martin appears to have been more independent and active than Artmann who was "hardly around" when the men trained or conducted patrols. One soldier noted that he had "never seen Artmann on an antipartisan operation and only saw him perhaps once a week."[580]

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[574] "L., Xaver Statement, 15 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 316.

[575] "B., Georg Statement, 3 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 519.

[576] "K., Alois Statement, (Undated)," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 536.

[577] "B., Georg Statement, 3 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 519.

[578] "K., Alois Statement, (Undated)," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 536-7.

[579] "N., Arthur Statement, 21 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 579.

[580] "M., Kaspar Statement, 5 November 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 527.

Martin was a man for whom "nothing could be done quick enough" while Artmann was "calmer and more easygoing."[581] Martin and Artmann also did not get along personally. Beyond their different styles of leadership, the two were allegedly "in conflict" over a woman who worked in the *Gebietskommissariat.*"[582]

As a go-getter, Martin appeared to have exercised an exceptional amount of control over the operations of the company. One soldier from his platoon stated "at least 50% of the company was of the opinion that Artmann was the commander in name only and that Martin did the essential organizing and held the company together."[583] Captain Artmann himself admitted that because he was busy with other tasks as *Ortskommandant*, Martin "was more concerned with the company."[584] "Martin was not," another platoon member testified, "the kind of man who preferred to do only what he had been ordered to do."[585] Artmann's orderly had the impression that Martin and another platoon leader "overrode" the commander.[586] Further, the company First Sergeant noted that Martin "always wanted to take the helm of the company himself, even though he was only a platoon leader."[587] It appears that Martin often *did* take over company leadership, certainly when it came to supporting the civil authorities.

This streak of independence and ambition is of increased importance because Lieutenant Martin, unlike Captain Artmann, maintained a close personal relationship with the

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[581] Ibid.

[582] Ibid.

[583] "K., Alois Statement, (Undated)," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 536-7.

[584] "A., Johann Statement, 22 September 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 541.

[585] "M., Kaspar Statement, 5 November 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 527.

[586] "E., Lorenz Statement, 19 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 562.

[587] "N., Arthur Statement, 21 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 579.

civil authorities. He was "often with the 'Golden Pheasants,'" one man recalled. He would attend parties, smoking and drinking, and often did not return to his quarters at night.[588] He often hunted with members of the *Gebietskommissariat* as well.[589] Several soldiers also confirm that he was dating a secretary from the civil administration. One man joked that, while on sentry duty, they would often see him head after duty hours toward the administration buildings and the men would say, "there he goes again."[590] The effect of all this was, as a former soldier stated, that Martin "sat together with the masters of Novogrudok" and "acted more as a liaison and had…taken on many of the suggestions of the civil administrators."[591] While the relatively passive and apathetic Artmann himself may not have wanted to engage this way, he did not or could not prevent the more active and ambitious Martin from doing so.

It seems clear that Martin was both ideologically and practically aligned with the *Gebietskommissariat* and often acted in the furtherance of their goals. Captain Artmann accused Martin, who did not survive the war, of having acted independently in cooperation with the civilian authorities, saying that he believed he could have issued orders behind his back for the participation of the company in "Jewish Actions."[592] He claimed further that he had no knowledge of his soldiers' participation in the *Absperrung* and that he had not ordered such actions.[593] There is both truth and obfuscation in Artmann's statements. It is highly

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[588] "B., Georg Statement, 3 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 520.

[589] "N., Arthur Statement, 21 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 579.

[590] "M., Kaspar Statement, 5 November 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 528.

[591] "B., Georg Statement, 3 November 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 520.

[592] "A., Johann Statement, 22 September 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 545.

[593] Ibid., 543-44.

unlikely that Lieutenant Martin acted against orders or without his commander's approval. This is both a common postwar defense tactic and, given the draconian discipline of the Army described by the same witnesses, an extraordinarily improbable event. However, the preponderance of evidence indicates the following: Captain Artmann was an indecisive and lethargic commander who delegated the day-to-day running of the company to the much younger and much more energetic Lieutenant Martin. Indeed, Artmann appears content to have remained in the background both physically and as a leader. Martin was *given* the authority to employ the company as a tool of genocidal policy by Artmann; he did not usurp it. Finally, given Martin's close ties both ideologically and socially with the civil administration, he was more than willing to help his new friends fulfill their missions and used his de facto authority as commander to do so.

The German policy of extermination in the East was, as elsewhere, accompanied by the expropriation and collection of Jewish property. The connection of anti-Jewish actions with financial gain was not causal but rather institutionalized from the beginning in the Reich.[594] While the process in Germany and Western Europe followed a "more circumscribed and 'rational' path," in the East the almost complete power exercised by local authorities made systematic looting (and corruption) an ever present facet of racial policy.[595] Frank Bajohr examines the element of corruption directly. Given the morally and professionally questionable quality of many of the civilian administrators in the East, it is

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[594] Götz Ally takes a much more extreme view of the financial element of the Holocaust, granting it perhaps excessive siginificance as a cause of anti-Jewish policy. However, his work is important in its frank depiction of the myriad ways in which the murder of Jews and finances came together in the Third Reich. See Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries : Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007).

[595] Martin Dean, "Seizure of Jewish Property and Inter-Agency Rivalry in the Reich and in the Occupied Soviet Territories.," in *Networks of Nazi Persecution : Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust*, ed. Gerald D. Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 89.

perhaps not surprising that the occupied Soviet Union was the scene of widespread theft, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption. Bajohr rightly concludes that these forms of "wild" plundering were a "mass phenomenon;" they were also widely tolerated as long as the theft was not from the party itself and remained within reason.[596]

Another area in which the Slonim case demonstrates increasing complicity by German soldiers is the disposition of Jewish property. While often the image these men attempted to portray of their participation after the war was one of isolated incidents, their relationship with Jewish property reflects a deeper, continuing role in Germany's comprehensive genocidal project. For some men, personal enrichment began immediately, in the Cziepelow forest. Franz L. recalled that, on the truck ride back from the shooting site the morning after, he observed that several fellow soldiers had "acted as graverobbers. They had taken 10-15 rings, watches, valuable pieces of clothing." He had then seen them send these things home to Germany, from the post office in Slonim.[597] First Lieutenant Glück himself took advantage of this opportunity as well. According to one private, Glück sent a *train car* full of Jewish possessions to his hometown of Rosenheim in Bavaria, along a detachment of soldiers to escort it.[598] News of Glück's self-enrichment was widely known. A blacksmith from the 7th Company in Novogrudok noted that he had taken "confiscated Jewish property, particularly fur coats."[599] There appears to have been little reluctance to loot the bodies of the

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[596] Frank Bajohr, "The Holocaust and Corruption," in *Networks of Nazi Persecution : Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust*, ed. Gerald D. Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 132-34. For more on this, see Frank Bajohr, *Parvenüs Und Profiteure : Korruption in Der Ns-Zeit* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2001).

[597] "L., Franz Statement, 20 March 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 133.

[598] "E., Kurt Statement, 15 May 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2753-4.

[599] "K., Joseph Statement, 2 August 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 372.

dead, though some men certainly viewed such behavior with distaste. This very intimate form of enrichment weakens claims of neutrality or passivity toward the killings themselves.

The expropriation of property went beyond this opportunistic looting. Several large garages near the 6th Company barracks were used to warehouse clothing from the shootings. The visiting 7th Company blacksmith recalled "huge mountains of 'good as new' clothes" that were guarded by 6th Company soldiers.[600] The Slonim synagogue was also used to store appropriated Jewish property. One Jewish worker received a written order from Dietrich Hick to remove the bathtub and sink from the apartment of a Jewish dentist and install them in a German official's house.[601] It is probable that soldiers, too, availed themselves of this kind of opportunity. Some of these goods were likely also destined for a special store set up in Slonim where these items were sold to the soldiers. One private recalled that the company members would shop there for items to send home to their families. "I wanted to buy a watch," he testified, "but I didn't because there wasn't anything good left to buy."[602] Another soldier knew a Jewish woman named Nina who worked in the shop sorting the clothing of murdered Jews. He said that one day she told him, "buy something for your wife and child before those brown scoundrels sell it all."[603] The commoditization of murdered Jews' property is a particularly disturbing turn and one that was only possible given a long term association with the murder of the Jews.

Testimonies from Krupki and Krucha do not mention this kind of personal enrichment

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[600] "K., Joseph Statement, 13 May 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 549.

[601] "Rotstein, I. Statement, 26 September 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 295.

[602] "N., Anton Statement, 7 February 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 144.

[603] "N, Wilhelm Statement, 4 December 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2159.

from killing. The men of these units had no more prior experience with the intentional expropriation of Jewish property than they did with these mass killings themselves. The tempo and newness of these operations likely meant that the opportunity for personal enrichment was perhaps not as apparent. In Slonim and Novogrudok, soldiers had plenty of time to realize that the murder of Jews offered the chance for personal gain. They also recognized how they could do this.

Indeed, in Slonim, Gerhard Erren set the example, demanding a payment of 2,000,000 rubles from the Jewish council or *Judenrat*. This and other extortions were publicized on posters throughout Slonim. After delivery of this sum at the end of September or beginning of October, Erren had the entire Jewish council murdered. A new council was assembled and again forced to deliver a high ransom for three members of the Jewish community. After the payment of this sum, this second Jewish council was again murdered just one week before the mass executions.[604] In this environment, many soldiers asked why they too could not profit? The looting of the property of murdered Jews also suggests a growing desensitization to the brutality of Jewish policy. In short, this intimate connection to property is both an indicator *and* a result of prolonged daily exposure to Nazi policy, one not seen to this extent in earlier cases.

An area that has been both somewhat neglected and at the same time difficult for historians to access is the relationships between soldiers and Jews at the local level. Indeed, there is very little, if any, scholarship that directly addresses the issue of friendships, for example. Work done so far has focused on sexual relationships and sexual violence at the

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[604] "H., Johann Statement, 13 October 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5663.

hands of German occupiers.[605] Even less research has examined these issues in the Soviet Union. Therefore, a search for some evidence of the nuanced relationships of soldiers with Jews requires reading at the edges of rescuer historiography, the aforementioned sexual violence scholarship, and postwar soldier and survivor testimony.

From this focus, we see that one of the defining characteristics of this period of routinization was the frequency with which these German soldiers came into contact with Jews as part of their daily duties. Jewish women cooked and cleaned for them. 6th Company men supervised Jewish laborers on a daily basis. For example, predominantly Jewish women were employed in the ammunition dump, working on the captured weapons there.[606] Some remembered them by name twenty years later. 6th Company men retrieved Jews from the ghetto and returned them after work. They were aware of the restrictions and privations of the Jewish inhabitants of Slonim, for their workers talked about them. German soldiers were also treated by Jewish doctors in the local hospital until Erren had them all shot.[607] One soldier recalled that he often brought bread and potatoes to a Jewish family in return for laundry service; they disappeared during the November killing.[608] In Novogrudok, the 7th Company also "employed" Jews as laborers, craftsman, and assistants in its kitchen. This familiarity inevitably brought German soldiers into closer contact with the victims of Nazi

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[605] See for example Birgit Beck, *Wehrmacht und sexuelle Gewalt : Sexualverbrechen vor deutschen Militärgerichten 1939-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), David Raub Snyder, *Sex Crimes under the Wehrmacht*, Studies in War, Society and the Military; (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), Jeffrey Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War Ii, 1939--1945," *Politics Society* 37, no. 1 (2009), Regina Mühlhäuser, "Rasse, Blut und Männlichkeit: Politiken sexueller Regulierung in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion (1941–1945)," *Feministische Studien* 25, no. 1 (2007), Wendy Jo Gertjejanssen, "Victims, Heroes, Survivors: Sexual Violence on the Eastern Front during World War II" (Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2004).

[606] "T., Heinrich Statement, 2 October 1959," (BA-ZS: B162/25532), 8.

[607] "S., Otto Statement, 2 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 114.

[608] "E., Kurt Statement, 15 May 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2756.

policy.

Some of these relationships apparently went beyond work. During his testimony, one soldier stated, "in the course of the morning [November 14], I went into the town to see about my Jewish girlfriend, Ida, because I was afraid she had been caught up in the Aktion. This was, however, not the case."[609] Unfortunately, the police did not follow up on this statement and so the details of this relationship remain unclear. For two other men in 6th Company, it is clearer that they were engaging in some form of intimate relationship with Jewish women. From the outset, it must first be stated from the outset that the German word "*Freundin*" that is used in all these testimonies is ambiguous. It can mean "female friend" or "girlfriend" in a romantic sense. Second, even if meant in the latter sense, when used by German soldiers, the meaning is still quite unclear. Without a great deal of additional evidence, it would be difficult to term these relationships in any way normal.[610] The power dynamics alone suggest that any relationship between a Jewish woman and an occupying soldier was at least partially exploitative. At best, these relationships involved instrumental sex in which the woman expected and received some kind of compensation for her participation.

Relationships between Jews and Germans appear rarely in archival evidence for two reasons. First, both soldiers and survivors were loathe to discuss these things. Second, in the case of postwar statements, such events were not of judicial interest to investigators and were rarely pursued. That such relationships can be documented from both the victim and

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[609] "H., Xavier Statement, 30 May 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 194. […suchte dort meine jüdische Freundin mit Vornamen Ida auf…]

[610] Due to the ambiguity of the term and to avoid the implication of a fully consensual relationship, "girlfriend" will be placed in quotation marks.

perpetrator perspectives gives us a rare opportunity to analyze them.

These relationships existed in at least two verifiable instances in this study. The most bizarre includes First Lieutenant Glück himself. Though described by his soldiers as a "Jew-hater," alleged to have shot two Jews in a drunken rage, and the man who personally led several killing actions, two of his soldiers explicitly testified that Glück also had a Jewish "girlfriend." One soldier stated "Glück had a Jew as his lover, who lived with him in the kaserne. As the company was transferred by rail from Slonim, she was also at the train station. I can still see before my eyes," he continued, "as Glück went back and forth with the Jewish woman at the station. He took her by the shoulders and kissed her goodbye, right in front of our eyes."[611] Another former soldier, Stocker, testified that, while Glück was an "old fighter [*alter Kämpfer*] and a Nazi Blood Order Wearer," because of his Jewish "girlfriend" he was "tolerant" toward the Jews.[612] How did a man like Glück come to have a sexual relationship with one Jew while he was actively exterminating others in large numbers?

The nature of this relationship is very difficult to understand. Given Glück's willing and even zealous participation in the murder of Jews, his party background, and general reputation, it is hard to see this as much more than a sexual relationship from which the Jewish woman perhaps benefitted materially. Yet the description of his behavior at the train station and the general awareness by the men of this liaison complicate matters. It would appear that the most likely explanation is that, for Glück, this was simply a mutually beneficial relationship and did not, Stocker's testimony notwithstanding, in any way affect how he carried out genocidal policy. Perhaps his "girlfriend" was also receiving preferential

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[611] "L., Franz Statement, 20 March 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/1550), 134. A second soldier, Otto Stocker, also testified to Glück's relationship.

[612] "S., Otto Statement, 2 February 1960," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 12.

treatment or improved rations. In any case, it appears that Glück was able to separate his professional hatreds and tasks from his personal needs.

Thirty-five year old Sergeant Major Erich Aichinger, too, had a Jewish "girlfriend" in Slonim. In his own testimony to police, he does not mention this relationship (likely because he was not asked about it). However, a detailed account of the relationship comes from a Jewish survivor, Abraham Orlinksi.[613] Such testimony from a Jewish survivor, identifying a German soldier by name and describing his relationship, is exceedingly rare. Aichinger lived in a room that had been requisitioned for him by the *Ortskommandant* in Orlinski's apartment on Majakowskiego Street.[614] He had at least two Jewish "girlfriends." His first lived with him in the apartment with the Orlinskis. A friend of hers, Regina, was often also in the apartment where she worked as a housekeeper. After Aichinger's first girlfriend fell ill in October 1941, she moved out and Aichinger began living with Regina.

Unlike Glück, Aichinger seemed to have deeper emotional feelings for his "girlfriend." On the evening of 14 November, he came to Mr. Orlinski, distraught and drunk, from the Czepielow forest shooting. He described the murder of Orlinski's neighbors, the Gadzinkis and Epsteins, and the murder of his first girlfriend. He said that he had wanted to save his "girlfriend" but she said he had to save her mother too. Aichinger told Orlinski he could not save her mother and so the girl went to the pits.[615] When asked why the Germans had done this, Aichinger replied that he "believed there would not be enough food to feed all the inhabitants of Slonim and that it had been decided to liquidate 10,000." He added a

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[613] In addition to Orlinski, a German soldier also corroborates Aichinger's relationship. "H., Johannes Statement, 5 May 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1453.

[614] "Orlinski, A. Statement, 14 July 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5658.

[615] Ibid., 5659-60.

second reason, "the Führer had declared that no Jews in Europe should remain alive and that only those behind the Urals had a chance of survival."[616] As Aichinger did not discuss his relationship during his testimony, it remains unclear why he could not save his "girlfriend's" mother. However, given his relationship with the *Ortskommandant* and civil authorities, it would have been well within his power to do so.

Aichinger's relationship and his behavior illustrate some of the complexities and contradictions that appeared as German soldiers participated in the execution of Nazi racial policy on a daily basis. One of these seems to be conflicting personal and professional obligations, in this case complicity and rescue. Aichinger's other girlfriend, Regina, recalled that a meeting had taken place the evening before in his apartment. Aichinger left the apartment at 4 am on the morning of the massacre. Orlinski had been warned of the impending killing several weeks earlier by Regina, who often served drinks at Aichinger's get-togethers with staff of the *Gebietskommissariat*. While he apparently did not care to conceal information regarding the upcoming Aktion and tried to save his girlfriend, Aichinger did not make any effort to warn his flat-mates, nor was he willing to make any additional effort to save his girlfriend's mother which was very likely in his power.

For some soldiers, "rescue" behavior did not even approach the level of the kind of individual rescues in which Aichinger might have been willing to engage. One 6th Company soldier recalled standing guard on a bridge to prevent Jews from escaping. A Jewish woman approached him and a comrade, requesting that they let her pass. "Actually, we let that woman pass," he stated, "because we knew that the next sentry post would arrest her."[617] For

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[616] Ibid., 5660.

[617] "M., Karl Statement, 7 July 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2738-9.

these men, their actions had far more to do with evading responsibility for the almost certain death of this woman than they did with any desire to evade orders or to help her escape. This behavior (or the description of it after the fact) is more an indication of self-deception, rationalization, and moral compartmentalization than of a desire to help.

In Slonim, there *were* examples of genuine aid given to Jews and of aiding Jews in escaping. Survivor Szymon Goldberg testified that on the way to the killing site "many were able to flee from the column. The soldiers and policemen acted as though they hadn't seen or they shot without aiming. Of those fleeing, no one was shot or wounded."[618] In his history, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry*, Slonim resident Nachum Alpert relates several similar examples of Germans (including soldiers) allowing Jews to escape and actively rescue them:

> Twenty Jewish barbers, who had been cutting the hair of German soldiers in their barracks, were rounded up and taken to the ditch. The soldiers ran after them, released them and started back toward town. A spark of hope arose in the hearts of the barbers, but on the way, Hick and his squad appeared and ordered them taken back to their executioners.[619]
>
> A German guard, on duty at a post near the corner of Ruzany and Jurdzitka Street, used the roundup as a "cover" to chase a score of Jews into the cellar of a yeshiva in the Shulgass. When the roundup was over, he let them out one by one.
>
> In one Jewish home a German found a Jew hiding under a bed, but did not report this to the local police. When they found the Jew under the bed, the German blamed his "nearsightedness" and under his breath swore at the "*verfluchte Schwein.*"
>
> Several German soldiers, "escorting" Jews into the forest in a truck, not only let the Jews "escape" but showed them where to hide until the massacre was over.[620]

Another survivor, Leon Small, noted that the "medics who were temporarily stationed in

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[618] "Goldberg, S. Statement, 16 August 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2436.

[619] Nachum Alpert, *The Destruction of Slonim Jewry: The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), 89-90.

[620] Ibid., 92.

Slonim showed themselves to be very helpful and behaved favorably [toward us.]"[621] It seems that more than a few soldiers took it upon themselves to help Jews when possible. That these examples do not appear in postwar testimonies is likely because the men involved either had not survived the war, did not mention these actions to the police in order not to become involved as witnesses against their former comrades, or simply because the police did not deem these statements to be relevant to the investigation.

Similar incidents also occurred in Novogrudok. A 7th Company soldier stood with a comrade on a railroad bridge, as part of the *Absperrung*. An elderly Jewish man approached and asked if he could pass to get his wife and child. He was allowed through and returned shortly with his family.[622] Another private was on *Absperrung* duty around Novogrudok when several Jews approached. He recalled, "we let them by unmolested….I remembered the words of our captain that we shouldn't take it so seriously."[623] It seems, that for this soldier, Artmann's desire to remain uninvolved provided a positive example.

The routinization in Slonim was also a contributing factor for those who sought within the limits of their abilities to aid Jews. One area in which there seems to have been a larger amount of helping behavior, either self-interested or altruistic, was in the distribution of work permits. Approximately three weeks before the November killing, *Gebietskommissar* Erren decided to identify necessary workers among the local population. A list of names was drawn up. The *Gebietskommissar* was seeking to eliminate what he termed "unnecessary eaters." According to one survivor, Erren himself crossed names off

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[621] "Small, L. Statement, 9 February 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2481.

[622] "S., Peter Statement, 5 October 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3453), 294.

[623] "W., Anton Statement, 21 August 1963," (BA-ZS: B162/3454), 394.

this list, effectively condemning those people to death.[624] The selected workers were issued special work permits printed on yellow cardboard. The cards also listed the names of the worker's family. "Family," however, was limited only to the wife and two children. For eighteen-year-old Rachel Klenicki, this meant that one of her brothers did not receive one and the family had to scrounge for a third card.[625] Survivors such as Zvi Szepetynski said that, for the Jewish inhabitants of Slonim, the yellow cards were literally "tickets to life."[626] The distribution of these cards presented a relatively easy and unobtrusive way for soldiers to help Jews. It was also an opportunity for the less scrupulous men to sell these cards to Jews for personal profit.

For Jewish laborers, the yellow cards (and their meaning) were no secret. Regina, Sergeant Aichinger's Jewish "girlfriend," had learned from him of the impending Aktion and tried to warn her flatmate, Mr. Orlinski. According to him, she told him that he should try to obtain a work permit because there was a "plan to liquidate 10,000 non-working Jews and children."[627] Some soldiers used these permits as a way to help Jews they knew. Company Cook Alexander L. recalled that a Jew named Jakob who had built their baking oven came to him asking for a work permit. Alexander then went to the company First Sergeant and requested a card for him. The First Sergeant replied that many men had already come to get additional permits and this would cause him difficulties but he would see. According to the cook, Jakob did receive permits for him and his family, which he told L. with "tears of

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[624] "Rotstein, I. Statement, 26 September 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5102), 293.

[625] "Klenicki, R. Statement, 5 February 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2473.

[626] "Szepetynski, Z. Statement, 24 June 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5711.

[627] "Orlinski, A. Statement, 14 July 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/5092), 5659.

joy."[628] The procurement of these documents seems to have been the most common method of aiding Jews employed by soldiers.

Sergeant Walter K. worked in the *Ortskommandantur* and was assigned two Jews, one for manual labor and another for clerical work. In November, one of these men came to him asking for a work permit that would show he worked for the *Wehrmacht*. At Sergeant K.'s request, a permit was issued, not by the *Gebietskommissariat* but instead by the *Ortskommandant*, that is, by the German Army itself.[629] This is an interesting statement for two reasons. First, it shows how deeply 6th Company (particularly those manning the *Ortskommandantur*) was occupied with the day-to-day administration of Jewish policy. But second, it demonstrates how easy it was to aid Jews through the issuing of these yellow cards. For those who wished, this was the least challenging and least confrontational way to obstruct total implementation of the Final Solution, because German economic interests on behalf of the war effort rather than opposition to Nazi racial policy could be invoked as the justification. The statement by the 6th Company First Sergeant that many men had already come to get permits for their laborers perhaps indicates that others took this route. Yet, as in all instances of *Wehrmacht* aid to Jews, soldiers who aided or rescued Jews constituted a tiny minority of those involved. These actions seem limited as well to Jews the men knew personally. Finally, while they saved their bearers from the November execution, they did not rescue them from danger entirely.

It is important to address here the veracity of the sources themselves. None of the men questioned were on trial or charged with a crime. Moreover, they were testifying

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[628] "L., Alexander Statement, 6 December 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2676.

[629] "K., Willy Statement, 5 December ", (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 2168.

against Gerhard Erren and only rarely against a fellow *Wehrmacht* veteran. These men had little reason to fabricate stories of supplying work permits to Jews. The fact that these men supplied "their" Jews with life-saving work permits does not on its face prove a moral justification and could indicate nothing more than a desire to retain a skilled worker. Sometimes this was the case. However, in these instances, the evidence does not support such a conclusion in Slonim. The fact, for example, that Alexander L. remembered Jakob's name probably indicates at least some personal concern. Much soldier testimony indicates that they knew the Jews who worked for them, to such an extent that the Jews felt comfortable to share their concerns with them. The bureaucratic nature of the permits, the ease with which they could be obtained, and the relatively low level at which they were issued likely made this a very attractive option for those helping to ameliorate the condition of Jewish workers they had become familiar with. On the other hand, those who cynically exploited Jewish desperation by selling work permits for self-enrichment—a practice often noted by Jewish survivors— were not likely to testify to such behavior after the war.

An Oasis in Lida: A German Soldier's Rescue of Jews in the Pupko Brewery

One of the clearest examples of altruistic rescue comes from a soldier in 10th Company, 727th Infantry Regiment. Thirty-one year old Joachim Lochbihler had been a brewery engineer in Nürnberg before he was called up. Because of his experience, he was assigned in August 1941 to manage and run the two local breweries in Lida, a town fifty-five miles north of Slonim. One of the breweries was almost totally destroyed and Lochbihler

concentrated his efforts on the other.[630] This brewery had been owned by two Jewish brothers, Marc and Simon Pupko, and had produced award-winning beer since its founding in 1876.[631] The Pupko brothers stayed on to work in the brewery along with other Jewish workers. One survivor remembered that Lochbihler had allowed her husband to choose whomever he wanted from the ghetto to work and live there.[632] Lochbihler had arranged with Leopold Windisch, the official in charge of Jewish affairs in Lida, that these families could stay in the brewery outside of the ghetto. As he recalled, "at the request of the Jews and also for technical reasons, I called on *Stabsleiter* Windisch and requested that the Jews be allowed to live in the brewery. I advised him that the Jews were necessary also at night and that the operation of the brewery depended on it. He allowed this." There was, however, a stipulation. Windisch told Lochbihler, "You are responsible to me in this to see that no one escapes."[633] Lochbihler was taking some personal and professional risk in assuming responsibility for the behavior of all the Jews in the brewery.

Often, Germans protecting Jews did so for their own self-interest, to ensure that operations that they oversaw (and thus, themselves) were successful. In this case, however, it is clear that Lochbihler protected the Jews of the Lida brewery due to his opposition to Nazi genocidal policy or at least a genuine concern for the welfare of the Jews he could help.

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[630] An *Einsatzgruppen* report from 18 August blames a Pole for burning down the brewery in Lida. See Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 92.

[631] "L., Joachim Statement, 5 July 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3440), 1807, Leon Lauresh and Irene Newhouse, "Pupko Brewery," JewishGen, http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/lida-city/beer.htm.

[632] "Pupko, Shura," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 37107, Visual History Archive, 2009).

[633] "L., Joachim Statement, 5 July 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3440), 1808.

Lochbihler was described as a "very liberal, very decent man."[634] His humane and generous behavior toward the Jews in his care, which he does not mention, was noted by several survivors in their testimony. Simon Pupko himself called the brewery "an oasis." They were allowed to celebrate the Seder and to live as normally as possible.[635] Other Jewish workers such as the carpenters lived in the ghetto and came to work in the brewery during the day.[636]

In May 1942, Lochbihler learned from a German railway worker that Lida's ghetto and its 6,000 inhabitants were to be liquidated. He informed his comrade, Lorenz Fischer, who also ran the brewery with him, that "they were going to snatch up our Jews and we had to prevent this."[637] At the same time, the Jews working in the brewery came to Lochbihler asking for help. He stated that "the Jews were understandably frightened and implored me to protect them from the execution….There were terrible scenes. I still remember how a Jewish person fell on his knees and beseeched me to protect them."[638] Lochbihler promised that he would protect them and that he would devote his "whole person" to it. He further told them that he would "simulate a *Wehrmacht* operation" and that no one would enter the brewery. Michael Stoll, who was fourteen and worked in the brewery as an electrician's assistant, remembered Lochbihler telling him, "Michael, go into the house and wake everybody up and tell them to hide. Tonight we are killing off the ghetto. But don't worry, they are not going to touch you." Lochbihler added, "I am standing guard. They can't come into the

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[634] "Goldfischer, Bella," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 24412, Visual History Archive, 2009).

[635] Sioma Pupko and Sheldon Clare (trans.), "The Story Told by Sioma and Mrs. Pupko," in *Sefer Lida (Book of Lida)*, ed. Alexander Manor, Itzchak Ganusovitch, and Aba Lando (Tel Aviv: Former residents of Lida in Israel and the Committee of Lida Jews in USA, 1970), 311-13.

[636] "F., Lorenz Statement, 6 July 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3440), 1811.

[637] Ibid., 1811-12.

[638] "L., Joachim Statement, 5 July 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3440), 1809.

brewery."[639] Beginning that night, at Lochbihler's insistence, the two German soldiers put on their helmets, shouldered their rifles and stood guard outside the door.[640] Lochbihler heard shots later around dawn and bullets landed in his vicinity, leading him to believe that shooting had already begun during the round-up. No one entered the brewery and the Jews there avoided the execution.

Shura Pupko, a Jewish woman living in the brewery, remembered that this was not the first time he had done such a thing. In March 1942, she testified, there was a "rehearsal" of a round-up. "For us," she continued, "Lochbihler stood outside the business and said these are my Jews and you aren't going to enter, they work for me and I don't need this rehearsal. This was his first step to save us."[641]

He could not, however, save the Jews who lived in the ghetto. They did not arrive for work and were likely killed.[642] According to Shura Pupko, Lochbihler returned from the front near Minsk in 1943 to pick up beer and again warned the Jews in the brewery of an impending action. She remembered him saying, "He said there are many people in the woods, go, because they are going to kill you. It was a good warning."[643] This is more evidence of his altruistic motives and genuine concern. After the war, Mr. and Mrs. Pupko

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[639] "Stoll [Stolowicki], Michael," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 23405, Visual History Archive, 2009).

[640] Both Lochbihler and Fischer verify this.

[641] "Pupko, Shura," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 37107, Visual History Archive, 2009). Translation and Transcription by Lindsay MacNeill, USHMM.

[642] "L., Joachim Statement, 5 July 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3440), 1809-10.

[643] "Pupko, Shura," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 37107, Visual History Archive, 2009). Translation and Transcription by Lindsay MacNeill, USHMM.

testified on Lochbihler's behalf, and he was freed from an American POW camp where he was being held as a suspected war criminal.[644]

Conclusions: Proximity, Duration, and Increased Complicity

What does this episode tell us about rescue in Slonim? The Lida brewery case is the clearest example of German soldiers attempting to aid Jews. The concurrence between survivor and soldier testimony shows that this was truly a case of a soldier wishing to help Jews. Lochbihler in his conversations with Erren couched his arguments in terms of military necessity, but his subsequent treatment of the Pupko family and others, allowing them to practice their religion and live as comfortably as possible, indicates a concern for his people beyond simply economics. Lochbihler clearly took the initiative in saving Jews he had come to know within the limited opportunity and space that enabled him to do so. His exact reasons, however, remain a mystery.

As positive as this episode may be, it is, like most examples of *Wehrmacht* rescue, both rare and limited. Lochbihler saved those Jews whom he knew personally. He was unable or unwilling to save even those Jews he knew who lived in the ghetto. Moreover, Lochbihler and the soldiers with him were in a relatively unique position, independent and isolated from their superiors. This allowed them to manage their laborers as they chose. In addition, being in charge of an important *Wehrmacht* economic operation allowed Lochbihler to negotiate the terms of its operation, including those regarding his workers. This kind of situation unfortunately was not easily translatable to the more commonly experienced encounters with Jews by German soldiers.

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[644] Sioma Pupko and Sheldon Clare (trans.), "The Story Told by Sioma and Mrs. Pupko," in *Sefer Lida (Book of Lida)*, ed. Alexander Manor, Itzchak Ganusovitch, and Aba Lando (Tel Aviv: Former residents of Lida in Israel and the Committee of Lida Jews in USA, 1970), 311-13.

The helping and rescue behavior of German soldiers in Slonim (and elsewhere) must be defined by its rarity. Most soldiers for a variety of reasons did not make efforts to help Jews. Indeed, most non-conformist behavior of these men is best termed evasion or non-compliance. They were most likely to refuse to participate when in closest proximity to the actual carrying out of violence. In contrast, soldiers were most likely to aid Jews when at a distance from violence. In terms of the process of increasing complicity, the routinization seen in both Slonim and Novogrudok also demonstrates perhaps a greater potential for rescue as well. As the tempo of killing operations slowed, those soldiers so inclined were able to work within a daily routine and a predictable system to help Jews. Unfortunately, few soldiers attempted or were interested in such aid.

In conclusion, the *Wehrmacht* collusion in the Holocaust in Slonim and Novogrudok demonstrates a progression from improvised cooperation to routinized participation in Nazi genocidal policy. Most importantly, a triangular relationship between the SS, the *Wehrmacht*, and the civil administration developed that led to greater complicity for several reasons. First, Army units stationed in these towns were viewed by civilian authorities specifically with their participation in mass murders in mind. Second, apart from the closer structural and operational relationships, these cases illustrate also the importance of cooperation between *Wehrmacht* officers and civil authorities on the personal level. In each town, administrators found willing supporters in key Army leaders who facilitated the greater involvement of the military in all aspects of the Nazi racial project. Additionally, the prolonged proximity to aspects of anti-Jewish policy not encountered in earlier killings like Krupki and Krucha led, in turn, to greater involvement of the soldiers. Put another way, the tempo and newness of participation in mass killings as in Krupki and Krucha likely made

opportunities for both self-enrichment and rescue less apparent or more difficult for soldiers there. Involvement in ghettoization, forced labor, and appropriation of Jewish property that appears in the Slonim and Novogrudok cases and not in the prior cases support this argument. On another level, the permanence of units being stationed in towns also led to more complex relationships between Jews and soldiers. While these relationships often produce more questions than answers, they do indicate that prolonged contact with Jews could result in connections that complicate our understanding of German soldiers' mentalities. This prolonged contact could also, as we have seen, lead to opportunities for rescue and assistance that were perhaps not as available or apparent earlier in the process.

Unfortunately, the trend toward greater complicity led Army units, on the whole, to become more not less involved in genocide. Close cooperation between the army units, the SS, and civilian authorities in anti-Jewish actions did not breed resistance to the racial project. Instead, most soldiers and units appear to have internalized the necessity of their role in assisting in the murder of Jews in the Soviet Union. This internalization reveals itself in more frequent smaller and decentralized killings. As the large-scale massacres were paused until the spring, soldiers in the *Generalbezirk Weißruthenien* repeatedly conducted "Jew Hunts" aimed specifically at rounding up Jews living in smaller villages who had escaped previous round-ups and executions and continued to kill Jews in smaller-scale executions. The conduct of the 12th Company, 727th Infantry Regiment in Szcuczyn is representative of this final step in the evolution of *Wehrmacht* complicity.

VI. Internalization- Hunting Jews in Szczuczyn

Sometime in the fall of 1941, twenty-four year old Lieutenant Oskar Ritterbusch led a patrol out of the town of Szczuczyn, forty-five miles northwest of Slonim and forty-five miles east of Novogrudok. He was the 1st Platoon Leader of the 12th Company, 727th Infantry Regiment. The patrol rode in two Army trucks through the snow-covered countryside, rounding up Jews. Ritterbusch stopped the patrol in a small village and his men got out. As they searched the village, they discovered a Jewish shoemaker and his family, which included his adult handicapped son, a hunchback. One soldier noticed that the family was also keeping bees and had honey. Before taking two pails of honey, they made the son taste it, to ensure that it was not poisoned. Another soldier ripped the pails out of the man's hands. When the Jew tried to grapple with the German, Lieutenant Ritterbusch ordered him thrown into the back of the truck with the other Jews who had been rounded up.[645] When one of his men informed Ritterbusch that this man was a resident of the town and had just given them honey, he replied, "I don't give a damn! He is a hindrance to his parents."[646] Paul B. recalled the lieutenant saying, "Away with him. It's no big deal."[647] B. also testified that he prevented another soldier from shooting the hunchback's mother. The shoemaker was a skilled artisan and he and his family were likely to be spared temporarily. As the

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[645] "B., Paul Statement, 31 May 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 185.

[646] "N., Ernst Statement, 3 March 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 91.

[647] "B., Paul Statement, 16 September 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 143.

handicapped son certainly was no partisan threat, Ritterbusch's decision to kill him appears especially gratuitous and unwarranted by even the most brutal interpretation of policy.

In any case, the handicapped Jewish man was thrown into the back of the truck and the patrol continued. After a short distance, Lieutenant Ritterbusch stopped the truck, dismounted, and his soldiers forced the Jews to climb out. They were told to run toward the forest and were to be shot from behind. Before Ritterbusch himself gave the order, the hunchbacked man clung to Ernst N.'s arm and began to cry for he had understood the officer's instructions in German. N. told him that he couldn't do anything to help him: "orders were orders." However, he testified that he told the man to fall when the shooting started and not to move, and that he and an Austrian soldier had agreed to shoot over his head.[648] This is highly improbable. After all the Jews were shot, the men of Ritterbusch's patrol returned to their base in Szczuczyn.

The actions of the 12th Company in this town represent an end stage in the evolution of deepening *Wehrmacht* complicity in the Holocaust, one in which the tactical and ideological have rather seamlessly merged. Unlike previous instances, there is was no major largescale massacre (at least not one that was uncovered in the course of the investigation). Instead, the face of complicity in Szczuczyn was characterized by repeated small-scale killings committed during normal operations over a long period of time with little or no contact with civil authorities. Such contact or pressure does not seem to have been necessary, for this unit had already internalized the need to kill Jews and was doing it on a daily basis. The "Jew Hunts" conducted by the 12th Company epitomized the ultimate fulfillment of the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus and the sadistic "Jew Games" its soldiers played on

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[648] "N., Ernst Statement, 3 March 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 91-2.

Saturdays were the end result of prolonged exposure to genocidal killing as to the internalization of the necessity to kill Jews.

Szczuczyn and the Leaders of 12th Company

The town of Szczuczyn (pronounced SHOO-CHIN) lies in western Belarus, seventy miles east of Bialystok near the 1941 Soviet border.[649] The town itself began as the estate of a local noble family, the Scipions.[650] Jews had first begun settling in the region in large numbers at the end of the 16th century. In the 19th century, like Novogrudok, Szczuczyn was a center of the Mussar movement which stressed the incorporation of an ethical dimension in traditional Orthodox Judaism. Around 2,500 Jews lived in the town or in the surrounding villages.[651]

The 12th Company, 727th Infantry Regiment arrived in Szczuczyn in mid August 1941, leaving a detachment behind in Ostryna, eleven miles to the northeast. The 3rd Battalion and the 10th Company were headquartered in nearby Lida. The 11th Company was stationed in Grodno, thirty-five miles to the west. Upon arrival in Szczuczyn, Lieutenant Josef Kiefer quartered his company in what all the soldiers remembered as a "palace." In all likelihood, this was the former estate of Count Drutsky-Lobatzky on the northern edge of town.

In Szczuczyn, the quality of leadership was decisive as the company officers appear

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[649] This is not to be confused with the town in Poland of the same name.

[650] L Losh and transl. Chaim Charutz, *Sefer Zikaron Le-Kehilot Szczuczyn Wasiliszki Ostryna Nowy-Dwor Rozanka (Book of Remembrance for the Communities of Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka)* (Tel Aviv1966), 12. Accessed Online at: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/szczuczyn-belarus/Szczuczyn.html

[651] Ibid., 89.

to have been the only decision makers. They were relatively isolated (as Sibille was) and thus could essentially do what they pleased. Though the leaders in the 12th Company disagreed on methods, unfortunately, they all agreed on end state, that is, the murder of the Jews. The company commander, Josef Kiefer, was a thirty-two year old active duty officer from Munich. With no high school diploma, he began a sales apprenticeship but was unable to complete it because his employer went out of business. After working briefly in his father's bakery, the nineteen-year-old Kiefer entered the Bavarian State Police in October 1928.[652] After seven years as a policeman in Munich, he was absorbed into the army in July 1935.[653] Kiefer served as an infantry non-commissioned officer during the occupation of Austria and the Sudetenland and then fought as a heavy machine gun section leader in Poland before being commissioned from the ranks as a lieutenant in 1940.[654]

In his evaluations, Kiefer was described as a man who had proven himself in battle. He was "slender and wiry" with "flawless etiquette." His superiors noted his "exemplary service as a platoon leader" and declared him fully qualified to be an officer.[655] In his company commander training course, however, he was rated as only qualified to take command after further training.[656] He perhaps was a man promoted past his capabilities, but seems to have been reasonably competent and motivated.

As a military commander, Kiefer appears to have been strict, but fair to his soldiers.

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[652] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 13 August 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 198.

[653] "Kiefer, J. Personalnachweis," (BA-L: DS A 116), 2213.

[654] Ibid., 2214,20.

[655] "Beurteilung für den Oberfeldwebel Kiefer, Josef, 12 July 1940," (BA-L: DS A 116), 2262, "Beurteilung des Leutnant Kiefer, 18 January 1941," (BA-L: DS A 116), 2256.

[656] "Beurteilungsnotizen über Leutnant Kiefer, 25 February 1941," (BA-L: DS A 116), 2252.

He was a "hard and disciplined soldier" but one loved valued by his men for "knowing his job."[657] Kiefer was also "reserved and unapproachable."[658] In short, he appears to have been tactically competent and not disliked by his men. It is perhaps telling that these men also characterized him as a political extremist. While some men claimed that their commander held no particularly racist beliefs, the bulk of the evidence suggests otherwise, beginning with two important decorations that he held.

Kiefer's personnel file indicates that he was awarded the *Ehrenzeichen der NSDAP von 1923* [Nazi Party Badge of Honor from 1923]. This was better known as the "Blood Order," for party members who had participated in the Munich Beer Hall Putsch on 9 November 1923 and was later extended to allow for those imprisoned or wounded in the service of the party. Less than 6,000 were ever awarded.[659] Kiefer explained in his police interviews that as a fourteen-year-old boy he had merely served as a messenger during the Beer Hall Putsch and had later applied for the award during his police training. His three older brothers were all SA-men as well.[660] Regardless of Kiefer's attempts to minimize its importance, this medal was not one awarded frivolously. At least one man also remembered that he wore the *Goldene Parteiabzeichen* [Golden Party Badge] that was awarded to the first 100,000 party members.[661] That Kiefer chose to wear this optional party insignia on his *Wehrmacht* uniform indicates that he was proud of this distinction.

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[657] "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 144.

[658] "B., Heinrich Statement, 17 February 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 112.

[659] John R. Angolia, *For Führer and Fatherland : Political & Civil Awards of the Third Reich* (San Jose, Calif.: R. James Bender Pub., 1978), 186-92.

[660] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 13 August 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 201.

[661] "G., Friedrich Statement, 2 March 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 118.

Kiefer's elite party status is powerfully suggestive of his ideological position. His attitude toward Jews was described by his soldiers. Though one man stated he was "not hostile to Jews and opposed atrocities," the majority of the men characterized him somewhat differently.[662] One soldier declared Kiefer a "convinced National Socialist [who] shared the National Socialist perspective on the Jewish Question."[663] Another observed that there were "already disputes between Kiefer and the Jews when they did not obey his ordinances."[664] A non-commissioned officer shed light on what kinds of regulations were meant here. He remembered Kiefer yelled at him for allowing some Jews to walk on the sidewalk rather than in the street as required. He further recalled that Kiefer took note of two Jewish women who cooked for the company and required that they be dismissed.[665] Yet, Kiefer was "no brutal guy" and a man who believed that the "military should not dirty its hands in such things [meaning actions against Jews]."[666] Instead, he appears to have been a believer and an antisemite but with a professional approach that did not countenance "unnecessary" violence.

The two other officers in the company were Lieutenants Ernst Schaffitz and Oskar Ritterbusch. Schaffitz led the 2nd platoon, was a former SA man, and an "outspoken Jew-hater."[667] He was described as "callous" and "harsh."[668] Several men recalled his high-

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[662] "H., Ernst Statement, 3 March 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 122.

[663] "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 147.

[664] "L., Franz Statement, 25 May 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 168.

[665] "F., Wilhelm Statement, 15 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 159.

[666] "L., Georg Statement, 16 February 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 98, "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 147.

[667] "H., Alois Statement, 12 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1354.

[668] "F., Wilhelm Statement, 15 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 161.

pitched voice. He confessed to Polish authorities that he was a "fanatic Nazi."[669] Schaffitz is consistently described by former soldiers as a brutal man who was deeply implicated in the murders of Jews. The characterization that he was "generally disliked" is probably representative.[670] One soldier went so far as to claim that several of his soldiers committed suicide as a result of his harassment.[671] However, we must not overlook the postwar interrogation context and the tendency of witnesses to often vilify those who were dead or otherwise immune from prosecution.[672] One man remembered that Schaffitz "had it in for the Jews." When approached by a Jewish panhandler, he responded, "You damned dirty Jews, go home! You have no business here."[673] The strongest condemnation of Schaffitz was that he "particularly wanted to break the spirit of the Jews."[674] Schaffitz is portrayed as particularly vulgar and cruel in his antisemitism.

Oskar Ritterbusch appears to have been a more enigmatic character, somewhere between Kiefer and Schaffitz. He was twenty-four and had taken four semesters of exercise and biology at university toward his goal of becoming an athletic trainer.[675] Drafted in 1938, he served in the Polish campaign as a private and was promoted to lieutenant in September 1940. Ritterbusch served in a training unit before being transferred to the 727th Infantry

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[669] "Schaffitz, E. Statement (Undated)," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1175a. The language of this confession indicates that it was perhaps coerced or at least edited by communist officials. However, Schaffitz's actual behavior in Szczuczyn corroborates a statement such as this.

[670] "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 148-9.

[671] "L., Georg Statement, 9 April 1946," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1182.

[672] Schaffitz died in a Polish prison in 1956, a fate likely not lost upon his former comrades.

[673] "M., Johann Statement, 17 March 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 139.

[674] "S., Ludwig Statement, 9 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1351.

[675] "Ritterbusch, O. Statement, 30 September 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 157.

Regiment shortly before the invasion of Russia.[676] The lanky, dark-haired officer was viewed as correct and strict. Others described him as "spirited," "self-confident," and a "Hitler Youth leader type."[677] Ritterbusch's disposition toward Jews appears a little more ambiguous. Former soldiers remembered that he "did not speak well of the Jews" and was also "harshly positioned against the Jews."[678] Yet, another noted that "as a rule, Ritterbusch did not go after Jews….[he] only arrested them when ordered."[679] As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, however, even this characterization is flatly contradicted by other accounts.[680]

These officers were the important leaders of 12th Company and their actions greatly affected the Jews in the local area. None was sympathetic toward Jews but their various forms of antisemitism directly impacted the manner in which they placed themselves in anti-Jewish policy and the ways in which they carried it out.

A Kaleidoscope of Killing: Modes of Murder in and around Szczuczyn

Unlike in previous cases, the 12th Company in Szczuczyn killed Jews routinely in the course of its daily operations. These killings took a variety of different forms but for the most part were all carried out at the company level and below, without much involvement from any other organization. They indicate an acceptance and internalization of the necessity

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[676] He claimed this was a result of having overstayed a leave. Ibid.

[677] "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 148.

[678] "B., Heinrich Statement, 17 February 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 113, "L., Franz Statement, 25 May 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 169.

[679] "B., Paul Statement, 16 September 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 145.

[680] It is interesting note that of all the men accused in the five cases examined in this work, only Ritterbusch refused to testify at all regarding his actions in the war.

of anti-Jewish policy as well as a certain vigor not previously seen. The killings in and around Szczuczyn were intrinsically motivated, decentralized, and repeated.

With its smaller Jewish population and location off more significant supply routes, Szczuczyn did not receive the attention from the *Einsatzgruppen* that other towns in the area did. The Germans entered the town on 26 June 1941 where they took the town's leaders hostage but released them after three days.[681] In July, a *Judenrat* was established but more draconian measures were not imposed. William Moll fled to Szczcuczyn from Lida with his family after their home in Lida had been destroyed. He remembered that there were cases of individual killings but nothing like mass murder.[682] Artur Nebe remarked with dissatisfaction on 13 July that "only 96 Jews were executed in Grodno and Lida during the first days. I gave orders to intensify these activities."[683] Thus, before the arrival of the 12th Company, the inhabitants of Szczuczyn had been left relatively unmolested by German forces. This changed shortly after Kiefer's arrival. Sometime in mid-August, a ghetto was established. It is unclear who presided over this action but it was likely the 12th company as German military maps do not indicate an external administrative unit being stationed there;

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[681] These were likely elements of the 35th Infantry Division based on its location on 29 June. See Klaus-Jürgen Thies, *Der Ostfeldzug: Heeresgruppe Mitte, 21.6.1941 - 6.12.1941 ; ein Lageatlas der Operationsabteilung des Generalstabs des Heeres* (Bissendorf: Biblio-Verl., 2001), 10, L Losh and transl. Chaim Charutz, *Sefer Zikaron Le-Kehilot Szczuczyn Wasiliszki Ostryna Nowy-Dwor Rozanka (Book of Remembrance for the Communities of Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka)* (Tel Aviv1966), 83. Accessed online at: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/szczuczyn-belarus/Szczuczyn.html

[682] "Moll [Molczadski], William," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 13573, Visual History Archive, 1996).

[683] Szczuczyn does not appear in the *Einsatzgruppen* reports explicitly. Nearby Lida is frequently mentioned and likely served as a base of operations for an *Einsatzkommando*. It is highly likely that some of the smaller, earlier killings in Szczuczyn were carried out by this unit. However, on the whole, there were no major killings there. Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 23.

the nearest was OK I/849 in Lida 30 miles to the northeast.[684] During this period, a local police force was raised. The *Yizhkor* (or Jewish community) book for Szczuczyn states that this police force was made up of ethnic Poles who collaborated "willingly and whole-heartedly."[685] Overall, with the exception of this force, it appears that the company was relatively isolated in the town and that Kiefer and the men of the unit wielded a great deal of power. This is not to say that larger killings did take place, though not on the scale of Slonim or Novogrudok. William Moll's parents were killed in a shooting of Jewish prominent residents that he remembered occurred in December 1941.[686] German records and testimonies remain silent on the role Kiefer's men played in this action, though it is likely they were involved.

Regardless, of all the cases examined, Szczuczyn demonstrates most explicitly the prevalence of "Jew hunting" as a pastime of German soldiers. Soldiers and officers broke the monotony of duty in a small rural town by conducting patrols into the countryside, ostensibly designed at rounding up partisans and suspected sympathizers. Usually conducted in platoon strength, these outings rarely if ever encountered partisans. One sergeant stated categorically that "during my time in Szczuczyn I never came into contact with partisans."[687] A company medic recalled that while "the mission of our unit was antipartisan fighting, I myself

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[684] "Map: rHGM, 25 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-224), 175.

[685] L Losh and transl. Chaim Charutz, *Sefer Zikaron Le-Kehilot Szczuczyn Wasiliszki Ostryna Nowy-Dwor Rozanka (Book of Remembrance for the Communities of Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka)* (Tel Aviv1966), 84. Accessed online at: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/szczuczyn-belarus/Szczuczyn.html

[686] "Moll [Molczadski], William," (USC Shoah Foundation Institute: Interview # 13573, Visual History Archive, 1996).

[687] "F., Wilhelm Statement, 15 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 160.

encountered no partisans."[688] The general absence of partisans and combat is corroborated by many other former soldiers. Interestingly, the battalion surgeon of the 3rd Battalion in Lida remarked that "no antipartisan operations were carried out during our presence in Lida because partisan activity was very low. Partisan activity first started *after* the large Jewish Aktion, *after* Jews fled to the forests."[689] Again, we see that the partisan "threat" was marshaled to support the killing of Jews, even when such a threat did not exist.

Most former soldiers agree that these patrols were generally made of volunteers, and while many different soldiers participated in these "Jew hunts," they were usually drawn from the same group. These soldiers were "always the same people who Schaffitz sought out; however, I don't remember there being any direct orders."[690] At least one soldier supported this, saying "that these hunting patrols [*Jagdkommandos*] were usually created from the first platoon."[691] The first platoon, interestingly, belonged to Ritterbusch.

Usually led by a squad leader but sometimes by a platoon leader, these patrols appear to have been mainly conducted in captured Soviet trucks. A soldier from the first platoon testified, "the patrol leader would then dismount in the village and talk with the mayor. We ourselves often never left the truck."[692] As Schrade's report noted several months earlier, this was not how one would go about fighting actual partisans. Groups of men from the company would scour the countryside for Jews and either kill them where they were found or bring them back to the Drobsky Palace where the unit was quartered and execute them there.

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[688] "W., Rupert Statement, 26 May 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 121.

[689] "S., Willibald Statement, 8 December 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1165-6.

[690] "L., Georg Statement, 28 February 1950," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1185.

[691] "M., Jakob Statement, 24 May 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 106.

[692] "B., Quirin Statement, 14 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 157.

One sergeant described the operations: "It is correct that we would repeatedly drive into towns, load Jews onto a truck and drive them to a gravel pit [1-2km behind the palace] where we had to shoot them."[693] He noted that the patrols were mostly led by Lieutenant Schaffitz. The fact that the men drove from village to village in trucks also indicates the low threat level, as this was not how actual antipartisan operations were conducted.[694] Indeed, one can easily surmise that the discussions with village officials involved asking if there were Jews in the village. As in previous cases, the men also took advantage of anti-Jewish operations to enrich themselves. A 12th company soldier remembered that during "searches of Jewish houses a few comrades took what they found."[695] Another soldier took shoes off dead Jews and sent them home.[696] Schaffitz, too, was accused of personally appropriating Jewish property.[697]

Moreover, the objectives and results of these "Jew Hunts" were no secret to anyone in the company. Captain Kiefer himself testified that "as a result of a standing regimental order Jews were generally seen as partisans when found outside their place of residence." He clarified that these arrested Jews were only shot if they attempted to escape.[698] Kiefer's explanation reflects both the formulaic but conscious phraseology used during the war to describe the murders of Jews as well as his postwar attempt at self-exculpation. Clearly, all Jews were targets, wherever they were found. A company clerk, Georg L., confirmed this.

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[693] "H., Maximilian Statement, 2 March 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 85.

[694] Recall that Sergeant Schrade's (12th Company, 354th Infantry) recommendations that reconnaissance for antipartisan operations be conducted by a small group of native speakers while disguised in civilian clothes.

[695] "M., Johann Statement, 17 March 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 139.

[696] "B., Franz Statement, 15 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286).

[697] "L., Georg Statement, 9 April 1946," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1182.

[698] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 9 December 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1172.

"I contend," he said, "that Schaffitz actually issued orders to shoot Jews because I saw myself that *kommandos* were assembled by him in our office with the purpose of conducting raids against the Jews." He added that "people from these raids returned and told that they had again shot Jews."[699] The 12th Company had moved beyond assisting in executions or when asked, to independently and actively targeting Jews for murder.

These Jews were then reported as partisan casualties. L. recalled the process. "When [Schaffitz] returned, he would report to the company clerk that several partisans were shot to death in the operation. In actuality, it was generally known throughout the company that these were Jews who were in no way partisans."[700] L. also had been present being in the command post as various company outposts also reported Jews killed.[701] The other company clerk corroborated these statements, adding, "there was an order by which all people without identification were to be shot."[702] Finally, the former company First Sergeant adds an important element to the issue of reporting. He recalled "our company was required to complete activity reports for the battalion and for this reason conducted patrols in the area seizing Jews and shooting them. In these activity reports, these people were portrayed as having been shot while trying to escape. These reports were also compiled when Lieutenant Kiefer was present."[703] It was an open secret within the company that Jews were being killed

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[699] "L., Georg Statement, 28 February 1950," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1184.

[700] "L., Georg Statement, 10 December 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1178.

[701] "L., Georg Statement, 9 April 1946," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1182. In his 1950 and 1964 testimonies, Lehner claimed that his 1946 statement had been coerced by American counter-intelligence officers and that it had been written for him. It is far more likely that he later regretted his condemnation of former comrades and sought to nullify his own testimony. Despite his protestations, testimony from soldiers and other historical evidence corroborates Lehner's words.

[702] "S., Ludwig Statement, 9 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1358.

[703] "H., Alois Statement, 12 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1354.

because they were Jews but that this was disguised in official reports with the use of the term "partisans" and the description "shot while trying to escape."

The significance of these "Jew hunts" should not be underestimated. They are indicators of how deeply this army unit had accepted its role in killing Jews and also how fully it embodied the fulfillment of the goals of the Mogilev Conference. First, the 12th Company took the initiative in and around Szczuczyn to hunt down Jews and kill them. It acted unilaterally, without the influence from civilian authorities that was felt by the 6th and 7th companies in Slonim and Novogrudok. Indeed, it appears that no SS, SD, or police units were involved in the 12th company's activities. Secondly, the reporting process and widespread knowledge of the real aim of these patrols demonstrates that no pretense was necessary to motivate soldiers to kill. The participation of the men in actual killing seems far greater in Szczuczyn than elsewhere. Thirdly, the company's reporting practices indicate that its superiors were also well aware of the killings and condoned them. Lastly, the focus on the killing of Jews in the small villages and countryside surrounding Szczuczyn (while maintaining a sizeable ghetto in the town itself) is powerful evidence of the impact of the organizational climate in the 707th.

The commander of the 707th Infantry Division, General Bechtolsheim, was a rabid antisemite. This might explain his eagerness to develop a "division of labor" between the Army and the SS in which the Army would consolidate and kill Jews in the countryside while the SS and *Einsatzgruppen* would murder Jews in established ghettos and larger towns. He published orders in November 1941 that clearly stated that "where larger or smaller groups of Jews are encountered in the countryside, they may either be executed [by the units themselves] or consolidated in ghettos in designated places where they will then be given

over to the civil administration, that is, the SD."[704] In a letter to *Gebietskommissar* Erren in nearby Slonim, First Lieutenant Glück alludes to a 29 November order from the 727th Infantry Regiment that the "flat lands are to be cleared and kept free of Jews."[705] The "Jew Hunts" around Szczuczyn were definitive evidence of the execution of this policy on the ground and must make us wonder about whether the 6th and 7th Companies also were following this guidance.[706] The prevalence of these "Jew hunts" and the early ghettoization in Szczuczyn suggests that they had been well underway *before* this order was written. Kiefer's leadership must also be seen, then, in the context of this higher level division and regimental guidance which appears to have established a standard operating procedure for participation in genocide.

The 12th company was not the only German Army unit to engage in this type of activity. Serbia also saw similar hunts for Jews, prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union. Here, Walter Manoschek explains that the "Polish ghettoization phase" was skipped as German forces "developed a regional model" as a solution.[707] In Serbia, battalions created *Jagdkommandos* that also included members of the SD. For Manoschek, these mixed patrols "marked the transition from a division of labor to direct cooperation between the *Wehrmacht* and police apparatus."[708] This is exactly the kind of cooperation seen in the 707th. These hunts were conducted elsewhere as well. Christopher Browning, for example, has found that

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[704] "Kdt. In Weissruthenien, Befehl Nr. 24, 24 Nov. 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 378-1-698).

[705] "Letter from Oblt. Glück to Geb. Komm. Erren, 4 December 1941," (BStA- Minsk: 1450-2-38), 563.

[706] Thus, one could make the argument that the November order is a codification of existing policy rather than a directed change.

[707] Walter Manoschek, ""Gehst Mit Juden Erschießen?" Die Vernichtung Der Juden in Serbien," in *Vernichtungskrieg : Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944*, ed. Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995), 39.

[708] Ibid., 41.

similar types of "Jew Hunts" took place in Poland. In his research, these actions were carried out by Police Battalions searching for Jews who had escaped from the ghetto or from previously attempted round-ups.[709] He, too, notes these were low-level, decentralized operations (and, thus, difficult to study). While similar to the "Jew Hunts" around Szczuczyn, these operations were much more, as Browning wrote, an "end phase of the Final Solution." 12th company's operations were directed, however, at a slightly different population. Unlike escapees from ghettos or previous round-ups, the victims of these hunts seemed to be simply Jews living in more remote areas yet to be reached by German troops. In this sense, then, these operations were less a mopping up and more an *active* extension of anti-Jewish policy into the hinterlands. These operations were not aimed at rounding up remnants, but in capturing Jews. Moreover, they required initiative to be successful. It would have been incredibly easy to *not* capture and kill Jews in this way, had that been the goal.

The Drobsky Palace where the 12th company was quartered was the starting point for its "Jew hunts" but also the foci for other killings. According to the *Yizhkor* book for Szczuczyn, forty Jews were shot on the palace grounds by German soldiers in mid-August, which would have been around the time of the unit's arrival. The Szczuczyn ghetto was created shortly after this killing, housing over 2,000 people. Two weeks later the local police on German orders assembled the Jewish intelligentsia including the rabbi and teachers and

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[709] Christopher R. Browning, ""Judenjagd". Die Schlußphase Der "Endlösung" In Polen," in *Deutsche, Juden, Völkermord : der Holocaust als Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Jürgen Matthäus (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006). Browning also addresses the relative dearth of sources that mention "Jew Hunts" [*Judenjagd*]. It seems that, at least in the *Wehrmacht* case, this can be explained by the fact that such actions were clearly reported as "antipartisan patrols" though everyone knew their actual meaning.

the Germans then shot them outside of the town.[710] This could very well be the same killing which claimed William Moll's parents, though the timing does not match up. Kiefer and his men likely played a role in this as well.[711]

But beyond this, the palace was the scene of regular shootings. A noncommissioned officer stated, "I believe it was a few hundred meters behind the palace where the shootings took place. These shootings must have been carried out by members of the company because only the 12th company was located in this palace."[712] Kiefer himself described a shooting that took place there. A patrol arrested a Jewish family (mother, father, and son) and brought them to Kiefer. He questioned them, recalling after the war that they had come from the Baltic. Then, according to him, he ordered them taken to the jail. He heard shots shortly thereafter and learned from his men that they had been "shot while trying to escape."[713] Of course, this is postwar dishonesty. The Jewish *family* was not shot while trying to escape, but had been executed on his orders. Several men of the company recalled the killing because various kinds of paper money had fluttered through the air when the victims were killed. One soldier explained more honestly that "they were shot because they were Jews and because they had no identification [*Ausweis*]."[714] This is a very revealing comment as it *directly* relates to guidance regarding *Zivilisten ohne Ausweis* which was mentioned at both the Mogilev Conference and in reports of "enemies" killed. This shooting

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[710] L Losh and transl. Chaim Charutz, *Sefer Zikaron Le-Kehilot Szczuczyn Wasiliszki Ostryna Nowy-Dwor Rozanka (Book of Remembrance for the Communities of Shtutshin, Vasilishki, Ostrina, Novi Dvor, and Rozanka)* (Tel Aviv1966), 84. Accessed online at: http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/szczuczyn-belarus/Szczuczyn.html

[711] As mentioned earlier, this was likely an element from the *Einsatzkommando* 9 from Lida.

[712] "G., Friedrich Statement, 25 May 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 110.

[713] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 13 August 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 206.

[714] "M., Johann Statement, 17 March 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 137.

in Szczuczyn again strongly suggests that many of the "enemies" reported killed in this period were indeed Jews. While the First Sergeant attempted after the war to argue that there was simply a firing range behind the palace which explained the shooting, the men of the company clearly killed literally in their own back yard. The shooting pit appears to have been the site of multiple killings over an extended period of time.

One of these killings appears to have taken place in December 1941 while Captain Kiefer was away.[715] Lieutenant Schaffitz, as senior ranking officer, took over acting command of the company. The First Sergeant H. (who himself was deeply implicated in the crimes of 12th Company) alleged that Schaffitz then rounded up twenty-five to thirty Jews and ordered that they be killed.[716] It is unclear exactly how this shooting took place but the company clerk testified that it took place in the park behind the palace. Moreover, he personally remembered seeing the "money, gold, jewelry, and valuables" from these Jews that were delivered to the company office and later sent on the battalion headquarters in Lida.[717] Thus, we see that even in decentralized killing operations, expropriated property was collected and passed on to the higher headquarters who certainly knew where such things were coming from.

Schaffitz's period of temporary command became an important element in postwar legal proceedings where Kiefer (and others) attempted to place all the blame for 12th Company's atrocities on Schaffitz. He was painted as a virulent antisemite and as having

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[715] Kiefer was often gone as acting battalion commander as well as, by his admission, as an instructor for officer training courses. It appears he was gone especially during the period of December 1941- February 1942.

[716] "H., Alois Statement, 1 March 1971," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 74. H., as senior ranking NCO, was deeply complicit in the atrocities committed by his company. As such, he, of course, placed all blame on Schaffitz and claimed these killings were for the men "a very uncomfortable thing."

[717] "L., Georg Statement, 28 February 1950," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1184.

carried out his killings unilaterally, without sanction or orders, and apparently without the approval of the vast majority of the company. Given that Schaffitz died in a Polish prison in 1956, this was no doubt a useful defense tactic. However, like much postwar testimony it tells half truths. Kiefer was often gone and often represented by Schaffitz. Upon his return to the unit, Kiefer testified that he was informed of Schaffitz's excesses by First Sergeant H.. Further, he stated that he reported Schaffitz to his superiors and requested his transfer.[718] Kiefer further claimed that he had harshly reprimanded Schaffitz for his actions. According to Kiefer, Schaffitz was disciplined by the battalion commander and was relieved for "independently carrying out shootings of Jews."[719] 707th records indicate that by April Schaffitz was indeed transferred to the 9th Company in the same battalion.[720] However, there is no evidence of any further "punishment."

It was well known in the battalion that the relationship between Kiefer and Schaffitz was "hostile."[721] This conflict between Schaffitz and Kiefer tells us much about the nature of the killings in which the 12th company was active. Perhaps Schaffitz had the company's work Jews killed as a way to deliberately antagonize his commander. What it does *not* tell us is that Schaffitz was censured for killing Jews or that Kiefer and his superiors at the battalion level disapproved of the murder of Jews in principle. It appears that Kiefer *was* angry at Schaffitz's undisciplined and somewhat insubordinate behavior. Kiefer was certainly well-aware of the "Jew hunts" taking place in his command and that these were being reported to the battalion. The battalion was aware of Jews being killed and would not have punished

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[718] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 13 August 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 205.

[719] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 9 February 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 46.

[720] "707 ID Officer Personnel List, 15 April 1942," (BA-MA: RH 26-707-5), 60-62.

[721] "S., Willibald Statement, 8 December 1964," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1165.

Schaffitz simply for this. However, Schaffitz's zeal to kill Jews constituted a challenge to Kiefer's authority in several cases. Kiefer apparently had been meeting with a young Jewish woman who had been teaching him Russian and translating a book on the Russian revolution.[722] This woman as well as other Jewish workers in the palace were among those allegedly killed on Schaffitz's orders. Among these workers was also a glassworker. When Schaffitz had been told that there were no other skilled workers able to do this work for the Germans, he ordered the men to determine whether there was no one capable of this work. When the answer was no, Schaffitz ordered him to be killed along with the rest anyway.[723] Kiefer may well have been angered at the killing of his personal Jewish teacher as well as the killing of the Jewish workers who supported the company. Killing Jews on patrol was one thing, but rounding up and killing Jews from Szczuczyn or those "employed" by the company may have been actions about which Kiefer felt that Schaffitz was over-reaching. In any case, beyond being transferred to a new unit, there do not seem to have been any real negative repercussions for Lieutenant Schaffitz. He continued his "patrolling" with the 9th company.

The killings committed by the 12th company in and around Szczuczyn demonstrate an important stage in the evolution of *Wehrmacht* complicity. In a small town with little or no outside influence by SS or civil authorities, Kiefer and his company carried out killings of Jews on their own as a natural component of their day to day operations. Moreover, they reported these killings to their superiors either plainly or in euphemistic language that did not conceal the truth from anyone. This was a departure from earlier killings that were as a rule

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[722] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 13 August 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 205.

[723] "L., Georg Statement, 28 February 1950," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1185.

either isolated or mass events. This execution of genocide without direction emphasizes that, by this point, killing Jews in the countryside had become policy and that the unit had internalized the need to kill Jews. Participation in killing had become normalized and was no longer an extraordinary event but a daily element of duty in the East. In the case of Szczuczyn, with no close supervision, leaders were able to act with as much (or as little) zeal and initiative as they wished. Here, the leaders of 12th Company chose to carry out the "spirit of the order" to its maximum extent rather than in a perfunctory manner. In his murder of working Jews employed by his commander, Schaffitz exceeded even this mandate. Indeed, beyond the shift in German tactics, what *further* distinguished the behavior of the 12th company was the excessive brutality which accompanied it. In these acts, we have arrived at the end result of prolonged participation in murder.

"Jew Games" and Extreme Brutality

While the behavior of German soldiers toward Jews was certainly brutal from Krupki to Novogrudok, Kiefer's men exhibited particular brutality and sadistic behavior that appears to have resulted from the independent nature of the operations and a deeper belief in the necessity of killing Jews. Individuals in previous cases may have carried out their duties with excessive cruelty, but in Szczuczyn such behavior became commonplace as German soldiers sought additional opportunities gratuitously to brutalize Jews.

Israel Zlocowski was a forty-eight year old father of four who had fled to Szczuczyn from the nearby town of Bilitsa. In the ghetto, he would go from door to door to give the children food.[724] One morning in the fall of 1941 he was standing in line by the Judenrat

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[724] "Schwartz, G. Statement, 25 July 1993," (Yad Vashem: Document 03/6922).Translated by Shoshana Stiftel, Accessed online at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/yv-shwarz.htm

waiting for work. "Suddenly I heard a shout," he remembered, "'They are coming.' I hid myself in a nearby courtyard and watched as an officer and sergeant from the infantry regiment stationed in Szczuczyn approached. At the same time, I saw an acquaintance of mine from Bilitsa named Dwora Kaplan walk out of her door. The sergeant drew his pistol and shot her on the spot for no reason."[725] This kind of gratuitously unnecessary killing was a new development.

A few months later in February 1942, this random violence struck closer to home for Israel. He and his son Jakob had worked especially hard the day before and spent the morning at home. A neighbor appeared and warned that "the Germans were coming." "My son Jakob and I immediately leapt over the wire and hid outside the ghetto," he said. "When we returned to the ghetto a few hours later, we found my son David and my mother-in-law shot to death." His wife had hidden under the bed and told Israel what had happened. The German "infantry soldiers" came into the living room, forced their son and her mother into the street, and shot them to death.[726] Given that survivors are often understandably unable to distinguish between SS, *Wehrmacht*, police, and other German units, the fact that Israel twice identifies the perpetrators as German infantry soldiers is remarkable and means that, in this case, he is referring to the men of the 12th company. In addition, the size of the town and the apparent lack of other German SS or police units also makes it highly likely that Kiefer's unit is described in these testimonies. Belarussian metalworker Viktor Schtemplewski recalled that "it very often happened that Jews were shot in the ghetto for the slightest sign of

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[725] "Zlocowski, I. Statement, 22 February 1962," (BA-ZS: B162/3426), 642.

[726] Ibid.

insubordination."[727] In the nearby town of Ostrina, Schaffitz allegedly had a Jewish family shot when he saw them looking out of the window.[728] Unlike in previous instances of complicity, here, *Wehrmacht* soldiers entered an existing ghetto and apparently shot Jews at random, taking Jewish lives without even the slightest pretence of military rationale or connection to any organized action.

However, the brutality of the company did not stop with random killings. Some German soldiers apparently found the ghetto a ready place to torment Jews. Saturdays were special for the men of the 12th company and terror-filled for the Jews of Szczuczyn. The ghetto became the scene of so-called "Jew games" where soldiers would arrive to torment and kill Jews there. Chaja Kirszenbaum was twenty when the Germans arrived. She remembered, "a German *Wehrmacht* unit was stationed in Szczuczyn which would amuse itself every Saturday with 'Jew games.' They tortured and shot Jews indiscriminately and for no reason. I still remember how three soldiers demanded that a woman show them to the courtyard. Suddenly, one took his rifle and shot her on the spot."[729] These outings were confirmed by other Jewish survivors. Azriel Weinstein had been deported to the Szczuczyn ghetto from his native Rozanka. He too remembered a *Wehrmacht* unit that often amused itself with "Jew games" and that many Jews were shot as a result.[730] Golda Schwartz, who was twelve, moved with her family to Szczuczyn from Ostryna. She remembered that "the Germans came mostly on Shabbat to see if the Jews were clean. They killed those they

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[727] "Schtemplewski, V. Statement, 7 February 1968," (BA-ZS: B162/3427), 988.

[728] "L., Georg Statement, 28 February 1950," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1184.

[729] "Kirszenbaum, C. Statement, 25 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1438.

[730] "Weinstein, A. Statement, 25 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1440.

found on the street."[731] Liber Losh elaborated, describing a similar incident that occurred in February 1942. During an inspection of sanitary conditions, German soldiers killed nine men and nine women.[732] Sometimes the killings had frivolous justifications. Jewish survivor Azriel Weinstein recalled one such incident. In winter 1941/42, thirteen to fifteen Jews were shot by German soldiers because "they had not pumped enough water."[733] Lieber Losh clarified that this killing resulted from a "brief water shortage in the German quarters."[734]

The sadistic behavior of these *Wehrmacht* soldiers represents a qualitative change in the anti-Jewish violence, even when compared with other units in the 727th Infantry Regiment. The initiative-taking here transcended even the dubious explanation of duty, reaching the level of sport. German soldiers in Szczuczyn apparently not only acted brutally in the course of their assigned tasks, but also apparently sought out opportunities to entertain themselves by murdering and abusing Jews. The "hygiene inspections," the intentional scheduling of "Jew games" on the Sabbath, and the indiscriminate brutality are indicative of a significant sadistic turn that constituted a new and sinister development. At least there is little testimony in the other earlier cases to indicate similar volume and tenor of sadistic behavior. Soldiers were no longer simply carrying out orders, even if coldly or harshly; they were deriving pleasure from tormenting their victims. How do we explain this shift to brutality?

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[731] "Schwartz, G. Statement, 25 July 1993," (Yad Vashem: Document 03/6922), Translated by Shoshana Stiftel, Accessed online at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/yv-shwarz.htm.

[732] "Losh, L. Statement," (Yad Vashem: Document 03/4378, O33C).Translated by Shoshana Stiftel, Accessed online at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/yv-losh.htm

[733] "Weinstein, A. Statement, 25 February 1965," (BA-ZS: B162/3438), 1440.

[734] "Losh, L. Statement," (Yad Vashem: Document 03/4378, O33C), Translated by Shoshana Stiftel, Accessed online at: http://www.shtetlinks.jewishgen.org/Lida-District/yv-losh.htm.

First, it appears that the leadership condoned it. Earlier, a meeting had taken place at the battalion headquarters in Lida where the battalion commander, Captain Rudolf Mayr, had passed on orders that all Jews were to be treated as partisans. There was no ambiguity as to what this meant. Kiefer himself admitted during questioning that "this order meant in practice that we should kill all Jews."[735] At the small unit level, Jews were repeatedly killed at close quarters. The "official" reporting of these killings by the company sent a clear message that the murders of Jews was a non-event and was part of normal operations. The decentralized nature of these operations (such as the one commanded by Ritterbusch) likely allowed men who were so inclined to take liberties that they would not have taken when under closer supervision. Still, what led to the Saturday "Jew games?" While Kiefer was certainly supportive of killing Jews during operations, he does not seem to have instigated gratuitous brutality and sadism.

It is more probable that when Schaffitz, with his more rabid and brutal antisemitism, was in command of the company, such "excesses" were readily encouraged. The acting commander was, after all, "a beast who bullied his own men when there were no Jews left to shoot."[736] However, given that these activities seem to have been ongoing, we must assume that Kiefer himself was at least indifferent. First Sergeant H. admitted that although "close contact with Jews was forbidden for soldiers, if a soldier was occasionally caught in the ghetto, he would not have expected any special punishment from Kiefer."[737] Indeed, it appears that the leadership adopted a permissive attitude toward this kind of behavior; there

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[735] "Kiefer, J. Statement, 9 February 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/25111), 41-2.

[736] "L., Georg Statement, 9 April 1946," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1182.

[737] "H., Alois Statement, 2 April 1970," (BA-ZS: B162/26286), 145.

certainly is no evidence of any punishment, even in postwar testimony where such testimony, even if fabricated, would be to Kiefer's advantage.

Another explanation could be a certain level of boredom or desire for excitement. Over 500 miles from the front, with no real insurgent activity to speak of, perhaps soldiers sought to relieve the tedium by preying upon the local Jewish population. The soldiers themselves do not even mention these more gratuitous atrocities much less offer any explanation in their postwar statements given the legal context of these interviews. It seems that here, as in other atrocities in similar contexts, the deliberate dehumanization and targeting of civilians led inexorably to progressively more vicious behavior above and beyond that "required" of the military situation.

An increasingly virulent antisemitism among the men could also be a factor. The fact that these "Jew games" took place on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath cannot simply be a coincidence. The men of the 12th company deliberately chose to attack Jews on their holy day. The brutality and cynical justifications for that brutality indicate a motivation to torment and kill beyond cold and clinical, even if specious, "military" calculations or even abstract scientific racism. Certainly the brutal behavior of Schaffitz and the extreme racist views he shared with Kiefer could have spread among the men. At a minimum, it would have encouraged similar behavior from those predisposed to act sadistically. In Szcuczyn, killing became pastime.

Another powerful explanation for the more violent behavior of the 12th Company is simply that people are changed by what they do. This is not just true in a numbing, brutalizing sort of way, though that kind of acclimatization happens. The social/psychological theory of cognitive dissonance, first espoused by Leon Festinger in

1957, is instructive in this regard.[738] The theory argues that when our actions and our beliefs are conflicting, we are thrown into a progressively more uncomfortable mental state. This "dissonance arousal" is, in essence, a threat to our conception of self.[739] The effect on our self-image is vital because "people experience dissonance after engaging in an action that leaves them feeling stupid, immoral, or confused. Moreover, the greater the personal commitment or self-involvement implied by the action and the smaller external justification for that action, the greater the dissonance and, therefore, the more powerful the need for self-justification."[740] In order to escape this threat to our mental well-being, we seek to change either our beliefs or our actions to bring our mental and physical states into congruence. In many situations, it is easier to change beliefs than acts.

By this model, the brutality we see by the 12th Company (and by other units with long-term exposure to the Nazi genocidal project) can be explained as function of a mental change that attempted to justify actions that had already been committed. In this sense, increasingly brutal action could be used to convince soldier of his own virulent antisemitism which then justified his brutal actions. If participation in murder began incrementally, as we see beginning in Krupki, then perhaps Szczcuzyn represents the natural result of all these small decisions. As Fred Katz notes, "through this type of localized incremental decision-making the individual can readily become involved in profound evil."[741] Perhaps the killers

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[738] See Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, . (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

[739] Ziva Kunda, *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 217.

[740] Elliot Aronson, "Dissonance, Hypocrisy, and the Self-Concept," in *Cognitive Dissonance : Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology*, ed. Eddie Harmon-Jones and Judson Mills (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 111-12.

[741] Fred E. Katz, *Ordinary People and Extraordinary Evil : A Report on the Beguilings of Evil* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 37.

in Szczuczyn found themselves in Katz' "Local Moral Universe" that "dictated behavior totally at variance with the ideals in which participants had been brought up to believe."[742]

Of relevance here as well is Katz's concept of "Cultures of Cruelty." He had noted during the trials of Auschwitz guards that some men had chosen to behave with excessive and imaginative cruelty beyond the already structurally cruel task to which they were bent. Certainly, latent antisemitism played a role. However, Katz is also able to identify similar behavior in the murders at My Lai which arguably lacked a similarly powerful ideological underpinning. It appears that a similar "culture of cruelty" developed at least for some soldiers in Szczuczyn and found its expression in creative and increasingly brutal degradations against its captive Jewish population.

And so the progressively deeper involvement of the German Army in the Holocaust culminates in soldiers murdering Jews for sport in the ghetto of a small town. The "Jew hunts" and "games" conducted by the 12th company in Szczuczyn are qualitatively different from the actions of German units in Krupki, Krucha, Slonim, and Novogrudok. Unlike previous killings, the behavior of Kiefer's men, which extends into early 1942, is characterized not only by a general acceptance of the specious military rationale for killing Jews whenever they are encountered as part of normal operations but also by a greater dehumanization leading to ever more sadistic and brutal atrocities against Jews committed *outside* of military operations.

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[742] Fred E. Katz, *Confronting Evil : Two Journeys* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 75.

VII. Conclusion

Justice Unfulfilled: Legal Outcomes of *Wehrmacht* Crimes

> The fact that countless suspects could give no explanation for why they were not engaged does not rule out that such circumstances could have presented themselves. It is well within the realm of possibility that as a result of the long passage of time or due to difficult experiences in the course of the war that the suspects have forgotten. In any case, concrete evidence of their participation has not been found.
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> -Dismissal of charges against Waldow et. al, Dortmund, 9 September 1969[743]

> It has been shown to me that in the trial against Erren it has been made clear that the 6th Company, 727th Infantry under the command of First Lieutenant Glück participated in the transport of the Jews in Slonim with trucks to the killing site and in the cordoning off of the town during the Action of 14 November 1941. To this I declare that this occurred without my knowledge and against my order that units in my regiment could in no way participate in Jewish actions.
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> - Statement Josef Pausinger, Commander 727th Infantry Regiment, 4 May 1961[744]

Unfortunately, few of the perpetrators identified in this study even went to trial, let alone paid for their crimes. In the case of the 354th Infantry Regiment and the murder of the Jews of Krupki, most of those investigated were not charged due to lack of evidence. These were mainly soldiers. Even the main Army perpetrators avoided any prosecution. The regimental commander, von Rekowski's case was dismissed because it could not be proven that he knowingly supported the action. Lieutenant Nick and the commander of the 10th

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[743] "Einstellungsverfügung ZSt Dortmund 45 Js 9/64 gg. Waldow u. A., 9 September 1969," (BA-ZS: B162/3911), 717.

[744] "Pausinger, Josef Statement, 4 May 1961," (BA-ZS: B162/5088), 1447.

Company escaped prosecution because it could not be proven that they were in personal danger if they disobeyed orders. The battalion adjutant, Lieutenant Speth, was judged guilty of being an accessory. However, due to a statute of limitations on crimes whose sentences did not exceed fifteen years, he was released as well. Charges against the First Sergeant of 12th Company, Hans H., were dismissed due to lack of evidence. Major Waldow, the battalion commander, was found guilty of the charges but they were dismissed as a result of his heart condition and inability to stand trial.[745] Werner Schönemann who had led *Einsatzkommando* 8 while it killed tens of thousands of Jews was found guilty of aiding and abetting murder on 12 counts of a total of 2,170 people and sentenced to only 6 years in prison.[746]

Friedrich Nöll, commander of the 3rd Company, 691st Infantry Regiment, and his First Sergeant, Emil Zimber, went to trial and were convicted for their actions in Krucha. The battalion commander, Commichau, who issued the order did not survive the war. The court found Nöll guilty of knowingly overseeing a minimum of sixty cases of manslaughter, noting that he could not have "feared for life and limb as a result of his refusal" and was "merely afraid that his avoidance of the order would be uncomfortably noted."[747] When Nöll weakly told the court that his personal intervention in the killings was "superfluous" because his "people were so well behaved," the presiding judge acidly replied, " 'Behaved' is a fully

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[745] See "Einstellungsverfügung ZSt Dortmund 45 Js 9/64 gg. Waldow u. A., 9 September 1969," (BA-ZS: B162/3911).

[746] See Irene Sagel-Grande, H.H. Fuchs, and C. F. Rüter, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XX (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam,1979), 164-84.

[747] C. F. Rüter, H.H. Fuchs, and Adelheid L Rüter-Ehlermann, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam,1974), 383.

tasteless expression here. As we will hear from witnesses, thank God that not all people are 'so well behaved.'"[748] Zimber was found guilty as an accessory to the sixty cases of manslaughter; the court concluded "that the achievement of the battalion commander's desires would have been unthinkable without Zimber's supporting activities."[749] If the court's judgment was at least somewhat stern, its sentences were not. Nöll and Zimber were initially sentenced to four and three years in prison respectively, but these were both reduced by a year on appeal in 1956.

Finally, the cases of Slonim and Novogrudok also failed to provide any substantive measure of judicial justice. In the Slonim case, only a private and a sergeant were tried, and not for the murder of the Jews but for a hanging that took place shortly before. These charges were dismissed due to a lack of evidence.[750] The vast majority of soldiers who testified to their participation in the November killing operation in Slonim were, in fact, testifying against Gerhard Erren, the *Gebietskommissar*, and were not themselves charged with anything. Erren himself was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and sentenced to life in prison. Unfortunately, the conviction was overturned on appeal due to a technicality and Erren was then, conveniently, unable to stand trial for health reasons.[751] Johann Artmann, whose 7th Company assisted in the killings in Novogrudok was spared

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[748] "Als Kompaniechef brauchte ich das nicht zu wissen," *Darmstädter Echo*, 2 March 1956.

[749] C. F. Rüter, H.H. Fuchs, and Adelheid L Rüter-Ehlermann, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1966*, vol. XII (Amsterdam: University Press Amsterdam,1974), 384.

[750] See BA-ZA: B162/1506

[751] C. F. Rüter and D.W. De Mildt, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1999*, vol. XXXIX (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press,2008), 672-763. Apparently, the jury had been called for one fiscal year and the trial occurred in the next, invalidating its judgment.

prosecution because the court reasoned that "it could not expect a conviction on the charges;" it had determined that Lieutenant Martin had acted alone.[752]

For the case of the 12th Company in Szczuczyn, charges against Captain Kiefer were dropped due to lack of evidence. Charges against Lieutenant Ritterbusch were dropped because "he appeared after investigation…not sufficiently suspect" and because "countless witnesses based on their knowledge of the accused found it out of the question [that he could have committed the acts]."[753] Lieutenant Schaffitz, however, was turned over to a Polish court and sentenced to death in 1948 (though this was later commuted to life).[754]

Each case, of course, was different but all suffered from both a general unwillingness to condemn *Wehrmacht* veterans and from the imposition of difficult German legal standards. The former is not particularly surprising given that, in some cases, the judges involved had also been sitting judges during the Third Reich. In other cases, diligent young prosecutors often found themselves stymied by evidentiary and legal obstacles. The statute of limitations on crimes with sentences of less than fifteen years meant that only the more difficult first degree murder charge was available. This charge required prosecutors to demonstrate base motives on the part of the perpetrator (i.e. antisemitism), the use of subterfuge, and that the nature of the killing was particularly cruel. With very few survivors available, successfully proving these elements often proved to be a serious challenge.

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[752] "Beschluß der 2. Strafkammer des Landgerichts Traunstein gg. Artmann, 11 January 1966," (BA-ZS: B162/3456).

[753] "Beschluß der 3. Strafkammer des Landgerichts Tübingen gg. Ritterbusch, 15 September 1972," (BA-ZS: B162/25111).

[754] "Urteilsspruch- Bezirksgericht Warschau, 9 December 1948," (BA-ZS: B162/3436), 1191a.

Motive but not Opportunity? Representativeness and *Wehrmacht* Crimes

In order to better weigh the significance of this study, we must consider the issue of representativeness. How characteristic were the actions of the military units described here as well as the actions of the individuals and leaders involved? Indeed, how typical were these units themselves? We have already seen that the security divisions such as the 286th were second or third rate at best. They were under-equipped, under-manned, under-trained, and overage. After the winter crisis of 1941-42, these divisions lost their best trained infantry regiments to front line duty; these losses, if they were made good at all, were filled by even more unsuitable units such as *Landesschützen* battalions.[755] Yet in regard to its antisemitic orders and complicity, the 286th is certainly in line with its fellow security divisions in rHGM, the 221st and 403rd. However, the 707th and 339th Infantry divisions were not so far removed from other divisions fighting in *rHGM*. Both these units ended up fighting at the front. In any case, all the units investigated here are far more typical of the *Wehrmacht* as a whole than SS or police formations which are the basis of several excellent previous studies.[756]

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[755] These units were poorly equipped, poorly trained reservists incapable of any real military operations.

[756] See, for example, Edward B. Westermann, ""Ordinary Men" Or "Ideological Soldiers"? Police Battalion 310 in Russia, 1942," *German Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (1998), Harald Welzer, *Täter : wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2005), Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men : Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), Christopher R. Browning, ""Judenjagd". Die Schlußphase Der "Endlösung" In Polen," in *Deutsche, Juden, Völkermord : der Holocaust als Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Jürgen Matthäus (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), Jürgen Matthäus, "What About The "Ordinary Men"?: The German Order Police and the Holocaust in the Occupied Soviet Union," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 10, no. 2 (1996), Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners : Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), Wendy Lower, ""Anticipatory Obedience" And the Nazi Implementation of the Holocaust in the Ukraine: A Case Study of Central and Peripheral Forces in the Generalbezirk Zhytomyr, 1941-1944," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16, no. 1 (2002), Edward B. Westermann, ""Friend and Helper": German Uniformed Police Operations in Poland and the General Government, 1939-1941," *The Journal of Military History* 58, no. 4 (1994).

Situational factors played an important role in determining both whether and how units would become involved in genocide. These can be temporal, spatial, and mental. How do we sort all these in an attempt to determine how far we can apply the findings of this study? In this, the legal concepts of means, motive, and opportunity provide a useful framework. Assuming that most units possessed the ability to murder Jews by shooting, what about motive? Did other units possess similar organizational climates and mentalities that would allow them to kill, given the chance?

A brief survey of eleven other divisions in Army Group Center (Rear) is helpful in answering these questions.[757] These "control" divisions, all first and second line infantry divisions, passed through central Belarus in the same areas as the case study units. Some were fighting in conventional combat and others were temporarily involved in occupation duties. Between June 21 and November/December 1941, these divisions followed a roughly northeasterly trajectory from Warsaw through Minsk toward Smolensk before becoming entangled in the struggle for Moscow. What can a look at the surviving documents from these units tell us about the mindsets and motives of their leadership and men?

Several of these divisions exhibited antisemitic climates. The Division commander of the 252nd Infantry division, General der Kavallerie Diether von Böhm-Bezing, told his men at the end of September: "As your Division Commander and comrade for two long years, I know that each of you have worked through this war that was forced upon us by international Jewry and Free masonry toward the greatest victory our history has ever known even as this can only be achieved through difficult battle on Russian soil."[758] Three months later, his

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[757] These were the 7th ID, 28th ID, 78th ID, 252nd ID, 102nd ID, 112th ID, 87th ID, 258th ID, 206th ID, 162nd ID, and 197th ID.

[758] "252 ID Message from Division Commander, 29 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-77).

Christmas message exuded a similar antisemitic, anti-Bolshevik message: "In these days of Christmas, the sacrifice of our fallen and wounded comrades finds its transfiguration. Entrenched in this Russian ground that we have freed from Bolshevism and the Jews, we want to prepare ourselves to go forward to the final victory in firm confidence in our strength, in unerring belief in the future of our Fatherland, and with a tenacious will. Comrades of the 252nd Division, not for us, but all for our homeland, our people, our Führer."[759] In both messages distributed to his entire command, the general clearly places Jews and Bolsheviks as the main enemy.

Other units did not perhaps place their antisemitism so prominently, but at least some of them were already dealing with issues of Nazi racial policy. The war diary for the 102nd Infantry Division stated on 13 July, regarding Lithuanian militias operating in its area: "For the first time, questions have surfaced whose solution, because of their half-political character, is particularly delicate. A decision from the Army is not forthcoming despite multiple requests….As they so far proved quite useful and also emphasize antisemitism and convey an anti-bolshevik character, the division has ordered that militias [*Hilfspolizeitruppen*] be recognized as legal, and be treated favorably, but that all political discussions be refused."[760] At this time, the 102nd was stationed just east of Vilnius. Clearly here the division's leadership was willing to accept (or even encourage) a violent solution to certain "questions" as long as it was not directly involved in approving them.

Such antisemitic rhetoric found expression in more concrete policies in these divisions as well. The 78th Infantry Division expressly forbid the use of Jews as interpreters

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[759] "252 ID Message from Division Commander, 12 December 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-79).

[760] "102 ID, Kriegstagebuch, 13 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-5).

and in any other capacity.[761] The 252nd Infantry Division (whose commander already demonstrated his adherence to Nazi racial beliefs) ordered on 26 July 1941 that "requests or complaints from the Jewish population are to be rejected by all units. The complainant is to be referred to the responsible police office."[762] These referrals would had predictably negative results.

Such guidance does not always tell the whole story. Indeed, part of the aim of this study has been an attempt to determine what actually happened on the ground. Jews were also specifically targeted and identified as casualties by these divisions, most notably the 252nd and 102nd. In July, the 232nd Infantry Regiment of the 102nd Infantry Division was reporting Jews killed in the course of its security operations. On 20 July, it claimed two communist functionaries, three Jews, and 5 Poles executed "because they were still active as communists after the occupation of the area…and in particular had incited the population against the *Wehrmacht*."[763] Two days later, the same regiment reported four Jews shot for "continuing terrorism of the local population, sabotage of *Wehrmacht* efforts, plundering, etc."[764] The 102nd Division itself supported these actions of its subordinates and later forwarded a directive from the XXXX Corps stating, because it was often difficult to catch partisans in the act, "all suspects are to be shot immediately on the order of a company (or other) commander. Communist party members, members of a communist organization, or Jews are particularly suspicious if they are found in the vicinity of an incident and cannot prove themselves residents of the nearest town or become entangled in contradictions during

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[761] "78 ID Div. Befehl, 3 November 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-78-29).

[762] "252 ID Div. Befehl, 26 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-75), p. 67.

[763] "232 IR Report to 102 ID, 20 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-9), Anl. 318.

[764] "232 IR Report to 102 ID, 22 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-9), Anl. 323.

interrogation."[765] The 162nd Infantry Division ominously reproached its own troops, saying: "The notion that it is only the police but not the army who should shoot partisans, armed people, and suspicious persons is completely false. It is completely vital that we demonstrate our will to take drastic measures…on the spot in a timely manner."[766] As we have seen, a blurring of the lines between the antipartisan effort and racial policy was also a recurring theme in other units. We will return to this concept in these other divisions shortly.

Another way in which these divisions were complicit in the Holocaust was through their collaboration with the SS, *Einsatzgruppen*, and other Nazi organizations. Evidence from these control divisions suggests that they, too, were not unaware of the actions of these killing units and in many cases supported them. Organizationally, several divisions made their relationship with the *Einsatzgruppen* clear. In a memorandum explaining its duties as rear security, the 102nd Division explicitly stated that under the jurisdiction of Section VII (an *Army* staff section) were: "General administrative affairs of the land and civil population….Collection of assets managed by Jews…Police affairs…Liaison with Order Police, Security Police, and SD."[767] The executive officer of the 87th Infantry Division returned from a meeting at *rHGM* headquarters and noted in the unit war diary: "Jews are to be collected together in ghettos…Cooperation with the police [including] *Einsatzkommando* Major Dr. Bratfisch."[768] The 252nd Division informed its soldiers on 16 July that: "*Einsatzkommando* 8 of the SD, with its headquarters in Baranovichi [sic]…and a branch

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[765] "102 ID Div. Befehl Nr. 23, 13 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-61), Anl. 7.

[766] "162 ID Gefärhdung der Versorgung, 17 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-162-10).

[767] "102 ID Anl. 3, Merkblatt für die Versorgung beim Einsatz als Sich. Div., 19 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-9), Anl. 320.

[768] "87 ID Kriegestagebuch, 20 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-87-22).

office in Slonim and Novogrudok is dependent on the cooperation of the Division. This command primarily handles all political issues and defensive affairs, but also advises the *Feldkommandanturen* in the selection of select trusted persons as mayors and economic leaders. Captured communists (civilians) are to be handed over to the SD."[769]

The next day it was clear that this cooperation was already taking place, as the division reported the "execution of a police roundup in Slonim in the course of the day during which a large number of communists and unsafe elements were arrested."[770] This was most likely one of the first *Einsatzgruppen* actions against Jews in Slonim. Recognition of structural relationships led to actual collaboration in other control divisions as well. The 102nd Division informed its units that a ten-man advance party from *Einsatzkommando* 9 had been attached to the division with the mission of "supporting and advising the division in all political and police matters [and] the supervision of all political and criminal matters in the division area."[771] Likewise, the 87th Division reminded its men that "suspect persons and those who are not caught in the act are to be handed over with the proper documentation to *Einsatzkommando* 8 of the security police and the SD in Minsk."[772] The 162nd Division went so far as to request that elements of *Einsatzgruppe B* conduct an action against "former Communist party members" near Bialystok; seventeen individuals were arrested and "liquidated."[773] Four of these divisions also had working relationships with both SS infantry

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[769] "252 ID Div. Befehl 10, 16 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-75).

[770] "252 ID Kriegestagebuch, 17 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-73).

[771] "102 ID Div. Befehl, 25 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-9), Anl. 348.

[772] "87 ID Div. Befehl, 6 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-87-25), 3.

[773] EM 43, 5 August 1941 Yitzhak Arad, Schmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, eds., *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign against the Jews July 1941-January 1943* (New York, N.Y.: Holocaust Library,1989), 67.

and cavalry brigades, which as we have seen, were deeply involved in carrying out the Final Solution in the East.[774] Being assigned control of these units did not always mean direct complicity in acts of genocide. At times, these *Waffen-SS* units were assigned as actual combat units. This was likely the case for two squadrons of the 1st SS Cavalry Regiment that formed the so-called *Vorausabteilung* and were attached to the 162nd Infantry Division to help combat a Soviet counterattack.[775] However, when the *Vorausabteilung* was transferred to the 252nd Infantry Division on 17 August, it had already been very busy murdering at least 11,000 Jewish men, women, and children in the northern reaches of the Pripet marshes.[776]

If there was one area in which there was almost complete agreement among the control divisions, it was in the necessity of harshness in antipartisan operations. In September, the 258th Infantry Division forwarded a typical declaration from its corps headquarters: "Ruthlessly fight the partisan with the harshest measures. Any charity and lenience is wrong and indicates weakness which ultimately costs us our own blood."[777] The 162nd Division ordered one regiment to round up and shoot all "suspect men" in three towns.[778] Certainly in these actions we can see the same brutal policy toward civilians as was suggested at the Mogilev Conference.

It appears that many of these control divisions held similarly antisemitic beliefs and also exhibited similarly harsh and brutal attitudes toward civilians. Why, then, did these

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[774] These were the 87th ID, 102nd ID, 162nd ID, and 252nd ID. See, for example, 6/23, 6/27, 7/19, and 7/28 in "Kommandostab RFSS Kriegestagebuch," (USHMM: RG-48.004M, 1993.A.0019), Reel 1.

[775] See Ibid, Martin Cüppers, *Wegbereiter der Shoah : die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 138.

[776] Martin Cüppers, *Wegbereiter der Shoah : die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939-1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 150.

[777] "258 ID XII Armeekorps Befehl, 27 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-258-46).

[778] "162 ID Div. Befehl, 14 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-162-10), Anl. 74.

units not participate in the mass killings of Jews that the 707th, 339th, and 286th did? The first possibility may be that some did, but that no records exist to prove participation or at least there were no trials involved that would bring to light the details of this involvement. The second explanation is related to the concept of opportunity. At least some of these divisions were mainly occupied with fighting and mopping up surrounded pockets of Red Army soldiers before they were thrown into the destructive battles for Smolensk and Moscow. Very simply, this meant that by their position on the battlefield these units were often too busy with combat to be involved with genocidal policy, though they could certainly were involved in carrying out the Commissar Order and with antipartisan related atrocities.

An example of the importance of opportunity comes from two of the units that appear most prominently in conjunction with anti-Jewish actions among the control divisions, the 102nd and the 252nd, also spent a large amount of time in rear areas, conducting security operations. It is perhaps not surprising then that they became more deeply embroiled in carrying out genocide for this is where , by and large, it was taking place. Rear area duty was not something these units looked forward to. Neither the 102nd nor the 252nd were happy with their assignment. Trying to put a positive spin on this assignment, the commander of the 252nd termed their duty a "quiet but not to be undervalued detail work."[779] The 102nd Division, however, expressed its feelings more clearly in its war diary. After learning that the Division would again be relegated to rear area duty, the entry read: "That this wish [for frontline duty] was once again not fulfilled raises in the best of us a feeling of bitterness."[780] The experience of these divisions before they, too, were sent to the front supports some of the

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[779] "252 ID Div. Commander Message, 23 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-75), 33.

[780] "102 ID Kriegestagebuch, 7 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-102-5).

conclusions of this study. The longer a unit was involved on a daily basis and at close proximity to genocidal policy, the deeper it became complicit and the more extreme its actions became.

This is not to say that all the divisions behaved equally. The 28th Infantry Division told its men that "poor treatment by our own troops drives the population into the arms of the partisans."[781] The 78th Division likewise instructed its soldiers that they were to "refrain from violent reprisals against towns where communist cells were found or in whose vicinity attacks on [German soldiers] have taken place when it cannot be without a doubt proven that the inhabitants were the perpetrators or were in contact with them."[782] The division commander, General der Artillerie Curt Gallenkamp, personally warned his soldiers against the thefts of property and livestock that were increasing in the division area. "I will leave no doubt that I will have every complaint investigated by the military police and will sentence the offenders by court-martial."[783] An understanding of the necessity of winning hearts and minds, while perhaps a rare insight in the German army, does not simultaneously prove any disagreement with racial policy. However, it does indicate that units could have different interpretations of what behavior was to be accepted depending on the context.

A survey of similar kinds of units in the same region at the same time suggests that they have much in common with the units in this study. Expressions of blatant antisemitism were not rare, though there were varying levels of virulence among different divisions. What was certainly prevalent was a proclivity to violence against civilians and a willingness to

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[781] "28 ID Memo Partisanenbekämpfung, 16 September 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-28-20).

[782] "78 ID Besondere Anordnungen zum Div. Befehl 38/41, 20 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-78-29).

[783] "78 ID Div. Befehl 34/41, 12 August 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-78-29).

knowingly collude with the SS, SD, and police battalions. Moreover, in units such as the 252nd and 102nd that were employed as occupation troops, we see glimpses of the same progression towards a normalization of complicity in genocide. It would appear that many units were *capable* of similar genocidal behavior as the ones investigated for this study. The deciding factor appears to have been, to a large extent, whether or not the unit was put into a situation of extended contact with Jews and occupation policy, that is, whether or not it had the opportunity to participate. It is likely that more often than not those that were ended up becoming more and more complicit. However, some units, but more often individuals, did refuse to comply, evade participation, or, more rarely, attempt to aid Jews.

Between Evasion and Rescue: *Wehrmacht* Non-Compliance in The Holocaust

The question of participation in anti-Jewish killing is more difficult for these control divisions as is the question of compliance and noncompliance. Both these behaviors rarely show up in military documents, which formed the basis for the investigation of the control divisions. The case of *Feldkommandantur* 551 is a good introduction to the complexities of seeking noncompliance in these sources. On 22 July, the commander of *Feldkommandantur* 551 wrote a heated memorandum to the 252nd Infantry Division to which FK 551 was attached. He complained that the previous day a German police battalion from Baranovichi had swooped down upon various factories and slave labor details, arresting Jews. He further argued that this raid had deprived him of irreplaceable laborers and impeded operations which supported the *Wehrmacht*. The police had torn up and trashed special identification cards that the *Feldkommandantur* had issued to its Jewish slave laborers. The lieutenant colonel closed by angrily terming the entire operation a "great injury to my office in front of

the Jews, that I cannot accept." He ended by requesting that "the police regiment be given orders which will prevent such behavior in the future."[784]

The 252nd acted quickly, forwarding the report to *rHGM* the next day. It requested that the Higher SS and Police Leader ensure that identification papers issued by the *Wehrmacht* would be honored in order to both keep important operations running and to recognize the authority of the *Feldkommandanturen*. Additionally, the division requested that in the future if there were "political or police" concerns about individuals under the authority of the *Feldkommandantur* that it be notified before any action would be taken. It was noted in the file that the matter was "satisfactorily settled;" in the future the HSSPF would recognize Army-issued identification.[785]

This small occurrence is a good introduction to the complex phenomenon of *Wehrmacht* evasion, resistance, or rescue behavior. In this case, it appears that the conflict was far more jurisdictional than moral and that it was the interests of the Army rather than those of the victims that predominated. In other cases, similar objections may have been attempts at expressing some form of moral outrage in a manner that would be both less challenging and also more convincing in military terms. A more well-known, but no less problematic example is that of the military chaplain in the 295th Infantry Division in the Ukraine. After the adults of Byelaya Tserkov had been murdered, the young children of the town had been locked in a house without food, water, or any kind of care. The military chaplain, Dr. Reuss, who had been called to the house by *Wehrmacht* soldiers, filed a lengthy report to his superiors in which he described in detail the inhumane conditions and how the

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[784] "FK 551 Report to 252 ID, 22 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-75), 53.

[785] "252 ID to rHGM: Meldung der Feld-Kdtr. 551 v.22.7.1941, 23 July 1941," (BA-MA: RH 26-252-75), 54.

soldiers were "shaken" and had "expressed their outrage." Reuss then alluded to the risk of disease and the fact that German soldiers were able to enter the house that had resulted in "a reaction of indignation and criticism."[786] Successive reports also remarked upon the impact on soldier morale of this scene. Eventually, the children were executed. What was the chaplain's motivation in this instance? Was he truly only concerned about morale and disease or was that how he chose to word his complaint in order to receive the most attention? The answer is unclear; however, the length in which he describes the plight of the children suggests at least some concern for their welfare. Even Josef Sibille, who refused outright to murder the Jews in his area, remarked after the war, that he would not "expect upstanding German soldiers to soil their hands with such things."[787] This may have been the limits of his objection or he may have simply been unwilling to openly condemn the immorality of the Army out of some feeling of loyalty.

Recent scholarship has uncovered several cases of *Wehrmacht* soldiers refusing to participate in killing or even acting as rescuers.[788] Some of these are quite extraordinary, such as the case of Sergeant Anton Schmid, a Viennese soldier who smuggled Jews out of the Vilna ghetto across the border with Belarus, releasing them in Lida. When a ghetto in Lida was established, the Gestapo noted the presence of many Jews from Lida who, under

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[786] Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, *"The Good Old Days" : The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, 1st American ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 143.

[787] "Sibille Letter, 2.2.1953," (LA NRW-H: H 13 Darmstadt, Nr. 979 I, Bd. III), 208.

[788] See, for example Detlef Bald and Wolfram Wette, *Zivilcourage: Empörte, Helfer und Retter aus Wehrmacht, Polizei und SS* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2004), Norbert Haase and Wolfram Wette, eds., *Retter in Uniform: Handlungsspielräume im Vernichtungskrieg der Wehrmacht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag,2002).

torture, revealed how they came to be there. Schmid was arrested, tried, and executed.[789] In his last letter to his wife and daughter, he wrote, "my dearest Steffi and Gerta, it is a terrible blow for us, but please, please forgive me. I acted only as a human being and did not want to hurt anyone."[790] Cases such as this are made extraordinary by their rarity. Most soldiers did not react this way as, indeed, most Germans did not. However, this study has shown that some men, like Joachim Lochbihler, *did* find the courage and opportunity to aid those Jews they came into contact with. Unfortunately, the vast majority did not object or, if they did, did not take any action on that objection.

Even rarer still were soldiers who spoke out against the killing and sought to encourage others to disobey. Such behavior, more than individual refusal, put soldiers in real danger of being executed. Lieutenant Reinhold Lofy was one such individual. In April 1944, he was ordered to lead a raid behind the lines, capture Red Army soldiers, and then, as a "birthday present to the Führer," behead them with entrenching spades.[791] He refused to do this and also reportedly informed his men about the concentration camps and the murder of the Jews, leaving no doubt what he thought of them. He was shortly thereafter denounced and sentenced to a punishment battalion, whose extraordinarily dangerous missions he barely survived. Another young officer whose actions fall into this rarest category of attempting to persuade others to resist was Lieutenant Michael Kitzelmann who was assigned to the 262nd Infantry division in the Soviet Union. He, too, was denounced for expressing his opposition

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[789] Arno Lustiger, "Feldwebel Anton Schmid- Judenretter in Wilna 1941-1942," in *Retter in Uniform: Handlungsspielräume im Vernichtungskrieg der Wehrmacht*, ed. Norbert Haase and Wolfram Wette (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002).

[790] Ibid., 63.

[791] See Hermine Wüllner, "Leutnant Reinhold Lothy- Mordtaten Verweigert," in *Retter in Uniform: Handlungsspielräume im Vernichtungskrieg der Wehrmacht*, ed. Norbert Haase and Wolfram Wette (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002).

to the war and the brutal German occupation to his soldiers. Unlike Lothy, he was sentenced to death and executed.[792] With the exception of these last two cases, acts of *Wehrmacht* resistance or rescue tended to be both very rare and highly individual in nature. The process of deepening complicity in acts of genocide and violence led instead to increased passivity and often to more active participation in the Holocaust for soldiers.

Explaining *Wehrmacht* Involvement in Murder

For *Wehrmacht* units, situational and institutional factors were most important in influencing the manner of participation in violence against civilians and in the Nazi genocidal project. This is, of course, not to minimize the effects of antisemitism brought to the military from the larger German society or to reopen the old intentionalist-structuralist argument. Beliefs and ideology were certainly a preexisting condition for many men. Indeed, they exist as a foundation and an important context in which all of these events took place. We must first recognize that the sources available, namely postwar testimony from German soldiers, do not often lend themselves to a judgment on the witness' stance on antisemitism as these men definitely knew to avoid any such racist statement when talking to the authorities. However, given the ages of most of the men involved, we can at least say that they lived their formative years not under the racially polarizing influence of Nazi Germany and the Hitler Youth but during the chaotic but liberal Weimar period that probably made them more anti-Bolshevik rather than antisemitic. Perhaps this is why the Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus may have had such impact. Second, on a relative scale, these men were

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[792] See Jakob Knab, "Empörung über den weltanschaulichen Vernichtungskrieg im Osten: Der katholische Leutnant Michael Kitzelmann," in *Zivilcourage: Empörte, Helfer und Retter aus Wehrmacht, Polizei und SS*, ed. Detlef Bald and Wolfram Wette (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2004).

likely less antisemitic (or at least certainly less racially indoctrinated) than the police and SS units which have been the focus of previous studies of this nature.

One factor that appears vital again and again is that of leadership. In every instance of complicity in the murder of the Jews of Belarus, a key leader led, encouraged, or permitted this behavior. Personalities such as Captain Kiefer, Lieutenant Glück, Lieutenant Martin, Lieutenant Schaffitz and others actively inserted themselves (and their men) into the killing process. At the opposite extreme stands Josef Sibille who refused any participation and, through this refusal, eliminated the participation of any of his men as well. In the middle of this spectrum and likely representing the majority of leadership are men such as Major Waldow, Captain Nöll, and Captain Artmann, who, while not driving participation themselves, permitted it, enabled it, and supported it. Artmann was too ineffectual to stop it and Nöll, who likely recognized the immorality of what he was doing was simply too weak to say no. The role of leadership in *Wehrmacht* complicity places the "obedience to orders" defense in an entirely different light. The arguments of Omer Bartov (and others) regarding the draconian discipline in the German Army and the statistics of Nazi military justice highlight the importance of leadership in *not* committing atrocities. If the threat (real or perceived) of swift punishment for a refusal to obey orders drove some men to kill, certainly an order to the contrary (like Sibille's) would have prevented them from doing so on their own.

Yet, like many things, the decision-making process on the ground was more complex. The institutional culture of the German Army itself greatly complicated this.[793] The older

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[793] For an excellent discussion of the use of organizational and military culture in analyzing the behavior of the Army, see Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction : Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 93-98.

artifacts of extreme brutality toward "potential" civilian resistance, expropriation of civilian property, and scorched earth policies flowed together with the more recent anti-Bolshevik fervor and polarizing Nazi racial ideology to create the conditions for a "perfect storm" of atrocity in the East. Perhaps the best example of this convergence of traditions was the intentional instrumentation of the antipartisan war to mobilize the resources of the Army in the rear areas in support of the Nazi genocidal project. The Jew-Bolshevik-Partisan calculus was specifically designed to play upon fears (real and imagined) of a partisan threat and to connect them with a racialized vision of the enemy (Jews) that would allow the military to at least pretend that it was accomplishing legitimate military tasks while killing women and children.[794] Of course, there were leaders involved here, men such as Keitel, Wagner, Reichenau, and von Schenckendorff as well as lower level commanders such as von Bechtolsheim who set a command climate that drove this process and undoubtedly influenced the decision-making of those below them.

The last element that influenced the level and type of participation in atrocity by German soldiers, not surprisingly, the situation in which they found themselves, both spatially and temporally. Not every German soldier was placed in a position where he would come into contact with the Nazi genocidal project. Frontline soldiers were exposed to different elements of Nazi violence such as POW killings, the Commissar order, plunder of civilian property, and murders of "suspected partisans," but not usually anti-Jewish actions. For those stationed in the rear, familiarity bred greater and greater levels of complicity. While the Krupki and Krucha killings were somewhat ad hoc, new, and benefited from no

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[794] Should this seem too stark a conclusion, we should not forget that a similar environment (though certainly different as well) enabled American servicemen to murder women and children under the pretext of an antipartisan action at My Lai in Vietnam in 1968.

real systematic working relationship, the actions of soldiers in Slonim, Novogrudok, and Szczuczyn demonstrate an increasing understanding of all the dimensions of the Final Solution and the various ways in which soldiers could participate and benefit. In a few cases, as Joachim Lochbihler's behavior shows, this familiarity could also allow those soldiers not interested in participation or seeking to assist Jews to identify modes of behavior within the system of persecution that would allow them to do just that.

The archival research behind this study has also brought to light the incredibly complex relationships between Jews, soldiers, and civilian authorities ranging from friendships to sexual exploitation. Despite postwar protestations that they had had no contact with Jews, these relationships demonstrate that long term exposure and proximity to anti-Jewish policy resulted in varying forms of intimate contact between Jews and soldiers. Of course, understanding these relationships has been one of the more difficult areas of research given the postwar reticence of both survivors and German soldiers to discuss these issues. Only recently have historians begun to venture into these sensitive, yet important areas.[795] Certainly, more research is necessary to better understand both the nature of these encounters and their effects on both Germans and Jews.

This study has also identified other areas for further investigation. First, as a result of the bitter fighting in the winter of 1941/42 both the 354th Infantry Regiment and the 691st Infantry Regiment were sent to the front so it is difficult to conduct a longitudinal study of their behavior throughout the war. It would be important to see how previous experience in the Holocaust in rear areas would impact a unit's actions later in the war. We have some

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[795] Most notable is Christopher Browning's latest work which includes descriptions of relationships between Jews, Poles, and Germans and begins to paint a picture of some of these most personal situations. Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

indication of how this might occur as the 707th Infantry Division *was* assigned to the increasingly dangerous antipartisan war in the East. The 6th Company, which had been so deeply involved in mass murder in Slonim, apparently continued to behave brutally in these operations as well. Former Lieutenant Scherer, who had joined the 6th Company in Slonim in December 1941, was charged in 1964 with murdering at least twelve civilians who had been confined in a barn during antipartisan operations.[796] This is not, perhaps, an isolated phenomenon as the most well-known of atrocities in France, in Oradour-sur-Glane in 1944, was perpetrated by an SS unit that had cut its teeth on the Eastern Front.[797] However, more research is necessary to determine the longer paths of these kinds of units throughout the war and to identify more instances of Army support for genocide, as only a small minority of these actions is reflected in judicial records.

Finally, in the end, why did these men choose to participate or fail to decline participation? Each individual approached this moment in the context of his own beliefs and background and few were prepared for it (at least initially). Some generalizations can be made. These men felt intense social pressure to conform, in a vast and strange enemy land with only their comrades around them. The environment heightened the already powerful cohesive forces that military units intrinsically exert. Of course, the all-male make-up of these units cannot be overlooked and likely contributed to criteria by which those who participated were strong and masculine; the condemnation of Josef Sibille by his commander

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[796] See BA-ZS: B162/1550 and B162/1551

[797] For more on Oradour, see Sarah Bennett Farmer, *Martyred Village : Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-Sur-Glane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

as "too soft" bears this out.[798] This also explains why those who did seek to abstain often blamed their distaste for the physical experience of killing rather than their moral opposition to the killing itself. Blaming one's own "softness" or sentimentality for non-participation allowed a soldier to continue to access the masculine support network of comradeship. Conversely, taking a moral position, and openly identifying the actions of one's comrades as wrong risked exclusion from that community and "social death."

The "obedience to orders" defense, while rejected by the Nuremburg Tribunal, speaks to a larger pressure: that of the fear of retribution and the indoctrination of slavish discipline (*Kadavergehorsam*). We cannot overlook the power that the military hierarchy held over soldiers, many of whom were draftees. However, this research has also shown that there was a significant space for agency among *Wehrmacht* soldiers in these rear areas. Asking to be released from shooting civilians was not the same as asking to be released from frontline duty and this request was almost always granted.

Longterm exposure to the genocidal project was decisive in cultivating the reactions of the soldiers involved. As the landscape of perpetration became more and more apparent, so too did the opportunities for both personal involvement (and enrichment) and for either disengagement or assistance to Jews. Therefore, these men were faced with the stark choice of to kill or not to kill, but also with the much more complex choices of complicity at the edges of the Final Solution. Most men chose not to take any outward action to remove themselves from the situation, though it is likely that some were deeply troubled by what

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[798] For more on this concept, see Thomas Kühne, "Male Bonding and Shame Culture: Hitler's Soldiers and the Moral Basis of Genocidal Warfare," in *Ordinary People as Mass Murderers : Perpetrators in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Olaf Szejnmann Claus-Christian W. Jensen (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008).

they were participating in.[799] Even those few who chose to help or at least evade participation did so in the least conspicuous ways possible. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that many soldiers chose to take advantage of the situation financially and that few refused to participate in tasks directly related to but not spatially near killing.

War and genocide are inextricably linked. All genocides in the modern era (and most throughout history) have occurred in the context of a war or some kind of armed conflict. Moreover, in each of these, militaries have played a key supporting and/or active role in the mass killing of civilians. The addition of a military to a genocidal (or pre-genocidal) situation can often be the spark required to ignite a full-fledged genocide. The behavior of the German Army during the Holocaust in the Soviet Union shows how deeply and rapidly a supposedly professional organization can become involved in the murder of women and children given extended exposure to genocidal policy.

The importance of leadership in preventing atrocities is perhaps not an earth shattering finding. However, the fact that institutional and unit cultures were decisive for the participation of German soldiers, even in an openly racist and violent regime such as the Third Reich, highlights for us the real impact of organizational structures and attitudes in influencing behavior. The experiences of German soldiers in killing in the East also allows the rare opportunity to connect the more general elements of a dysfunctional organization with the very real and specific effects they have at the ground level, on the lives of real power.

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[799] This kind of internal disagreement, though often assumed by the courts, is often difficult to find in soldier testimony because it required them to admit both participation and that they knew it was wrong, which for both reasons of legality and conscience many were reluctant to do. In this situation, the most clear indicator of mindset is action.

In an era whose wars continue to be less clearly defined and increasingly include civilian populations, the lessons we can learn from these *Wehrmacht* units regarding the critical impact of leadership and unit culture are even more important. The actions of a few American units in Iraq and Afghanistan reinforce that this lesson has not been learned and that maintaining an ethical environment in a complex war is very difficult. At least five members of the U.S. Army's 5th Stryker Brigade have been accused of war crimes, including forming a "kill team" which targeted unarmed Afghan civilians and took body parts as trophies. Investigators have focused on the command climate created by the brigade commander. An official who observed the unit in training noted "When you feel violent intent coming down from the command and into the culture of the brigade, that's when you end up with things like the rogue platoon. He established a culture that allowed that kind of mindset to percolate. And there are second- and third-order effects that come with that. Clearly, the guys who were pulling the trigger are the proximate cause of the crime, but the culture itself is the enabler."[800] The brigade commander had openly "sneered" at the Army's counter-insurgency policy and "old shocked U.S. and NATO officials that he was uninterested in winning the trust of the Afghan people."[801]

No one is comparing this unit to *Wehrmacht* units supporting a racist and genocidal regime. Indeed, it is the rarity of such crimes in the U.S. military that makes them so shocking. At the same time, this case starkly demonstrates that, despite advances in technology and the benefits of an all-volunteer force, dysfunctional unit cultures originating

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[800] Anna Mulrine, "Pentagon Had Red Flags About Command Climate in 'Kill Team' Stryker Brigade," *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 October 2010.

[801] Craig Whitlock, "Brigade's Strategy: 'Strike and Destroy'," *The Washington Post*, 14 October 2010.

from upper leadership can still result in crimes that would *not* seem out of place in the *Wehrmacht.*

Finally, this project has recreated *Wehrmacht* behavior at the individual level in a way that has not yet been done. It shows the Army participating in the Holocaust by bullets in different kinds of situations over time and it gives a human face to the perpetrators. "Complicity" is no longer a vague term that somehow indicates a compromised morality. It now represents men looting corpses, marching women and children to their deaths, and eventually murdering them as well.

Appendix I: Belarus Demographic Information

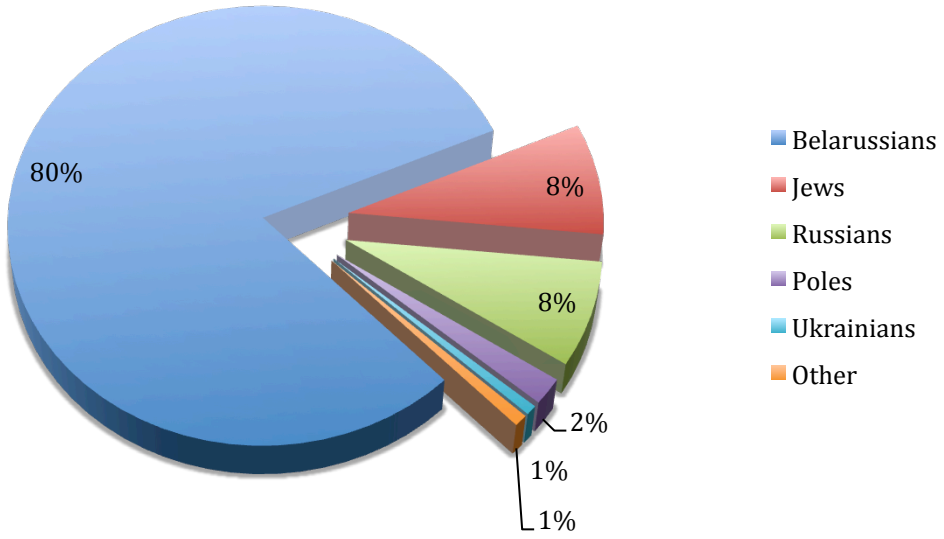

Figure 5. Population of Belarus, 1926 Census

[802]

[802] Mordechai Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust : A Social and Demographic Profile* (Jerusalem: Centre for Research of East European Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), 222.

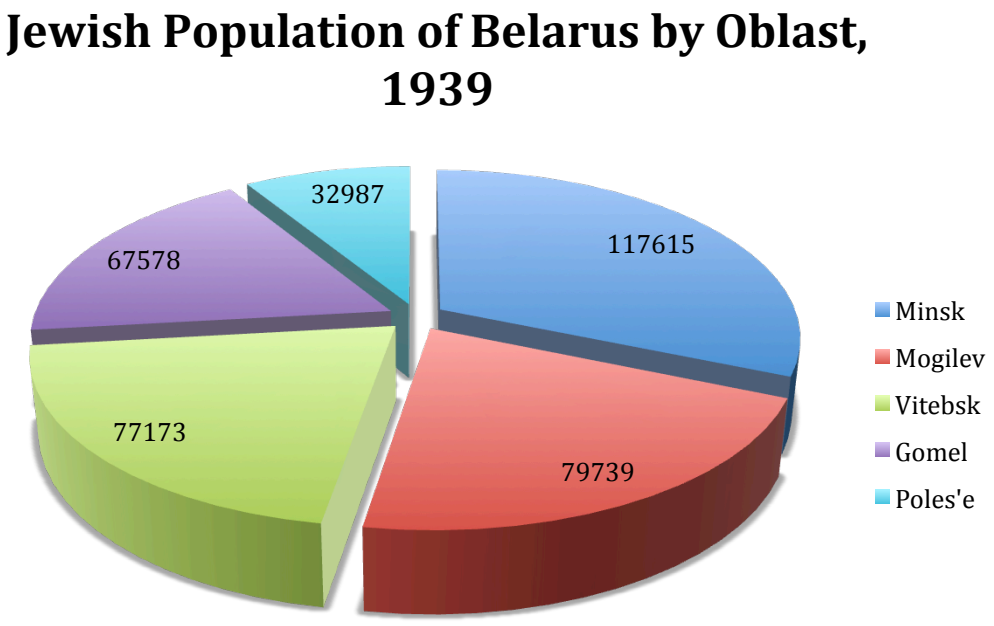

Figure 6. Jewish Population of Belarus by Oblast, 1939

[803]

[803] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus : At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 78.

Appendix II: Demographic Profile of Jewish Victims of Krupki and Slonim

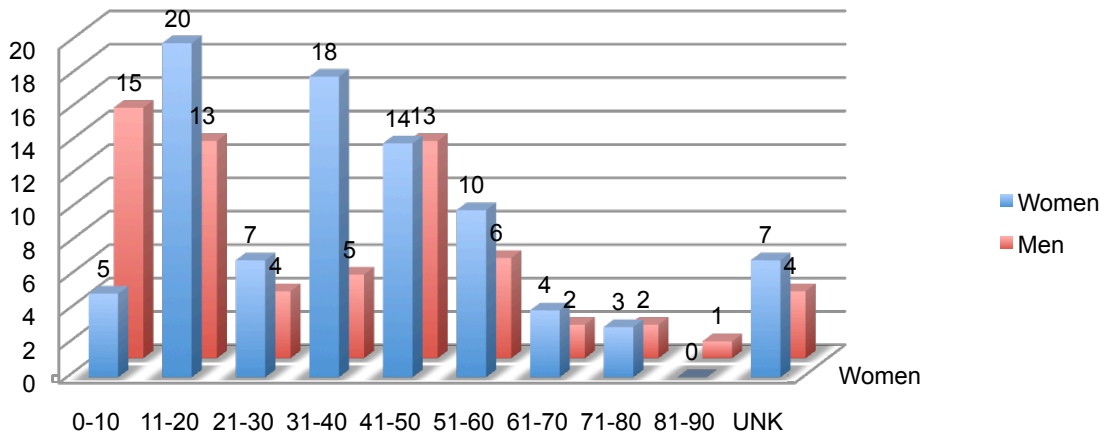

Figure 7. Krupki victims by age and gender (from a sample of 157)[804]

[804] This data was gathered from the Yad Vashem Names Database. This database consists of entries on individuals listing a great deal of biographical. These entries were generally submitted by family or friends of victims and, as such, cannot be considered entirely accurate. However, they do likely give us enough information to suggest general trends.

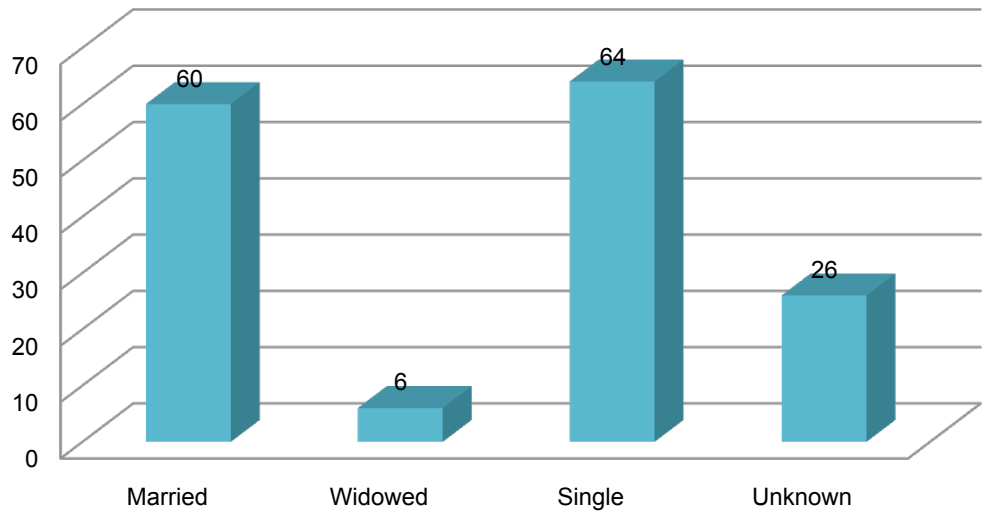

Figure 8. Krupki victims by marital status (from a sample of 157)

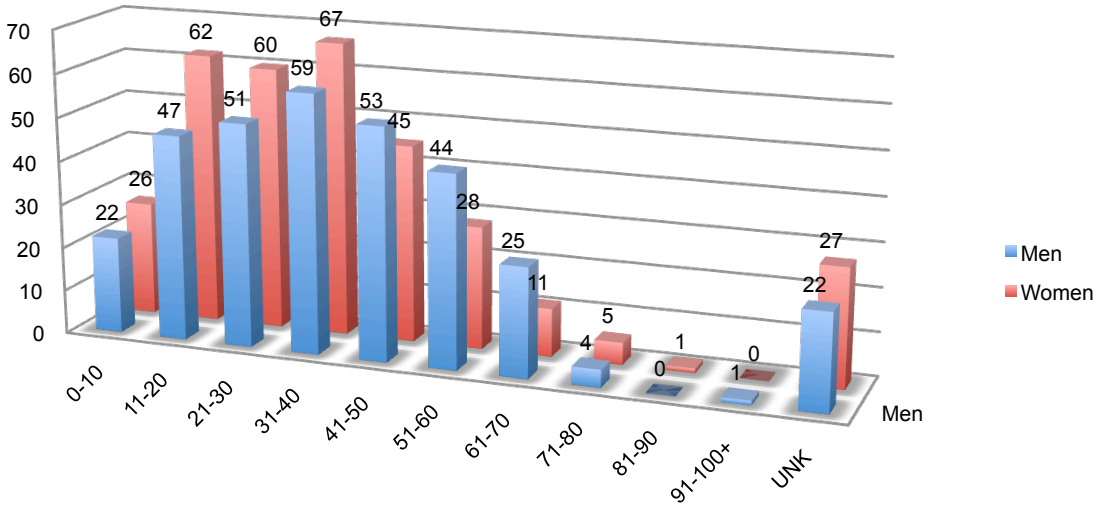

Figure 9. Slonim victims by age and gender (from a sample of 670)

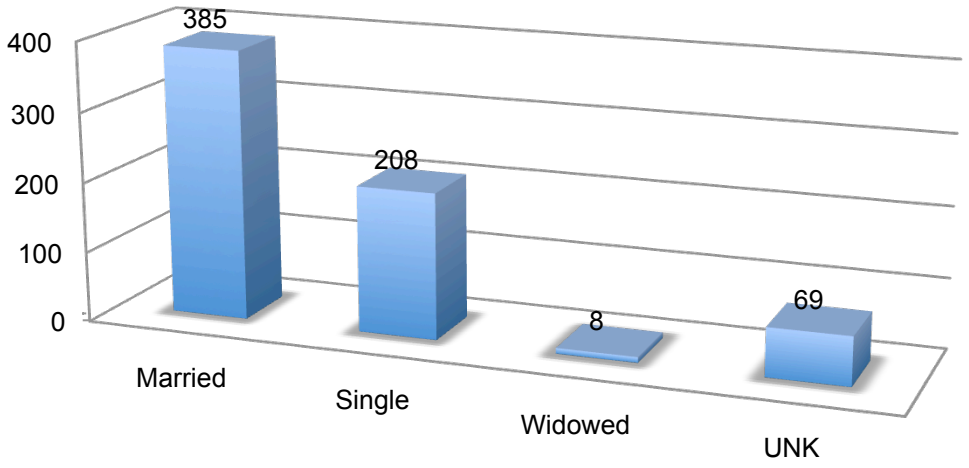

Figure 10. Slonim victims by marital status (from a sample of 670)

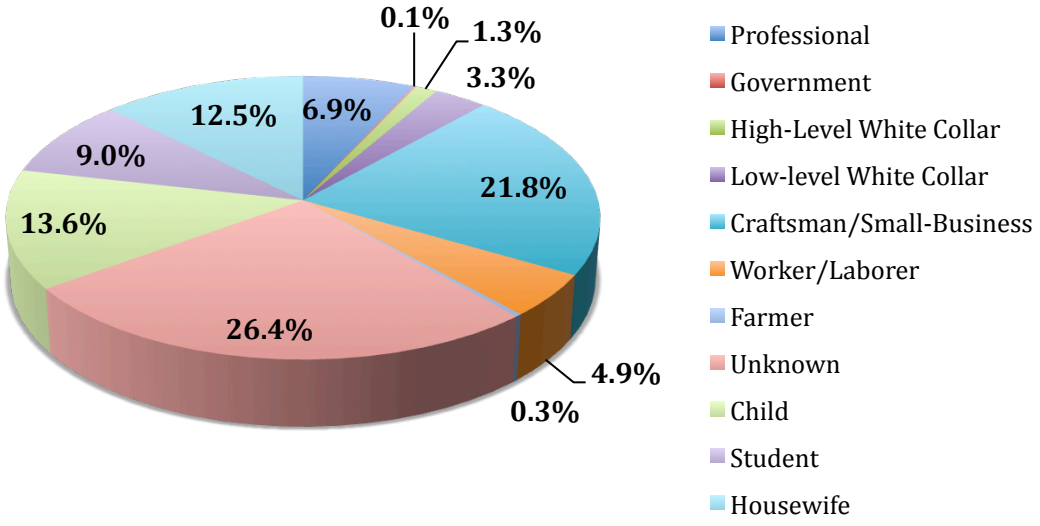

Figure 11. Slonim victims by profession (from a sample of 670)

Professions of Slonim Victims (Detail)

	All	%	Men	%	Women	%
Professionals	**35**	**7.17**	**25**	**9.47**	**10**	**4.67**
Accountant	5	1.02	4	1.52	1	0.47
Dentist	3	0.61	2	0.76	1	0.47
Doctor	5	1.02	4	1.52	1	0.47
Electrical Eng	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Engineer	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Judge	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Lawyer	3	0.61	3	1.14		0.00
Nurse	3	0.61		0.00	3	1.40
Opera Singer	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47
Pharmacist	4	0.82	3	1.14	1	0.47
Piano Teacher	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47
Polish Teacher	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47
Rabbi	5	1.02	5	1.89		0.00
Businesspeople	**42**	**8.61**	**27**	**10.23**	**15**	**7.01**
Banker	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Builder	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Clerk	17	3.48	9	3.41	8	3.74
Contractor	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Factory Owner	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Furniture Trader	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Grocer	7	1.43	5	1.89	2	0.93
Hotel Owner	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Industrialist	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Printer	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Saleswoman	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47

	All	%	Men	%	Women	%
Textile Merchant	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47
Wood Merchant	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Craftsman, etc	**117**	**23.98**	**103**	**39.02**	**14**	**6.54**
Textile Merchant	1	0.20		0.00	1	0.47
Baker	4	0.82	4	1.52		0.00
Blacksmith	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Butcher	5	1.02	5	1.89		0.00
Candle Maker	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Craftsman	5	1.02	5	1.89		0.00
Furniture Trader	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Goldsmith	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Grocer	7	1.43	5	1.89	2	0.93
Haberdasher	2	0.41	1	0.38	1	0.47
Hairdresser	3	0.61	2	0.76	1	0.47
Merchant	64	13.11	56	21.21	8	3.74
Sattler/Leatherworker	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Shoemaker	4	0.82	4	1.52		0.00
Tailor	10	2.05	10	3.79		0.00
Tanner	2	0.41	1	0.38	1	0.47
Watchmaker	3	0.61	3	1.14		0.00
Weaver	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Laborers	**50**	**10.25**	**32**	**12.12**	**18**	**8.41**
Agriculture	3	0.61	3	1.14		0.00
Carpenter	8	1.64	8	3.03		0.00
Electrician	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00
Factory Wkr	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Forrestry	2	0.41	2	0.76		0.00

	All	%	Men	%	Women	%
Metalworker	9	1.84	9	3.41		0.00
Road Worker	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Seamstress	17	3.48		0.00	17	7.94
Textile Technician	1	0.20	1	0.38		0.00
Worker	3	0.61	2	0.76	1	0.47

Appendix III: Demographic Profile of German Soldiers

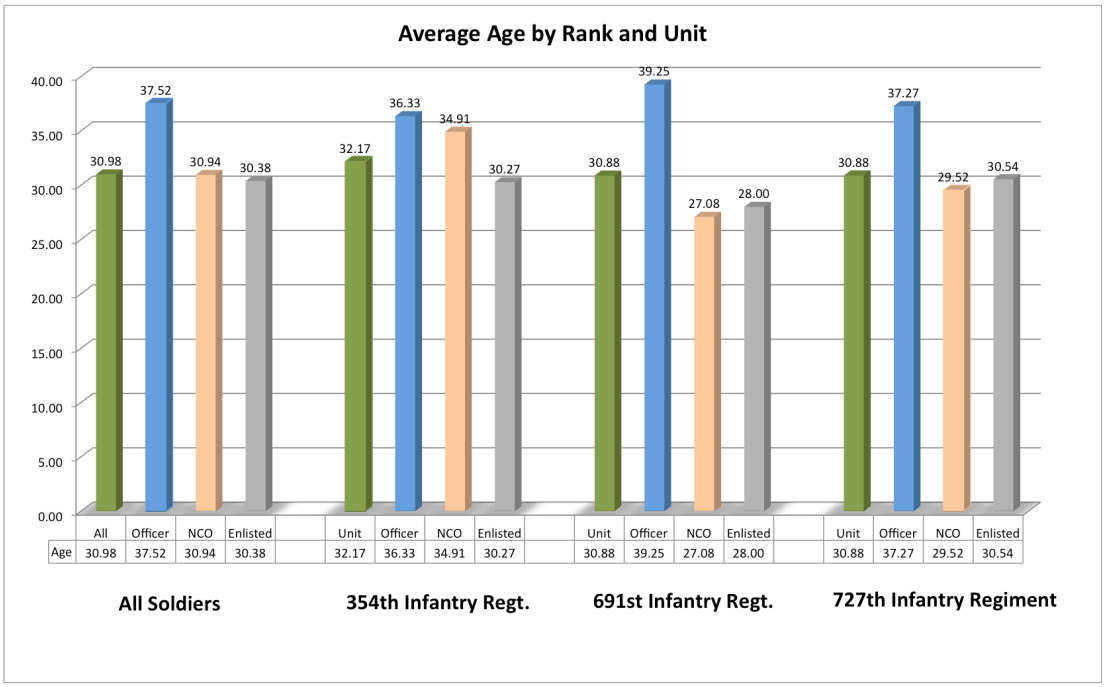

Figure 12. Soldier age by rank and unit

[805]

[805] These overall unit numbers are based on 320 separate former soldiers who testified after the war and, thus, had their biographical data entered into the record. The ages by rank relate to 172 men whose rank could be determined from their testimony.

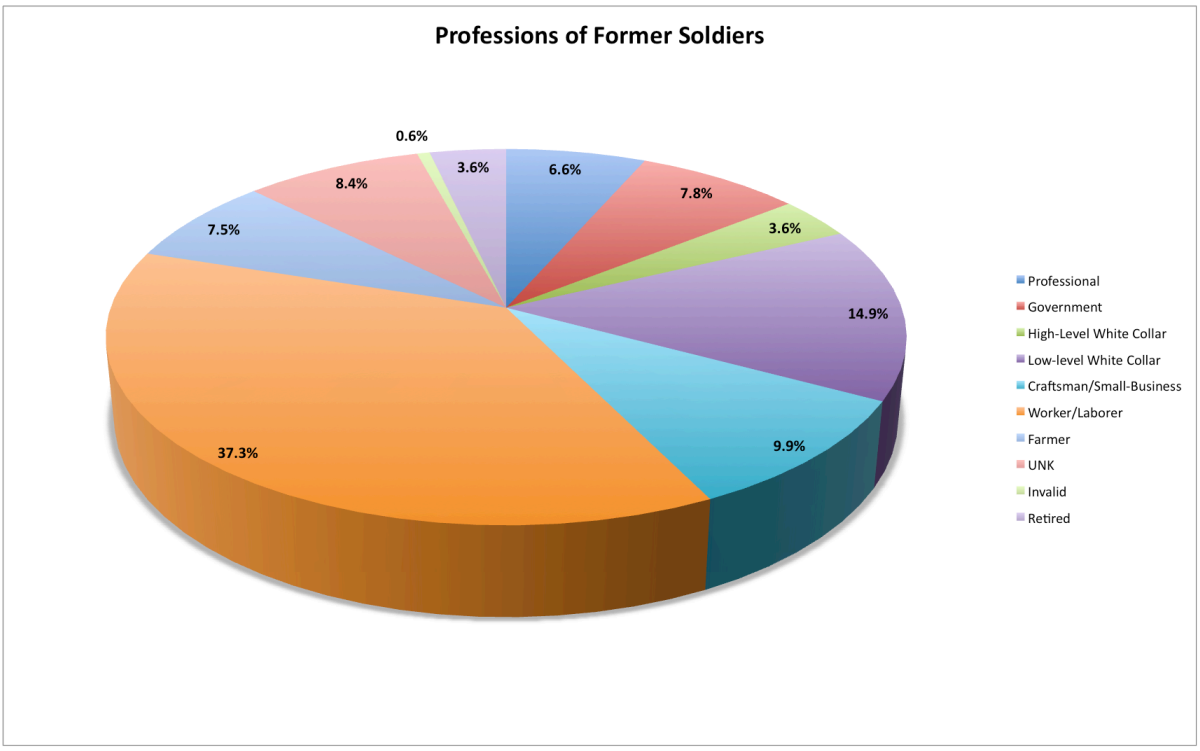

Figure 13. Soldier professions (as reported at the time of their questioning

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