

Winter 2014

Nazi Ideology and the Pursuit of War Aim: 1941-45

Kenneth Burgess

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Military History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Burgess, Kenneth, "Nazi Ideology and the Pursuit of War Aim: 1941-45" (2014). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1204.
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1204>

This thesis (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Winter 2014

NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THE PURSUIT OF WAR AIMS: 1941-45.

Kenneth B. Burgess II

NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THE PURSUIT OF WAR AIMS: 1941-45

by

KENNETH BERNARD BURGESS II

(UNDER DIRECTION OF BRIAN K. FELTMAN)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine what can be considered a military blunder on the part of the Nazi Germans. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched a massive invasion into the Soviet Union and Soviet territories. The political goals of Operation Barbarossa were to seize hold of the expanses of land belonging to the Soviet Union. This would serve as the foundation for increased agricultural production and the enslavement of any remaining Slavic people for the supposed greater good Germany. Additionally, the Nazis desired to erase the presence of all Jews living within the Soviet Union and Soviet held territories. Eventually, this goal would be aimed at eliminating Jews across all of Europe and would be dubbed the Final Solution. Furthermore, the Nazis desired the supply of oil fields within the region surrounding the Caucasus Mountains. This would help fuel the Nazi war machine as Adolf Hitler continued to progress towards his goal of establishing a Third Reich. The goals of the military were to achieve a complete victory over the Red Army. Nazi plans called for a quick conquest, which would enable the *Wehrmacht* to encircle and defeat the bulk of the Red Army within the first four months of the campaign. By studying Operation Barbarossa, historians can equate the operation to a pursuit of war aims. These included a two pronged war that was aimed at both crushing the Red Army and eliminating the Jews. Militarily, the Nazis did not have the manpower to pursue both the Final Solution and war against the Red Army. This thesis will examine how the Nazis misused vial

resources of manpower in the name of Nazi ideology from the commencement of Operation Barbarossa to the end of the war in 1945.

INDEX WORDS: Operation Barbarossa, June 22, 1945, Final Solution, War Aims, Adolf Hitler, *Wehrmacht*, Red Army, Soviet Union, Nazis, Germany

NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THE PURSUIT OF WAR AIMS: 1941-45

by

KENNETH BERNARD BURGESS II

B.A., Georgia Southern University, 2012

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF THE ARTS

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

© 2014

KENNETH BERNARD BURGESS II

All Rights Reserved

NAZI IDEOLOGY AND THE PURSUIT OF WAR AIMS: 1941-45

by

KENNETH BERNARD BURGESS II

Major Professor: Brian K. Feltman

Committee: Alan Downs

Bill Allison

Electronic Version Approved:

December: 2014

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Arletta and Kenneth Burgess. Without their support and love, I would have never made it this far. Thank you for believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to personally thank Dr. Brian K. Feltman for the guidance and aid he has given me as a graduate student. I encourage other grad-students to seek out his advice as well. I would also like to thank Dr. Downs and Dr. Allison for their help and time. Lastly, I would like to thank the staff of Georgia Southern's Library for their assistance in locating books and materials for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	6
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION TO WAR	9
A Historiographical Review of Relevant Literature.....	13
1. NAZI IDEOLOGY: THE PURSUIT OF WAR AIMS IN THE SOVIET UNION	
1941.....	24
2. KILLING GROUNDS: THE ANNEXED TERRITORIES OF THE SOVIET UNION AND	
POLAND, 1941-42.....	53
3. NAZI RATIONALIZATIONS AND THE END.....	77
4. CONCLUSIONS	98
5. REFERENCES.....	100

Introduction to War

Historian Christopher R. Browning once wrote that special selection among members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 was nonexistent. He stated in *Ordinary Men*, that, "...the battalion was the "dregs" of the manpower pool available at that stage of the war."¹ This quote indicates that during the summer of 1942, which coincided with Germany's counteroffensive in the USSR, only the worst of the worst were available for the rear-line duty of murdering Jews in Poland and the USSR. This signifies that the resources of manpower available to Adolf Hitler were slim even though the war in the USSR was only in its second year. Yet, the Nazis continued to prioritize achieving the Final Solution even while the tide of battle turned against them on both the Eastern and Western Fronts. In regards to the Eastern Front, this represented a total of 3.3 million and 500,000 satellite troops versus an estimated 4.75 million Soviet troops. This percentage of German troops made up 73.6% of the *Wehrmacht's* forces.² By the end of the Battle of Kursk, which lasted from July 5, 1943 to July 15, 1943, the *Wehrmacht* lost 448,000 men. This was almost double the amount of men lost during Germany's defeat at Stalingrad.³ Thus, one may conclude that based on the previous numbers given, that Germany did not have the luxury of squandering resources of manpower.

This study hopes to shed light on what can be considered a military blunder on the part of the German Army. In an effort to solve the, "Jewish Question," Germany side lined the goals of its military. This quest for racial dominance resulted in a massive misuse of manpower as the war progressed. Nazi ideology essentially blinded Hitler and his staff to the declining condition of the German Army and the lack of available resources of manpower. This racial ideology

¹ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1998), 165.

² Geoffrey Jukes, *Essential Histories: The Second World War(5) The Eastern Front 1941-1945* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 21-22.

³ *Ibid.*, 51.

would also prevent the Nazis from securing possible allies within the Ukraine, which had been starved to death by Joseph Stalin, the communist leader of the USSR, during the early 1930's. German soldiers could have played the role of liberators, and in doing so, would have theoretically faced less resistance from the local population. This thesis will analyze Germany's use of manpower and the effect that Nazi ideology had on Operation Barbarossa and its eventual failure. This study will assert that Nazi ideology served as both Hitler's greatest strength, and his greatest weakness. It should be noted, however, that this scholarship does not condone the heinous acts of genocide that were committed by Nazi Germany. This study will, nonetheless, analyze the scholarship from a military perspective.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland for the sake of expanding its empire and sphere of influence over Europe. The invasion sparked the beginning of World War II in Europe, a war that many European countries wished to avoid. The aftermath and casualties of the Great War, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, remained fresh within the minds of both Europeans and Americans alike. France itself had lost around 1,500,000 men to during the Great War.⁴ After the war, the Allied nations of Britain, The United States, and France had forced Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles, which demanded that Germany accept full responsibility for starting the war. In addition, it forced Germany to pay reparations to the allied powers, which many considered unfair. It also placed a 100,000 man restriction on Germany's military in addition to forcing Germany to surrender all of its imperial colonies. Adolf Hitler, among many other German politicians, saw the treaty as unjust and a direct threat to Germany's ability to defend itself. Hitler theorized that only through war would Germany be able to rebound from the economic losses it suffered after its defeat in the Great War. When Hitler legally seized power in 1933, he immediately began to covertly challenge the restrictions of Versailles. This included

⁴ Norman Stone, *World War Two: A Short History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012), 29.

initiating the conscription of new soldiers into the German Army and the rebuilding of the German air force in 1935. In March of 1936 Hitler ordered German soldiers to occupy the demilitarized Rhineland. This action defied the portion of Versailles which forbade Germany's military from occupying territory west of the Rhine. The governments of France and Britain responded with appeasement due to the shared notion among many Europeans that the Treaty of Versailles was indeed unjust. In addition, it was assumed that war could be avoided if Germany was allowed access to much of the territory that it once controlled prior to Great War. Nonetheless, the notion of appeasement merely empowered Hitler to attempt further territorial gains.

In March of 1938 Hitler initiated the *Anschluss*, or union, which formally annexed Austria into German territory. Two months later, and with yet again no opposition, Hitler pressed on for ownership of the Sudetenland. This was an area within Czechoslovakia which held a majority population of German speaking citizens. To avoid more territorial gains, the nations of Britain and France gathered together to discuss peace with Germany. The Munich Conference, which excluded the Czech government, agreed to grant Germany the Sudetenland on the condition that Hitler would not seek further territorial advances. This decision ultimately disappointed Hitler, who desired war. Germany agreed to the terms of the Munich Conference, but then later invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France assured Germany that an invasion of Poland would be the *red line* for all of Europe. Despite repeated warnings, Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939. The sovereign country received no aid from France or Britain and thus became the martyr of World War II.⁵ Soon after Poland's invasion, Hitler set his sights on France in May of 1940. After France's defeat, Hitler aimed to conquer the last remaining European threat to his Third Reich.

⁵ Ibid., 28.

Unternehmen Seelöwe, or Operation Sea Lion, was designed to launch a German invasion into Great Britain. Nonetheless, due to Britain's island location and a lack of German warships, an invasion could not take place until the Royal Air Force was defeated over the English Channel. During the Battle of Britain, Hitler shifted the Luftwaffe's targets from English airfields and radar sites to London's civilian population. Known as the Blitz, Hitler's objective was to force London's civilians to demand that England surrender. However, the panic that Berlin expected did not transpire. This terror tactic hardened the hearts of the English rather than instilling fear. It also united the hearts of the public with the objectives of the English government.⁶ By the end of the Battle of Britain, Germany had lost 1,773 planes along with their skilled pilots. The British lost 915 planes, but many of their pilots were able to recover from their losses and fight again. This was due to the fact that many downed pilots either crashed, or landed within Britain's territory. In addition, Britain's war production far outclassed Germany's. This resulted in the British producing up to 500 planes a week in 1940 while the Germans produced only half of Britain's figures.⁷

Despite the failure of Operation Sea Lion, Hitler remained determined to carry out his plans for the advent of a Third Reich. Although Germany had failed to defeat Britain, Hitler remained fixated on conquering the Soviet Union rather than pursuing direct warfare against the British homeland. Hitler saw his quest for *Lebensraum*, or living space, in the Soviet Union as the ultimate goal, which coincided with the elimination of the Jews. Operation Barbarossa, which was named after the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, was designed to incorporate Blitzkrieg tactics to strike into the heart of the Soviet Union. Hitler planned to encircle and destroy the Red Army within the first months of the operation in order to cut off supplies and

⁶ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 150.

⁷ Stone, *World War Two: A Short History*, 42-43.

control a retreating Soviet Army. This initial phase of the operation was critical for the seizure of Soviet cities such as Moscow and Leningrad. Though, given the magnitude of Operation Barbarossa and its importance to Nazi success in the area, one must wonder why Nazi Germany chose to allocate vital portions of their resources and manpower towards the elimination of the Jews. Why were racial aims so significant to the Nazi war machine, and why did Germany decide to pursue them even though the USSR had yet to be conquered? As we will see, Hitler opted for a two pronged war in the Soviet Union; a war fought against both the Red Army and innocent civilians.

Among the divisions within Germany's military responsible for the deaths of both Jews and Russian civilians were the *Einsatzgruppen*. The *Einsatzgruppen*, divisions of mobile killing units under the *Schutzstaffel* or SS, were trained and equipped to follow the *Wehrmacht*. These killings squads were tasked with eliminating and "cleansing" communities in the Soviet Union and Soviet held territories such as Ukraine. Major General Eduard Wagner asserted that the *Einsatzgruppen's* tasks centered within the Rear Army Area, and would hold the authority to eradicate anti-German and anti-Government movements. Thus, partisans, saboteurs, and anyone else deemed a threat to Germany would be handled specifically by the SS. Theoretically; this meant that the prerogatives of the *Wehrmacht* and the SS would not collide since the operations of the SS had little to do with the *Wehrmacht's*.⁸

A Historiographical Review of Relevant Literature

The purpose of this study will be to examine how Nazi ideology blinded Hitler and his staff from anticipating the failures that would doom Barbarossa. It will also show that in succumbing to their own ideology, the Nazi's vastly misused the limited amount of resources

⁸ Heinz Höhne, *The Order of The Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's S.S.*, trans. Richard Barry (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1970), 355.

that Germany had access to. The following sources will aid this thesis in examining questions which have plagued historians since the conclusion of World War II. This thesis will rely heavily on translated documentary readers such as the *Nazism 1919-1945* volumes by Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham. It will also rely on pre-translated eye witness accounts, testimonies, and memoirs. In addition, these primary sources will be supported by a variety of secondary literature from some of the most notable scholars within their fields. The goal of using such literature will be to aid the reader in understanding the questions which this thesis attempts to clarify and examine.

In *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941*, Alex J. Kay, Jeff Rutherford, and David Stahel argue that Germany's invasion of The Soviet Union produced a radicalization of warfare and genocide, which had not been seen in history. Kay analyzes the Nazis and their role in the exploitation of occupied territories. He also examines the Nazi decision making process, which would lead to mass genocide within the Soviet Union and Poland. Kay asserts that 1941 and Operation Barbarossa should be considered the focal point of World War II. It is during this year that the war, which was considered to be a European war, entered its global phase. Germany's total war against the Soviet Union was essentially a war on two fronts. The first was a war fought by opposing armies over territorial gains. The second was a war on the Soviet, Jewish, and Roma peoples. The Soviet Campaign dictated that large portions of Soviet territory would be cleansed of its occupants. Kay cites Staatssekretär Herbert Backe, and his 12 Gebote; or commandments, as proof that the Reich intended to starve Soviet civilians. Among these specifically were those living within the Ukraine. Backe writes that, "The Russian has already endured poverty, hunger,

and frugality for centuries. His stomach is elastic, hence no false sympathy...”⁹ In addition, Kay cites the postwar testimony of SS Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski to further establish the intent behind Nazi Germany’s plan to invade The Soviet Union. Kay writes that,

Between June 12 and 15, Himmler hosted a gathering at his Westphalian castle...Bach-Zelewski...recalled Himmler saying that, ‘the purpose of the Russian campaign’ was ‘the decimation of the Slavic population by thirty million.’¹⁰

Similar to Kay, Christopher R. Browning makes many contributions to the general scholarship of this study. In *Ordinary Men*, Browning asserts that although the atrocities committed by Germany during World War II can not be overlooked, many of the men serving within Battalion 101; and to an extent other divisions were ordinary human beings. He asserts that the extermination phase of the Holocaust was carried out due to the radical political and social circumstances within Nazi Germany. He examines both executions in Poland and Russia. This work directly relates to this thesis in examining why Germans who had no Nazi affiliation, still fought to aid the Nazi Party in achieving its racial war aims.

Browning also examines how Germany was able to organize and nearly succeed in destroying the Jewish population. In *Fateful Months* Browning again asserts that regardless of Hitler’s position and decision making, the fact that Hitler did not alone murder the European Jews is undisputable.¹¹ He asserts that the “first” victims of Hitler’s extermination phase came not from Poland, but inside Germany. Euthanasia programs selected roughly seventy thousand Germans who were deemed unfit for life to be gassed. Although these actions were done in secret, away from German civilians, gradually information about the killings began to leak out.

⁹ Herbert Becke, *12 Goble* (IMG vol. 39, Nuremberg: Sekretariat des Gerichtshofs, 1949), 367-71, quoted in, Alex J. Kay, Jeff Rutherford, and David Stahel, *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide, and Radicalization* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 111.

¹⁰ Eric von dem Bach-Zelewski, *Postwar Testimony* (IMG, Nuremberg, 1946),4:535-36, quoted in, Kay, *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹ Christopher R. Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., 1985),4.

For an attack on German citizens, healthy or not, to be carried out in such a magnitude Hitler must have held a considerable amount of support within his party. Browning examines how Germans took their first steps to the Final Solution and how those steps evolved over time. He analyzes Germany and the Final Solution by looking both from the top down and the bottom up within the command structure of Nazi Germany.¹²

In relation to examining Germany's quest for the Final Solution from the top down to the bottom up, Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer in *Soldaten* make their own contributions to the scholarship. For those historians who remain adamant on placing blame for the Holocaust solely upon Hitler's shoulders, Neitzel and Welzer discuss the nature in which captured German POWs spoke to each other. These recorded conversations revealed that among all branches of the German military, the atrocities inflicted upon the Jews, Roma, and Slavic people were common knowledge. *Soldaten* examines the mind-set of German soldiers; why they fought, why they believed in Hitler, and why some eagerly carried out atrocities against the Jews while others did not. Neitzel and Welzer also examine the origins of National Socialism in Germany and how it impacted German civilians. Neitzel and Welzer assert that, "To believe that a modern dictatorship like National Socialism integrates a populace by homogenizing them is to mistake the way it functions socially."¹³ They assert that National Socialism integrates a populace by doing the opposite. It maintains difference so that even critics may debate the issues of National Socialism in an intellectual manner.¹⁴

The subject of why German soldiers, particularly the *Wehrmacht*, chose to faithfully follow Hitler's orders is a widely debated topic. Even as the Soviet army began to steadily push

¹² Ibid., 7.

¹³ Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying, The Secret WWII Transcripts of German POWs*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 29.

¹⁴ Ibid.

German lines back to their original Pre-Eastern Front positions, the *Wehrmacht* remained Hitler's loyal fighting force. In *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich*, Omer Bartov examines the Nazification of Germany's soldiers and the anatomy of the German Army. Bartov asserts that due to Germany's initial refusal to mobilize its economy for war, Germany's total war production was drastically limited. Hitler essentially attempted to use the same Blitzkrieg tactics that had proved successful on the Western Front. Though, given the lack of resources, the number of ill-equipped infantry divisions within the *Wehrmacht*, the inferiority of German production when compared to the USSR, and the steady demodernization of German troops along with a return to trench warfare; Bartov asserts that it would have been impossible for the Third Reich to win a total world war.¹⁵ This work directly relates to this thesis by examining the core issue of *why* Operation Barbarossa would become a complete failure. This subject matter in turn relates to the theme of how Germany succumbed to its only ideology.

In *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare* Bartov examines the mental state of German soldiers on the Eastern Front. He asserts that historians have often neglected the importance of low ranking soldiers within the German Army. Bartov states that,

But the army was neglected; it was left either to the military historians who were concerned with its tactics...or to the political historians who focused on the relations between the generals and the regime.¹⁶

Bartov's study addresses the question of what caused barbarization to form among German soldiers on the Eastern Front. He examines the relationship between the conditions at the front,

¹⁵ Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: University Press, 1992), 14-16.

¹⁶ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: NY, St. Martin's Press, 1986), xi-xii.

the social and educational background of the junior officers, and the link between political indoctrination and criminal activities.¹⁷

Like Bartov, Vasily Grossman also examines the complexity of barbarization on the Eastern Front. Nonetheless, Grossman's contribution to the scholarship of Germany's invasion into the Soviet Union comes in the form of a memoir. In *A Writer At War*, Grossman recounts his eye-witness experiences while serving as a special correspondent for the Red Star, a Soviet newspaper. From 1941 to 1945, Grossman observed both Soviet defeats and victories over the Germans. Grossman is most noted for his brutal honesty when describing the atrocious conditions the Red Army was forced to endure while battling Germany for every inch of territory it had seized. Likewise, he also gives detailed accounts of atrocities committed by the Red Army, including the mass rape of German women during the USSR's attack on Berlin.¹⁸ Most importantly, Grossman recounts his experiences as the Red Army neared Treblinka and how the realization of how the Holocaust impacted both Grossman and the Stalinist system. The usefulness of this source directly relates to the subject matter of this thesis. In order to examine how German racial war aims side lined the aims of the military on the Eastern Front, one must also examine the issue from the Soviet perspective.

On the subject of Nazi death camps such as Chełmno, Shmuel Krakowski examines what he determines to be a neglected topic among Holocaust literature. In *Chełmno A Small Village in Europe*, Krakowski examines the origins of Chełmno and how it would later become the first death camp to use gas as a means of mass murder. He examines sparse documentation left over from those who survived the camp, transportation records, camp life, and documentation left behind in the Łódź Ghetto. He asserts that due to a lack of surviving recourses, and Nazi

¹⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁸ Vasily Grossman, *A Writer At War: A Soviet Journalist With the Red Army, 1941-1945*, Trans and Ed. Antony Beevor & Lube Vinogradova (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), xvii.

attempts to destroy documentation, there have been only a few works that have examined the camp's history, the first of which was written by Polish Judge Wladyslaw Bednarz and published in 1946. This work came in response to probing done by Bednarz on the behalf of the Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland.¹⁹

To answer the question of why Hitler was so obsessed with conquering the Soviet Union and eliminating the Jews, one must first examine Hitler's mindset. Today, *Mein Kampf* remains one of the most recognized written accounts of Hitler's inner thoughts during the days he served as a prisoner after his failed attempt to seize power in November 1923. *Mein Kampf* examines not only what Hitler's actions, but who he was as a person. Although originally ignored by British Intelligence, *Mein Kampf* clearly spells out Hitler's ambitions for a Europe ruled by Germany. Within *Mein Kampf*, Hitler studies the issues of communism, race, and Germany's right to defend itself in Great War.

While sources such as *Mein Kampf* still offer the best view into the mind of Hitler, Robert Cecil in *Hitler's Decision to Invade Russia 1941*, examines the content of war diaries written by the OKH, Oberkommando der Heeres, and the OKW, Oberkommando der *Wehrmacht*. These organizations were the High Command of the German Army and the Armed Forces High Command, which included all branches of the German military. These offer full accounts as to what was said during the period of Operation Barbarossa's planning. However, problems still remain with how to interpret the evidence supplied. Cecil states that,

The historian's problem is aggravated by the fact that, although there are so many authentic accounts of what Hitler said...his remarks can seldom be taken at face value; each requires to be evaluated in its own context, since Hitler was always conscious of his historic role and defending it before some future court of world opinion.²⁰

¹⁹ Shmuel Krakowski, *Chełmno A Small Village in Europe: The First Nazi Mass Extermination Camp*, Trans. Ralph Mandel (Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Vashem, 2009), 8.

²⁰ Robert Cecil. *Hitler's Decision in Invade Russia 1941* (London, UK: Davis Poynter, 1975), 177.

Cecil also examines the military, economic, and the political planning of Operation Barbarossa and the lessons that Hitler and his staff supposedly took from Germany's defeat in Great War. Hitler and his Generals concluded that Germany should never again become involved in a two-front war. Yet, by the time Operation Barbarossa was initiated, the war had already become a two-front campaign. In addition, Hitler failed to recognize the importance of inducting the entire German population into a state of total warfare. Instead, he chose to allow German citizens to enjoy the benefits of a succession of quick victories.²¹

Although the interpretation of historical documents can be troublesome for historians, they still offer the only means of accurately determining how and why events of the past took place. In *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol 3, Foreign Policy, War, and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader*, Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham examine the development of Germany's foreign policy from 1919 to 1945. Noakes and Pridham use archival sources in the form of state documents, speeches, letters, and both published and unpublished works. The book also includes detailed documented accounts of Germany's quest for the conquest of the Soviet Union, occupation policies, euthanasia programme, and the transition between persecution and the systematic elimination of the Jews.

Nazi ideology demanded that the war against the Jews and the Soviets be treated as a single combined conflict. When people speak of the Holocaust, many recall the death camps, which were spread throughout Poland, and the number of victims which passed through Jewish ghettos. Nevertheless, we often forget that the Soviet Jewry were the first Jews to face the Nazi extermination campaign. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, by Yitzhak Arad, examines the link between Operation Barbarossa and the extermination of Jews within the Soviet Union, Soviet

²¹ Ibid., 137.

Republics; such as Belorussia and Ukraine, and countries within the Baltic States. Arad states that the campaign against the Jews,

...started with the first days of German invasion, on June 22, 1941, and lasted until German capitulation on May 8, 1945. The extermination of the Soviet Jews was part of the ideological and physical preparations for Operation Barbarossa...²²

Arad bases his study around a combination of German, Soviet, and Jewish archival sources.

Among these, the sources gained from newly opened Soviet archives in the late 1980's and early 1990's proved to be essential to Arad's study. These archives released records of events during the German occupation of Soviet territories, documents kept in the Communist Party archives, and Soviet military archives. These included trials of war criminals which would help support Jewish testimonies and written dairies.²³

Similar to Arad, Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess in *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators* also discuss the murder of Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union. He debunks the myth that German civilians were unaware that Jews were being executed. He does this by providing archival documents such as diaries, letters, and statements by both civilians and military personnel detailing their observations. More importantly, Klee displays archival pictures taken of German soldiers, executions, and the civilians who watched on while Jews were being executed. However, Klee's objective is not to paint German soldiers as mindless killing machines. Klee states that, "These pictures do not portray fanatics...but perpetrators performing their 'work' and who afterwards...enjoyed a few beers in their free time."²⁴ These themes relate directly the subject of this thesis. Klee, Dressen, and Riess's work

²² Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 527.

²³ *Ibid.*, xiii.

²⁴ Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., "*The Good Old Days*" *The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, forward. Hugh Trevor-Roper, trans. Deborah Burnstone (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991), xvii

aid in examining how far the Nazis were willing to go in order to achieve their racial war aims. This includes testimonies from those who worked at Auschwitz for the sake of annihilating the victims who would call the camps “home.”

Before Auschwitz could become an infamous camp of murder, their first needed to exist a bureaucracy which could implement Nazi ideals. In *Architects of Annihilation*, Götz Aly and Susanne Heim examine the legend of Auschwitz. They connect the links between Germany’s politics of modernization and politics of annihilation. Using this bureaucratic viewpoint the authors examine how Auschwitz came to be. It stands that the murder of millions of Jews could have never taken place without the appropriate bureaucratic support from the Nazi government. Jews first had to be removed from both the eyes and minds of German society before they could be exterminated.

Similar to *Architects of Annihilation*, Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* examine the extermination camp from the ground up. This includes viewing Auschwitz under a “depoliticized” lens, and approaching the topic from a multidisciplinary perspective. To obtain a complete exploration of Auschwitz, Gutman and Berenbaum state, “...Auschwitz is not the province of historians alone...For example, while historians may document medical experimentation at Auschwitz, only physicians can evaluate the scientific validity of such experimentation...”²⁵ Gutman and Berenbaum also examine Auschwitz as both as an institution, a mechanism of destruction, the camp’s staff, and the fate of the Jews who arrived at the camp, including those who were victimized by Nazi doctors through experimentation. This work directly benefits this thesis through its thorough assessment everything related to Auschwitz and both its creation and destruction.

²⁵ Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, Ed., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), vii.

In conclusion, the above scholarships contribute to the nature of this study through the use of both primary sources and secondary literature. Due to the lack of access to primary source material, it became necessary to use sources which were already collected and translated by other historians. In addition, these sources also facilitate the understanding of the last twenty-eight years of German scholarship on the Eastern Front. Although sources like *Mein Kampf* and *Nazism 1919-1945* supply a vast amount of primary source material, more is needed in order to complete the scope of this study. The critical nature of these issues has been minimized by using translated primary sources which can be found within the above scholarship. Among these, the scholarship of Kay, Rutherford, Stahel, Browning, Bartov, Neitzel, Welzer, Arad, Klee, Dressen, and Riess have been instrumental in their assessment and accumulation of German, Jewish, and Soviet primary documents.

What makes this study unique is the way in which the Eastern Front is being analyzed. Many historians have written works on Operation Barbarossa and its connection to Nazi ideology, the Final Solution, and Germany's misuse of manpower. Likewise, many historians have also written works which examine the mindset and behavior of German soldiers that fought on the Eastern Front. Though, few have dedicated the entirety of their work towards assessing the actual nature of how Germany managed its manpower while Barbarossa was in full effect and how Nazi ideology directly contributed to a misuse of manpower.

CHAPTER 1

Nazi Ideology: The Pursuit of War Aims in the Soviet Union, 1941

From September 1, 1939 to September 2, 1945 the world was once again consumed by war. World War II included combat across all of Europe, Asia, North Africa, islands throughout the Pacific and around Australia, and North America through the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In the aftermath of the Great War, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, Germany's leaders vowed that their nation would never again engage in a war on two fronts. This occurred during Germany's attempt to penetrate French and British trenches on the Western Front while fighting against the Russians on the Eastern Front. However, by 1941 the NSDAP, or National Socialist German Workers' Party, had already committed resources to invading the Soviet Union without finishing the war with Britain. In order for the Nazis to create the world they desired, the USSR would need to be conquered, its people enslaved, and its lands prepped to support the agricultural needs of the German Empire. Hitler saw the conquest of the Soviet Union as his ultimate goal, which coincided with the elimination of the Jews. Operation Barbarossa was to be Hitler's first step towards achieving his war aims in The Soviet Union. However, rather than waiting for the operation's completion Hitler opted for an immediate two pronged engagement. Essentially, Germany would wage war against both the Red Army and innocent civilians living throughout The Soviet Union in the name of Nazi ideology. Considering the poor day-by-day planning of Operation Barbarossa, Germany could not afford to dedicate resources to the pursuit of racial aims. This in turn would cause Germany to misuse considerable amounts of manpower during the initial phases of Operation Barbarossa. This chapter will examine the development of Operation Barbarossa and its relation to the origins and nature of Nazi ideology in dealing with the "Jewish Question."

Why are the years 1941-43 vital to the understanding of Hitler's racial aims for Jews living in Europe and the Soviet Union? Was mass murder always an option favored by Nazi Germany? As historians have discovered, in mid-March of 1942, 75% to 80% of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while only 20% to 25% had perished.²⁶ Although the initial phase of mass murder against Jews occurred in the Soviet Union during the summer and fall of 1941, the vast majority of European Jewry; especially those living in Poland, were still alive. Nevertheless, by mid-February 1943 the percentages of surviving Jews would be reversed.²⁷ This fact implicates two things. First, initially the Nazis were unsure of how they would deal with the Jews living in Europe. According the most recent census figures, approximately 3,115,000 Jews were living in Poland by 1939. Of these 3.1 million Jews, 61% lived within the General Government, or areas of Poland that were annexed into Germany.²⁸ With such a large population, it would have been impossible for the Nazis to immediately initiate the mass murder of Polish Jews; especially while sharing portions of Poland with the Soviet Union. At the time Germany simply lacked the means to commit to the systematic elimination of European Jewry and remained committed to exploring other options.

In December of 1938, French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet informed Joachim von Ribbentrop, Germany's Foreign Minister, of his Madagascar plan. This plan would call for 10,000 Jewish refugees living in France to be deported to the island off the coast of Africa. On July 3, 1940, this idea was once again taken into consideration by Franz Rademacher, an official in the German Foreign Ministry's Department for Internal German Affairs.²⁹ These facts, also known as the Functionalist view; suggest that Hitler's path towards the Final Solution took many

²⁶ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, xv.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xv, 9.

²⁸ Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3 Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter, UK: Exeter University Publications, 1988), 1050.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1075.

detours before its implementation in 1942. In 1939 and early 1940 the option of deportation was a popular method in dealing with Jews living within German-occupied Poland. Thousands of Jews were expelled across the border into Soviet-occupied Poland by the Germans after November 1939. Nonetheless, upon capture Soviet patrols promptly sent the expelled Jews back across the border. At the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Zvi Pakhter, a member of a group of two thousand Jewish men expelled from the city of Chelm, testified,

It was before the river Bug...When it grew dark they told us that we were to advance toward the border, where there was a bridge...When we arrived at the Soviet side we were returned to the area of general government...At about 10 o'clock in the evening, the Germans turned up again and hurried us across the border.³⁰

This testimony suggests that Germany's plans for dealing with the Jewish population in Poland were far from concrete.

Hitler also needed to find a balance between the goals of Nazi ideology and the goals of the military before he could commit to any large-scale extermination. In order for Germany to realize Hitler's plan for a Third Reich, certain obstacles needed to be removed. Primarily, Hitler needed to declare war on the Soviet Union. Hitler theorized that by eliminating the Soviet Union early on, Britain would have no hope of resisting against the might of the German Army. In addition, a conquered Soviet Union would supply Germany with the food, oil, and slave labor needed to insure Germany's survival as a world power. However, Hitler would only wage war against The Soviet Union once the conditions were favorable.

The Nazi-Soviet Non Aggression Pact was signed by Germany on August 23, 1939 with the intention of buying time to prepare for a Soviet invasion. Once Germany was ready, Soviet forces would then be pushed out of Poland, the Baltic States, Belorussia, the Ukraine, and

³⁰ Zvi Pakhter, *The Eichmann Trial, Testimonies*, A:53-54, quoted in, Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 44.

eventually back towards the Volga River. The launch of Operation Barbarossa would accompany the immediate executions of both Jews and Russians living within the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Historians know this due to the issuing of the Commissar Order, which called for the murder of political commissars of all types, by the OKH and the OKW. Though, this would not spell the immediate doom of Jews living in Europe.³¹

Following France's defeat in June 1940, Hitler released his *Directive No. 21*, which called for the *Wehrmacht* and the *Luftwaffe* to prepare for an invasion of the Soviet Union. While this directive made clear Hitler's intentions towards the Soviet Union, it would be the later directives that would transparently demonstrate a fierce change within German foreign policy. On March 13, 1941, Hitler issued an amendment to Directive No. 21 entitled, *Guidelines in Special Fields Concerning Directive No. 21*. This change in policy granted the SS complete freedom to operate on its own authority against the Soviets. It legally protected the SS from the power of military courts and control. Essentially, this meant the SS could bypass both military and international law in its treatment of prisoners or civilians during Operation Barbarossa. Later, on May 13th Hitler issued the *Decree on the Exercise of Martial Jurisdiction*. This directive granted the same freedoms the SS enjoyed from military law to common soldiers. Under *Martial Jurisdiction* soldiers could now shoot civilians they suspected of committing war "crimes" against Germany. On May 19th Hitler issued yet another directive entitled, *Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia*. This order called for a clampdown on Jews and other targeted groups living within the newly occupied German zones. Lastly, Hitler issued his June 6th Commissar Order, which called for the rapid and hateful executions of Soviet Commissars

³¹ "Commissar Order June 6, 1941," Documents – The Military, Foreign Policy, and War, accessed November 9, 2014, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1548

upon capture. The order allowed German soldiers to ignore the terms of the Hague Convention and execute lawful enemy combatants.³²

When historians examine the Nazi regulations issued in the spring and early summer of 1941, a pattern of newly formed radicalization begins to emerge. One may argue that in freeing German soldiers from the bindings of international law, Hitler destroyed the core of the German military's authority and discipline. German soldiers were essentially granted permission to kill innocent civilians and prisoners without fear of punishment. For these reasons, the years 1941-43 should be studied thoroughly. In addition, it is in the summer and fall of 1941 that Hitler began to initiate the extermination phase of his Final Solution to the "Jewish Question." It is also in 1941 that historians see the radicalization of the German Army towards acceptable murder against Russian prisoners and civilians. It is likely that the revulsion Hitler felt towards those of Slavic descent directly contributed to the decision to kill Russian Jews early on in the initial stages of Barbarossa.

Was hatred the only factor, however? Based on recorded conversations between German POWs, historians concluded that although many Germans searched for reasons to justify the killing of Jews in Russia, some felt that the action needed no justification. Neitzel and Welzer asserted that, "Hatred is enough of a spark, without any further motivation..."³³ Although Neitzel and Welzer also concluded that ideology did not prominently occupy the minds of soldiers; it seems that it did, nevertheless, play some form of a role within the thought process and actions of *some* POWs. Ideas of National Socialism would have been ingrained into the already militaristic minds of many German soldiers and civilians the moment Hitler consolidated

³² Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds., *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 296.

³³ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 228.

his power as Führer. Although, some may argue that German soldiers had no choice in the matter and that they took part in the killings unwillingly.

However, is this truth or simple myth? The notion that members of the *Einsatzgruppen*, SD, Security Police, and other branches of the military were forced to take part in the executions of Jews living in Europe and the Soviet Union is a major misconception. Nowhere have historians discovered evidence of German soldiers being executed for refusing to take part in the mass killings of Jews. Evidence gathered by historians tends to point towards the opposite; that German soldiers retained the right to refuse orders to participate in the killings of Jews if they chose to. Naturally, some soldiers did in fact choose to take part in the killings willingly, simply because they could. A statement from a police official from the Neu-Sandez *Grenzpolizeikommissariat* located in Cracow, Poland, indicated that, “Members of the *Grenzpolizeikommissariat* were, with a few exceptions, quite happy to take part in shootings of Jews. They had a ball!”³⁴ Clearly, this statement demonstrates that there were Germans who not only participated in the killing of Jews willingly, but also took joy in doing so. Likewise, just as there were soldiers who participated in the mass killings, there were also those who chose not to. A statement made by SS *Oberführer*, Professor Dr. Franz Six of *Einsatzgruppe B* indicated, “During the war a person could at least try to have himself transferred from an *Einsatzgruppe*. I myself managed to do this successfully...As far as I know, nobody was shot as a result.”³⁵ Statements such as these from members of the *Einsatzgruppen* as well as various divisions of Police Battalions all indicate that one could refuse orders to exterminate Jews without facing penalty of death or imprisonment.

³⁴ Klee, Dressen, and Riess, eds., “*The Good Old Days*”, 76.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

Another popular myth behind Jewish killings suggests that the *Wehrmacht* took no part in the executions of Jews. Myths such as these would suggest that only the divisions of the SS actively killed Jews living throughout The Soviet Union and Europe. Although this very issue continues to inspire debate, this too is a misconception. Historians assert that through surveillance protocols, many soldiers revealed that they were well aware of the specific details of the extermination of European Jews. Soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* were among those who committed war crimes against Jews throughout occupied Europe as executioners, witnesses, accomplices, support workers, and commentators.³⁶ Historian Christopher Browning also supports these notions. He cites the murdering of male Jews in Serbia during the fall of 1941 as a prime example of how Jews were treated differently from their Serb counterparts. Browning asserts that,

It is my contention that although these shootings were carried out within the framework of a reprisal policy developed in response to the partisan uprising and were not part of the European-wide genocide program...the *Wehrmacht* in fact dealt with Jewish hostages differently than with the Serbs solely because they were Jews. The resulting massacre of the Jews was primarily the responsibility of the military commanders in Serbia, not the local SS, Wilhelm Keitel and the OKW, or central authorities in Berlin.³⁷

However, incidents such as these along with evidence from surveillance protocols do not suggest that soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* were all mindless killers of civilians. On rare occasions, individual *Wehrmacht* officers stepped forward to disrupt the mass killings by registering complaints, saving victims, and even threatening the SS with violence.³⁸ These incidents of mercy, nonetheless, do not excuse the soldiers which actively took part in the mass killings of Jews. Regardless of whether or not these soldiers were influenced by Nazi ideology, by taking part in the killings they contributed to completing the Final Solution.

³⁶ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 99-100.

³⁷ Browning, *Fateful Months*, 39.

³⁸ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 100.

The goal of Hitler's Final Solution was to ensure that only the "fittest" humans lived to populate the Third Reich. Hitler saw the Jews, Slavic peoples, and the mentally disabled as hindrances to the population of healthy German workers. Where did this brand of ideology originate? Did Hitler always view the Jews and other peoples with such contempt? To answer these questions, historians must first examine the mindset of Hitler going back to 1914 and up to the early 1920's.

As a young man, the enthusiasm Hitler felt towards what be called "The Great War" was unparalleled. The upcoming war would offer the perfect chance for one to grasp hold of recognition and glory. Historians know that although Hitler was eager to fight, he opposed the idea of fighting among Austrians, his fellow brothers. In order to avoid being targeted by the Austrian draft, Hitler allegedly volunteered to serve in the Bavarian Army. By September 1, 1914, Hitler was transferred to the 1st Company of the List Regiment.³⁹ Historians now know that much of Hitler's self-proclaimed achievements during the war were greatly embellished. Hitler claimed to stand as the bravest and strongest among his fellow shoulders. For example, on October 29, 1914, Hitler later claimed that he stood as the sole survivor during his first battle in Belgium. He stated that the company had lost all of its officers, and that he had survived the onslaught of British machine guns due to his superior combat abilities. In actuality on the 29th, 1st Company had only lost 13 men. In addition, Hitler had been rejected for military service by Austrian authorities a year prior to the war's outbreak. This was due to his poor physique. When combined with a scanty two month period of training it seems unlikely that Hitler survived solely due to his own abilities.⁴⁰

³⁹ Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, The Men of the List Regiment, and The First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

By Christmas Hitler had managed to rise within the ranks of the Bavarian Army. Due to his experience as an infantryman, and the vital fact that the List Regiment was desperately short on higher ranking soldiers, Hitler was promoted to the rank of *Gefreiter*. Thus, Hitler held a rank that equaled that of a Private in the U.S Army. His rank awarded him no authority over other soldiers.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it did allow Hitler to be assigned to regimental headquarters as a dispatch runner. According to Hitler, his new job was more dangerous than any other regimental assignment. He claimed to be a soldier who faced his assignments with bravery. This is only partly correct. As a dispatch runner, Hitler's primary duty was to take messages to the headquarters of the regiment's battalions. While doing so, Hitler faced the dangers of artillery fire. He was not, however, placed at risk from machine gun fire, rifle fire, mines, or other hazards that were synonymous with the lives of front line soldiers.⁴² Historians who cite Hitler's obtainment of the Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Class awards as proof of his bravery are only partially accurate. The Iron Cross did stand for a symbol of bravery in battle. But, it also signified how well connected soldiers were to regimental headquarters. Iron Crosses usually were given directly to officers, or soldiers who were familiar with the officers who held the authority to nominate others for the award. The closer a soldier, or officer, was to headquarters, the greater his chances were of receiving an Iron Cross. Likewise, soldiers who fought on the front lines, far from headquarters, were less likely to receive the award. Thus, it is impossible to judge Hitler self-proclaimed bravery simply by his obtainment of the Iron Crosses.⁴³

What historians now see is a man, who upon achieving power, altered details of his military service for the sake of propaganda. Similarly, Hitler did the same with respect to his notions of anti-Semitism. The Hitler of the 1920's claimed that he had always been a stark

⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

⁴² Ibid., 95-96.

⁴³ Ibid., 97.

believer in the “inferiority” of Jews. If this is true, logic would deduce that Hitler displayed anti-Semitic behavior towards the Jews serving within his own regiment. The sight of Jews within the army, especially the Bavarian Army, was common. In 1909 the Bavarian Army employed 88 Jewish officers and 182 in 1910.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Hitler claimed that by 1916, the List Regiment, German society, and he were stark followers of anti-Semitism. In regards to German society, in 1916 claims that the Jews were not pulling their weight spread across all of Germany. German officials believed that the Jew’s lack of participation in the war made them responsible for its negative outcome. In October 1916 a Jewish census was completed and displayed that, within Hitler’s regiment, 30% of all Jews had been honored for their bravery in battle. Further calculations, which were completed after the war, asserted that the numbers of Jews serving within the German armed forces was nearly identical to the number of gentiles.⁴⁵ Thus, the Jews could not be blamed *officially* for not contributing towards the war effort.

With regards to the List Regiment and German armed forces in general, historians know that notions anti-Semitism were not a central feature of the German military. German armed forces attempted to show consideration to its Jewish soldiers by allowing them to take part in Jewish holidays while on the front. On the Eastern Front, even as German forces encountered large Jewish populations in Poland and the Baltic, the majority of German soldiers shunned anti-Semitism and saw themselves as liberators.⁴⁶ Within Hitler’s own regiment, 59 Jews served during the war. Historians have found no evidence among the regimental papers of the List Regiment that suggest any Jewish soldiers were subject to anti-Semitism. In addition, 12% of the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 173-174.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 135-176.

Jews within Hitler's regiment served as officers.⁴⁷ Thus, it would have been rare to see lower ranking soldiers engaging in anti-Semitic behavior towards superior officers.

One of the most notable Jewish figures, whom Hitler knew well, was Hugo Gutmann. Considered one of Nuremberg's educated elite, Gutmann was promoted to *Lieutenant of the Landwehr 1st Class* upon being transferred into Hitler's Reserve Infantry Regiment No.16. By January 1916 Gutmann was awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class and praised for his prudent conduct during the Battle of Loos. Gutmann received constant praise from his superiors. Among these was Commander of 3rd Battalion Wilhelm von Lünenschloß, who desired to award Gutmann with a medal that transcended the Iron Cross.⁴⁸ Gutmann himself would later be the one to award Hitler his own Iron Cross. If Hitler was indeed an anti-Semitic and expressed his ideas openly, it is doubtful that Gutmann would have chosen to back Hitler's recognition for the Iron Cross.

Historians have discovered no contemporary evidence, which recorded Hitler ever expressing anti-Semitic behavior towards the Jews in his regiment. Nevertheless, three hagiographical accounts by former comrades Balthasa Brandmayer, Hans Mend, and Ignaz Westenkirchner were published in the 1930's. These accounts comply completely with Hitler's anti-Semitic image and thus are unreliable. Brandmayer specifically contradicts himself by claiming to despise Gutmann for his Jewish heritage, but then later, claims that he felt sympathy for the plight of the Jews.⁴⁹ If Hitler's anti-Semitic ideals had taken place as early as 1916, he did not express them openly.

It is only after the Great War that historians began to see Hitler's hate for the Jews come to life. After the end of the Great War many German soldiers who had fought in defense of Germany felt betrayed. Germans felt that Jews had helped to sway public opinion against the war

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 177.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 178.

and thus, stabbed thousands of strong German soldiers in the back. Although Hitler profited greatly from this theory, it was former General Erich Ludendorff who had developed the hypothesis. He believed that the lies of Jewry and its army of Marxists were to blame for Germany's collapse. In addition, after 1918 many Germans, both civilians and soldiers, held onto the notion that Germany had not lost the war. Furthermore, many believed Germany's role within the war to be just. Within the eyes of the public, Germany had fought a defensive war against the aggressive actions of its neighbors.

Hitler in particular held firm to this belief. He viewed Germany's struggle against the Allied Powers to be honorable. Hitler refused to believe that the military's losses during Great War were the cause of Germany's collapse after the war. Hitler cited the way in which German citizens received Germany's defeat as proof that the military was not responsible.⁵⁰ Hitler remained firm in the view that the destabilizing of Germany after the war was due to the work of Jews. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler stated,

No, this military collapse was itself only the consequence of a large number of symptoms of disease and their causes, which even in peacetime were with the German nation...It required the whole bottomless falsehood of the Jews and their Marxist fighting organization to lay the blame for the collapse on that very man who alone, with superhuman energy and will power, tried to prevent the catastrophe.⁵¹

Hitler goes on to assert that through the disarmament, enslavement, political helplessness, and the sacking of the German economy, a moral spirit was produced, which forced Germans to see the Dawes Plan as a blessing.⁵²

What does Hitler mean when he describes the enslavement and political helplessness of Germany? Generally, he refers to the effects that the Treaty of Versailles had on Germany after

⁵⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 230.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 670.

the war. The Treaty of Versailles was seen to be Germany's punishment for initiating war against the major European powers. It placed unrealistic demands of reparations for Germany's loss of the war and for the suffering Britain and France had endured. In addition, the United States would need to be compensated for its support and role in the later years of the war. It also demanded the Germany completely disarm, placed restrictions on the growth of its military, and forced Germany to concede all of its colonies. It additionally demanded that Germany recognize the sovereignty of Poland and forbid Germany and Austria from uniting as one country. Specifically, article 231 of the treaty demanded that Germany accept full fault for the commencement of the war.

Naturally, many Germans felt that the treaty was unjust. Even British and American politicians voiced their concerns that the terms of the treaty were unfair. However, Hitler asserted that during his time spent as an instructor to military troops, few Germans truly understood the inhumanity of Versailles. He believed that millions of Germans saw Versailles as punishment for the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This peace treaty, signed between Germany and the Soviet Union, demanded that the USSR pay reparations for its crimes against Germany and that it concede the Baltic States. From his lectures, Hitler concluded that many German citizens had been poisoned by the destructive work of the Marxists, which had deprived the German people of common sense.⁵³ Nevertheless, as Hitler continued to deliver his comparisons between Brest-Litovsk and Versailles, he rallied many towards his method of thinking. Thus, Hitler gained experience in speaking to the masses on political issues.

This experience would continue to multiply after Hitler joined the German Workers Party, or *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*. As a member of the party, Hitler began to organize his ideological beliefs until the party transformed into the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche*

⁵³ Ibid., 464.

Arbeiterpartei, or NSDAP. Among these, which would strengthen Hitler's ideology against Slavs and Jews, were his beliefs on people and race. Hitler believed that it was the will of nature that creatures mate within their own species. He theorized that one's blood was sacred and that repeated mating with those of inferior bloodlines would bring forth racial decline.⁵⁴ For example, Hitler cites differences between the German immigrants to North America versus the immigrants of Central and South America. According to *Mein Kampf*, the Germans of North America became the masters of their land due to their racial purity and refusal to mix with the, "lower colored peoples." However, Latin immigrants often mixed blood with the local aborigines and as a result, suffered from physical and intellectual regression.⁵⁵

Although these ideas might appear to be the ravings of a mad man, they do give insight into Hitler's thought process. Hitler's views on the relationship between Germany, The Soviet Union, and the failures of foreign policy were no different. Hitler argued that for a nation to be considered a world power, it needed a significantly large space to occupy which would guarantee the nation's survival.⁵⁶ Essentially, expansionism was the defining key feature which would determine the how long an empire would reign. During the early 1920's, Hitler asserted through *Mein Kampf* that even if Germany managed to overcome the weaknesses within its military, it would never be able to claim the title of a world power. This was due to the fact that at the time Germany's territory covered about 500,000 square kilometers.⁵⁷

Regarding the Soviet Union, Hitler considered the Slavic state to be a danger to Germany's survival. In 1914, Imperial Germany feared that if given the chance to industrialize, the Soviet Union would completely destroy the German state. Hitler's fears were similar, yet

⁵⁴ Ibid., 389.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 286.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 643.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 644.

based exclusively around his own ideology rather than Russia's potential to go to war. Hitler believed that Russia's conversion to Bolshevism eliminated the presence of German intelligentsia, who had allegedly created the Soviet state. In addition, Hitler feared in the 1920's that the presence of German elites within the USSR would be completely replaced by Jews.⁵⁸ Hitler then concluded that it would be impossible for the Russians to rid themselves of the Jewish presence. Thus, the eventual end of the Jew's domination in Russia would additionally spell the end of the Soviet state.⁵⁹ Hitler believed that it was the nature of Jews to topple established empires, and if allowed, Germany would meet a similar fate. Due to the lack of Germanic influence within the USSR, Hitler also concluded that the two could never become allies in a fight against Western powers such as France and Britain. The Soviet Union's inability to industrialize would result in Russia depending on Germany for support, rather than contributing equally to the war effort. In addition, Germany would have never been able to fully trust a Soviet-German alliance. Hitler considered Russia's new Bolshevik leaders to be the "...scum of humanity"⁶⁰ for the role they had played in toppling Russia's intelligentsia. When one combined the violence of the Bolsheviks with the poisonous tongues of Jews, Hitler concluded that Russia's ultimate goal could only be world domination.

Again, although these ideas might appear to be the ravings of a mad man, they do give insight into just how much Hitler feared the alleged strength of Russian Bolsheviks and Jews. One could argue that Hitler's own fears regarding race are what led Jews in The USSR to perish before their European counterparts. Hitler saw the Russian Jew as the ultimate threat to his budding empire. To prevent them from escaping, he activated the extermination phase of his Final Solution. However, as historians have discovered, Hitler was not solely responsible for the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 654-655.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 655.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 660.

elimination of the Jews. His fears and ideas were shared by both German soldiers and civilians alike. Although some of these individuals refused to support, or take part in the Final Solution, a great number of both soldiers and civilians did.

Historians such as Neitzel, Welzer, Daniel Goldhagen, and Christopher Browning support the notion that German soldiers often voluntarily took part in the killings of Jews without receiving orders to do so. Neitzel and Welzer cite the mid-November 1942 incident involving a Berlin police unit comprised of musicians as a prime example. The police unit was ordered to entertain soldiers on the front, and so, traveled to Luckow, Germany. Upon reaching the town the police unit requested to take part in executing Jews. Their request was granted and the musicians spent the following day murdering innocent people.⁶¹ These executions often drew the attention of locals, *Wehrmacht* soldiers, and members of civilian administration who would come to observe the spectacle. During one such execution, A Major Rösler stated that he observed, “Soldiers and civilians...pouring in from all directions...Soldiers, some clad only in bathing trunks, congregated in small groups. And civilians, among them women and children, looked on.”⁶²

Whether these individuals flocked to the execution out of curiosity or hate for the Jews is irrelevant. By taking part, they unconsciously or perhaps consciously supported the Final Solution. Nazi ideology would have been present within local German newspapers from 1933 and onwards. Thus, German civilians would have been exposed to theories of Jewish inferiority and the dangers that Jews posed to German society. Propaganda was one area that the Nazi's took great pride in. This same ideology would be used to aid Hitler and his staff in planning for Operation Barbarossa.

⁶¹ Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 136.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 137.

Since the fall of France in 1940, Hitler had begun to plan for an invasion of the USSR. The initial phase of the invasion would require a massive, quick moving force to secure the numerous territories lining the Soviet border. The invasion would be carried out by three army groups in order to achieve Hitler's targets. These army groups would in turn divide German armor among themselves to form the spearhead of the assault. The invasion would also require a simple, yet fool proof plan in order for the operation to succeed.

Historian David Stahel described Barbarossa as, "A problematic enterprise based on poor intelligence and an erroneous understanding of warfare in Eastern Europe."⁶³ He cited Germany's inability to learn from the mistakes of Charles XII of Sweden and Napoleon during their failed invasions into Eastern Europe. Strategically, the goal of Operation Barbarossa lay in eliminating Soviet resistance. This would be accomplished by classical quick encirclements of the enemy, which had worked well in past campaigns. Though in the USSR, this would require multiple operations of the same kind over greater stretches of land. Thus, the operations would take a quicker toll on German resources. Due to misled faith in the operation's initial success, Stahel asserts that by the end of July; the planning of the war was still being improvised on a day to day basis. By the time Kiev had fallen in September of 1941, the German Army had yet to achieve any decisive victories that would spell the end of Soviet resistance.⁶⁴ Although the Soviets were steadily being pushed back across their own border and Soviet POWs were being taken, resistance remained strong. This was done while Hitler still refused to initiate total warfare on the German economy prior to the launch of Barbarossa.

If Germany's leaders had begun to plan Barbarossa in 1940, why were the Germans running into logistical problems at the beginning of the operation in 1941? To answer this

⁶³ Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds., *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

question, historians must examine the history of past German campaigns in addition to the actual planning of Barbarossa. In Germany's campaigns against Poland and Western Europe, victories were quickly achieved despite the relatively inferior numbers and quality of German armor. On May 10, 1940, the *Wehrmacht* sent 2,445 of its 3,505 available tanks against a combination of 3,383 French, British, Belgium, and Dutch tanks. In addition, out of the tanks deployed by Germany, only about 725 at the time consisted of the newer Panzer III and IV models, which still had difficulties confronting heavy French tanks.⁶⁵ Germany's victory, despite the weakness of its armor divisions, lay in its ability to utilize its armor in a fashion the Allies had not discovered. German Panzer divisions were grouped together to form powerful spearheads, which were capable of penetrating deeply into enemy territory. When combined with the support of the Luftwaffe, Germany was able to easily spread chaos among the Western lines before the inherent weaknesses of its Blitzkrieg could be exploited.

The use of Blitzkrieg tactics can be represented as a double-edged sword. While one gains the ability to smash through enemy defenses at lightning speed, the following infantry units face vulnerability. Should the enemy be able to reorganize its forces, the infantry face the risk of being cut off from the armor. In addition, the use of Blitzkrieg often jeopardizes the safety of supply routes, which armor groups depend on for mobilization. Essentially, Blitzkrieg is a high-risk method of fighting which offers great rewards should it succeed on the battle field.

The nature of Germany's quick victory over France led Hitler to believe that that he was a military genius of sorts. However, after the failure to secure overall victory in the West, the OKH and OKW objected to the notion of a Soviet invasion. The Generals recognized that a two front war would be disastrous for Germany. Nevertheless, as Hitler remained adamant, the need to begin formulating a coherent plan emerged. The first operational study for the OKH was

⁶⁵ Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 12-13.

produced by *Generalmajor* Erich Marcks. The report was filled with outdated information. It assumed that the strategic objectives of the campaign could be achieved. Any future problems could be ironed out at a later time, or by field commanders during the campaign.⁶⁶ In November 1940, the chief of the Army General Staff, *Generaloberst* Franz Halder, met with the army quartermaster general, *Generalmajor* Eduard Wagner. Halder intended to discuss planning for the logistical support of Barbarossa. Wagner concluded that based on the plan of keeping roughly 2,000,000 men, 300,000 horses and 500,000 vehicles supplied, that the army groups would only be able to advance at maximum between 700 and 800 kilometers. This would be roughly between 435 and 497 miles. In addition, Wager predicted the German Army would only have enough food and ammunition to last for the first 20 days of the campaign.⁶⁷

In addition to logistical problems, the OKH indirectly disagreed with Hitler on how the army groups should be used after the initial encirclements. In the second phase of Barbarossa, Hitler wanted Army Group Center to march on Leningrad alongside Army Group North. Hitler desired to destroy what he viewed to be the center of bolshevism. However, *Generalfeldmarschall* Walther von Brauchitsch and Franz Halder disagreed. Considering that Army Group Center was the strongest out of the three army groups, the Generals deemed it logical for Army Group Center to attack Moscow. They believed that the capital was vital to Soviet power in the USSR.⁶⁸ Although the Generals chose to remain silent on the issue when standing in the presence of Hitler, throughout the planning stages there existed severe differences of opinion between Hitler and OKH.

These differences of opinion were not the only problems associated with the planning of Barbarossa. By the end of January 1941, the OKW remained oblivious to the fighting strength of

⁶⁶ Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds., *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the Red Army. They assumed that the Red Army would have 121 infantry Divisions, 25 cavalry divisions, and 31 mechanized brigades. These numbers were far from concrete, though. They continued to rise even as Hitler's objectives for Barbarossa remained ambiguous.⁶⁹ Hitler could not be swayed towards logic. After the fall of France, he began to ignore all forms of council from his General Staff that did not support his own beliefs. Ideology aside, Hitler believed that it would be impossible for the Red Army to defeat a German invasion due to Stalin's purges of the Red Army's officer corps. From 1937-38, it is estimated that between 20,000 and 25,000 officers within the Red Army were removed. By the end of 1938, only 39% of the officers ranging from divisional commander to marshal remained.⁷⁰ Knowledge of these facts united Hitler and his General staff in the belief that a German victory was inevitable.

Although Hitler's General Staff agreed that a victory against the USSR was assured, Hitler still needed to prepare the *Wehrmacht* for the task before them. On March 30, 1941, Hitler addressed both army group and army commanders of the Ostheer, or Eastern Army, in a speech delivered in Berlin's Reich Chancellery. The meeting was in regards to the Nazi directives, which would be released a month later. Hitler stressed that the war against the Soviet Union was a struggle for survival and would require an alteration from previous patterns of war.⁷¹ In addition, Hitler stated that the German Army would have to depart from the position of soldierly camaraderie. The army was to consider the Red Army as, "*vorher kein Kamerad und nachher kein Kamerad*" or, "beforehand no comrade and afterward no comrade."⁷² Nazi ideology demanded all Soviet, "criminals" be punished without mercy or hesitation. In order for this to happen, Hitler first needed to protect his army from both international and military law. Historian

⁶⁹ Cecil, *Hitler's Decision to Invade Russia 1941*, 119.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷¹ Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds., *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 74.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Felix Römer asserts that due to the commander's failure to voice any form of disagreement, an air of compliance loomed over the branches of the *Wehrmacht* and of the central offices of High Command.⁷³

On April 28, 1941, Hitler issued a directive which would forever change the shape of the *Wehrmacht*. The *Regulations on the Deployment of the Security Police and the SD in Army Formations* now required that the *Wehrmacht* and the *Einsatzgruppen* cooperate throughout Germany's campaign in the east. This union of army divisions would clear the way for the annihilation of Russian Jewry.⁷⁴ While the *Wehrmacht* worked to eliminate Soviet forces, the *Einsatzgruppen* would follow behind eliminating "criminals" as they saw fit. Thus, Nazi ideology would succeed in working its way into the heart of the German military through the application of the Criminal Orders.

However, this did not mean that forms of resistance would not come from upper levels within the army command. On June 21, 1941, the leadership of the 296th Infantry Division under *Generalmajor* Wilhelm Stremmesmann released modified regulations for the *Treatment of Enemy Civilians* in a way that would still agree with the measures listed within the *Martial Jurisdiction Decree*. Under paragraph I.4, the decree stated,

Where such measures were neglected or were not initially possible, persons suspected of criminal action will be brought at once before an officer...and will decide if they are to be shot.⁷⁵

However, the modified regulations instead ordered that,

If such measures were neglected or were not initially possible, persons suspected of criminal action are to be brought at once before an officer with the power of a dependent battalion commander. This officer will decide whether the suspect is to be shot or released.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 80.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Under the original regulations, every single officer within the battalion would have been granted the authority to initiate shootings of captured criminals. Nevertheless, under the modified regulation, only a few departmental, battalion, and regimental commanders now had the authority to initiate the shootings. Thus, the authority of Hitler's original regulation was kept intact while at the same time the responsibility for passing judgment upon captured criminals was heightened.

In addition to resistance against the *Treatment of Enemy Civilians*, the Commissar Order also met with similar disapproval. *Generalleutnant* John Ansat, commander of the 102nd Infantry Division, expressed rage in his soldiers becoming, "...hangman's assistants"⁷⁷ and directly forbade his troops to carry out shootings of captured commissars. Instead, he ordered that political officers be separated upon capture and delivered to units such as the *Feldgendarmerie* or the SS Commandos.⁷⁸ Above all, *Wehrmacht* commanders were concerned with the possibility of a break down of discipline among their troops if the Criminal Orders were directly followed. If discipline broke down among the soldiers, the army would be unable to function properly against the threat of the Red Army.

Tasked with the burden of overcoming the expanses of the USSR's territory was the infantry of the *Wehrmacht*. In western campaigns, the *Wehrmacht*'s policy of maintaining only a few well-equipped divisions proved effective due to the *Wehrmacht*'s ability to keep up with German armor while on the move. Once again, this was due both to the relative size of the territories Germany invaded and the Allies' inability to regroup after contact with Germany's Panzer divisions. In the East, however, the *Wehrmacht* was unable to keep up with its armored counterparts as they trekked across long distances of Russian territory. Despite the fact that the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Wehrmacht was considered to be the greatest fighting army of the time, conditions on the ground for the infantry continued to worsen as the army moved deeper into the USSR. Due to Hitler's refusal to enact total war on Germany economy, German production faced great short comings. This fact would also contribute to Germany's eventual defeat.

As discussed, the spearhead of Operation Barbarossa would be formed from the creation of three army groups. Army Group North, led by Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, would move through Lithuania and Latvia, and up towards the gates of Leningrad. Fedor von Bock would lead Army Group Center towards Smolensk, and eventually Moscow. Army Group South, led by Gern von Rundstedt, would move towards the oil rich Don Basin located in Eastern Ukraine, and eventually Stalingrad. Though, in order for the idea of Blitzkrieg to succeed, German armor would need to be divided among the three army groups. Historians suggest that in doing so, organizers of Barbarossa actually weakened the spearheads when compared to the single armored concentrations used in the West.⁷⁹

When the planning of Operation Barbarossa took place, Hitler theorized that the operation would be over relatively quickly just as Germany's invasion into France had been. However, as the Germans moved deeper into the USSR during the late summer of 1941, the length of the Eastern Front nearly doubled from 800 to 1500 miles across. This caused supply lines to extend roughly 1,000 miles towards the rear of German positions.⁸⁰ Naturally, this further divided the formations of German armor and made maintaining supply routes increasingly difficult. In addition, German trains could not cross into Russia at the beginning of the war due to different type of gages that Russian rails equipped. This meant that supplies would need to be driven to their awaiting troops. This, however, would serve as a source of great

⁷⁹ Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

frustration among German commanders. Although the Panzer divisions were given motorized supply columns, 77 infantry divisions; which made up half of the entire invasion force, relied on horse drawn wagons to ferry supplies to awaiting soldiers.⁸¹ Nevertheless, due to lack of food and spare parts for damaged vehicles, horses very often died and soldiers had no choice but to abandon their vehicles. Thus, the logistical problems of receiving supplies would have caused the German advance to halt until it could resupply. However, if the German armor could not advance, then the infantry would not be able to either and would often find themselves stranded in less than ideal environments.

As late as October 28, 1942, the commander of 16th Army's II Corps reported, "The recent rainy weather had made the roads and terrain...impassible...I know that while walking on the roads one sinks to one's knees in the mud..."⁸² As bad as conditions were for the 16th Army, the situation for six divisions stranded within the Demyansk pocket, was far worse. Between February and April 1942, 96,000 Germans found themselves encircled by the Red Army. The Luftwaffe had failed to airlift the amount of supplies needed by troops on the ground. Thus, soldiers were forced to contend with their summer uniforms and lack of food and ammunition. Bartov asserts that, "Soldiers insulated themselves from the cold with newspapers, until those too ran out..."⁸³ Primal conditions such as these were similar to the ones Germans faced during the Great War. The *Wehrmacht*, who were allegedly superior in every way to their Slavic counterparts, were now bogged down across multiple battlefields south of Leningrad.

Hitler, the OKH, and the OKW had failed on an astonishing level to predict the problems that the *Wehrmacht* would run into while conducting westernized warfare within the East. Within less than a month after Operation Barbarossa's launch, Army Group South was forced to replace

⁸¹ Ibid., 17.

⁸² Ibid., 18.

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

half of its trucks. By November, its armored component had lost so many vehicles that it declared itself unable to fight. However, it was as early as September that the Ostheer found that two-thirds of its tanks were out of commission due to either maintenance issues or a lack of fuel. As winter set in, cases of spotted fever quickly ravaged the Ostheer. In December of 1941, roughly 90,000 men became sick. About 36,434 men would die from sickness and frostbite.⁸⁴

When historians examine the numerous failures in the planning of Operation Barbarossa, special attention must be paid to the initial expectations of success. For example, although Hitler planned on reaching both Leningrad and Moscow, by that time in the invasion he envisioned most of the Soviet army already destroyed. Vast amounts of resistance were to be completely wiped out during the first encirclements of the war. For this reason, nowhere within the planning of Barbarossa did Hitler, or German High Command, simulate the results of urban combat. At best, Hitler expected only minimal resistance. This notion was directly due to the underestimating of Soviet troop strength and mobilization rates during the initial planning stages. Although the *Wehrmacht* succeeded in moving rapidly across Soviet territory within the first few months of the war, the Red Army had not been destroyed. Thus, the operation was bound to take longer than originally expected. Soviet forces would fight desperately in order to hold onto their defensive positions around cities and towns.

On July 16, 1941, the *Wehrmacht* easily broke through the defenses of Smolensk. The defending Soviet forces were made up of the remainders of the Soviet 34th Rifle Corps and NKVD, or Communist Secret Police, units. Together, the Soviet forces quickly barricaded the streets and fortified the houses within the city. Choosing to avoid as much urban fighting as possible, German forces opted to maneuver around the city while destroying Soviet artillery batteries to the south. This went on until the Germans were able to approach the city from the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 20, 24.

southeast, thus enabling them to catch the Soviets off guard. Within two days, the Germans were able to claim victory, but would still have to cleanse Smolensk of its defenders.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, not all urban centers would fall as easily. In the attempt to take the city of Mogilev, Germany's 23rd Division alone lost 264 men, and another 1,088 to injuries. The 67th Infantry Regiment lost all of its officers and two-thirds of its men.⁸⁶ As the invasion progressed, Germans would continue to lose men in higher numbers due to the unavoidable nature of urban fighting and their lack of training for such combat.

With such resistance, one might ask why not simply bypass Soviet cities, or leave the occupants to starve by encircling the cities while laying siege to them? In the USSR, such options did not exist for most urban cities with exception to Leningrad. The Soviet traffic system was largely focused on communication lines between cities. For this reason, there were few connections between these points. In addition, in order for German forces to cross the majority of rivers throughout the USSR, they would have to take the cities that the bridges were found in. However, as the Germans quickly discovered, the Soviets would do anything to defend their cities; even if it meant destroying their own infrastructure. At the battle for Kiev, the Soviets used all manner of explosives to slow the German advance. After five days of attempted fire control by the German 29th Corps, it took two infantry units a week to search for other cleverly hidden explosives.⁸⁷

This in turn exposed a vital flaw within the design of the German Army. The German Army had been designed with speed in mind. The purpose of Panzer divisions was to smash through the lines of enemy defenses, leaving them in a state of confusion. This advantage could not be used within the urban environment of a city. As history has shown, the advantage in any

⁸⁵ Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds., *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 52.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 52-53

battle always goes to the defending force. In an urban environment, a defender could easily render mobile invasion powerless through the use of street barricades, mines, and other hindrances. In the case of the Germans, when a mobile advance would halt for support from the infantry, the Soviets would gain a vital opportunity to strengthen their defenses while gathering reinforcements.⁸⁸

In conclusion, how can one analyze Hitler's decision to invade the USSR despite the logistical problems that presented themselves during Barbarossa's planning? Why did Hitler choose to pursue his racial aim to eliminate the Jews living in the Soviet Union before the nation, and its people, were fully conquered? This study would suggest that Nazi ideology served as both Hitler's greatest strength, and his greatest weakness. It was exercised excessively for the sake of correcting the mistakes Germany had made after the Great War. In the political uncertainty that was Weimar Germany, Hitler and his Nazi's offered light to an otherwise bleak future. Germans had suffered physically and financially due to the excessive reparations demanded in the Treaty of Versailles. The Dawes Plan, which was crafted by American bankers to "aid" Germany in paying back its loans to Britain and France, insured that Germany would forever be locked in a state of debt. In addition, the Great Depression brought about the highest rates of hyperinflation and unemployment the German state had ever seen. The suffering that Germans endured was the result of Germany's economy being supported by American loans. Hitler and his Nazis offered hope for millions of German workers. Hitler blamed the Jews, intellectuals, and the aristocrats for the miserable conditions in which Germans found themselves in the early years after the Great War, and again during the early 1930s.

However, while Nazi ideology served as Hitler's driving force in uniting Germany under his control, it also severally limited his hindsight. After the fall of France, Hitler deemed himself

⁸⁸ Ibid., 54.

to be a military genius. His victories over France and Poland, and the success of reclaiming lost German territory proved that Hitler was the right man to lead Germany. Essentially, it also proved that Hitler's desire to directly challenge the restrictions named in the Treaty of Versailles was the correct path for Germans to follow. German propaganda painted the German military as an unstoppable force made of superior soldiers. Nonetheless, Hitler's failure to eliminate Britain from the war before opening a second front proved that he was starting to believe his own propaganda.

This observation can be seen in the manner of which Hitler, the OKH, and the OKW prepared for Barbarossa. With minimal intelligence, Hitler committed the lives of his soldiers to defeating the strength of the Red Army. He assumed that Germany would be victorious due to the superiority of German blood, and the fact that Stalin had purged significant percentages of his officer corps. Nonetheless, Hitler ignored the fact that Germany lacked the means to supply such a massive invasion. In addition, the planning of Barbarossa had come exclusively from past campaigns in the West. Hitler made no attempt to address changes that would need to be made to the German Army on an Eastern Front. However, he had found the need to address changes that would take place within the *Wehrmacht* through his Criminal Orders. Although the operation was initially successful, it lost speed quickly due to the need to resupply and the effect that Soviet weather had on roads. The Red Army was to be encircled during the initial engagements along the Soviet border, and destroyed. Nevertheless, this objective was never achieved. The longer the operation went on without accomplishing its main objective, the greater the risk German soldiers were exposed to due their poor equipment and summer uniforms.

Hitler remained fixated on completing both his objectives to conquer the USSR and to eliminate the Jews living in The Soviet Union. It is from 1941 to 1943 that historians can observe

Germany's utter failure in managing the initial phase of Barbarossa. This failure was due to the negative aspects of Nazi ideology. It blinded Hitler, and prevented him from acknowledging the capabilities of his army.

Chapter 2

Killing Grounds: The Annexed Territories of the Soviet Union and Poland, 1941-42

In the summer of 1941, Germany committed the full power of its army and air force to penetrating Soviet held territory. Despite the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact in August of 1939, Germany preceded to invade the Soviet Union for the sake of expanding its own borders and influence. The conquest of the Soviet Union had always held a special place within the mind of Hitler as early as the 1920's. Yet, at the time Hitler lacked the preparation to fight against the Red Army and win. Ironically, when the time came for Germany to invade the Soviet Union, Hitler's army still lacked the resources necessary to commit to a long-term war against the Red Army. Nonetheless, the initial success of Operation Barbarossa blinded Hitler to the realities his army faced. The Germans seized massive amounts of Soviet territory during the early months of the campaign. These gains amounted up to 450-500 kilometers on the northern front, 600 on the central front, and 300-350 on the southern front.⁸⁹ More importantly, the sheer number of Soviet troops that were captured during the initial stages of the invasion led Hitler to believe that the war was proceeding better than expected. Even Hitler's generals believed that they would face minimal resistance east of the Dvina and Dnieper Rivers. General Franz Halder, Chief of the OKH General Staff, wrote in his diary that, "...it may already be said that the aim of shattering the bulk of the Red Army...has been accomplished."⁹⁰ With the Red Army presumed to be destroyed, Hitler moved forward with his plans to eliminate both Russian civilians and Jews living within the occupied German territories. This chapter will examine the quickness in which the *Einsatzgruppen*, *Wehrmacht*, and SS murdered innocent civilians in the name of Nazi

⁸⁹ Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3*, 818.

⁹⁰ Franz Halder, *Halder Tagebuch, Vol III*, pp. 38-9, quoted in, Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3*, Ibid., 818.

ideology. It will also examine the after affects of the Wannsee Conference on Jews living throughout German controlled Europe.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, functionalist and intentionalist historians differ in their interpretations of who was ultimately responsible for the Holocaust. The functionalist view states that Hitler's path to the Final Solution was one of many curves and turns. Extermination was a concept that Nazis reached overtime. This was due to the fact that in the 1930's there was no widespread agreement on how to solve the Jewish problem. This also was in part due to the fact that in the early 1930's, issues of unemployment, a need for imports, and the weakness of the German military took precedence over dealing with Jews.⁹¹ The intentionalist view states that from commencement of the war, Hitler aimed to exterminate the Jews. Thus, responsibility for the Holocaust fell upon the shoulders of Hitler and the SS. This view ignores archival evidence which implicates the presence of the *Wehrmacht* during mass executions. Nonetheless, thanks to historians such as Christopher Browning, Omar Bartov, and Yitzhak Arad, we now know that the *Wehrmacht* actively participated in the killings of Jews throughout the territories of German occupied Soviet Union. This was simple to achieve in part due to the fact that the Red Army's defenses were shattered by Germany's armor and Luftwaffe in 1941. Assuming that the Red Army could have mounted a strong defense, Russia's communist ideology would not have acknowledged the suffering of a single group of people. Instead, Stalin's regime would have argued that all Russians were suffering under the treat of the German invasion. Thus, the Jews would not have received special attention.

Nazi propaganda heavily focused on painting the invading force of German soldiers as liberators of the Soviet people. In a diary entry, Nazi Propaganda Chief Joseph Goebbels wrote,

⁹¹ Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews 1933-1939* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 257, 260.

Rules for propaganda in Russia: Not against Socialism, there is to be no return to the Czarist, not to talk openly about destroying the Russian state, this will turn the army, which is Russian, against us. We must condemn Stalin and the Jews behind him.⁹²

Although Germany had no intention on liberating Soviet civilians, propaganda was used in order to encourage Soviet soldiers to lay down their arms. This was yet another blunder by the Reich. It would have been more effective for the Nazis to follow their own propaganda, and aid in the liberation of Soviet citizens. This would have been especially effective in Ukraine, whose population had suffered heavily under the oppression of Stalin

Hitler himself drew direct connections between the leadership of the Soviet Union and its falsely Jewish backed foundations. In addition, Nazi propaganda also targeted its own people with claims of Jewish backed aggression towards Germany. On June 22, 1941, Hitler released an announcement to the German people, which was read over the radio by Goebbels. The announcement stated,

German people...a well-known conspiracy has been formed between the Jews and the Democrats, between the Bolsheviks and the Reactionaries...the rulers of Judeo-Bolshevist Moscow have tried endlessly to impose their regime on our people...The hour has come when it is necessary to take a stand against the conspiracy of warmongering Jews and Anglo-Saxons and against the Jewish rulers of the Bolshevik center in Moscow.⁹³

This announcement, which was followed by leaflets delivered to Soviet civilians on the first day of the invasion, cleverly depicted Germany's target to be only Stalin, his administration, and their, "Zhild,"⁹⁴ supporters. Although the use of leaflets and radio broadcasts were an effective

⁹² Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3*, 67.

⁹³ *Institut Istorii SSSR Akademia Nauk (AN) Dokumenty i Materialy, Moscow, 148, 19-23, 26, 27*, quoted in, Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*.

⁹⁴ "Zhild," A derogatory term used by the Nazis in reference to Jews living in Russia. This term and similar phrasing was used to sway the Red Army to surrender to German forces by linking Anti-Semitism to Soviet leadership, which was already present within Russian society, *Ibid.*, 68.

way of reaching Soviet soldiers and civilians, the Germans also made use of captured Russian prisoners of war and deserters.

Russian POWs and deserters supplied German propaganda with the perfect means of reaching out to front line Soviet soldiers. Captured Soviet soldiers would often call upon their brothers to defect in the midst of battle. In addition, Germany made use of captured Soviet officers by returning them to their units to convince their men to surrender. This tactic saw the most use as the German Army began to encircle whole Soviet battalions in the fall of 1941. In October 1941, the deserter Colonel Tichonov was returned to his forces in the Vyazma region of the Soviet Union. The former Soviet officer convinced two battalion commanders to surrender, which came with 1,500 Soviet soldiers.⁹⁵

Although this form of Nazi propaganda was effective, as the war progressed the Germans were forced to change the manner in which their propaganda was being used. In its current state, German propaganda began to cause Soviet soldiers to fight harder, rather than surrender.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, Soviet resistance to Germany's propaganda was also in part due to the massive gains in territory that the German Army was seizing; in addition to the number of Soviet soldiers that were being taken prisoner. The new version of Nazi propaganda would guarantee that captured Soviet soldiers would be treated no differently than any other POWs. In addition, the new promises also reached out to Soviet partisans and called upon them to distance themselves from Stalin and his supposed Jewish supporters. Naturally, the number of partisan groups could have been greatly reduced if the Nazis had been willing to properly manage the resources of manpower that stood at their fingertips. It seems counterproductive to initiate propaganda, which

⁹⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 69.

was designed to protect German soldiers against the wrath of Soviet citizens, and then not put the propaganda towards proper use.

Historians must now ask two questions. First, how much did German propaganda truly affect the numbers of Soviet soldiers who surrendered during the first few months of the war? Yitzhak Arad asserts that no research has been done on the extent to which Nazi propaganda affected soldiers of the Red Army. For this reason there is no data to suggest exactly how many Soviet soldiers surrendered strictly due to German propaganda. However, considering the popularity of anti-Semitism within Soviet society, it would be fair to assume that Nazi propaganda did play a role in the decision by Soviet soldiers to surrender.⁹⁷ Second, how did Stalin and his regime cope with the dangers that German propaganda presented to both Jewish and Soviet soldiers of the Red Army? Historian Isaac Deutscher has asserted in his book, *Stalin*, that,

...Stalin's propagandists countered with nothing better than embarrassed silence. He forbade them to reply with a counter-blast that would expose the dreadful inhumanity of Hitler's anti-Semitism. He feared...that it would make him appear in the role of a Jew's defender.⁹⁸

This action by Stalin speaks volumes to the level of anti-Semitism which circulated among the Russian people. If anti-Semitic ideals were so popular that they forced Stalin to remain silent on the issue, one must conclude that it is highly feasible that Nazi propaganda did play a critical role in the decisions by Soviet soldiers to desert or surrender.

As previously stated, Operation Barbarossa had two main objectives. First, the German Army was to crush the Red Army and all forms of Soviet resistance within the first four months of the war. Second, German soldiers were expected to cleanse the occupied Soviet territories of "redundant people", or those who were viewed as "unworthy of life." These two objectives were

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 70.

viewed as a single goal within the eyes of Hitler. Immediately following the invasion of the Soviet Union and its annexed territories, Germany began to implement its plans for how to deal with the Soviet Union's overwhelming Jewish population.

In order to insure that Germany's objectives for the elimination of Russian Jews was achieved; the *Schutzstaffel* or SS, Germany's elite defense corps, were tasked with putting together several units which would be able to operate independently of German military law. Among these units were the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Order Police. The term *Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile killing units, appeared for the first time during preparations for the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in May 1938. Supervised by Reinhardt Heydrich, the Security Police, Gestapo, and Waffen SS, or armed division of the SS, would serve as the core from, which future *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers would be recruited. During operations in Czechoslovakia the *Einsatzgruppen* operated in a similar manner in which Russians would encounter later in 1941 and 1942. Soldiers of the *Einsatzgruppen* would immediately follow behind the *Wehrmacht* and initiate massive waves of arrests in order to eliminate politically dangerous individuals. Often these arrests would target German immigrants and Czech communists, and would lead to summary executions.⁹⁹ However, during Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia the *Einsatzgruppen* remained under the authority of the *Wehrmacht*, which greatly limited the organization's jurisdiction.

This limitation of authority would change during Germany's invasion of Poland. On September 1, 1939 the German Army penetrated Poland's borders in an invasion that would

⁹⁹ Helmut Langerbein, *Hitler's Death Squads: The Logic of Mass Murder* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 22-24.

spark the beginning of World War II.¹⁰⁰ During the early days of the invasion, the responsibilities of the *Einsatzgruppen* mainly included arresting individuals who were considered dangerous to Nazi Germany. These individuals often consisted of Polish elites, intellectuals, communists, nationalists, Catholic priests, and anyone else who held a position of authority within the Polish community. Similar to what had occurred in Czechoslovakia, these arrests very often led to executions which were conducted outside the proper channels of military law. Although these actions sparked protests among *Wehrmacht* officers it was not until early 1940, after Governor Hans Frank became the administrative authority, which the *Wehrmacht* began to notice how the *Einsatzgruppen* were operating unimpeded. The *Wehrmacht* had no time to correct the behavior of the *Einsatzgruppen* and, “was content with the conduct of combat operations and left the required policing and ideological duties to the *Einsatzgruppen*.”¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, as the role of the *Wehrmacht* transformed into that of an occupying force, and as more actions of deliberate murder were witnessed, protests against the SS increased once more. Some members of the SS were even arrested and charged by army officials. Specifically, Colonel General Johannes Blaskowitz openly protested the treatment of the Jews and Poles by the *Einsatzgruppen*. In his notes the General wrote,

It is wholly misguided to slaughter some 10,000 Jews and Poles as is happening at the moment. Such methods will eradicate neither Polish nationalism nor the Jews from the mass of the population. On the contrary, the way in which the slaughter is being carried out is extremely damaging, complicates the problems and makes them a great deal more dangerous than they would be if dealt with by a well-considered and decisive policy...The worst damage, however, affecting Germans, which has developed as a result of the current circumstances, is the tremendous brutalization and moral depravity which is spreading rapidly among precious

¹⁰⁰ “World War II,” It should be noted that historians debate the dates for the beginning of the war. It is after 1939 that Britain and France declared war on Germany, thus sparking the war in Europe. However, some suggest that Japan’s invasion of China in 1937 should be used as the true starting point for World War II.

¹⁰¹ Langerbein, *Hitler’s Death Squads*, 26.

German manpower like an epidemic...¹⁰²

This description of SS atrocities clearly demonstrates the level of contempt Blaskowitz had for the manner in which the *Einsatzgruppen* were conducting their operations. For a man of the army, discipline was vital to maintaining authority over one's soldiers, which in turn would limit the spread of chaos. It should be noted that the protests of Blaskowitz and other officers of the *Wehrmacht* most likely were never intended to actually aid Jews and Poles. As stated above, foremost officers like Blaskowitz were primarily concerned with the issue of moral among German troops. On October 4, 1939, Hitler granted the SS amnesty, which freed them from any crimes they might have committed during Poland's occupation. In addition the OKH, Oberkommando des Heeres, which served as the German Army's high command, refused to support the protests. Army Supreme Commander Field Marshal General von Brauchitsch also refused to support the protests of his men.¹⁰³ The bureaucratic and militaristic freedom the SS enjoyed during the invasion of Poland would double during Operation Barbarossa. The history of their operations and their gradual emancipation from authority of the German Army would allow the SS to conduct operations with complete autonomy. The Order Police would fall under similar jurisdictional freedoms as well.

According to historian Christopher Browning, the origins of the Order Police, "...resulted from the third attempt in interwar Germany to create large police formations with military training and equipment."¹⁰⁴ However, due to the regulations of the Treaty of Versailles, the size of Germany's standing army was not permitted to rise above 100,000 men. When Hitler seized power in 1933, one of his first acts as Führer was to covertly establish a police army, which

¹⁰² Johannes Blaskowitz, *Denkschrift Blaskowitz*, quoted in, Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3*, 4-5.

¹⁰³ Langerbein, *Hitler's Death Squads*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 3.

would aid Germany in rearming its forces. Many within Germany saw the Versailles Treaty as unjust and a direct threat to the future of Germany, both financially and physically. In 1935 Hitler openly defied the treaty by reintroducing conscription. The police army was then merged into a larger army which would train over ninety-seven generals in Germany's future army.¹⁰⁵

Under the direction of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and Chief of the German Police, Germany's police units were divided into two branches. The Gestapo, the Secret State Police, and the Criminal Police would fall under the authority of the first branch, the Secret Police Main Office of Reinhard Heydrich. The second branch of the police was the Order Police Main Office under Kurt Daluege. Under the direction of Daluege also stood the City Police, Rural Police, and the Community Police. In the years between 1938 and 1939 the size of the Order Police expanded rapidly. The option of joining the police attracted many Germans who wished to be exempted from conscription into the army. In addition, since the Order Police were organized regionally, one could serve the military while remaining fairly close to home.¹⁰⁶ Although these men could not technically be considered soldiers within the same sphere as those who served in the *Wehrmacht*, members of the Order Police were given military training. This training would allow the police to perform the duties that were required of them during Germany's campaign into the Soviet Union and its annexed territories. This process of recruitment represented a critical error in Hitler's judgment. The manpower needed to serve the heinous desires of the SS could have better served the needs of the German Army during Operation Barbarossa.

Germany's invasion of the USSR immediately signaled what would be later known as the initial stages of the Holocaust. Acts of mass murder would become a common sight in territories such as Ukraine, Lithuania, Serbia, and other territories that the Soviet Union controlled prior to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 5.

Germany's invasion. Conversely, the tempo in which these actions occurred was not uniform. Several factors influenced the timetable in which acts of murder could take place. For example, seasons of the year often dictated the pace in which Jews were murdered. The harsh winters of the Soviet Union would have made it difficult for the SS to complete their operations within a specified timetable. In addition, the number of Jews in any given place and the local need for a temporary Jewish workforce would have also affected the tempo in which Jews were murdered. For these reasons, the annihilation of Jews occurred in three stages.¹⁰⁷

The first stage; which occurred from June 22, 1941 to the end of winter 1941-42, resulted in most of the Jews living in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, east Belorussia, east Ukraine, and the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, Bessarabia, and north Bukovina being murdered. The second stage; which occurred from spring 1942 until the winter of 1942-43, resulted in Jews of west Belorussia, west Ukraine, and the southern regions of the Soviet Union being murdered. Lastly, the third stage; which occurred from the spring of 1943 to the summer of 1944, resulted in Jews who remained in annexed and Soviet territories were either murdered or marched to concentration camps. This final stage occurred while the Germans hastily retreated from Soviet territory.¹⁰⁸

Considering that such an abundance of violence occurred within Soviet territory, historians must examine the depth of the Red Army's knowledge of the subject as they fought against German forces. According to Soviet reporter, Vasily Grossman, accounts of German atrocities began to reach the ears of the Red Army prior to Kiev's fall on September 26, 1941.¹⁰⁹ After the fall of Ukraine's capital city, reports of a great massacre of Jews at Babi Yar reached Grossman's ears. He learned that the mass execution was conducted by SS *Sonderkommando 4a*

¹⁰⁷ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 126.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Grossman, *A Writer at War*, 250.

from *Einsatzgruppe C*. The German Sixth Army, commanded by Field Marshal Walther von Reichenau, had also taken part in the carnage.¹¹⁰ Similar accounts of mass murder across Ukraine continued to pour in well throughout 1942. In Berdichev, Grossman learned that out of a population of 60,000 people, 30,000 of which were Jews, between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews were murdered during the first major massacre in Ukraine.¹¹¹ However, what truly appalled Grossman the most was the issue of collaboration by many Ukrainian locals. In Domanevka alone, the chief of the Ukrainian police had killed 12,000 Jews himself. Grossman noted that this collaboration with the “enemy” in part was done for the sake of revenge. Ukrainians had not forgotten Stalin’s famines during the 1920’s and 1930’s. The Jews were used as scapegoats and viewed as the cause of suffering for many Ukrainians.¹¹²

It is impossible to deny that Stalin’s regime had to have known about the slaughter taking place throughout Soviet territories. Grossman himself wrote many articles that provided accounts of the events from eye witnesses. In the autumn of 1943, he wrote an article entitled ‘Ukraine with Jews.’ In the article, Grossman asserted that, “There are no Jews in the Ukraine. Nowhere – Poltava, Kharkov, Kremenchug...in none of the cities...A whole people has been brutally murdered.”¹¹³ Nonetheless, these articles and reports were rejected by Soviet authorities. Stalin refused to acknowledge the Jews as special victims. Stalin’s policy ordered reporters not to “Divide the Dead” and recognize that all Soviet citizens were victims of Nazism. Because of this policy, all official reports of Jewish atrocities avoided any mention of the word Jew.¹¹⁴

Historians must now examine why Stalin suppressed knowledge of the events of mass murder that were being conducted within Soviet territory and why nothing was done to stop it.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 255.

¹¹² Ibid., 267, 255.

¹¹³ Ibid., 251.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Grossman concluded after writing his article ‘The Killing of Jews in Berdichev,’ that his reports were suppressed in part due to the collaboration of Ukrainian citizens. The subject of collaboration was deemed embarrassing by Soviet authorities and thus censored. This censorship of information continued until the fall of Communism.¹¹⁵ Second, in the year of 1941, the Red Army found itself being pushed farther back from its original borders. The following year Germany threatened to seize Stalingrad and possibly push the Red Army across the Volga River. By this point, the battles for Leningrad and Moscow were already well underway. Even if the Soviet authorities had chosen to acknowledge the massacre of Jews across Ukraine and other Soviet territories, the Red Army would not have been able to assist in any sort of rescue attempt.

As previously mentioned, the *Einsatzgruppen* were a division of German soldiers that fell under the authority of the SS. Under the Spring Orders of 1941, the SS were granted complete freedom to operate on their own authority. This same freedom would later be granted to common soldiers and would allow them to shoot Russian civilians who were suspected of committing war crimes against Germany.¹¹⁶ This level of independence from military and international law would allow any German soldier to murder innocent civilians on sight. However, such freedoms would not have been permitted if not for the prerequisites that had been met by the SS during the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Poland. In particular, the *Einsatzgruppen* would benefit the most from the freedom allowed under newly formed German laws.

The *Einsatzgruppen* consisted of 4 units who operated within different zones behind Germany’s Army Groups. *Einsatzgruppe A*’s zone of operation consisted of the Baltic States. Their task was to move behind Army Group North and eventually reach Leningrad. *Einsatzgruppe B*’s zone of operation consisted of the rear area of Army Group Center, and

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 252.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter 1, page 39, 2nd paragraph for a full list of the spring 1941 orders.

included Belorussia and parts of central Russia. Like Army Group Center, B's final objective would be Moscow. *Einsatzgruppe C's* area of activity consisted of the rear region of Army Group South. This area would cover Kiev and east Ukraine. Lastly, *Einsatzgruppe D* was attached to the German 11th Army, which operated alongside the Romanian Army in the regions of Bessarabia and South Ukraine. Their final objective would be Crimea and the Caucasus region.¹¹⁷

In a report submitted by Franz Walter Stahlecker, head of *Einsatzgruppe A*, Walter recounted the events that led to the liquidation of Jews living throughout cities in Lithuania during the first month of Operation Barbarossa. Within hours of the entering the city of Kaunas, local anti-Semitic elements were induced to engage in pogroms against the Jews. Although the Security Police were firmly set on solving the Jewish question, it was concluded that it would be best for the local population to be seen as the aggressors against the Jewish community. This was done to avoid attracting unwanted attention within German circles. In the proclaimed struggle against Bolshevism, local Lithuanians were organized into several partisan groups, all of which competed against each other for superiority. This was done for the sake of establishing a closer association with the *Wehrmacht*. The dominate partisan group would thus be able to capitalize on the coming changes within the Lithuanian government.¹¹⁸

Specifically, the partisan group led by Lithuanian journalist Klimatis was deployed not only in Kaunas, but also in various other parts of Lithuania. The first pogrom to be initiated occurred in Kovno on the nights of June 25-26, 1941. Stahlecker estimated that more than 1,500 Jews were beaten to death by Lithuanian partisans. In addition, several synagogues and about sixty houses were burnt down within Kovno's Jewish quarter. On the following nights an

¹¹⁷ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 125-128.

¹¹⁸ Franz Walter Stahlecker, *Einsatzgruppe A, Gesamtbericht bis zum 15. Oktober 1941*, quoted in, Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days*, 24, 26.

estimated 2,300 Jews were murdered. Similar pogroms were adopted across Lithuania which included communists that had remained after the Red Army retreated.¹¹⁹ Historians know that Stahlecker's report accurately summarizes the events at Kovno due to similar reports from other German soldiers that were discovered.

One such report came from a lance-corporal in the 562nd Backers' Company. The lance-corporal reported that on June 23, 1941, his company crossed the German-Soviet border at Wirballen. His company arrived in Kovno in the later afternoon of the same day. On his way through the city, the lance-corporal noticed Lithuanian civilians beating a number of civilians with different types of weapons. The lance-corporal reported that,

The killings were carried out by recently released Lithuanian convicts. Why these Jews were being beaten to death I did not find out. At that time I had not formulated my own thoughts about the persecution of the Jews because I had not yet heard anything about it. The bystanders were almost exclusively German soldiers, who were observing the cruel incident out of curiosity.¹²⁰

These reports raise a few interesting points. First, even though Hitler had already given the SS complete freedom to operate as the organization saw fit, clearly the local levels of German command still held concern for how their actions would be perceived by other Germans. One could argue that in implementing this roundabout method, it proved that not even members of the Security Police were completely indoctrinated by Nazi ideology. If this had been the case, the Security Police would have likely carried out the executions themselves without concern for the attention that the executions attracted. Second, if the details of the report are analyzed, one might conclude that during the early months of the war there existed German soldiers, and perhaps even companies or divisions, which truly were unaware of what the SS were planning. Though, as the war continued few would be able to make such claims.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹²⁰ *Statement of a Gefreiter [lance-corporal] from Backers' Coy Röder 8.7.59: 2ff*, quoted in, Klee, Dressen, and Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days*, Ibid., 32-33

In the case of the SS, the Massacre at Bialystok supplies further evidence to the organizational atmosphere which existed among its members. Prior to Germany's invasion into the Soviet Union, Police Battalion 309 was one of three police battalions assigned to *Wehrmacht* Security Divisions in Army Group Center. Under the Russian-Nazi Non Aggression Pact, Hitler had split ownership of Poland to ensure that the Soviet Union would not attempt to fight his army before he was ready. However, when the time finally came in June 22, 1941, the German Army swarmed across the border that separated Nazi occupied Poland from Soviet occupied Poland. Shortly before the invasion, the division released the following instructions, "The troops of the Red Army oppose us not only as military, but political enemies. According to the Jewish-Bolshevist teaching, the Red Army will no only make use of military combat methods."¹²¹

On the morning of June 27, 1941 Police Battalion 309 was ordered to aid the *Wehrmacht* in cleansing the city of Bialystok of any remaining Russian troops as well as any anti-German inhabitants. When the Germans entered the city they encountered no resistance. However, this did not prevent policemen from the First and Third Companies from looting and executing Jews living within the Jewish quarter. Among the victims were small children and around 700 Jewish men. These men were locked inside the city's synagogue and then burned alive. The fire from the synagogue soon spread to surrounding houses. By the end of the operation, an estimated 2,000 Jews lost their lives due to either the fire or police bullets.¹²²

This massacre raises an interesting issue regarding the actions of the police. Although the division's orders framed the war using racial terms by linking Jews with Bolsheviks, the actual escalation of violence came from within the division. Edward B. Westermann asserts that, "...the pogrom aimed at the city's Jewish population arose from the ranks of two police companies that

¹²¹ Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 174

¹²² *Ibid.*, 175.

chose to escalate the violence from mistreatment and random shootings to the premeditated massacre of hundreds.”¹²³ Thus, it would seem that orders for these actions did not come from the Reich. Although the division’s orders warned the police to be prepared to take drastic measures against the Red Army, it technically mentioned nothing of killing thousands of people and destroying property. Was this a common occurrence among German soldiers? Were vague orders handed down from the Reich and then interpreted by captains and lieutenants who controlled the divisions?

On July 8th shortly after the massacre at Bialystok the *Höherer SS und Polizeiführer*, or HSSPF, Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski approved the decision for Police Battalion 307 to be used in an upcoming mission to cleanse the city of Brest-Litowsk. However, on the same day Bach had also met with Himmler, Daguege, and other police and military commanders in Bialystok. At the meeting Himmler complained that not enough Jews were being rounded up and ordered the police leadership to double their efforts. Following the order, Police Battalion 309 and the 162nd Infantry Division proceeded to Brest-Litowsk and the surrounded the Jewish quarter to ensure that none would escape. On the early morning of July 9th Jewish males who were considered to be capable of work, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, were escorted to a central collection point. From there, the men were either marched or trucked to a site south of the city where, in groups of ten to twelve, they were shot by policemen. This process was repeated over the next several days.¹²⁴

Does the case of Brest-Litowsk counter the case of Bialystok? Westermann argues that it would be safe to assume that the rise in Jewish deaths could be directly linked Himmler’s order for more Jews to be rounded up. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, nothing about the murdering

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 176.

of Jews was uniform for the Nazis. Historians know that some police battalions actively engaged in mass shootings of Jewish people regardless of age or gender. At the same time, other battalions refused to murder children and only shot adults while others opted to spare both women and children.

It is believed by some historians that Himmler's visit to Minsk coincided with the universal order to exterminate all Jews including children and women. According to the testimony of SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff, who was the head of Himmler's personal staff, it was Hitler who ordered Himmler to go to Minsk and discuss the partisan problem. In this case, Jews and partisans were seen as one. On the evening of August 14, Himmler met with Bach-Zelewski, Arthur Nebe, Otto Brandisch, and other high ranking SS officers. It is believed that there they discussed how to fight the partisans as well as how to liquidate the Jews.¹²⁵ According to a postwar testimony given by Brandisch, commander of *Einsatzkommando 8*, Nebe, commander of *Einsatzgruppe B*, informed him before Himmler's arrival that there was a verbal order from Hitler which called for the elimination of all Jews. Brandisch questioned Himmler about the legitimacy of the order and Himmler apparently confirmed that the order existed.

This testimony has been countered by historians who claim that such a transparent and comprehensive was never given by Hitler or Himmler. Browning wrote,

The claim that Himmler issued an all-encompassing killing order in front of the murder scene near Minsk is primarily based on self-serving post war statements by his officers and on the mistake assumption that Berlin agencies had to be the centers of decision making in regard to the carrying out of the mass murder in the east...With the delegation of power to his commanding officers, it was not Himmler but the HSSPF...who, in conjunction with the military and representatives of the emerging civil administration, decided on matters of practical policy.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 129.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

However, several *Einsatzkommando* commanders such as Brandisch, Dr. Filbert, and Erwin Schulz, commanders of *EK 9* and *EG C*, testified that an order calling for the murders of Jewish women and children in late July or early August was given by Himmler. These murders occurred in the area of the Pripet marshes, but lasted for months due to the inability of some SS forces to carry out operations which involved large Jewish communities such as those of Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkov.¹²⁷ If this is true, where is the location such an order? Considering how well the Nazi's documented nearly everything they did, one would expect to have found such an order stashed away in a lost file. Could the order have been destroyed? Historians know that during the final days of Germany's reign over Europe and the USSR, the Nazi's burned perhaps thousands of documents to prevent them from falling into Allied hands.

Arad offers a different explanation. He argues that Himmler's tour of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union was a determining factor in policy change by the SS. However, the orders he would have issued to his commanders would not have been written, but verbal conversations. In such meetings, Himmler would have discussed the need to intensify the killings of all Jews. Thus, the critical point that historians must observe is not how the orders were given, but in how they were received. The subordinate HSSPF and *Einsatzgruppen* commanders interpreted Himmler's verbal conversations as orders from the authorities in Berlin. The commanders then acted accordingly because they often shared the same point of view. If this is true, then the practical decisions of when and where to conduct the killings, and on which scale, was left to the local SS command as well as the military and civilian administrations.¹²⁸

Regardless of the technical categories in which orders were given and received, the fact remains that the Nazi's and their allies actively murdered millions of innocent people who were

¹²⁷ Ibid., 131.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

depicted as aggressive partisans. One such example of German allies aiding in the murder of Jews can be seen in the case of Slovakia and Slovakian troops. Today, little is known about Slovak involvement within Operation Barbarossa. Considering Hitler's hatred for Slavs, one would have assumed that the Führer would have never permitted them to take part in his invasion. However, the OKH had already determined to make use of Slovak units during the stages of prewar planning. The formal arrangements were not finalized until the day of the Soviet invasion.

The Slovak presence in Nazi occupied Ukraine began originally with expeditionary groups. Though, by the end of August 1941, the Slovak Army was reorganized into two infantry divisions that together consisted of around 42,000 men. These units took part in the battle for Kiev and were engaged in patrols near Rostov, Melitopol, and Crimea.¹²⁹ The 2nd Infantry Division, which served as a security unit, individually consisted of about 6,000 to 8,000 men. It is unclear if these divisions participated in Jewish massacres. This is in part due to the loss of war dairies from the German liaison officer who would have been attached to the Slovakian Army. Nevertheless, sparse evidence of Slovakian participation in the murder of Jews does appear within the dairy of SS officer Felix Landau. While leading a special *Einsatzkommando* in the summer of 1941, Landau wrote that near Drohobych on July 2, 1941, he and his comrades shot Jewish laborers and prisoners. Regarding the participation of the Slovakian units, he wrote that, "In this instance the Slovaks dug the graves and immediacy covered them."¹³⁰ In addition to this incident, another came to light from the records of the Security Services Archive in Prague. On October 13, 1941, in Miropol 94 Jews, which consisted of 49 children, were shot in a local park. Skrovina Lubimir asserted that,

¹²⁹ Kay, Rutherford, and Stahel, eds, *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front*, 200.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

...he was in the area assigned to guard bridges for the *Wehrmacht*. His Slovak commander, Hruska, ordered him and two other soldiers to attend the mass shooting. Lubimir brought his camera. He testified that two Ukrainian militia who shot the Jews were locals, because they knew the victims.¹³¹

With this testimony, once again we see the participation of the local population in murdering Jews. This theme would become a popular occurrence among those who did not possess the capabilities of resisting against the Nazis, or those who simply chose not to. It also offers yet another example of how Nazis misused their resources of manpower during the initial stages of Operation Barbarossa.

While German soldiers were fighting to make Operation Barbarossa a success, they were also heavily engaged in wiping out whole Jewish communities with the aid of locals. One of the most well documented cases of these executions can be seen in the case of the Babi Yar ravine. As mentioned earlier by Grossman, this was one of the first mass killing sites that the Red Army obtained reports on. In a statement taken from a truck driver named Höfer, the eye witness reported that there were whole Jewish families marching on foot towards the direction of Babi Yar. Höfer asserted that the further he drove out of town, the denser the columns of Jews became. After he stopped in an area near a pile of clothes, he noted that Ukrainians were the ones loading his truck. Ukrainians were also the ones responsible for leading the Jewish families through different areas where they would quickly remove all of their clothing and valuables.¹³² In a report given by the *Wehrmacht*, there were 150,000 present at the execution sight on September 28, 1941. The *Wehrmacht* had made plans to execute at least 50,000 and welcomed the measures and requests for radical action.¹³³ Höfer continued with his report asserting that the Jews were led into a ravine which was about 150 metres long(164 yards), 30 metres wide(32

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Klee, Dressen, and Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days*, 63.

¹³³ *Ereignismeldung USSR*, No, 97, 28 September 1941, quoted in, Klee, Dressen, and Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days*, Ibid., 64.

yards), and a good 15 metres deep(16 yards). Jews were channeled through two narrowed entrances. When they reached the bottom of the ravine they were seized by members of the Security Police and made to lie down on top of Jews who had already been shot. A police marksman then came and shot each Jew in the back of the neck with no discrimination between men, women, and children.¹³⁴ In a slightly similar statement given by Kurt Werner, a member of *Sonderkommando 4a*, he asserted that the shooting of the Jews lasted for seventeen to eighteen hours. Afterwards, the soldiers were taken back to their quarters and were given alcohol. By the end of the 29-30 of September, 33,711 Jews men, women, and children were murdered.¹³⁵ This would not signal the end of Babi Yar. The execution sight was also used as a mass grave for both Gypsies and Soviet citizens as well.

Given the brutality mentioned within the previously given accounts, which spanned across half a continent, one might assume that Jews had faced the worst in the Soviet Union. However, the events that took place in the Soviet Union were nothing more than a prequel to the acts of genocide which would take place across Europe. The Wannsee Conference would be the final step in discussing how Jews living within German occupied Europe would be dealt with. It would signify to all portions of the Nazi government that the SS were in control.

It was in March 1947 that a staff of American prosecutors, while collecting information for the later Nuremberg trials, discovered a unique folder. The minutes for a meeting were stamped “*Geheime Reichssache*,” or “Secret Reich matter,” and were tucked away in a German Foreign Office folder. The meeting involved fifteen top Nazi civil servants, SS officials, and party representatives and occurred on January 20, 1942.¹³⁶ The minutes of the meeting largely

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 67.

¹³⁶ Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 1.

consisted of a presentation giving by Heydrich. The presentation included the measures taken against Jews since 1941, tallies of the number of Jews remaining in the Axis, occupied, neutral, and enemy Europe, and outlines of a plan to *evacuate* them the East. Although terms such as murder, kill, or starve were not used within the minutes of meeting, it is clear that Heydrich was referring to the eventual genocide of Jews living throughout Europe. Most historians refute the idea that the Wannsee Conference represented a radical new plan in how the Jews would be dealt with.¹³⁷ This method of thinking is correct. Historians know that the Nazis were working on their Jewish policy possibly from the moment Hitler secured his power as the head of the German state. Nazi policy within the coming years would change several times before the notion of universal liquidation was accepted.

Prior to Wannsee, the deportations of Jews from Germany had already begun as early as September of 1941. Before this decision was made the Nazis had also toyed with the ideas of sterilization and a colony in Madagascar for the Jews. These facts prove that there was no transparent idea within Hitler's inner circle as to how the Jews in Europe would be dealt with and more importantly, who would be responsible. In addition to this issue, Hitler had yet to formulate a plan on how to deal with half Jews, or Jews which were married to full blooded German citizens. Heydrich addressed this very issue at Wannsee. From that moment onward, First-degree *Mischlinge*, or crossbreeds, were to be equated with full Jews. Second-degree crossbreeds could hope for better treatment only through voluntary sterilization. However, those of the second-degree could be considered Jews if their parents were of the first-degree, if they appeared racially unfavorable, or if they had negative police or political records. These rules did not apply to second-degree crossbreeds who married a German. The possibility of deportation would be left open nevertheless. Regarding mixed marriages, all Jews who had married Germans

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2-3.

would be deported to ghettos unless children existed who were deemed to fit into the second-degree.¹³⁸ In establishing these new laws, Heydrich corrected the gaps within the Nuremberg Laws and at the same time demonstrated power the SS would hold over the lives of German citizens.

One may argue that the Wannsee Conference was nothing more than a stage for Heydrich to announce his ambitions while determining which departments of the government could be trusted to comply with his plans. However, regardless of how the conference is viewed, the results led to millions of Jews being deported from their homes and shipped like cattle to their deaths. However not all Jews would survive long enough to face deportations. The effects of Wannsee clearly signified a more lethal shift within Germany's Jewish policies.

As previously stated, the Nazis in general had difficulties dealing with large cities with even larger Jewish populations. Such a case can be seen in the handling of Jews living within Lublin Poland. In the summer of 1941, HSSPF Odilo Globocnik met with Himmler to discuss how the Jews living within the General Government would be destroyed. Unlike previous attempts, the European Jewry would require more efficient methods of killing, which would not burden the minds of German soldiers. The answer Himmler and Globocnik came to was the use of extermination camps. In *theory*, the camps would require little man power and Jews could be exterminated by gassing fairly quickly. Nonetheless, within the Lublin district alone there existed 300,000 Jews and 2,000,000 within the entirety of the General Government. With such a large population, Globocnik realized that he lacked the manpower needed for such an operation. Three battalions of Order Police, which amounted to 1,500 men in addition to various SS and police division stationed within Lublin would not be enough. To solve this issue, Karl Streibel, a member of Globocnik's staff, recruited Ukrainian, Latvian, and Lithuanian volunteers from

¹³⁸ Ibid., 118-119.

POW camps. These *Hilfswillige*, or *Hiwis* were then sent to the SS camp at Trawniki for special training. The first attempt at deporting the Lublin Jewry occurred in mid-March 1942 and continued through mid-April. An estimated 90% of the 40,000 inhabitants of the Lublin ghetto were killed either through deportation to the extermination camp at Belzec, or were executed on the spot. By June 18, an estimated 100,000 Jews from the Lublin district were murdered in addition to 65,000 from Krakow and Galicia¹³⁹ Once again, we see examples of how the Nazi's misused their resources of manpower for the sake of fighting an imaginary threat.

In conclusion, while Operation Barbarossa was still being conducted, the Nazis began to implement their plans for solving the so-called Jewish Question. In the Soviet Union, this occurred instantly from the moment Germany invaded on June 22, 1941. Although patterns of brutal violence against Jewish men, women, and children emerged during the year of 1941, it was not the ultimate step in Germany's Final Solution. In addition, these patterns were not uniform among the several divisions of police and *Einsatzgruppen* who carried them out. However, Nazi ideology would cause these patterns of genocide to converge and continue well into 1942 and 1943, even as the tide of war began to turn against the Germans. It is in this case that we see one of the many flaws credit to Germany during USSR's invasion. At times, it even appears that the Nazis placed more thought into solving the Jewish question than the logistical issues of Barbarossa itself.

¹³⁹ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 49-53.

CHAPTER 3

Nazi Rationalizations and the End

On the nights of November 9-10, 1938, Germany's anti-Jewish policy reached a turning point. *Die Kristallnacht*, or the Crystal Night, resulted in synagogues, business, and hundreds of Jewish institutions being set a blaze. An estimated 100 Jews were killed, and 30,000 more were arrested and sent to concentration camps.¹⁴⁰ These camps were designed with the purpose of operating as labor camps for political and Jewish prisoners in the wake of Hitler's seizure of power. The aim of the concentration camp was to rehabilitate its prisoners through beatings, forced labor, and Nazi propaganda. Thus, it was possible that one could escape the confines of a concentration camp. Nevertheless, death camps such as Auschwitz, Belzec, and Sobibor were designed with the purpose of murdering their prisoners with machine-like efficiency. Nazi ideology demanded that all Jews, from east to west, be eliminated. The goal of Operation Reinhardt, commanded by Odilo Globocnik, was to prepare for the eventual liquidation of Jews living within the General Government of Poland. This operation would continue from the fall of 1941 to the winter of 1943. Globocnik was tasked with the overall planning of deportations and exterminations, building the death camps, coordinating the deportations of Jews from different districts, killing Jews within the camps, and finally seizing valuable assets from the camp's victims.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, by the end of October 1941 as preparations for Operation Reinhardt were underway, Globocnik and his staff failed to foresee how many death camps would need to be constructed and operated. In addition, the Nazis also failed to plan for how their prisoners would be efficiently executed within the death camps. This was due to the fact that no model existed

¹⁴⁰ Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1987), 1. Note. *Die Kristallnacht* may also be referred to as *The Night of Broken Glass*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

that could serve as a foundation for the Nazis. Thus, the Nazis would have to experiment with both annihilation and construction techniques.¹⁴² In this aspect, the Nazis implored the same level of detail into their planning for the Final Solution as they did with Operation Barbarossa. Nazi racial ideology hindered the conception of an efficient Soviet invasion. Similarly, it also resulted in the Nazis redirecting resources in the pursuit of the Final Solution, thus squandering an already limited supply of man power. The following chapter will examine the role that Nazi ideology played within the use of death camps up until the end of Hitler's Reich.

As stated, the initial phase of the mass extermination of Jews began not in Central Europe, but within the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa was used as a pretext to launch a brutal war upon the Soviet Jewry. Initially the mass killings that were conducted within the Soviet Union were grossly inefficient. Jews would be lined up within ditches or ravines, such as Babi Yar, and shot in groups. Within cities housing large Jewish populations, such atrocities often lasted for weeks and presented organizational challenges. Karl Jäger, commander of *Einsatzkommando 3*, reported that,

The implementation of such *Aktionen* was first of all an organizational problem. The decision to clear systematically each sub-district of Jews called for thorough preparation for each *Aktion* and the study of local conditions. The Jews had to be concentrated in one or more localities, and, in accordance with their numbers, a site had to be selected and pits dug...The Jews were brought to the place of execution in groups of 500, with a distance of at least 2 kms between groups...¹⁴³

In addition, conducting mass executions within the vicinity of cities made it difficult to keep the executions a secret from the local population. The fact that the Nazis used individuals within the local population to aid in carrying out their plans would have undoubtedly added to the issue of maintaining secrecy. The murder of large populations of Jews proceeded at a sluggish pace.

¹⁴² Ibid., 23.

¹⁴³ Karl Jäger, *Yad Vashem Archives* (hereafter, YVA), 0-18/245, quoted in, Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, Ibid., 7.

Nevertheless, the most severe challenge came from how the executions impacted the minds of the Germans who carried them out. The actions of murdering women, children, and the elderly often produced negative psychological effects that led to mental breakdowns and an outbreak of alcoholism.¹⁴⁴ Although there are no cases of a German soldier being reprimanded for refusing to take part in the mass killings, most willingly assumed the roles of murders as their fellow soldiers had done as well.

The incorporation of death camps was intended to aid the SS in making the elimination of the Jews more efficient. In total, there existed five death camps, which were all located within the Government General of Poland. Unlike concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Chełmno, Belzec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, and Treblinka were designed to kill Jews using a machine-like efficiency and quickness. The largest of the death camps was Auschwitz, which consisted of three camps in one: a killing center, a concentration camp, and a series of slave-labor camps.¹⁴⁵

From 1940 to 1941 German concentration camps were divided into three categories. Category I, also known as work camps, represented the mildest of working conditions for prisoners. Category II concentration camps represented harsher living and working conditions. Category III camps were considered bone mills, or *Knochenmühlen*. Among these death camps stood facilities such as Auschwitz and Mauthausen.¹⁴⁶ Although Buchenwald was technically considered a category II concentration camp, and later category I, the conditions in which many Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners were forced to endure resulted in thousands of deaths. Until 1939, the vast majority of Buchenwald's prisoners were German.¹⁴⁷ The camp was established

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁵ Gutman, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, vii.

¹⁴⁶ David A. Hackett, ed and trans., *The Buchenwald Report* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 28.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 27.

by the SS on July 19, 1937 with the initial purpose of housing political prisoners. These prisoners would be forced to work through a long series of harassment, beatings, and provocation from the SS guards. During the foundation period of the camp, in the spring of 1938, the camp's population stood at an estimated 2,500 prisoners.¹⁴⁸

The organizational structure of Buchenwald resembled other camps such as Auschwitz and Belzec. At the top stood the camp's commandant SS Major Karl Koch, and later SS Colonel Hermann Pister, and his two assistants SS Major Arthur Rödl and SS Captain Weissenborn. An estimated 355 SS staff were employed throughout the camp's history along with 6,500 guards, provided by the Waffen SS, additional Gestapo units, canine patrol units, and other members of the camp's staff.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned, Buchenwald initially was designed to house political prisoners; however, in November 1938 more than 10,000 German Jews were deported to Buchenwald. This was as a result of the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, a secretary of the German embassy in Paris, by a Jew. This marked the first mass shipment, although not the first transport, of Jews to Buchenwald.¹⁵⁰ By 1941, as more Jews began to arrive at Buchenwald, experimentation on Jewish prisoners began. Initially 60 Jews were chosen to undergo experiments with Typhus.¹⁵¹ These experiments represented a pointless feat of barbarity on the part of Nazi doctors. Those who were not selected experimentation faced the potential deportation to Auschwitz. Pregnant Jewish women were especially under threat. After 1944 all pregnant Jewish women were deported from Buchenwald to Auschwitz with the promise of, "kindergartens" and, "maternity facilities" that would be available.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 36, 121.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 165.

¹⁵² Ibid., 79.

Statistically, the prisoners of Buchenwald were represented by more than 30 different countries. The total number of new admissions to the camp reached 238,980 prisoners from 1937 to 1945. On October 6, 1944, Buchenwald's population reached its peak with a total of 89,134 prisoners.¹⁵³ From October 1, 1937 to April 10, 1945 an estimated 34,566 prisoners died inside of Buchenwald. This number includes those who were beaten to death or shot, but does not include the number of female deaths. An estimated 11,060 liquidation transports left Buchenwald between July 1940 and 1944. This resulted in a death toll reaching an estimated 53,926 Jewish men, women, and children.¹⁵⁴

Buchenwald was not the only camp in which the Nazis sought to misuse valuable sources of manpower. The site for Chełmno was chosen specifically for its isolation. At the time of Chełmno's construction, the Nazis were already conducting extermination missions throughout the Soviet republics. These exterminations were slow and costly. After September 1941, *Einsatzgruppen* units began to employ gas vans as an alternative to shootings.¹⁵⁵ The Nazis saw the use of gas, which had already seen use during the Euthanasia Program of 1939, as the most efficient way to solve the, "Jewish problem." Before Jews could be gassed in mass, though, the Nazis first needed to experiment and refine the process. Thus, Chełmno became the first site of mass-murder among the German camps.

The first people to staff the camp arrived in November 1941. They consisted of two groups and were then divided into sub-groups as Jews were deported to the camp. Group one was comprised of 15 members from the *Sicherheitspolizei*, or Sipo and stood under the command of commandant *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Herbert Lange. Group two contained 100 members of the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 109.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 112-113. Note. This number is debatable. Conservative figures place the death toll at 55,000 victims.

¹⁵⁵ Krakowski, *Chełmno*, 32.

Schutzpolizei, or Schupo.¹⁵⁶ The first transports of Jews were taken to Chełmno from Kolo on December 7, 1941. Approximately 700 people arrived at the camp and were later loaded into gas vans and murdered by use of carbon monoxide. Over the next few days the Nazis began liquidating towns surrounding Chełmno. Approximately 1,100 Jews were transported from the Czachulec ghetto and another 975 from Dabie. By the end of the year all Jews living within the immediate vicinity of the camp were murdered and burned within the forest surrounding Chełmno.¹⁵⁷ This period of extermination marked the first phase of Chełmno's operation, which lasted from 1941 to 1943. Chełmno closed temporarily in March 1943 due to the completion of eliminating the local Jewish population, with exception to the Jews living within the Łódź ghetto. The camp was reestablished in June 1944 until its final liquidation on January 15, 1945.

The fact that the Nazis chose to reopen Chełmno in the wake of German defeats in the East speaks volumes to the misguided dedication shared among the SS. By April 1943 *Generalfeldmarschall* Friedrich Paulus and his 6th Army had been encircled and defeated at Stalingrad. Allied bombings over Germany had intensified and German-Italian forces had surrendered in North Africa. By the end of 1943 the Russians had retaken Kiev and the Allies were pressing through Italian territory.¹⁵⁸ The end of Germany's Third Reich was rapidly approaching. In the final days of the camp's operation Nazi ideology and rationalization demanded that the elimination of Jews would continue. This was done while the Nazis worked to erase evidence of their crimes. An estimated 300,000 Jews were killed at Chełmno, however, the exact figure will never be known.¹⁵⁹ Although the staff that was used to manage Chełmno was

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Patrick Montague, *Chełmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 65.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵⁹ Laqueur, "Chełmno," in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, 115. Note. This number has been debated by Historians. On June 5, 1945, Polish Judge Wladyslaw Bednarz concluded that between 350,000 and 360,000 Jews could have died in Chełmno.

small, especially in comparison to Auschwitz, resources of manpower were still used in order to maintain both the daily operations and security of the camp. Additional personnel were also needed to maintain security around the many ghettos surrounding Chełmno. Among these included Poland's second largest ghetto, Łódź.

Similar to Chełmno, Belzec was also chosen as an ideal place for the annihilations of Jews due its remote location and its proximity to Jews living within Poland's General Government. Construction of the death camp first began on November 1, 1941. Unlike Chełmno's commandant, Belzec's Christian Wirth sought to create permanent gas chambers. He conducted the first experiments using newly built chambers at the end of February 1942.¹⁶⁰ Together with his assistant Josef Oberhauser, the two men developed new methods to gas, transport, and bury Jews at Belzec, which would also later be used at Sobibor and Treblinka. During its operation, which lasted from March 1942 to December 1942, Belzec employed an estimated 20 to 30 SS staff members and an additional 90 to 120 Ukrainian guards. The collaboration between the Ukrainians and the SS resulted in 600,000 Jews being murdered and buried using the most inhumane methods conceived.¹⁶¹

The most infamous of the death camps was Auschwitz. It was initially designed specifically as a concentration camp for Polish prisoners and later expanded for the arrival of Soviet POWs. Nonetheless, as the Nazi's plan for the Final Solution became more transparent, Auschwitz evolved into what would later be a hub of murder. By January 1945, approximately 1.3 million prisoners were deported to Auschwitz, 1.1 million of which were Jews. An estimated 1.1 million of those prisoners, the majority Jews from across Europe, were murdered. This figure also included 75,000 Poles, more than 20,000 Roma and Sinti, 15,000 Soviet POWs, and 10,000

¹⁶⁰ David M. Crowe, *The Holocaust: Roots, History, and the Aftermath* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 241-242.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 243-244.

members of other nationalities.¹⁶² This figure does not include those who were murdered without first being registered. For example, the first transports of Jewish deportees were comprised of Polish Jews from Upper Silesia, and most from Sosnowiec. As soon as the Jews arrived they were sent directly to the gas chambers of bunkers 1 and 2 within Birkenau. It is impossible to know exactly how many children were murdered within Auschwitz. However, according to transportation lists, from April 17 to July 17, 1942, 656 of the deportees were children. Beginning in July 1942 Jewish deportees were separated into two groups upon arrival to Auschwitz. The young and healthy men and women were selected for slave labor. The remaining deportees, which included children, mothers with small children and pregnant women, were sent to the gas chambers without registration. Out of the total population of deportees, an estimated 30% of Jewish prisoners were women.¹⁶³

The Nazis intended to eliminate the presence of Jews from all of Europe. Such a task could only be completed if both the current and next generation of Jews were eliminated at the same time. To accomplish this, camps such as Auschwitz needed to be organized. The organization structure of Auschwitz consisted of three components: camp administration, guard forces, and branches or units of the main SS offices. Specifically, the guard forces made up 75% of the camp's personnel. A typical guard company or *SS-Totenkopfwach-Kompanie*, consisted of at least 200 men. Initially in 1940, the number of SS staff members serving within Auschwitz did not exceed 500. However, by January 15, 1945, the day before the camp's evacuation, the number of SS personnel reached its peak at 4,481 men and 71 SS women supervisors, or *SS-*

¹⁶² Walter Laqueur, ed., "Auschwitz," in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, associate ed. Judith Taylor Baumel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 44.

¹⁶³ Gutman, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, 413-414, 393.

Aufseherinnen. In total, 6,800 SS men and an estimated 200 SS women superiors served within Auschwitz.¹⁶⁴

This increase of personnel from 1940 to 1945 clearly reflects the need for greater numbers of manpower within Auschwitz as the war continued. Before one can label the workforce of camps like Auschwitz as a misuse of manpower, one must first examine the nature and origin of the people who chose to work at Auschwitz. Although many have labeled those who took part in the Holocaust, via directly or indirectly, as evil or different from ordinary humans, there are those who have argued the opposite. For example, in the 1960s Hannah Arendt provoked a considerable amount of controversy after portraying Adolf Eichmann simply as a master bureaucrat. She claimed that a common theme among Germans was the mental necessitate to not only obey laws, but to enforce them as well. Thus, Arendt concluded that Eichmann conducted his duties with little thought or exemptions.¹⁶⁵

Within Auschwitz the largest age groups were those born in 1907-13 and 1919-24. They generally came from a low occupational status with the exception of doctors, teachers, and engineers.¹⁶⁶ Of these individuals 42.6% were Catholic and identified with religious backgrounds.¹⁶⁷ An estimated 58.1% of the staff's nationalities consisted of those born as Austrian or German citizens. Second to this statistic were the *Volkdeutsche*, or ethnic Germans. Citizens from Yugoslavia made up 12.8% of the staff, and another 10.1% consisted of people from Rumania.¹⁶⁸ These staff members were divided into three corps which served as the base of the camp's ranking system. First, rank and file, or ordinary people made up 69.7% of the camp's

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 272-274.

¹⁶⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1965), 137.

¹⁶⁶ Gutman, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, 276-277.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., see page 280 for table 2.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., see page 281 for table 3.

staff, the majority of which willingly chose to serve in Auschwitz rather than fight on the Eastern Front. Second, noncommissioned officers made up 26.1%, while officers made up a minimal 4.2%.¹⁶⁹

Now that the individuals who chose to work at Auschwitz have been examined, one may address a critical question: how do these figures represent a misuse of manpower by the Nazis? Central to this question is the issue of resource management. Unlike machines, which can be rebuilt and manufactured, people can not be so easily replaced. Both the Nazis and the Japanese discovered through their blunders that there was no substitute for an experienced well-trained pilot or soldier. In the case of the staff of Auschwitz, the 6,800 men and 200 women could have served within vital positions while Germany was engaging the Red Army on the Eastern Front. According to Browning, by the end of 1942, the total strength of the Order Police reached 15,186. The Polish police, who were supervised by the Order Police, numbered 14,297 men.¹⁷⁰ In total this amounts to 36,283 men, not including the numbers of those who served within the *Einsatzgruppen*, other police battalions, and within Nazi concentration and death camps throughout the war. While this number seems small, one must recall the struggles that the German Army faced in the winter of 1941, and every winter campaign afterwards. As stated in Chapter 1, at the time of Germany's invasion into the Soviet Union, the Germans only had enough fuel, food, and ammunition to last for the first few months of the campaign. Although one of the underlying causes of Operation Barbarossa's failure was a lack of supplies, *and* the mechanized vehicles to move them, 30,000 willing soldiers could have served in critical roles of the army. Those who were not fit for front line duty could have served roles within transportation of supplies from the rear to the front lines, or within other rear line roles. In fact, given the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 282.

¹⁷⁰ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, 7.

critical nature of Germany's dwindling supply of manpower from 1941 to 1945, which represented the reduction of Germany's captured territory, it would be logical to prioritize one's natural resources to ensure that victory over the Red Army came first.

Auschwitz was one of the most infamous camps built by the Nazis. It represented the ultimate form of cruelty towards what the Nazis deemed "inferior races." However, did these "races" actually pose a threat to Germany's military supremacy? The answer is certainly not. With regards to the Eastern Front, Nazi ideology failed to differentiate between the Soviet threat and the, "Jewish threat." Nazi leaders such as Himmler saw the two as one and the same. Thus, it created problems for the *Wehrmacht* as it entered the Soviet Union.

This same ideology would never allow women to serve active roles within the German Army. Although by 1942, 52% of the German labor force was female, many German elites believed that the primary role of a German woman was to serve as a mother.¹⁷¹ Hitler also held very strong reservations about how the roles of women could change within Germany. In a speech delivered to the Nazi Women's Organization at the Nuremberg Party Congress, Hitler asserted that,

If National Socialism has now given women a different position to that which was the case with liberal and, in particular, Marxist, parties the reason is it has a different valuation of women. We see in the women the eternal mothers of our nation... These aspects form the basic for the particular attitude which Nation Socialism adopts towards women. The so-called 'equal rights' of women, which Marxism demands, are in reality not equality of rights but a deprivation of woman's rights because they will draw women into areas where they bound to be inferior because they will put women in situations which cannot strengthen their position vis-à-vis both men and society but only weaken it...¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Jeremy Noakes, eds, *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 4 The German Home Front In World War II: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter, UK: Exeter University Publications, 1998), 302, 304.

¹⁷² Hitler Adolf, *Die Reden Hitlers am Parteitag der Freiheit 1935* (Munich 1935), pp. 53-4, quoted in, Noakes, *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 4 The German Home Front In World War II*, Ibid., 338.

This point of view was shared both by Nazi party officials and elites within the *Wehrmacht*. In the case of women, certain forms of labor were viewed to be unsuitable. Although women were allowed to serve as secretaries, cooks, and even as air warning personnel for the *Wehrmacht*. However, this recruitment was not publicized and with the exemption of those women who served as air warning personnel, or in occupied territories, no woman was allowed to wear a military uniform.¹⁷³ In this case we see a transparent example of poor resource management based solely upon the ideals of gender values and ascribed statuses. In the case of the USSR, one may observe how quickly the Russians began to conscript women into active army roles. Although this was done to prevent losing a war, the Soviets realized that the sovereignty of their country was at risk. After the battle of Stalingrad, which can be argued as a major turning point on the Eastern Front, Germany's leaders should have adopted Soviet adaptations and practices of conscription. Mobilizing the German economy for war would have also greatly benefited the Eastern Front.

Similarly to German women, people of Slavic origin also were never permitted to join the ranks of the German Army. In the case of Ukraine, German soldiers were welcomed by Ukrainian locals as heroes and saviors due to Stalin's purges of the Ukrainian people during the early 1930's. An estimated 3.3 million soviet citizens died from starvation between 1932 and 1933. It is estimated that Ukrainians made up at least 3 million out of the total number of deaths.¹⁷⁴ Accepting the Ukrainian's will to fight against Stalin would have surely lowered the number of partisan groups which rose up to harass and maim German soldiers.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 339.

¹⁷⁴ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 53.

In addition, Gottlob Herbert Bidermann, a soldier of *Wehrmacht's* 132nd Infantry Division, noted within his memoir *In Deadly Combat* the hazardous situations that the *Wehrmacht* faced due to Berlin's ideological thinking. Bidermann asserted that,

Nevertheless, none of us could foresee or comprehend that the bitterness and rage of the Russians following the invasion of their country would grow more intense with each passing year. Much of the civilian population was in opposition to this retribution... Many Russian prisoners captured early during the campaign had expressed a strong desire to fight alongside us against Stalin and the Soviet government. As time passed the Communist leadership abandoned the call to sacrifice oneself for Communism and sought to make a strong appeal to the inherent patriotism of the people. To defend "Mother Russia" against the "invading Fascist intruders" became the patriotic duty for everyone, with absolutely no exceptions...¹⁷⁵

Thus, the Nazis missed a vital chance to capitalize on the hate which was felt by Ukrainians and some even some Russians towards the Soviet government and Stalin himself. This hate towards Stalin was verified by Vasily Grossman, a writer for the Soviet newspaper, during his travels with Soviet soldiers on the front lines. As Germans invaded Ukraine, many locals noted the black crosses that were painted on German vehicles. Some Ukrainians saw the Germans as Christian liberators who sought to free them from Soviet atheism. As a result, the Germans were welcomed with bread and salt upon their arrival into Ukrainian towns. The German Army Intelligence department had even suggested that an army of 100,000 Ukrainians, who were ethnic Germans, should be raised to aid in fighting against the Red Army. Naturally this recommendation was swiftly rejected by Hitler.¹⁷⁶ This refutation of labor raises an interesting question concerning Nazi ideology. Why were Ukrainian sympathizers allowed to work alongside the SS in death camps like Belzec and Sobibor, but not alongside the *Wehrmacht* during their operations against the Red Army? In many cases Ukrainian guards were given little

¹⁷⁵ Gottlob Herbert Bidermann, *In Deadly Combat: A German Soldier's Memoir of the Eastern Front*, edited and translated by Derek S. Zumbro (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 2000), 43.

¹⁷⁶ Grossman, *A Writer At War*, 36, 38.

to no pay for their services. Yet, they contributed to the murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children. If German soldiers feared fighting alongside inferior troops, that horror had already manifested by incorporating the use of, “inferior” Italian soldiers into the German Army.

This chosen rejection of what could be considered; “free aid” demonstrates that the ideas behind Nazi ideology were far from concrete. Once again in the name of Nazi ideology and racial superiority historians can see that in the face of limited resources of manpower, the Nazis continued to operate as if their invasion was foolproof. Although, one may argue that by 1941 the Nazis had only suffered one military defeat by Britain, and so had no reason to be wary of launching an invasion into the Soviet Union. Even after the Nazi defeat at Stalingrad, German commanders remained faithful towards Hitler’s vision. However, one may also argue that the history of Germany’s military conquests have been plagued by an inability to conquer the issue of logistical planning and supply management. The history of German warfare has focused primarily on fast offensive movements, which were aimed to encircle and cut off the enemy. History illustrates that in portions of Germany’s military expeditions, little consideration has been given to *how* such offensive movements would be supported.

This particular German method of conducting warfare dates back to the time of Frederick the Great, who ruled over Prussia from 1740 to 1786. *Federkrieg*, or war of the penetration, was a strategy of complete destruction.¹⁷⁷ In 1756, Frederick II(the Great) initiated the advent of the Seven Years’ War by launching a preemptive strike in the form of a invasion into western Bohemia. Although tactically victorious, the Prussians sustained many casualties due to engaging what Frederick II perceived to be an Austrian rear guard. In 1957 Frederick II initiated

¹⁷⁷ Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 63.

a full scale invasion of Bohemia, which included the incorporation of some 115,000 men.¹⁷⁸ The siege of Prague and the battle of Kolin, fought on May 6 and June 18, resulted in the Prussians suffering heavy casualties. In both cases, Frederick II attempted to strike at the flank of his enemies with little consideration of the terrain, ammunition reserves, and proper intelligence on enemy numbers.¹⁷⁹ In a similar fashion, the Nazis staked the future of their Reich by gambling on a quick victory over the Soviet Union. This was achieved, however, with some of the most irresponsible planning by the Nazis during their campaigns on the Eastern Front.

Another prime example of the inconsistencies German warfare can be seen by observing the Herero Genocide of 1904-1907. In April 1884 Germany acquired the protectorate of German Southwest Africa. The territory covered 580,000 square miles of desert. The Herero and the Ovambo made up 80% of the indigenous population and greatly surpassed the numbers of their German counterparts.¹⁸⁰ The Herero launched a rebellion against the Germans, whom they viewed as brutal thieves. During the initial outbreak of violence Captain Gudewill telegraphed Berlin that 44 settlers, women and children among them, 26 soldiers, and 50 others had been mutilated by the Herero. Although these claims were false, German public opinion initially sided with the claims of their newspapers and thus supported action against their African subjects.¹⁸¹

The Herero numbered 6,000 to 8,000 warriors, all of which were armed with modern rifles. During the first two weeks of the revolt the Herero dominated German troops, but failed to acknowledge the importance of German railroads, the capital, or other strongholds, which if captured would have dealt the colonists a crushing blow.¹⁸² In early February the Germans had

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 67.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 69-70.

¹⁸⁰ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 8.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸² Ibid., 11.

succeeded in securing the railroad, but failed miserably at squashing the rebellion. German naval troops lacked nearly every quality necessary to fight against the Herero. They were inexperienced and poorly disciplined. As more reinforcements joined the battle, the burden of obtaining and distributing supplies became heavier. Food, water, ammunition, and medical services were especially in short supply. German soldiers suffered from typhus due to malnourishment and contaminated water. This resulted in the fighting power of Theodore Leutwein's, commander of the German troops SWA, army being reduced to a third of its fighting strength.¹⁸³ These shortcomings in preparation for the campaign in South-West Africa came from a misguided interpretation of military priorities. The elites within the German Army believed that duties such as land administration, medical care, POW treatment, and supply management were meaningless. In their clouded eyes only actual combat was significant.¹⁸⁴ Thus, there was no chance to move up through the chains of command unless one showed promise through achieving military victories. This attitude towards what could be considered inferior duties caused many Germans during the first year of the revolt in SWA to suffer and perish. The elites within the German Army were so focused on the annihilation of the enemy that they caused unnecessary casualties.

Although the Nazis made slight improvements in this regard, Nazi ideology blinded many within the military to the realities of war, which the German Army faced during Operation Barbarossa. As stated in chapter 1, the Nazis adapted the same method of attack which had they had used during the invasions of Poland and France. In both cases, the total distance that German supply routes had to travel was significantly shorter than the routes used to deliver supplies

¹⁸³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 138-139.

within the Soviet Union and Soviet Republics. This pattern of poor logistical planning appeared yet again during the Great War.

German officers prided themselves as students of military history. As such, they would have been required to study the shortcomings and successes of the Great War. The defining strategy, which Germany assumed would guarantee victory, was the Schlieffen-Moltke plan. The Schlieffen-Moltke plan was first devised by Alfred von Schlieffen as a means to attack France while holding off its ally, Russia. The plan initially called for France, which was deemed the greater threat, to be eliminated by a crushing offensive. Schlieffen's plan called for seven armies, three in Lorraine and two on wing, to assemble between Aachen and Basel. If the French attacked first, Schlieffen planned to counter attack against France's left wing and drive the French Army away from its fortifications and towards the Upper Rhine.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, if the French remained on the defensive, Schlieffen would flank French fortifications by sweeping through Belgium and Luxembourg to trap the French Army and cut it off from any potential British aid. Once France had been conquered, Germany would then turn her attention to Russia. Schlieffen thought that his plan would be Germany's best hope for victory. Though, after his retirement, his successor General Helmuth von Moltke the younger, modified the existing plan by redistributing troops to enforce the center of the Germany Army. Moltke and Colonel Erich Ludendorff planned to make their center strong enough both to pin down the French and to counterattack, thus making a fully sweep through Belgium pointless.¹⁸⁶

The failure of the Schlieffen-Moltke plan came not from the distribution of forces, but from the issues associated with quick infantry movements, endurance, and logistical

¹⁸⁵ Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," cited in, Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 316-317.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 322.

shortcomings.¹⁸⁷ Neither Moltke nor Schlieffen predicted that the German Army's advance would be slowed down as it crossed through Belgium. Resistance was expected to be minimal at best. German military commanders also underestimated how far their soldiers could travel while maintaining limited supplies. German officers also fell victim their own propaganda. Like the Nazis, they believed in German martial superiority and the strength of the Imperial Army of 1914.¹⁸⁸

In conclusion, through these examples historians can see that the patterns of German military logistical blunders did not originate in the winter of 1941. They first took shape in 1904, against what many Germans likely considered inferior enemies. This same ideology was adopted by the Nazis towards their Slavic counterparts. German military doctrine demanded that offensive engagements be carried out using quick maneuvers. Although initially the German invasion into the Soviet Union made great strides, the reality of the campaign was that the German advance would eventually fall short due to limited supplies. Although the weather during the winter of 1941 played a major role in slowing the German advance, German soldiers were additionally plagued by harassment from partisans. The Nazis managed to turn a possible ally against the Red Army into an eternal enemy. Nonetheless, the Nazis were not above employing Ukrainians to work within their death camps. This misuse of free labor was a direct result of Nazi ideology blinding German elites in Berlin. The goals of the German Army were side-lined in favor of pursuing the Final Solution. Nonetheless, many Germans, especially those belonging to the SS, saw the Soviet threat and the, "Jewish threat" as one and the same. For this reason, the Nazis employed thousands of Germans for the sake of managing and supplying the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 323.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 320.

death camp system. These resources could have served other purposes on the Eastern Front, but instead were used to commit some of the most heinous crimes in human history.

It is important to mention that while the Nazis were committing valuable resources of manpower to the Final Solution in 1943, they were also waging war in North Africa and fighting a losing battle against the Red Army. In the winter of 1942, the Soviet victory at the battle of Stalingrad changed the dynamics of the war in the east. This marked the Soviet Union's first major victory and their first successful winter offensive. In the summer of 1943 Germany initiated Operation Citadel, which was a high-risk venture to regain the initiative from the Red Army before Western Allies could establish themselves in Europe.¹⁸⁹ The battle of Kursk would decide who would control Ukraine, and more importantly, whether or not Germany would be forced to fight defensively for the remainder of the war. Heinz Guderian suggested that the entire operation be canceled in favor of allowing the *Wehrmacht* time to resupply. He argued that Germany needed to build a mobile reserve that would be strong enough to halt an Allied advance. Once this was accomplished, the Germans would be free in 1944 to strike back in the east with an updated generation of heavy tanks.¹⁹⁰ Erich von Manstein, however, argued that the 450 mile front of Kursk could not be defended. Thus, Germany needed to launch a quick large scale, double penetration of the Kursk salient. This would in theory cut off Soviet soldiers within the salient, and draw in Soviet reserves. Mantein's plan would also theoretically shorten the front to 150 miles while additionally catching the Soviets off guard.¹⁹¹

Similar to the planning of Barbarossa, which doomed the operation prior to its initiation, Citadel shared a similar fate. By 1943 Hitler had lost faith in his generals and refused all forms

¹⁸⁹ Dennis E. Showalter, *Armor and Blood: The Battle of Kursk The Turning Point of World War II* (New York: Random House, 2013), 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 42.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 43.

of council that did not concur with his own ideas. On March 13, 1943, Hitler issued *Operational Order No.5*, which called for Army groups Center and South to prepare for an attack no later than mid April.¹⁹² Hitler, however, postponed the operation three times. This was due to poor weather, issues of preparation for the attack, and disagreements between Hitler and his generals. The final date for the offensive was set for early July of 1943. Nevertheless, by that point the Soviets were given ample time to prepare for the German offensive, which made attack all the more risky for the Nazis. Additionally, the more time the Nazis spent planning and deploying thousands of tanks and hundreds of thousands of men, the more difficult it would be to cancel the offensive if the need ever arose.¹⁹³ Although the Germans were able to deploy 650,000 men, some 2,600 tanks and assault guns, and 1,800 planes, the Germans achieved this only by drawing a mass of troops from the north and south.¹⁹⁴ Thus, if the operation failed there would be no chance of initiating a second offensive.

The German's defeat at Kursk provided the Red Army with a clear path to Berlin. Yet, Nazi ideology still remained firm within the minds of the SS. In September 1943, Germany began to formulate plans for the occupation of Hungary in order to ensure that the country would not fall into the hands of the Allies. In March 1944, Germany occupied Hungary and thus gained access to the last remains of Jews living in Europe. The Nazis committed precious time to capturing and deporting Hungarian Jews for the sake of their Final Solution. This was done as the Soviets were steadily pushing the Germans back towards their original borders. As the Allies pushed in from the west, and the Soviets pushed from the east, Nazi Germany responded by attempting to eliminate as many remaining Jews as possible. Jewish prisoners were quickly

¹⁹² Robert M. Citino, *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting a Lost War, 1943* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 120.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 129.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 133.

evacuated between camps, and thus, were deliberately murdered as the Nazis sought to hold on to their crumbling Reich.¹⁹⁵ Thus, even as the Nazis knew that the end was near, they continued to engage in similar actions of poor resource management. The only difference between the pursuit of the Final Solution in 1941 compared to 1943, was that during Barbarossa, Germany had the opportunity to correct the mistakes it had made. The Nazis would have been able to focus solely on dealing with the Red Army while properly utilizing resources of manpower. After the failure of Citadel in 1943, however, Germany's fate was sealed by a combination of poor planning and an overestimation of the *Wehrmacht's* capabilities.

¹⁹⁵ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 244.

Conclusions

Prior to 1941, Nazi Germany was generally successful in its attempts to conquer Europe and bring about the foundation of a Third Reich. Nazi ideology, which was based exclusively upon ideas of racial superiority and inferiority, led many German soldiers to believe that their cause was just. By following Hitler, the German people could free themselves from the shackles of Versailles, and take control of their own fates. Nazi ideology led many Germans to believe that they were unstoppable; that it was their destiny to rule over Europe. Although this idea united many under a single cause, it also severely limited the hindsight of those within the upper ranks of the Reich. Hitler had proven his worth as a leader after defeating France. He stood among many German people as a god who could achieve anything.

It was this brand of delusional thinking that caused a nearly flawless set of victories to be transformed into a disastrous war on two fronts, from which Germany would never recover. The planning of Barbarossa had come exclusively from past campaigns in the West. Hitler made no attempt to address changes that would need to be made to the German Army on an Eastern Front. Although the operation was initially successful, it lost speed quickly due to the need to resupply and the effect that Soviet winter weather had on roads. For Germany speed was critical. The longer the operation went on without accomplishing its main objective, the greater the risk German soldiers were exposed to. As a result, the Germans would only be able to conduct their offensive operations during the USSR's spring and summer months. This method of fighting enabled the Allies time to prepare for the Normandy landings. By the time D-Day had arrived, the Russians were preparing to expel Germany from the western half of the USSR. At that point, Germany's sphere of influence began to contract.

The significance of this failure was tripled by the misuse of resources by the Nazis. The pursuit of the Final Solution added yet another front to Germany's campaign for world domination. In the face of destruction, Hitler and his subordinates continued to commit to the idea of a Jewish free Europe and USSR. The perception of a "Jewish threat" aided Hitler in rushing into a war with the USSR. The employment of the *Einsatzgruppen*, Order Police, and other policing organizations against Polish and Soviet Jewry represented a level of brutality, which the world had not yet witnessed. In addition, it also symbolized a division of labor among Germany's forces. Considering Germany's limited recourses, it would have been logical to task those who were unfit for front line duty with other job, which could directly benefit the war effort against the Red Army.

Instead, the Nazis allowed themselves to become victims of their own propaganda. They denied themselves what could have been valuable assistance in the fight against Stalin. The rejection, harassment, and murder of Ukrainian citizens led many partisans to take up Stalin's cause. Thus, all Soviet citizens were united by the single desire to survive. The Nazi's also misused their resources by employing Germans to work in death and concentration camps. The entire camp system subtracted a focus, which should have remained fixed on defeating the Soviet Union. Germany's primary intention was to conquer the USSR so that Germany could acquire the needed slave labor, agricultural land, and oil needed to fight against Britain and the U.S. With addition of a third front, the "Jewish front," the Nazis spent more time considering how to deal with the "Jewish threat" than how to win against the Red Army. This fact can be easily proven by observing the level of detail that was used while planning Operation Barbarossa.

References

- Arad, Yitzhak. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.
- _____. *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*. Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1965.
- Bartov, Omer. *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- _____. *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Browning, Christopher R. *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution*. New York, NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc, 1985.
- _____. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York, NY: Harper Perennia, 1998.
- Cecil, Robert. *Hitler's Decision to Invade Russia 1941*. London, UK: Davis Poynter, 1975.
- Citino, Robert M. *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005.
- _____. *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting a Lost War, 1943*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2012.
- Crowe, David M. *The Holocaust: Roots, History, and the Aftermath*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008.

- German History in Documents and Images(GHID). "Commissar Order June 6, 1941."
 Documents – The Military, Foreign Policy, and War. Accessed November 9, 2014.
http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1548
- Grossman, Vasily. *A Writer At War: A Soviet Journalist With the Red Army, 1941-1945*. Trans and Ed. Antony Beevor & Lube Vinogradova. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.
- Gutman, Yisrael and Michael Berenbaum, Ed. *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*.
 Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Hackett, David A. Edited and translated. *The Buchenwald Report*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.
- Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.
- Höhne, Heinz. *The Order of The Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's S.S.* Trans. Richard Barry. New York: Coward-McCann Inc, 1970.
- Hull, Isabel V. *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Jukes, Geoffrey. *Essential Histories: The Second World War(5) The Eastern Front 1941-1945*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2002.
- Kay, Alex J., Jeff Rutherford, and David Stahel, eds. *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide, and Radicalization*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012.
- Klee, Ernst, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds. "*The Good Old Days*" *The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*. Forward. Hugh Trevor-Roper. Trans. Deborah Burnstone. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991.

Krakowski, Shmuel. *Chełmno A Small Village in Europe: The First Nazi Mass Extermination Camp*. Trans. Ralph Mandel. Jerusalem, Israel: Yad Vashem, 2009.

Langerbein, Helmut. *Hitler's Death Squads: The Logic of Mass Murder*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004.

Laqueur, Walter. ed. "Auschwitz." In *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*. associate ed. Judith Taylor Baumel. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Montague, Patrick. *Chełmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Neitzel, Sönke and Harald Welzer. *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying, The Secret WWII Transcripts of German POWs*. Trans. Jefferson Chase. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

Noakes, Jeremy and Geoffrey Pridham. Eds. *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 3 Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader*. Exeter, UK: Exeter University Publications, 1988.

_____. *Nazism 1919-1945. Vol 4 The German Home Front In World War II: A Documentary Reader*. Exeter, UK: Exeter University Publications, 1998.

Roseman, Mark. *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2002.

Rothenberg, Gunther E. "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment." cited in, Paret, Peter. ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Schleunes, Karl A. *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews 1933-1939*. Bloomington, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970.

Showalter, Dennis E. *Armor and Blood: The Battle of Kursk The turning point of World War II.*

NY: Random House, 2013.

Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin.* New York, NY: Basic Books,

2010.

Stone, Norman. *World War Two: A Short History.* New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012.

Weber, Thomas. *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, The Men of the List Regiment, and The First*

World War. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Weinberg, Gerhard L. *Germany, Hitler, and World War II.* New York: Cambridge University

Press, 1996.

_____. *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

University Press, 1994.

Westermann, Edward B. *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East.* Lawrence,

Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005.