

vent men from marrying. The organization also charged that girls served only as cheap routine workers whose low pay contributed to immorality and to the proletarianization of the commercial estate, but then also asserted that pay levels were determined by general economic circumstances, so that raising the educational level of the female work force in clerking would not improve overall salaries.<sup>39</sup>

There is clearly a connection between a view of women as weak, emotional creatures lacking any moral seriousness and best suited to domestic pursuits and the maintenance of power relations that place women in a subordinate position. Similarly, holding that Jews are outsiders, poor citizens, liars, cheats, and profligates, contributes to a situation in which Jews are subordinate, marginalized, and relatively powerless. But this does not necessarily answer the question "Why Germany?"

The example of women shows that direct linear connections between ideological beliefs and activities and mass murder are not quite so simple to draw. In a number of respects, women were treated harshly by the Nazis.<sup>40</sup> Many found their lives constrained by their biology, urged to bear children if "fit" and sterilized if they were not. They also faced serious discrimination in schooling and employment. Many socialists suffered to an even greater extent, facing beatings, torture, and death as well as imprisonment and discrimination. In neither case, however, did an ideology of hatred, resentment and exclusion lead ultimately to a policy whose sole aim was the murder of the entire group. Only hatred of the Jews was acted upon by the Nazis to this extent.

This chapter has directed attention to the relative weakness of anti-Semitism as a force motivating white-collar workers. Misogyny, too, faced strong opposition. And although both were present in Wilhelmine Germany, in asking "Why Germany?" we must at the same time recognize that continuities are many and varied and that the answer cannot reside solely in some peculiar continuity that is Germany's alone.

39. "18. Sitzung der Bürgerschaft," 30.4.1902, BB I, B164; and DHV petition to Senate, [May, 1909], BB I, B166; both in Hamburg Staatsarchiv.

40. Whether non-Jewish German women can be seen as victims of Nazism is currently much debated. See Gisela Bock, "No Children at Any Cost": Perspectives on Compulsory Sterilization, Sexism, and Racism in Nazi Germany," in *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change*, ed. Judith Friedlander, et al. (Bloomington 1986), and Eve Rosenhaft, "Inside the Third Reich: What is the Women's Story?" in *Radical History Review* 43 (1989), 72-80.

## 5

## From the Diary of a Killing Unit

KONRAD KWIET

This chapter is not concerned with the infamous *Einsatzgruppen* of the *Sicherheitspolizei* and the *Sicherheitsdienst* ("Security Police" and "Security Service"), nor with the less familiar murder brigades of the *Kommandostab RFSS* (*Reichsführer-SS*); it presents the story of a *Radfahrer-Bataillon* – a "bicycle battalion" – which, neglected by historians, has attracted the attention only of war crimes investigators and some concerned journalists.<sup>1</sup> As Police Battalion 322, it was part of the *Ordnungspolizei* ("Order Police"), the third force that Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsführer-SS*, involved in the operation to execute the Führer's commission in which, after the attack on the Soviet Union, he had been given a free hand to translate the "Final Solution" into reality.<sup>2</sup>

Much has been written about the persecution and extermination of the Jews under Nazi rule; the trend toward ever-increasing specialization continues, leaving no more than a few experts in a position to keep abreast of the overall state of research. It is no easy matter to keep up with all of the current historiographical controversies; many topics are still subject to intense debate, such as approach and terminology, historical context and historicization, interpretation and theory, ideologies and structures, personalities and groups, orders and behavior, dates and statistics of victims.<sup>3</sup> These debates reveal, among other things, the limitations arising from problems of

1. The most prominent of these journalists is Heiner Lichtenstein, whose latest documentation includes a chapter on Battalion 322 based on the court material: *Himmler's grüne Helfer. Die Schutz- und Ordnungspolizei im "Dritten Reich"* (Köln 1990), 57-68.

2. See Richard Breitman's recent detailed study *Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York 1991), which won the prize of the Leo Baeck Institute and brilliantly analyzes Himmler's personality and policies.

3. I list here only a few recent contributions referring to these historiographical debates and setting agendas for future research; in addition to Breitman's study, see Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer, eds., *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg*

archival documentation. The removal and burning of records by the National Socialists resulted in enormous losses; further material was destroyed by Allied air raids. The remaining files were then requisitioned by the victorious powers and never released in their entirety. Historians' models of description and documentation thus rely largely on fragmentary and familiar historical documents that have either been published – often several times – or are generally accessible in archives. These have been supplemented by the late and somewhat reluctant inclusion of judicial material assembled in the course of war crimes investigations and trials in the postwar period, stored in central offices of the judiciary, at court offices and in archives. But there are many signs that archivists and historians will soon be presented with “new” Nazi record and archive collections. The “revolutionary” events in Central and Eastern Europe and the efforts of various war crimes commissions – the Special Investigations Unit of the Australian Attorney-General's Department has played a leading role – led to the opening of archives whose existence had previously been denied. The expected release of formerly classified material will give new impetus to contemporary research, extending and correcting previously accepted insights and interpretations.

A remnant of the SS war archives, a collection which, under the code name “Schloß Zasmuky” (after an estate close to the city of Kolin, where it was rumored to have been deposited), had been surrounded by legend and speculation, is held in the Military Archives in Prague. It includes material on Police Battalion 322:<sup>4</sup> its “war diary” (*Kriegstagebuch*) No. 1 (“KTB”), in typescript; the handwritten

(Stuttgart 1985); Christopher Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York 1985); Ian Kershaw, *Der NS-Staat* (Reinbek 1988); Dan Diner, ed., *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte?* (Frankfurt a. M. 1987); Dan Diner, ed., *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz* (Frankfurt a. M. 1988); H. Graml, “Zur Genesis der ‘Endlösung,’” in *Der Judenpogrom 1938*, ed. W.H. Pehle (Frankfurt a. M. 1988), 160–75; Sybil Milton, “The Context of the Holocaust,” in *German Studies Review* XIII (1990), 269–83; François Furet, ed., *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (New York 1989); W. Benz, ed., *Dimensionen des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (München 1991). On the controversy on the “economy of the ‘Final Solution,’” triggered by Suzanne Heim and Götz Aly, see the responses of Ulrich Herbert, Christopher Browning, Dan Diner, Ernst Köhler and others in the journal *Konkret*, Nos. 10, 11, and 12 (1989) and 1, 2, 4, 5, and 11 (1990); Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, “Offene Fragen der Holocaust-Forschung. Das Beispiel des Baltikums,” in *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit*, ed. Uwe Backes et al. (Berlin 1990), 403–25.

4. VHA Praha, N Pol Regt A-2-1-3, and SS-Varia. Unless otherwise mentioned, my account and the quotations I have selected are drawn from this material. I thank the directorate of the Military Archive and the Special Investigations Unit of the Australian Attorney General's Department for permission to make use of this material in my research.

diary of the 3rd company,<sup>5</sup> together with numerous originals and copies of directives, operational orders, reports, radio messages, telegrams, telexes, correspondence, and statistics. On the basis of these rare documents, the preparation and execution of organized mass murder can be demonstrated, in line with Raul Hilberg's postulate: “There is no better way to arrive at reality than to reconstruct the perspective of the perpetrators.”<sup>6</sup>

The *Radfahrer-Bataillon* was originally based in Vienna. Confined to barracks, police officers and recruits received the order from Himmler on 15 April 1941 to make preparations for *auswärtiger Einsatz*, deployment abroad. They rejoiced at the news that their unit had been selected to be put at the personal disposition of the *Reichsführer-SS*. The chain and channels of command and the “special mission” of the group were thus already determined. Led by a major, the battalion consisted of a staff group, 3 companies of 4 platoons each, and a motorized support group. It comprised 12 officers, 1 senior medical officer, 5 administrative officials, 104 *Unterführer* (“non-commissioned officers”) and 435 *Wachtmeister* (“constables”); it had a *großdeutsch* (“greater German”) complexion, as Germans and Austrians were equally represented. The majority of the constables were from the age cohort 1908 to 1912. The preparation of the young policemen for their mission demanded an intensive period of training. The program comprised shooting practice – especially with carbines and machine guns – cycling trips lasting several days, nocturnal bivouacs, and simulations in which the hunting of the “enemy” was rehearsed. Particular emphasis was placed – as with all other police and SS units – on political-ideological indoctrination by means of political instruction (*Schulungsunterricht*). The development of xenophobia and racism was strengthened through images of the “Jewish-Bolshevik enemy.” Members of the battalion rejoiced at the decision, on 17 May 1941, that they were to be transferred to the East.

Preparations for Operation Barbarossa were then proceeding at full speed,<sup>7</sup> but Hitler's decision to start the campaign of genocide

5. The company diary has already been published in extract in *Schöne Zeiten. Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer*, ed. Ernst Klee, Willi Dreyßen, Volker Rieß (Frankfurt a. M. 1988), 18–28. This material and some other documents relating to Police Battalion 322 were handed over to the West German courts in the mid-1960s, in connection with charges against members. It is held in the Zentrale Stelle Ludwigsburg under CSSR I, Ordner 147 (“ZSL”).

6. In Dan Diner, *Zivilisationsbruch*, 197.

7. For the best overview, see Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, ed., *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 4.: *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion* (Stuttgart 1983), esp. Jürgen Förster, “Die Sicherung des ‘Lebensraumes,’” 1030–78.

had long since been taken. He had entrusted the *Reichsführer-SS* with "special tasks," tasks that resulted – as the famous OKW-guidelines of 13 March 1941 had put it – "from the final struggle between two opposing political systems which must now be acted out." Six copies were produced, classified as *top secret - chief of staff - officers only!* The second copy was sent to the Navy High Command; one officer wrote in the margin: "Das bedeutet einiges!" ("this is really something!")<sup>8</sup> With no opposition, the army had also accepted the arrangement with the SS, confirmed in writing on 28 April 1941, that *Sonderkommandos* (special command groups) of the Security Police and Political Police were entitled to take "executive measures" against the civilian population "in the context of their mission and on their own responsibility."<sup>9</sup> Himmler referred to a "special commission from the Führer" in announcing the deployment of Higher SS and Police Leaders (*HSSPF*)<sup>10</sup> "to carry out the special instructions I have been given by the Führer in the area of political administration" – simultaneously determining both the task and the chain of command.<sup>11</sup> A force of five mobile *Einsatzgruppen*,<sup>12</sup> three SS Brigades,<sup>13</sup> and nine police battalions – combined in three regiments – and other small special units was assembled, all in all a force of about 35,000 men. Almost one-third, 430 officers and 11,640 men, belonged to the "Order Police."<sup>14</sup>

A group of Viennese lined their path when the *Radfahrer-Bataillon* finally departed by train on 9 June 1941. The parting song, accompanied by a band, was *muß i' denn, muß i' denn zum Städtele hinaus*. The farewell ritual was complete with a short martial address on the parade ground by the commander of the Vienna *Ordnungspolizei*. Officers and men were reminded of the importance of their mission and exhorted to obey orders and to fulfill their duty at all times, for *Führer, Volk und Vaterland*. Later, these exhortations were constantly repeated, especially when senior representatives of the SS, Police, and Army appeared for inspections and issued "special instructions."

8. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RW 7/985 ("BA-MA").

9. BA-MA RH 22/155.

10. Cf. Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die höheren SS- und Polizeiführer* (Düsseldorf 1986).

11. BA-MA RH 22/155.

12. On the operations of the *Einsatzgruppen*, see Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges* (Stuttgart 1981); Yaacov Lozowick, "Rollbahn Mord: The Early Activities of Einsatzgruppe C," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2 (1987), 221–41; and Ronald Headland, "The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Question of Their Initial Operations," in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4 (1989), 401–12.

13. Yehoshua Büchler, "Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS: Himmler's personal murder brigades in 1941," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1 (1986), 11–25.

14. ZSL V 117. Annual report 1941 by General Daluege on "Kräfte und Kriegseinsatz der Ordnungspolizei," 10.

Other "messages" were passed on as well, which clearly had a deep impact on members of the battalion and were to determine their behavior: the policemen were to "confront the Slavic peoples as members of the master race, to demonstrate their Germanness." The ceremony ended with an oath of fealty and shouts of *Sieg Heil*, the singing of the *Horst-Wessel Lied* and the national anthem. The staging of such rituals served as an effective strategy to strengthen group bonding and to ensure both conformance to Nazi ideology and total absorption into the Nazi system of domination.

The first stop after Vienna was Warsaw, where the unit was integrated – together with Battalions 307 and 316 – into the *Polizei Regiment Mitte* led by Lt. Col. Montua, an energetic, highly decorated officer who is believed to have committed suicide in 1945. Immediately after the beginning of the attack on the Soviet Union, the *Radfahrer-Bataillon* set out for the "*rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet Mitte*" ("Rear Area, Army Group Center") to fulfill its mission of "purging" and "pacifying" the conquered territory.<sup>15</sup> On crossing the Russian border it came under the command of *HSSPF* Center, General von dem Bach. Its route led from Bialystok through the forests of Bialowies to Minsk, and thence via Mogilev to Smolensk, reached in October 1941. In May 1942, the *Osteinsatz* was complete, and again "cheerful singing" heralded the transfer of the battalion to Kattowitz for R & R; later it was sent to the Italian front.

Wherever *Himmlers grüne Helfer* ("Himmler's green helpers") appeared, they exemplified the new Nazi method of rule. Mercilessly, Jews, communist officials, escaped prisoners-of-war, partisans or "freebooters," "ringleaders" or "mutineers," "plunderers" or "idlers," "vagrant civilians" and other "suspicious elements" were sought out and liquidated. Villages and farms were burned to the ground, to remove the means of support of "gangs" and their accomplices. Units of the Order Police were also called in to assist in the guarding, and subsequently the liquidation, of the last remaining enclosed ghettos. At the beginning of 1942, General Daluege, "Chief, Main Office – Order Police," described the varied activities and achievements of the Order Police in the following words:

The (Police) units, as with all missions in combat areas, have first to carry out the normal tasks: clearing the area of enemy remnants, combating criminal and above all political elements, securing and clearing arteries and supply routes for efficient traffic flow, transporting squads of prison-

15. See the exhaustive study of two rear areas under Nazi rule by Theo Schulte, *The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia* (Oxford 1989), and Omar Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Oxford 1985).

ers, securing and guarding valuable booty depots and factories and pacifying the civilian population. These were supplemented by large scale operations against organized enemy units in the rear front area and, in particular, engagements with organized groups of partisans and paratroopers and the required executions [my emphasis].<sup>16</sup>

Police Battalion 322 distinguished itself by participating in about 10,000 executions by May 1942. Numerous orders were given sanctioning the murder of Jews. The records reveal that for each *Judenaktion* (action against Jews) an order was issued, usually in writing, sometimes orally with subsequent written confirmation. Courier services, telegraphic and cable networks ensured efficient communication. The chain of command ran from the *RFSS* and *HSSPF* through the regiment to the battalion and thence – according to the scope and type of the operation – to the companies, platoons, and patrols. A report on each “action” had to be submitted. Platoon and patrol leaders were the first to report; the company leader informed the battalion, which informed the regiment. The regiment commander reported to the *HSSPF*, which passed on the information to the *RFSS* and main offices of the SS. At each intermediate stage, the reports were “revised” (*bearbeitet*), passages omitted, shortened, summarized, or annotated. These records included *Opferbilanzen* (“statistics on victims”), lists detailing arrests and executions. On 27 July 1941, the Police Regiment Center instructed its battalions to submit a summary on the first day of each month. It was particularly stressed that the stated figures must “correspond to the actual conditions,” an indication that in the first reports exaggerated figures had been entered to demonstrate the success and efficiency of a unit. The form looked like this:

Time:	Place:	Prisoners Taken:	Shootings:			Reason:
			Russ. Soldiers	Jews	Women	

The central authorities in Berlin soon saw the need to seal off communication channels from the uninitiated. On 13 September 1941, the Chief of the Order Police determined that reports of executions were to be classified as *geheime Reichssache* (top secret) and conveyed only by courier.

16. ZSL V 117, 11.

None of the killing orders and the subsequent reports contain reference to a *Führerbefehl* (“Führer’s Order”). The *Radfahrer-Bataillon* 322 was in the same situation as all SS and Police units. When they embarked on their journey to the East, they were equipped with guidelines, instructions, and directives that specified their mission and their chain of command, together with target groups to be liquidated at once. There is, however, sufficient evidence to demonstrate clearly that the SS and Police commanders were granted a discretion that permitted individual initiatives. Several of them distinguished themselves through particular zeal, and they did this in the knowledge that at the highest level of the leadership the *radical* and *fundamental* solution of the Jewish Question had already been envisaged; they had been instructed orally on the goal, the “Final Solution.” This process was expressed in writing by Walter Stahlecker, chief of *Einsatzgruppe A*, with all necessary clarity. On 6 August 1941, he criticized the “tentative guidelines for the treatment of Jews,” prepared by the *Reichskommissar* “Ostland,” as remaining within the boundaries of traditional discriminatory measures; he appended the following handwritten comment to the memorandum from *Einsatzgruppe A*:

I think it necessary to discuss the above-mentioned questions again thoroughly, in private, before a basic directive is issued, the more so since the draft touches on basic orders to the Security Police from the highest level, which cannot be discussed in writing.<sup>17</sup>

Stahlecker was convinced that “decisive measures” could be carried out only by the Security and Order Police. On 29 August 1941, he reported that “we are presently directing our main attention to the final solution of the Jewish Question by means quite different from those foreseen by the *Reichskommissar*.”<sup>18</sup>

The “means” employed by the SS and the police were inadequate to liquidate all Jews in the conquered territory in Summer 1941 “at one blow.” Lack of manpower and the practice of “open-air shooting” restricted the killing capacity, permitting only the “first wave of killings.” Preparations were under way for the introduction of more efficient, modern technologies: mobile gas vans and stationary gassing installations. Geographic, demographic, and climatic factors dictated a longer time span. And economic interests still played a

17. State Archive Riga, PSR CVVA P-1026-1-3, 296–298. Cf. also Gerald Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* (1982; reprint, Berkeley 1984). Fleming, who discovered this document, passed on a copy to Hans Mommsen, who published it in H. Mommsen, ed., *Herrschaftsalltag im Dritten Reich* (Dusseldorf 1988), 467–71.

18. Riga State Archive, P-1026-1-3, 303.

part: civilian and military authorities everywhere hastened to recruit and exploit Jewish forced labor.

There can be no question of regarding the planning and execution of the prelude to the "Final Solution" as an "improvisation," to quote Martin Broszat's formulation, the way out of a cul-de-sac into which Hitler, other race fanatics, and competing bureaucracies had maneuvered themselves.<sup>19</sup> The constructions and theses of historians like Arno Mayer who suggest that the destruction of the Jews was decided only at the beginning of 1942, after the failure of the Russian campaign, are equally untenable.<sup>20</sup> A clear and consistent genocidal strategy can be detected. At the beginning of July 1941, Jewish men between sixteen and forty-five were killed; the age limit was soon increased to sixty-five. In August the women and elderly followed, and in September, the children were included as the final, "logical" step: the survival of bothersome Jewish orphans was out of the question. Although there were variations according to time and area and some "overlap" in operations, this sequence in time and target group can be regarded – as Alfred Streim has pointed out – as a basic pattern.<sup>21</sup> The procedure was chosen not only because it denied the victims any chance of resistance or survival, but also because it was the best method of familiarizing the murderers with the practice of liquidation. They soon got used to the routine. The gradual process of rehearsing for murder was also facilitated by strategies of legitimation, as the initial operations of Police Battalion 322 in Bialystok and in Bialowies exemplify.<sup>22</sup>

When the *Radfahrer-Bataillon* reached Bialystok, on 7 July 1941, other Police and SS units had already initiated the campaign of genocide. One day after the *Einmarsch*, on 27 June, the main synagogue was set on fire: seven hundred Jews perished, a massacre for which Police Battalion 309 had been responsible.<sup>23</sup> Mass executions were

19. Martin Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der 'Endlösung'," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977), 737–75; see also Christopher Browning, "Eine Antwort auf Martin Broszats Thesen zur Genesis der 'Endlösung'," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29 (1983), 381–420, and Hans Mommsen, "Die Realisierung des Utopischen," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983), 381–420, trans. and repr. in *The Politics of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld (London 1986), 93–144.

20. Arno J. Mayer, *Why did the Heavens not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History* (New York 1988).

21. See Alfred Streim, "The Tasks of the SS *Einsatzgruppen*," in *Simon Wiesenthal Centre Annual* 4 (1987), 311–16, and his further controversy with Helmut Krausnick in the correspondence section of the *Annual*, 6 (1988), 311–47.

22. Cf. Hans Mommsen, "Anti-Jewish Politics and the Implementation of the Holocaust," in *From the Emancipation to the Holocaust*, ed. K. Kwiet (Kensington NSW 1987), 63–78.

23. Lichtenstein, 69–96.

conducted by *Einsatzkommando* 9. Upon their arrival, members of Police Battalion 322 were allocated to guard and patrol service. Some were assigned to searching the city area and instructed to capture and "hand over suspicious persons, especially Jews or disguised Russian military personnel, to the SD." Others were posted as guards to *Dulags* (*Durchgangslager*, "transit camps"). The shooting of prisoners of war began soon enough; most were of Jewish origin. Reports were submitted daily, with the laconic comment "shot while attempting to escape." The first *Judenaktion* was scheduled for 8 July; it was limited to a raid on the Jewish Quarter. A sector was chosen and marked off with colored lines on a street map; 6 officers and 220 constables were required. After sealing off the streets in the early morning hours, four search troops forced their way into apartments and shops. What was found and "requisitioned" served not only to satisfy material interests, the personal requirements of an invading army, but also, and primarily, as justification and proof for the identification of the Jews as plunderers and the corresponding punishment.

By afternoon the action was finished. Twenty trucks transported the "booty" to a special "booty depot." It consisted of "groceries and luxury wares of all kinds, leather goods, textiles (coats and rolls of suit material), kitchen appliances and rubber goods." There was no doubt in the minds of the police that "the entire booty had been plundered from stores." The action was considered a "great success," serving both as an encouragement and a basis for the self-fulfilling prophecy: "One can conclude from the abundant outcome of the first search action in a small fraction of Jewish dwellings that in further actions, vast amounts of stolen plunder can be extracted from all Jewish and Polish apartments." The police held firmly to this fiction. Yet when, at the end of October 1941, a company of the battalion carried out an action in the "totally Jew-infested" village of Krasnopolje at the request of the *Feldkommandantur* ("district military administrative HQ") in Propoisk, the raid resulted in "relatively little booty." The report continues: "Doubtless the Jews had buried much of the valuable plunder, which could not be located despite a thorough search."

The Jewish possessions confiscated in Krasnopolje and registered painstakingly on lists under the title *Judennachlaß* ("Jews' bequest") document the existence of a poor, rural community: they consisted of "a few ruble and dollar notes, gold objects whose value was only that of the metal" and "old, damaged pieces of jewelry." The company leader proposed that the "real gold be given to the regiment dentist for fillings"; fabric remnants were to be used to mend items of

clothing. The action in Krasnopolje ended with the liquidation of all the Jews, 124 men and 216 women and children. During the raid in Bialystok in early July, twenty-one men and one woman were shot: "Those executed were plunderers and fugitives and almost exclusively Jews." Given the volume of "booty" found, one might have expected that many "plunderers" would have been shot; significantly, only those who refused to admit to possession of "plunder" were liquidated. Some Jews were forced to line up in front of the collected "booty"; the photographs were included in the diary as an attachment. Himmler, the *Reichsführer-SS*, visited Bialystok "unexpectedly" on that very afternoon. He inspected the booty depot and "inquired about the nature of the unit's work." Accompanied by the *HSSPF*, he then withdrew to a staff conference, where – behind closed doors – it seems probable that the first formal "killing order" was prepared; it was issued on 11 July 1941. As commander of the Police Regiment Center, Lt. Col. Montua signed the "confidential" document, which was distributed to Police Battalions 307, 316, and 322 under reference number Ia 15–34, and reads:

- 1) On the orders of the Higher SS and Police Leader . . . attached to the Rear Army Centre, all male Jews between 17–45 years of age convicted of looting are to be executed immediately.

Precautions had to be taken to seal off the killing fields:

- 2) The executions are to take place away from cities, villages and traffic routes. The graves are to be levelled to prevent them becoming places of pilgrimage. I forbid photography and the admittance of spectators. Executions and places of burial are not to be made public.

Similar restrictions were imposed on the sites of all organized mass murders. They were often disregarded and had frequently to be reinforced, as numerous documents attest. Other documents, however, do not reveal the concern of Montua's "killing order" to consider the well-being of the marksmen and take precautionary measures to protect them from any distress arising from the committal of murder:

- 3) Battalion and company leaders are to pay special attention to the pastoral care of the participants in this action. The impressions of the day are to be dispelled through evening gatherings with comrades (*Kameradschaftsabende*). In addition, the men are to be instructed regularly on the necessity of this measure, resulting from the political situation.

From now on, the killing order, Ia 15–34, was consistently referred to. It enabled the substitution of target groups in terms of sex, age, and classification of victims. It was no longer a matter of punishing

"looters," "agitators," "saboteurs," "partisans," or "persons who supported the bolshevik system," but of the liquidation of Jews and other "enemies." The killing was not, as has often been asserted, a product of the war situation, but as Montua had termed it, a "measure resulting from the political situation."

In mid-July 1941, the *Radfahrer-Bataillon* set off for Bialowies, a large and inaccessible forest region; it had once served the Tsars as a hunting reserve and was also of great importance for the timber industry. Unsurprisingly, General Field Marshall Göring, that mighty hunter and omnipotent executor of the Four Year Plan, registered a claim to the area.<sup>24</sup> He sent *Reichsjägermeister* ("Reich Master of the Hunt") Scherping to Bialowies to prosecute his interests on the spot. Scherping established contacts with local military and SS agencies and devised a plan for the total "clearing" (i.e., depopulation) of part of the area. The implementation of this plan was entrusted to Police Battalion 322. The *HSSPF* issued a special order; he also assigned a qualified SS officer to the battalion, familiar with all the problems of "resettlement." As always, the policemen did a thorough job. In the period between 25 July and 31 July 1941, 34 villages were evacuated and 6,446 inhabitants expelled. The procedure was as follows:

Posters and leaflets in German, Polish, and Russian and verbal commands were issued, demanding the immediate departure of all inhabitants. They were permitted to take their "moveable belongings," and one horse, one cow, and one pig per family. Women, children, and invalids were loaded onto trucks or carts and unloaded at sites 20 to 50 km. outside the prohibited zone. The cattle was also registered and removed and put at the disposal of a "slaughterer company" (*Schlachterkompanie*) from the army. Russian prisoners of war brought in the harvest. After clearing, villages and farms were razed:

The policemen enjoyed only a brief spell from their labors. Resistance erupted: on 2 August a squad was dispatched to a sawmill to crush a workers' strike – nineteen "ringleaders" were summarily executed. Other squads embarked on the search for seventy-two people who had been denounced as "suspicious elements" and "communist functionaries"; twenty-five were apprehended in the first raid. "All captives were found guilty and were shot, together with 22 other culprits, by an execution squad from the 3rd company." Finally, this company was also commissioned by the *HSSPF* to conclude its mission in the district of Bialowies with the "liquidation of Jews." Its

24. See Heinrich Rubner, *Deutsche Forstgeschichte 1933–1945* (St. Katharinen 1985).

experience in searches, resettlement, and execution showed its worth. On 9 August, all Jews in Bialowies were arrested. Women, children, and the elderly were loaded on trucks and "evacuated" to the town of Kobryn: "Except for some hand baggage, the Jews had to leave everything . . . behind. Confiscated valuables were handed over to the local military administration . . . in the Bialowies hunting lodge. The homes of the evacuated Jews were locked and sealed." Seventy-seven men between the ages of sixteen and forty-five had to spend one more night in confinement before being driven in the early morning hours to a pit, which had been dug in a secluded part of the forest. The first group was forced to lie face down on the floor of the pit. There was a marksman for each victim; from the edge of the pit, he shot his target in the neck on the command *one - two - fire!*, using his carbine 98K. Any bodies still moving were given the coup de grace. Further layers of corpses were stacked on their lifeless forms. The company leader reported: "The execution proceeded without event. There were no cases of resistance, and no attempts to escape." Five tailors, four shoemakers and one watchmaker were temporarily spared, as they were "required urgently by the company as workers." A few days later, on 15 August, the Jewish community in Narewska Mala was extinguished. The cycle of arrest and confiscation, selection and evacuation continued. Kobryn served once again, for the last time, as a depot for 259 women and 162 children who had been "resettled." This time a further step was taken: the death sentence was imposed on all Jewish males between the ages of 16 and 65; 282 men were shot, "smoothly and without incident."

The *Radfahrer-Bataillon* carried out all further "special tasks" in its usual, reliable manner. There were no more resettlement actions; the killing orders now included women and children. After receiving the order, squads were sent to their allocated areas. As before, each campaign began with the sealing off of a Jewish district. The Jews were driven into *Sammelstellen* ("collection points"). Anyone who tried to resist or escape was shot at once, figuring in dispatches under the standard phrase *auf der Flucht erschossen* ("shot while fleeing"). On foot or in trucks, the victims were brought, often pushed or beaten, to the place of execution. The killings proceeded for the most part without "disturbances." The following report is typical:

The shootings proceeded without event. Due to the favorable location, the careful planning of the leadership and the experience of the men, there were no attempts to escape . . . The job was thoroughly and rapidly done, with firm and sure hand.

Occasionally, Jews tried to resist; there was little possibility of escaping the area. Again, a typical report:

The Jews were hiding under the hay and straw in the barns and stables, under the many haystacks and in all other possible places. They could only be found and captured after a lengthy search, which took up several hours [of the operation].

These events occurred in rural Anapol at the end of August 1941; 264 Jews were extracted from their hiding places, 257 "smoothly" executed. In urban Mogilev, even the experienced policemen had some trouble in driving Jews from their enforced ghetto to the execution site. A company chief reported that "the Jews hid themselves in all possible corners in a cowardly and underhanded way, so that it was often difficult to drag these filthy scum from their hiding places." Such experiences and sentiments – symptomatic of the total decay of moral and human values – were the pre-conditions for murder.

In all killing units, the basic principle was that every member should participate in at least one execution squad. A few tried to "wiggle their way out;" others made a name for themselves as *Dauer-schützen*, always to be counted on. Many received medals for their "bravery before the enemy." Occasionally, especially at the beginning of the killing operations, some were plagued by "pangs of conscience" or expressed disquiet. One officer of Police Battalion 322 even refused to participate in the execution of women without a warrant from the military court. During a search action, one squad found a young woman and her five- and seven-year-old sons. The commander called for volunteers, shouting: "The Jewish brats are to be shot."<sup>25</sup> No one volunteered. One declared that he had not gone to war to shoot children. The commander threatened to report him, and carried out the liquidation of the woman and children himself. The others stood by and watched.

No one who disobeyed a killing order was ever sentenced to death by the special SS and police courts. Such *Befehlsverweigerer* ("refusers to obey orders") were demoted, transferred, or dismissed. Conversely – and this is typical of the theory and practice of law in the Third Reich – SS and policemen, military personnel and civilians, Germans and non-Germans who killed Jews "independently" risked trial and punishment if convicted of infringing SS jurisdiction.

But no sanctions were imposed on those marksmen who had to be relieved when the sight of a massacre, especially of children, induced

vomiting or signs of nervous collapse. Such reactions sometimes occurred when the marksman's face was hit by pieces of bone or brain from the victims, and occasionally resulted in eczema and other psychosomatic symptoms. SS medical experts and "reliable" university professors were frequently asked for advice and assistance. The patients were cared for in special wards in clinics, sanatoriums, and holiday resorts. The chief architect of the genocide, Heinrich Himmler, issued a secret SS order on 12 December 1941 requiring his SS and policemen to "get rid of all pockets of resistance . . . in the areas entrusted to us and to bring enemies of the German people mercilessly to their just execution." On inspection tours he had requested demonstrations of model executions and other killing experiments; they caused him nausea (*Unwohlsein*) and symptoms of nervous collapse. Concerned for the *well-being* of his men, he proclaimed:

It is the holy duty of senior leaders and commanders personally to ensure that none of our men who has to fulfill this heavy duty should grow coarse or suffer emotional or personal damage thereby. This task is to be fulfilled through the strictest discipline in the execution of official duties, through comradely gatherings at the end of days which have included such difficult tasks. The comradely gathering must on no account, however, end in the abuse of alcohol. It should be an evening on which, as far as possible, they sit and eat at table in the best German domestic style, and music, lectures and introductions to the beauties of German intellectual and emotional life occupy the hours. To relieve men at the appropriate stage from such difficult missions, send them on leave or transfer them to other absorbing and fulfilling tasks – possibly even to another area – I regard as an important and pressing matter.<sup>26</sup>

On later occasions as well, in speeches and conversations, Himmler spoke of the "heaviest task" the SS had ever had to perform, and of the *Anständigkeit* ("decency" – a German word, as Hans Mommsen writes, "so imbued with connotations of an eroded bourgeois morality that it is almost untranslatable"<sup>27</sup>) that had been preserved in spite of it. The *Reichsführer-SS* concluded this remarkable, previously unknown order with the comment: "it is generally regarded as impossible and indecent to discuss facts and related figures or even to mention them. Orders and duties necessary for the existence of a Volk must be carried out. This material is unsuited to subsequent discussion or conversation" (underlining in text). The precept was observed. Montua's killing order of 11 July 1941 shows that the "burdens" of committing murder had been reckoned with from the outset.

26. Riga State Archive, P83-1-80.

27. Mommsen, "Anti-Jewish Politics," 63.

There was no lack of opportunities or diversions for the members of the *Radfahrer-Bataillon* to "dispel their impressions" from the liquidation of the Jews. After the hours of service, which included continual political instruction and perpetual cleaning of weapons, "cosy get-togethers" were arranged. In the forest of Bialowies and other places, campfires were lit and the familiar folk and marching songs bawled out. Beer and rum were served, and performances and films completed the entertainment. After eliminating the Jews of Bialowies, they went on a trip, "in radiant sunshine," on the *Urwaldbahn* ("Forest Railway") through the forest. The excursion was memorable; "it gave the men a deeper impression of our large field of operations." Christmas and New Year were suitably celebrated. On Christmas Eve, a company commander held a speech clarifying "the necessity of the struggle between the Germanic and the Jewish. Every individual should realize that temporary separation from one's family is only a small sacrifice compared with the gigantic struggle between two *Weltanschauungen*." On New Year's Eve, he declared: "The police has always fulfilled its task, to secure the rear of the troops fighting at the front line, and can be proud of its contribution to the enormous successes of the past year." In the official war diaries and reports of the battalion, one looks in vain for expressions of sorrow or irritation, let alone protest. Instead, there are continual references to "high morale" or "enthusiasm and dedication to the job."

The basic pattern of this collective behavior survived the lost war. With hardly a ripple, *Himmlers grüne Helfer* were reintegrated into the police force; privileges, promotions and pensions were all secure, both in Germany and Austria. The perpetrators and accomplices were free of the "syndromes" they had imposed on the surviving victims. Surprise, irritation, and dismay were the reactions when in the 1960s they were summoned to appear at war crimes investigations and trials. There was no question of guilt or regret; innocence and ignorance were constantly affirmed.<sup>28</sup> A *Waffenwart* ("armorer") declared as witness that he had "never heard anything" about the execution of Jews: "that may sound unusual, but that's the way it is." Many claimed "not to have seen anything" or only to have known "something, from hearsay." A marksman assured the court he had never "noticed," during the "occasional and legitimate" execution of partisans, "that they were Jews." Others gladly provided detailed accounts of "actions" they had merely "observed": "One could stay in the background or slink off, even if not in all situations. Often, or

28. The following quotes are taken from the court records held at ZSL, 202 AR-Z 6/65.



even mostly, the officers had no trouble getting execution squads together, for in my opinion it was always the same people who volunteered." Some particularly enjoyed recalling *das viele Radeln* ("all the cycling") and the "hunting reserve" at Bialowies, where "7 golden weeks" had been spent and "much livestock slaughtered," providing a "welcome change of menu." Otherwise, they had not "touched a hair of anyone's head." If that did not have the desired effect, there was always the appeal to "obeying orders" or "partisan warfare" to justify their criminal acts. And finally, many remembered to point out that they had served only as simple, ordinary policemen, members of a bicycle unit, which had had to go to war for *Führer, Volk, und Vaterland*. These strategies did not go unrewarded. Several cases were abandoned after the first investigations; others ended with acquittals. Attempts to reopen cases failed, the most recent in 1976. The accused (and many others) were clearly pleased with the outcome. The title question of this book – "Why Germany?" – seems in the meantime to have been answered by history in its own way. The efforts to regard National Socialism and the Germans' murder of the Jews as a thing of the past, which emerged publicly in 1983 – on the occasion of fiftieth anniversary of the National Socialist seizure of power in the *Berlin Reichstag*, – and were then transferred to the center of the academic *Historikerstreit* – seem to have found their goal in the new, "united" Germany.

## 6

## The Persecution and Extermination of the Jews in the German Consciousness

WOLFGANG BENZ

In the founding days of the Federal Republic, during the summer of 1949, the designated American High Commissioner, John McCloy, described the future relationship of the Germans to the Jews as "the crucial test of German democracy." The statement was part of a public speech and was reported by the newspapers. It was prompted by what had emerged in opinion polls as a widespread and mounting anti-Semitism among Germans in the era after Hitler. To be sure, there were now hardly any German Jews left. In a number of cities, however, particularly Munich and Frankfurt, the presence of Jewish "Displaced Persons," housed in camps much like ghettos, but economically active in the cities, made the Germans conscious of the fact that Jews in Germany and the relationship of Germans with Jews constituted special problems.

These DPs, as "Displaced Persons" were officially and generally known, had been taken from their homes by the Hitler regime to become slave laborers – "voluntary helpers" – or concentration camp prisoners. They were now the responsibility of the American and British armies and international welfare agencies. Following their liberation, they remained in occupied postwar Germany awaiting repatriation or permission to emigrate to another country. During the postwar years, those Jews liberated from the National Socialist concentration camps – who had come, for the most part, from Eastern-Central and Eastern Europe – were joined by refugees from Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and other lands, who had fled from a rekindled enmity, from anti-Semitic riots and pogroms. These Jews assembled in the American occupation zone of Germany and awaited the opportunity to emigrate to Palestine, the United States, and

This chapter has been translated by Joe O'Donnell and John Milfull.

# WHY GERMANY?

National Socialist Anti-Semitism  
and the European Context

Edited by John Milfull, *Dean, Faculty of Arts  
and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales*

**W**HY DID ANTI-SEMITISM assume its ultimate and most deadly form in Germany, and not in other countries which, at the turn of the century, showed an equal penchant for blaming their Jewish citizens for all the tensions of modernity?

To attempt to understand the specific and catastrophic development of National Socialist anti-Semitism one must investigate the whole complex of factors, economic, political, historical and social-psychological, which led to the quantum leap from "normal" anti-Semitism, superficially no more marked than in neighboring countries, to the acceptance of the Nazi policy and practice of genocide. This book adopts a comparative and inter-disciplinary approach to this central problem which, free from any "metaphysics of ethnicity," seeks to confront both the paradoxes of the German-Jewish experience – the extraordinary initial success, and the devastating subsequent failure of assimilation – and the complex patterns of assimilation and rejection in other European societies.

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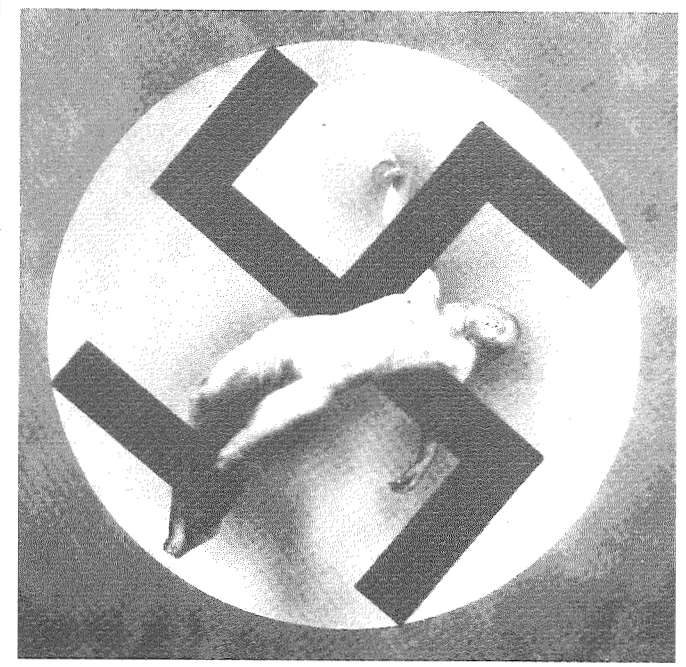


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