

Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Crimes of the German Wehrmacht:

DIMENSIONS OF A WAR OF ANNIHILATION 1941 - 1944

An outline of the exhibition

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INTRODUCTION

The German Wehrmacht's war against the Soviet Union differed from all other European wars of the modern era, including the campaigns waged by the Wehrmacht against other countries during World War II. This was a war directed not only against another army, but against parts of the civilian population as well. The Jewish population was to be murdered, the non-Jewish civilian population decimated by starvation and acts of terror and recruited for or coerced into slave labor. These criminal acts did not result from escalating violence in the course of the war but were an integral element of German war plans from the outset.

War plans were, however, only one factor determining what actually occurred during the German occupation of eastern Europe. Each situation also carried the mark of current conditions, temporary influences, and the behavioral patterns and actions of those involved.

The laws and customs of war and international humanitarian law in effect at the time included a number of internationally accepted principles which were to be complied with in any war. Although the laws and customs of war permitted some deeply inhuman practices and also did not set down rules for all possible situations, they did make a clear distinction between right and wrong.

The exhibition *Crimes of the German Wehrmacht: Dimensions of a War of Annihilation, 1941-1944* documents the participation of the Wehrmacht in crimes committed during World War II, taking as its starting point contemporary international humanitarian law and the laws and customs of war. The exhibition documents six dimensions of this war of annihilation: the genocide perpetrated against Soviet Jews, the mass death of Soviet prisoners of war, starvation as a strategy of war, the war against partisans, and reprisals and executions of hostages.

The exhibition shows the at times active, at times passive participation of the Wehrmacht in these crimes. On the basis of research carried out to date, it is impossible to estimate the exact number of Wehrmacht soldiers and officers involved. However, the exhibition also shows the actual behavior of individuals. The "Options for action" section demonstrates that the war of annihilation did not occur in a realm governed by some abstract dynamic, but was characterized by various levels of decision-making and individual responsibility.

WAR AND LAW

Wars are seldom waged without any legal constraints. Throughout history, very diverse societies have attempted to regulate the perpetration of violence, even in its most extreme forms. In defining what is considered necessary, permissible, or prohibited in warfare, a society also defines itself. In the wake of the catastrophic Thirty Years War, attempts were made to establish transnational codes of warfare. At the beginning of the 20th century, a number of states, including the German Reich, signed a series of agreements defining the limits of what was considered permissible in warfare.

The codes of war valid during World War II comprised both written conventions and customary law. The written conventions had been formulated and signed by various states and included the Hague Convention of 1907 (with the Hague regulations on land warfare as an annex) and the Geneva Red Cross Conventions of 1929.

International humanitarian laws of war were binding for party states and for individual soldiers from countries which had incorporated these laws into national law.

THE HAGUE REGULATIONS ON LAND WARFARE

At the international conferences held in 1899 and 1907 in The Hague, more than 40 party states passed and ratified the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex, the Hague Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The key points of the regulations were the definition of who was to be considered a regular soldier, what were the rights and duties of prisoners of war, the prohibition of certain means deemed unacceptable for injuring the enemy, and provisions regulating military rule in occupied territories.

The Hague regulations on land warfare did not establish new laws; they summarized in writing parts of the existing customary laws of war. Germany recognized the agreement and incorporated its provisions into national law. The Hague regulations on land warfare thus became legally binding for members of the Wehrmacht.

Until a more complete code of the laws of war has been issued, the High Contracting Parties deem it expedient to declare that, in cases not included in the Regulations adopted by them, the inhabitants and the belligerents remain under the protection and the rule of the principles of the law of nations, as they result from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity, and the dictates of the public conscience. [...]

(Here follow the names of Plenipotentiaries)

Who, after having deposited their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed upon the following: [...]

Annex: Regulations respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land [...]

Prisoners of war

Article 4.

Prisoners of war are in the power of the hostile Government, but not of the individuals or corps who capture them. They must be humanely treated.

All their personal belongings, except arms, horses, and military papers, remain their property. [...]

Art. 7.

The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is charged with their maintenance.

In the absence of a special agreement between the belligerents, prisoners of war shall be treated as regards board, lodging, and clothing on the same footing as the troops of the Government who captured them.

Hostilities [...]

Art. 25.

The attack or bombardment, by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings, or buildings which are undefended is prohibited. [...]

Art. 28.

The pillage of a town or place, even when taken by assault, is prohibited. [...]

Military authority over the territory of the hostile state

Art. 46.

Family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious convictions and practice, must be respected.

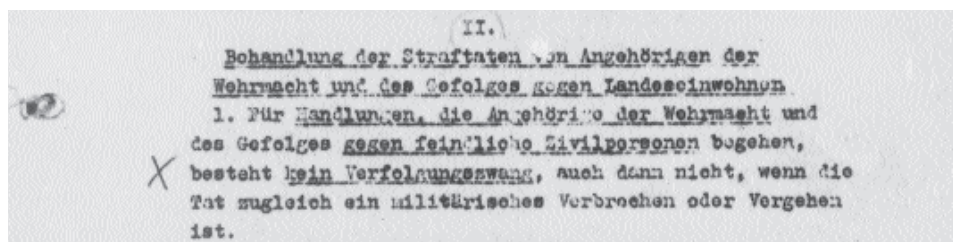
Private property cannot be confiscated. [...]

A WAR THAT DIFFERED FROM ALL OTHERS

Preparations for the war against the Soviet Union began in the fall of 1940. Three months before the war began, Hitler revealed to the Wehrmacht High Command that this campaign would be special. The intention was to not only militarily conquer and defeat the Soviet Union, as the Nazi's number one enemy, but to utterly eliminate the system of "Jewish Bolshevism." According to Hitler, the ideological goals of this war called for another form of warfare, to which international humanitarian law and the laws and customs of war could no longer apply. According to Generaloberst Franz Halder, reporting in his war diary on Hitler's standpoint, this war was "not a question of military tribunals. [...] The struggle will differ greatly from the struggle in the West. In the East, severity is mildness for the future."

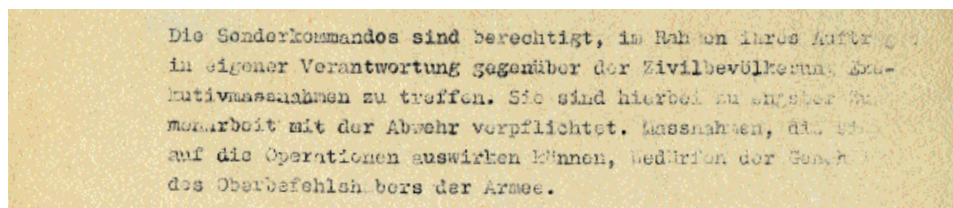
The Wehrmacht leadership subsequently issued key orders in May and June 1941, in order to secure the "unprecedented severity" of operations in the East that Hitler had called for. By implementing the *Kriegsgerichtsbarkeitserlaß* [Decree on Military Jurisdiction] and the *Kommissarbefehl* [Commissar Order], the Wehrmacht suspended key elements of the laws and customs of war in effect at the time and created the necessary preconditions for a hitherto unprecedented war of racial ideology and annihilation.

Fully conscious of the criminal consequences of their orders, Hitler and the Wehrmacht High Command revoked the guarantees of protection of civilians in wartime and ordered that political commissars be murdered. Moreover, the High Command of the German army expressed their agreement with permitting the *Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des Sicherheitsdienst* [Special Squads of the Security Police and Security Service] under Heinrich Himmler's command to implement, within the area of operations in the East, "executive measures with respect to the civilian population within the framework of their mission and on their own responsibility."



OKW Order for the Exercise of Military Jurisdiction and Procedure in Area »Barbarossa« and Special Military Measures, May 13, 1941

Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RW 4/v. 577, Bl. 72–74, Faksimile Bl. 73



Orders regarding the deployment of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service) within army formations, April 28, 1941

Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 22/155

GENOCIDE

The Wehrmacht leadership agreed in principle with Hitler's ideological war goals. However, as a result of their experience with the *Einsatzgruppen* in the war against Poland, they pressed for a clarification of the duties and jurisdiction of all the units involved. In March 1941, the Wehrmacht High Command accepted the proviso that, in the army areas of operation, Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer-SS, "will be entrusted, on behalf of the Führer, with special tasks for the preparation of the political administration tasks which derive from the decisive struggle which will have to be carried out between the two opposing political systems. Within the framework of these tasks, the Reichsführer-SS will act independently and on his own responsibility."

Without the cooperation of the Wehrmacht, however, the *Einsatzgruppen* and the units of Higher SS and Police Leaders would have been unable to realize the mass murder of the Jewish population of the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht established military administration headquarters in the field and in towns and villages; these headquarters were the seat of executive power in the area as long as a particular territory was under military administration. All such Wehrmacht headquarters were charged with registering the Jewish population of the region, forcing Jewish inhabitants to wear a readily visible mark on their clothing, and concentrating Jews in the ghettos. Besides implementing these anti-Jewish measures, Wehrmacht units were also involved in executions. Numerous commanding officers expressly legitimated the mass murder of the Soviet Jews in their daily orders.

Members of the military administrations in the occupied Soviet territories also filled their coffers with the property of those murdered by confiscating it, in agreement with the *Wirtschaftsstab Ost*, as "Jewish property." In their reports the *Einsatzgruppen* repeatedly emphasized the smooth and unhesitating cooperation with various levels of the Wehrmacht.

KRIVOY ROG

In late August 1941 one of the Ukrainian centers of iron ore mining, Krivoy Rog, a city with about 200,000 inhabitants, was occupied by Wehrmacht units. The local administration was at first in the hands of Field Headquarters (V) 538; Field Headquarters (V) 246 took over on September 20, 1941. Immediately after taking control of the city, the military administration issued orders to implement anti-Jewish measures.

Jewish citizens were forced to wear an arm band and recruited for slave labor. They were prohibited from buying goods freely and butchering animals according to kosher practices. The staff of the local headquarters confiscated Jewish property and permitted the collection of "contributions" from Jewish inhabitants by the Ukrainian city administration. There was, however, no Jewish ghetto in Krivoy Rog.

Not far from Krivoy Rog in the rayon [district] of Shirokoye, under the command of the same field headquarters, the 2nd company of Police Battalion 318 had begun murdering the Jewish population. The same was about to happen in Krivoy Rog. The local city headquarters reported on October 15, 1941 that Krivoy Rog was being made "Jew-free." In the Iljitsch mines outside of the city an as yet unidentified police unit which belonged to the Higher SS and Police Leadership of Russia South joined with Ukrainian auxiliary police in murdering about 2500 Jewish civilians and 800 Jewish prisoners of war. The latter group had been selected from a Wehrmacht prisoner of war camp.



Victims on the way to being executed,
presumably October 15, 1941

Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein, Abt. 352 Nr. 2477, Lichtbildmappe

KAMENEZ-PODOLSK

In July 1941 Hungarian troops who were fighting side-by-side with the German Wehrmacht forced several thousand Jews to cross the border from Hungary into the Ukrainian city of Kamenez-Podolsk. The local German field commander informed his higher-ups that he was unable and unwilling to provide food for the refugees. Consultations on what was to become of these people dragged on into August.

Since Kamenez-Podolsk was scheduled to be turned over to the German civilian administrators on September 1, 1941, those responsible increased pressure for a more rapid solution. In the decisive meeting on August 25, 1941, conducted by Major i.G. Hans Georg Schmidt von Altenstadt, *Chef der Abteilung Kriegsverwaltung beim Generalquartiermeister des Heeres* [major at the General Staff, head of the Department of War Administration under the General Quartermaster of the Army], high-ranking representatives of the military and the civilian administration noted that the Leader of the Higher SS and Police in Russia South, Friedrich Jeckeln (who was not present at the meeting), hoped that "the liquidation of these Jews would be carried out by September 1, 1941."

On August 29, right on schedule, Jeckeln reported to Berlin that his units in Kamenez-Podolsk had shot not only the Jews who had previously been driven out of Hungary, but also the local Jews, a total of 23,600 people. From the perspective of the Wehrmacht, the way was now clear for turning the town over to the German civilian administration.

Jewish victims being rounded up in Kamenez-Podolsk, August 27, 1941





Jews on the way to being executed in Kamenez-Podolsk, August 27, 1941.
Photographer: Gyula Spitz
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 28214–28217

SOVIET SOLDIERS AS GERMAN PRISONERS OF WAR

Between summer 1941 and spring 1942, more than two million Soviets died while being held by the German forces as prisoners of war. The Wehrmacht had sole responsibility for transporting these POWs and providing them with food, shelter, and medical care. In contrast to the majority of Western POWs, Soviet soldiers were not treated according to the minimum standards of international humanitarian law. As a result, disastrous shortages of food and inadequate care and shelter led to the death of millions of people.

Before the war began, the Wehrmacht leaders issued the *Kommissarbefehl* [Commissar Order], which stipulated that the Red Army's political functionaries were to be murdered. Wehrmacht units also cooperated with the *Einsatzgruppen* of the Security Police and the *Sicherheitsdienst* [SD, Security Service] in conducting selections in the camps where Soviet POWs were incarcerated. Those deemed "politically suspect" – Jewish prisoners were included per se in this category – were selected and handed over to the *Einsatzgruppen*, who then shot them outside of the camps. Such selections were also carried out among those prisoners who had already been transported to POW camps in Germany. Selected prisoners were then brought to concentration camps. How many of these POWs died is unknown to this day, but estimates range from 40,000 to 120,000.

It was not until 1942, when the so-called blitzkrieg failed, resulting in a shortage of workers in Germany, that a change of course appeared opportune to the German authorities. Soviet prisoners of war were increasingly employed in the German Reich's wartime economy. Although the Wehrmacht High Command ordered that better rations and care were to be provided for these POWs, for hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers these measures came too late.

HEIDELAGER

Three so-called "Russian camps" existed in the Lüneburger Heide, near Wietzendorf, Oerbke, and Bergen-Belsen. Prisoners here were first forced to seek shelter in earth caves or earth huts which they built themselves. Barracks offering somewhat better living conditions were built later.

Conditions in the three Heide camps were catastrophic. The food supply was so inadequate that many prisoners, especially those who were weak and ill, died after only a few weeks. The period between November 1941 and February 1942 marked the beginning of the mass death of thousands of POWs as a result of typhus and other diseases but above all due to malnutrition; at least 40,000 people lost their lives. By April 1942, the total number of prisoners in the three camps was reduced to 6500 POWs.

The camps in the Heide became a popular destination for excursions by the local population, who strolled to the camp fence on weekends to see the Soviet POWs. These "sightseers" were not even deterred by additional barriers erected around the camps.

Stalag Wietzendorf



Primitive earth huts in the Wietzendorf camp, undated
Staatsanwaltschaft Hamburg, 147 Js 29/65, Lichtbildmappe

Stalag XI C: Bergen-Belsen



Cemetery, 1941/42

Zentralnachweis zur Geschichte von Widerstand und Verfolgung 1933–1945
auf dem Gebiet des Landes Niedersachsen
(Niedersächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung), 4000–20

Stalag XI D/321: Oerbke



Oerbke 1941: »Death candidate«
(original legend found on the photograph)

Zentralnachweis zur Geschichte von Widerstand und Verfolgung 1933–1945
auf dem Gebiet des Landes Niedersachsen (Niedersächsische Landeszentrale
für politische Bildung), 4016A

STARVATION AS A STRATEGY OF WAR

In order to secure food for the Wehrmacht and the German *Volksgemeinschaft* [nation], the occupied Soviet territories were to be plundered radically. "To procure as much food and mineral oil as possible for Germany" – that was the guideline for the occupation forces' economic staff. Those responsible for this policy were quite aware of the fact that it was likely to lead to death by starvation for millions of people. The *Wirtschaftsstab Ost* was responsible for implementing these measures and coordinated the relevant activities of the Reich Ministries and economic departments of the Wehrmacht.

Independent of these overall plans to exploit the East economically, some Wehrmacht formations were already suffering acute supply problems only a few months after the war against the Soviet Union began. As a result, by 1941, the troops' requisitioning of food had reached a level which led to so-called *Kahlfräßzonen* [defoliation zones]. Entire regions were devastated, stretching in places as far as 300 kilometers behind the front; not even breeding animals or seed grain were left.

With these operations, the Wehrmacht endangered both its own food supply and the necessary sustenance for Soviet laborers. Therefore, beginning in the fall of 1941, minimal food rations were to secure the most basic needs of the Soviet population – but only for those able to work. "All parasites and useless eaters," – meaning, first and foremost, the Nazis' political opponents, Jews, the urban population, the old, the infirm or weak, and children – were to receive rations below the subsistence level. Today it is no longer possible to reconstruct how many people died as a result of the German starvation policy.

LENINGRAD

The nearly five-hundred-day blockade of Leningrad, lasting from September 8, 1941 until January 18, 1943, was more than just a military siege. It aimed to systematically and intentionally starve the entire population of the city. In the fall of 1941, about three million people lived in Leningrad.

Hitler had repeatedly announced his intention to destroy Leningrad. The decisive orders to forego a military conquest of the city and erect a hunger blockade were formulated in cooperation with the Wehrmacht High Command and the High Command of the Army. This strategy was sealed with the decision to reject a possible offer of capitulation. Despite certain scruples, the German military leaders drawn together outside Leningrad adopted an uncompromising and merciless stance. According to Soviet reports, a total of 623,000 inhabitants of Leningrad died during the hunger blockade; Western estimates refer to more than one million.



Passport photos of S.N. Petrova of Leningrad from pre-war period (left), May 1942 (middle), and October 1942 (right).

State Historical Museum, St. Petersburg, no cataloguing number

	Officially registered deaths
1941	
July	4,162
September	6,808
October	7,353
November	11,085
December	52,881
1942	
January	96,751
February	96,015
March	81,507

Official death statistics für Leningrad July 1941 - March 1942

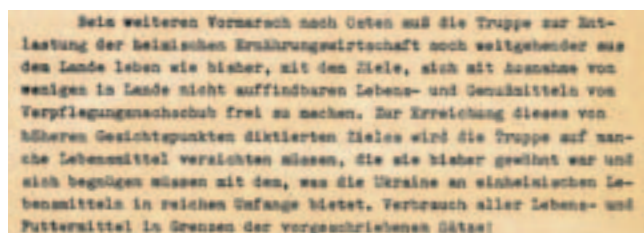
Data compiled from: A.R. Dzenisenich et.al, eds., Leningrad during the blockade: a collection of documents (Sankt-Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 1995, 298, 314)(in Russian)

KHARKOV

The Army High Command and the Army Group South had left it up to the commander of the 6th Army to decide whether he would employ the siege methods directed against Leningrad to Kharkov as well. Generalfeldmarschall Walter von Reichenau made excessive use of this freedom to choose a course of action. Although Reichenau occupied the city instead of establishing a hunger blockade, the military administration plundered the city and its environs ruthlessly, ordering that food, livestock, and grain be confiscated. The High Command of the 6th Army sub-divided Greater Kharkov into *Erfassungsräume* [registration zones] and thereby transformed the region into a collection of *Kahlfrabzonen*. As a result of this policy, 11,918 inhabitants died in 1941/42, the first year of occupation, according to a count by the city administration installed by the German occupiers.



Kharkov, undated Propaganda company photographer: Hermann Hoeffke
Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz



Army order of the Commander in Chief of the 6th Army, Generalfeldmarschall von Reichenau, September 28, 1941
Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 20-6/133, Bl. 76

DEPORTATIONS

In the course of the war, millions of Soviet civilians were deported to Germany as workers. Immediately after the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Wehrmacht began rounding up workers for the construction of streets, railways, and field fortifications in its area of operations. When the blitzkrieg failed in the winter of 1941/42 and German industry had to readjust, a severe lack of workers within the borders of the Reich also became apparent.

In March 1942, Hitler appointed the NSDAP Gauleiter in Thuringia, Fritz Sauckel, to the post of *Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz* [Plenipotentiary for Labor Service]. German labor authorities then began recruiting Soviet civilian workers in the occupied territories for service in Germany. The number of volunteers, at first quite substantial, decreased after a few weeks to almost zero, as reports about the actual living conditions for Soviet workers in Germany spread. With the support of the police and the Wehrmacht, labor authorities responded by increasingly using force to conscript laborers. In the period between November 1941 and June 1944, about 2.8 million people from the German occupied territories of the Soviet Union alone were transported to the German Reich to serve as forced laborers.

Although the Wehrmacht was at first skeptical about labor conscription, as this was a drain on its own reservoir of workers, it was directly involved in organizing the procurement of slave labor. Without the cooperation of the military administrations, recruiting or conscripting and deporting millions of slave laborers would have been impossible.

Moreover, beginning in 1942/43, the civilian administrations, the Wehrmacht, SS, and police utilized the "large-scale operations" aimed at weakening the partisan movement to register the local population and press them into labor service. "Band helpers and suspected members of bands" or whoever was labeled as such were deported to SS concentration camps and became slave laborers there, with the express approval of the Wehrmacht High Command.

When the Wehrmacht began its retreat from the Soviet Union in 1943/44, it followed Hitler's orders and forced hundreds of thousands of civilians to accompany the retreating German forces, in order to prevent them from joining the Red Army and also to force them to serve the Wehrmacht as slave laborers.

Teilabschrift!

Heeresgruppe Süd

H.Qu., den 3.5.42

I b

83

Betr.: Arbeitskräfte für das Reich.

1. Um den im Reich durch die Einberufung zur Wehrmacht entstandenen Mangel an Arbeitskräften notdürftig auszugleichen, ist von dem "Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan, Geschäftsgruppe Arbeit", Gauleiter Sauckel, befohlen worden, dass in den nächsten Monaten je 150 000 Arbeitskräfte aus dem Operationsgebiet der Heeresgruppe Süd in das Reich überführt werden.
Die Durchführung dieser Aufgabe unterliegt der Wirtschaftsinspektion Süd.
2.
3. Für den Monat Mai sind aus den Oblasten folgende Arbeitskräfte herauszuziehen.
Oblast Krim 12 000 Arbeitskräfte
Für die weiteren Monate Juni und Juli werden die Zahlen an die Feldkommandanturen direkt bekanntgegeben. Arbeitskräfte, die in Betrieben beschäftigt sind, die für die Wehrmacht arbeiten, dürfen nicht herausgezogen werden.
4. Die Feldkommandanturen haben gemeinsam mit den Wl. Kdos. diese Zahlen auf die Bezirke der kommunalen Dienststellen aufzuschlüsseln. Das Herausziehen dieser Arbeitskräfte erfolgt durch Auflage an die Leiter der kommunalen Dienststellen. Die Auflagen sind durch die Feldkommandanturen auszusprechen. Nach Gestellung der Kräfte werden die Wl. Kdos. überprüfen, ob die zur Verfügung gestellten Kräfte für das Reich geeignet sind.
Die durch die Wl. Kdos. ausgesuchten Leute sind von den Feldkommandanturen zu noch festzusetzenden Tagen an die Eisenbahnstation in Marsch zu setzen, von denen der Transport in das Reich abgeht. Die Stationen werden durch die Wl. Kdos. den Feldkommandanturen bekanntgegeben.
5. Für die Verpflegung der Arbeiter hat im allgemeinen die Wirtschaftsinspektion Süd zu sorgen. In Ausnahmefällen haben die Armeeverpflegungsdienststellen, im Bereich des Bfh. rückw. H.Geb. Süd die Heeresverpflegungs-Dienststellen, vorschussweise Verpflegung zu stellen.
Im Interesse einer wirksamen Propaganda haben die Wl. Kdos. dafür zu sorgen, dass kein Arbeitertransport ohne ausreichende Verpflegung in Marsch gesetzt wird. Die Unterstützung durch die Feldkommandanturen ist dabei unerlässlich.

Für das Heeresgruppenkommando Süd
Der Chef des Generalstabes
gez. v. Hanstein
Oberst i.G.

20

THE 3RD PANZER ARMY

In the course of recruiting laborers for the German Reich, the 3rd Panzer Army began deporting civilians from Vitebsk to the Borisov transit camp in March 1944. The Borisov camp was located in the operating area of the 4th Army; civilians were mustered there and then transported to the Reich.

The SS, police, Wehrmacht, and the civilian administration also cooperated with the 3rd Panzer Army to conduct "large-scale operations" such as the *Unternehmen Regenschauer* [Operation Rainshower] and *Unternehmen Frühlingsfest* [Operation Spring Festival], as part of the fight against Soviet partisans.

During these "large-scale operations," the formations involved cordoned off the areas where partisans were operating, "combed" through them, and burned down the villages in the area. Local civilians were shot as "suspected partisans" or deported as slave laborers.

Camp Borisov, March 1944



Deportation of civilian laborers from the Borisov transit camp on March 27, 1944

Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RW 31/860



Whether these photos show inhabitants of Vitebsk cannot be determined unequivocally, since laborers conscripted from other areas were also brought to Borisov.

WAR AGAINST THE PARTISANS

The war against the Soviet Union was waged not only along frontlines that were thousands of kilometers long. It was also a war against the partisans in the occupied territories. In the first few months of the war, the Wehrmacht generally encountered poorly organized partisan groups. Despite Stalin's call to take up partisan warfare, these groups were of no military significance. Nonetheless, the Wehrmacht High Command and the Army High Command extended the criteria for deciding who was to be treated as a guerilla. Besides suspected partisans and Red Army stragglers, the Wehrmacht also killed civilians, in particular Jews, who were generally suspected of being partisans or supporting them. The usual procedure was to beat and torture captives during interrogation and, in the case of what was termed "severe interrogation," to kill them afterwards.

The Red Army's counteroffensive in the winter of 1941/42 forced the Wehrmacht to withdraw large portions of its occupying forces, in particular in the so-called *Heeresgebiet Mitte* [Army Area Center]. Subsequently, Soviet partisans, now well trained and armed, were able to bring entire regions behind the German lines under their control and to plague the German occupying forces militarily. In response to these developments, a few Wehrmacht commanders attempted to adapt the general policy of terror and curb "collective reprisal measures" against the civilian population to avoid driving civilians into the arms of the partisans. Hitler, in contrast, continued to demand that the war against the partisans be waged with the "most brutal methods."

From 1942 on, a German military victory in the war against the partisans had become impossible. In order to destroy the partisan units' infrastructure, the SS, police, and Wehrmacht adopted a strategy of "large-scale operations" aimed at transforming entire regions into *Wüstenzonen* [desert zones]. Villages were burned to the ground and thousands of people murdered or deported as slave laborers.

MINSK

On Sunday, October 26, 1941, twelve people were publicly hanged in Minsk. At the time, the city was under the military rule of the 707th Infantry Division. Accompanied by rolls of the drum, eight men and four women were led to four different execution sites. Around their necks the prisoners wore signs with a message in German and Russian: "We are partisans and have shot at German soldiers."

The victims were neither partisans, nor had they shot at German soldiers. They belonged to a resistance group which had provided convalescent Red Army soldiers confined to a hospital for infectious diseases with forged passports and civilian clothes and then led them in the direction of the Soviet frontlines.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146/72/26/43



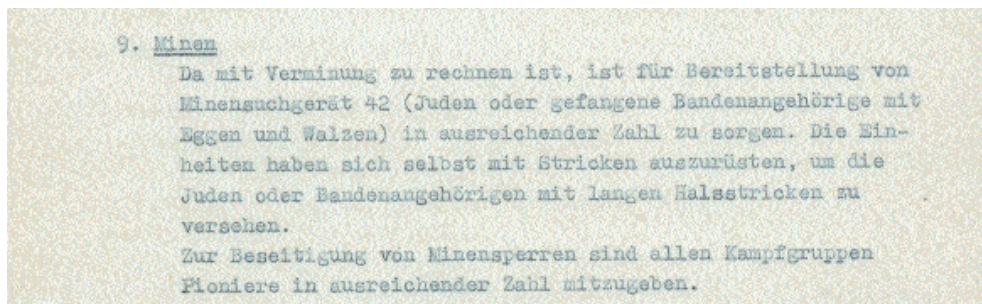
Belorussian State Archive for Film, Photo and Phono Documents, Dzerzhinsk, No. 0-133733

UNTERNEHMEN DREIECK AND UNTERNEHMEN VIERECK

With the spring of 1942, partisan activities increased in the southern sector of the Army Group Center's area of operation. Following two unsuccessful "cleansing operations," the High Command of the 2nd Panzer Army issued an order on September 9, 1942 to begin *Unternehmen Dreieck und Viereck* [Operation Triangle and Rectangle].

The 727th Infantry Regiment, several royal Hungarian infantry regiments, and Russian volunteer formations were charged with encircling the approximately 4,000 partisans operating around the Bryansk rail junction in a series of "pockets" and annihilating them.

Unternehmen Dreieck und Viereck left behind huge desert zones. At least 1000 people were killed, grain and food stores and livestock confiscated, villages leveled, and the inhabitants of the region, a total of 18,596 people, were deported. The treatment of Jews and "members of bands" was specified in extra instructions: they were to be employed as "mine sweeping device 42." In other words, a long rope was tied around the necks of these victims and they were then driven across mine fields with the help of harrows and rollers. The author of the combat report notes in a satisfied tone: "The supply of numerous 'minesweepers' [...] has proven to be useful and has spared the troops a great deal of blood."



Operation order of the commanders of the Army Rear Area 532 for *Unternehmen Dreieck* and *Unternehmen Viereck*, September 23, 1942

Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 23/26, Bl. 90

Combat report on Unternehmen Dreieck und Viereck from September 17 to October 2, 1942

Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 23/25, Bl. 3-52, Quotation Bl. 51 f.

[...] e) Creation of a 'Wüstenzone':

The orders given regarding the creation of a 'Wüstenzone' by destroying stores, burning villages etc. have been ruthlessly carried out everywhere. Due to lack of sufficient manpower, the troops were themselves unable to recover the considerable harvest stores, etc.

Therefore, before an operation begins, a recovery crew (civilian population, militia, etc.) must be drawn together under resolute leadership to transport all stores etc., which would otherwise have to be destroyed, from the area cleansed by the troops. In this way goods and stores of great value would have been preserved.

In particular, it would have been possible to recover the entire potato harvest and the large amounts of hay and straw from the fertile Revna valley.

f) In summary, we can say that, in the area Dreieck und Viereck, our opponent has,

- 1.) due to heavy losses,*
- 2.) due to the complete destruction of all villages and numerous storehouses, and*
- 3.) due to the evacuation of the population, by which he has lost his workers especially for the fall and spring field work, has had taken from him for the near future – at least to a great extent – his means of existence.*

Furthermore, the shield at the Navlya prevents a re-infiltration of the cleansed area. All German, Hungarian, and Russian volunteer formations participating in the Unternehmen 'Dreieck' und 'Viereck' have, with exemplary cooperation of all arms, performed excellently in these 3 weeks, both in combat with a well-armed, tough, unrelenting enemy and in combing through these very swampy, jungle-like, and in places completely impassable forests.

REPRISALS AND EXECUTION OF HOSTAGES

According to international humanitarian law and the laws and customs of war in effect at the time, it was permissible to subject the civilian population to reprisals (counter measures) and even to shoot hostages as a form of "atonement" if such measures were deemed necessary to avert attacks on one's own soldiers and to secure the occupying forces' control.

The German Wehrmacht made use of this possibility throughout Europe on a criminal scale. Tens of thousands of civilians were shot in France, Norway, Italy, Serbia, and Greece. But with these executions the Wehrmacht fanned the flames of national resistance. The Wehrmacht found itself caught up in a dilemma of its own making, as it employed harsh measures to maintain the hegemony of the occupation forces, on the one hand, and nonetheless remained dependent on the domestic population's willingness to collaborate, on the other. Its response was to begin selecting Jews, Roma, and Sinti as the primary victims of "atonement measures".

In particular in Serbia and Greece – countries which were under the military administration of the Wehrmacht's Commander Southeast – the civilian population suffered from such acts of terror. In Serbia, the Wehrmacht aimed to break the so-called "Balkan mentality" with its ruthless treatment of civilians. Following the communist uprising in the summer of 1941, the Wehrmacht commander in chief for Serbia made full use of the opportunities created by the Wehrmacht High Command's guidelines and ordered that 100 civilians be shot for every German soldier that died and 50 killed for each German soldier wounded. Increasingly, the victims of this retaliation policy were Jews.

Following Italy's capitulation in 1943 and the German forces' occupation of territories formerly controlled by Italian troops, German terror perpetrated against the Greek civilian population escalated. Fear of an Allied invasion and increasing partisan attacks led the German occupiers to implement increasingly brutal and arbitrary measures against civilians.

KRALJEVO AND KRAGUJEVAC

Since early October 1941, fighting between German forces and partisan units had increased in the vicinity of the Serbian towns Kraljevo and Kragujevac. On October 13, partisans successfully encircled the town of Kraljevo and the 717th Infantry Division stationed there. The Wehrmacht responded by taking hostages in the town. Two days later, the partisans resumed their attack; this time, the Germans troops were able to repel them, albeit with heavy losses. Towards evening shots again fell in the town; the Wehrmacht responded by killing 300 Serbian civilians.

The German losses during the fight for Kraljevo were "atoned" the next day. Soldiers from the 717th Infantry Division herded together all male inhabitants of the town in the yard of the local railway car factory and shot them. According to Yugoslavian sources, between four and five thousand civilians were shot in Kraljevo and surroundings.

On October 21, 1941, a mass shooting also occurred in Kragujevac. Following a skirmish with partisans in which ten German soldiers were killed and 26 wounded, soldiers of the 749th and 724th Infantry Regiment under the command of Major Paul König shot a total of 2,300 people on the outskirts of the town.

Shooting of hostages in Kraljevo



Legend from the archive: »Hostages incarcerated in the locomotive assembly building in the Kraljevo railway car factory, directly before being shot in October 1941.«

Military Museum Belgrade, No. 20835



Legend from the archive: »Hostages being lead to be shot near the railway car factory in Kraljevo, October 1941.«

Military Museum Belgrade, No. 20849



Legend from the archive: »The bodies of hostages shot near the railway car factory in Kraljevo, October 1941.«

Military Museum Belgrade, No. 20850

1426(14) **Geheim!** 1595

~~Versandweg:~~ Fernschreiben; ~~Versandweg:~~

Nachr.Stelle	Nr.	Beordert an	15.12.43
117.42	388		
Vers.:		214	24/1
An- oder aufgenommen von	Tag	Zeit	durch

Abgang	An	Abender
Tag	31.12.	117.Jäg.Div.
Zeit	Gen.Kdo.LXVIII.A.E.	in
Dringl.-		Fepr.Anschl.
vern.		

Betr.: Abschlussbericht über Maßnahmen beim Unternehmen "Kalavrita".

1) Folgende Ortschaften (1:100 000) wurden zerstört:

Kozi, Karpini, Bahnhof Karpini, Ano Sachlari, Kato Sachlari, Stewardo, Vrachni, Kalavrita, Kloster Meg-Spilaron, Kloster Lauras, Aj.Kiriaki, Avlas, Vitsos, Pteri, Klapatsuna, Tiryaki, Vallitza, Melissia, Kloster Ombia, Kapanagos, Kasi, Massika, Pasyrati, Merochova, Lervesi, Galtes, Manara, Mitten (4 W Massika).

2) 696 Griechen erschossen.

1. 117.Jäg.Div.
in Nr.1595/43 geb.

all right

Final report about "atonement measures" during operation "Kalavrita", teletype from the 117th Jägerdivision to the LXVIII Army Corps, December 31, 1943
Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 26-117/16

OPTIONS FOR ACTION

An order is not simply an order. Frequently, the persons giving and receiving an order are not in the same place at the same time. Then the individual receiving the order is on his own and must decide whether the order should be carried out, and how. An order is not always a detailed instruction, but it is always a charge conferring the power to act.

When an order is given, opportunities for action are opened up which can be used in different ways. Nonetheless, there are limits to these possibilities. The individual perception of a situation is an essential factor in determining whether and how options for action will be utilized. Military functions and an individual's position in the hierarchy can both limit and open up a person's opportunities for action.

Individuals decide how they will act in a specific situation. No one can take responsibility for another person's acts.

"AN ORDER IS AN ORDER"

On May 8, 1954, the *Landgericht Darmstadt* [Darmstadt State Court] found the former company commander Friedrich Nöll and his Hauptfeldwebel Emil Zimber guilty of acting as accessories to manslaughter and sentenced them to four and three years in prison respectively. The sentences were reduced to three and two years in 1956. In the opinion of the court, Nöll and Zimber were responsible for the execution of the Jewish inhabitants of Krutsha – most of whom were old people, women, and children.

"PARTISAN THREAT"

In the fall of 1941, the Wehrmacht's 691st Infantry Regiment was charged with "security and pacification duties" in occupied Belorussia, in the area west of Mogilev, Orsha, and Vitebsk. Although the regiment's first battalion reported daily "enemy contact," there was no indication of a partisan threat.

In late September 1941, Oberleutnant Hermann Kuhls, one of the company heads, took part in a training program on "anti-partisan warfare" initiated by General Max von Schenkendorff, Commander of the Rear Area, Army Group Center. This training course saw the birth of the sentence: The Jew is the partisan, the partisan is the Jew. The 1st Battalion reported for the first week in October that a total of 41 Jews had been killed, as a reprisal for one wounded German soldier and the victims' alleged links to partisans.

In this context, Major Alfred Commichau, Commander of the 1st Battalion of the 691st Infantry Regiment issued a verbal order to his three company leaders Hermann Kuhls, Josef Sibille, and Friedrich Nöll in early October 1941 to shoot the entire Jewish populations of the localities in which the companies were quartered.

ONE ORDER, THREE REACTIONS

According to his own testimony, the leader of the first company, Oberleutnant Josef Sibille, born 1894, a teacher in civilian life and a member of the NSDAP since 1933, did not carry out the order. He explained to the battalion commander that he could not recognize a link between Jews and partisans. In any case, said Sibille, the only Jewish inhabitants remaining in his area were the aged, women, and children, none of whom posed a threat to the safety of the troops. A day or two later, Commichau inquired by telephone whether the order had been carried out in the meantime. Sibille expressly rejected the order. In response to Commichau's question, when he, Sibille, intended to at last get tough, Sibille reported that he answered: "Never."

Oberleutnant Hermann Kuhls, leader of the 2nd Company, aged 33 at the time, a member of the NSDAP and the SS and participant in the partisan training program mentioned above, apparently carried out the order directly and without hesitation.

The third company chief, Hauptmann Friedrich Nöll, born 1897 and also a teacher in civilian life, hesitated. He talked about the matter with his Hauptfeldwebel Emil Zimber. Both were unsure of themselves, since they were clearly aware of the fact that the order involved shooting women and children, even though there was no indication that the Jewish inhabitants of Krutsha, a village with about 1000 residents, had anything to do with partisans. They requested a written confirmation of the order. Shortly thereafter, they received the order of their battalion commander: All Jews in Krutsha were to be shot. Nöll and Zimber were consternated, this could not be a misunderstanding. At first, Nöll refused to comply but finally fear of the possible consequences of disregarding an order won the upper hand. Nöll charged Zimber with shooting all the Jewish residents of the village. According to his own testimony, Zimber reacted to the resulting disquiet among the soldiers of his company by asserting that the whole matter had been decided by higher-ups. An order is an order.

On October 10, 1941, the soldiers of the 3rd Company of the 691st Infantry Regiment and local auxiliary police drove the Jews inhabitants of Krutsha out of their homes, led them to a ditch outside of the village and shot them there.

One incident occurred during the shooting. According to his own report, Gefreite Wilhelm Magel, one of the soldiers assigned to the execution squad, closed his eyes while shooting and presumably missed his intended victim. In any event, not all of the Jewish villagers were dead. Another soldier then took Magel's place and Magel was assigned to a squad charged with cordoning off the area. The execution was resumed.

AFTER THE WAR

Battalion Commander Commichau and company leader Kuhls did not survive the war. Hauptmann Nöll and Hauptfeldwebel Zimber were prosecuted and sentenced to prison. Gefreite Magel was found innocent.



Karl Friedrich Nöll and Emil Zimber in the dock of the *Landgericht Darmstadt*, March 9, 1956.

ullstein bild

THE POSTWAR PERIOD

On May 9, 1945, the Wehrmacht High Command announced in its last report that the armed forces had laid down their weapons at midnight and that "the German Wehrmacht [...] was, in the end, honorably defeated by overwhelmingly superior forces." A few months later, former leading Wehrmacht generals formulated their view of the role of the Wehrmacht in World War II for the first time. In this memorandum, the war against partisans, executions of hostages, and the recruitment and conscription of slave laborers were characterized as necessary elements of the war effort. The Reichsführer-SS, it was contended, had conducted the persecution and murder of European Jews without the participation and knowledge of the army authorities. This statement laid the groundwork for the image of an "unblemished Wehrmacht" which had not been involved in war crimes.

This view did not, however, remain unchallenged. High-ranking military officials stood trial before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg and were found guilty of participating in war crimes. At the same time, the Allied court declared that the Gestapo, the Security Service, and the SS were criminal organizations but did not reach the same conclusion for the Wehrmacht General Staff and High Command. The German public regarded this decision as an acquittal of the Wehrmacht.

In the 1950s the issue of how Germany would deal politically and socially with former Wehrmacht soldiers was influenced by the Cold War and Germany's decision to rearm. The criminal prosecution of "war criminals" lost priority as the two Germanies became integrated into their respective alliances. East and West Germany required the old elites for reconstruction of the state and the army. In West Germany, it was not until a new generation had come of age that dubious traditions and taboos in German society were questioned. A critical approach to military historiography which took up intensive research into the Wehrmacht's involvement in war crimes did not become established until the late 1970s. Despite the results of this research, however, the image of an "unblemished Wehrmacht" dominated West German public opinion into the 1980s.

Charter of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, 8 August 1945 (excerpt)

Dietrich Schindler and Jiri Toman, eds., *The Laws of Armed Conflicts: A Collection of Conventions, Resolutions and Other Documents*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988, 911-919

" [...] II: Jurisdiction and General Principles

Art. 6. The Tribunal established by the Agreement referred to in Article 1 hereof for the trial and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis countries shall have the power to try and punish persons who, acting in the interests of the European Axis countries, whether as individuals or as members of organizations, committed any of the following crimes.

The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility:

(a) Crimes against peace: namely, planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing;

(b) War crimes: namely, violations of the laws or customs of war.

Such violations shall include, but not be limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labour or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity;

(c) Crimes against humanity: namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

Leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any persons in execution of such plan. [...]"



Bulganin and Adenauer on September 13, 1955 in Moscow at the signing of the final communiqué
Bundesarchiv, Bild 183/32875/1



Former POWs upon returning to Germany from the Soviet Union,
in the Friedland refugee camp, 1955
Alfred Strobel/SV-Bilderdienst

Tradition decree of the Federal Minister of Defense, Kai-Uwe von Hassel (CDU), July 1, 1965

Bundearchiv/Militärarchiv, BW 2/4238; English version quoted in part from Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: the Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 209-211)

"[...] 14. According to German military tradition, the achievement and dignity of the soldier rests to a large degree upon his freedom in obedience. Training for self-discipline, the call for shared responsibility and the kind of command exemplified by mission oriented tactics (Auftragstaktik) gave this freedom even greater room [to develop]. The National Socialist regime was the first to disregard it.

[The Bundeswehr] must once more tie itself to this freedom in obedience. One's own responsibility in the risk of life, position, and reputation has always given a human dimension to the soldier's obedience. Finally answerable only to their conscience, the soldiers of the resistance proved themselves to the final degree against the injustice and criminality of the National Socialist rule of force.

Such loyalty to conscience must be preserved in the Bundeswehr.

25 [...] Symbols which include the swastika will not be displayed and shown. At ceremonial events which serve to preserve traditions and honor the dead, the Bundeswehr may escort flags of former troop units, if the [Bundeswehr] troop flag is also displayed.

26. The traditions of former troop units will not be awarded to units of the Bundeswehr. [...]"

Guidelines of the Federal Minister of Defense Hans Apel (SPD) for the Understanding of Tradition and the Maintenance of Tradition in the Bundeswehr, September 9, 1982

BMVg, GenInspBW Fü, S 13-AZ 35-08-07, Information für Kommandeure Nr. 1/82, September 20, 1982, Anl. 1; English translation quoted in part from Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: the Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 279-282)

"[...] 6. The history of the German armed forces has developed with deep breaks in its continuity. The armed forces were in part ensnared in guilt in National Socialism and in part they were misused innocently. Such an illegal regime as the Third Reich cannot be the basis of tradition.

7. All military deeds must be oriented to the norms of a state grounded in the law and in international law. The duties of the soldier – loyalty, bravery, obedience, comradeship, honesty, confidentiality as well as the exemplary and caring behavior of superiors – achieve their moral standing in our time by being bound to the Basic Law. [...]"

22. Meetings for the maintenance of tradition may only take place with persons or associations whose basic attitude accords with the values and aims of our constitutional order.

Traditions [lineage and honors] from units of former German armed forces will not be awarded to the Bundeswehr. The flags and standards of earlier German units will neither be trooped nor escorted. Official contacts with the successor organizations of the former Waffen SS are forbidden.

National Socialist symbols, in particular the swastika, are not to be displayed. Excepted from this prohibition are presentations which deal with National Socialism within the context of education programs in the areas of history or politics, exhibitions of the Wehrgeschichtliches Museum [Museum for the History of the Armed Forces], and the use of these symbols within research and education. [...]"

VERNICHTUNGSKRIEG. VERBRECHEN DER WEHRMACHT 1941 BIS 1944 CONTROVERSIES ABOUT AN EXHIBITION

When the Hamburg Institute for Social Research's exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* opened in Hamburg for the first time on March 5, 1995, no one expected that it would be seen by more than 800,000 visitors in 33 German and Austrian cities during the four years to follow. By 1995, the majority of historians regarded the exhibition's central thesis, namely, that the Wehrmacht was involved in planning and implementing a war of annihilation against Jews, prisoners of war, and the civilian population, as virtually indisputable. The reception of the exhibition by the general public, however, showed that, even fifty years after the end of the war, the image of an "unblemished Wehrmacht" was still firmly rooted in parts of German society.

During the four years in which it was shown to the public, the exhibition met with a great deal of approval and public recognition. The debate about the exhibition in the German Bundestag on March 13, 1997 is held to be one of the "parliament's finest hours." And yet, at the same time, the exhibition was also accompanied by criticism and massive protest. By the time it opened in Munich, if not before, it had become a political issue.

The debate reached a new height in October 1999, due to criticism centering on the alleged incorrect attribution of several photographs and legends in the exhibition. According to some historians, these photos showed victims of the Soviet secret service, the NKVD, and not Jewish victims of a pogrom, as stated in the exhibition. The head of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, Jan Philipp Reemtsma, cancelled further showings of the exhibition and asked a committee of historians to review all the images and texts it contained. The committee came to the conclusion that charges the authors of the exhibition had manipulated or forged material could not be upheld. However, they were of the opinion that the documentation included errors and that some of the arguments presented were too sweeping. They therefore recommended that the exhibition be shown to the public again, albeit in a thoroughly revised and possibly newly designed form.



Visitors waiting to see the exhibition, Munich Town Hall, April 6, 1997
 Karlheinz Egginger/SV-Bilderdienst



Tour of the exhibition for young people,
 Hamburg, June 1, 1999
 Axel Kirchhof/action press



DER SPIEGEL, March 10, 1997

Report of the committee reviewing the exhibition Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944, November 2000 (excerpt)

"[...] Conclusions

- 1. As a result of on-going public controversy and the review process which the committee was asked to carry out, the exhibition Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944 has been investigated more thoroughly than any other exhibition focusing on contemporary history to date; this is true for both the statements made in the exhibition and the source material employed there.*
- 2. The investigation has shown that, at least in part, the publicly voiced criticism of the exhibition was justified. The exhibition contains 1. errors in content, 2. inaccuracies and careless mistakes in the use of historical source material and 3. due, in particular, to the form of presentation, unduly generalized and suggestive statements.*
- 3. The exhibition does not, however, contain any forgeries with respect to the key issues and topics. The re-examination of the text and image documents used in the exhibition in the various archives from which they were obtained revealed certain inaccuracies and in some cases incorrect attributions; however, taken as a whole, the review confirmed the thoroughness and reliability of the authors' work with historical sources.*
- 4. The exhibition argues in part with sweeping statements and inadmissible generalizations. For this reason, and because of the form of presentation, the exhibition itself contributed to a great extent to the perception that it was not an exhibition about the special character of the war of annihilation conducted in the Soviet Union, but rather an exhibition about the Wehrmacht as such – the Wehrmachtsausstellung.*
- 5. Nonetheless, the fundamental statements made in the exhibition about the Wehrmacht and the war of annihilation in 'the east' are correct. It is indisputable that, in the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht not only 'entangled' itself [sich verstrickte] in genocide perpetrated against the Jewish population, in crimes perpetrated against Soviet POWs, and in the fight against the civilian population, but in fact participated in these crimes, playing at times a supporting, at times a leading role. These were not isolated cases of 'abuse' or 'excesses,' they were activities based on decisions reached by top level military leaders or troop leaders on or behind the frontlines.*
- 6. The exhibition's crisis of credibility is not so much a result of individually substantiated errors as the consequence of the authors' arrogant and unprofessional treatment of criticism. We admit that it was not always easy to distinguish between mere polemics and serious expert criticism. But we have been unable to detect sincere efforts to make this distinction in due time. This reaction paved the way to a situation in which the legitimate critique of certain images triggered a crisis so fundamental in nature that a 'moratorium' became unavoidable.*
- 7. For the reasons stated here, the committee recommends that the exhibition be shown to the public in a thoroughly revised – and possibly re-designed – form. The key statements made in the exhibition about the Wehrmacht and the war of annihilation in 'the east' do not have to be revised, but must be safeguarded from misunderstandings. Furthermore, careful treatment of the documents employed, in particular the images, is required. Moreover, the argumentative forms used in the exhibition should reflect the theories and methodology of historical research, rather than the stance of a district attorney. The exhibition should present its material, but as far as possible leave conclusions up to its viewers.*
- 8. In a revised version of the exhibition, the current focus on the perspective of the perpetrators should be complemented – at least with a few examples – by a victim-oriented perspective, in which these crimes can be viewed through the eyes and the experience of those who endured them.*
- 9. The exhibition was useful and necessary, as public controversy has shown. It can continue to make a significant contribution to the development of historical-political culture in the Federal Republic of Germany in the coming years – in a version which takes critique, the results of recent research, and the discussions which accompanied the exhibition into consideration."*

Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Exhibition Crimes of the German Wehrmacht: Dimensions of a War of Annihilation, 1941-1944 [Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944]

Exhibition concept: Dr. Ulrike Jureit , Prof. Dr. Jan Philipp Reemtsma

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Exhibition installation and lighting: Studio Hamburg Atelier GmbH
Exhibition lettering: Altonaer Werbewerkstatt
Computers and user software: Hamburg 4 GmbH
Sound installations: Amptown Sound and Communication GmbH
Photo processing: Fotofachlabor Ralph Kleinhempel GmbH
Scans: Grafische Werkstatt Kreher
Transportation: Paul Filter Möbelspedition GmbH