Home to the Reich:
The Nazi Occupation of Europe's Influence on Life inside Germany, 1941-45

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Abstract

Between September 1944 and March 1945 the Nazi regime deported over 250,000 German civilians living in western Germany. These clearances drew upon brutal techniques of population control perfected earlier in occupied Europe. Led by veterans of the anti-partisan war in Eastern Europe, the Rhineland's security personnel forcibly removed civilians from areas threatened by the Allied advance and appropriated their personal property, such as food and livestock, for the war effort. During the deportations, security officers forced men and teenage boys into militia units sent to the front, and executed suspected criminals, spies, and deserters. In theory and in practice, the Rhineland deportations were reminiscent of the so-called "dead zone" operations previously carried out in Nazi Europe to deny enemy partisans food and shelter. However, this time the regime used these methods to coerce its own war weary population into defending the country. This intersection between counterinsurgency methods and domestic policing during the last months of the Third Reich is the subject of this dissertation.

It examines how a ruthless anti-partisan war waged abroad reshaped policing at home through the rotation of security personnel between outposts on the edges of Nazi Europe and offices inside Germany. Deploying personnel to war zones profoundly influenced the already radical nature of Nazi security culture. Participation in genocide and counterinsurgency operations hardened officers' interpretation of contradictory civilian behaviors, and allowed them to conflate common criminality and war weariness with resistance. The intentional use of criminal tropes to describe guerilla fighters encouraged personnel to draw parallels between their experiences abroad and the social unrest they confronted on the home front as the Third Reich collapsed, with tragic results. By tracing the careers of the security officers responsible for the atrocities committed in the Rhineland, my research highlights the strong continuities in ideas, policies, practices, and

personnel between Nazi Germany and its occupied territories that caused violence against civilians on the German home front at the end of World War II.

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Introduction

Shortly before dawn on the morning of April 12, 1945 a police convoy arrived at a prison in the small town of Lüttringhausen in western Germany. Entering the courtyard, the officers proceeded to load sixty-four of the inmates into the back of several large trucks, including one elderly amputee who they carried to the waiting vehicles. After securing their prisoners they drove westwards, before turning south onto a wooded road a few kilometers outside the village of Hilden. Disembarking in the murky predawn twilight the officers escorted their prisoners, including an additional seven East European forced laborers taken from a prison in nearby Wuppertal, to a freshly dug mass grave.[1]

As enemy artillery fire thundered in the distance, officers from the Criminal Police and the Secret State Police (Gestapo) marched the prisoners in small groups into the pit and shot them in the back of the head. Recognizing their fate, several tried to escape and run into the surrounding woods, only to be gunned down by their guards. After the execution ended the policemen filled in the grave, and their commander distributed bottles of Schnapps and cartons of cigarettes to the officers who participated in the executions.[2] Fortified with spirits, the killers departed, fully expecting to return a few days later and finish off the remaining prisoners still held at Lüttringhausen.

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[1] Hauptstaatsarchiv Landesarchiv Düsseldorf, hereafter cited as HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, p, 43, Landgericht Wuppertal, 20.6.49, Zeugevernehmung Albert S.; p. 48, Zeugevernehmung Willi S. Last names redacted to comply with the German Federal Government's *Datenschutz* laws concerning the protection of personal information.

[2] Ibid. p. 25, Landgericht Wuppertal, 20.6.49., Zeugevernehmung Ernst V.; p. 48. Zeugevernehmung Willi S.; p. 160, 22.9.48, Zeugevernehmung Julius P.

Fortunately, these plans never came to fruition. American troops captured the town three days later, and several members of a local anti-Nazi group informed them of the murders committed at Hilden. After weeks of frustrated searching, American soldiers finally uncovered the mass grave hidden deep within the woods. Shocked war crimes investigators and townspeople discovered that only a handful of the seventy-one victims were political prisoners or foreign workers. The overwhelming majority in fact turned out to be German civilians imprisoned for committing acts of criminality. Tragically, several victims had already served their sentences for minor crimes such as petty theft and were set to be released just days before the police murdered them.[3] Instead of targeting inmates who could help the enemy build a new postwar state, it appeared that the Nazi security forces instead prioritized the extermination of common criminals.

The leader of the execution detail later confirmed these suspicions when told West German interrogators that his men shot "dangerous criminals" held at Lüttringhausen on the orders of General Walter Model, the commander of the German military forces trapped inside the Ruhr Pocket. Fearing they might turn against the civilian population after the enemy released them, Model ordered the execution of all prisoners accused of criminal acts such as theft and looting.[4]

The atrocity at Hilden was one of the last crimes committed by the Nazi regime. Starting in early September 1944, its security forces embarked on a reign of violence which stretched

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[3] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, p. 9-13, 20. 6. 49., Landgericht Wuppertal, Ermittlungsverfahren Mordes und Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit.

[4] Ibid. p. 8-10; p. 214, Landgericht Wuppertal, 3.2.49., Vernehmung Hans Henschke; Nr. 181, p. 4, 7.4.45., Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, Erlass.

from the towns and villages along the western border, eastwards across the shattered cities nestled along the Rhine River and down into the foggy valleys of the Eifel Mountains. In early 1945 these crimes culminated in a series of massacres inside the bombed out industrial heartland of the Ruhr. This extraordinary eight month period of atrocity stemmed from the regime's efforts to prepare the Reich for the much anticipated *Endkampf*, or cataclysmic final battle which they claimed would decide the fate of the German people.

However, the Nazi leadership soon discovered that few civilians in the Left Bank Rhineland, the area between the border and the Rhine River, shared their enthusiasm. Already weary from three years of intense aerial bombardment and suffering from the everyday challenges posed by collapsing supply infrastructure, most Rhinelanders were only concerned with surviving what they perceived as the last few weeks of the war. Many refused to join militia or labor units sent to the front, and crime also dramatically rose due to food shortages. Dismayed at this apparent collapse of home front morale, the regime ordered its security forces to remove all civilians from the region.

Drawing upon ruthless techniques of population control developed in Nazi occupied Europe, the deportations removed over 250,000 German civilians from their homes in order to quell unrest and secure areas endangered by the advancing enemy.[5] During the clearances, the regime also authorized its security personnel to mercilessly root out so-called "defeatist

[5] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 2, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeitsbericht Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; RW 37-24, p. 45, HSSPF West, 27.10.44, Einsatzkommandos der Stapostelle Köln; RW 37-11, p. 44, HSSPF West, no date given, Polizeikampfgruppen 1944-1945. This figure is drawn from totals combined from surviving contemporary security reports, and is likely much higher.

elements" such as spies, criminals, and deserters, who threatened the integrity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or "People's Community, whose unity they deemed essential for victory.

The words of Higher SS and Police Leader West Karl Gutenberger, the commander of the Rhineland's security forces, best summed up this shocking decision to use violence against civilians on the home front. On September 21, 1944 he met with his officers to discuss the deteriorating situation in the region. Expressing frustration with the widespread disorder that continued to plague the area along the Reich's western border he remarked, "From now on, plunderers, deserters, and all riff raff will be dealt with gun in hand." He then told his men, "Take these people into the forest—you know what to do with them."[6]

Gutenberger's chilling comments implicitly acknowledged that many of the men who gathered to hear him speak previously served in occupied Eastern Europe. As members of the notorious Einsatzgruppen or other security units, they participated in the Holocaust and atrocities against civilians during brutal anti-partisan operations. Gutenberger's words therefore reveal how deeply entwined the counterinsurgency wars waged abroad and policing at home became by war's end. While an estimated seventy-five percent of all security officers served in occupied Europe at some point in their careers, little remains known about how their violent experiences in foreign lands reshaped their perception of Germans once they returned home, especially as the Reich faced defeat.[7] These transfers of security personnel and practice that linked Nazi Germany and its occupied territories are the subject of this study.

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[6] HStAD, Rep.270, Nr. 19, p. 409, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 18.8.50, Anklageschrift Richard Bach.

[7] Gerhard Paul, "Kämpfende Verwaltung." Das Amt IV des Reichssicherungshauptamtes als Führunginstanz der Gestapo," in Gerhard Paul & Klaus-Michael Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. 'Heimatfront' und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 75.

These connections are readily evidenced by the deportations which occurred in the Rhineland. In addition to removing the population into the interior of Germany, security officers also rounded up other valuable resources, such as food, coal, livestock and even radios, for the war effort. Special units known as Einsatzkommandos roved throughout the region arresting and executing suspected criminals, spies, and deserters. Sometimes these victims were their own *Volksgenossen*, or racial comrades—on November 10, 1944, security officers publicly hanged thirteen German gang members, including several teenagers as young as sixteen, outside of the Ehrenfeld train station in western Cologne in retaliation for a wave of armed robberies, thefts, and attacks on the police. These atrocities underscore how the tactics of population control developed in occupied Europe returned home to the Reich.

Most surprising of all, as this study illuminates, the Rhineland's security officers used the language of *Bandenkampf*, or counterinsurgency, to describe their activities. Max Hoffmann, the head of the Cologne Gestapo and a veteran of anti-partisan operations in Poland and Ukraine, reported to his superiors in Berlin that his men carried out *Bandensicherungsaufgaben*, efforts to secure the Rhineland from "banditry."[8] Earlier in the war, security and military personnel across Nazi occupied Europe used this well-worn euphemism to describe partisan activity and justify their murder of civilians. Thus, by using this phrase, one of the leading security officers in western Germany equated the region with the unruly spaces he encountered while stationed abroad, collapsing distinctions between the home front and the Reich's occupied territories. The

[8] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 1, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Staatspolizeistelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

study investigates this so-called "boomerang effect," and challenges the supposed binaries between Nazi Germany and its conquered territories that remain so prevalent in the vast scholarship on the Third Reich.[9]

Two decades ago, historians launched their own *Drang nach Osten*, turning eastwards as archives in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, and the Russian Federation became accessible after the Iron Curtain lifted. These rich new collections revealed the startling depth and breadth of the Nazis' ruthless aspirations to secure living space for a Greater Germany. The scholarship that emerged from this source material revolutionized the study of the Third Reich by conclusively exposing the complicity of large segments of the German population in this ruthless colonial project.[10] These works not only demolished the myth of a "clean" Wehrmacht blissfully ignorant of the genocidal crimes committed by the SS, but also revealed the key role played by civilian administrators and their families, who "went East" to benefit from the murderous racial reordering of the region. More crucially, the opening of the East European

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[9] I borrow the term "boomerang effect" from Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 54. See also Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1975-6* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 103.

[10] For post-colonial interpretations of the Third Reich see Jürgen Zimmerer, "The birth of the *Ostland* out of the spirit of colonialism: a postcolonial perspective on the Nazi policy of conquest and extermination," in Dirk Moses and Dan Stone, eds. *Colonialism and Genocide* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Holocaust als "kolonialer Genozid"? Europäische Kolonialgewalt und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungskrieg," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 33, (3) (Juli-September 2007): 439-466; Volker Langbehn and Mohammed Salama, eds., *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in the Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Furber, "Near as Far: The Nazi Occupation of Poland," *The International Review of History*. Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 2004): 541-579; Susanne Kuß recently provided counterpoint to the thesis regarding direct connections between Germany's colonial wars and Nazism's war of extermination in Eastern Europe. Susanne Kuß, *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegsschauplätzen. Eskalation von Gewalt zu Beginn des 20 Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: C.H. Links, 2012).

archives finally allowed for a cohesive picture of the concentration camp universe, as scholars uncovered thousands of smaller camps and ghettos previously lost to history.[11]

While this host of scholarship provided an important trove of new knowledge about the occupation, the enduring focus on the region created a perception of Nazi Europe divided into eastern and western hemispheres, with little apparent interaction between the two. Scholars continue to portray Eastern Europe as the epicenter of atrocity, with hardly any consideration as to how the policies and practices developed there spread across the rest of occupied Europe. Although a small number of historians challenged this false dichotomy by investigating violence

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[11] Due to space constraints I can unfortunately only list key examples of this now vast body of literature. Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1982); Hannes Heer & Klaus Naumann, eds., *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1998); Wolfram Wette, *Die Wehrmacht. Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Verbrechen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000); Geoffrey Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992); Jeff Rutherford, *Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front: The Germany Infantry's War, 1941-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Christoph Rass, '*Menschenmaterial.'Deutsche Soldaten an der Ostfront. Innensichten einen Infantriedivision 1939-1945* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003); Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht: Deutscher Militärbesatzung und einheimishche Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1944*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011); Walter Manoschek, ed., *Die Wehrmacht im Rassenkrieg*. *Der Vernichtungskrieg hinter der Front* (Wien: Pictus, 1996); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts-und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: HIS, 2000); Jörn Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik in der Sowjetunion. Die Befehlshaber der rückwärtigen Heeresgebiete 1941-1943* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010); Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East: The German Army and the Soviet Partisans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Ben Shepherd & Juliette Patterson, eds., *War in a Twilight World. Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939-1945* (New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010); Timothy Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942-1943* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Geoffrey P. Megargee, Martin Dean, and Christopher R. Browning, eds., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933-1945, Volume II: Ghettos in German Occupied Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010); Berndhard Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front. Besatzung, Kollaboration, Widerstand in Weissrussland, 1941-1944*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998); Martin Dean, *Collaboration and the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-1944* (New York. Palgrave-MacMillan, 2003); Bogdan Musial *Sowjetische Partisanen 1941-1944: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women in the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2013); Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite. Ehefrauen in der SS 'Sippengemeinschaft'* (Hamburg: HIS, 1997).

against civilians in countries such as France and Italy, these works place primacy on local conditions over discussions of continuity, and studies which consider violence within Nazi Europe as a whole remain rare.[12]

If the scholarship on the occupation is compartmentalized geographically, the history of the Third Reich's collapse, its "End Phase," remains confined by a narrative that places emphasis on rupture over continuity. Historians continue to stress how a range of unique situational factors, such as the breakdown of communication and the deliberate decentralization of the regime's security and governmental apparatus at the end of the war allowed die-hard fanatics to take matters into their own hands.[13]

The events that took place in the Rhineland, and in particular the atrocities committed in the city of Cologne, featured heavily in this small body of scholarship. Encouraged by the press coverage surrounding the investigation of the Ehrenfeld executions, several former members of the "Edelweiss Pirates," a loose moniker the Nazi regime bestowed on youth non-conformists,

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[12] Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Peter Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg oder NS Weltanschauungskrieg?: Kriegführung und Partisanenbekämpfung in Frankreich, 1943-44* (Göttingen: Oldenbourg 2007); Ahlrich Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich 1940-1944. Widerstandsbekämpfung und Judenverfolgung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000); Carlo Gentile, *Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS und Polizei im Kampf gegen Partisanen und Zivilbevölkerung in Italien, 1943-1945* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012); Lutz Klinkhammer, *Stragi naziste in Italia: la guerra contro i civili 1943-1944* (Roma: Donzelli, 1997); Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008).

[13] Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Stephen Fritz, *Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Death of the Third Reich* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004); Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2011); Gerhard Paul, " Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich nicht mehr berührt." Die Kriegsendphasenverbrechen der Gestapo 1944/45," in Mallmann and Paul, eds. *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

published their recollections starting in the 1980s.[14] These works quickly established an enduring legend regarding resistance to the regime during the last months of the war.

This redemptive narrative in which "Germans" fought "Nazis" in the streets of Cologne, was challenged by Bernd-A. Rusinek, the first scholar to critically investigate the events which transpired inside the city. His study served as a much needed corrective to the mythology surrounding the Edelweiss Pirates. Using surviving security files and postwar investigative records, Rusinek made a compelling argument that no organized, let alone effective, resistance movement existed in Cologne at the end of the war. Rather, disparate groups of deserters and other fugitives turned to criminality in order to survive. However, in the eyes of the security forces their actions seemed proof of the city's spiral into unrest. Fearing these gangs of deserters, criminals, and fugitives might help the invading Allies, they reacted violently to these everyday efforts to survive.[15]

Stressing the role that perceived social collapse played in generating violence against German civilians, Rusinek's important work helped establish the chaos thesis, which remains the primary means of explaining Nazi crimes committed during the End Phase. While disorder did indeed become widespread inside Germany at the end of the war, the scholarship's overreliance on the themes of societal breakdown and Nazi fanaticism obscures important continuities

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[14] Fritz Theilen, *Edelweiß Piraten. Geschichte eines Jugendlichen der trotz aller Drohungen nicht bereit war, sich dem nationalsozialistschen Erziehungsanspruch unterzuorden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984); Alexander Goeb, *Er war sechzehn, als man ihn hängte. Das kurze Leben des Widerstandskämpfer Bartholomäus Schink* (Münster: Rororo, 2001); Marion Heister, *Kohldampf, Knast und Kamelle. Ein Edelweiß Pirat erzählt sein Leben*, (Köln: Kiwi, 2003); Gertrud Koch, *Edelweiß. Mein Jugend als Widerstandskämpferin* (Münster: Rororo, 2006).

[15] Bernd-A. Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe. Terror, Illegalität, Widerstand—Köln 1944/45* (Essen: Klartext, 1989).

between this period and the larger history of the Third Reich. Indeed, as one historian astutely noted, Nazism's End Phase "is still largely considered an independent period in the history of National Socialism, with its own unique structures, situational constraints, and forms of authority."[16] How the perpetrators' perception of civilians were shaped beyond the immediate problems of pervasive anarchy and crime still remains unexamined in the historiography.

Scholarly notions of a unique period of collapse have not gone entirely unchallenged. Michael Geyer first highlighted the need for a reconsideration of the End Phase's periodization. He located the roots of the Third Reich's demise in the disaster at Stalingrad in February 1943, when the regime faced the first clear signs of Germany's shifting war fortunes. Geyer argued Nazi leaders drew directly upon the experience of World War I, and used the conflict's disastrous outcome to mobilize Germans to support the belated transition to a true "total war" footing characterized by increased economic production and harsher social policies. As Germany continued to hurtle towards defeat, the regime drew ever starker comparisons between 1918 and the current crisis, stoking their uncompromising desire to avoid defeat at all costs. Ultimately, Geyer found the desire to avoid repeating the failure of World War I even allowed the Nazis to conceive of self-destruction as a means of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.[17] Elisabeth Thalhofer later seconded his notion of a "long End Phase." In her work on

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[16] Gerhard Paul. "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich nicht mehr berührt." Die Kriegsendphasenverbrechen der Gestapo 1944/45," in Mallmann and Paul, eds. *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 545.

[17] Michael Geyer, "*Endkampf* 1918 and 1945. German Nationalism, Annihilation, and Self-Destruction," in *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds. (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2006), 49-53; Michael Geyer, "Insurrectionary Warfare: The German debate about a *Levée en Masse* in October 1918," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Sep. 2001): 459-527; Michael Geyer, "'There is a Land Where Everything Is Pure: Its Name Is Land of Death:' Some Observations on Catastrophic Nationalism," in Greg Eghigian & Matthew Paul Berg, eds., *Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth Century Germany* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); Michael Geyer, "How the Germans Learned to Wage War:

the prison system inside Germany, she found a gradual "widening" of violence on the home front after 1942, as the fortunes of war turned against the regime.[18]

Despite these interpretations, the idea of a distinct End Phase bracketed off in the history of the Third Reich remains hegemonic, as indicated by a proliferation of new studies devoted to the end of the war.[19] These works used the period as a *Sattelzeit*, or historical bridge, to link the war with postwar reconstruction and the creation of a divided Germany. Like their predecessors, this scholarship favored a cataclysmic narrative that best fitted the passing of the Nazi years and the rapid onset of the Cold War.

Recently, several historians attempted to break with the chaos thesis. Ian Kershaw argued the absence of a cohesive resistance movement in the wake of the July 20 bomb plot left the Führer's charismatic image as the Reich's defender unchallenged, despite the fact that by summer 1944 Hitler had faded as a presence in the lives of most Germans. Furthermore, fears of defeat and its aftermath maintained the bond between the Reich's citizens and their *Führer*. Even as Germany's governmental structure dissolved in early 1945, regional authority figures such as the Gauleiters, Wehrmacht commanders, and security officers continued to anticipate Hitler's desires. Most importantly, once allowed to act independently inside Germany for the

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On the Question of Killing in the First and Second World Wars," in Alon Confino, Paul Betts, and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Between Mass Death and Individual Loss: The Place of the Dead in Twentieth Century Germany* (New York; Berghahn, 2008), 25-50.

[18] Elisabeth Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt. Gestapo-Lager in der Endphase des Dritten Reiches* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 11-13.

[19] Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Fredrick Taylor, *Exorcizing Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011); Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

first time, they made full use of their autonomy to punish civilians for failing to defend the Reich.[20]

In another recent addition to the historiography on the End Phase, Sven Keller located the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* as the impetus for atrocities committed at the end of the war. He finds the concept of a national community "provided guidance and suggested set courses of action, offering certainties to the faithful when everything else was dissolving." Moreover, the myth of *Volksgemeinschaft* claimed that unity could achieve victory, encouraging true believers to maintain this world view at all costs.[21]

Yet Kershaw's compelling Weberian argument and Keller's thesis regarding the durability of imagined community still reflect the influence of the chaos thesis. They situate their work well within the boundaries of the Reich's collapse, and emphasize the key roles invasion, imploding infrastructure, and fanaticism played in encouraging violence against civilians. The attention paid to social collapse in the historiography is undoubtedly accurate. However, the scholarship neglects the important continuities that also made End Phase violence possible. As this study argues, without the experience of a long and bloody anti-partisan war which criminalized civilian behaviors and integrated extreme forms of violence into everyday security practice, the Nazi regime could not have committed atrocities against Germans on the home front.

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[20] Ian Kershaw, *The End: The Defiance and Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 12-14, 399-400.

[21] Sven Keller, "*Volksgemeinschaft* and Violence: Interdependencies," in Martina Steber & Bernhard Gotto, eds. *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 239. See also, Sven Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende: Gesellschaft und Gewalt 1944/45* (Göttingen: Oldenbourg, 2013).

The reliance on fanaticism and chaos as explanatory models also compresses the End Phase into the last few weeks before the end of the war in May 1945. As the study of the Rhineland demonstrates, violence in fact began inside Germany eight months *earlier*, well before the period examined by previous scholarship. In late 1944, the regime still had a firm grip on the country, and prepared for the Reich's defense by purging society of perceived threats to home front morale. The language and experience of counterinsurgency campaigns previously waged abroad proved crucial in constructing these categories of enemies. The *Bandenkampf*'s seamless blending of resistance and criminality created a nexus of fear and uncertainty which promoted violence against war weary civilians by casting them as dangerous security threats.

Using the Rhineland deportations as a case study, this work seeks to inject elements of continuity back into the discussion of the war's final months. To date, the small body of scholarship on the End Phase and the much larger historiography on the Nazi occupation of Europe has overlooked the important significance of these population removals. As this study argues, the decision to depopulate Germany's western border region, and the violence accompanying these clearances, exposes the significant congruencies that linked the supposed east-west binaries of Nazi Europe. Exploring these connections contributes to the pursuit of three historical questions.

First, it helps explain how and why the regime directed the same sorts of violent practices it deployed abroad against its own citizens at the end of the war. As noted above, these explanations currently remain rooted in the chaotic conditions of the last few weeks of the Third Reich. Examining the larger history of Nazi security policy alongside late war situational factors satisfactorily reveals how the atrocities that occurred during the End Phase became possible.

Second, the investigation of continuity intends to encourage the broader study of the relationship between Nazi Germany and its conquered territories. The constant transmission of people and ideas encouraged by the Nazi regime enabled developments on the Reich's periphery to influence the lives of Germans at home. The next logical step after two decades of increasingly narrow focus on Europe's eastern "bloodlands," is to consider the porous nature of the boundaries between metropole and periphery, east and west, providing a more accurate picture of how the Third Reich functioned.[22]

Investigating these issues leads to the work's third contribution, one that carries well beyond the study of modern German history. An examination of the Nazi fusion of domestic policing with counterinsurgency practices is quite timely, as methods of population control developed in war zones continue to return home. For example, U.S. Army reservists working in the Massachusetts state police deployed counterinsurgency methods they learned during the Iraq War on the streets of Springfield.[23] Other police agencies across the world also eagerly adopted

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[22] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2012). Several examples of cross pollination are Martijn Eickhoff's work on Dutch archaeologists in the Nazi East, "Der Unterschied zwischen den Russen und uns". Die Vor- und Frühgeschichte in den besetzten Niederlanden 1940-1945', in: Jean-Pierre Legendre, Laurent Olivier en Bernadette Schnitzler red., L'archeologie nationale-socialiste dans les pays occupes a l'ouest du reich. Actes de la table ronde internationale "Blut und Boden" tenue à Lyon (Rhône) dans le cadre du Xe congrès de la European Assocation of Archaeologists (EAA) les 8 et 9 septembre 2004 (z.p., 2007) 351-364.; Anja Heuss, *Kunst und Kulturgutraub: Eine vergleichende Studie zur Besatzungspolitik der Nationalsozialisten in Frankreich und der Sowjetunion* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2001). For an astute study of the impact of the Nazi occupation on Dutch postwar colonialism see Jennifer L. Foray, *Visions of Empire in the Nazi Occupied Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Menschenjagd und Massenmord. Das neue Instrument des Einsatzgruppen und-kommandos, 1939-1945," in Mallmann & Paul, eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg.*

[23] Stanley T. Grip, Jr., "The Avghani Model," *AUSA Magazine*, May 2008; "Counterinsurgency Tactics Used to Reduce Crime in Springfield"; WFCR New England Public Radio (August 22, 2011); "Springfield North End residents praise initiative that has reduced crime," *Springfield Republican*, May 5, 2011. See also the program's website: www.mspc3policing.com.

these tactics as tools of internal population management. For example, in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and Olympics, the Brazilian government forcibly relocated favela residents. Elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean, other governments use similar methods to combat drug cartels, further blending the boundaries between police and military action.[24] Indeed, even European police forces increasingly appear more like their paramilitary nineteenth century counterparts with each passing year.[25] While grounded in the history of modern Germany, this study aims to promote discussion about the often all too thin line between police and military practice.

To answer these questions, the work concerns itself with the Nazi regime's logics of security, in order to investigate how concerns regarding civilian behavior allowed the violence of occupation to return home. National Socialism premised its vision of order on an idealized *Volksgemeinschaft* that unified all Germans, ensuring the nation survived any internal or external challenge. According to the regime, this utopian project promised to restore the normality Germans supposedly craved during the unstable years of the Weimar Republic by securing the *Volk* (nation) against those who allegedly disrupted its unity, such as minorities, criminals, and political subversives.

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[24] Simon Romero, "Rio Slum is 'Pacified' in Advance of Games," *New York Times* (November 13, 2011); Christopher Gaffney, "Securing the Olympic City," *Georgetown International Review*, Summer/Fall 2012: 75-82; Thom Shanker, "U.S. Turns its Focus to Drug Smuggling in Honduras," *New York Times*, (May 5, 2012); Tim Padgett, "Mexico's Drug War: Why Soldiers Make Bad Narco Agents," *Time Magazine* (May 31, 2012); Richard Drayton, "From Kabul to Kingston: Army tactics in Jamaica resemble those in Afghanistan-and it's no mere coincidence," www.guardian.uk (June 14, 2010).

[25] Allen Feldman, "Securocratic Wars of Public Safety." *Interventions: International Journal of Post-Colonial Studies*, 6:3(2004): 330-350; C. Christine Fair & Sumit Ganguly, eds., *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerilla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Because it conceived unity as only achievable by rooting out and destroying hidden threats, the regime envisioned its security forces as a martial "fighting administration" devoted to uncovering and combating these enemies.[26] Nazi security logic thus concerned itself with anticipating and neutralizing dangers before they emerged rather than assessing the potential of known threats. Subsequently, by its very nature, the regime's security efforts were anxiety ridden, as the uncertainty inherent in this predictive endeavor generated constant fear, mistrust, intolerance, and foreboding. Most crucially, preemptive policing urgently demanded decision, and this reliance on intervention and quick decision brought imagination and intuition to the forefront as the powers capable of allowing security officers to neutralize threat.[27]

In order to define its targets, this security imagination juxtaposed rigid and unrealistic conceptions of ideal, "normal" behavior against the "abnormal," i.e. any behaviors which appeared to contradict the regime's expectations of its subjects. Thus, preemptive security logic remained mired in uncertainty and anxiety, as few managed to fit its rubrics and disorder seemed to spread uncontrollably despite officers' best efforts to eliminate it. Ultimately, security and insecurity became mutually reinforcing, as the increasingly invasive, preventative policing of populations at home and abroad disrupted daily life, causing unrest that created new perceived dangers. Ultimately, security became a form of war, as this toxic symbiosis of fear and prevention encouraged increasingly extreme measures, culminating in the forced removal and murder of entire peoples considered threatening to the Nazi vision of order.[28]

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[26] Gerhard Paul, "Kämpfende Verwaltung," 75.

[27] Louise Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security Beyond Probability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 7, 159.

[28] Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 119-126, 135.

My investigation of the fantasies provoked by these security anxieties is intellectually inspired by the work of Vejas Liulevicius. His study of the German military's occupation of the Baltic during World War I demonstrated how the clash between their wild imaginings of a resource rich East and the difficult reality of extracting those commodities reinforced virulent racial stereotypes of eastern peoples. This tension encouraged the military to embark on an increasingly violent, and ultimately useless, campaign to "civilize" the population of these territories, generating further resistance to the occupation. The military's failure to reform the East amplified crass perceptions of its population, and greatly contributed to the Nazis' own fantasies of the region as a place of unparalleled opportunity that could only be seized through the merciless reordering, if not outright extermination, of its inhabitants.[29]

Methodologically, the study orients its investigation by drawing upon sociologist Edgar Schein's pioneering work on the subject of organizational culture. Schein defines culture as "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group uses to solve problems of external adaptation and internal integration." Taking their cues from the values espoused by the group's founders, honed through experience, and reinforced daily through rituals of socialization, these basic assumptions, Schein's term for core values and concepts, structure the thoughts and actions of group members. They ensure that, "Overt behavior is always determined by both the cultural

[29] Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East, 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

predisposition (the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that are patterned) and the situational contingencies that arise from the immediate external environment."[30]

Providing both identity and stability for the group's members, these values often go unchallenged, and members make great effort to sustain them in times of crisis or moments when they face events which contradict them. Schein finds this confrontation with uncertainty typically serves to reinforce reliance on tried and tested procedures, often making alternatives inconceivable. As he notes, culture thus "defines for us what we pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations."[31]

The use of Schein's model of organizational culture allows the study to highlight the Nazi security forces' basic assumptions, and reveal the motives for the violence they committed at home and abroad. The regime's deep concerns regarding the supposed danger lurking within civilian populations guided and shaped these values. Nazism cast human history as a life or death struggle between competing peoples. Unity meant survival, and as the vanguards of the Nazi racial state security personnel struggled to create a society free from internal contradiction, one that could supposedly endure the harsh realities of war and avoid the kind of humiliation the nation suffered in 1918. However, according to the regime, threat always lay hidden within, and officers worked tirelessly to locate, isolate, and destroy those considered dangerous to this imagined community of Germans. These supposed dangers not only included minorities such as the Jews and Roma, but also *Volksgenossen* whose behaviors contradicted or challenged an

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[30] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Second Edition* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 13-14.

[31] Ibid. 22.

alleged German national character premised on solid moral values, good hygiene, martial prowess, and willingness to unconditionally sacrifice for the nation. Those who failed to live up to these high expectations risked arrest, imprisonment, and all too often, death.

Rooted in the experience of defeat in 1918 and the unstable years of the Weimar Republic, security officers later exported this framework of assumptions concerning proper and improper forms of behavior abroad after 1939 as a means of controlling enemy populations. In the Reich's conquered territories, longstanding criminal tropes merged with Nazi racial dogma, and the regime used them to justify brutal preemptive policies of ethnic cleansing. Officers returning from the occupied territories brought these, now modified, perceptions of civilians back into Germany, shaping policing from below, and the regime also encouraged the use of these tropes of criminality and resistance by working them into security policy.

As the Allied air campaign against Germany intensified after 1942, concerns about civilian behavior at home heightened, as increasing numbers of Germans responded to the Reich's supply problems by engaging in acts of criminality. This rise in crime stoked the regime's fears of internal collapse, and these anxieties finally exploded into violence in autumn 1944. Faced with a war weary population apparently uninterested in defending the Reich from invasion, the security forces in the Rhineland turned atrocity against the *Volk* in a desperate attempt to coerce them into helping stave off defeat.

To help locate these internal enemies, officers turned to the terminology of counterinsurgency, and superimposed its exclusionary categories on their fellow citizens. Schein notes that language is crucial to how organizations operate, and that it invests "common words with special meanings…what certain words really mean ultimately becomes one of the deepest

layers of that group's culture."[32] Viewed in such a fashion, the euphemisms and redefined meanings that littered the security forces' discourse on crime and civilian behavior served as a conduit that transferred violent practices of occupation back into Germany.

To investigate the language of counterinsurgency and demonstrate how it became embedded within domestic policing, the study turns to the work of cultural anthropologist and historian Ann Stoler. In her study of Dutch Indonesia she describes colonial administrators' reports as "blueprints of distress" which generated fear of insurrection abroad and concerns regarding moral weakness at home.[33] In order to recover the world of fantasies, fears, expectations, and desires which drove colonial projects and forced reconsiderations about life at home, Stoler calls for an ethnographic approach to reading archival sources.

This methodology is characterized, as she terms it, by reading "along the archival grain." In contrast to the popular techniques of literary deconstruction that concentrate on investigating absence within contemporary texts, ethnographic styles of reading are concerned with a careful understanding of professional language and the critical investigation of semantics and context. These elements, Stoler argues, expose the mentality and emotions which linked colony and metropole in the minds of officials.[34] Unearthing the logics of the Nazi security imagination by undertaking an ethnographic style of reading allows this study to chart how the fears and expectations of civilians at both home and abroad worked in a reciprocal fashion. Inspired by

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[32] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 75.

[33] Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 107.

[34] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 47.

Stoler's technique, it reads carefully along the grain of the Third Reich's "blueprints of distress"—contemporary military, security, and Party correspondence.[35] The study seeks to uncover the semantic nuances, turns of phrase, and marginal utterances which reveal security officers' fears concerning civilians, in order to demonstrate how violence against them became possible.

While documents pertaining to the anti-partisan war that raged in occupied Europe from 1941-1944 are bountiful, late war sources written by security officers are rare. In November 1944, Allied bombing destroyed the headquarters of the Cologne Gestapo, which oversaw the Rhineland deportations. Personnel transported the surviving correspondence across the Rhine to the town of Marienheide, where officers deemed unfit for active duty sifted through them, attempting to piece the files back together. This ultimately proved a useless task, given they destroyed most of these documents in April 1945, shortly before the arrival of American troops.[36] Due to the office's increased workloads and its difficulties maintaining communication via telegraph or telephone, personnel also resorted to sporadic face-to-face meetings, a tactic encouraged by the security leadership since it ensured sensitive material did not fall into enemy hands.[37] Officers then summarized the information collected during this period in their internal daily and weekly reports.

These documents fortunately survived the war, and along with records from the office of Higher SS and Police Leader West, are important and unique source bases which provide a

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[35] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 107.

[36] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 58, p. 1141, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 21.6.68., Zeugevernehmung Hubert. W.

[37] Ibid. RW 34-10, p. 68-71, Stapostelle Köln, 23.10.44., Verhalten die Polizei bei Feind Berüherung.

cohesive picture of security activities in the Rhineland, from the beginning of the deportations in early September 1944 up until March 1945 when the Allies invaded Germany. Read alongside documents from parts of Eastern Europe where the Cologne Gestapo's leadership worked before returning to the Reich, these files allow an unprecedented glimpse into the Third Reich's final months, and they reveal the exchanges in knowledge, practice, and personnel between Germany and its occupied territories.

To fill in the gaps present in the contemporary sources, the study turns to the information gathered by the West German courts. The Rhineland saw successive attempts to bring the perpetrators of End Phase atrocities to justice, starting in 1947 when the British military government handed over its files to prosecutors in Cologne. Numerous investigations into crimes committed at the end of the war continued until the mid-1970s, and a large amount of material is now available for historical inquiry. These sources not only provide additional information about the security forces' activities in the Rhineland in late 1944 and early 1945. The interrogation of former officers and the testimony of witnesses also allows the study to cut to the ground level and examine the mentality and motivations of security personnel.

Laden with the kinds of rich details that reveal the tense atmosphere in the region, these sources often compliment, and at times contradict, contemporary records drafted by security officers. The postwar investigations also unearth the connections between the crimes carried out in the Rhineland and those previously conducted in occupied Europe. In 1966, the West German courts prosecuted Kurt Matschke, the only leading officer of the Cologne Gestapo to survive the war, for atrocities he committed while stationed in Eastern Europe as a member of Einsatzgruppe B. This investigation in particular allows for the rare opportunity to compare a security officer's activities at home and abroad.

This postwar investigative material needs to be addressed with extreme care. For obvious reasons, the accused prevaricated at every turn, manipulating investigators' often slim knowledge of events.[38] In some cases they changed dates and locations in order to portray their organization's crimes as the work of a handful of fanatical Nazis, most of whom conveniently died during the war. While some of their efforts were blatantly obvious even to investigators hindered by a lack of reliable contemporary information, these sources remain riddled with more subtle efforts to throw off suspicion, and the historian must take great care when using them.

Some of these inconsistencies are offset by turning to other sources such as diary entries, letters, and newspaper accounts, sources which provide the civilian perspective. While the regime censored periodicals and newspapers, diary entries and letters allow the work to portray the civilian perspective. Yet personal correspondence is rare. To supplement these documents, the study incorporates the "G-2" or divisional intelligence reports of the American military units operating in the Rhineland between September 1944 and April 1945. These documents round out the investigation, as they detail encounters between American patrols and German civilians who volunteered information about life on the other side of the front.

Finally, the study uses the records of the International Tracing Service to illuminate the lives and fates of those arrested by the security forces. Housed in Bad Arolsen, Germany and duplicated on a digital database at the United States Holocaust Memorial, these records provide

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[38] HStAD. Rep. 213. Nr. 515. p. 631. 13.1.53. Internal correspondence from Landgericht Köln noting the difficulties of locating security documents due to their capture by Allied authorities. By the late 1960s many of these captured documents returned, and along with greater coordination between the German state courts, in the form of both federal and state legal offices dedicated to Nazi crimes, prosecutions dramatically increased. See also Rep. 248, Nr. 5, p. 552, 26.6.67. Letter from Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf to Oberstaatsanwalt Köln noting return of the Cologne Gestapo files from the United States.

transport lists and prison registers, as well as internment records from concentration camps, death certificates, and postwar inquiries made by families searching for missing loved ones. This important, and still underutilized, source base allows the investigation to chart the movement and document the fates of those arrested during the deportations. They also reveal the terrible conditions inside the prison system during one of its most destructive phases.

In regards to structure, the work proceeds chronologically as well as thematically. Chapter one highlights the experience of World War I as critical to reshaping discourses on crime and community among German police officials and criminologists. These experts drew upon the war years to advocate new controversial forms of preventative policing that intended to reorder society by cracking down on suspect groups such as youth gangs, prostitutes, criminals, and vagrants before they carried out their crimes. However, these interventionary efforts ran up against the Weimar Republic's commitment to civil rights, and the discussion surrounding the subject of preventative policing caused increasing friction between police officials and the government they served.

After coming to power in January 1933 the Nazi regime encouraged the use of preventative police methods. The second chapter examines the creation of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) which coordinated Nazi security operations. It traces the evolution of this apparatus from its origins in the Secret State Police (Gestapo), up to the formal establishment of RSHA in September 1939 and the outbreak of war. Much of the focus is on the institution's founders, Heinrich Himmler, Werner Best, and Reinhard Heydrich, who laid the foundation of its organizational culture. Desiring to break with what they disdained as the restrictive, overly bureaucratic procedures of law enforcement during the Weimar Republic, these men sought to imbue RSHA with a new value system characterized by strong

ideological conviction and preemptive action. Officially established a few weeks after the invasion of Poland, RSHA saw its mission change overnight, as it watched protectively over the *Volk* and also policed the subjects living in Reich's newly conquered territories. To meet these demands, the organization increasingly relied on violent, proactive methods of social control.

Chapter three examines the evolution of these practices by investigating the activities of security personnel in occupied Eastern Europe. In these territories, criminal tropes exported from the Reich blended together with Nazi racial ideology, encouraging violence as a means of imposing order. As resistance increased from 1942 on due to the occupation's ruthless and exploitative policies, security personnel resorted to depopulating vast swaths of territory and used mass violence as a means of restoring order.

The return of these concepts regarding crime and insurrection to Germany is the subject of chapter four, which traces their impact on domestic policing. As the country's war fortunes worsened after 1942, hundreds of thousands of foreign workers flooded the Reich, taking up positions in key industries and agriculture. The overwhelming majority of these people came from Eastern Europe, and the security forces always remained concerned about the possibility of revolt or the supposed moral contamination of Germans. At the same time officers grappled with these challenges, the air war intensified. The dramatic changes bombing caused to the landscape of Germany's cities, and the numerous official and illegal movements of people throughout the country stoked security anxieties and called into question RSHA's ability to effectively police the *Volksgemeinschaft*, causing further uncertainty among its personnel.

Chapter five shifts focus to the Rhineland in September 1944. It investigates the specific local conditions, such as the region's large foreign worker population, collapsing infrastructure, and rising crime rate, which provoked intense concern within the regime. The Allies' rapid

arrival on the Reich's western border only amplified these fears, and the chapter details the disorder and panic which erupted in the region as the enemy approached. Rhinelanders' behavior during this time of crisis contradicted the regime's image of a unified *Volksgemeinschaft* ready to defend the country, encouraging the use of brutal practices honed abroad.

Chapter six details the security forces' efforts to regain order in the region. Overseen by officers experienced in anti-partisan warfare, these attempts came chiefly through the reliance on the depopulation tactics perfected in occupied Europe. However, the clearances generated the very disorder they intended to eliminate, and the confrontation with frustrated and angry Rhinelanders definitively shifted the regime's thinking regarding German civilians, resulting in atrocity.

Chapter seven studies the prison system in order to reveal the experiences of those Germans and foreign workers arrested in the Rhineland. It argues that the security forces continued to investigate and sentence their prisoners rather than simply murder them, and details the conditions which produced their own unique forms of violence. In addition to investigating the system's structure, it also discusses the backgrounds and fates of those arrested, providing a perspective on the victims which is currently rare in the historiography.

The study's final chapter turns to the atrocities that occurred in the Rhineland in order to consider the limits of violence. Although the regime deployed counterinsurgency practices on the home front, it remained uncomfortable about committing mass violence inside Germany. Surprisingly, this unease structured the activities of the security forces, and sometimes unintentionally prevented atrocity. In contrast to members of the Party and militia, security officers did not lash out indiscriminately against civilians. Instead, the problems of command

and control generated by poor communication and the scattering of personnel during successive retreats created an increasing reliance on institutional protocols that governed the use of force. Adhering closely to guidelines issued by their leadership in Berlin, the security forces ironically hindered their own efforts to murder their prisoners. As the chapter demonstrates, organizational culture not only promoted atrocity but in some cases prevented the kinds of violence that previously characterized security operations in Nazi occupied of Europe.

The work concludes with a discussion of postwar justice and the often all too lenient punishments given to the officers who organized or participated in End Phase atrocities. It finds that a combination of pragmatic politics, vested interests, and outdated legal codes combined to cripple efforts to hold them accountable for their crimes. The study then moves on to provide some final thoughts on the dangers posed by anticipatory security logics, and how their quest to eliminate threat often results in the very catastrophes they intend to prevent.

Chapter One
A Bitterly Conducted Struggle: Community, Criminality, and Policing Before 1933

"Every people must defend itself against its vermin. A nation who does not rigorously carry out this principle will perish."

— *Robert Heindl*[39]

"Trust nobody, look at nobody"

— *Walter Serner*[40]

On the evening of November 9, 1918, Germans who gathered to read the newspapers posted on the *Litfaßsäule*, the advertising pillars found on almost every street in German cities and towns, learned that the Kaiser was heading into exile in Holland. For the last several days, protests held by angry, hungry civilians had spread across the once mighty German Empire, now weakened by four years of enemy naval blockade and the ravenous economic demands of a two front war. When the government called out police and soldiers to disperse the protestors, they too joined in, chanting the slogan "Peace and Bread," a cry that reflected the widespread effects of wartime deprivation. Two days after the Kaiser abdicated, the new Social Democratic government led by Chancellor Friedrich Ebert agreed to an armistice, bringing an end to the fighting.[41]

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[39] Robert Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher. Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechstreform* (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heisse, 1926), 162.

[40] Todd Herzog, *Crime Stories: Criminalistic Fantasy and the Culture of Crisis in Weimar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 102.

[41] Volker Ullrich, *Die nervöse Großmacht 1871-1918. Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs* (Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 2004), 569-573; Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*

Although some readers gathered around the advertising pillars that evening celebrated the armistice, they felt the war's repercussions long after the fighting ended. Living in a country crippled by social, political, and economic instability, most Germans agreed on one thing: the Kaiser's August 1914 appeal for Germans to create a society capable of weathering internal and external challenges failed.[42] Entering the Roaring Twenties, the citizens of the new Weimar Republic were not members of the promised *Volksgemeinschaft* bound together by resolve and collective purpose. Instead, society seemed more fragmented than ever, plagued by a host of internal divisions such as class, confession, and politics exacerbated by four long years of hunger and suffering.

Discussions about the country's predicament often centered on the subject of social deviance, and Germans used criminality as a way to articulate their uncertainties, anxieties, and hopes regarding this new age.[43] Consequently, Weimar society underwent what some scholars termed a "crisis of normality" during the interwar period, as the social distinctions of the *Kaisserreich* continued to erode.[44] The concerns generated by these changes focused primarily on issues of morality and social identity. Experiencing military defeat, economic chaos, and

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 202.

[42] Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft. Die Soldaten des nationalsolzialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2006), 51; Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 25.

[43] Sace Elder, *Murder Scenes: Normality, Deviance, and Criminal Violence in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 2, 11; Herzog, *Crime Stories*, 35.

[44] Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 43.

revolution many Germans remained uneasy about their country's future and the ability to rebuild in the midst of continued upheaval.

For example, over the second half of World War I and into the early 1920s, two especially disturbing forms of crime, property theft and murder, steadily rose. Most alarming, convictions in cases regarding premeditated murder dramatically jumped from 0.1 to 0.35 per 100, 000 residents between 1914 and 1919. These figures reached 0.41 percent by 1924, leading social commentator Siegfried Kracauer to warn that "Murders in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany are on the rise … Life has become cheap."[45] The number of prosecutions for theft also skyrocketed, almost doubling from 242 to 428 between 1919 and 1920, and they peaked in the midst of the inflation crisis of 1923 at 633 per 100,000 residents.[46] Equally troubling, police arrested increasing numbers of women and juveniles for criminal activity, two groups underrepresented in court statistics before World War I. These changing demographics, alongside the rising crime rate, raised the specter of the country's moral decline.[47]

These figures deeply disturbed Germans because they exposed the apparent weakness lurking within society, which some blamed for the *Dolchstoss*, or "stab in the back" that led to defeat and national humiliation in November 1918. During the war, crime became politicized as a selfish act weakening the country internally, and this notion endured after the armistice, as criminality seemed to continue to threaten the country's stability. These fears converged with

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[45] Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 16.

[46] Ibid. 21; Patrick Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft ohne Verbrecher*. *Konzeption und Praxis der Kriminalpolizei in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1996), 31.

[47] Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 223, 237, 241-243.

those regarding the dangers posed by Bolshevism in the minds of conservatives, right wing radicals, and anti-Semites, who claimed a subversive conspiracy intended to ruin the country, paving the way for its takeover by "foreign interests" and their supposed masters, a shadowy international cabal of Jews.[48]

While these ideas remained on the fringes of German social and political thought, many people felt that the war had turned the country's moral code turned upside down. It appeared no one could remain certain about anything, least of all the intentions of one's neighbors and coworkers.[49] The emergence of new types of criminals supposedly created by the pressures of modern postwar society only underscored such notions.[50] Chief among these figures was the *Hochstapler*, or imposter, who best epitomized the uncertainty which characterized the lives of many Germans during the interwar period.

Moving with ease across not only social boundaries but international borders, the *Hochstapler* embodied the fluidity of life after 1918. Despite the obvious appeal of using one's guile to transcend economic difficulties, imposters' ability to transgress class lines and infiltrate social networks raised troubling questions about the policing of society, as well as national security. For example, in January 1921 the Berlin newspaper *Vossische Zeitung* reported the "unmasking" of a Russian actor from St. Petersburg who passed himself off as an aristocratic

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[48] Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 91-98; Boris Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden und politische Desintegration. Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003), 223, 447-448, 465; Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 73, 231.

[49] Ibid. 66.

[50] Richard J. Evans, "Social Outsiders in German History: From the Seventeenth Century to 1933," in Robert Gellately and Nathaniel Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 36-37; Bessel, *Germany After the First World War,* 243, 245.

refugee fleeing the Russian Civil War. Finally arrested after a lengthy crime spree, surprised detectives discovered that the man concocted a plethora of other false identities, passing himself off as a university professor in Würzburg, a doctor in Jena, and even an officer from a paramilitary Free Corps.[51] Later the same year, the paper triumphantly informed its readers that the authorities finally arrested three "dangerous" imposters in Berlin who committed a string of lucrative crimes. Originally from Hungary, during their crime spree the trio of "swindlers dressed in elegant clothes," traveled across the country, living in the best hotels while they attempted to exchange American dollars for German Marks and sell stolen jewelry, a story which tied the Republic's economic problems to parasitic foreign criminality.[52]

One of the most infamous imposters of the era was Oskar Daubmann, a Swiss citizen who passed himself off as Karl Hummel, a German soldier who disappeared during World War I. Appearing at a border rail station in 1932, in an attempt to scam free passage into Germany Daubmann told workers he escaped from French captivity in North Africa. What started as a simple con quickly became a lucrative business for Daubmann. As news of the miracle of Hummel's return quickly spread throughout Germany, he found himself under contract for a book memoir and invited to tell his story in front of thousands of well-wishers eager to hear about the mistreatment he suffered at the hands of his captors.[53]

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[51] *Vossische Zeitung*, 21.1.21, "Ein geheimnisvoller Hochstapler."

[52] Ibid. 29.12.21, "Drei Internationaler Hochstapler Verhaftet."

[53] "Die Affäre Daubmann: eine badische köpenickiade," http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/45888.

However, to the chagrin of Germans who still held out hopes their missing loved ones might also someday return from the war, Daubmann's tale quickly fell apart under scrutiny. The unassuming coconut led to the imposter's downfall; Daubmann often told his audiences that he survived captivity by drinking coconut milk while imprisoned in North Africa. However, the lifesaving tropical plant did not in fact grow in the region, a key detail which led to his three year imprisonment for fraud.[54]

These kinds of incidents exposed the disturbing ease with which cunning criminals exploited the weakened country. Already confronted with an increasingly precarious economic situation caused by runaway inflation and a plummeting postwar economy, it seemed that Germans now faced the additional danger of financial ruin at the hands of foreigners. Still, if foreign *Hochstapler* became Germans in order to commit their crimes, Germans also morphed into foreigners in order to take advantage of their fellow citizens. For instance, Walter Derkel, "a dangerous imposter" from Dresden impersonated a German aristocrat, a French army officer, and an Argentinian doctor before the police finally arrested him.[55]

In addition to the danger posed by imposters, several other new types of criminals threatened Germans' daily lives. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, newspapers published sensational articles about serial murderers who stalked their prey inside the country's growing cities. Many of these stories deployed wartime language to convey the sense of betrayal and outrage they elicited. In the case of Carl Grossmann, responsible for the deaths of several women in Berlin's working class Friedrichshain district, the press informed the incredulous

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[54] "Die Affäre Daubmann: eine badische köpenickiade," http://www.landesarchiv-bw.de/web/45888.

[55] *Vossische Zeitung*, 8.1.22, "Ein gefährlicher Hochstapler verhaftet."

public that the former butcher's apprentice not only allegedly tried to sell his victims' clothing at a nearby train station, but also their body parts to his hungry, unsuspecting neighbors. Although these claims fortunately turned out to be horrific rumors rather than fact, the trope of Grossman as a butcher resonated with a readership already attuned to the crimes of this wartime scapegoat. As food shortages increased and rationing became stricter after 1915, neighborhood butchers often became the target of popular anger driven by accusations that they scammed their customers by substituting horse meat for beef in their shops, and sold the genuine products for outrageous profits on the black market.[56]

The coverage of the Grossmann case was sensational, but not exceptional. The press also described less gruesome crimes in ways which drew upon wartime imagery. Articles cast incidents of forgery or scams—the epitome of selfish acts in an era of economic ruin— in terms reminiscent of war profiteering, since they took advantage of decent, hardworking people or elderly pensioners, undermining faith in one's fellow man and trust in society. The public and media attention these crimes generated stoked Germans' misgivings about the evident lack of community during the interwar period. Supposedly once a secure and easily legible social space, society now seemed fraught with hidden dangers, causing Germans to question if their quiet neighbor who worked odd hours was a devious criminal or simply an ordinary person who should remain free of suspicion. For many, author Walter Serner's tongue in cheek adage, "trust nobody, look at nobody," best exemplified the deep sense of uncertainty pervading Weimar society.[57]

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[56] Elder, *Murder Scenes,* 100.

[57] Herzog, *Crime Stories,* 102.

In response to this new world, some Germans continued to express their values through the rhetoric of the war years.[58] Regardless of their political affiliations, many believed in the purity of the so-called "Trench Community" that allegedly characterized life at the front. Unlike civilian society, the experience of war and the will to survive bound together soldiers, and their close comradeship transcended the prewar social divisions of home. For civilian observers, the trench community provided an ideal blueprint for interwar German society, due its emphasis on the need to share burdens and work for the betterment of the group.[59]

The enduring power of these idealistic values was only reinforced in the wake of defeat, and Germans' notions of personal responsibility and acceptable behavior became increasingly guided by an ethical system that placed primacy on the rights of the collective rather than those of the individual.[60] Although conceptions of who belonged to the national community remained contingent on one's political and social affiliations throughout the interwar period, the discourse on belonging remained oriented by the common principle that those Germans who pursued their selfish criminal desires were ballast dragging the country down into ruin.[61]

In particular, German criminologists harbored a strong desire to rekindle a sense of communal values and reverse the decline in moral standards. Emerging during the fin-de-siècle,

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[58] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 10; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Mourning, Trauma, and Recovery* (New York: Picador. 2003), 232-233.

[59] Kühne, *Kameradschaft,* 51, 89, 97.

[60] Ibid. 88-9; Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.

[61] Ibid. 86; Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 243.

German criminology proudly juxtaposed itself against Cesare Lombroso and his thesis that criminals composed a distinct anthropological category noted by their physical characteristics. Largely influenced by medical treatises, the majority of German criminologists located the origins of crime and social deviance in environment.[62] They posited that over time, poor air quality, malnutrition, lack of exercise, and the unsanitary living conditions of crowded urban areas short-circuited the nervous system and poisoned the brain's chemistry, decreasing moral inhibition. They argued these conditions caused some people to fall into a hopeless downward spiral of poverty and criminal behavior, since they failed to adapt to the rigorous challenges of modern life by maintaining a healthy living characterized by honesty, good hygiene, and a productive work ethic. Once these people reproduced, criminologists argued, they supposedly passed on their genetic defects to their children, over time creating a criminal underclass.[63]

Although this thesis clearly smacked of class prejudice, several influential scholars, including the godfathers of German criminology, Gustav Aschaffenburg and Franz List, warned that "immoral" pursuits such as drinking, gambling, and smoking, which all ranks of society indulged in also reduced the capacity for morally informed action. This environmental thesis therefore stressed the porous boundaries between "normal" Germans and "abnormal" social deviants.[64]

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[62] Richard F. Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal: A History of German Criminology, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 29, 49, 53.

[63] Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 50-52; Robert Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher. Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechstreform* (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heisse, 1926), 160-162.

[64] Ibid. 47-51, 65, 71, 117-118, 191-193; Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 20.

The experience of World War I only hardened criminologists' perception of the dangers crime posed to the nation.[65] Grounding biological and moral decline in environmental factors, German criminology provided compelling explanations for the country's interwar predicament by placing the blame on the Allied blockade of German ports. The criminologists' wartime narrative thus claimed the effects of this siege created supply shortages that resulted in moral collapse and defeat.[66]

Strong evidence for criminologists' argument appeared in the form of the large numbers of women participating in the wave of property crime that swept across Germany during the late war years and the early 1920s. They attributed these deviant acts to the effects of wartime economic shortages, which drove desperate women to rob their fellow Germans.[67] Aside from condemning the Allied blockade, criminologists also contributed to the backlash against the Republic's socially emancipated "new woman," by blaming women's growing role in criminality on the "masculinization" caused by their wartime entry into the workforce.[68]

Further attempting to delineate the public "masculine" sphere of work from the "feminine" private sphere of family and hearth, Weimar's criminal scientists offered similar

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[65] Ingrid Tomkowiak, "Asozialer Nachwuchs ist für die Volksgemeinschaft vollkommen unerwünscht." Eugenik und Rassenhygiene als Wegbereiter der Verfolgung der gesellschaftlicher Aussenseiter," in Dietmar Sedlaczek, Thomas Lutz, Ulrike Puvogel, Ingrid Tomkowiak, eds., *"Minderwertig" und "Asozial." Stationen der Verfolgung gesellschaftlicher Aussenseiter* (Zürich: Chronos, 2005), 41; Evans, "Social Outsiders in Germany," 30-33.

[66] Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal,* 107; Bessel, *Germany After the First World War,* 218.

[67] Ibid. 248-253.

[68] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic.* 95-101; Gellately, *Backing* Hitler, 10; Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal,* 113; Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 25-27, 36, 39.

explanations for the disturbing spike in delinquency among teenagers. They argued that the fragmentation of the educational system and family structure during the war dangerously undermined adult authority.[69] Coupled with malnutrition and their own early entry into the workforce, increasing numbers of young adults resorted to crime out of boredom or to relieve their poor material conditions.[70]

The war experience also played an influential role in shaping how criminologists interpreted acts of crime. They viewed Germany during the interwar period as besieged from within, locked in a desperate struggle against criminals created by the strains of deprivation. The work of Robert Heindl, whose treatises on organized crime became widely influential during the 1920s, best reflected this perception.[71]

Heindl was no stranger to the threat posed by criminality. As the director of the Leipzig Criminal Police he played a key role in the professionalization of Germany's pre-war police system. Greatly interested in promoting new investigative methods, he helped organize international conferences for criminologists and advocated the adoption of fingerprinting techniques developed in British India. He also toured penal colonies in Asia, and later expressed his approval of the deportation of criminals from Europe to the outer fringes of empire in his 1913 work *My Travels to the Penal Colonies*.[72] The influence of this journey led him to

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[69] Bessel, *Germany After the First World War*, 221, 241.

[70] Frank Kebbedies, *Ausserkontrolle. Jugendkriminalität in der NS-Zeit und frühen Nachkriegszeit* (Essen: Klartext, 2000), 55; Alfons Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend. Lebenswelt grossstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus und Währungsreform* (Essen: Klartext, 2002), 49-50, 108-10; Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 89-95.

[71] Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 136-138.

[72] Robert Heindl, *Meine Reise nach den Strafkolonien* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1913), see also his discussion of the French

encourage the German courts to adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards lawbreakers during World War I. In 1916, in the midst of the home front's worsening conditions, he advocated the roundup of all criminals, remarking "war is a good time for work houses."[73]

Although one voice among many in the field of German criminology, Heindl's writing found receptive audiences after 1918 because he placed the onus for the country's rising crime rates squarely on the Allied blockade and its destabilizing effects on German society.[74] His colleague Franz Exner later echoed Heindl's position by provocatively warning that "The army of professional criminals has not only survived the war but been invigorated by it. Criminality was less decimated through the blood sacrifice of the war than the honorable population… This criminality sustained a strong cadre through the end of the war, which appealed to those with derailed lives and weak characters."[75]

Exner's militarized language is striking. His references to an "army" of unseen criminals led by a "cadre" of experienced law breakers drew crime out of the realm of social ills and made deviance an issue of national security because it endangered Germany's resurrection. Also noteworthy are his appeals to the emotionally charged themes of "blood sacrifices" and "honor," which juxtaposed the ideal, "good," law abiding Germans decimated by the war against a growing, traitorous criminal conspiracy. Heindl seconded this notion in his 1926 magnum opus

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punishment colony on the south Pacific island of New Caledonia, in *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 29-62.

[73] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 19-20.

[74] Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 162-163.

[75] Franz Exner, *Krieg und Kriminalität* (Wein: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927), 12; Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 37-38.

The Professional Criminal, remarking that the unrest caused by the 1918 revolution provided new urgency to the ongoing fight to crush criminality, highlighting the perceived connection between crime, political unrest, and national decline.[76]

In contrast to some of their peers such as Moritz Liepmann, who blamed the rise of crime on the "wayward conditions" created by the war, Heindl and Exner tried to clearly delineate the boundaries between criminals and society by making crime a question not just of moral character but national loyalty.[77] They best summed up this argument in their sensational descriptions of criminal culture. Heindl warned that crime created a countercommunity in the form of an underclass led by unredeemable professional criminals. These "aristocrats of criminal society," he claimed, led and directed a larger body of "delinquents," selfish Germans who might someday abandon the nation in its hour of need.[78] Heindl's fears concerning this counterculture were echoed by criminologist Max Hagemann, who in particular blamed the anonymity of urban slums for the crime wave sweeping across the country. Pairing criminality with Leftist political unrest, he cast these neighborhoods as unruly spaces which fostered rebellion. He warned, "There, in the regions inhabited by numerous tenant houses, with their eternal coming and going, the individual is the least observed ... Here outsiders are found among their peers," indicating how according to Germany's criminologists urban modernity supposedly harbored enemies within. Heindl echoed these comments, describing slums, corner cafes, and pubs as "the

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[76] Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, "Social Outsiders and the Construction of the Community of the People." in Gellately and Stoltzfus, ed., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, 12-13; Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 169.

[77] Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal,* 109-115.

[78] Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 194.

headquarters" from which criminals launched "campaigns" against society, painting a provocative image of a network of subversion undermining the country.[79]

In addition to professional criminals and delinquents, criminologists also fixed their attention on other marginal members of society, so-called "asocials," who appeared unwilling or unable to contribute to the community. As Germany's economic situation worsened, they increasingly advanced these criticisms through contrasts between "honorable" forms of "German work" and the perceived slovenliness and laziness of the country's underclass. This juxtaposition became particularly important during the Great Depression, and criminologists and welfare officials increasingly used it as a means of defining the boundaries between "acceptable" forms of poverty caused by the country's economic situation, and "parasitic" beggars, prostitutes, and alcoholics.[80]

Again drawing upon the language of the war years, criminologists often cast asocials as "shirkers" unwilling to do their part for the country.[81] This growing concern about social marginals encouraged interventionary procedures by welfare workers, charities, eugenicists, and the police, broadening the scope of their attention to ever larger segments of society as the country's economy continued to flat line.[82] Yet these boundaries between social insiders and

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[79] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 60-61.

[80] Andrea Woeldike, "Die "Gesundung des Volkörpers durch Arbeit." Eine kulturhistorichse Auseinandersetztung mit der Entwicklung des Begriffs der "deutschen Arbeit," in Sedlaczek, Lutz, Puvogel, Tomkowiak, *"Minderwertig" und "Asozial,"* 27-30; David F. Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 212-213.

[81] Tomkowiak, "Asozialer Nachwuchs," 43; Gellately, *Backing Hitler.* 10.

[82] Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity. Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 321-325; Pamela Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 261-269, 275, 284, Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 139, 145-146.

outsiders remained unclear to officials; despite their best efforts they continued to have trouble teasing out which members of the community fell within the rubric of the "honorable" poor and those who did not.

The anonymity and ambiguity of urban life hindered criminologists' attempts to define what constituted asocial behavior, and the net result of this enduring uncertainty was the exacerbation of the anxieties surrounding the subject of crime. To address these fears, criminologists advocated new techniques of police investigation such as fingerprinting, forensic science, and the creation of databases to help catalogue and track delinquents. By making the claim that these technologies made the inner workings of daily life legible, criminologists such as Heindl, Exner, and Hagemann thrust law enforcement into the spotlight as the institution best equipped to remedy the Republic's social ills.[83]

Criminologists' confidence in the abilities of law enforcement to unmask criminals and safely separate healthy citizens from dangerous deviants reflected the police's own self-perception. As Rüdiger Graf noted, Weimar's many periods of "crisis" were not simply negative events, but instead moments when Germans seized the initiative and implemented bold new ideas.[84] Many officers considered the methods of the emerging field of *Kriminaltechnik*, or police science, as capable of returning a sense of security to German society. In particular, new methods of information gathering appeared able to cut through the messy complexity of Germany's social terrain by reducing it to statistics, index cards, photographs, and archives of

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[83] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 25.

[84] Rüdiger Graf, "Either-Or: The Narrative of "Crisis" in Weimar Germany and in Historiography," *Central European History*, 43 (2010): 592-615, 614.

file folders, accumulations of knowledge which seemed destined to eliminate crime and the anxiety it created.[85]

Yet these techniques often merely produced wild misconceptions about how and why crime occurred, creating enduring stereotypes within both the police and general public. Furthermore, the failure of *Kriminaltechnik* to conclusively win the battle against criminality ultimately led to calls within the police for the adoption of radical new methods of investigation and detainment. This desire to intervene more forcefully in the lives of the Republic's citizens caused growing tensions between officers and the state they served.

The roots of this strain lay in the structure of the country's police system. Prior to 1933, it remained largely localized, with the various states, or *Länder,* overseeing their own forces. Despite a general uniformity in regards to the responsibilities of the police, each state operated autonomously. An important consequence of this division was that it impeded the sharing of information between *Länder*, limiting law enforcement's ability to keep up with the new breed of highly mobile criminals. To further complicate matters, each state's police forces were also divided into three different service branches, further complicating the information sharing that was the hallmark of modern policing.[86]

The first of these branches, the *Schutzpolizei*, or Order Police, maintained daily law and order. It included both the beat policemen of Germany's cities, as well as the rural gendarmerie. Imbedded in the fabric of community life, these officers continued to bridge the gap between

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[85] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 80-93.

[86] Elder*, Murder Scenes*, 49.

state and society just as they did in the Kaiser's day. In addition to finding themselves fighting political protestors, they could also be seen on the streets of German towns, returning wayward drunken workers to their wives or rounding up errant schoolchildren.[87]

The second branch, the *Kriminalpolizei*, or Criminal Police, commonly referred to as the Kripo, investigated acts of robbery, murder, and organized crime. Like many of its international contemporaries, the Kripo underwent increasing professionalization during the interwar period, seizing upon new investigative methods to better facilitate the apprehension of criminals.[88] These developments, coupled with the influx of younger, university educated officers into the force over the late 1920s and early 1930s, gave rise to the self-image of the Kripo detective as an elite specialist trained to address particular types of crimes by applying scientific techniques, teasing intelligible patterns out of seemingly irrational acts of misconduct.[89]

The third branch of the state police system consisted of the Political Police. These officers served as the Republic's first line of defense against the growing extremism within German political culture. Comparatively smaller in terms of manpower than their counterparts in

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[87] Elaine Glovka Spencer, *Police and the Social Order in German Cities. The Düsseldorf District, 1848-191* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), 66, 69, 120; Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 25-28; Bessel, *Germany,* 244; Bernhard Sauer, "Zur politischen Haltung der Berliner Sicherheitspolizei in der Weimarer Republik," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 53 (2005): 26-45, 33.

[88] James F. Richardson, "Berlin Police in the Weimar Republic: A Comparison with Police Forces in Cities of the United States," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 7, No. ½ (Jan.-April 1972): 261-275, 262-266; Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2013); Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control between the Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Peter Becker & Richard F. Wetzell, eds., *Criminals and their Scientists: The History of Criminology in International Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jonathan Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen: Behavior, Ideology, and Institutional Culture in Practice* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2012); Clive Emsley and Barbara Weinberger, eds., *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism, and Public Order, 1850-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991); Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 91.

[89] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 96-99, 101, 129; Elder, *Murder Scenes,* 28.

the Criminal Police, these departments' responsibilities included monitoring the press and watching over the activities of the Republic's political parties in order to prevent violence and unrest. They also devoted considerable energy to counterespionage, reflecting the state's deep concerns about the seemingly porous nature of Germany's borders.[90]

This system, much like the Republic itself, was in a state of flux after 1918 and law enforcement in Germany underwent considerable changes during the interwar period. Like many of their contemporaries in Europe and North America, the German police became intensely interested in methods of data collection and new forms of evidence analysis which aided the pursuit of their investigations. The fingerprint records, index card files, photograph albums, and forensic techniques deployed by Weimar's police in their fight against crime appeared to offer the means to crack the impenetrability of lower class urban spaces, providing the illusion that their opponents could be comprehensively understood, tracked, and preempted through surveillance and the relentless accumulation of information.[91]

The collections of the Dresden Police Directory's Criminal Museum most starkly evidenced the German police's pursuit of categorization and specialization. Founded in 1894 as a means of familiarizing the Saxon police with criminal methods, it reflected the "culture of collecting" which seized imperial Germany. By the turn of the century the artifacts housed in its archive, such as fake stamps, safe cracking tools, coded letters, and weapons were displayed for

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[90] Carsten Dams, *Staatschutz in der Weimarer Republik. Die Überwachung und Bekämpfung der NSDAP durch die preussische politische Polizei von 1928 bis 1932* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2002), 10, 48, 10; Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 125.

[91] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 87-93.

the curious public in a special exhibition room inside the city's newly built Police Presidium.[92] By 1926, the museum boasted over 70,000 objects, and the arch-criminologist Robert Heindl used photographs from the museum's collections to illustrate his treatises on police practices.[93]

Much like the caretakers of the Dresden Police Presidium, after 1918 police departments across Germany feverishly accumulated evidence, such as plaster casts of foot prints found at crime scenes, the personal correspondence of suspects, and photo albums of known criminals, as well as hundreds of thousands of index cards and case files documenting their activities and movement. Officers later reified this information into colored push pins or notations on large, wall mounted maps that hung in the duty rooms of police stations all across the country. The end result of the police's intense campaign of data collecting was that crime not only seemed everywhere, but appeared governed by a shadowy and well-organized underworld which sought to undermine civil society.[94]

For police officers, the existence of a criminal counterculture appeared most evident in the form of the *Ringvereine.* Originally support networks created during the *Kaiserreich* to help members after they left prison, by the 1920s the *Ringvereine* evolved into criminal organizations which controlled a multitude of illegal activities ranging from fencing stolen goods to smuggling and prostitution. These groups, which carried colorful names such as "Always Loyal,"

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[92] Heiko Weckbrodt, "Von der Stockflinte bis zum Sissi-Mörder. Das Dresdner Polizeimuseum spiegelt Jahrhunderte der Kriminalgeschichte – besuchen kann man es nur nach Anmeldung," *Dresdner Neuste Nachrichten,* 4.9.2011; Glenn H. Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

[93] See Robert Heindl, *Polizei und Verbrechen*, (Berlin: Gersbach & Sohn, 1926).

[94] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 148, 186; Nikolaus Wachsmann, "From Indefinite Incarceration to Extermination: "Habitual Criminals" in the Third Reich." in Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders*, 167-169.

"Dragonfly," and "the Circle of Greater Germany," numbered dozens, sometimes hundreds of members, who paid annual dues and adhered to strict social codes that governed the burial ceremonies of deceased colleagues, behavior during meetings, and in the case of one *Ring*, banned dogs from entering their social clubs. Police officials also found that many of these groups appeared to ape the culture of middle class associational life, and held banquets and concerts hosted by their choir groups.[95] The existence of the *Ringvereine* thus seemed to lend a veneer of credibility to officials' fantasies that Germany's criminals formed a true countercommunity.

To combat this threat the police increasingly relied on the work of *Fachmänner,* or specialists, from the Criminal Police trained to uncover and combat specific forms of crime. During the 1920s, Kripo stratified into various departments, lettered A through J, each dedicated to the pursuit of specific categories of criminals such as safe crackers, murderers, robbers, thieves, and forgers.[96] However, these specializations caused the splintering of the Criminal Police, undermining its efficiency. For example, by 1926 the various departments became so specialized they often ceased communicating, obstructing the sharing of information within local Kripo offices, let alone with the other branches of the police and their colleagues in different parts of the country.[97]

The dependence on police science also encouraged new thinking regarding those Germans assessed as "asocials," such as beggars, the mentally ill, and Roma, moving the police

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[95] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 162-163.

[96] Ibid. 82.

[97] Ibid. 84.

towards a wider role in the disciplining of German society. For example, Kripo's Desk J worked alongside welfare officials to track so-called social marginals in Berlin, evidencing the shift in the perception of social outsiders.[98] Most importantly, the endless accumulation of data and evidence encouraged officers' self-perception as an all-seeing, all-knowing elite standing ready to intervene and protect the body politic.[99]

The Criminal Police's inability to convert their knowledge into a decisive victory against criminality best reflected the growing disparity between professional faith in the methods of *Kriminaltechnik* and the reality of law enforcement's limited successes. Despite new investigative methods, crime and delinquency only appeared to increase as the 1920s faded into the 1930s, leading one official to note that the police found themselves locked in a "bitterly conducted struggle" with criminal gangs, conjuring up the stalemate of the war years.[100]

To break the deadlock, the police, including highly trained Kripo officers, resorted to mass raids and indiscriminate arrests. During the late 1920s the Berlin Criminal Police carried out the Great Patrol, an operation which exposed the limits of police science. The city's police commanders divided the metropolis into five different zones, and sent their officers out to systematically search known or suspected criminal hangouts.[101] These *Durchkämmerung*, or search, operations intended to secure shopping districts and impress the supposedly unruly

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[98] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 82.

[99] Ibid. 96, 144; Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies*, 260.

[100] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 71.

[101] Ibid. 94.

inhabitants of lower class neighborhoods by rounding up suspects en masse.[102] After making their arrests, officers took suspects in for interrogation, hoping to capture a current picture of criminal activity in their sector. However, this "snap shot" method of intelligence gathering only underscored the inability of statistics and forensics to expose the inner workings of the underworld.

Over the course of the 1920s these operations contributed to the growing calls within the police for the preventative arrest of suspects without evidence that they actually committed a crime. This radical tactic, which clearly exposed the false hope placed in *Kriminaltechnik*, was a response to the failure of the police to secure prosecutions in several high profile cases. These embarrassments included the well-publicized and repeated efforts to imprison the Sass brothers, two notorious safe crackers whose trials always seemed to fall apart due to police misconduct.[103] Reeling from media backlash, officers defensively claimed that their efforts to carefully track and pursue criminals were obstructed by the Republic's commitment to civil rights, which placed limits on surveillance, arrest, and interrogation methods. In response, outraged police officials demanded more autonomy for their departments, and some even claimed that the courts privileged individual rights at the expense of community safety.[104]

The writing of Willi Gay aptly evidenced the police's sense of growing frustration. A leading official in the Prussian Police Presidium and a member of the Social Democratic Party,

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[102] Molly Loberg, "The Streetscape of Economic Crisis: Commerce, Politics, and Urban Space in Interwar Berlin," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (June 2013): 364-402.

[103] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 175-178.

[104] Ibid. 106-107, 142; Gellately, *Backing Hitler,* 22.

he supported the Republic yet felt constrained by its staunch commitment to protect the legal rights of its citizens. Warning of the dangers posed by unchecked criminality, he advocated preventative arrest for members of socially marginalized groups, and recommended imposing mandatory curfews, as well as restrictions on the travel and employment of known criminals. In his sensationally titled *A Hard Fight Demands Sharp Weapons,* published in 1925, Gay envisioned the creation of a centralized police apparatus with expanded powers to track the movement of citizens and hold suspects in custody purely on suspicion rather than evidence of wrongdoing.[105] He also called for the courts to sentence prisoners and vagrants to work colonies, underscoring his commitment to permanently limiting the rights of those Germans assessed as "abnormal."[106]

Gay was not alone in his call for the police to be freed from the restraints imposed by the state. Both Heindl and Hagemann also advocated the methods of preventative arrest and defended the competency of the police.[107] High ranking police officers from across the country also lent their support. They included Bernhard Weiss, the chief of the Chemnitz Kripo, who remarked, "Beyond doubt, the Criminal Police's preventative thinking hears the future." Others, such as Ernst Engelbrecht, a famous Berlin detective and author, openly admired fascist Italy's

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[105] Willi Gay, "Ein harter Kampf erfodert scharfe Waffen. Wir kämpfen ihn, drum gilt es sie zu schaffen." in Max Julier, ed., *Wie kann die vorbeugende Tätigkeit der Polizei bei Bekämpfung des Verbrechertums ausgebaut und erfolgreicher gestaltet werden?* (Berlin: Freien Vereinigung für Polizei und Kriminalwissenschaft, 1925), 5-82.

[106] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 141, 20; Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 144.

[107] Wachsmann, "From Indefinite Confinement to Extermination," 167-169; Heindl, *Der Berufsverbrecher*, 394, see also Heindl, *Polizei und Verbrechen*, 121-124.

police methods, such as the roundup of "work shy" citizens for use as slave labor on state construction projects.[108]

The controversial subject of preventative policing quickly became a rallying point for opposition to the Republic, and served as a sounding board for officers frustrated not only with the justice system, but what they felt were the general lack of resources invested in the police.[109] Although their wages improved as the economy temporarily stabilized in the late 1920s, few officers secured the rank needed to obtain these coveted financial benefits. Many of those promoted continued to come from the infamous "Eagles Club," detectives with well-placed connections to the upper levels of police administration. These criticisms only continued to grow as more university students entered the police during the economically unstable early 1930s. Perceiving themselves as well-trained and well-educated, but underpaid and unrepresented, they organized into a cohesive block with their own set of interests, dividing the police along class and generational lines.[110]

In addition to the issue of preventive arrest, many officers took the Republic's inability to create a central office to share information between the *Länder* as clear evidence of the government's failure to understand the needs of modern law enforcement. From the late 1890s on, the police consistently lobbied for the creation of a federal office to coordinate their activities, and the interwar "crisis of normality" only heightened calls for a central office to help track increasingly mobile international criminals. The debates surrounding the creation of a

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[108] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 143-145.

[109] Ibid. 139-141; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 22.

[110] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 124, 127.

Reichskriminalpolizei Hauptamt [Reich Criminal Police Main Office, RKPA], revealed the futility of these efforts.

The idea gained new impetus after the assassination of Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau in June 1922, and the Reichstag passed legislation to create a central office to facilitate better communication between the Kripo offices of the various states. However, the bill never came to fruition due to the strong opposition of Bavaria and Prussia. These two large and wealthy states feared a federal office might demand that they take on the lion's share of the financial burdens created by the new system.[111] As a compromise, the *Länder* agreed to form a German Criminal Police Commission to facilitate voluntary communication between police and criminologists across the country. The Commission's coverage thus turned out to be greatly uneven, hampering law enforcement's desire to efficiently conduct its work and share information.[112]

Working conditions proved another contentious subject for many officers. They commonly worked twelve to sixteen hours a day in outdated buildings and the maintenance of essential office equipment, such as typewriters and forensic tools, declined as the Republic's economic difficulties worsened after 1929. Some detectives even paid informers out of their own pockets or bought their own clothes for undercover assignments, often only to find that they were well below the fashion standards of the criminal groups they tried to infiltrate.[113] Others resorted to hiring clairvoyants, taking *Kriminaltechnik* beyond the earthly realm in an effort to

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[111] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 111-113.

[112] Ibid. 116, 119.

[113] Ibid. 125-126.

solve their cases.[114] These material obstacles led one parliamentarian to remark after inspecting Prussia's Criminal Police that "The officers work under conditions one could hardly describe as humane," while another investigator described officers as "greatly overworked," and warned of the mounting burdens placed on the police.[115]

Adding insult to injury, officers also faced an awkward relationship with the general public. While they wanted to encourage Germans to observe and report unusual behavior, they remained concerned about the accuracy of testimony given by people they viewed as untrained amateurs.[116] This cautious desire to cultivate assistance therefore ran up against the police's own self-perception as experts supposedly trained and equipped to uncover criminal activity. The results were humbling. In several important incidents public tips rather than police science, provided the information needed to break the case. The debate even spilled over into popular culture— Fritz Lang's 1931 film *M* provocatively contrasted the scientific methods championed by detectives with the local knowledge of Berlin's criminals, who captured a notorious child murder and succeeded where the police failed.[117]

Lang's masterpiece highlighted how public perceptions of crime diverged from those held by the police. While citizens remained concerned about social deviance, they also enjoyed the entertaining thrills of reading sensational accounts of murders, robberies, and imposters

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[114] Heather Wolffram, "Crime, Clairvoyance, and the Weimar Police," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Oct. 2009): 581-601.

[115] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*. 126.

[116] Elder, *Murder Scene*s, 61.

[117] Herzog, *Crime Stories*, 98-100; Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 62. 68.

depicted in newspapers, novels, and films.[118] This interest reflected the complexity of Germans' relationship to criminality. Weimar's citizens could, and did, admire criminals such as the Sass brothers, who during the Great Depression reached an iconic status as Robin Hood figures always one step ahead of the law.[119] The public's apparent admiration of some criminals, alongside the exposure of police incompetence in the press, only fed officers' deepening sense of alienation from both the state and society they served.[120]

By the early 1930s, many harbored a festering sense of frustration about the Republic's commitment to preventing aggressive and interventionary forms of policing. This growing dissatisfaction helped Nazism establish inroads into the police. In 1932, disaffected officers formed a professional association to help generate support for the Nazi Party within their ranks. They felt the Nazis, if elected, were the political group most likely to unshackle law enforcement from legal restraint. One of the association's leaders was Arthur Nebe, a Berlin native and World War I veteran who joined the Kripo in 1920 after dropping out of medical school due to financial difficulties. A vocal supporter of Nazism despite the Republic's ban on police membership in the Nazi Party, he later commanded both Desk V (Kripo) of the Reich Security Main Office and Einsatzgruppe B during the invasion of the Soviet Union.[121]

Despite the presence of an increasing number of Nazis within the ranks, the definitive political shift within the police occurred after the so-called "Prussian Coup" of July 20, 1932,

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[118] Elder, *Murder Scenes*, 29, 34, 79.

[119] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 176, 178, Elder, *Murder* Scenes, 72.

[120] Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies*, 36.

[121] Wildt, *Generation*, 301-303.

when Chancellor Franz von Papen removed Ministerpräsident Otto Braun and Berlin Polizeipräsident Albert Grzesinski. In the aftermath of this incident, under new leadership the police redirected their focus against the political Left.[122] The Coup, and the subsequent appointment of Nazi officers to leading positions within the Prussian Criminal and Political Police, also reflected the demographic shift that took place within these organizations during the early 1930s.

Although the Nazis attracted detectives disgraced by the press, they drew their greatest support from a younger generation of officers who joined the police after 1918. Most of these men received partial university educations. Despite their training and credentials, many found themselves unable to advance professionally, and they clamored for better representation of their interests. These young officers were thus highly receptive to supporting a political party which cast itself as ready to aggressively address the country's many problems.[123]

The new regime quickly met their expectations. After gaining power in January 1933, the Nazis promised to create a "real community of the people" and realign Germany's citizens with the values of the collective instead of the individual.[124] To achieve this task, the Nazis encouraged police officers to commit "body and soul" to their work, and offered them a blank check regarding the conduct of their investigations.[125] Officially codified into federal law in 1937, these orders sanctioned the long anticipated tactic of preventative arrest in order to, as one

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[122] Dams, *Staatschutz*, 163-167, 169-170.

[123] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 79; Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 204.

[124] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 13.

[125] Ibid. 17.

officer termed it, "fully break the solidarity of professional criminality." Indiscriminate, preemptive arrest finally became police doctrine.[126]

Lawmakers quickly extended this legislation to those the regime viewed as delinquents, asocials, or work shy, allowing the police to detain anyone with a prior criminal record or who they thought posed "a danger to the community." As the Nazi state consolidated its power between 1933 and 1936, it sent thousands of these suspects to the newly established concentration camps.[127] During this period, more criminals and "asocials" languished in places like Dachau, Buchenwald, and Moringen than communists, indicating the Nazis' desire to strengthen the nation by removing those they considered morally weak.[128] Alongside raids and mass arrests, the police also established a new system of surveillance to watch over citizens released from the prisons and concentration camps.[129] They carried out these measures without oversight from the courts, and by 1938 the police enjoyed almost full legal autonomy.[130]

As the crackdown continued, law enforcement found itself enjoying a new relationship with the public, touted as heroes in a state media eager to show citizens that their government worked hard to restore stability and harmony. During the mid-1930s, newspapers published a wave of articles about the dramatic decrease in crime and the reassertion of community values.[131]

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[126] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 194, 219; Gellately, *Backing Hitler,* 17, 35.

[127] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft,* 199-200; 225, Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 96.

[128] Ibid. 99.

[129] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, hereafter cited as USHMMA, RG 14.106., NS 19, Fiche 473/50, Reich Interior Ministry, 14.12.37., Polizeiliche planmässige Überwachung.

[130] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 97.

[131] Ibid. 36, 44, 49.

The regime attributed these efforts to the ceaseless energy of the police, underscoring its commitment to rebuilding the institution's public image.

The greatest gift the new government bestowed on the police came in July 1937, when it established the Reich Criminal Police Main Office (RKPA). Commanded by Arthur Nebe, the organization marked the realization of the police's dream of achieving a unified, national system of information sharing. [132] However, distancing themselves from their Weimar contemporaries, the regime expected the RKPA to direct the efforts of the police in the different states rather than simply coordinate their requests, creating a truly centralized federal police system. As Nebe himself melodramatically declared, the RKPA was the "General Staff of the German police," leading "the body of troops at the front of the fight against crime," indicating the Nazis' martial conception of law enforcement.[133]

Along with the founding of the RKPA came a new racial focus that broadened the police's role in society well beyond that envisioned by officials in the 1920s. Marginalized during the Weimar Republic, young criminologists such as Robert Ritter and Paul Werner gained increasing influence after 1933 due to the regime's concerns about racial hygiene, causing the field's definitive shift towards criminal biology.[134] Genetic explanations racialized crime by portraying criminals, social outsiders, and entire ethnic groups such as Jews and Roma as inherently deviant. These interpretations opened the door to the pursuit of new solutions to

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[132] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 91.

[133] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 236.

[134] Ibid. 267; Wetzell, *Inventing the Criminal*, 220-223.

stamp out the enduring presence of threat, and the Nazis' wove them into their plans to create a racially reordered Greater Germany spanning the breadth of Europe.[135]

Police officials' strident calls for the "elimination" of criminality reflected these new ideas.[136] While such language did not yet mean the physical destruction of criminals, but only the breakup of criminal counterculture, it encouraged officers to view their work not as the maintenance of law and order but the uprooting of threat in order to protect the *Volk*. This self-conception paved the way for law enforcement's militarization over the course of the late 1930s, and their active role in racial war after 1939.

Reflecting on the history of Weimar's police it becomes clear that anxieties regarding community and criminality linked democracy to dictatorship between 1918 and 1933. As political, economic, and social instability continued to plague the country, ordinary Germans and officials alike drew upon the wartime rhetoric of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the mythical "Spirit of 1914" in order to promote an idealized form of community they claimed held the key to ending Germany's postwar difficulties. Crime became a way of articulating both criticism of the present and visions of the future, as it seemed to best embody the uncertainty haunting the lives of the Republic's citizens. Criminologists such as Robert Heindl and Max Hagemann stoked these anxieties, as they placed the blame for the country's misfortune on Germany's enemies and a criminal underclass spawned by wartime suffering. These men claimed that uncovering, containing, and then breaking up this counterculture prevented the country's continued slide into the abyss.

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[135] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 91.

[136] Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 201.

In an effort to restore stability, policing became increasingly exclusionary during the interwar period, as officers deployed new methods in the hopes of addressing crime and social deviance. In this respect, Weimar's police marched in tandem with law enforcement organizations in other European countries and in North America, which pursued similar fantasies of control that relied heavily on the powers of police science. However, by the early 1930s German policing took a hard and radical turn as these techniques appeared discredited in the face of rising criminality and what officials perceived as a hostile state that often seemed more sympathetic to criminals than the police. Crime became increasingly cast in terms of subversion and insurrection, as deviants sallied forth from urban slums to prey on society, and imposters manipulated upstanding citizens for personal gain.

Disgruntled by Weimar's failure to support the creation of a centralized police system, many officers welcomed the Nazis as a chance for a fresh start. The new regime did not disappoint. It encouraged police officers to pursue methods previously off limits due to the Republic's commitment to civil rights. Along with autonomy came centralization and staunch commitments to invest in police science, as reflected in the creation of not only the RKPA but the *Kriminaltechnisches Institut*, a research center in Berlin where scholars labored to improve investigative techniques and promote new racial-biological conceptions of criminality. These developments sent the clear message to officers that it was Weimar state and society rather than *Kriminaltechnik*, that failed them.

The concept of criminality as a dangerous internal enemy reached full fruition after 1933 with the help of the Nazi regime. Crime remained the touchstone orienting conceptions of community and who belonged to it, and law enforcement added new categories of criminals to the growing list of the *Volk*'s enemies. Ethnic minorities such as Jews and the Roma, as well as

Germans assessed as mentally unfit or unwilling to integrate into the People's Community, such as vagrants, criminals, prostitutes, and homosexuals, became targets of police action. According to the regime, the persecution of these people was an essential part of the country's transition to a healthy and unified new society capable of restoring its rightful place on the world stage. As part of the newly formed Reich Security Main Office, the police played an integral role in the pursuit of this historical mission.

Chapter Two
An Instrument in the Hands of the Führer: The Reich Security Main Office

"The mission of the Security Police is to secure the existence of the German Nation, its vitality and its cohesion against every form of subversion and corruption."

—Reinhard Heydrich[137]

"We will create a fourth theater of war: inside Germany!"

—Heinrich Himmler[138]

After coming to power in January 1933, the Nazi regime immediately began working towards its goal of fusing *Staat und Volk*, state and people, into one seamless *Volksgemeinschaft*. A crucial component of these efforts was the creation of a national security apparatus. Officially founded in 1939, the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) brought together the Political Police, Criminal Police, Order Police, and Party intelligence service [*Sicherheitsdienst,* SD], combining them into one comprehensive system to watch protectively over the nation.[139] Oriented by Nazism's exclusionary principles of ethnic, or *völkisch*, nationalism which claimed national belonging was contingent on immutable racial and moral characteristics, RSHA intended to conclusively eliminate all dangers to the *Volk*.

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[137] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/126, Reinhard Heydrich, "Der Bekämpfung der Staatsfeinde," 15.4.36., Abschrift aus "Deutsches Recht."

[138] Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 57.

[139] United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, hereafter cited as NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2728724, Der Chef der Sicherheitspolizei, 25.9.36., Aufgaben der Polizei; 232/2728733, Reichsverwaltungsblatt, Nr. 35, 29.8.36., Die Polizei im neuen Staat.

The roots of these efforts lay in the traumatic experience of defeat and national humiliation in November 1918.[140] Deliberately grounding the rebirth of the nation in the events of 1918, the regime attempted to expunge the humiliation of defeat by creating a harmonious and unified People's Community capable of restoring and maintaining the country's greatness for centuries to come. However, the traumatic experience of defeat endured, and was embedded at the core of this project, as evidenced by the regime's enduring fears of internal weakness and anxious concern about the *Volk's* resilience. This unease raised the prospect that another disastrous internal collapse might still occur.

To prevent a future catastrophe from happening, RSHA's architects sought to merge the investigative powers of the police with the martial, interventionary values of National Socialism. They intended to create a new institutional culture within the security forces which broke with the supposedly slow-moving, bureaucratic system of the Weimar Republic by creating proactive, political warriors ready to intervene in the body politic. In contrast to other European countries, Nazi security culture was premised not on deterrence, or the ability to chart the capabilities of known rivals, but on predicting and neutralizing future dangers, preemption.[141]

To achieve this goal, RSHA relied upon a catastrophic imagination that constantly envisioned impending disaster. This world view required that the organization collapse distinctions between common crime and political subversion, perpetually expanding its horizons. This ceaseless hunt for threats created a toxic symbiosis, a process in which the search for

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[140] Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, 225; Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*, 11-20; Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, 540-552.

[141] Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility*, 161.

enemies continually generated uncertainty that provoked further anxiety regarding catastrophe. These fears in turn encouraged extreme solutions to perceived dangers, solutions which culminated in mass violence and population removal.

Investigating the development of the Third Reich's security culture is crucial to explaining how its officers turned violence not only outwards against the peoples of occupied Europe, but also against their own citizens. By definition, organizational culture is the process by which a group integrates its members and adapts to meet external challenges. This learning generates "basic assumptions;" ideas and behaviors which, once validated, are used by an institution's leadership to inculcate members in the correct ways of addressing perceived problems. More importantly, these values also provide a sense of collective purpose.[142] It is important to note that culture is never static, but always evolving, and the assumptions that orient the group's world view are constantly modified and reworked by experience.

However, culture also narrows perception and limits the array of possible responses to challenges in order to define an institution's objectives. It therefore tends to entrench group values and methods, rather than encourage members to seek new, alternative solutions. In fact, when innovation does occur, it typically reinforces and improves upon previously validated assumptions. This is particularly the case in institutions with strong organizational cultures, such as police and militaries. Because of their commitment to carefully delineated missions, such groups are inherently "disaster prone," because the confrontation with uncertainty and the unknown often leads to conceptual rigidity and a greater reliance on institutional norms as a

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[142] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 12, 19, 21-27.

means of simplifying complex challenges.[143] In the case of RSHA, organizational values were reinforced by its leadership personalities, who exerted enormous influence within the security forces, as well as the specific ways in which it evolved and defined its purpose prior to the outbreak of war in 1939.

The Nazis' early efforts to create a Reich security service centered on Prussia, a logical choice given that the state fielded Germany's largest police force. In January 1933, recognizing the crucial role the Prussian police played in the consolidation of power, Hitler appointed Hermann Göring head of the Prussian Interior Ministry. Overseeing their activities, he immediately authorized the use of deadly force against what he vaguely termed "Communist acts of terror."[144] He also placed his protégé, Rudolf Diels, in command of the Prussian Political Police, which the regime considered essential to the Nazi state due to its wealth of knowledge about the Party's political opponents.[145]

In April 1933, the regime launched an initial attempt at centralization, passing a law that ordered the police to streamline their efforts to support the activities of the Political Police. The directive gave the Political Police authority to independently conduct preventative arrests and dramatically expanded their surveillance capabilities, indicating the organization's central role in the construction of the new Reich. Later known as the "First Gestapo Law," this legislation intended to steer law enforcement resources towards the suppression of Nazism's enemies on the

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[143] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 131; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 96; Barry A.Turner, "The Organizational and Interorganizational Development of Disasters." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, No. 3 (1976): 378-97, 378-379.

[144] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 17.

[145] Dams, *Gestapo*, 20.

Left, and also marked the shift towards the long desired adoption of preventative policing methods. A second law that followed on November 30, 1933 removed the Political Police from the purview of the Interior Ministry and placed it directly at the disposal of Göring. A short time later, he changed the name of the organization to the *Geheime Staatspolizei* [Secret State Police], shortened in every day parlance to "Gestapo."[146]

Despite the consolidation of the Political Police under the regime, the creation of a centralized Reich security apparatus proved a difficult task hindered by the competing visions and personal rivalries which characterized the Nazi style of governance. During the Reich's early years, Göring repeatedly clashed with Wilhelm Frick, the Reich's Minister of the Interior, over the creation of a national security force. A leading figure in planning the *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) of German government and society with the policies of the new regime, Frick was an early advocate of a central office to coordinate Germany's multi-state and multi-layered police system. However, given his own interests in centralizing the Reich's security forces, Göring blocked his attempts to establish a system that included the Prussian police. The Reich Minister soon found himself fighting on two fronts, as his bid for centralization also drew the ire of Heinrich Himmler, the head of the Bavarian police and the Nazi Party's paramilitary *Schutzstaffel* (SS, Party Defense Corps). Another figure highly sensitive to perceived threats to his power base, Himmler harbored his own vision of a German police system merged with the SS.[147]

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[146] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 31.

[147] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: Biographie* (München: Pantheon, 2008), 171-172.

Recognizing he lacked the power to single-handedly challenge Göring, Frick courted Himmler's support. His decision to ally with the SS chief proved critical to the future development of the Nazi police system. Göring quickly caved under the pressure exerted by his rivals and agreed to open discussions about the merger of the Prussian police into a central security apparatus. However, Frick's victory proved pyrrhic—Himmler, appointed Inspector of the Prussian Gestapo as a reward for his assistance, emerged as the real winner.[148] He quickly used the position to consolidate his hold on this crown jewel of Germany's police system and appointed the leader of the SD, Reinhard Heydrich, as the new head of the Prussian Gestapo in order to more closely align it with the SS.[149]

The starkest demonstration of the ideological shift occurring within the Reich's security forces came in the wake of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. These new racial guidelines expanded the scope of their activities by highlighting new threats to the *Volk*. The Laws made it abundantly clear that some of Germany's citizens now constituted a security risk not because of their political views, but because of their very existence. More importantly, they introduced a new biologically driven professional language which complemented officers' growing role in maintaining the racial and moral integrity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This lexicon underscored, as one police journal remarked, the new role of the security forces as "an instrument in the hands of the Führer," securing the community by crushing all threats to its existence.[150]

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[148] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2728694-95, Preuss. Innere Verwaltung, 8.3.34., Sonderabdruck Nr. 10; Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions*, 40; Dams, *Gestapo*, 20-21, 24.

[149] USHMMA, RG 14.001, 243/54a, RFSS, 10.8.35., "Zusammenarbeit der Geheimestaatspolizei mit dem SD des RFSS"; NARA, RG242, T 175, 232/2720311, RFSS, 27.8.42., Uns ist der Kampf; Roger Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 76; Longerich, *Himmler*, 194, 196.

[150] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2728733, Reichsverwaltungblatt, Nr. 35, 29.8.36., Die Polizei im neuen Staat.

Written four months after the courts established the Nuremberg Laws, a report entitled "The Administration of Justice" reminded security personnel that the regime fully emancipated them from the legal procedures set down in "earlier 'normal' years," a thinly veiled reference to the late Republic.[151] The phrase is noteworthy, as it indicates that the authors chose to reverse National Socialism's previous claims regarding the Weimar period's supposed abnormality. This was a time of national regeneration, and a sense of urgency therefore needed to drive the actions of the Reich's security personnel.

The regime expected its officers to no longer remain impartial. Instead, the article remarked officers should act upon *völkisch* interpretations of the law in order to protect and foster the well-being of the nation.[152] In contrast to earlier legal correspondence, biologisms riddled the text. Operating in "the spirit of nationalist ethics" officers now protected the "national health" and "national consciousness," of the German people from "racial traitors" and "criminals" seeking to undermine the "vital needs of the people."[153]

What is striking about such language is that it did not entirely break with rhetorical notions of criminality espoused by police officials and criminologists prior to 1933, as it paired everyday criminality and "immoral" forms of behavior with dangerous subversion.[154] The document thus reflected the strong intellectual continuities between the Third Reich's policemen

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[151] USHMMA, RG 14.001/ 243/ 97, 17.1.36., "Abschrift aus der deutschen Justiz, 'Rechtspflege und Rechtspolitik.'

[152] Ibid. 243/ 97-98; NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2728725, Reichsverwaltungblatt Nr. 35, 29.8.36, Die Polizei im neuen Staat.

[153] Ibid. 243/ 98, 102, 17.1.36., "Abschrift aus der deutschen Justiz 'Rechtspflege und Rechtspolitik.'"

[154] Thomas Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 44; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 22.

and their authoritarian predecessors in the Weimar Republic. However, the key difference was that the new government codified these preexisting tropes of deviance and crime into racial law. The model of the *Volk* as a living organism capable of being weakened from within encouraged officers to view themselves as guardians of the nation locked in a life or death struggle with not only criminals but suspect minority populations, and even the mentally and physically handicapped. More significantly, by fixing the gaze of security on the nation rather than the state, the use of quasi-medical terminology generated what Jacques Semelin termed "destructive fantasies," within the security forces.[155] While this new professional language intended to increase efficiency by highlighting new categories of threats, Nazi security culture became increasingly indiscriminate and extreme, as it scrambled to quickly address the endless series of dangers besieging the *Volk*. Furthermore, quasi-biological interpretations of crime and deviance raised the possibility of violently targeting entire groups perceived as dangerous.[156]

The Nuremberg Laws therefore marked the transition in Nazi policing from the suppression of political opponents during consolidation of power towards the regime's project of social engineering, which aimed to neutralize not only the corruptive influence of crime and political subversion, but also "racial outsiders" such as Jews, Roma, and "asocials."[157] In addition to creating new enemies out of minority groups, the regime also revamped threatening

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[155] Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 17.

[156] Ibid. 48-49; Dams, *Gestapo*, 41; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 74-75; Patrick Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten. Die deutsche Kriminalpolizei und der Nationalsozialismus* (München: C.H. Beck, 2002), 12, 23; Harald Welzer, *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005), 48-54.

[157] Gellately, *Backing Hitler,* 122.

images of old foes. Criminal stereotypes were used to convey the dire threat that outsiders posed to the community.[158] Extremely sensitive to the prospect that civil unrest might undermine the Reich at a crucial moment and bring about another national collapse, the regime cast criminals as an insurrectionary force lurking within the body politic.[159]

A 1936 training exercise drafted by the Berlin Police Presidium reflected these ideas. It depicted a hypothetical violent outbreak of civil disorder after a devastating enemy air raid. In the aftermath of the attack, Leftist agitators allied with gangs of criminals attempted to overthrow the government. In the midst of the unrest, looting also broke out across large portions of the capital, creating panic and widespread disorder. Subversives whipped some of these looters into a frenzy, and used them to delay the state's attempt to regain control of the city, buying time for revolutionary cadres to seize control of key parts of infrastructure, such as power stations, water reservoirs, and government buildings.[160]

The exercise demonstrated how the Reich's enemies could exploit civil unrest, hearkening back to the revolution of November 1918 and the Leftist uprisings of the early Weimar Republic. Exposing the long lasting trauma these events generated in police circles, the training scenario erased distinctions between foreign attackers, criminality, political uprising, and civilians' attempts to survive the crisis. Instead, it simply subsumed this complexity under a

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[158] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2728725-28, Reichsverwaltungsblatt, Nr. 35, 29.8.36., Die Polizei im neuen Staat.

[159] Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 57.

[160] NARA, RG 242, T 175/9/25011009-2511052, Besprechung der Prüfungsarbeit für Major-Anwärter in Polizeiverwendung, Mai 1936; Philip W. Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters: The SS and the Nazi Occupation of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2008), 165-166.

general rubric of disorder and rebellion. Most disturbing of all, the plans to take back the city imagined a street-by-street battle, using artillery and air strikes.[161]

In this aspect of police training, art imitated life. As members of the failed Kapp Putsch of March 1920, many of Berlin's leading security officers tried to depose the Social Democratic government and replace it with an authoritarian dictatorship.[162] These men experienced firsthand the large numbers of protesters who gathered in Berlin's streets to protest the coup attempt.[163] The exercise allowed the officials to theorize about the very response their commanders prevented them from using in 1920—military force against unarmed civilians. Its existence is clear evidence that the new regime fully intended for its security forces to adopt military tactics and apply violence in order to prevent the disruption of the *Volk's* internal harmony.[164]

The security forces' role as political soldiers became fully codified into both policy and practice in June 1936, when Hitler appointed Himmler Chief of the German Police. His promotion was the result of the problems caused by the Party's unruly paramilitary wing, the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, Storm Troops). Although it played a key role in the Nazis' rise to power, after 1933, the organization quickly fell out of step with the regime's vision of a new Reich. Failing to demobilize after the *Kampfzeit* (time of struggle) ended in January 1933, many of the SA's members rejected the Party's desire to redirect their manpower into kinder, gentler acts that

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[161] NARA, RG 242, T 175/9/2511031-2511037, Besprechung der Prüfungsarbeit für Major-Anwärter in Polizeiverwendung, Mai 1936.

[162] Sauer, "Berliner Sicherheitspolizei," 7.

[163] Robert L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement of Postwar Germany, 1918-1923* (New York: Norton, 1969), 155, 168-172; Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 148.

[164] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, 329.

helped foster national unity, such as charity work and fund raising. Instead, their leader, Ernst Röhm, pushed for the SA to take a leading role in revitalizing the military, and he provocatively declared his intentions to dissolve the General Staff.[165]

The concerns Röhm generated among top military leaders dovetailed nicely with the Party's own growing concerns about the SA. Providing further incentive for a purge, Röhm, who openly disdained what he considered the Party's retreat from the principles of National Socialist revolution, also remained the only one of the *Alte Kämpfer* (old fighters) at the top of the Nazi leadership with a base of support to strong enough to challenge Hitler. Recognizing their ability to benefit at Röhm's expense, those close to the Führer, in particular Göring and Himmler, stoked fears of a coup.[166] Under mounting pressure from his closest confidants, Hitler ordered the police to move against the SA's leadership.

In the early morning hours of June 30, 1934, Gestapo and SS officers spread out across Germany, arresting and executing Röhm and other leading members of the SA in what became popularly known as "The Night of Long the Knives." This event uncoupled the SS from its association with the Storm Troops and launched the organization's meteoric rise as the largest and most important institution within the Party. For the security forces in particular, the purge marked a crucial turning point—for the first time its officers engaged in organized murder to protect the Nazi state.[167]

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[165] David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 194.

[166] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1939, Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 516; Longerich, *Himmler*, 181-184.

[167] George C. Browder, *The Foundations of the Nazi Police State* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990) 143; Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studie über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft*

The episode cemented Himmler's reputation as a trusted member of Hitler's inner circle, and he gained a well-deserved reputation as a figure reliable enough to carry out the most difficult and unpleasant tasks.[168] Hitler fully revealed Himmler's growing standing within the Party two years later, when he appointed him Chief of the German Police. While technically still subordinate to Frick, Himmler operated autonomously and enjoyed direct communication with Hitler. Exhausted by the infighting, Frick finally ceded ministerial responsibilities concerning the Reich's police the SS chief, and Himmler turned his attention towards creating a Reich security apparatus under his control.[169]

Shortly after his appointment as head of the German Police, Himmler met with Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Gestapo and SD, and Kurt Daluege, the commander of the Order Police. Together, the three men drafted the organizational structure of the future Reich Security Main Office. The trio envisioned Himmler, as *Reichsführer der SS* (Reich Leader of the SS) and Chief of the German Police, overseeing three security branches; the Nazi Party's security services, or SD, the uniformed, Order Police, and the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police), which included the Kripo and Gestapo. Daluege oversaw the Order Police, and Heydrich directed the activities of the SD and Security Police.[170]

1903-1989. 5. Auflage (Bonn: J.H. Dietz, 2010), 145.

[168] Dams, *Gestapo*, 24, 26-27; Longerich, *Himmler*, 185; Browder, *Foundations*, 145.

[169] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 33; Longerich, *Himmler*, 209.

[170] Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 5; Browder, *Foundations*, 236; Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions*, 56-57.

Reflecting the intellectual influence of Weimar's criminologists, much like their counterparts in the Kripo, Heydrich's subdivided his forces into seven smaller offices, each with a specific area of responsibility, such as overseeing the political reliability of the churches, combating enemy propaganda, and counterespionage. The dual positions held by Himmler and Heydrich also left little doubt about their plans to fuse the Gestapo, Criminal Police, and Order Police with the SS, creating an ideologically committed security force.

Despite these plans, RSHA did not come to fruition for another two years. This final phase of centralization saw increasing attention paid to the activities and administration of the Gestapo. In April 1937, the regime passed legislation expanding its role as the vanguard of the Reich's security. This "Third Gestapo Law" fully empowered the organization to conduct preventative arrests, winning the long battle with the Reich courts over the legal limitations of surveillance and the detention of suspects. The new law empowered the Gestapo to arrest "any person who through their behavior, threatens the security of the people and state," a deliberately nebulous phrase that exponentially expanded the organization's already broad purview.[171] These measures anticipated the unification of the security forces into a national system the following August as the *Sicherheitshauptamt* (Security Main Office), finally freeing the Secret Police and Criminal Police from outside legal oversight.

Giving the Gestapo the leading role in combating the Reich's enemies, Himmler expanded its physical reach over the course of the late 1930s, increasing the number of *Stapostellen* (regional offices) from thirty-three to seventy by autumn 1939.[172] From these

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[171] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2962570, Reichsminister des Innern, 25.1.38., Erlass; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 42.

[172] Dams, *Gestapo*, 34.

outposts, regional Gestapo chiefs directed a network of *Aussendienststellen* (local offices) that extended the organization's reach into every city and town across Germany. For example, the Düsseldorf *Stapostelle* controlled six *Aussendienststellen* scattered over the Ruhr industrial area, casting a web of surveillance over almost five million people and roughly five thousand kilometers.[173] This period of rapid growth created new logistical and command difficulties, which allowed the *Reichsführer* the opportunity to bind the security services even more closely to the SS.

In November 1937, Himmler appointed a *Höherer SS-und Polizei Führer* (Higher SS and Police Leader, HSSPF) in each *Wehrkreis* (military district) of Germany in order to oversee the activities of the security police. Often older men with military backgrounds, these officers forged early connections to the Party and SS, and most also experienced financial difficulty prior to joining the *Schutzstaffel*, allowing Himmler to tie them to him through a system of patronage.[174] The HSSPFs allowed the *Reichsführer* to assert better control over the growing security apparatus by reducing the number of administrators he dealt with directly, ensuring that his trusted acolytes carried out his orders.

Acting solely on his authority, these men oversaw *Inspekteure der Sicherheitspolizei* (Inspectors of Security Police, IdS), who liaisoned with the Gestapo, Criminal Police, SD, and other Party agencies in order to coordinate their regional activities.[175] Himmler designed this

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[173] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 232/2720564, RFSS, 1.4.43., Dienstellenverzeichnis der Sicherheitspolizei und SD; Dams, *Gestapo*, 34.

[174] Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Höheren SS-und Polizeiführer. Himmlers Vertreter im Reich und in den besetzten Gebieten*, (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1986), 326-329; Longerich, *Himmler*, 333-341.

[175] Jens Banach. "Heydrichs Vertreter im Feld. Die Inspekteure, Kommandeure, und Befehlshaber der

insulated system of leadership to protect his security empire from political rivals and guarantee faster ideological indoctrination of the police forces within each *Wehrkreis*. The two-track command structure also encouraged both innovation and radicalism by allowing senior officers to appeal directly to Himmler, or act on his perceived desires.[176]

Alongside organizational adjustments, the composition of the security forces underwent important changes over the course of the mid-1930s. Due to the manpower demands imposed by the rapidly expanding security corps, Himmler rose to command a hybrid force which only underscored the need to foster a strong organizational culture in order to unify its disparate elements into a committed and cohesive force. Contrary to what some officers expected, the Nazis expressed little interest in undertaking a thorough purge of the police after gaining power. Between January 1933 and February 1934, the regime dismissed only 1,000 officers from service. Most of these losses came from the Order Police, and the Criminal and Political Police lost less than two percent of their officers.[177] Furthermore, many of those targeted for removal belonged to the upper echelons of police leadership, and the purges left the police's middle and lower ranks intact.[178]

For example, the new regime sent Willi Gay, a staunch supporter of the SPD despite his commitment to preventative policing, to Cologne, where he remained there as director of the

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Sicherheitspolizei und der SD," in Mallmann and Paul eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 82; Dams, *Gestapo*, 30.

[176] Birn, *Die Höheren SS-und Polizeiführer*, 323, 351-355; Dams, *Gestapo*, 30.

[177] Ibid. 17.

[178] Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions*, 36-37; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 18; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 72-73, 92.

city's Criminal Police until 1945.[179] Indeed, while only eleven out of the fifty-nine high ranking officers of the Prussian Political Police remained in their positions by the end of 1933, the regime rarely punished them for their political allegiances. Thirty-two found themselves posted to duty with the Criminal Police or as instructors to the Police Training School at Charlottenburg, and only sixteen were dismissed. Some states, such as Bavaria, saw even fewer officers removed from their posts and the continuities in manpower between the Republic and the Reich remained strong.[180]

Consequently, the early years of the Nazi dictatorship did not see a reduction in personnel but instead a dramatic increase in the number of officers, as the regime recognized the need to insert its supporters into rank and file positions, coordinating the security forces from within as well as from above. This merger of Party and police began as early as February 22, 1933 when Göring deputized 50,000 members of the SA and SS as auxiliary policemen in order to intimidate Leftists before the March national elections. Similar kinds of augmentation took place in Hessen and Bavaria, and these amateur policemen played a key role in the mass arrests and acts of selective terror which swept the country during the first year of the Third Reich. This infusion of Nazis into the police helped shift its organizational culture internally by encouraging violence and extralegal measures against the regime's enemies.[181]

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[179] Roth, "Die Kölner Kriminalpolizei: Organisation, Personal und "Verbrechensbekämpfung" eines lokalen Kripo-Apparates 1933-1945," in Harald Buhlan and Werner Jung, eds., *Wessen Freund und wessen Helfer? Die Kölner Polizei im Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Emons, 2000), 315-316.

[180] Dams, *Gestapo*, 17-18.

[181] Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions,* 41-43; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 17-18; Browder, *Foundations*, 54.

Police administrators also siphoned off sizeable segments of the Criminal Police to the Gestapo during this period. Between June 1934 and March 1937, the Prussian Gestapo expanded from 2,500 to 3,500 officers, reflecting the growth of the organization under Himmler's direction. The effects of the regime's commitment to increasing personnel were felt most strongly at the local level—in March 1933 the Hamburg Political Police stood in the shadow of the city's Kripo, numbering only fifty-two officers and twelve auxiliaries. Less than two years later, the office fielded 251 men, most of whom came from the ranks of the Criminal Police.[182]

The Hamburg example exposes the important role played by the Kripo during the early years of the Reich, in particular their contribution to the growth of the Gestapo. Kripo chief Arthur Nebe often fondly acknowledged the close relationship between the two organizations remarking, "The struggle against the political enemy of the state and against the asocial criminal must be logically led by one hand."[183] Initially unable to staff the Gestapo with personnel of its choosing, the regime compromised and drew upon the talents of veteran Criminal Police officers.[184]

Most of those transferred to the Gestapo accepted their new postings, and even those officers initially wary of National Socialism looked forward to the opportunities for promotion, prestige, and pay increases offered by reassignment to the Political Police. The Party's staunch support of Germany's law enforcement professionals further allayed concerns about the regime and its policies. The founding of the Reich Criminal Police Main Office, the rolling back of the

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[182] Dams, *Gestapo*, 45, 48.

[183] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 45.

[184] Dams, *Gestapo*, 57; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 18.

constraints the Republic placed on investigations, and the encouragement of preventative arrest tactics were all highly popular measures within police ranks. They allowed the regime to paper over any remaining political fissures and to court the support of those officers initially skeptical of the Party's takeover of the police.[185]

In addition to increased budgets, a push for centralization, and the encouragement of more aggressive forms of policing, the regime committed itself to raising law enforcement's public standing. In December 1934 it founded the "Day of the German Police," a national holiday that celebrated the Reich's law enforcement professionals. After the ceremonies, uniformed officers then went door-to-door across Germany collecting money for the Nazi *Winterhilfe* (Winter Help) welfare program. Other initiatives, such as distributing pamphlets emblazoned with pictures of smiling policemen underneath titles such as *The Police: Your Friend and Helper*, sought to develop a closer relationship with the public.[186] Officers and citizens alike perceived these efforts not simply as acts of propaganda, but gestures of goodwill, enabling the regime to generate genuine support for the police within German society.

Further efforts to garner officers' support for National Socialism came in the form invitations to attend classes at the Police School in Charlottenburg, located on the outskirts of Berlin. Designed to educate officers on the new *völkisch* forms of policing advocated by the regime, the classes included over fifty hours of lectures on subjects such as racial biology and the struggle for national unity, alongside detailed descriptions of the Reich's enemies, such as Jews,

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[185] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung*," 91-94; Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 52-53.

[186] Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions*, 46; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 43-44.

criminals, and communists. Instructors integrated these foes into their discussions of German history, which included analyses of the Thirty Year's War, the French Revolution, Jewish emancipation, and the injustice of the Versailles Treaty— national tragedies that allegedly prevented the *Volk*'s march toward historical greatness. However, the course ended on a positive note, crafting a redemptive narrative built around the creation of the Third Reich. Significantly, this discussion included lectures on *Kolonialpolitik*, or colonial police procedures, foreshadowing the security forces' role in the regime's plans to expand the Reich's borders.[187]

In addition to ideological indoctrination, the courses intended to foster officers' identification with the new state by allowing them to attend prestigious training seminars in the Reich's capital, enhancing their professional self-image and increasing their chances for promotion. They also strengthened the bonds of comradeship and encouraged the creation of social networks through extracurricular activities such as movie nights and cultural outings. Indeed, the personal connections between many "Charlottenburger," as the graduates were known, endured into the postwar period when officers helped one another find jobs in the West German Republic's new police system.[188]

During the years just prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, a younger cohort of officers entered the ranks, taking command of the regional security offices. Born after 1900, this cadre hailed from middle class nationalist backgrounds, and in contrast to their older Kripo colleagues, identified more closely with National Socialism. They were also better educated than their

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[187] HStAD, RW 34-20, p. 1-4, Befehlsblatt des Chefs der Sipo und SD, Nr 35. 15.8.42. Lehrplan für den zweimontatigen Lehrgang für Kriminal-Inspektoren; Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 134.

[188] Dieter Schenk, *Auf dem rechten Auge Blind: Die braunen Wurzeln des BKA* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2000), 72-74.

Criminal Police counterparts—in 1938 ninety-eight percent of newly minted security commanders held their doctorate, and eighty-seven percent of these graduates majored in law.[189]

In contrast to postwar stereotypes which cast them as maladjusted sadists, they were in fact *ganz normale Akademiker*—"completely normal academics"—intensely career minded individuals who rose through the crowded university system during a time of prolonged economic hardship.[190] Work remained hard to find in the Reich after 1933, especially in the overcrowded legal profession. For example, in 1935, 5,700 graduates sought one of 250 positions available in the Prussian courts. This deluge also quickly engulfed the temporary internship positions created to ease the pressure on the state's system, and these too became as rare and coveted as regular appointments.[191] Already sympathetic to the tenets of *völkisch* nationalism, Himmler's new security corps proved an attractive proposition for these frustrated young professionals.

Deeply emotionally affected by the instability created by the Republic's economic and social upheaval, many of these officers grew up in the closing years of World War I, and viewed themselves as fighters in an ongoing national struggle for survival.[192] For most members of this "war youth generation," this self-perception as political warriors crystallized during their

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[189] Dams, *Gestapo*, 59; Wildt, *Generation*, 73-74.

[190] Gerhard Paul, "Ganz normale Akademiker. Eine Fallstudie zur regionalen staatspolizeilichen Funktionselite." in Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, eds. *Die Gestapo. Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1995), 241, 24; Wildt, *Generation*, 74-75.

[191] Banach, "Heydrichs Vertreter im Feld," 93; Dams, *Gestapo*, 63.

[192] Christian Ingrao, Andrew Brown, trans., *Believe & Destroy: Intellectuals in the SS War Machine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 48.

university years.[193] Across the centuries, German student life was marked by paradox. While many of these "movers and doers" later formed the bureaucratic backbone of the state, their time at university was marked by their status as social outsiders. The residents of the parochial home towns which hosted Germany's universities often viewed students as alien interlopers. As a result, they learned to band together, juxtaposing themselves against the "backward" townspeople, and this sense of isolation often encouraged a lack of empathy and understanding towards their fellow citizens.[194]

In many respects, this self-perception as an elite in the making served to compensate for a life characterized by uncertainty about the future, a predicament only exacerbated by the Republic's severe economic troubles. During the interwar period student activism intensified to meet the challenges posed by the country's difficulties, which they believed would only end when the country abandoned the divisiveness of party politics in favor of a more direct and decisive form of government.[195] This desire for strong, charismatic leaders grew out of longer traditions within academic culture, in particular its high regard for professors who rose on personal merit and their ability to attract students from across the country.[196] This "academic

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[193] Wildt, *Generation*, 41.

[194] Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 119, 130; Helena Rimon "Paradoxes of "Free Floating" and the Controversy of Betrayal: Intellectuals' Reflections on Themselves Against the Background of Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Volume 25 (4), 2013: 531-549, 531-535.

[195] Anslem Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistiche Deutsche Studentenbund. Studenten und Nationalsozialismus in der Weimarer Republik, Band I* (Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1973), 112-117; Michael H. Kater, *Studentenschaft und Rechtsradikalismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1975), 99-101, 198-201; Wildt, *Generation*, 116-124; Rimon, "Paradoxes," 533-535.

[196] William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 14-19, 245.

charisma" turned political during the 1920s, when the war youth generation flocked to join the *Arbeitskreisen* (work circles) of nationalist academics, who lectured on politicized topics such as the revision of the 1919 border agreements and the need to preserve German culture and language.[197]

The self-help initiatives used by students radicalized during the interwar period as well. Members of nationalist organizations such as the "Black Hand" in Leipzig collected money for ethnic German minorities living in other European countries, and devoted their academic breaks to promoting "Germaness" in the Silesian and East Prussian borderlands. For these young activists, only the power of collective will, intuitive understanding of the needs of the people, and an uncompromising desire to achieve one's goals manifested decisive political and social change.[198] Many carried this mindset into their professional lives, and they were therefore attracted to the kinds of interventionary ideas promoted by the Reich's security forces.[199]

Just as these officers joined the ranks, the regime also began to transfer personnel from the SD to help aid ideological indoctrination. Composed of younger men who held especially strong political convictions but often lacked higher education and professional training, these men helped widen the generational rift within the security forces, as older, more experienced former Kripo officers saw themselves passed over for promotion in favor of these new arrivals.

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[197] Ingrao, *Believe and Destroy*, 18-22, 38-42.

[198] Ibid. 128-129.

[199] Ibid. 78-79; Kater, *Studentenschaft*, 162-172.

The problems caused by the heterogeneous composition of the Reich's security personnel only highlighted the need to foster a strong identity for the new institution.[200]

As the security services' chief administrator, the task of forming this culture fell to Werner Best. Known as a leading theorist on the subject of *völkisch* policing, he came of age in a middle class nationalist milieu and remained committed to conservative politics while studying Law at Heidelberg and Frankfurt. During his university years he became deeply involved in nationalist activism.[201] Best's political writing, in particular his contribution to a 1927 anthology edited by the war veteran and author Ernst Jünger, evidenced his unconditional commitment to the nationalist movement.[202]

Best's article reflected Jünger's influence on the young student, especially his thoughts on the life-affirming qualities of war. His essay, entitled "*Der Krieg und das Recht*" (War and the Law), refuted the Kellog-Briand Pact and its condemnation of war as a tool in the hands of Germany's enemies. In response to this perceived injustice, he promoted unyielding political conviction and what he termed "Heroic Realism," a hard and ruthless commitment to act in the interests of one's nation and if necessary, undertake the destruction of entire enemy populations with dispassionate, clinical detachment.[203] Such blood thirsty statements reflected Best's status

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[200] Dams, *Gestapo*, 63.

[201] Faust, *Deutschen Studentenbund*, 121-128; Herbert, *Best*, 52.

[202] Ernst Jünger, ed. *Krieg und Krieger* (Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1930).

[203] Werner Best, "Der Krieg und Das Recht," in Jünger, *Krieg und Krieger*, 137-161.

as a student "free floater," someone seeking a firm sense of place in the world, and who embraced radical solutions as a means of quelling his personal anxieties about the future.[204]

Best initially disdained the Nazi Party as a mass movement, which he felt failed to reflect his own self-perception as a member of the nationalist elite.[205] However, in 1930 he joined, convinced it now offered the only opportunity to establish an authoritarian government. Due to his wide-ranging connections and close personal relationship with the Gauleiter of Hessen, he rapidly rose through the ranks of the Party and later joined the SS, which attracted him due to its elite image.[206] Appointed special commissioner for the Hessen police in 1933, Best proved adept at using this key position to secure the regime's hold on the state, and established one of the earliest concentration camps at an abandoned paper factory in the town of Osthofen. He also later helped plan the Night of the Long Knives, and Best's organizational talents soon caught the attention of Himmler, who appointed him to oversee the Gestapo's administrative section. [207]

From this position Best played an important role in shifting the security forces' focus away from selective political suppression and towards the preventative policing of society.[208] He worked tirelessly to broaden the security forces' purview and help free its officers from legal restraint.[209] In addition to helping strengthen the mandate of the security apparatus, Best placed

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[204] Rimon, "Paradoxes," 539-543.

[205] Herbert, *Best*, 80.

[206] Wildt, *Generation*, 125-128; Herbert, *Best*, 107-108; www.gedenkstaette-osthofen-rlp.de.

[207] Herbert, *Best,* 123-127.

[208] NARA, RG242, T 175, 249/2741287-88, Preussische Geheime Staatspolizei, Der stellv. Chef und Inspekteur, 3.4.35, Mitteilung grundsätzlicher Veröffentlichungen über die Politische Polizei; Herbert, *Best,* 204, 208-209; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 96.

[209] Herbert, *Best*. 151-153.

his personal stamp on its organizational culture by encouraging the recruitment of recent law school graduates, whom he often personally solicited during university exam periods.[210] Best understood the political and social atmosphere that shaped these men's lives, and he was eager to replicate their activist academic culture within the security services, particularly its emphasis on initiative and proactive action.

An article Best wrote entitled "The Secret Police" reflect his desire to cultivate these attributes within the security forces. In the article he outlined his vision of "a new kind of state security corps, whose members, alongside their bureaucratic temperament, feel they are part of a fighting organization [*kämpferischen Verbandes*] in which the individual, regardless of whether or not he volunteered or was reassigned, is bound together through comradely connections and personal loyalty to its mission. Only when these essential psychological prerequisites are satisfied can its responsibilities be fulfilled."[211] Committed not to the state but to the nation, its officers were to "secure the life force and future of the nation against the many outer and inner enemies generated by the *Volk*'s national character."[212]

This sentence embodied the preemptive essence of Nazi security logic, as officers needed to remain vigilant and committed to hunting down an endless series of threats that could conceivably come from anywhere, at any time. Further evidencing the future oriented nature of *völkisch* policing, Best noted this mission demanded security officers "with character and

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[210] Banach, "Heydrichs Vertreter im Feld," 94.

[211] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/122, Auszug aus den Ausführungen von SS-Oberführer Dr. Werner Best in der Zeitschrift "Deutsches Recht" vom 15.4.36.

[212] Ibid. 243/121.

values," whose intuition and deep understanding of the needs of the *Volk* allowed them to uncover these hidden threats.[213] According to Best, "fighting organization" demanded dynamic and energetic officers, capable of meeting the diverse needs of security in the National Socialist state by exercising independent decision making.[214]

Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the Security Police, echoed Best's vision of a "fighting organization" that combined the initiative and comradeship of activist student culture with the militaristic values and unflinching ruthlessness of the SS. A disgraced naval officer introduced to Nazism by his wife, in 1931 Himmler appointed him to direct the Party's nascent security service. Despite the fact that his experience in intelligence work was limited to recollections of the detective novels he read as a teenager, Heydrich excelled in his new position, creating an extensive network of informers within the Party.[215]

A personal favorite of the *Reichsführer*, Heydrich struck a stronger ideological tone than Best, declaring that "the human resources [*Menschenmaterial*] for this fighting State Police must be of a special form."[216] Underscoring the need for ideological commitment, he argued "the fight against the enemies of the state, above and beyond, belongs to the unconditional recognition of the National Socialist idea and the comprehensive and fundamental knowledge of the opponent. The men of the State Police must therefore be absolutely focused in their spiritual

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[213] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/122, Auszug aus den Ausführungen von SS-Oberführer Dr. Werner Best in der Zeitschrift "Deutsches Recht" vom 15.4.36.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*. 48, 51-55.

[216] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/126, Reinhard Heydrich, "Der Bekämpfung der Staatsfeinde," 15.4.36., Abschrift aus "Deutsches Recht."

outlook."[217] This comment reflected his opinion that *völkisch* conceptions of national belonging exclusively oriented policing in the new Reich. He underscored this notion by remarking, "National Socialism views enemies of the state as enemies of the nation ... the enemies of the nation can only be fought properly if its methods and means can be spiritually detected. This task is fulfilled by the Secret State Police and the Security Service of the SS, and this exemplary collaboration provides an example of the unity between the Party and State."[218]

Heydrich's comments again laid bare the anticipatory logic of preventative policing, which relied on officers' initiative and intuitive "sixth sense" to root out the enemies hidden within the *Volk*. His comment that "in the struggle against the enemies of the state, one must take into consideration the opponent's means and methods, as well as the means of one's own resistance," further revealed the ideal values of the Nazi political soldier, underscoring the need for dynamic, flexible, vigilant officers ready to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.[219]

The security chief's words also highlighted the inherent propensity for extreme solutions built into the mission to protect the *Volk*. His pugilistic remark that "a fight is only finished when the opponent is rendered incapable of fighting and remains so," starkly evidenced Heydrich's willingness to use force to crush the Reich's enemies.[220] The statement indicated that security officers could adopt whatever methods needed to defeat their enemies, reflecting how

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[217] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/126, Reinhard Heydrich, "Der Bekämpfung der Staatsfeinde," 15.4.36., Abschrift aus "Deutsches Recht."

[218] Ibid.

[219] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 22.

[220] USHMMA, RG 14.016, 243/123, Reinhard Heydrich, "Die Bekämpfung der Staatsfeinde," 15.4.36., Abschrift aus "Deutsches Recht."

the lack of oversight from outside authorities and legal accountability fostered the organization's radicalism.

Best and Heydrich's reiterations of the Nazi values of *Führerprinzip,* or leadership principle, closely modeled the German army's doctrine of *Auftragstaktik* (mission command), providing an important intellectual intersection between the police and military that the regime soon put into practice. These principles allowed junior officers to exercise their initiative in pursuit of the goals of their commanders.[221] However, it should be noted that these axioms never advocated complete decentralization or unsanctioned action, even among the security forces. As Michael Thad Allen astutely pointed out, "If the Führer Principle encouraged managers to act decisively, this doctrine never meant to unleash unbridled individualism, for which Hitler, Himmler, and the SS had nothing but scorn."[222]

In order to avoid the potential chaos caused by the encouragement of initiative, like their counterparts in the army, RSHA's leadership structured the innovations of their subordinates through an understanding of their mission and the methods required to accomplish it. However, the reliance on initiative, personal intuition, and the idealization of action ensured that RSHA's organizational culture fostered radical methods, over time creating a centrifugal effect which drew upon experiences in the field to fine tune institutional practice, continually expanding

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[221] Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 181-190, 308-310.

[222] Michael Thad Allen, *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 31.

policy horizons.[223] The outbreak of war exacerbated this phenomenon and cemented security officers' self-perception as political soldiers.

Although Himmler formally founded the Reich Security Main Office on September 23, 1939, its officers were already inside Poland, serving with five Einsatzgruppen (task forces) responsible for securing the areas behind the advancing Wehrmacht. Whereas similar units accompanied German troops into Austria and the Sudetenland in 1937 and 1938, assisting the transition of power by arresting political dissidents, the Einsatzgruppen in Poland participated in missions of a much different sort, and they played a key role in the regime's first foray into racial warfare.

National Socialism did not view war as a conflict between states to achieve political ends. Instead Nazism conceived it as merciless struggle between competing peoples, especially in regards to Eastern Europe, the alleged homeland of the Reich's most hated enemies—Jews, Slavs, and communists. According to the regime, the invasion of Poland thus required ruthless preemptive forms of action, as reflected in Hitler's chilling comment to security and military officers just prior to invasion that, "Poland must be destroyed."[224]

Drawing upon the experience of the border struggles of 1919-21 in the Silesian region, Heydrich, Best, and other security planners fully expected the country's entire population to fanatically resist the German advance and wage a guerilla war behind the lines.[225] They planned

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[223] Paul, "Kämpfende Verwaltung," 69.

[224] Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 6.

[225] Ibid. 25, 138, 143.

to preempt these threats by eliminating segments of the Polish population considered most likely to resist, such as the nobility, clergy, and intellectuals. However, reflecting RSHA's penchant for fostering initiative and action, at the start of the campaign Heydrich simply ordered his officers to combat all "elements hostile to Germany and the Reich." These deliberately vague orders meant that personnel in the field crafted the definition of resistance, allowing them to label a plethora of social behaviors that contradicted the idea of a docile occupied population as resistance.[226]

As a result, the plans to prevent the creation of a guerilla movement in conquered Poland, deliberately extended military tactics to civilians. During the invasion, preventative policing became preventative violence. The methods deployed by the security forces included hostage taking, mass shootings, and ethnically cleansing the region by forcing the Jewish population to flee into the Soviet zone east of the San River. Orders issued by Himmler and Heydrich on September 3 left no doubt about how they wanted these responsibilities carried out, commanding their officers to address any perceived act of resistance with "ruthless suppression."[227]

Armed with these open ended directives, the Einsatzgruppen operating behind the lines broke into smaller units, known as Einsatzkommandos, to cover territory more effectively. Led by young officers encouraged by Heydrich's orders to let *völkisch* nationalism, paranoid perceptions, and base instinct guide their actions, these units often exceeded their orders, leaving

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[226] Klaus Michael-Mallmann, Jochen Böhler, Jürgen Matthäus, *Einsatzgruppen in Polen. Darstellung und Dokumentation* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 117.

[227] Michael Wildt, "Radikaliserung und Selbstradikaliserung 1939. Die Geburt des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes aus dem Geist des völkischen Massenmords," in Paul & Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 26; Alexander B. Rossino, "Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy during the Polish Invasion: The Case of Einsatzgruppe von Woyrsch," *German Studies Review*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb.2001): 35-53, 38.

a trail of carnage across western Poland that even shocked German army units carrying out their own brutal reprisals against suspected civilian resistance.[228]

For example, after hearing news that retreating Polish troops killed ethnic Germans in the town of Bydgoszcz, Einsatzkommando 2/IV terrorized its population. Helmut Bischoff, the unit's commander, remembered that after entering the town on September 5 his men immediately began to clear it of "looters" and other "criminals." Bischoff also recalled he personally encountered a Pole, who he described as "a bandit, his arms full of stolen goods." Revealing the use of the violent, preemptive methods idealized by Nazi security culture as a means of restoring order, Bischoff remarked, "in a few minutes he met his fate. As a warning to the rest of the population, I left him shot and laying in the street; a less humane but very effective means of deterrence."[229] His description of the "pacification" of Bydgoszcz evidences the uncritical application of criminal stereotypes and the use of indiscriminate violence that later became part and parcel of security operations across Nazi Europe.

However, his portrayal of the unit's atrocities as cool and calculated acts necessary to control a criminal population belied the reality on the ground. In contrast to the detached and ruthless efficiency envisioned by RSHA's leaders, the Einsatzgruppen engaged in numerous acts of wanton sadism, rape, random murder, and theft. They often committed these crimes in Jewish communities, where they came under the least amount of official scrutiny. Throughout occupied Poland, security officers forced their ways into their homes, demanding gold, furs, jewelry, and

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[228] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 53; Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, 125-129.

[229] Wildt, "Radikaliserung," 28.

other valuables at gun point. As one Jewish survivor from the city of Tarnów later recalled, "hardly a day passed when a shooting or some sort of abuse didn't take place."[230]

In the midst of the invasion, on September 9, Heydrich arrived in Poland to personally visit the Einsatzgruppen and assess what future measures were needed to subdue the Reich's newly conquered territories. Their operation ended a few weeks later, and the security forces redirected their energies into destroying all remaining "suspect elements," murdering an estimated 40,000 Polish citizens in a systematic effort to proactively purge the population.[231]

On November 20, Heydrich disbanded the Einsatzgruppen and reassigned their officers. Some returned to their posts in Germany, while others took charge of the security offices established throughout the Reich's new eastern provinces and the "no man's land" of the newly formed General Gouvernment, which was now home to displaced Jews and Poles.[232] Their participation in mass murder cemented their careers—of the thirty-nine commanders of the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos, sixteen became leading functionaries within RSHA. Those officers who participated in "frontline service" truly embodied the idea of a "fighting organization," one that straddled the worlds of the bureaucrat and the political soldier.[233] These men proved equally comfortable behind a desk drafting policy or with a pistol at the edge of a mass grave, annihilating the Reich's enemies.

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[230] Mallmann, Böhler, Matthäus, *Einsatzgruppen in Polen,* 86.

[231] Wildt, "Radikaliserung'" 31-34; Herbert, *Best*, 244; Mallmann, Böhler, Matthäus, *Einsatzgruppen in Polen*, 87.

[232] Wildt, *Generation*, 481-485.

[233] Paul, "Kämpfende Verwaltung," 56-57.

The invasion of Poland marked a crucial point of departure for the security forces. The Einsatzgruppen converted preventative policing into preemptive violence, linking persecution inside Germany with the atrocities carried out in its occupied territories. Just as they planned in pre-war training scenarios, security officers carried out indiscriminate violence against a civilian population considered unruly, inferior, and criminal.[234] Allowed to exercise almost full independence in everyday decision making for the first time, Einsatzgruppen officers often exceeded the orders issued by their commanders in Berlin. They understood their organization prized action, initiative, and embraced a world view that cast human existence as a merciless struggle between competing peoples.

The invasion of Poland exposed how experience reinforced institutional values. As the security forces carried out their purge of Polish society, the mission broadened to encompass not only resistance fighters, Jews, and the elite, but also civilian "bandits" caught out after curfew or committing vaguely defined "criminal acts."[235] During the invasion, the security forces converted years of violent rhetoric into practice, as the National Socialist conception of conflict left no room for noncombatants, only *Volksgenossen* and their enemies waging a struggle fought not just on the battlefield but within the civilian population.

Nazism's effort to collapse state and people into one homogenous body at home encouraged this conception of war. Despite their own claims that they restored the unity of the nation, the regime feared the durability of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Himmler's 1936 remark "We

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[234] Mallmann, Böhler, Matthäus, *Einsatzgruppen in Polen*, 54; Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, xv.

[235] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 58.

will create a fourth theater of war: inside Germany!" best reflected this uncertainty about the durability of the national community.[236] This unnerving comment reflected the regime's desire to ruthlessly root out internal dissent and impose order on Germany society. In September 1939, the security forces enacted these militarized principles during a preventative war waged against enemy populations abroad.

The application of mass violence, decentralization of command, and the fostering of preemptive action through intentionally vague orders that occurred during the invasion of Poland brought theory into practice. The conflict fostered the initiative and ruthless decision making that became the hallmarks of the Reich Security Main Office's organizational culture. These attributes were championed by its leadership, who advocated military values and unconditional commitment to the idea of national unity. They used these martial ethics to cultivate the security forces' self-perception as political soldiers defending the *Volk* from extermination. This mission transcended rivalries between the diverse cadres of RSHA's personnel and bound them together through participation in atrocity.[237]

In the aftermath of the invasion of Poland, the application of violence became institutional practice, a valued means of confronting uncertainty and imposing order.[238] The removal of legal oversight prior to the war encouraged this reliance on unilateral force, by freeing officers from outside scrutiny and allowing them to develop policy unhindered from outside intervention that might have checked their most radical impulses. Coupled to the

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[236] Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 57.

[237] Welzer, *Täter*, 54, 65-67, 71, 209-210; Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 58, 211, 231-233.

[238] Ibid. 12.

urgency to protect the nation from perceived threat, this unravelling of constraint and the conscious adoption of a martial image created a unique institutional atmosphere that fused together security paranoia, activist student culture, and militarism.

However, these practices failed to banish the anxieties regarding internal weakness and national catastrophe haunting the regime. Although the invasion of Poland opened up optimistic new vistas of possibility for the Reich's guardians in the form of the new security polices, it simultaneously brought hundreds of thousands of new potential dangers into the fold, as large numbers of Jews and Poles, two groups long demonized by Nazi racial dogma, now rested within the Reich's expanded borders. Likewise, in the wake of the invasion the supposed dangers of the East also filtered west in the form of ethnic German repatriates and Polish prisoners destined for work on farms and factories inside Germany.

This paradox encouraged new initiatives, as the Reich Security Main Office now faced the task of regulating the lives of civilians inside Germany and its occupied territories. The invasion of Poland therefore marked not only RSHA's baptism of fire. It also brought to the forefront anticipatory security logics that allowed personnel to reconceptualize physical and social space at home and abroad as battlefields. These anxieties encouraged the adoption of the violent techniques of population control the security forces perfected during the anti-partisan operations carried out in Nazi occupied Europe between 1941 and 1944.

Chapter Three
The Reich's Eastern Laboratory: Counterinsurgency in Theory and Practice 1941-1944

"He who fully sets aside his personal emotions and acts ruthlessly and mercilessly acts correctly."

—General Max von Schenckendorff [239]

"in the future survivors are to be considered fair game."

— Higher SS and Police Leader Curt von Gottberg[240]

The invasion of the Soviet Union played a critical role in shaping the Nazi security services, and RSHA assigned larger numbers of officers there than any other region of occupied Europe. The Nazi East served as a laboratory, in which security officers developed and perfected brutal techniques of population control before exporting them to other occupied territories such as Italy and France. The tactics used in the East eventually filtered back into Germany as well, and Himmler himself noted how the experiences of occupation reshaped policing at home. Indicating his desire to integrate practices developed abroad into police methods inside the Reich, in an April 1942 directive he remarked, "Only through an exchange of officers with the experiences of the front will training improve at home." In the same correspondence, Himmler also encouraged the rotation of personnel from the East back into Germany in order to assist the transfer of these techniques of occupation to the home front.[241]

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[239] Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, hereafter cited as BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 121, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 12.10.41., 'Der Partisan, seine Organisation und seine Bekämpfung.'

[240] Bundesarchiv Berlin, hereafter cited as BA-B R 70/14, p. 1648, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 25.7.43., Einsatzbefehl Nr. 2.

[241] USHMMA, RG 14.015, NS 19/2572/1, RFSS, 10.4.42., Austausch von SS Führern zwischen Front und Heimat.

This policy had tragic consequences at the end of the war, when veteran security officers upon their violent experiences in an attempt to prevent the home front's collapse.

In the early predawn hours of June 22, 1941 some three million German soldiers began to march eastwards into the Soviet Union. Codenamed Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi regime cast the invasion as a preemptive strike to protect Europe from the dire threat of Judeo-Bolshevism. During the planning of the attack, Hitler and other Nazi leaders repeatedly cast the coming campaign as a life or death ideological struggle that required the German army to wage a merciless *Vernichtungskrieg*, or "war of annihilation," against a determined and barbaric enemy.[242]

Although the regime claimed the invasion saved Europe from Soviet influence, in reality it intended to win colonies in the East. One security dossier aptly revealed these plans for conquest, remarking that the Soviet Union was "the ideal target of exploitation," and home to "the most backward and poorest peoples this side of the Urals."[243] The invasion preparations were notably silent regarding care for the people who inhabited the region. Indeed, Nazi administrators envisioned that an estimated thirty million of the inhabitants would perish to suit the Reich's material needs.[244]

The plans for the *Vernichtungskrieg* in the East required thousands of security officers to join the invasion. In a fashion similar to the Polish campaign, Einsatzgruppen and other police

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[242] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 65-66.

[243] Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 101.

[244] Ibid. 52; Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2006), 466-468.

units followed behind the advancing Wehrmacht, preemptively rooting out suspected threats among the civilian population. Expecting resistance from Soviet citizens and soldiers alike, the invasion plans warned that in the East that anyone could be a potential threat. As Directive 21, issued by the Wehrmacht High Command, stated "Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the National Socialist German people … this war demands the ruthless suppression of Bolshevist snipers, guerillas, saboteurs, Jews, and the complete elimination of active or passive resistance."[245]

Other correspondence, such as the infamous Commissar Order given to soldiers and security officers on June 6, 1941 made it clear the regime no longer expected them to adhere to the international laws governing the conduct of warfare. These orders encouraged soldiers and security officers to treat the population harshly and to remain hyper vigilant because, as one document noted, "The Russian is accustomed to the hard and ruthless application of authority. The necessary, rapid pacification of the country can only be achieved if every threat from the enemy civilian population is ruthlessly suppressed. Every leniency and softness leads to danger."[246] These kinds of directives reveal more than just the regime's conception of the East as a primitive, backwards place.[247] They expose the anticipatory nature of Nazi security logic, as well as officers' fears that the unruly civilian population, poisoned by Bolshevist ideology, would resist the invasion.

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[245] Quoted in Dirk W. Oetting, *Kein Krieg wie im Westen. Wehrmacht und Sowejtarmee im Russlandkrieg, 1941-1945* (Bonn: Osning 2009), 54.

[246] BA-MA, RH 23/344 p, 799, Oberkommando des Heeres, 25.7.41., Behandlung feindlicher Zivilpersonen und russischer Kriegsgefangener in rückwärtigen Heeresgebiet.

[247] Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, 48, 88, 114-115.

In contrast to this image of a fanatical enemy, as the Wehrmacht advanced eastwards it encountered a demoralized Red Army which initially put up little resistance. Even more surprising, in parts of the Baltic and western Ukraine formerly occupied by the Soviets, villagers welcomed them as liberators. By October, German troops captured over three million prisoners and were closing on Moscow.[248] As the offensive continued, RSHA headquarters in Berlin reassigned increasing numbers of security personnel to watch over the vast stretches of newly conquered territory. Operating free from outside oversight and encouraged to view eastern peoples as only responsive to harsh discipline, the security forces developed radical new policies of population control that became central to institutional practice.

These security methods emerged from the anti-partisan war fought behind the front. In addition to eliminating Jews and communists, Heydrich tasked the police units and Einsatzgruppen following the Wehrmacht with preventing the creation of a resistance movement. Stalin's desperate July 3, 1941 call for civilians to defend their country and carry out acts of sabotage behind the front only further provoked the invaders' concerns about the creation of a guerilla movement. As one document warned, "The plan to use partisans in the rear areas, the call for gangs of youth, and above all the agitation of the supporters of the Judeo-Bolshevist system means that a guerilla war should be expected. Attacks and sabotage by the enemy population, especially upon individual soldiers, should be expected."[249]

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[248] Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 158-159.

[249] BA-MA, RH 23/344, p. 799, Oberkommando des Heeres, 25.7.41., Behandlung feindlicher Zivilpersonen und russischer Kriegsgefangener im rückwärtigen Heeresgebiet.

The leadership of Rear Army Group Middle, the military government established in Weissruthenien (modern day Belarus), harbored especially strong fears about civilian resistance. This heavily forested region dotted with countless small villages and farms was the site of the large encirclement battles that crushed the Red Army at Smolensk in late July, netting over 300,000 prisoners.[250] Yet hundreds, if not thousands, of Soviet troops still remained on the loose, cut off behind enemy lines. Many of these soldiers fled into the woods or sought sanctuary in local villages, hoping to wait out the end of the Soviet state. However, because of their military training and supposed ideological indoctrination, the occupiers viewed them as a grave danger to rear area security, and they quickly became the target of an extensive manhunt.[251] The efforts to uncover and destroy these groups of trapped Soviet troops throughout autumn 1941 greatly influenced the development of occupation policy throughout Nazi Europe.

These far reaching consequences were attributed to Rear Army Group Middle's commander. Hailing from an aristocratic family with long ties to the Prussian military, sixty-six-year-old General Max von Schenckendorff was no stranger to the threat posed by partisans. During the opening days of the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914, his infantry regiment executed hostages in retaliation for perceived resistance, and Schenckendorff's deep concerns about enemy civilians continued after his reassignment to garrison duty in northern France, where he unsuccessfully tried to deport them as security risk.[252] The following year, in

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[250] David Glantz, *Barbarossa Derailed: The Battle for Smolensk, 10 July-10 September 1941*, *Volume 2* (Solihull, England: Helion, 2010), 576.

[251] Bogdan Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen*, 40-41, 65; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 165; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 877.

[252] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 210-212, see also Jeff Lipke, *Rehearsals: The German Army in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007); Jens Thiel, *"Menschenbasin Belgien." Anwerbung, Deportation,*

1915, Schenckendorff travelled to the Balkans, and worked as an adviser to Austro-Hungarian army, and this assignment played a crucial influence on his thinking regarding enemy populations.

During the occupation of the Balkans, the Habsburg military engaged in particularly ruthless forms of counterinsurgency.[253] Despite the atrocities carried out by Austro-Hungarian troops, many German military figures and scholars expressed great admiration for their anti-partisan methods. As one scholar later noted, the Habsburg army's use of checkpoints, mass reprisals, hostage taking, large scale search and destroy operations, and the destruction of villages as collective punishment made Serbia "a perfect example" of the kind of anti-partisan war the Germany military should fight if they faced guerillas.[254]

After his return from the Balkans, the German General Staff placed Schenckendorff in charge of training troops for the upcoming spring 1918 offensive in France. He excelled in this position, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff later summoned him to their headquarters at Spa, where they personally thanked him for his efforts. After the Armistice, the general continued to conduct training seminars for the newly formed Reichswehr despite his deep disdain for the new

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und Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg (Essen: Klartext, 2007); John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 73.

[253] Johnathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Hapsburg Serbia, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 192, 229-233; Ben Shepherd, *Terror in the Balkans: German Armies and Partisan Warfare* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 28-32; Geoffrey Wawro, *A Mad Catastrophe: The Outbreak of World War I and the Collapse of the Habsburg Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 163-164, 322.

[254] Arthur Ehrhardt, *Kleinkrieg. Geschichtliche Erfahrungen und künftige Möglichkeiten,* 3. Auflage (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1944), 70, 73, 76-77.

Republic, and he published several training manuals before retiring in 1930. The Nazi regime recalled him to service in 1939 to assist in the occupation of Poland.[255]

Schenckendorff's travels throughout Europe during World War I reinforced his already strong sense of cultural chauvinism. His time in the Balkans left a particularly strong impression, and he noted that "Serbia is a god-forsaken land. The abundant landscape is mocked by barbarities of every description. The population is to a high degree uneducated and dirty; some of their housing can hardly be regarded as habitation fit for humans."[256] He later encountered the same seeming contradiction between an idyllic natural paradise and the supposedly primitive nature of its troublesome inhabitants during his time as commander of Rear Army Group Middle.[257]

Initially encompassing much of Weissruthenien, Schenckendorff reduced his area of operations on September 1, 1941 when he ceded control of the area west of the city of Bobriusk to the newly formed Reichskommissariat Ostland.[258] Although the general welcomed the reduction of territory, Rear Army Group Middle's security units remained grossly overextended.[259] Schenckendorff now governed a landmass of roughly 145,000 square kilometers, stretching from Borisov in the west, to the towns of Dorogobusch and Brjansk in the east. The city of Toropez formed the northern-most boundary of the area of operations, and the

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[255] Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 73, 77-78, 84, 92-93.

[256] Ibid. 78-79.

[257] Ibid. 93, 182; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 54, 100.

[258] BA-MA, RH 22/22, p. 280, Übergabe des rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte Ia, 29.8.41.

[259] Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 103.

town of Gomel marked its southern boundary.[260] The tangled forests and murky swamps which covered most of the region only compounded the problems of governing this vast space, whose roughly ten million inhabitants were spread across a rural hinterland only accessible by poorly maintained dirt roads.[261]

To meet these logistical challenges, Schenckendorff quickly established a series of strict policies aimed at limiting the movement of civilians. He reasoned that keeping them confined to their villages would allow his men to begin mapping the region's human terrain. In addition to providing demographic information, the registration of civilians aided the hunt for so-called *Ortsfremde* (outsiders), a term he used to describe Soviet soldiers or spies trying to pass themselves off as villagers. [262]

While the registration system intended to generate information about the civilian population, it also created violence. Several days after issuing these orders, Schenckendorff's troops extended the occupation's presence into the small villages that dotted the heavily wooded landscape.[263] These security sweeps uncovered hundreds of unregistered *Ortsfremde* and transient "wanderers" who they executed on the spot. For example, during one such *Durchkämmerung,* or search, operation conducted on September 15, the 221st Security Division

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[260] BA-MA, RH 22/22, p. 285, Karte, Heeresgebietes Mitte.

[261] Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, 48-52.

[262] BA-MA, RH 22/224, p. 127, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 5.7.41., Korpsbefehl Nr. 24; USHMMA, RG 53, Reel 4, Fond 65, Opis 1, Folder 1, p. 241, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte; 17.9.41., Abwehr der Partisantätigkeit hinter der Front; Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde,* 876-877; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht,* 135, 164-165.

[263] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 877.

and Police Regiment Middle reported they killed 500 "partisans." Most of the victims were undoubtedly Red Army deserters or villagers unfortunate enough to be caught without proper identification, since ambushes and acts of sabotage remained rare throughout autumn 1941.[264]

The discovery of hundreds of suspected *Ortsfremde* only fueled the occupiers' concerns that they needed to firmly establish their authority. Schenckendorff confirmed the likelihood of further violence in a series of directives that ordered security personnel to screen all adult males in their area of operations as suspected spies or partisans. The outcome of these interrogations, he noted, determined whether troops should subject the inhabitants of towns and villages to collective punishment such as executions or the destruction of their homes. Indicating his desire to quickly crush resistance before it could emerge, he also remarked that in the future his forces needed to conclusively destroy the nascent partisan movement by carrying out large scale search and destroy operations. These kinds of commands encouraged his men to deploy military methods as a means of managing populations, further eroding the already thin distinction between civilians and partisans in the minds of the soldiers and security personnel.[265]

Schenckendorff codified the use of military tactics into a coherent, if paranoid, counterinsurgency doctrine a few weeks later. On September 24, 1941, sixty-one Wehrmacht and security officers met at Rear Army Group Center's headquarters in Mogilev for a two day meeting on the subject of partisans. This first-of-its-kind conference hosted a cross-section of the occupation's leadership. In addition to senior personnel, Schenckendorff invited each of the

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[264] Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen*, 45; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 161.

[265] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 48, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 14.9.41., Korpsbefehl Nr. 52.

Wehrmacht security divisions and police regiments under his command to bring one junior officer, such as a captain or lieutenant, to help quickly disseminate the conference's findings to their troops in the field. Higher SS and Police Leader Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski and the commander of Einsatzgruppe B, Arthur Nebe also attended, indicating Schenckendorff's intent to foster better cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the security forces.[266]

He opened the meeting by providing a brief overview of the history of partisans from the Napoleonic Wars until the invasion of the Soviet Union. During the lecture, Schenckendorff carefully noted that the Bolsheviks were the first group to fully harness the power of guerilla fighters, using them to great advantage during the Russian Civil War. These experiences, he argued, created a distinctly Soviet style of warfare characterized by its use of civilian unrest to undermine the enemy from within. To support this thesis, the general drew upon select quotes from Lenin and Trotsky concerning partisans, and also used the 1919 Sparticist Uprising in Germany as an example of Bolshevism's attempts to sow internal chaos by using guerilla fighters.[267]

After detailing the history of partisans, the general discussed their presence within Rear Army Group Middle. He informed his audience that they usually operated in small groups, disguising themselves as farmers, beggars, or other transients, a comment which revealed the supposed links between "abnormal" social behaviors, crime, and insurgency. Schenckendorff also told the gathered officers that partisans often used women, children, and the elderly to

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[266] Ibid. p. 76, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 16.9.41., Kampf gegen Partisanen, Erfahrungsaustausch.

[267] Ibid. p. 78, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 24.9.41., Einleitungsworte zum Partisanen Bekämpfunglehrgang.

transport supplies and send messages, underscoring the need to restrict the mobility of the entire population in order to cut off the guerillas from their base of support. Reinforcing the perception that threats lurked everywhere, he also warned them that partisans and their supporters used forged identification to move through the area of operations, calling into question the loyalties of the civilians already vetted by the authorities. Further evidencing the radical impulses generated by these security anxieties, Schenckendorff concluded his presentation by calling for proactivity and aggression, reminding his listeners that "only through attack is the elimination of the partisan possible."[268]

His words were not empty rhetoric. After lunch, a fleet of omnibusses took the officers to the outskirts of Mogilev, where they watched Police Regiment Middle conduct a search operation at a nearby village. After they returned, Schenckendorff treated his guests to a banquet, followed by a "Russian music evening," before they retired to their rooms.[269] The next day they participated in another live exercise, and observed a company from Police Battalion 322 and a detachment of security officers search another village for *Ortsfremde*. The unit executed fifty-one Jewish inhabitants as suspected partisans, grimly revealing how Schenckendorff used the civilian population as test subjects to develop his counterinsurgency policies.[270]

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[268] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 78, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 24.9.41., Einleitungsworte zum Partisanen Bekämpfunglehrgang.

[269] Ibid. p. 70-71, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 23.9.41., Tagesordnung für den Kursus 'Bekämpfung von Partisanen.' vom 24-26.9.41.

[270] Ibid. p. 72, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, p. 88, 24.9.41., Pol. Regt. Mitte für Partisanlehrgang; Waitman W. Beorn, "A Calculus of Complicity: The *Wehrmacht*, the Anti-Partisan War, and the Final Solution in White Russia, 1941-1942," *Central European History*, 44 (2011): 308-337, 323.

One final demonstration took place in the early morning hours of September 26, when the participants gathered to witness the conference's finale, a raid conducted by Security Regiment 2. The officers watched safely from a distance as heavily armed troops surrounded and searched a village, arresting four residents accused of supporting the partisans or harboring communist sympathies. After troops secured the village, the group moved closer to watch officers from the army's Secret Field Police interrogate prisoners and pass out propaganda leaflets.[271] Returning to Mogilev, they enjoyed a light lunch before departing to rejoin their units.

Schenckendorff summarized the conference's findings two weeks later in a sixteen page pamphlet entitled "The Partisan: His Organization and His Suppression." The document's opening pages took care to note that "Today's battle against partisans is a battle against Bolshevism. It is not a national movement and is rejected by the peasants. The fighting methods of the partisans are underhanded and treacherous. The enemy must be completely eliminated."[272] However, this did not absolve the civilian population from suspicion. Schenckendorff highlighted the need to establish authority by exhorting his men to set aside their natural inclination to exercise restraint, remarking "Confronting the constant decision between life and death for partisans and suspects is difficult for even the hardest solider. Yet it must be done. He who fully sets aside his personal emotions and acts ruthlessly and mercilessly acts correctly."[273] This comment placed violence against civilians at the center of Rear Army Group Middle's new counterinsurgency policy.

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[271] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 90-93, Sich. Regt. 2, 26.9.41., Befehl für das Unternehmen Kussikowitschi.

[272] Ibid. p. 121, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 12.10.41., 'Der Partisan, seine Organisation und seine Bekämpfung.'

[273] Ibid.

The population was now the target of security operations, a notion further reflected in the pamphlet's call for troops to continue strictly enforcing the new movement and passport policy, "keeping the streets free of every Russian," and ensuring villagers remained in the areas subject to constant surveillance. This order was the first step to creating a free fire zone in Rear Army Group Middle, since troops and security personnel now viewed civilians who failed to heed the movement policy as partisans.[274] Although this directive intended to make the population legible to the occupation's gaze, it also highlighted how the inability to effectively control civilians encouraged the use of extreme methods.

Further indicating his fear of a resistance movement that had not yet materialized, Schenckendorff promoted military tactics such as encirclement operations as a means of quickly destroying large groups of partisans, and he encouraged his men carry out acts of collective punishment to deter the population from supporting the guerillas.[275] Further advocating the use of indiscriminate violence as a means of proactively heading off threat, the document remarked, "The Russian has more fear of the club than the rifle; the club is the most advisable means." This statement in particular made it clear to readers that the civilian population only responded to coercive force.[276]

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[274] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 124, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 12.10.41., 'Der Partisan, seine Organisation und seine Bekämpfung.'

[275] Ibid. p. 121.

[276] Ibid. p. 122.

Schenckendorff's writing had an immediate effect. A few days after the circulation of the conference's findings, Sergeant Schrade from the 354th Infantry Regiment submitted his own report about his experiences fighting partisans. In the essay he paraphrased Schenckendorff, commenting "The Russian has more fear of the club than the rifle; beatings are most advisable." Moreover, Schrade informed his superiors that every village harbored partisan supporters, but they were difficult to uncover because, "It is unbelievable the primitive means these Russians use to try to distract the Germans. Interrogations devolve into cowardly question-and-answer games … with the same seemingly innocent face the Russian both lies and tells the truth."[277] These comments reflected how the ambiguity and uncertainty that characterized life behind the front intersected with Nazi racial ideology among the rank and file of Rear Army Group Middle, encouraging violence towards a dehumanized, untrustworthy, and suspect population.

In order to uncover partisans, Schrade recommended that troops interrogate anyone found working in the fields, "above all children and women," noting they often delivered messages and supplies to the guerillas hiding in the woods and swamps. The report, which documented the unravelling of constraint at ground level, made its way up the chain of command to Schenckendorff. Reflecting the innovative culture of information sharing within Rear Army Group Middle, the general later circulated copies of Schrade's report to security and military units throughout the region.[278]

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[277] USHMMA, RG 53, Reel 4, Fond 655, Opis 1, Folder 1, p. 396, I.R. 354, .14. 10. 41, Erfahrungsbericht.

[278] Ibid.; Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 366; Waitman Beorn, *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 70.

The Mogilev conference and Schenckendorff's treatise on anti-partisan warfare were the first real attempts to analyze, define, and address the partisan movement. Although German armies fought guerilla forces during the Kaiser's colonial wars against the Herero and Boxers, as well as during the invasions of France in 1870 and in Belgium in 1914, the subject remained neglected as an object of military study.[279] This was reflected by the fact that although the Wehrmacht waged a brutal anti-partisan campaign in the Balkans well before the invasion of the Soviet Union, it still lacked a cohesive counterinsurgency doctrine in September 1941.[280] Schenckendorff's conference filled this void, and subsequently influenced the development of anti-partisan warfare throughout Nazi Europe.[281]

His gathering at Mogilev also paved the way for the Wehrmacht's participation in the Holocaust, integrating eliminationist anti-Semitism into German counterinsurgency policy by encouraging a murderous "calculus of complicity" which equated Jews with partisans.[282] Although the content of the lecture given by Arthur Nebe on the alleged role Jews played in the partisan movement remains unknown, the Einsatzgruppe leader's presence at the conference alongside Higher SS and Police Leader Bach-Zelewski indicated Schenckendorff's willingness to broaden the military's role in Jewish persecution. A draft of his treatise on counterinsurgency methods also found its way into the files of Einsatzgruppe B's headquarters in Smolensk,

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[279] See Kuß, *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegschauplätze*; Zimmerer, "The Birth of the *Ostland* out of the spirit of colonialism; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*.

[280] Shepherd, *Terror in the Balkans*, 88-95.

[281] Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 363.

[282] Beorn, "Calculus," 314, 329.

evidencing both the close cooperation between the Wehrmacht and security forces fostered by the conference, and the cross pollination of military and security methods.[283]

Equally as important, the gathering formulated concrete guidelines that held the larger civilian population suspect, as indicated by the frequent references made to "partisan supporters" such as beggars, child spies, and in particular, homeless "wanderers." These discussions fit well with Nazi racial theories, which cast eastern peoples as dirty, underhanded, and unruly.[284] Furthermore, Schenckendorff's use of criminal and asocial tropes highlighted the influence of a Manichean security imagination which equated "deviant" behaviors with disorder and resistance simply because they contradicted the image of a docile occupied subject.

Schenckendorff's innovations ensured these perceptions were worked into policy. He continued to hold regular conferences and training seminars on the subject of partisans throughout his tenure as commander of Rear Army Group Middle, and quickly gained a reputation as one of the Reich's leading experts on anti-partisan warfare.[285] This was in large part due to the plethora of professional contacts he cultivated throughout his career.[286] This network widely circulated Schenckendorff's writing, and it formed the basis for the

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[283] BA-B, R 70/49, Einsatzgruppe B, Erfahrungen über die Arbeitsweise der Partisanen und ihre Bekämpfung. No date given. The document's use of the term 'partisan' rather than 'bandit' denotes its publication prior to August 1942.

[284] Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, 192-193.

[285] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p.177, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 18.1.41., Korpsbefehl Nr. 68; RH 22/227, p. 64, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 9.12.41., Tagesmeldung; RH 22/231, p. 240, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 18.5.42. Tagesordnung für den Lehrgang 'Bekämpfung von Partisanen' vom 20.5-24.5.42.; p. 287, 6.6.42., 'Lehren aus der Lehrgang für Partisanenbekämpfung'; Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 366.

[286] Hasenclever, *Wehrmacht und Besatzungspolitik*, 365.

counterinsurgency manuals issued to soldiers and security officers across Nazi Europe. These documents played a central role in constructing the image of the partisan.[287]

Evidence of Schenckendorff's rise as one of the Reich's leading anti-partisan theorists is found in the almost verbatim reprinting of his Mogilev pamphlet in the counterinsurgency guidelines issued by the Wehrmacht High Command in October 1941. It included quotes from Schenckendorff's conference paper, such as reiterations of the "cowardly" methods used by partisan fighters, and the need to ruthlessly exterminate insurgents and those who helped them. The guidelines institutionalized the growing violence against civilians across the eastern front, noting "There is no battle without scouts. Old men and women play their part. Disguised as farmers, the partisans gather intelligence," indicating troops should view the entire population with suspicion.[288]

In addition to discussing tactics and field craft, the counterinsurgency manuals informed troops about the type of enemy waiting for them in the occupied territories. Two themes characterized this security writing; uncertainty and the blending of political resistance with criminal stereotypes. The booklets stressed that the Soviet Politburo in Moscow directed resistance, and warned even seemingly harmless segments of the population supported the enemy, driving home the notion every civilian was a potential threat. In particular, these

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[287] USHMMA, RG 18.002, Reel 11, Fond R 83, Opis 1, Folder 122, 'Bandenbekämpfung' 1 Angabe. September 1942; Kommandant des Sicherungsgebietes Lettland, 29.12.42., 'Kampfanweisung für die Bandenbekämpfung in Osten v. 11.11.42'.; RG 49.008, Reel 1, p. 255, Der Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber in Südosten und Oberbefehlshaber 12 Armee, 10.2.44., 'Praktische Winke für die Bekämpfung von Banden.' This document was found in the collections of the German occupation administration in Serbia.

[288] Staatsarchiv Bremen, hereafter cited as BStA, Js 4.89/3, Nr. 942, Der Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, 25.10.41., Richtlinien für Partisanenbekämpfung.

foreboding documents informed readers to be wary of military age males and anyone without a fixed address or encountered "wandering" roads or trails rather than working in the fields.[289] In sum, partisans might be anyone who ignored the restrictions placed on them by the security forces.[290]

The manuals' portrayal of guerillas as underhanded criminals rather than as combatants fuelled these perceptions. As the introduction to the first edition of the handbook on anti-partisan warfare informed its readers, "In the future partisans are to be described as what they are: bandits."[291] These comments echoed a new set of counterinsurgency guidelines issued by Hitler in August 1942. Führer Directive Number 46, entitled "Instructions for Intensified Action against Banditry in the East," ordered that security officers use the term "bandit" to describe all partisan activity in their correspondence.[292] This decree standardized criminal tropes as a means of describing resistance, and the choice of the term bandit is significant. In addition to vilifying guerillas by firmly placing them outside the laws of war, the word politicized common criminality, removing distinctions between crime and resistance in an attempt to reorder occupied populations to benefit the German war effort.[293]

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[289] USHMMA, RG 18.002, Reel 11, Fond R 83, Opis 1, Folder 122, 'Bandenbekämpfung' 1 Angabe. September 1942, p. 10, 18; Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters,* 63.

[290] USHMMA, RG 18.002, Reel 11, Fond R 83, Opis 1, Folder 122, p. 31, 'Kampfanweisung für die Bandenbekämpfung im Osten,' November 1942; Neitzel & Welzer, *Soldaten. Protokolle von Kämpfen und Sterben*. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011) 402-405.

[291] USHMMA, RG 18.002, Reel 11, Fond R 83, Opis 1, Folder 122, p. 31, 'Kampfanweisung für die Bandenbekämpfung im Osten,' November 1942.

[292] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 140/2663246, Führer-Hauptquartier, 8.42. (no day given) Weisung Nr. 46, Richtlinien für die Verstärkte Bekämpfung des Bandenunwesens im Osten; 74/2591691, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei, 31.7.42., Sonderbefehl; Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters*, 77.

[293] BA-MA, RH 22/233, Auszug aus einem Befehl des Oberkommandos der Heeresgruppe Mitte v. 25.8.42.

Führer Directive Number 46 effectively institutionalized the already ongoing indiscriminate extension of violence to civilians by fabricating "partisans" out of locals caught stealing, stockpiling food or buying goods on the black market. These everyday acts of petty crime were the result of the occupation's rapacious economic policies, which caused widespread starvation throughout Eastern Europe.[294] Regardless, such behaviors cut against the occupation's efforts to harness resources for the war effort, and the security forces dealt with them mercilessly. Führer Directive Number 46 therefore indicated the full unfolding of Nazism's anticipatory security logic, as the order allowed the occupation to address any perceived threat or sign of disorder with violence. Most importantly, while criminalizing a plethora of contradictory civilian behaviors, it also left the interpretation of what constituted dangerous activity open to officers in the field. Yet atrocity only created more security anxieties, by ruining economies and generating resistance that in turn led to harsher forms of reprisal. This mutually reinforcing process, what Isabel Hull described as "the hidden dynamism of violence," seemed to only confirm the "barbaric" and criminal nature of enemy civilians, justifying the overreliance on violence as a cure all to an ever expanding series of social ills caused by the occupation.[295]

Language further reinforced this perception. German security officers throughout occupied Europe often used cold, clinical terminology to distinguish what they preferred to see as their "rational" application of violence from that of their partisan enemies. Reports from Rear Army Group Middle ascribed to this lexicon of violence, detailing the atrocities committed by

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[294] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 278-289.

[295] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 99-100, 174-175.

their troops in a detached, sanitized fashion. In correspondence, officers described anti-partisan missions as "purification operations," "clearances [*Räumung*]," or "*Säuberung des Gelandes,* (cleansing the terrain)," phrases which denoted the emerging spatial relationship between order and violence.[296] As Vejas Liulevicius points out, such terminology not only defined problem areas and how they should be addressed, but also opened up endless new vistas of possibility.[297] The indiscriminate "cleansing" of entire regions thus offered up a means of conclusively dealing with disorder and the messy complexities posed by civil society, which repeatedly defied attempts to make it legible to the occupation's gaze.

Security officers' discussion of the victims of these operations reflected this desire to sanitize both landscape and people. Reports did not list them as murdered or abducted for labor, but instead described them as "evacuated," from areas now considered "pacified" after troops emptied them of their inhabitants and resources.[298] As evidenced by these phrases, this counterinsurgency terminology portrayed the application of violence as transformative, a tool used to reorder and improve society. In reality, these methods caused the very disorder they intended to eliminate.

In contrast to the atrocities committed by the occupation, security personnel described partisans in terms that drew strongly upon criminality and social deviance. For example, their

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[296] Johnathan Gumz, "Wehrmacht Perceptions of Mass Violence in Croatia, 1941-1942," *The Historical Journal*, 44, 4 (2001): 1015-1038, 1028, 1032.

[297] Vejas Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 106-107, 253.

[298] BA-MA, RH 22/225, p. 48, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 14.9.41., Korpsbefehl Nr. 52; RH 23/344, p. 57, 59, HSSPF Ostland, Führungstab, Ia,19.3.43., Einsatzbefehl 13; RH 23/344, p. 66, Kommandant des rückw. Armeegebiets 590, 15.3.43., Bericht; RH 23/346, p. 4, Sperrabschnitt Korück, 10.3.43. Erfahrungsbericht, Unternehmen Kugelblitz.

reports often recorded attacks and ambushes as "acts of murder and robbery."[299] Officers also described partisans as *Räuberbande,* gangs of thieves who plundered villages and towns. They also cast them as a *Bandenpest*, a plague sweeping across the land. Indeed, merging the language of counterinsurgency with that of medicine, officers described areas under their control as *Bandenverseuchtegebiete*, "areas infested with bandits," conjuring up the image of a dangerous and spreading contagion. The maps used by the security forces to chart the spread of resistance behind the lines starkly reflected this comparison of partisans with disease. As the partisan movement grew from 1942 on, much like the bodies of disease victims, they became marked by a spreading number of red splotches of various shapes and sizes with numbers written within them denoting the strength of various guerilla groups.[300]

In some cases the associations between filth, disease, partisans, and the population were quite literal—during anti-partisan operations, commanders warned their men not to drink water from wells, or even milk from cows in partisan held areas because of fears of typhus and other diseases.[301] This "medicalization of insecurity" accentuated the vileness of the enemy and reinforced the occupation's self-perception as a civilizing force with a mandate to intervene in the lives of civilians in order to cure the very ills it created.[302]

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[299] USHMMA, RG 53, 3/ 60, Einsatzgruppe B, Tätigkeits-und Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 16 bis 30 September 1942.

[300] Ibid. 11/ Fond 370/ Opis 1/386a/17, Wi. Mitte, Karte, Bandenlage in Weissruthenien und Armeegebiet, Stand v. 15.10.43

[301] Ibid. RG 53, 3/ 60, Einsatzgruppe B, Tätigkeits-und Lagebericht für die Zeit vom 16 bis 30 September 1942; RG 18.002, 8/131, Gruppe Kneckt, 24.3.43., Unternehmen Winterzauber, Ortsbefehl; 6/ 205, Generalkommissariat Riga, 14. 9. 43., Aufnahme russischer Flüchtlinge im Generalbezirk Lettland.

[302] Colleen Bell, "War and the Allegory of Medical Intervention: Why Metaphors Matter," *International Political Sociology*, 6: 325–328, 327.

In contrast to their own atrocities, German reports that detailed encounters with partisans were rife with descriptions of the mutilated bodies of dead German soldiers found in the aftermath of ambushes and raids. Others noted acts of cannibalism among the partisans hiding in the forests, further accentuating their savage nature.[303] As Monica Black has written, the improper care or mistreatment of the dead was interpreted by Germans as evidence of barbarity, or *Unkultur*.[304] Detailed descriptions of partisan cruelties in reports otherwise noted for their clinical detachment thus reinforced Germans' already virulent cultural imaginings about the unruly lands and peoples they occupied. As one security officer who served in Weissruthenien later recalled, "It was like the Wild West, a hundred years ago in America." His comments echoed Hitler's own insistence that partisans should be ruthlessly hunted and exterminated like "Red Indians," further indicating how Germans viewed the East as an unruly space filled with savage subhumans.[305]

The final facet of the image of the partisan was emphasis on the role played by Bolshevism. The idea that Leftist subversives encouraged civil unrest to further their aims was an important part of Nazi political thinking that emerged from the trauma of revolution in 1918 and the street fighting, strikes, and protests of the Weimar Republic's early years. This stress on

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[303] USHMMA, RG 53, 11/ Fond 370/Opis 1, p. 2, 3, 8, 60, Einsatzgruppe B. Tätigkeits-und Lagebericht für die Zeit 15 November bis 15 Dezember 1942; RG 18.002, 2/ Fond R 69/ Opis 1A/6/114, Gebietskommissar Dünaberg, 3.12.43., Bandenunwesen; BA-MA, RH 22.23, p. 201, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 7.5.42., Tätigkeitsbericht der Abteilung Ia für Monat April 1942; USHMMA, RG 18.001, 8/ Fond R 82/ Opis 1/ 9/63-64, HSSPF Ostland, 22.2.43., Tagesmeldung Unternehmen Winterzauber; BA-B, R 70/9/36, p. 102, HSSPF Weissruthenia , 23.8.42., Sonderbefehl Nr. 2; Chiari, *Alltag hinter der Front*, 188.

[304] Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116-119.

[305] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 874 f.; H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk: 1941-1944: His Private Conversations* (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), 621.

the influence Bolshevism, the Reich's most dangerous foe, provided further justification for committing violence against civilians. Whereas criminal stereotypes dramatically broadened the scope of atrocity by allowing the occupation to intervene in any aspect of their lives, casting partisans as fanatical Bolsheviks demanded suspects' complete annihilation as ideological enemies supposedly incapable of reform. Lastly, casting insurgents as Bolsheviks also ensured anti-partisan methods hardly remained confined to the Nazi East and helped encouraged their spread to other parts of occupied Europe.[306]

Aside from helping craft the image of the partisan, developments within Rear Army Group Middle contributed to shaping the practices of population control designed to defeat them.[307] Between March 26 and April 6, 1942 Schenckendorff launched Operation Bamberg in response to growing partisan activity in the area around Bobriusk. Targeting several villages described as "strongly infested" with guerillas, the general tried out his much touted encirclement tactics.[308] The newly arrived 707th Infantry Division, whose commander served as observer during anti-partisan campaigns in the Balkans, provided the bulk of the manpower for the operation.[309]

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[306] Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 303-304.

[307] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 884.

[308] BA-MA, RH 22/23, p. 17, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 3.4.42., Tagesmeldung Stand 31.3.42.; p. 87, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 13.4.42., Tätigkeitsbericht für Monat März 1942.

[309] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 887; Beorn, *Marching into Darkness*, 136.

Schenckendorff's men surrounded their objective, creating a thirty-five kilometer wide "cauldron" that intended to make the partisans' escape impossible.[310] They then swept towards the towns of Oktjabrski, Karpilowa, and Chonino located at the center, searching farms and villages along their way.[311] After reaching and destroying these locations with artillery fire, the troops carried out another sweep, working their way outwards in order to catch any survivors missed during the initial advance. Over the course of the twelve day operation, troops killed an estimated 3,426 "partisans" and "partisan helpers." Most of these victims were defenseless civilians—German losses totaled seven dead and eight wounded, a stunning disparity that revealed little fighting actually occurred. In order to deprive any remaining survivors of food and shelter, the soldiers also carted off livestock, food, and other supplies before destroying the villages and farms.[312]

Operation Bamberg served as a "pilot operation" that provided the blueprint for the destructive anti-partisan sweeps carried out across Eastern Europe between 1942 and 1944.[313] Military and security officers eagerly embraced these encirclement tactics as a means of quickly pacifying large segments of their vast area of operations.[314] The first edition of the anti-partisan manual issued to troops and security personnel also reprinted summaries of Schenckendorff's

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[310] BA-MA, RH 22/23, p.84, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 13.4.42., Tätigkeitsbericht für Monat März 1942; p. 28, 707 I.D. Abteilung Ia., 7.4.4.2., Unternehmen Bamberg.

[311] Ibid. p. 17, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 3.4.42., Tagesmeldung Stand 31.3.42.; RH 41, p. 1-4, Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Ukraine. Abt. Ia, 21.4.42., Bericht Nr. 7.

[312] Ibid. RH 22/231, p. 28, 707 I.D., Abteilung Ia, 7.4.42., Unternehmen Bamberg.

[313] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 885.

[314] Shepherd. *War in the Wild East*, 47.

methods, such as encirclement and the removal of civilians, denoting their positive reception well beyond Rear Army Group Middle.[315]

The violence that accompanied operations such as Bamberg not only killed but displaced thousands of civilians. Reduced to homeless "wanders" living illegally in areas supposedly "cleansed" of partisans, the enduring presence of civilians in off-limits sectors led to further obsessions about the nefarious nature of the population. Classified as *Überläufer*, a term which connoted not only a transient but also traitorous individual who aided the enemy, military patrols either killed survivors caught in these so-called "forbidden zones [*Sperrgebiete*]" or handed them over to the security forces for execution.[316] These vague terms helped broaden the scope of the violence directed against civilians, because they encouraged personnel to view anyone found in these areas as enemy combatants.

Schenckendorff's large scale sweeps reveal how the deployment of military tactics encouraged an indiscriminate mindset which equated all civilians in targeted areas as partisans, despite the reality that the population was often caught in the middle, trying to eke out a tenuous existence threatened by both the guerillas and the occupiers.[317] However, this mattered little to the occupation—according to the military doctrine adopted by the security forces, perceived

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[315] USHMMA, RG 18.002, 11/ Fond R 83/ Opis 1/122,'Bandenbekämpfung' 1 Angabe. September 1942; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 890.

[316] USHMMA, RG 18.002, 11/ Fond R 83/ Opis 1/122, Folder 122/58, Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber Ostland, 5.11.43., Behandlung von Bandenmitgliedern und bei Bandenunternehmen Festgenommen; Folder 8, Fond R 82, Opis 1, p. 9, HSSPF Ostland, 19.2.43., Tätigkeitsbericht Unternehmen Winterzauber, HSSPF Ostland; .21.2.43, Tagesmeldung Unternehmen Winterzauber; BA-B, R 70/9/38, HSSPF Weissruthenien, 16.6.42., Bericht; BA-MA, RH 22/223, p. 156, Oberkommando der Heeresgruppe Mitte, 2.9.42., Auszug aus einem Befehl v. 25.8.42.

[317] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 126-128.

dangers or contradictions required conclusive, and therefore violent, solutions. When faced with threat personnel considered it best to err on the side of overwhelming force in order to crush an elusive enemy rather than exercise restraint.[318]

Security logic became indiscriminate, as it sought to anticipate a seemingly never ending array of potential threats evidenced by contradictory forms of civilian behavior. After Bamberg, officers jettisoned efforts to distinguish between civilians and partisans in areas considered unruly. The application of mass violence, they argued, quickly broke resistance by destroying guerilla groups and terrorizing their bases of support. As Schenckendorff himself noted in a directive issued to his troops in August 1942, even children as young as eleven could be killed, because he considered them old enough to understand the consequences of their actions.[319] Such blood thirsty orders expose a security imagination which now considered rebellious areas as only secure once their inhabitants were removed or destroyed.

However, the rapid expansion of the partisan movement over the course of 1942 revealed the failure of these operations. The growing resistance they created coincided with a decline in both the quality and quantity of German troops, as Schenkendorff's best personnel were called up for service at the front. This change only increased the reliance on violence, as overstretched units sought to quickly pacify their vast area of operations. These forays generated new levels of destruction, as mounting frustration, exploitive economic policies, and declining manpower combined to create sustained periods of atrocity.[320]

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[318] Neitzel & Welzer, *Soldaten*, 402-405.

[319] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 792, p. 39, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 3.8.42., Befehl; Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, 125.

[320] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 978-996.

Alongside growing violence came the tactic of deportation. The removal of civilians from "infested" areas simultaneously denied the resistance valuable recruits, solved the problem of securing territory, and fed the Reich's appetite for workers as the regime called up ever larger numbers of Germans for military service.[321] Contested areas no longer needed to be held, tying down troops. Instead, troops simply removed the population and its resources, such as livestock and food, from contested areas.

Himmler's July 10, 1943 directive to security personnel in the East summed up the benefits of this new security tactic. It ordered them to arrest the entire of adult population of "bandit infested" areas of Weissruthenien and northern Ukraine for labor service. Himmler also commanded his men to place civilians "incapable of work [*arbeitsunfähig*]" such as small children and the elderly, in prison camps or put them to work in local agriculture, restoring order in partisan held areas by systematically depopulating them.[322] As the directive indicated, the occupiers no longer viewed civilians as a nuisance or threat, but instead as a valuable resource they gathered or destroy in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Operation Hermann, carried out between July 13 and August 11, 1943 marked the destructive apex of this new policy.[323] Led by Higher SS and Police Leader Curt von Gottberg, a World War I veteran with close personal connections to Himmler, the month-long operation

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[321] BA-B, R 70/50, p. 1260, Chef der Bandenbekämpfverbände, 19.1.43., Gewinnung von Arbeitskräftung für die deutsche Rüstungs und Ernähungswirftschaft bei der Bandenbekämpfung.

[322] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 81/2601769, Chef der Bandenkampfsverbände 10.7.43., Befehl; Rutherford, *Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front*, 310-335.

[323] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1032.

targeted the Nowogrodek area, one hundred kilometers west of Minsk. It netted 20,954 men, women, and children for labor service, and the security forces also executed almost 5,000 "partisan suspects," most of whom were innocent civilians.[324] Personnel also rounded up over 10,000 livestock, and Gottberg demanded that "Villages, other buildings, bridges and also orchards, which cannot be removed are to be destroyed. As much as is possible, the forests in the area are also to be burned."[325] At the end of the operation, he also ordered his men to turn the "cleansed" area into a free fire zone, remarking, "In the evacuated areas, in the future survivors are to be considered fair game."[326]

Gottberg's chilling words aptly summed up the "dead zones" which covered much of Weissruthenien by late 1943.[327] The occupiers transformed large swaths of territory into killing fields, and orders from Rear Army Group Middle even extended security efforts to the landscape by declaring that troops destroy all vegetation along road and rail lines to prevent concealment.[328] Bent on structuring population and territory through violence, security units routinely ignored alarmed civil administrators' repeated calls for moderation and their warnings about the severe, counterproductive damage done to the local economy.

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[324] USHMMA, RG. 21.001, 4/27/14, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 20.8.43., Gefechtsbericht Unternehmen Hermann.

[325] BA-B, R 70/14, p. 1650, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 1.8.43., Befehl.

[326] Ibid. p. 1648, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 25.7.43., Einsatzbefehl Nr. 2; USHMMA, RG. 21.001, 4/27/8, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 8.20.43., Gefechtsbericht Unternehmen Hermann; Moritz Felix Lück, "Partisanenbekämpfung durch SS und Polizei in Weissruthenien 1943: Die Kampfgruppe von Gottberg," in Alfons Kenkmann & Christoph Spieker, eds., *Im Auftrag. Polizei, Verwaltung und Verantwortung* (Münster: Stadt Münster, 2001), 242.

[327] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 1032-1036; Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, 166.

[328] BA-B, R70/38, p.399, Der Kommandiere General der Sicherheitstruppen und Befehlshaber im Heeresgebiete Mitte, 10.9.42., Merkblatt für Streckensicherung und Bahnschutz.

For example, in spring 1943 agricultural officials in the Smolewitsche area requested a dramatic reduction of their quotas because security units destroyed all of the villages in the region and deported or killed most of the population.[329] An administrator in Zaslawl, twenty kilometers northwest of Minsk, was more direct in his criticism. He pointed out that anti-partisan operations in the region completely undermined the occupation's authority and generated deep mistrust and hate among what he described as the "largely innocent" population. He also noted the damage these operations caused to both the local economy and the Reich's attempts to secure resources for the war effort, remarking that security troops recently took livestock earmarked for agricultural use. The administrator closed his letter by diplomatically suggesting that in the future, these forces remain scattered among a string of small outposts where they could not interfere with the economy. The plea went unanswered and the security forces continued their quest for order despite the disaster they created.[330]

The problems these pillaging operations caused also became clear to the staff of Rear Army Group Middle, who belatedly tried to curb the atrocities committed by their troops. Schenckendorff attempted to personally rein in the violence by issuing orders for units not to burn villages, reminding them, "It is necessary to understand that we need the Russians as assistants in the reconstruction of the region and as allies in the fight against the bandit threat. Bolshevism, not the Russian people, is the enemy."[331] Additionally, he began an intensive

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[329] USHMMA, RG 53, Reel 53, Reel 4, Fond 393, Opis 1, Folder 99, p. 13, Landwirtschaftliche Aussenstelle Smolewitsche, 10.5.43., Herabsetztung des Anbauplanes.

[330] Ibid. Reel 16, Fond 370, Opis 1, Folder 212, p.35a, Landwirtschaft Aussenstelle Zaslawl,21.8.43., Bericht.

[331] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 792, p. 39, Befehlshaber rückw. Heeresgebietes Mitte, 3.8.42., Befehl; BA-MA, RH 21/3/48, p. 22, Pz. AOK 2. Ia, 4.5.43., Behandlung von Banden, Zivilbevölkerung und Wirtschaftsgütern.

propaganda campaign in an attempt to win over civilians, casting the occupation as a source of order that protected them from partisans. Schenckendorff also changed the rules of engagement, and ordered his men treat captured partisans as prisoners of war in an effort to limit the scope of violence.[332] However, the terrible treatment of Soviet prisoners during the winter of 1941 and two years of devastation caused by the anti-partisan war unsurprisingly discouraged partisan deserters, and few civilians came forward to assist the occupation.[333]

The reforms thus came too little too late, and were undercut by a new round of mass deportations as the Red Army advanced westwards in 1944. Between February 29 and March 18 German troops evacuated a five kilometer wide strip behind the entire front in preparation of the upcoming Soviet offensive, deporting 26,000 people to transit camps. From there, administrators sent an estimated 11,000 to work in Germany, and the military used another 5,000 to repair roads and build fortifications. The security forces quarantined evacuees assessed as sick with typhus or other diseases in special camps, and Wehrmacht units forced "useless eaters" such as the elderly and small children back towards Witebsk, where they tried to survive in no man's land until the Red Army arrived on June 22.[334]

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[332] BA-MA, RH 22/346, p. 36, Kommandant Korück 590, 7.3.43., Behandlung von Bevölkerung, Banden und Wirtschaftsgütern; Shepherd, *War in the Wild East*, 132-134.

[333] On the treatment of Soviet POWs see Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden. Die Wehrmacht und sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008); Babette Quinkert, *Propaganda und Terror in Weissrussland 1941-1944. Die deutsche "geistige" Kriegsführung gegen Zivilbevölkerung und Partisanen* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009).

[334] BA-MA, RH 21/3/487, p.2-3, 2 Pz. AOK, 4.4.44., Beiträge Qu. 2 für Vortrag Q. Qu bei OB. 4.4.44., Evakuierung Witebsk; p. 4, 3 Pz. AOK, 24.4.44., Einsatz der Zivilbevölkerung.

Army Group Middle carried out similar operations in its southern sector. There, the 35th and 253rd Infantry Divisions, working in conjunction with Einsatzgruppe B's Sonderkommando 7a, carried out an operation to deport civilians from areas immediately behind the German lines. These units took over 33,000 people assessed as *arbeitsunfähig*, or unable to contribute to the German war effort, i.e. the sick, elderly, and all children under the age of ten, to the town of Osaritschi, seventy kilometers south of Bobriusk.[335] Soldiers and security personnel forced their prisoners to march on foot, shooting and beating those who failed to keep up.[336]

They herded the survivors into three detainment camps, which in reality were little more than large areas in the forest surrounded by barbed wire, devoid of sanitation or shelter. Despite the subzero overnight temperatures, the guards did not allow the inmates to light fires and over the next few days Wehrmacht engineers mined the surrounding area. The Germans then left, without providing the prisoners with food, fresh water, or medical care.[337] Unbeknownst to the inmates, the camps rested on strategically important ground, flanked on either side by swamps that channeled the enemy's advance. The prisoners thus served as human shields, slowing down the Red Army and covering the Wehrmacht's retreat to more defensible terrain farther to the west.[338] An estimated 9,000 prisoners died from exposure and a typhus outbreak before the

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[335] BA-MA, RH 24-55/131, p. 207-208, Generalkommando LV AK Abt. Qu., 20.3.44., Erfassungsaktion am 12.3.44.; p. 242, Generalkommando LA AK Abt. Qu., 1.4.44, Bericht.

[336] NARA, RG 242, T 314, 1440/990f, Einsatzgruppe B, Sonderkommando 7a, 30.3.44., Tagesbericht; Christoph Rass, *'Menschenmaterial,'* 386-387, 397, 399.

[337] *Esslinger Zeitung*, 13.1.10. "Als lebenden Schutzschild missbraucht"; *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 22.9.06. "Vier Zeitzeugen berichteten über ihre Erlebnisse im Konzentrationslager Ostarischi."

[338] Rass, *'Menschenmaterial,'* 397.

arrival of the Soviets on March 19, and the number likely rose in the days immediately after they were freed.[339] The atrocity at Osaritschi marked the end of large scale deportations behind the front, as several months later the Red Army evicted the occupiers from the western Soviet Union during its summer offensive.

In the latter half of 1944 security officers exported these tactics to Italy and France, which became the scene of similar deportation operations. In particular, Germany military and security units targeted geographically remote regions, such as the upper valleys of the French Alps. These efforts culminated in the destruction of the rural community of Vercors in southern France. Between mid-July and early August 1944, troops from the 157th Reserve Infantry Division and a unit of paratroopers massacred 200 French civilians, destroyed 573 farms, and deported the remaining residents, effectively creating a "dead zone" reminiscent of the eastern front. August Meier, a former officer of Einsatzgruppe C reassigned as Commander of Security Police in Lyon led these forces, evidencing how RSHA's deliberate rotation of personnel exported the violent practices developed in Nazism's eastern laboratory to other parts of occupied Europe. By autumn 1944, when German forces abandoned France, an estimated 20,000 civilians had died, mostly in the south, where security and Wehrmacht personnel murdered 14,000 during the anti-partisan operations carried out in the final year of occupation.[340]

The situation was worse in Italy, where historians cautiously estimate between 70,000 and 80,000 civilians were killed during the war. Many of them died during summer 1944, when

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[339] Rass, *'Menschenmaterial*,' 397.

[340] Peter Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg*, 339-350, 414.

the 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division arrived in Tuscany and Lombardy to suppress partisan resistance.[341] Helmut Loos, who joined the division as its intelligence officer after commanding Sonderkommando 7a during the deportations at Osaritschi the previous spring, planned these operations, again evidencing how the rotation of personnel spread violent security practices across Nazi Europe.[342] The anti-partisan sweeps carried out by the division bore all the hallmarks of the *Bandenkampf* in Rear Army Group Middle. Loos' troops typically murdered the elderly, women with small children, and others deemed *arbeitsunfähig* inside their homes, which they then set on fire to deny the partisans shelter. His men also rounded up livestock and other resources, and sent able-bodied residents to work inside the Reich.[343]

The practices of population control developed in Rear Army Group Middle were not only exported from the Reich's eastern laboratory through the creation of official policy. They also circulated informally, through the rotation of security personnel to other parts of Nazi Europe and back into Germany where, socialized to violence, many of these officers resorted to atrocity as they faced defeat. This transfer of personnel and practice is reflected by the careers of two leading officers of the Cologne Gestapo, Richard Foltis and Kurt Matschke, who served in Rear Army Group Middle with Einsatzgruppe B's Sonderkommando 7a. Both men later played important roles during the deportations in the Rhineland, and investigating their tours of duty in

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[341] Carlo Gentile, *Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Partisanenkrieg*, 36, 407.

[342] BA-MA, RH 20-14/140, p. 454, Kriegstagebuch AOK 14, 24.7.44., Evakuierung im Raume der 14 Armee; Gentile, *Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Partisanenkrieg,* 201.

[343] BStA, 4,111 Pers., p. 1487, Landgericht Bremen, 13.6.68., Vernehmung Helmut Loos; Gentile, *Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Partisanenkrieg*, 214, 238, 245, 258, 301.

the East demonstrates how the deployment of security officers as counterinsurgents brought violent methods of occupation back into Germany.

In early June 1941, roughly 600 Gestapo, Kripo, and Order Police officers gathered in the town of Posen in occupied Poland as part of newly formed Einsatzgruppe B. Commanded by Arthur Nebe, the Chief of the Criminal Police, the unit was one of four special task forces, lettered A through D, assigned to the Wehrmacht Army Groups preparing to invade the Soviet Union.[344] Like their predecessors during the Polish campaign, the Einsatzgruppen intended to follow in the wake of the advancing troops, securing conquered territory by executing communist functionaries and isolating the Jewish minority in specially constructed ghettos in each village, town, or city they passed through.

On July 2, Einsatzgruppe B reached Minsk, where the unit carried out its first atrocities.[345] After arriving in the largely destroyed city, its officers assisted Wehrmacht troops in rounding up all military aged males. After vetting them, they shot suspected communists, criminals, Jewish, and "Asiatic" prisoners such as Siberians and Uzbeks, at a nearby prisoner of war camp. In August the rubrics regarding executions changed, when Himmler ordered the security forces to exterminate the entire Jewish population in their areas of operations.[346]

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[344] Peter Klein, ed., *Die Einsatzgruppen in der besetzten Sowjetunion1941/42. Die Tätigkeit und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* (Berlin: Gedenk und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee Konferenz, 1997), 52.

[345] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 794, p. 43, Zentralstelle im Lande NRW für die Bearbeitung nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen, 5.8.65., Anklageschrift.

[346] Longerich, *Himmler,* 544; Klein, *Einsatzgruppen,* 55-56; HStAD, Rep, 299, Nr. 790, p. 36, Landgericht Essen, 11.12.61.,Vernehmung Franz Amend.

After receiving its new orders, Einsatzgruppe B divided into four subunits, decentralizing in order to carry out their responsibilities with deadly efficiency. One of these detachments was Sonderkommando 7a, which Nebe ordered eastwards to keep up with the Wehrmacht as it advanced towards Moscow. Commanded by Dr. Walter Blume, who later became a leading figure in the brutal occupation of Greece, the ninety-one man unit broke apart into several smaller units, or *Teilkommandos* which traveled along the dusty back roads and forested tracks of Weissruthenien searching villages and farms for Jews, Soviet soldiers, and communists.[347]

Richard Foltis, who became the adjutant of the Cologne Gestapo, commanded one of these units. The twenty-eight-year-old Silesian law school dropout proved himself during the executions at Minsk, and Blume recalled that he rarely missed participating in an execution as Sonderkommando 7a murdered its way across eastern Weissruthenien.[348] He also remembered Foltis as a "very energetic and fanatic man" who displayed "exceptional hardness" as he tirelessly worked to uncover the Reich's enemies.[349] Although it is likely Blume made these statements to curry favor with his postwar interrogators and obscure his own role in these atrocities, Foltis's personnel file seconded these comments. The remarks made at the end of his tour of duty in the East described him as a "committed nationalist," "very reliable," and "well assessed." They were likely made by Arthur Nebe, who ordered Foltis to organize the murder of Smolensk's Jewish population after Blume failed to carry out the mission and was relieved of his

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[347] HStAD, Rep, 299, Nr. 790, p. 75, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 28.5.62., Vernehmung Walter Blume; Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece*, 231-232.

[348] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 790, p. 78, Landgericht Ipshording, 19.12.62., Vernehmung Walter Blume; *Nuremburg Military Tribunals*, No. 10, Vol. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), 411-587.

[349]HStAD, Rep, 299, Nr. 790, p. 79, Landgericht Ipshording, 19.12.62., Vernehmung Walter Blume.

command.[350] Eugen Steimle, who led Sonderkommando 7a after Blume's departure, also remembered Foltis's tireless energy and eagerness to commit atrocity, recalling that he organized the execution of 300 Soviet POWs and 183 suspected communists at Demidov.[351]

In early October 1941, the Einsatzgruppen rotated their officers back to Germany and brought in a new cadre of personnel. During this period Foltis was replaced by fellow Silesian Kurt Matschke. Like his predecessor, he grew up during the turbulent years of border struggle between Germany and the new Polish state.[352] Matschke gravitated towards nationalist politics at an early age, and as a Gymnasium student he helped pass out pro German propaganda during the 1921 plebiscite. Forced to cut short his law studies at Breslau University due to financial problems, Matschke joined the Gestapo at the urging of the city's top Nazi officials. He also participated in the purge of the local SA during the Night of the Long Knives.[353]

Arriving at Einsatzgruppe B's headquarters in late September 1941, Matschke worked as an assistant on Nebe's staff, shortly before the Kripo chief finished his bloody sabbatical in the East and returned to Berlin. The unit designed this position to acclimate newly arrived officers, and Matschke had few real responsibilities other than to attend Nebe's going away party, where he witnessed the hardened Einsatzgruppe commander cry as his men serenaded him to the song

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[350] NARA, RG 242, A3343/215, SS Officer Personnel File Richard Foltis; HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 790, p. 86, Landgericht Ipshording, 19.12.62., Vernehmung Walter Blume.

[351] Ibid. p. 315-316, Landeskriminalamt Unterensing, 26.6.62.,Vernehmung Albert Müller; Nr. 791, p. 222,Ortskommandanteur Demidov, 14.9.41.,Tätigkeitsbericht für die Woche 7-13.9.41.; p. 284, Landeskriminalamt Ravensburg, 26.2.60., Vernehmung Eugen Steimle; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde,* 873.

[352] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 184, Landgericht Essen, 19.1.65., Nervenfachärtzliches Gutachten Kurt Matschkes.

[353] Ibid.

"Lili Marlene."[354] Shortly after the arrival of the unit's new commander, Erich Naumann, Matschke joined Sonderkommando 7a in the city of Kalinin.[355]

There he met Steimle, who informed him that instead of taking over Foltis's *Teilkommando*, he would serve as the unit's second-in-command. He then outlined Sonderkommando 7a's responsibilities, informing Matschke that all Jews, partisans, and members of the Communist Party "must be eliminated root and branch."[356] A few days later, along with several other new officers, Matschke witnessed an execution held on the outskirts of the city.[357] The gruesome incident served as a rite of initiation that intended to familiarize the replacements with the unit's methods of execution, and it left them with no doubts about the responsibilities their commander expected his men to carry out.[358]

On December 2, Matschke took over command of Sonderkommando 7a after Steimle departed for holiday leave. Three days later, the Soviets launched a massive counteroffensive in an effort to push German forces back from the outskirts of Moscow. Forced to flee Kalinin, Matshchke ordered the unit to execute their remaining prisoners before it retreated westwards, reaching Smolensk in early January. There, Naumann declared that the understrength unit no

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[354] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 9, 11, Staatsanwalt Essen, 9.10.61., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[355] Ibid. Nr. 794, p. 41, Zentralstelle im Lande NRW für die Bearbeitung nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen, 5.8.65., Anklageschrift.

[356] Ibid. Nr. 784, p. 30-31, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[357] Ibid. Nr. 795, p. 208, Landgericht Essen., 29.3.6., Strafsache gegen Matschke, Spengler, Tormann.

[358] Ibid. Nr. 786, p. 71, Landeskriminalamt Nordrhein Westfalen, 14.3.62., Durchsuchungsbericht.

longer fit for active duty and sent it to rest and refit at the town of Klinzy, in the quiet southeastern sector of Rear Army Group Middle.[359]

After arriving in the town, Sonderkommando 7a awaited the end of winter and Naumann's promised reinforcements. Among them was their new commander, Albert Rapp. Previously the chief of the Reich Resettlement Office in Posen, Rapp eagerly embraced his new "frontline" assignment. Shortly after assuming command in early March 1942, he ordered his men to eliminate the surviving Jewish population of southeastern Weissruthenien.[360] The subsequent series of executions served as Matschke's true education in the East. Over the course of these atrocities he honed the values, such as tireless, ruthless proactive action, personal initiative, and an intuitive understanding of threat, prized by RSHA's organizational culture.

The unit's preemptive posture was reflected by the fact that despite daytime temperatures which regularly plunged to minus thirty-five degrees Celsius with blinding snowstorms, it scoured the region, murdering the inmates of ghettos located in the towns of Kletnja, Slynka, Dobrusch, Mglin, Unestscha, Krasnja-Gora, and several smaller, outlying villages. Their new commander required that all members of the unit attend these executions, and frequently rotated the members of the shooting squads, keeping a list of who participated as a means of building camaraderie and reinforcing his self-perception as a hard, but fair leader.[361] His efforts went

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[359] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 4, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 18.9.61., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke; Welzer, *Täter*, 90, 114-115.

[360] Ibid. Nr. 795, p. 189, Landgericht Essen, 29. 3.66., Strafsache gegen Matschke, Spengler, Tormann.

[361] Ibid. Nr. 786, p. 155, Landgericht Isphording, 19.3.62, Vernehmung Eduard Spengler; Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 63,80, 222.

largely unappreciated. Disgruntled about the abrupt end of what one officer described as the Sonderkommando's well-earned "hibernation," few of its members were enthusiastic about these orders, or their new commander.[362]

To instill hardness and set what he considered a proper soldierly bearing, Rapp ordered his men to use their side arms to carry out executions, a command which greatly increased the proximity of the killers to their victims. Drenched in blood, bone fragments, and brain matter which steamed in the frigid air, the unnerved shooters, experienced killers and new replacements alike, often misplaced their shots, hitting their victims in the shoulder, face, or chest rather than the back of the head as intended. Consequently, some badly wounded prisoners still remained alive after falling into the graves. Guards armed with machine pistols then attempted to finish off the survivors, but due to the inaccuracy of their weapons, many were hit several more times before finally dying. Rapp, Matschke, or other officers often climbed down into the graves, searching among the tangled bodies in order to finish off these survivors. Intended to express solidarity with their subordinates, this task proved dangerous—during one execution an officer accidentally killed one of his colleagues after he strayed too close to the shooting area. To spare the unit, and himself, from embarrassment and investigation Rapp reported the man killed during a fictitious encounter with partisans.[363]

To cope with their gruesome "work," Sonderkommando 7a's men turned to alcohol. As one officer remembered, "in Klinzy there was always Schnapps," and after returning from

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[362] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 786, p. 145, Landgericht Ipshording, 18.7.62., Vernehmung Eduard Spengler.

[363] Ibid. Nr. 784, p. 38, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke; Nr. 790, p. 269, 16.1.63., Landgericht Essen, Zeugevernehmung Karl J.; Nr. 790, p. 56, Landgericht Mühldorf, 2.2.62., Zeugevernehmung Hans B.

executions the officers gathered to self-medicate at "comradeship evenings," drinking binges that often continued well into the next day.[364] At one such gathering, Rapp drunkenly stumbled into the officers living quarters and emptied his pistol into the wall above the bed of one of his subordinates.[365]

He was not the only one to exhibit disturbing forms of behavior, and as the executions and drinking bouts continued several other new officers in the unit lost control. One, Eduard Spengler, a former Wehrmacht reservist and law student remembered for the *Schmiss*, or dueling scar, he carried on the left side of his face, once fell out of the back of a truck while intoxicated during a patrol. Helping him up, his bemused colleagues noticed he soiled himself. Evidencing the casual violence to which the men of Sonderkomanndo 7a grew so accustomed, Spengler unholstered his pistol and threatened the snickering officers, telling them, "I'll shoot you like I would a Jew."[366] As demonstrated by the incident, the unit became so desensitized that violence now seemed second nature and simply viewed as a solution to any perceived problem, no matter how slight.

After the first series of large executions, Rapp divided his men into *Teilkommandos*, sending them out to extend the unit's reach into even the remotest of locations. He gave one of these missions to Matschke, and ordered him to eliminate a ghetto at the town of Starodub, forty kilometers southeast of Klinzy. Before his arrival, Rapp arranged for Wehrmacht soldiers

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[364] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 788, p. 25-26, Landgericht Essen, 24.9.62., Vernehmung Franz Tormann, Nr. 790, p. 54, Landgericht Mühldorf, 2.2.62., Zeugevernehmung Hans B.

[365] Ibid. Nr. 786, p. 94, Landeskriminalamt NRW, 14.3.62., Durchsuchungsbericht, Nr. 790, p. 17, Landgericht Essen, 8.5.62., Zeugevernehmung Hans A.; p. 310, Landgericht Essen, 11.10.61., Zeugevernehmung Albert M.

[366] Ibid. Nr 791, p. 83, Landeskriminalamt NRW, 15.5.62., Zeugevernehmung Gustav R.

guarding a nearby airfield to use Soviet artillery shells to blast a rudimentary trench inside a small patch of woods on the outskirts of the town.[367] Matschke and his men then marched the ghetto's 200 inmates, mostly emaciated women and children, to the killing site and murdered them with the help of local collaborators. After the initial execution, at the request of the town's Wehrmacht commander they also shot a small number of criminals and partisan suspects, denoting how these executions often integrated various victim groups.[368]

Witnesses later recalled Matschke calmly walked among the bodies of the victims during the hour long execution at Starodub, delivering head shots to those still alive with a long barreled Mauser pistol.[369] In 1961, the former security officer admitted to these murders, which he described as "mercy killings," to West German authorities.[370] In an obscene attempt to defend his actions, he recalled an "especially horrifying incident" in which one of his men prepared to shoot a small child in front of its distraught mother. He told the shocked investigators that he reorganized the shooting detail, so his men killed the mother first and spared her the pain of witnessing her child's death.[371]

Matschke's comments expose how the killers transformed appalling acts such as punching or kicking mothers in order to force them to let go of their children, or climbing into

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[367] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 35, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[368] Ibid.

[369] Ibid. Nr. 794, p. 3, 52, Zentralstelle in Land NRW für die Bearbeitung von nationalsozialistichen Verbrechen, 5.8.65., Anklageschrift.

[370] Ibid. Nr. 784, p. 35, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 18.9.61., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[371] Ibid. Nr. 795, p. 226, Landgericht Essen, 29.3.66., Strafsache gegen Matschke, Spengler, Tormann; Nr. 784, p. 35, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 18.9.61., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

mass graves to finish off surviving victims into difficult, but necessary acts, emotional burdens they carried for the good of the *Volk*.[372] These rationalizations were fully in tandem with the ethical codes of the security forces. As sociologist Harald Welzer noted, morality played a central role in these episodes of mass violence, and not only provided justification for the destruction of Nazism's enemies, but ensured that the killers' positive self-image remained intact by recasting murder as an unpleasant but undeniable part of a historical mission to save the German people.[373] Matschke's postwar comments reflect this self-perception, and as evidenced by his later actions inside Germany, one consequence of this moral reordering was that he accepted violence against civilians as necessary for national survival.

Rapp's killing operation ended in April 1942. With the onset of spring, after eliminating the local Jewish population, Sonderkommando 7a turned its attention to the growing partisan threat.[374] Following Schenkendorff's preemptive guidelines, from these units Rapp formed several platoons of partisan hunters, or *Bandenjagdkommandos*, led by his officers. These scouts worked closely with Klinzy's Wehrmacht garrison, moving across the thickly forested terrain to lay ambushes or raid villages suspected of harboring partisans.[375]

During this period Matschke remained stationed in Klinzy. He later claimed to West German investigators he developed a strained relationship with Rapp because he protested the killing operations the previous winter, and that his commander confined him to the unit's

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[372] Welzer, *Täter*, 31-40.

[373] Ibid. 40.

[374] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 25, Landeskriminalamt NRW, 13.11.61., Vernehmung Eduard Spengler.

[375] Ibid.

headquarters as punishment.[376] However, no such reprimand exists in his personnel file. Instead, it appears Matschke became an important figure within Sonderkommando 7a during spring 1942, and coordinated its hunt for partisans.

Throughout his tenure as the unit's commander, Rapp remained an energetic leader, well known for his enthusiasm regarding what he proudly considered "frontline service." He often accompanied his men on anti-partisan patrols, and needed a competent officer to take over his duties in Klinzy, ensuring the smooth functioning of the unit while he worked in the field.[377] As a veteran officer with command experience, Matschke was an obvious choice for the position.[378] Indeed, his actions belie his postwar claims that he merely filled out administrative paperwork until he returned to Germany in early 1943.

In one incident, Matschke personally led a group of fourteen men in an early morning assault on a village suspected of hiding Soviet paratroopers dropped behind the lines to help organize resistance. During the fight, the group swept through the hamlet, capturing one Soviet soldier and killing eight others. Soon after the engagement, Matschke received praise in reports written by Klinzy's Wehrmacht commander, and the document exposes him as a veteran "bandit hunter," an officer equipped with the requisite skills in field craft to track down and confront what was, for once, a real enemy.[379] It is also worth noting that personnel from

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[376] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 784, p. 35, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[377] Ibid. Nr. 790, p. 14. Landgericht Essen, 8.5.62., Zeugevernehmung Hans A.; Nr. 786, p. 231, Landgericht Essen, 11.5.61., Vernehmung Eduard Spengler.

[378] Ibid. Nr. 792, p. 9, Wirtschaftskommando im Bereich der Feldkommandanteur Klinzy, 14.5.42., Kriegstagebuch Nr. 2.

[379] Ibid. p. 90, Wirtschaftskommando im Bereich der Feldkommandanteur Klinzy, 15.5.42., Kriegstagebuch Nr. 2; Nr. 784, p. 114, Landgericht Essen, 30.6.64., Zeugevernehmung Alwin D.

Sonderkommando 7a attacked the village, rather than troops from the Wehrmacht garrison, reflecting the unit's growing reputation as counterinsurgents.

In addition to providing a quick reaction force for Klinzy's garrison, Matschke also oversaw the interrogation of "partisan suspects" brought to Sonderkommando 7a's headquarters.[380] Due to his intelligence work at Klinzy, Matschke assumed an important role in shaping the unit's image of the partisan enemy. Reflecting German counterinsurgency doctrine's concerns about the unauthorized movement of civilians, he broadened it to include the local Roma population, which he suspected spied for the Soviets simply because of their transient lifestyle.[381] Matschke personally led these executions, and in one incident killed fifty Roma men, women, and children, before handing over their belongings to Klinzy's militia as payment for their participation in the murders.[382]

As Sonderkommando 7a's second-in-command, Matschke also acted as both judge and jury for the suspects held at the unit's prison.[383] The inmates included anyone caught outside their home villages without travel permits, as well as those captured in the forest and therefore considered partisans, regardless of their age or sex. Civilians sick with syphilis, typhus, or

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[380] HStAd, Rp. 299, Nr. 790, p. 41, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 16.7.63., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[381] Ibid. p. 17, Landgericht Essen, 6.8.64., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[382] Ibid. Nr. 791, p. 156, Landgericht Essen, 15.7.62., Zeugevernehmung Karl S.

[383] Ibid. Nr. 784, p. 42, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

assessed as mentally ill or criminals were also executed, indicating the central role social order and public health played in the unit's counterinsurgency policy.[384]

Matschke also killed prisoners simply to alleviate the unsanitary conditions in the vastly overcrowded prison. As one Wehrmacht soldier stationed at Klinzy recalled, its cells were often so full that inmates slept standing up.[385] To relieve this situation, Matschke's men periodically loaded their sick and malnourished prisoners, including children as young as eight, into a truck and took them to an open grave on the edge of the town where they were killed by a team of former Soviet soldiers the Germans derisively referred to as "Mongols."[386] Matschke carried out these executions independently, without consulting with Rapp or other officers. It is important to note he evaluated his prisoners based on his own arbitrary standards and the vague guidelines given by anti-partisan policy. This guaranteed that almost everyone who entered the prison died at the executions sites on the edge of Klinzy as "bandit suspects."[387]

During the summer of 1942 the partisan war in Rear Army Group Middle intensified, and the Sonderkommando's once quiet sector now teemed with "bandits" created by their own arbitrary policies.[388] In the midst of this crisis, Naumann reassigned Matschke to Einsatzgruppe B's headquarters in Smolensk. There, he assumed temporary command of its anti-partisan unit,

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[384] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 790, p. 51, Landeskriminalamt Mühldorf., 2.2.62., Zeugevernehmung Hans B.; Nr. 78, p. 26, Landgericht Essen, 24.9.62., Vernehmung Franz Tormann; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 275-276.

[385] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 791, p. 193-194, Landgericht Essen, 13.1.65., Zeugevernehmung Karl S.

[386] Ibid. Nr. 784, p. 41-4, Oberstaatsanwalt Essen, 16.7.62., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[387] Ibid.

[388] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 786, p. 17, Amtsgericht Kamen, 14.3.63., Vernehmung Eduard Spengler.

Trupp Smolensk, further reflecting his reputation as a valued counterinsurgent. Under Matschke's leadership, the task force assisted in the liquidation of the Smolensk ghetto and the murder of its 1,700 remaining inmates. It also searched a nearby prison camp, uncovering hidden weapons and correspondence that allowed them to eliminate several resistance cells.[389] In addition to these operations, the unit carried out anti-partisan missions in the surrounding countryside that claimed the lives of 2,430 people by the end of August.[390]

While Matschke worked in Smolensk, Einsatzgruppe B issued new counterinsurgency guidelines. Drawing upon Hitler's recently issued Führer Directive Number 46, the orders expanded the unit's purview to encompass common criminality, noting several "asocials and common thieves" personnel recently found among prisoners captured during anti-partisan operations. The correspondence also warned of the role children played in supporting the resistance, and complained of the large numbers of homeless teenagers living in Rear Army Group Middle. These "useless eaters," the document claimed, spent too much of their time drinking and gambling rather than working for the war effort.[391] This inclusion of homeless children in anti-partisan doctrine in particular reflected the occupation's desire to intensify its ruthless reordering of the population and harness it for the German war economy.

Matschke took these orders to heart—his report for the next three week period listed criminals and "asocials" among the unit's victims for the first time.[392] As one of his last acts as

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[389] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 788, p. 28, Landgericht Essen, 24.9.62., Vernehmung Franz Tormann; BA-B, R 70/9/21, p, 832, Einsatzgruppe B, 1.9.42., Tätigkeitsbericht.

[390] Ibid. p, 832, Einsatzgruppe B, 1.9.42., Tätigkeitsbericht.

[391] Ibid. p. 876, Einsatzgruppe B, 16.8.42., Tätigkeitsbericht.

[392] BA-B, R 70/9/21, p. 921, Einsatzgruppe B, 15.9.42., Polizeilicher Lagebericht

Trupp Smolensk's commander before returning home to Germany, Matschke welcomed a newly arrived group of officers by ordering them to carry out these executions, initiating a new cohort of officers into Einsatzgruppe B's culture of violence.[393] A few weeks later, RSHA headquarters reassigned him to Cologne, where he worked under the supervision of fellow Sonderkommando 7a veteran Richard Foltis. Both men later played key roles in carrying out atrocity on the home front as the Reich faced defeat, and as commander of the Cologne Gestapo's counterintelligence section Matschke in particular proved influential in reshaping the office's perception of civilians during the Rhineland deportations. This image drew directly upon the anti-partisan terminology developed in Rear Army Group Middle.

The experiences of the eastern occupation allowed security officers such as Matschke and Foltis to become the political soldiers idealized by their leaders. The adoption of tactics such as encirclement and deportation alongside the security forces' growing role in the anti-partisan war intertwined police and military practices. Through experience, Nazi security culture's longstanding emphasis on aggression, hypervigilance, initiative, and the use of overwhelming force became enshrined as institutional values.[394] Their adoption narrowed the response to perceived threat, ingraining the idea that violence was the only solution to both acts of resistance and perceived social ills. This reliance on atrocity as a means of transforming societies emerged from RSHA's basic cultural assumptions, which claimed that anyone who defied the occupation's notions of what constituted good order, including children, were legitimate targets.

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[393] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 791, p. 208, Landgericht Essen, 25.10.63., Zeugevernehmung Karl S.

[394] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 13-14.

However, this quest for absolute order failed, and concerns about civilians only deepened as the partisan war intensified in response to the occupation's harsh policies. When challenged by reality, these violent doctrines continued to exert a powerful influence on security personnel. Guided by anticipatory security logic, RSHA's leadership constantly encouraged their officers to pursue the unrealistic expectations generated by institutional assumptions regarding order, productivity, hygiene, transience, and proper social behaviors, regardless of the cost to civilians or their own war effort. Thus, the enduring confrontation with uncertainty created new, extreme practices that reinforced the reliance on violence.

Language played a crucial role in this process. The vocabulary of counterinsurgency powerfully reshaped conceptions of civilians. Vague terms such as *Banden, Überläufer, Bandenhelfer, Räuberbande, Bandenunwesen,* and *Bandenverseucht,* promoted the reliance on intuition and imagination as means of preempting threat. Most importantly, the nebulous nature of these categories dramatically broadened the scope of violence, allowing it to strike any civilian suspected of "criminal" behavior.[395] The partisan war created a new image of civilians that cast any contradictory activity, such as transience, petty theft, and other mundane acts of everyday survival as insurrectionary, requiring harsh reprisal. As such, the policing of populations called for military and security practices to overlap, and these basic assumptions set dangerous precedents for the citizens of the Reich and Western Europe as disorder spread and defeat loomed.

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[395] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 74-75, 95.

The language of counterinsurgency also encouraged security officers to think spatially. As reflected by Operation Bamberg, areas deemed "bandit infested" were not lost but rather offered up new opportunities to experiment in regards to the reordering of lands and peoples.[396] As reflected in the discussion of Operation Hermann, these tendencies became more extreme as resistance grew, and security officers even attempted to transform the landscape, evidencing the continued reliance on tried and true methods despite their failure to achieve order.

This terminology also encouraged indiscriminate conceptions of the people who inhabited these so-called disorderly spaces. These assumptions demanded their annihilation or deportation as a means of restoring order by "cleansing" the area.[397] However, the use of violence only generated further unrest. Atrocity created disaster by destroying social structures, displacing civilians, debilitating already weak economies, and forcing the population to turn to petty acts of crime in order to survive. In response to these deteriorating conditions, the security forces relied even more heavily on violence as a means of pursuing their quest for control. The murderous anti-partisan operations of 1943 and the widespread deportations of 1944 best reflected this reciprocal phenomenon between policy and practice. Security officers later exported the methods of population control perfected in the East into parts of Western Europe previously insulated from the worst of Nazi atrocity.[398] The influence of the occupation, in particular its fear and loathing of civilians, also started to filter home, aided from below by RSHA's policy of rotating personnel between home and front.

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[396] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 95, 118-119.

[397] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 127, 166-68.

[398] Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, 303.

Chapter Four
Home to the Reich:
The Return of Security Officers to Germany

"I ask you: Do you want total war? If necessary, do you want a war more total and radical than anything we can yet even imagine?"

— Josef Goebbels[399]

"Whaddaya get for jokes? Three months in Dachau."

— Popular wartime joke.[400]

Officers returning from "frontline service" in Eastern Europe arrived in Germany at the very moment when the Reich's security forces underwent an important transition. Over the course of 1943, in the wake of the defeats at Stalingrad, El Alamein, and Kursk, the Nazi regime intensified its push to exploit civilian labor at home and abroad for the German war economy. These efforts led to new policies of population control which narrowed the once vast distinctions between the Reich and its occupied territories. In particular, the removal of populations in order to meet the twin demands of labor and security became increasingly attractive across occupied Europe, and at home, as the Reich's leadership tried to increase its industrial output while simultaneously grappling with growing disorder.

By removing populations from areas considered uncontrollable, such as the "partisan infested areas" of the East, or the bomb-damaged neighborhoods of the Reich's cities, deportation offered the possibility of reordering societies and coercing civilians to support the

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[399] Randall L. Bytwerk, *Landmark Speeches of National Socialism* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 112.

[400] Rudolph Herzog, *Dead Funny: Telling Jokes in Hitler's Germany* (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2006), 65.

pursuit of victory. However, these efforts simply created more chaos and radicalized the regime's perceptions of civilians, allowing the techniques and mentality of occupation to filter back into Germany.

The adoption of these methods occurred after the defeat at Stalingrad. The loss of the Sixth Army came as an incredible shock to most Germans, who largely believed the regime's claims it stood poised to win a battle touted as "one of the greatest epics in German history."[401] Consequently, home front morale plummeted when news was released via radio on February 3, 1943 that the Red Army captured over 90,000 German soldiers and their Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian allies.[402] For the first time, security officers responsible for monitoring civilian morale recorded widespread dismay and outrage, commenting that many Germans considered the defeat a catastrophic "turning point" in the country's fortunes.[403]

For the Nazi leadership, these reports reflexively conjured up the specter of 1918 and the collapse of home morale that allegedly led to defeat and national humiliation. In response, they dramatically increased their efforts to mobilize Germans for continued struggle, casting the defeat at Stalingrad as an event which bound all the Reich's *Volksgenossen* into a "community of fate." These efforts, as one scholar noted, "inscribed meaning into futility" by claiming that if Germany lost the war the results would be nothing less than apocalyptic, since the *Volk* would be

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[401] Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth:.' Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 190.

[402] Anthony Beevor, *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege: 1941-1942* (New York, Penguin, 1999), 396.

[403] Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth,'* 192; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 225; Detlev Peukert, Richard Deveson, trans., *Inside Nazi Germany*, *Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 63.

annihilated by their vengeful enemies. Continued selfless sacrifice for the nation, the regime claimed, now offered the only chance for survival.[404]

Josef Goebbels's infamous February 18, 1943 appeal for Germans to adopt a true doctrine of "total war" best epitomized this call for continued struggle. In front of wildly cheering crowds inside Berlin's massive Sportspalast, the Propaganda Minister called upon Germans to fully embrace the demands of war and devote themselves to victory, regardless of the cost. Although Goebbels carefully crafted the speech for maximum effect and deliberately staged it in front of an audience that he described as "the politically best trained audience you can find in Germany," his call to action still resonated with a population which now felt it must see things through to the bitter end.[405]

The intensification of the policing formed an important part of the regime's plan to mobilize Germans for continued struggle. The year 1943 thus marked the beginning of the security forces' first real foray into the kinds of interventionary forms of activity that Heydrich envisioned almost four years earlier in his directive "Principles of Inner State Security during the War." These guidelines merged political resistance and common criminality into a nebulous rubric of subversion by remarking, "Any attempt to subvert the unity and the will of the German people to fight must be ruthlessly suppressed. It is particularly essential to arrest immediately any person who expresses doubts about the victory of the German people or challenges the just cause of war."[406]

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[404] Kühne, *Kameradschaft*, 196-197; Geyer, "There Is a Land Where Everything is Pure," 129.

[405] Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 257; Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth,'* 198.

[406] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 162.

Because the regime's early victories in France and Poland generated enthusiastic support for the war effort, until the disaster at Stalingrad the security forces had not needed to systematically carry out these orders. The occupation of Western Europe and the Balkans, alongside the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 further distracted the Reich's security apparatus, as it saw many of its officers posted abroad to watch over the peoples of occupied Europe. Therefore, the public's reaction to the defeat at Stalingrad finally motivated security officers to expand preventative policing to encompass all of German society rather than only those they considered community outsiders.

These efforts narrowed the already tenuous boundaries between the nonpolitical activities of the Criminal Police and the political duties of the Gestapo. In addition to attempting to punish Germans accused of listening to enemy radio broadcasts, Secret Police officers now became involved in efforts to disrupt black market activity, juvenile delinquency, and punish civilians suspected of "work absenteeism," spreading rumors, or other forms of behavior viewed as threatening to home front morale. Heydrich's 1939 directive left the penalties for engaging in these types of infractions intentionally vague. Although the security chief told his officers to issue warnings to first time law breakers, he ordered them to show no mercy to repeat offenders or those suspected of harboring Leftist political loyalties, and Heydrich intended to personally determine these sentences.[407]

One of the key tools security officers used to discipline wartime German society was the *Arbeitserziehungslager*, or work reeducation camp (AEL), system. First introduced by HSSPF

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[407] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 162.

West Friedrich Jeckeln in August 1940 as a means of punishing obstinate German and foreign workers, alongside the older concentration camp system, the AELs quickly became an essential tool of repression inside Germany. After Himmler appointed Jeckeln Reich Defense Commissar in western Germany in May 1940, he discovered a growing production crisis within the critically important Ruhr coal industry. Since the outbreak of war, coal extraction continually lagged, and produced a nine million ton shortfall despite an influx of Polish and French prisoners sent to the mines to bolster the work force.[408] Fearing they might carry out acts of sabotage or passive protest, further slowing production, Jeckeln sought some way of punishing recalcitrant workers that offered the opportunity for rehabilitation rather than sentencing them to concentration camps.

The growing rate of absenteeism among German workers also drove his search for a solution—over the course of 1940 an estimated 800 a day were reported missing from their jobs in the Ruhr factories and mines. By August, the figure sky rocketed to a record 1,151 absentees per day, and Jeckeln glumly estimated that a full thirty-five percent of the German workforce in the Ruhr was now inactive due to a "lack of interest, aversion to work, loss of discipline, and a propensity for disobedience."[409] Deeply dissatisfied with the Criminal Police's policy of issuing warnings to these workers, Jeckeln established what he termed a "work reeducation camp" in the

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[408] NARA, RG242, T 175, 195/2717713, HSSPF West, 8.8.40, Bericht über Angelegenheiten des Ruhrbergbaus am 6.8.40, 10 Uhr, beim Reichsverteidigungskommissar, Münster; Gabriele Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo. Arbeitserziehungslager im Dritten Reich* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000), 91; Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 58-59.

[409] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 195/017713-017715, HSSPF West, 8.8.40, Bericht über Angelegenheiten des Ruhrbergbaus am 6.8.40, 10 Uhr, beim Reichsverteidigungskommissar, Münster; 195/017717, HSSPF West, 16.8.40., Entwicklung der Arbeitsdiziplin im Wirtschaftsgebiet Westfalen-Niederrhein.

isolated hills of the Lister Valley near the small town of Hunswinkel bei Lüdenschied, forty kilometers west of the city of Cologne.[410]

On August 20, 1940 over 200 prisoners, mostly German workers accused of chronic absenteeism or assessed as "lazy" by their employers arrived at the new camp after the Ruhr courts sentenced them to six weeks imprisonment at the new prison. Unbeknownst to the inmates, Jeckeln contracted out their labor to the Essen construction firm Hochtief AG, and the miserable prisoners carried out back-breaking labor in nearby stone quarries or poured concrete at the Verse Valley dam project.[411]

The harsh nature of their work, combined with constant harassment from their guards and largely inedible rations caused many of the inmates to collapse from exhaustion. Despite these debilitating conditions, by mid-December 1940 the camp was grossly overcrowded with workers arrested by the Gestapo, and now housed 517 prisoners, of whom 457 were Germans.[412] By this point it barely functioned. Due to bad weather, inadequate sanitation, and poor food over half the inmates were sick with bronchitis and other ailments caused by the daily six kilometer round trip march to their job sites, often in deep snow. Worksite accidents also badly injured several prisoners.[413]

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[410] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 195/017717, , HSSPF West, 16.8.40., Entwicklung der Arbeitsdiziplin im Wirtschaftsgebiet Westfalen-Niederrhein.

[411] HStAD, RW 37-17, p. 1, HSSPF West, 20.8.40., Besichtigung des Erziehungslagern Hunswinkel an der Versetalsperre bei Lüdenscheid am 20.8.40; NARA, T 175, 195/017723, HSSPF West, 30.8.40., Erziehungslager Hunswinkel; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 97, 99.

[412] HStAD, RW 37-17, p. 33, Kommandant Erziehungslager Hunswinkel, 12.12.40., Erfahrungsbericht.

[413] Ibid. p. 34; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 100.

Despite its inefficiency, which reduced healthy workers to sick and feeble shells by the time they returned to their civilian jobs, Hunswinkel provided the blue print for two other camps that Jeckeln established at the Essen-Mülheim airport and Recklinghausen the following year.[414] Due to their policy of temporary confinement, these camps rested under the purview of the Rhineland's Gestapo offices. In contrast to the concentration camp system, the AELs also remained free from oversight by the Reich Security Main Office, and the region's Inspector of Security Police monitored their activities. Although he coordinated his early efforts with Himmler, Jeckeln also staffed the camps and consulted with industry officials at his own discretion. Consequently, a close partnership quickly developed between the Ruhr business concerns and the Gestapo, who contracted out their prisoners' labor and pocketed the profits. This relationship provided enormous incentive for the expansion of the AEL system as a lucrative money maker for the security services.[415]

Himmler formally established the work reeducation camp system in a decree issued on May 28, 1941. It ordered security offices across the Reich to establish their own AELs to punish German and foreign workers suspected of undermining "work place morale or order and security," broad definitions which left interpretations of these behaviors open to security officers and civilian officials at the local level.[416] Himmler's directive reflected the *Reichsführer*'s

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[414] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 195/017750, IdS Düsseldorf, 22.1.41., Einrichtung eines neuen Erziehungs-und Arbeitslagers in Recklinghausen, 195/017762; HSSPF West, 16.5.41., Einrichtung eines Arbeitserziehungslagers; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo,* 107.

[415] Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 131-132; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 100-104.

[416] USHMMA, RG 58, Fiche 1027/168, .28.5.41, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei im Reichministerium des Innern, Errichtung von Arbeitserziehungslagern.

characteristic willingness to convert his subordinates' innovations into policy.[417] In terms of content, the May 28 order was remarkably similar to Jeckeln's earlier directives, down to the plans for camp design, staff requirements, and the mandatory six week sentence for all inmates. Yet in contrast to Jeckeln, Himmler offered detailed guidelines regulating the contracting of prisoner labor, and expanded the system by creating camps to punish female workers, denoting women's growing importance to the Reich's economy.[418]

Jeckeln exported the AEL system abroad during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Initially appointed Higher SS Police Leader Russia South, he organized a wave of atrocities in western Ukraine, most notoriously the mass shootings of tens of thousands of Jews at Babi Yar and Kamenets-Podolsk. Having proven himself dedicated to destroying the Reich's enemies, in October 1941 Himmler appointed Jeckeln Higher SS and Police Leader in the Baltic.[419] Tasked not only with the destruction of the remaining Jews in the former Baltic states but also the elimination of resistance organizations, in November 1941 Jeckeln established a work reeducation camp at Salaspils, near Riga. Freed from the legal constraints which governed the AELs in Germany, Jeckeln designed the camp to eliminate its Jewish, Roma, and Latvian inmates through hard labor, and in early 1942 he expanded it to house several hundred German Jews deported to Reichskommissariat Ostland.[420]

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[417] Longerich, *Himmler*, 170, 317, 333.

[418]USHMMA, RG 58, Fiche 1027/169-172, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei im Reichministerium des Innern, 28.5.41., Errichtung von Arbeitserziehungslagern.

[419] Birn, *Die Höheren SS-und Polizeiführer*, 220-222; Wildt, *Generation*, 574; Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 177; Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust*, 42.

[420] Andrej Angrick & Peter Klein, *The "Final Solution" in Riga: Exploitation and Annihilation, 1941-1944* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 235-236.

Commanded by Rudolf Lange, an officer from Einsatzgruppe A, the camp served as an integral facet of the Nazi regime's genocidal plans in the Baltic.[421] In early 1943 the arrival of 2,200 civilians arrested as "bandit suspects" during the anti-partisan operation Winterzauber, which depopulated the region along Latvia's southern border, further increased the camp's inmate population.[422] The arrival of these prisoners underscored the camp's mixed function, and indicates how officers exported forms of social discipline developed inside Germany abroad and modified them to serve security needs in occupied Europe.[423]

Jeckeln deemed Salaspils so successful that he used it as a model for another AEL later established at Maly Trostenets, just outside of the city of Minsk. This camp also served as both a labor and an extermination camp for Jews and suspected partisans contracted to work in agriculture or other local industries.[424] Salaspils also provided the inspiration for work reeducation camps later established in Alsace-Lorraine and Holland to punish workers in Western Europe, further reflecting the transfer of practices between Germany and its occupied territories.[425]

In the aftermath of Stalingrad, Himmler issued another series of orders which confirmed the AEL system's important role in curbing dissent on the home front.[426] Between winter 1942

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[421] Angrick & Klein, *The "Final Solution" in Riga*, 199-200, 236-241.

[422] USHMMA, RG 18, 9/Fond R 82/39/1824, HSSPF Ostland, 30.3.43., Befehl über Abschluss-Unternehmen Winterzauber.

[423] Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 174, 179, 181-184; Wildt, *Generation*, 585.

[424] Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 693, 768-770; Thalhofer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 184.

[425] Ibid. 43, 138, 176, 184, 243-244.

[426] USHMMA, RG 58, 1027/303, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, 26.7.43., Errichtung von Arbeitserziehungslagern.

and summer 1944 the AELs inside the Reich underwent a period of dramatic expansion that brought these camps into cities and towns across Germany. The Cologne Gestapo, for example, established the Köln-Deutz AEL at the city's former fairgrounds in autumn 1942. Reflecting the influence of experiences of the East, the perpetually overcrowded and squalid camp also served as transit facility during the deportation of the Cathedral City's Jewish residents.[427]

Older AELs, such as Hunswinkel, Essen, and Recklinghausen became dangerously overcrowded as the war progressed, and some camps periodically ceased to function due to outbreaks of typhus caused by unsanitary living conditions. In the Essen-Mülheim AEL for example, one policeman trained in basic first aid was responsible for over 500 prisoners. As late as November 1943, Hunswinkel's overwhelmed medical staff also transported suspected typhus cases to the hospital in nearby Lüdenscheid, because of the inadequate state of their camp infirmary.[428]

These frequent breakdowns in camp infrastructure highlight the low logistical priority the AELs received as the war dragged on. Supplies, particularly clothing and medicine, became increasingly scarce by the end of 1943, and camp staff relied heavily on trusted members of the inmate population known as *Kalfaktoren* to oversee the everyday maintenance of order as the

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[427] Karola Fings, *Messelager Köln. Ein KZ-Aussenlager im Zentrum der Stadt* (Köln: Emmons, 1996), 13, 51, 76, 130.

[428] HStAD, RW 37-17, HSSPF West, 16.11.43., Abstellung eines im SA-Dienst ausgebildeten Polizeibeamten zum Arbeitserziehungslager Hunswinkel bei Lüdenscheid; NARA, T 175, 197/273740, HSSPF West, 7.10.43., Anforderung eines Sanitätswachmeisters für die Sanitätstelle im Arbeitserziehungslager Essen-Mülheim; 197/017826, HSSPF West, 3.11.43., Fleckfieberverdacht im Arbeitserziehungslager in Hunswinkel; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 152-155.

regime called up increasing numbers of guards for military service.[429] The worsening situation in the camps also underscored the intensification of Nazism's arbitrary social policies. For example, by June 1943 the inmate population at Hunswinkel mushroomed to over 600 prisoners, and was now almost twice the size of the number the camp originally intended to house.[430]

The AELs use as a means of disciplining foreign laborers greatly contributed to their overcrowding. By late 1943 over five million citizens of Nazi occupied Europe worked inside Germany. The majority of these forced laborers [*Zwangsarbeiter*] came from the East, and by the end of 1939 alone, 410,000 Polish civilians lived inside the Reich.[431] The presence of these people created a troubling contradiction for the Nazi regime. While eastern workers comprised an increasingly important part of Germany's workforce, their presence was deeply antithetical to the regime's desire to construct a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft* free from internal dissent.

To ease their fears of racial contamination and potential rebellion, the regime imposed a rigid apartheid system which forbade foreign workers from using public transportation, interacting socially with Germans, and banned them from visiting cultural sites such as churches, museums, and theaters.[432] To further enforce the separation of Germans and foreigners, on March 8, 1940 Himmler ordered his security forces to send *Zwangsarbeiter* who violated these regulations to the Mauthausen concentration camp. The *Reichsführer* also personally reviewed

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[429] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 151, 174-175.

[430] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 197/017825, Landesarbeitsamtes Westfalen, 22.6.43., Bauvorhaben "Untere Versetalsperre,"; HStAD, RW 37-17, p. 89, Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei Münster, 16.11.43., Wachtsmannschaft Arbeitserziehungslager Hunswinkel.

[431] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 153-154.

[432] Ibid. 152-155; Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 69-71.

cases regarding sexual relations between foreign workers and German women, in order to ensure these suspects received the death penalty.[433]

The regime's new racial regulations meant that the monitoring of foreign workers became one of the primary responsibilities of the security forces for the rest of the war, a responsibility increasingly difficult to fulfill as forced laborers from Eastern Europe flooded into the Reich between 1942 and 1944. The security forces rounded up the vast majority of these workers during counterinsurgency operations. For example, in January 1944, Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Reickskommissar of Riga for his efforts to "recruit a workforce for the Reich." However, such accolades came with a price—the *Ostministerium* now demanded an additional 100,000 Lithuanian and Latvian civilians, whom Rosenberg intended to use to "fill the growing gaps" left by the mobilization of German workers for the military.[434] Rosenberg's correspondence reflected the Reich's desperate need for labor, which reached its peak in mid-1944 as the Wehrmacht retreated from Ukraine and Belarus, taking with them any able-bodied civilians they could find.[435]

By mid-1943, the administrators who oversaw the deportation of workers from the East were fully aware of the damage these anti-partisan operations did to the war effort, in particular the recruitment of labor. As one document from Reichskommissariat Ukraine noted, "even a primitive person has a fine sense of justice. Therefore every kind of mistreatment must be

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[433] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 154-155; Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 363.

[434] USHMMA, RG 18, 6/Fond R 70/Opis 1/393, Ost Minister Alfred Rosenberg, 15.1.44., Reichswerbung 1944.

[435] Rutherford, *Combat and Genocide*, 310.

avoided… one cannot expect great performance from people who are treated as beasts, barbarians and subhumans. Therefore, at every opportunity exhibit the kinds of positivity that will foster a fighting will against Bolshevism, security for their own existence and the existence of the homeland, a readiness for action, and a willingness to work."[436]

To this end, security officers, and civil administrators involved in anti-partisan operations started to distribute propaganda leaflets in order to quell unrest among the deportees. The documents distributed to villagers during Operation Hermann, conducted between July 13 and August 11, 1943 evidence the optimism they tried to foster among civilians rounded up to work as forced laborers. The flyers depicted smiling workers marveling at the achievements of German *Kultur* such as the spires of gothic cathedrals, the autobahn, high rise office buildings, and neat, orderly homes. [437] Others showed pre-war pictures of Hitler talking with humble farmers, or of the *Führer* expressing solidarity with them by shoveling mounds of dirt. One magazine even included an artist's rendering of a prosperous young family returning from labor service in Germany. The parents, dressed in the most modern fashions pushed a baby pram, while a young girl and a boy clutching a toy car ran alongside, showing off all of the prosperity and new social status that supposedly came with working in the Reich. The image belied the reality that few eastern workers would return home again, and that those who did were considered traitors by the Soviet state.[438] The cache of documents crassly concluded with a

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[436] USHMMA, RG 31.002, 1/Fond3206, Opis 1, Folder 38, Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 16.4.43., Merkblatt über die allgemeinen Grundsätze für die Behandlung der im Reich tätigen ausländischen Arbeitskräfte.

[437] Ibid. RG 53, 13/Fond 1286, Sicherheitsdienst Aussenstelle Nowogrodek, 10.8.43. Propagandaaktion im Rahmen des Unternehmens Hermann und der Aushebungsaktion von Arbeitskräften für das Reich im Juli/August 1943.

[438] Nikita Petrov, "Unter Verdacht: Die staatliche Überprüfung sowjetischer Repatrianten und ihre rechtlichen Folgen," in Dieter Pohl & Tanja Sebta, eds., *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa. Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin:

portrait of the man responsible for the readers' misery, complete with the accompanying slogan "Adolf Hitler—Liberator!"[439]

Most of the deportees were young, and specifically targeted by decrees aimed at curbing the growing rate of juvenile delinquency in the occupied territories. Reflecting the deteriorating social conditions in the East, one security document noted that due to school closings, lack of employment, and the fragmentation of families, many young people spent too much idle time smoking, drinking, gambling, and making a nuisance of themselves. It also warned that these "difficult living conditions" had "eroded their conception of right and wrong," making them susceptible to joining the partisans, indicating how the security forces equated moral weakness with potential resistance.[440]

Deporting these adolescents and teenagers to the Reich to work as forced laborers offered the best means of curbing delinquency and eliminating a drain on resources in the occupied territories, while simultaneously satisfying the German economy's desperate need for workers.[441] While administrators sometimes recruited these children for labor service, the police often simply snatched them off the street.[442] Born in the Black Sea port of Berdjansk, one day in May

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Metropol, 2013), 311-327.

[439] USHMMA, RG 22.001, 4/27, Kampfgruppe von Gottberg, 20.8.43., Gefechtsbericht über das Unternehmen Hermann,; RG 53, 13/Fond 1286, Sicherheitsdienst Aussenstelle Nowogrodek, 10.8.43. Propagandaaktion im Rahmen des Unternehmens Hermann und der Aushebungaktion von Arbeitskräften für das Reich im Juli/August 1943; Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde*, 902.

[440] USHMMA, RG 31, 13/Fond 3676/480/229, Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 21.5.43., Bandentätigkeit in Generalbezirk Shitomir; RG 68.048, 27/15/1, SD Aussenstelle Hagenau, 17.6.44, Haltung der Jugend im Kriege; Chiari, *Alltag Hinter der Front*, 151, 201-223.

[441] USHMMA, RG 68.048, 27/15/1, SD Aussenstelle Hagenau, 17.6.44, Haltung der Jugend im Kriege; 230-235, Reichskommissariat Ukraine, 21.5.43., Bandentätigkeit in Generalbezirk Shitomir,

[442] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 279-281.

1942 Leonid Ulenko went with his mother to the city's market to try to trade a lantern for tobacco. Like many other urban Ukrainians, Leonid and his family were starving because the occupiers' reduced rations for urban residents. Out of desperation, the Ulenkos, like many of their neighbors, were forced to trade their few remaining possessions for food and other goods.[443] While they haggled over the best price for their items, Ukrainian policemen swept into the market, rounded up all the young people they could find, and marched them off to a camp to await deportation to Germany.[444] Transit to the Reich left much to be desired. Typically, after being quickly deloused, their guards crowded the deportees into waiting freight cars with little forethought to either logistics or sanitation. Sent to work in a glass factory in Gelsenkirchen in summer 1943, seventeen-year-old Kazimierz Tarnawskij, from the Polish-Ukrainian border city of Rivne, was crammed by security officers into a rail car filled with other teenagers and taken to Germany without food and only a little water.[445]

The methods of assigning foreign workers to their job sites were also often unorganized—one former *Zwangsarbeiter* who arrived at the Cologne recruitment center described the atmosphere as "similar to a bazaar," as Germans strolled around gawking and prodding at them. Marija Schabanowa, a geology student from Kharkov, recalled that some Germans who visited the office took pictures of the prisoners, presumably to help them decide

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[443] Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*, 164.

[444] NS Dokumentationzentrum Köln, hereafter cited as NSDok, Z 20 790, 9.9.03. Zeitzeugen Unterredung Leonid Ulenko. Note that the spelling of the interviewees' names are phonetically German, as per the transcript rather than how their names are spelled in their native language.

[445] Ibid. Z 20 614, 13.9.95., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Kazimierz Tarnawskij.

which ones they should apply to hire, but also likely out of pure fascination with the new arrivals from the East.[446]

After administrators assigned them to their jobs, the workers quickly confronted the harsh restrictions imposed on them by the Nazi racial state. Their employers required them to work very long shifts for substandard wages, particularly in factories, where they usually labored from 5 A.M. to 10 or 11 P.M., with half hour breaks for lunch and dinner. On Sundays, their only off day, they spent their free time searching for food or socialized in segregated parks.[447]

Poor treatment from German civilians was also common—fifty-one years after her liberation by the American troops that captured Cologne, Walentina Trifonowa immediately recalled the racial taunts hurled at her by schoolchildren during an interview with researchers.[448] The teenagers also suffered physical abuse at the hands of their German overseers and co-workers, who sometimes acted in entirely arbitrary ways. For example, after arriving in Germany, sixteen-year-old Anna Adamczyk was assigned with other Polish female workers to a large farm located near the village of Fühlingen, ten kilometers north of Cologne. The owner behaved brutality towards them, and executed one of the women after he discovered she taught his daughter Polish swear words.[449]

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[446] NSDok, Z 20 545, 22.9.91., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Marija Schabanowa.

[447] Ibid. Z 20 742, 12.9.01., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Dmitry Tschuchijenko; Z 20 788, 13.9.03., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Sachar Knysch; Z 20 545, 22.9.91. Zeitzeugen Unterredung Marija Schabanowa.

[448] Ibid. Z 20 634, 1.9.96., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Walentina Trifonowa.

[449] Ibid. Z 20 660, 15.9.97., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Anna Adamczyk.

Yet some Germans also violated the strict rules which governed relations between eastern workers and *Volksgenossen*. During the spring and summer Germans often visited the foreign workers' park in Cologne, and this site became one of the main centers of social interaction between civilians and *Zwangsarbeiter* outside of the work place. To earn extra money and food, a group of Ukrainian women often put on "traditional" folk dances, and the cultural exhibition quickly became one of the main attractions for visiting Germans. However, as one participant later remembered, the women simply made up the dances, and thoroughly enjoyed the momentary gratification of turning a profit by hoodwinking their supposed racial superiors.[450] Still, not all Germans came to the park out of mere curiosity—it was a well-known site of black market activity due to the large numbers of hungry foreign workers, who traded goods they made or stole in exchange for bread, tobacco, and clothing.[451]

In some cases, close daily interaction between eastern workers and their German co-workers temporarily broke down some of the Reich's racial barriers. In small businesses such as bakeries, which employed increasing numbers of East European women by the end of 1943, the cramped work spaces and small staffs sometimes led to a sense of familiarity, which in turn sometimes led to favors that provided a modicum of comfort to forced laborers. For example, Klawdija Myrtner, a twenty-two-year-old Polish woman from Poznań, was given ration cards by her employer and listened to foreign radio broadcasts with her German work mates. Likewise, Dmitry Tuschijenko, a Ukrainian teenager who worked as a lathe operator in a factory in

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[450] NSDok, Z 20 545, 22.9.91., Zeitzeugen Unterredung, Marija Schabanowa.

[451] Ibid.; Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 328; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 569.

Cologne, was also given extra food and, in direct violation of the regime's racial laws, the manager allowed him to enter the factory's bunker during air raids.[452]

One of the most common forms of leniency shown to foreign workers by their employers was allowing them to travel through the city unsupervised. Some foreign workers became quite adept at navigating their way around, after temporarily removing the clothing symbols, such as "P" for Pole or "OST" for eastern worker, which designated their status as East Europeans. They also found that some Germans turned a blind eye to racial violations, especially when they could make a profit. Former workers recalled that by 1943, due to war-time conditions in the largely bombed out cities, it was simply impossible for Germans to keep up with all the foreigners, who provided nosy policemen with false names which were particularly difficult to pronounce and document.[453]

Indeed, by late 1943 foreign workers seemed to be everywhere, comprising a full quarter of the country's labor strength.[454] For example, an estimated 35,000 lived and worked in one of the 116 different labor camps and countless small businesses that employed them inside Cologne. Due to the call up of German men for military service, in some factories such as the Ford Motor Works located in the western part of the city, foreigners now counted for over half of the workforce.[455] The Cologne Gestapo, which now numbered only sixty-two officers, simply

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[452] NSDok, Z 20 618, 23.09.97., Zeitzeugen Unterredung, Klawdija Myrtner; Z 20 742, 12.9.01., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Dmitry Tuschijenko.

[453] Ibid. Z 20 545, 22.9.91., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Marija Schabanowa; Z 20 660, 15.9.97 Zeitzeugen Unterredung, Anna Adamczyk; Z 20 634, 11.9.96., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Walentina Trifonowa.

[454] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 297.

[455] Martin Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Alltag und Erfahrungen zwischen 1939 und 1945* (Köln: Emons Verlag, 2005), 274.

did not have the manpower to effectively police the city's rapidly growing *Zwangsarbeiter* population. Other offices in the region faced similar manpower shortages—the Düsseldorf Gestapo numbered only sixty members by 1944 and its *Aussenstelle* in the city of Krefeld numbered a mere fourteen.[456] The growing inability to properly keep watch over foreign workers only fed the regime's concerns about crime and subversion on the home front.

From the perspective of the security forces, a crime wave was cresting over Germany. Since late 1942, escaped foreign workers and other fugitives living in German cities formed armed gangs that preyed upon civilians.[457] Although these groups were initially few and far between in contrast to later in the war, their presence stoked security anxieties that the partisan war in the East might filter back into the Reich. Drawing upon familiar stereotypes of eastern peoples as inherently rebellious and criminal, officials warned that the majority of "foreigner crimes involved violent crime and property crime," the very kinds of behavior that purportedly undermined civilian morale.[458] A report sent to HSSPF Gutenberger in early 1944 by an official in the Westphalian village of Haldem reflected officials' growing concern these gangs might wage an insurgency inside Germany. It claimed the war's "shifting fronts in east and west" encouraged armed bands of fugitive workers to form in the countryside, and that they attacked a young girl and set several farms on fire. The official demanded more protection for Germans in

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[456] NARA, RG 249, XE 019212, Office of Strategic Services, 18.4.45., Notes on the Krefeld Gestapo; Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 47.

[457] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 359; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 543.

[458] USHMMA, RG14.106, R 58/449/322., Reichssicherheitshauptamt 28.4.44., Bekämpfung der Ausländerkriminalität-Vernichtung ausländerischen Einbrecherbanden.

outlying areas, warning "I am convinced that there will be countless opportunities for these foreign workers to murder and burn an entire village because the inhabitants aren't able to organize a proper defense."[459]

The possibility that some Germans supported these fugitives, or at the very least turned a blind eye to the growing surliness of foreign workers also alarmed security officers. A letter sent to Gutenberger by the Hitler Youth Leader of Westfalen expressed these fears. It noted disturbing behavior in the region, such as workers who openly taunted their employers, and a spate of recent bicycle thefts. Worse, on some farms foreigners seemed to come and go as they pleased, and at one homestead a German farmer allegedly even remarked that "a Pole is dearer to me than my German workers," and claimed that they should be treated "as human beings." Closing, the official attributed the failure to properly control foreign workers to the fact that "today, farmers go as far as to sit at the same table as their foreign workers," a stark indication of the regime's anxiety that some Germans were no longer doing their duty to help police foreign laborers.[460]

Overstretched and understaffed, the security forces increasingly relied on terror to punish violations of the Reich's racial codes. Since autumn 1941, Himmler pushed for officers to exercise autonomy in regards to punishing foreign workers. Up until this point, the security forces still sent these to the courts, a legal protocol which rankled personnel who sought to quickly dispense "justice" in order to keep *Zwangsarbeiter* in line. Although Nazi judges were

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[459] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 150, HSSPF West, 9.2.44., Verhalten Sowjet-Kriegsgefangenen und Ostarbeiter.

[460] Ibid. RW 37-23, Hitler Jugend Führer Westfalen Nord, 25.2.44., Verhalten polnischer Arbeiter.

often sympathetic and cooperative, some still tried to curb what they considered the security forces' all too frequent demands for capital punishment, or what one magistrate described as "lynch justice."[461] Security officers seeking the death penalty frequently sidestepped the Justice Ministry by appealing directly to Heydrich, who used his influence to fast-track their requests.[462]

In October 1942, after lengthy consultation with Himmler, Georg Thierack, the head of the Reich's Justice Ministry, awarded the Gestapo the right to take over the sentencing of Jews, Roma, and eastern workers inside Germany, giving its officers the power to carry out executions for even minor infractions.[463] As Thierack noted, "I intend to pass over to the *Reichsführer-SS* the criminal prosecution of Poles, Russians, Jews, and Gypsies … It makes no sense to conserve such peoples for years on end in German jails and prisons … Instead, I believe that by handing such people over to the police, who can then act free of legal constraints, far better results will be obtained."[464]

A directive Himmler issued on January 6, 1943 regarding the execution, or "special treatment [*Sonderbehhandlung*]" of foreign laborers reflected this newly won autonomy. It informed security officers that the courts discarded preexisting legal protocols regarding these executions in favor of a new, decentralized system. Security offices seeking to carry out

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[461] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 176.

[462] See for example, HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 37, p. 34, Chef der Reichssicherheitshauptamt Heydrich, 24.4.41., Hinrichtung Thomas B.

[463] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 265-269.

[464] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 177.

executions now needed to merely coordinate with their region's Inspector of Security Police, who then passed news of the executions along to RSHA headquarters in Berlin.[465]

The year 1943 thus marked an important turning point in the unraveling of whatever legal restraint remained inside Germany regarding foreign workers. The upshot of these changes concerning the treatment of *Zwangsarbeiter* was that overworked security personnel now relied heavily on their new powers to dispense capital punishment. The changes reveal how the tactics of population control developed in Eastern Europe began to return home.

A decree Himmler issued regarding the execution of foreign workers in early 1943 best epitomized these influences. It advised security officers conducting executions at labor camps or factories to publicly hang their victims and force the remaining inmates to file past the bodies, as a means of displaying the grim consequences of disobedience. For executions conducted outside of the camps, the *Reichsführer* ordered that they bury their victims in parks, bomb craters, or cemeteries, the very kinds locations security units in the East used as murder sites, denoting how he converted these local practices into trans-regional policy.[466]

The experiences of the eastern occupation came to Germany in other ways as well. As early as July 1941, at Heydrich's behest, security offices formed special units to screen foreign workers arriving from the East. Led by highly motivated young officers often drawn from the Gestapo's anti-Marxist sections, these small units purged prisoner of war and labor camps of communists and other suspected subversives. They were created under the auspices of Service

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[465] USHMMA, RG14.106, R 58/473/275, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei, 6.1.43., Durchführungsbestimmungen für Executionen.

[466] Ibid. 276-277.

Orders 8 & 9 issued by the Reich Security Main Office that targeted captured communists, in particular political officials, for execution. The units thus complemented the notorious "Commissar Order" issued to soldiers and security officers before the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Forming a second line of defense against supposed ideological and moral contamination from the East, the use of these death squads highlights the integration of policing inside Germany into the larger "war of annihilation" waged abroad.[467]

In 1943 the policy of killing foreign workers suspected of subversion changed again. While violence remained at the core of the security forces' efforts to control *Zwangsarbeiter*, officers removed increasing numbers of recalcitrant foreign prisoners from the work force and sent them to concentration camps. This change was part of Himmler's desire to maximize Germany's industrial output through the use of slave labor. Now, the security forces planned to eliminate obstinate prisoners through work rather than execute them, in order to fully harness their labor for the war effort.[468] This new policy brought tens of thousands of prisoners into the concentration camp system and extended its network of satellite camps, or *Aussenlager*, into most German cities and towns. Whereas by the end of 1942 eighty-two of these smaller camps existed inside Germany, by the end of 1943 number stood at 186, a stark testament to both the system's rapid expansion and the immense number of prisoners now working for the SS.[469]

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[467] Reinhard Otto, *Wehrmacht, Gestapo und sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im deutschen Reichsgebiet 1941/42* (Göttingen: Oldenbourg, 1998), 54, 59-61.

[468] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 207; Allen, *The Business of Genocide*, 166-69, 177; Karin Orth, *Das System der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (München: Pendo, 2002), 171-174.

[469] Ibid. 180.

These *Aussenlager* not only served to parallel the ever-expanding labor camps created for foreign workers. Some had a more sinister purpose.

In response to the increasing devastation caused by the Allied air campaign, in autumn 1942 Himmler established SS construction brigades composed of 300 prisoners from the Buchenwald concentration camp. Stationed in small subcamps located in the cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Essen, these unfortunates recovered the bodies of Germans killed during air raids.[470] Prisoners the authorities sentenced to Buchenwald for particularly rebellious acts were assigned to these units. Among them was Kazimierz Tarnawskij, the Polish teenager from Rivne, who administrators sent to Germany to work in a glass factory in the Ruhr city of Gelsenkirchen. In spring 1943 he escaped and tried to return home, managing to reach the border of the General Gouvernment before being rearrested and sent to Buchenwald. As punishment for the escape attempt, the camp staff assigned him to the SS construction brigade in Cologne, which contained about one hundred men, mostly foreigners who committed similar offenses, as well as several German Jews.[471]

The work was extremely dangerous—ruined buildings often collapsed on the prisoners, who lacked proper food, training, medical attention, and equipment. Prisoners scrounged whatever they could in order to survive, at the risk of execution for looting.[472] Aside from recovering the bodies of German civilians, the construction brigade's members removed

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[470] Karola Fings, *Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ: Himmlers SS-Baubrigaden* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005), 64.

[471] NSDok, Z 20 614, 13.9.95., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Kazimierz Tarnawskij.

[472] Fings, *Krieg, Gesellschaft und KZ*, 166-181.

unexploded ordinance, a task that reflected the construction brigade's intent to destroy its inmates through work.

Ironically, some of the prisoners who formed the bomb clearing detail achieved an almost cult-like status among the Rhineland's residents. Assigned to the Cologne SS construction brigade in April 1942 after attempting to impersonate a Gestapo officer, Hans Steinbrück became a local legend due to his knack for retrieving unexploded bombs under the most difficult and dangerous conditions.[473] Nicknamed "Bomber Hans" by his guards and admiring civilians, Steinbrück had already lived quite a colorful life by the time the authorities condemned him to the construction brigade. As a child he repeatedly ran away from his orphanage to the dubious sanctuary of the Düsseldorf docks, before later joining the merchant marine at the age of fourteen and traveling to Africa. After contracting malaria, his company discharged Steinbrück and he returned to Düsseldorf where he worked odd jobs and tended bar before trying to join the city's Gestapo office. Although rejected due to his "asocial" background, this didn't stop Steinbrück from trying to rent an apartment by claiming he worked for the Secret Police. His suspicious landlady tipped off the Gestapo, who arrested him for impersonating a security officer, a crime which destined him for Buchenwald.[474]

Already streetwise, Steinbrück exploited his status as the star of the bomb clearing detail to obtain extra food and clothing. He also used his assignment to plot his escape. On October 20, 1943, Bomber Hans quietly slipped away from the Köln-Deutz work reeducation camp and

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[473] USHMMA, KZ Buchenwald, 9.4.42., Häftlingskarte Hans Steinbrück/7185975/1.1.5.3 ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 59, p. 1306, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht.

[474] Ibid.

fled to his former girlfriend's apartment in Berlin. The bid for freedom was short lived, and the Gestapo quickly rearrested him after she phoned the police. After they recaptured him, he managed to escape again while the train taking him back to prison stopped at a rail station. This time Steinbrück wisely made his way back to Cologne, where his work with the SS construction brigade had allowed him to familiarize himself with the city and its people. Consequently, when he returned, several sympathetic residents provided assistance and introduced him to the network of fugitives living in the city's rubble fields.[475]

The Reich Security Main Office attempted to curb the mounting challenges posed by foreign workers and escaped prisoners by placing recently returned officers in positions that allowed them to use the practices they honed while stationed abroad. For example, RSHA reassigned Karl Nolte to the Dortmund Gestapo's foreign workers section in early 1944 after he was wounded by partisans in the Ukraine. Likewise, Alfred Maniera joined the same office in 1940 after receiving shrapnel wounds during the invasion of France. He initially worked as a truck driver, bringing supplies and prisoners to the Gestapo's headquarters. However, due to personnel shortages, the office later hired him to serve as an interpreter because he learned Polish while stationed in Eastern Europe.[476]

By early 1943 the Cologne Gestapo, like many other offices, also felt the pressure of wartime demands, which siphoned off its younger officers for service in the occupied territories. Like others across Germany, the office used truck drivers and clerks to help fill the growing

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[475] USHMMA, KZ Buchenwald, 2.11.44., Weiderergriffenen Häftling Nr. 8013/7185985/1.1.5.3/ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 59, p. 1308, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht.

[476] Hauptstaatsarchiv Landesarchiv Münster, hereafter cited as HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1436, p. 151-152, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 21.4.52., Strafsache gegen Egon Weisenick u.A.

manpower gaps.[477] The majority of the remaining rank and file were now older, former Criminal Police officers RSHA considered unfit for postings abroad, and only the office's leadership cadre still exhibited the sort of ideological motivation and youthful dynamism which characterized the office prior to 1939. The personnel changes thus deepened the generational fissures within the security forces, as older men who saw themselves as more experienced and level-headed, chafed under what they perceived as the arrogance and careerism of their younger commanders. For their part, their superiors tended to disdain these older officers as too lazy and grandfatherly to meet the rigorous challenges of wartime policing.[478]

A common epithet hurled at older members of the office by their younger rivals was that they were "too weak," an insult which reflected the backgrounds of their commanders.[479] Richard Foltis, the veteran of Einsatzgruppe B's Sonderkommando 7a, joined the Cologne Gestapo in January 1942.[480] There he served as the *Vertreter*, or adjutant, to the office's commander, Dr. Emmanuel Schäfer, another veteran of the East who later took command of a security outpost in Belgrade, where he oversaw the destruction of Serbia's Jews and Roma.[481]

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[477] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 278, p. 750-751, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.7.49., wesentliches Ermittlungsergebnis.

[478] Ibid. Nr. 512., p. 195, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Peter H.; p. 197, 20.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Heinrich K, p. 287, 11.11.52., Zeugevernehmung Karl L.

[479] Ibid. p. 192, p. 192, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Anna B.; p. 317, 13.11.52., Zeugevernehmung Walter B.

[480] NARA, RG 242, SSO, 215, Personnel File Richard Foltis.

[481] Ibid. SSO, 066B, Personnel File Emmanuel Schäfer; Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 137; Mallmann, Böhler, Matthäus, *Einsatzgruppen in Polen*, 58; Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 55-57.

Aside from their "eastern service," the command structure of the Cologne Gestapo shared a Silesian background. This important industrial region was the site of border clashes between the Polish and German governments during the interwar period, and these years of violent turmoil shaped the world views of these men. For example, Schäfer participated in the famous battle at the Annaberg in 1921, when right wing Free Corps prevented Polish forces from capturing the cities of Gleiwitz and Kattowitz. After the fighting ended, he returned to Breslau University where he obtained his doctorate in law.[482] In contrast, although Foltis was too young to participate in the battles to defend the Silesian borderlands, questions of territorial and ethnic sovereignty also shaped his world view.[483]

These commonalities in background, education, and life experience created a leadership cadre noted for its strong ideological commitment and reliance on swift, decisive action—the hallmarks of Heydrich's envisioned "fighting organization."[484] Although Schäfer was in Belgrade by the time Kurt Matschke arrived in Cologne in early 1943, in many respects his arrival maintained the office's cultural continuities. Foltis and Matschke both served in Sonderkommando 7a on the eastern front, and while they did not deploy together, the experiences particular to that unit created "networks of sociability" that allowed for the transmission of ideas and practices between home and front.[485] Foltis and Matschke also reflected the new type of security officer created by the war—men whose career trajectories were

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[482] Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 54.

[483] NARA, RG 242, SSO, 215, Personnel File, Richard Foltis.

[484] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 512, p. 197, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Heinrich K.

[485] Ingrao, *Believe and Destroy*, 83.

initially cut short by the Weimar Republic's economic difficulties, but who managed to quickly rise through the ranks due to their willingness to destroy the *Volk*'s enemies.

Franz Sprinz replaced Schäfer as the commander of the Cologne Gestapo. In contrast to his predecessor, he hailed from Friedrichshafen, an idyllic town nestled along the German side of Lake Constance, in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg. The son of a pharmacist, Sprinz studied law at the University of Tübingen, an academic institution noted for its rabidly nationalist and anti-Semitic faculty.[486] After completing his studies, Sprinz briefly worked for the Stuttgart courts, before joining the SD's Security Office Southwest in 1935. Described as "well-ordered, authoritarian, and uncompromising" by his superiors, Sprinz quickly became an isolated figure once he took command of the Cologne Gestapo.[487]

In contrast to Schäfer, who former officers remembered as personable and easy going in light of his intense ideological convictions, they perceived Sprinz as cold, distant, and alienating.[488] His men viewed him with suspicion, and feared RSHA sent him to purge the office of those considered politically unreliable. Sprinz only reinforced this perception by making comments that suggested he would have indeed liked to replace the older Criminal Police officers that comprised the majority of his subordinates.[489] He also lacked the proven, "frontline" experience of Foltis and Matschke, further discrediting him in the eyes of his men. Both officers were popular, and brought their self-medicating love of drink back with them to the

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[486] NARA, RG 242, A3343, 147 B, Personnel File, Franz Sprinz; Wildt, *Generation*, 89-91.

[487] NARA, RG 242, A3343, 147 B, Personnel File, Franz Sprinz.

[488] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 512, p. 195, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Peter H.

[489] Ibid. p. 363, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 15.11.52., Zeugevernehmung Jean B.

Reich, prompting one former secretary to later make the rose-colored comment that "the SS were happy young men." Their penchant for drinking bouts and flirtation rubbed Sprinz's authoritarian personality the wrong way, deepening his sense of isolation.[490]

The arrival of Matschke and Foltis brought the experiences of the East home to the office's staff. In spring 1943, Sprinz appointed Matschke to oversee the ongoing deportation of the city's Jews. Since October 1941, trains periodically left the Köln-Deutz train station crowded with people destined for Litzmannstadt (Łodź), Minsk, Riga, Theresienstadt, and Lublin. Of the 11,500 Jews deported between 1941 and 1943, only 300 survived to see liberation.[491] While many members of the Cologne Gestapo initially rationalized their actions by maintaining the myth they simply resettled these people in the East, rumors frequently circulated among the deportees that they might meet a worse fate.

Having spent the better part of two years confined to special *Judenhäuser* (Jewish Houses) in order to isolate them from the rest of German society, armed guards marched Cologne's Jews to the Köln-Deutz AEL. There, they forced them to sign over any remaining property, as well as valuables such as jewelry, watches, and wedding rings to administrators from the city's finance office.[492] Roused in the early morning hours by guards wielding clubs, the deportees were then crowded onto waiting train cars. Deported to Riga in December 1941, Jakob M., later remembered no one on his unheated train ate during the three day trip to the

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[490] Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 56.

[491] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 520, p. 11, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.1.55., Verurteilung gegen Kurt Matschke; Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 135.

[492] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 520, p. 12, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.1.55., Verurteilung gegen Kurt Matschke; Nr. 515, p. 688, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.12.52., Abschrift, Kurt Matschke.

Baltic, and when the prisoners arrived their guards forced them to bury the people killed to make room for them in the city's ghetto.[493]

The staff of the Cologne Gestapo remained blissfully ignorant of these kinds of macabre details until Matschke arrived in early 1943. In contrast to his tight-lipped colleague Richard Foltis, he evidenced few qualms about sharing stories about the atrocities he committed in the East. Although he later claimed during his trial in 1952 that he thought Cologne's Jews were sent to a special reservation, similar to Native Americans in the United States—a comment which caused the incensed judge to declare "Mr. Matschke, you go too far!"—his former secretaries contradicted this statement.[494] They recalled he often talked about his experiences during office coffee breaks, and once proudly boasted that he killed over 3,000 people while stationed in the East.[495]

It was in such informal settings that the nature of the security force's bloody work, and the truth of the Jewish deportations, emerged and then became normalized in the home security offices. One secretary later remarked that by late 1943 everyone in the Cologne Gestapo knew the fate of those sent to the East. Others recalled his office mates admired Matschke as a man of conviction, who replaced an older officer considered by the secretaries as "too weak" for the job.[496] These remarks demonstrate how even the civilians who worked for the Cologne Gestapo

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[493] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 512, p. 190-191, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Jakob M.

[494] Ibid. p. 911, *Die Neue Presse*, 26.6.53; Nr. 516 I, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 21.10.53., Aussage Kurt Matschke.

[495] Ibid. Nr. 520, p. 20, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.1.55., Verurteilung gegen Kurt Matschke.

[496] Ibid. Nr. 512, p. 103, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 3.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Elisabeth G.; p. 192, 18.10.52., Zeugevernehmung Anna B., Nr. 520; p. 20, 30, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.1.55., Verurteilung gegen Kurt Matschke.

internalized the office's mission and the casual brutality so common in the East. This was most starkly reflected by the repulsive comment one older member of Matschke's team made to an adolescent Jewish girl struggling with an overloaded suitcase during one deportation from the Deutz train station. Snatching the luggage out of the bewildered child's hands, he joked in *Kölnisch* dialect, "you won't need a suitcase when you get to Jewish heaven."[497]

Their interactions with German civilians also contributed to security officers' growing callousness. Alongside the regime's demand for total mobilization and the arrival of increasing numbers of foreigners in Germany, the air war caused civilian life to undergo rapid and profound changes which generated security anxieties. The chaotic aftermath of these attacks and their perceived impact on morale is reflected in a report made after an air raid in Cologne on February 16, 1943, just a few weeks after Matschke's arrival. Due to a late warning, many residents did not have enough time to reach the massive concrete bunkers designed to protect them from the heaviest bombing. Casualties were high, and officers commented that a mood of "despondency" reigned inside the city. Many people blamed the civil defense authorities who arrived tour bomb damaged neighborhoods, and "large crowds" of angry, women harassed the officials.[498]

By early 1943 Allied air attacks destroyed over 25,000 homes and caused the evacuation of 250,000 of the city's 770,000 residents. The worst was yet to come—the infamous "Peter and Paul" attacks which occurred on the May 30-31 religious holiday killed 4,500 people in a single night and left 230,000 homeless.[499] Over the latter half of the year the bombing intensified, and

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[497] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 512, p. 401, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 17.11.52., Zeugevernehmung Willy F.

[498] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 611/00116, Stapostelle Köln, 16.2.43., Lagebericht.

[499] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 257, 282.

attacks often struck Cologne struck several times each day or night, forcing people to live in their air raid shelters. The strain caused by this kind of existence led teenager Anna Schmitz to scribble in her diary, "The English are making us crazy! Every day, 3, 4, 5 times or more the alarm goes off, even at night," reflecting how these raids wore inhabitants' nerves to the breaking point.[500]

Due to the widespread destruction, by summer 1943 security reports sent to Berlin dropped all pretenses and described the citizens of the Rhineland's cities as living a "frontline existence that has no comparison with other parts of the rest of the Reich." By early 1944 they noted that the constant aerial bombardment led to "a tense and increasingly fearful mood" among civilians, who became ever more pessimistic about the country's ability to strike back. Even more disturbing, new social fissures were opening up inside the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as reflected by life in the overcrowded air raid bunkers, where new arrivals received frosty receptions from the residents.[501]

The regime's fear that civilians' sense of *Durchhalten*, or resolve, was starting to crack seemed validated by the criminality created by the air war. As infrastructure broke down, many Germans turned to the black market in order to offset food shortages, an act deemed unacceptable by the regime.[502] The chaos of the air war created plenty of opportunities to steal

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[500] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 257.

[501] USHMMA, RG 14.106, R 58/186/26-27, RSHA Berlin, 22.7.43., Meldungen über die Terrorangriffe auf Köln und Aachen und ihre stimmungsmässigen Auswirkungen; 192/84, RSHA Berlin, 17.2.44., Meldungen über die Entwicklung in der öffentlich Meinungsbildung; Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 252, 276-277; Dietmar Süss, "Der Kampf um die "Moral" im Bunker. Deutschland, Großbritannien und der Luftkrieg," in Frank Bajhor & Michael Wildt, eds., *Volksgemeinschaft. Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2009), 129-135.

[502] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 572.

in order to fund these excursions, while allowing criminals to slip away unnoticed. In the frantic aftermath of an attack, residents often poured over the rubble, attempting to salvage their belongings or take anything they could find before the owners of the property arrived.[503] While most of these attempts to opportunistically scavenge were motivated by one's own material losses or the search for items to barter, the regime viewed them as exceptionally threatening. The Nazi leadership considered such "selfish individuals" as not only evidence of social disintegration, but also the very antithesis of the ideal racial comrade sacrificing for the good of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[504]

Despite the regime's condemnation of criminality, cases of theft in the Reich skyrocketed, and by 1943 were fifty-two percent higher than in 1940. Crime continued to rise, and by January 1944 incidents of robbery rose 115 percent higher than just a year earlier.[505] In response, the regime became increasingly draconian when faced with civilian criminality in the "war zones" of Germany's bombed out cities. Cases of capital punishment often spiked in the first twenty-four hours after an air raid, as authorities attempted to restore order by making examples of those caught looting. Some of these incidents bordered on the tragically absurd—arrested for stealing underwear off of a neighbor's clothesline in August 1942, Cologne's Special Courts sentenced fifty-six-year-old Paula W. to death for "plundering."[506]

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[503] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 583.

[504] Ibid. 499.

[505] USHMMA, RG 14.106, R 58/473/87-99, Reichskriminalpolizeiamt, Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik für das Deutsches Reich 1. Vierteljahr 1944; Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 120.

[506] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 246, 253-254.

The air war not only sharpened the regime's longstanding fears of subversive criminality. The chaos it caused also made it impossible to achieve the kind of rigorous crime fighting envisioned by the Nazi state.[507] In particular, the large scale movement of urban residents to rural parts Germany that had not yet felt the hard hand of war greatly hindered the security forces' ability to crack down on the growing crime wave.

These movements of people provoked intense security anxieties. Officers feared the evacuations enabled suspects to blend into the crowd and escape arrest, allowing them to continue to undermine the *Volk* elsewhere. Reflecting these concerns, a directive from a welfare office in Westphalia noted, "Rumormongers, and those who continuously disturb the community with their behavior are to be reported."[508] Still, despite their best efforts, police, city administrators, and welfare officers simply could not keep track of where people came from, where they were going, who they really were, or what they were doing, generating deep concerns about the regime's ability to prevent the destabilizing effects of crime and keep track of its citizens as the country's war fortunes worsened.[509]

Yet among the growing pessimism and uncertainty, the utopian ideals that formed the core of Nazi ideology persisted. The regime tried to take full advantage of the dislocations, using the upheaval as cover to continue the euthanasia program aimed at eliminating the mentally ill, under the pretext that medical staff created valuable space in hospitals and

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[507] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 209.

[508] Julia S. Torries, *"For Their Own Good:" Civilian Evacuations in Germany and France, 1939-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 145.

[509] USHMMA, RG 14.016, R 58/473/184, Der Reichsführer-SS Reichsminister des Innern, 19.5.44., Meldepolizeiliche Erfassung der Umquartierung.

sanitariums for the "racially fit."[510] As Julia Torries noted, the air war broadened the scope of this program, as it "rendered more opaque the boundary between sanity, insanity, and temporary insanity." For example, in the aftermath of the Hamburg firebombing of July 1943, doctors murdered ninety-seven women suffering from extreme neurological damage at the Hadamar euthanasia facility located near the Hessian town of Limburg.[511] As this incident indicates, while generating uncertainty, civilian evacuations in some cases still permitted the regime to identify perceived "undesirables" and prevent them from supposedly weakening the nation, creating an important point of contact between domestic policing and the techniques of occupation deployed abroad.

The regime remained especially concerned about those *Volksgenossen* who failed to evacuate their ruined neighborhoods. Initially, administrators sent urban residents who lost their homes into nearby rural areas, but these locations quickly became overcrowded, and officials began to transport evacuees from western Germany to Hanover, Württemberg, Thuringia, and as far east as Silesia. More often than not, their destinations were small towns and farming villages characterized by their deeply parochial attitudes and reluctance to share their resources with new comers. Consequently, some people refused to leave their badly damaged homes, as rumors circulated about the refugee camps' poor living conditions or how locals mistreated evacuees after they reached their new homes.[512] The continued presence of residents who refused to leave

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[510] Michael Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg. "Umquartierung" im Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Wiedereingliederung der Evakuierten in Deutschland 1943-1963* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1997), 146-151; Torries, *"For Their Own Good,"* 137-143.

[511] Ibid. 139.

[512] Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg*, 134-137; Torries, *"For Their Own Good,"* 85.

their bombed out neighborhoods seemed to belie the regime's ability to care for its citizens. They also defied a security logic that sought to remove civilians from troubled spaces in order to make them legible. Thus, just as in the East, officers suspected those who failed to leave of nefarious activity, regardless of whether they engaged in it or not.

For their part, urban evacuees also added to the tension by showing contempt for their new homes and communities, helping open up rifts within the fragile *Volksgemeinschaft*. As a mother of three from Hamburg acidly remarked after arriving in a south German village, "living in a cellar in Hamburg was a thousand times better… I wish bombs would fall here."[513] The deep emotional wounds caused by displacement were best summed up by the diary entry *Ich möch zo Fos no Kölle jon* [I want to go on foot to Cologne] written by fifteen-year-old evacuee Magarete F. Drawing inspiration from the lyrics of fellow *Kölner* Willi Ostermann's popular song *Homesickness for Cologne*, the entry described her family's panicked flight from the city after an air raid on June 29, 1943. Hurriedly herded out of the smoldering city and onto waiting trains in the aftermath of the attack, officials moved them around the country for days before finally sending them to Silesia. After two months being of being treated as an outsider, homesick Magerete declared, "We've been here for eight weeks… if Cologne was a pile of rubble, I would still like it better than Silesia."[514]

The numbers of civilians who refused to leave or returned after evacuation grew so large by July 1943 that the one security report alarmingly noted, "In western Germany there is a clear

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[513] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 298-299; Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg*, 141.

[514] Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg*. 657.

resistance against evacuation."[515] In the Rhineland, the Gauleiter of Gau Köln-Aachen frustratingly confided in his diary, "These people simply won't go," and eventually revoked evacuees' ration cards in a desperate attempt to force them to leave.[516] This tactic later backfired in the Ruhr on October 11, 1943, when over 300 women gathered to protest the confiscation of their ration cards after they illegally returned from evacuation camps. Although the Gauleiter called out police to disperse them, the officers sided with the women, forcing officials to allow them to stay.[517]

Despite the regime's best efforts to prevent these "wild returnees" from coming home, the illegal movement of people across Germany increased during the last two years of the war, and security reports bemoaned the fact that "almost the entire population of some districts will be living at home again."[518] The consequence of these unauthorized movements was that the regime perceived the people who refused to leave or returned after evacuation as a security risk. Oriented to expose future threat, the unauthorized internal movement of thousands of people, not just Germans but also escaped foreign workers and prisoners, generated extreme uncertainty on the part of the security forces, who knew these people existed, but had no means of knowing what they might be up to. Aside from disobeying orders and therefore suspect of something more sinister than just unauthorized travel, their presence also represented the regime's failure to

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[515] USHMMA, RG 14.016, R 58/186/17, RSHA Berlin, 15.7.43., Stimmen aus der Bevölkerung zu den bei der Evakuierung aus den Luftkriegsgebieten aufgetretenen Schwierigkeiten.

[516] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 297-298.

[517] Torries, *"For Their Own Good,"* 97.

[518] Ibid. 92.

meet the needs of Germany's increasingly disordered society and help alleviate the burdens of war.[519]

In addition to concerns about the *Volk*'s ability to carry on continued struggle, more mundane factors also encouraged radicalization among security personnel. Due to the sheer intensity of the bombing, urban landscapes underwent dramatic and rapid changes which made surveillance and control impossible. Apartment blocks that stood untouched one day lay in ruins the next, making it difficult to track the whereabouts of suspects, and in the aftermath of attacks, officers found roads unpassable and public transport suspended indefinitely, making it difficult for them to rapidly respond to acts of crime.

The raids also played havoc on the administration of justice—attacks bombed out court buildings and security outposts, severed phone lines, and case files were lost in fires or hopelessly mixed together by the shockwaves of explosions which blew them out of their filing cabinets and scattered them across badly damaged offices.[520] To lessen the impact of the air war on their activities, the security forces decentralized. For example, after the infamous "thousand bomber raid" of May 1943 obliterated the headquarters of Cologne's Criminal Police, personnel spread out across the city in small offices. However, these efforts to minimize the damage to security infrastructure were fleeting, as other attacks also destroyed many of these locations.[521]

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[519] USHMMA, RG 14.016, R 58/186/19, RSHA Berlin, 15.7.43., Stimmen aus der Bevölkerung zu den bei der Evakuierung aus den Luftkriegsgebieten aufgetretenen Schwierigkeiten; Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 119,121; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 212, 230.

[520] USHHMA, RG 14.016,, R 58/192/130-132, RSHA Berlin, 21.2.44., Auswirkung der Luftangriffe auf die Arbeit der Justiz.

[521] Roth, "Die kölner Kriminalpolizei," 310-311.

These organizational changes born out of necessity were completely at odds with the security services' self-perception as a technologically advanced elite. Investigations became increasingly primitive and unsystematic, as the decentralization of personnel, fragmented databases, and damaged telephone networks prevented the kinds of rapid information sharing that epitomized modern police work.[522] Security offices shrunk in size, and were now largely composed of retired officers recalled to service, or inexperienced personnel promoted from the ranks of support staff.[523] This breakdown in technology and decline in professionalism encouraged the tendency to rely on indiscriminate methods.

For example, during the last two years of the war, the security forces conducted large scale raids to catch suspects, and in particular targeted areas long associated with crime, such as working class neighborhoods and red light districts in an effort to quickly stamp out criminality.[524] First carried out against foreign workers, officers applied these mass arrests to "work shy" German teenagers, and often simply swept up as many suspects as possible in a feeble attempt to disrupt juvenile criminality.[525] Reflecting how the regime's concerns about productivity and order often created rash generalizations, one security document issued by Himmler ordered his officers to arrest any teenagers standing around idle on street corners, denoting how increasing uncertainty encouraged indiscriminate methods to restore order.[526]

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[522] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 259-260.

[523] Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 116.

[524] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 502-504.

[525] Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend*, 320-322; Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 161; Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten*, 125-126.

[526] USHMMA, RG 14.015, R 58/473/189, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei, 25.10.44., Bekämpfung jugendlicher Cliquen.

The experience of the air war also encouraged mass arrests and callous world views— the widespread destruction caused by around-the-clock bombardment caused security officers to identify closely with the regime's description of the Reich's urban centers as so-called "front cities" or "war zones."[527] While ostensibly a propaganda tool aimed at strengthening Germans' will to resist, these phrases exposed the regime's conception of Germany's cities as contested sites of struggle between morally upright citizens and subversive, traitorous elements weakening the *Volk* from within. Facing air attacks and picking their way through scorched, ruined terrain, security officers envisioned their experiences as something more than police work, a struggle to secure the Reich's existence by preventing social collapse and defeat.[528]

This collision of ideology with everyday experience is best summed up in the postwar testimony of a member of the Hamburg Gestapo. Having survived the firebombing of July 1943 which destroyed the port city, when questioned about his participation in several executions he answered, "I approved of the shootings because I was loyal to the previous government and was a convinced National Socialist. I must still note that after the great attack on Hamburg, full chaos reigned and the war was at its peak. That one was internally brutalized after seeing countless dead civilians killed by the bombing surely also played a role… I can't find words to describe how terrible it was in Hamburg during that time. These shootings that I carried out no longer inwardly affected me."[529]

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[527] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 250, 253, 502-506.

[528] Paul, "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt," 563; Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"* 240-241.

[529] Paul, "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt," 563.

In his study of the Germany army in Eastern Europe, Omer Bartow argued that by December 1941 it faced insurmountable problems posed by technological breakdown, combined with the morale-sapping destruction of unit cohesion, and their confrontation with vast amounts of physical space which defied control. Taken together, Bartov argued, these realities encouraged soldiers to rely more heavily on Nazi ideology as a means of ordering their experiences, enabling the Wehrmacht to truly become "Hitler's Army."[530]

This thesis also applies to policing on the home front. By December 1943, the Reich's security forces confronted similar conditions. The personnel changes, breakdown in technology, and futile attempts to control the rubble fields of shattered German cities did not just primitivize domestic policing, compelling officers to identify more closely with Nazi ideology. The social upheaval on the home front allowed the doctrine of preventative policing to come fully into its own.

After the defeat at Stalingrad, radical and expansive by its very nature, security officers embraced this concept as the best means of restoring order to an increasingly disordered home front. Consequently, ever larger numbers of people were caught up in the security forces' net, as definitions of criminality and subversion continually broadened. Yet unrestrained preventative policing created even more contradiction. Large numbers of arrests did not signal victory—instead they only stoked the regime's unease that the *Volk* appeared slipping towards disintegration.

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[530] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.

The maintenance of this "community of fate" became paramount over the course of 1943. Nazi conceptions of society hardened as the home front became a battleground, a contested space where authentic Germans supposedly struggled against traitors within. This notion was encouraged not only by the daily experiences of officers working and living in the Reich's bombed out cities, but by the return of personnel from the occupied territories, who took up leadership roles within the security apparatus. Self-styled soldiers socialized to violence, these men helped change the organizational culture of the security forces from within, most notably by promoting the callousness and fears of civilian behaviors so common among personnel in occupied Europe. By September 1944, when the Allies reached Germany's western border, all the pieces were thus in place for preventative policing to reach its logical culmination in a violent purge of society as the Reich faced invasion and defeat.

Chapter Five
Fortress Germany:
Volkskrieg, Volksgemeinschaft, and Apocalyptic Fantasy

In the last few days we've traveled far. Always in the direction of home. A few days ago Paris fell to the English and Americans. These two great powers march across France unchecked. If they continue they will be in Germany within fourteen days…perhaps quicker than we will be.

—Corporal Leopold Schober. 30.8.44[531]

If the Führer gave the impression that the enemy will not set one foot on German soil, in the East or the West, I believe this optimism to be well-founded at the moment.

—Josef Goebbels. 3.9.44.[532]

No one expected the enemy's arrival so soon. Although the news coming from France had not been good, for most Germans living along the Reich's western border the full extent of the disaster in Normandy remained unknown. Even astute and loyal readers of the *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, the official mouthpiece of the Nazi Party in the Rhineland, were surprised to read on September 5 that the enemy now threatened Malmedy, Monschau, and Euskirchen, all areas dangerously close to the Reich's border.[533] Unreported in articles focusing

[531] Franz and Leopold Schober, Michael Hans Salvesberger, ed., *Briefe von der Front: Feldpostbriefe 1939-1945* (Gösing am Wagram: Weinviertel Verlag 1997), 252.

[532] Elke Fröhlich, ed., *Die Tagebücher von Josef Goebbels, Teil II, Band 13, Juli-September 1944* (München: K.G. Saur, 1995), 402.

[533] USHMMA, LM0394, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 5. 9. 44., "Hinter dem Grenzvolk steht das ganze Reich."

narrowly on the effect of "wonder weapons" and the determination of the Wehrmacht, after breaking out of the hedgerow country in late July the Allies encircled the German army at Falaise, destroying most of its fighting capability. Once free of the bocage and in open country, they moved incredibly fast. Although surviving German units struggled to conduct a fighting withdrawal, Allied armored spearheads backed by limitless air power proved almost impossible to slow down. Within a month they reached the Seine and on August 25 liberated Paris. Two weeks later the enemy overran most of Belgium and appeared poised to enter Germany.[534]

In the East the situation was equally catastrophic. The Soviet summer offensive, Operation Bagration, almost completely destroyed Army Group Center and liberated Weissruthenien and the Ukraine, at the cost of over half a million irreplaceable German casualties. Within two months the Red Army advanced over 600 kilometers westward, and by August 19 stood on the banks of the Vistula outside of Warsaw, where an uprising by the Polish Home Army continued to rage inside the city. To the north, enemy troops threatened to cut off the German forces in the Baltic from overland contact with the rest of the Wehrmacht. In the southern sector, Soviet divisions massed on the borders of Hungary and Romania, endangering the flow of vital fuel supplies to the Reich.[535]

At home, the fortunes of war turned against the regime as well. At 12:40 P.M. on July 20, a kilogram of explosive hidden in a briefcase detonated during a meeting held at Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia. Although the *Führer* managed to escape with minor injuries, the

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[534] Horst Boog, Gerhard Krebs, Detlef Vogel, eds., *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 7* (München: Deutsches Verlags-Anstalt, 2007), 560-573.

[535] Karl Heinz Frieser, ed., *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 8* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2007), 592-593.

assassination plot rocked the Party once the Gestapo revealed that several high ranking military officers and prominent civilian officials participated in the coup attempt. In retaliation, the security forces launched Operation Thunderstorm, a country-wide round up of suspected dissidents.[536]

The war seemed all but over, a fact reinforced by the columns of ragged and weary German soldiers fleeing westwards into the Reich. Some rode by in military vehicles or stolen civilian cars and trucks but most marched on foot, weighed down not only by their own equipment but also loot taken in France and Belgium. To some observers, the retreat resembled complete chaos, as soldiers herded livestock taken from farms along their march, while others rode atop casks of wine or cognac piled onto wagons.[537] Interspersed among them were German civilians and collaborators fleeing from the Low Countries. In addition to these refugees, an estimated 12,000 disheveled prisoners and foreign workers also marched eastwards, valued too much as a labor reserve to fall into Allied hands.[538]

Along with the retreat came crime. Having ready access to fresh produce, meat, and cheese, many residents of the farms and small towns along the border fared far better than their urban counterparts in nearby cities such as Aachen and Cologne. Now, like a swarm of locusts,

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[536] HStAD, RW 34-5, p. 23, Stapostelle Köln, 27.7.44., Attentat auf den Führer; Harmut Mehringer, *Widerstand und Emigration. Das NS-Regime und seine Gegner*, 2. Auflage (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), 218-232; Andreas Kunz, *Wehrmacht und Niederlage. Die bewaffnette Macht in der Endphase der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft 1944 bis 1945* (Göttingen: Oldenbourg, 2007), 107-110.

[537] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 66, HSSPF West, 8.9.44., Verkehrskontrolle an der Grenze; Ralph J. Jaud, *Der Landkreis Aachen in der NS-Zeit. Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in einem katholischem Grenzgebiet 1929-1944* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1997), 727.

[538] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 8., HSSPF West, 9.9.44., Lage an der Grenze; Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen in der NS-Zeit*, 728.

hungry soldiers, refugees, and escaped prisoners descended on these communities, taking the stockpiles of food carefully nurtured by the locals. Sometimes Rhinelanders also joined in the looting—in some towns and villages, crowds gathered to carry off supplies from trains destroyed by Allied air attacks, while outnumbered police and Party officials watched helplessly.[539]

The groups of fugitive foreigner workers who roamed the countryside, as one Party member reported, "Begging, stealing, and vagabonding across the land," particularly concerned the region's residents.[540] Many escaped during air raids or the evacuation of their camps, while others awoke to find their guards simply abandoned them, fearing the approach of the enemy. Expecting the Allies to arrive at any minute, local farmers also released their forced laborers.[541] These fugitives were not the only threat locals contended with. Rhinelanders especially feared the gangs of Wehrmacht deserters who robbed civilians as they made their way eastwards towards their homes.[542]

However, the regime did not attribute all of these incidents to cowards and traitors to the Fatherland. In one report, an official laid the blame for thefts and other crime on soldiers staying in the area. He noted that many of these incidents involved food, especially livestock, and he warned about the effects of the Army's widespread requisition and butchery of animals

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[539] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 66. 8.9.44., Verkehrskontrolle an der Grenze; RW 34-8, p. 1., Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[540] NARA, RG 242, T77, 788/5816916, Gauleiter Essen, 2.2.45., Reiseeindrücke in Rheingebiet.

[541] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign* Workers, 361-362; HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 153, p. 65, Landgericht Bonn, 22.1.63., Zeugevernehmung Franz E.

[542] Derek S. Zumbro, *Battle for the Ruhr: The German Army's Final Defeat in the West* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 59.

earmarked for civilian food supplies. He also stressed the damage these incidents did to home front morale, and accused soldiers of selling some of the food on the black market, extorting the very same people they took it from.[543]

Despite these warnings, army units continued to appropriate food from local residents. From the military's perspective, these were not acts of theft but simply the continuation of foraging practices commonplace during the retreat from France, when Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht to vengefully live off the land as they marched northwards. Still cut off from reliable supply and accustomed to taking what they needed, German soldiers continued to appropriate food from civilians once they entered the Reich.[544] These requisitions quickly led to tensions between soldiers and the locals, as in the case of the village of Nütterden, where farmers and agricultural administrators formed a self-defense group which drove soldiers away at gun point when they arrived looking for food. Meeting with largely unapologetic officers from an infantry division camped nearby, incensed Party officials discovered they indeed told their men to take two animals from each village in the area.[545]

Spurred to act after reading the report, another senior Party official set out to view the situation first hand. Upon his return, he sent a description of his travels through the region to the Wehrmacht's High Command. It detailed his conversations with civilians, who told him soldiers took "everything that isn't nailed down," and pointed out that the rising tide of crime forced

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[543] NARA, RG 242, T77, 790/5518206, Kreisleiter Kleve, 28.11.44., Bericht.

[544] Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg*, 473, 478.

[545] NARA, RG 242, T77, 790/5518206, Kreisleiter Kleve, 28.11.44., Bericht.

residents to stay home and protect their property rather than help prepare for the region's defense. Confirming his subordinate's suspicion that army personnel participated in black market activity, the frustrated official referenced security reports about soldiers they caught trying to smuggle clothes, radios, and food back into the Reich from the former occupied territories.[546]

Throughout the Rhineland, townspeople found themselves hostage to the military as drunken soldiers wandered the streets, forcing residents to hide inside their homes.[547] Some even compared the situation to the catastrophe of the Thirty Years War.[548] In one town, a group of Wehrmacht officers took over the hotel and turned one of its rooms into a casino where they gambled away their loot, including goods such as tobacco, liquor, and chocolate. Security officers noted the frivolous treatment of luxuries so rare to local residents quickly created tension between townspeople and the soldiers.[549] Further commenting on the unrest caused by the military's arrival in the border region, an official from a local branch of the Propaganda Ministry reported to his superiors that the "uncomradely" and "scandalous" behavior exhibited by the troops demoralized many civilians.[550] Commenting on such scenes one officer, a veteran of

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[546] NARA, RG 242, T77, 788/5816967, Gauleiter Essen, 28.11.44., Verhalten von Wehrmachtsangehörigen in den von der Deutschen Bevölkerung geräumten Gebieten.

[547] Ibid. T 175, 279/2771486, Gauleiter Köln-Aachen, 28.9.44., Bericht.

[548] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 826.

[549] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 15, HSSPF West, 11.9.44., Vorkomnisse bei der Einquartierung von Offizieren in Hückswagen.

[550] NARA, RG 242, T77, 788/5816916, Partei Kanzelei (OKW copy), Reiseeindrücke in Rheingebiet. 2.45.

World War I, ashamedly admitted the retreat was worse than the turmoil that accompanied the army's return to Germany in November 1918.[551]

Indeed, another collapse seemed imminent. The influx of refugees and retreating troops placed a great strain on the region's already weakened infrastructure. For almost four years, the Allies bombed The Left Bank Rhineland, the location of heavy industry and vital transportation networks leading into the occupied West, and these raids reduced many cities and towns into piles of rubble. By this stage in the war, air attacks frequently disrupted basic services such as communications, running water, sanitation, and electricity. The region's shattered rail network further exacerbated residents' misery by preventing an adequate flow of supplies into the region.

As the air war decentralized industry into the surrounding countryside, many smaller towns and villages also became targets, and the swath of devastation continued to spread. In late summer 1944, as Allied fighter planes operating from newly captured bases in France targeted German troop movements and transportation the air war reached even the remotest of locations. Traveling through western Germany in early autumn to assess the Rhineland's economic capacity, Albert Speer, Minister of Armaments and War Production, noted Allied planes indiscriminately strafed farmers working in their fields and that he abandoned his car and took cover several times during the journey. These air attacks became so common during the first weeks of September that the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* published a lengthy article on how civilians could protect themselves, recommending that women working in the fields avoid

[551] Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg*, p. 448.

wearing white head scarfs or other brightly colored clothing which might catch the eye of roving fighter pilots.[552]

In addition to the approaching enemy, it appeared the regime needed to worry about the Rhineland's residents as well. Security personnel sent to assess the situation along the border reported the disturbing appearance of white flags outside of houses, and that in one incident civilians ransacked a local Party office. In many towns and villages vexed officers found civilians wandering the streets aimlessly without any apparent sense of urgency or purpose, rather than helping prepare defenses. Their reports blamed much of the disorder on what they described as the "defeatist" and unruly troops retreating from France, and the fact that most of the local Party leadership prematurely fled the region. Others warned of the growing threat posed by enemy propaganda and rumors, as well as the demoralizing psychological effect of the region's rising crime rate. In an attempt to restore civilians' sense of security, in one instance officers publicly shot sixteen Dutch forced laborers for looting, an act which they surprisingly noted shocked local residents.[553]

The situation appeared most critical in the border areas of Luxembourg and Belgium annexed to the Reich in 1940, where resistance groups harassed retreating troops. In a hurried letter to his parents, Leopold Schober wrote, "A great agitation lies within the Belgian people. Thousands of civilians have taken up arms to fight German soldiers. It is almost impossible to

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[552] NARA, RG, 242, T77, 788/5816916, Partei Kanzelei, OKW copy dated 2.45., Reiseeindrücke in Eifelgebiet; Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 402; USHMMA, LM0394, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 12.9.44., "Wenn Tiefflieger kommen."

[553] NARA, RG 242, T175, 279/2771485-86, Gauleiter Köln-Aachen, 28.9.44., Bericht; HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 58, HSSPF West, 15.9.44., Tätigkeiten Polizei-Battalionen 304 und 305.

travel through the cities. The terrorists shoot at us from all corners and alleyways."[554] For many German soldiers, it often seemed as if the entire population turned out to welcome the enemy. Rolling through one village, Herbert Rink's weary column of tanks turned a corner to find the residents lined up with Belgian flags, drinks in hand, waiting for the Americans to arrive. He later recorded their disappointed expressions as his men streamed past.[555]

Not all Germans turned a blind eye to the insurrection. Dr. Max Hoffmann, the commander of the Cologne Gestapo, who recently returned to Germany after two years of fighting partisans in the Ukraine and Poland, ordered the Border Police in the town of Verviers to suppress the uprising by rounding up and executing all military age males. His reprisal plan failed at the last minute, when the unit fled in panic after hearing rumors of American tanks on the outskirts of the town.[556]

Indeed, the enemy was not far behind—security officers reported they often stumbled upon American patrols during their travels, engaging in sporadic firefights which led to further confusion about the exact location of the enemy.[557] Artillery shells started falling on Aachen's southern suburbs on September 14, conclusively confirming the close proximity of the enemy.[558] The bombardment plunged the city into panic. Many Party officials promptly fled, leaving

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[554] Leopold Schober, *Briefe von der Front*, 5.9.44., 243.

[555] Max Hastings, *Armageddon: The Battle for Germany* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 14.

[556] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 140, Landgericht Bonn, 23.1.63, Vernehmung Arnold Schneider; RW 34-8, p. 1, 9.11.44., Stapostelle Köln, Tätigkeit der Staatspolizei Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[557] Ibid. RW 37-7, p. 13, 10.9.44. Morgenmeldung HSSPF West.

[558] Ibid. p, 20, HSSPF West, 14.9.44., Meldung; RW 37-21, p. 58. HSSPF West, 15.9.44., Tätigkeit Polizei-Battalionen 304 und 305.

residents leaderless as they attempted to carry out an impromptu evacuation plan, which in the words of one Wehrmacht officer, quickly devolved into "senseless flight and widespread looting." For two days, Aachen's desperate residents tried to flee the city by any means possible, under constant air attack and artillery fire, until special evacuation trains arrived at the neighboring town of Eschweiler. After consulting with Kreisleiter Friedt, the only remaining Party functionary in the Aachen area, General Graf von Schwerin, whose tank division was resting in the area, halted the evacuation in an attempt to return a sense order of order to the city. He also later sent a letter to the Americans asking for the safe passage of civilians.[559]

In response to his humanitarian efforts, Hitler ordered Schwerin relieved of his command for attempting to negotiate with the enemy.[560] The Aachen Gestapo's unauthorized retreat from the city caused further embarrassment to the regime. As the office tasked with security for Gau Köln-Aachen's border areas, Himmler furiously remarked that its personnel should have stayed to assist the evacuations and help defend the city. He expressed his dissatisfaction by warning that in the future, security officers who fled would be demoted and sent to a punishment brigade assisting in the brutal house-to-house suppression of the Warsaw Uprising.[561]

Anticipating the arrival of the enemy, members of the Party and security forces not only prematurely fled Aachen, but other towns and cities throughout the region, generating mistrust and frustration within the population. For example, a Catholic priest and Gestapo informant

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[559] NARA, RG 242, T175. 274/ 277140, IdS Düsseldorf, 28.9.44., Räumung des Landkreises Aachen; Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen in der NS-Zeit*, 730.

[560] NARA, RG 242, T77, 788/5603939, Heeresgruppe B, 16.9.44., Bericht.

[561] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 87, Reichsführer SS, 19.9.44., Rücktritt Stapostelle Aachen.

codenamed V 0121, reported that in Düren, leading Party officials disappeared, leaving "us poor devils to stay behind or carry our luggage on foot" as they fled eastwards. The man recalled the mood in the town was tense—Army officers no longer gave the Hitler salute, and he overheard many of his parishioners discussing the impending arrival of the enemy and slandered Party officials as cowards.[562] The informant also reported that the officials' flight created a dangerous food shortage in the city, since no one remained to organize the distribution of rations. Additionally, he informed his handlers that some desperate residents attempted to flee by stealing a fire engine, but that their "community minded" comrades prevented the theft. Closing one of his reports, V 0121 helpfully included the names of these neighbors, so the Gestapo could investigate.[563]

The most serious outbreak of civil unrest in the western Rhineland occurred in Cologne, the strategically located city linking the front with the interior of Germany. Largely depopulated of its civilian population by this point in the war, the city's vast rubble fields were now home to numerous military deserters, escaped foreign workers, and other fugitives.[564] Living illegally in off limits areas and unable to access regular supply channels, many of these people banded together into small groups, stealing in order to survive. Often striking under the cover of darkness or in the aftermath of air raids, gangs broke into stores and supply depots across the city. Another favorite target were the cellars of homes and apartment buildings, since many

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[562] HStAD, RW 34-2, p. 110-111, Stapostelle Köln, 8.9.44, 17.9.44., V-Leute Bericht V 0121.

[563] Ibid. p. 112, Stapostelle Köln, V-Leute Bericht, 24.9.44, V 0121.

[564] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 59, p. 1242, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.6.69., Bericht.

residents hid their valuables there for safe keeping. Wiley thieves often broke into these makeshift vaults and made off with not only food, but money, jewels, and expensive clothing which they sold on Cologne's thriving black market.[565]

For example, in late August, a German gang that included an army deserter and a fugitive from the Köln-Deutz work reeducation camp broke into the cellar of a grocery store in the neighborhood of Köln-Riehl and stole eighty pounds of butter, along with a sack of sugar, and several wheels of cheese.[566] They fenced their loot by using some of their associates as distributors, and also made contact with black marketeers. The sale of the butter alone netted the gang over 3,000 Reichsmarks, most of which they promptly gambled away or spent on cigarettes and alcohol.[567]

By late summer these gangs turned to armed robbery. The arrival of retreating army units led to a proliferation of weapons inside the city, as some soldiers, especially deserters needing a quick infusion of cash or supplies, sold their equipment to civilians. Thieves also stole guns, and even hand grenades from army supply depots, unguarded vehicles, and drunken soldiers.[568] They often resold these weapons, with pistols alone fetching as much as 1,000 Reichsmarks.[569] Unsurprisingly, along with the weapons came a spike in violence, as gang members panicked

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[565] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 63, p. 101, Stapostelle Köln, 26.9.44. Zeugevernehmung Ottilie D.

[566] Ibid. Nr. 59, p. 1310, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht.

[567] Ibid. p. 1314.

[568] Ibid. Nr. 63, p. 197, Stapostelle Köln, 2.10.44., Zeugevernehmung Heinz W.

[569] Ibid. Nr. 59, p. 1315, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln., 7.3.69., Bericht; Nr. 64 I, p. 486, Stapostelle Köln, 28.10.44.,Vernehmung Bartholomäus Schink; p. 511, Stapostelle Köln, 30.10.44., Vernehmung Berta S.

and shot their victims during robberies or fought back against the pursuing police. Many of the city's more law abiding citizens also began to carry weapons for protection, increasing the risk of lethal encounters, and over the course of early autumn several citizens died during these incidents. Several Party officials, policemen, and soldiers also numbered among the victims, blurring the boundaries between crime and resistance in the minds of security officers. Most of this criminal activity took place in the western district of Ehrenfeld, now commonly referred to by locals and security personnel alike as *Räuberfeld* because of its notoriously high crime rate.[570] Other sections of the city also appeared to be slipping out of control, forcing the Cologne Gestapo to remark that the Criminal Police were no longer capable of retaining order, and Hoffmann urged RSHA to let his men take over the effort to combat crime.[571]

The unrest erupting in the Rhineland was antithetical to the regime's vision of how Germans should act during a time of crisis. Criminal acts such as looting, robbery, blackmarketeering, desertion, and panicked retreat belied Nazi propaganda's much touted myth of a unified *Volk* selflessly sacrificing for the Fatherland's survival. In particular, the disorder in the Rhineland appeared to undermine the regime's efforts to mobilize all Germans for what they termed a *Volkskrieg*, or People's War. This concept anticipated that every person regardless of age or sex, would fanatically resist the invasion, turning "every German heart and every German house into a fortress."[572] The idea of a final battle to decide the nation's fate drew heavily upon

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[570] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 298, p. 15, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, Brief von Josef F. 15.2.70., Bericht zur Lage Köln für die Zeit Oktober 1944 bis 5 März 1945.

[571] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 637, Stapostelle Köln, 29.1.45., Bericht.

[572] USHMMA, RG 14.015, NS 6/321, Partei Kanzelei, 63, 18.10.44. Dienstappell, Deutscher Volkssturm.

an imagined German character noted for its martial prowess, devotion to duty, and upright moral bearing, values which once harnessed could defeat the invaders. However, the doctrine of *Volkskrieg* had more pragmatic uses as well—the regime hoped that putting up a determined fight along the border would force the supposedly casualty adverse British and Americans to strike a separate peace treaty, allowing the Germans to turn eastwards and fight back the Soviets.[573]

The regime's idea of ordering a *Levée-en-Masse* and drafting every able bodied German into the country's defense was hardly novel. In autumn 1918, civilian and military leaders prepared to defend the Rhineland by conducting a policy of scorched earth by poisoning wells, removing food supplies, and destroying infrastructure.[574] These desperate measures intended to slow the weary Allies' advance on Germany and gain leverage in future peace negotiations. Fortunately, cooler heads within the government prevailed, and prevented the plans to turn western Germany into a barren wasteland.

However, the notion of a final battle on German soil did not disappear after November 1918. Joachim von Stülpnagel, the General Staff's Chief of Operations during the 1920s, developed these earlier plans for *Volkskrieg* into a cohesive military doctrine. His 1923 treatise, "Thoughts on the War of the Future" argued that due to the restrictions placed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty, the weakened military needed to seek new, innovative ways to defend the country. He claimed the answer to these questions rested in what he termed a "People's War,"

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[573] David Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm: The Nazi Militia and the Fall of Germany, 1944-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 19, 163.

[574] Michael Geyer, "Insurrectionary Warfare," 449-52; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 309-333.

which used civilian militia to buy time by slowing down invaders long enough for Germany's small military to mobilize and counterattack on ground of their choosing. Significantly, he deployed the rhetoric of national character, claiming "moral force" could overcome superior numbers of enemy troops and better technology, reducing victory to endurance and resolve.[575]

Stülpnagel imagined an apocalyptic battle in which "any distinction between combatants and non-combatants disappears and all persons and all things become a means of war."[576] As the enemy advanced through a bitter house-to-house, street-to-street struggle, retreating troops laid waste to the surrounding countryside in order to deprive the enemy of resources and shelter. During the final phase of the fighting, small groups carried out assassinations and acts of sabotage against the occupiers, leading to reprisals which in turn sparked a popular insurrection against them.[577] Reflecting the traumatic influence of defeat on German military thinking and politics in the wake of World War I, he chillingly justified these plans by noting, "If victory is at stake considerations concerning the survival of the population do not matter." For Stülpnagel and other proponents of *Volkskrieg*, self-destruction itself became a victory by denying the nation another humiliating defeat at the hands of their enemies.[578]

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[575] BA-MA, NS 5/20, p. 22-27, Reichswehrministerium Heeresabteilung. 18.3.24., Volkskrieg und Grenzschutz.

[576] Geyer, "Insurrectionary Warfare," 499.

[577] BA-MA, NS 5/20, p. 30, Reichsministerium Heeresabteilung, 18.3.24., Volkskrieg und Grenzschutz.

[578] Ibid. p. 72, Reichsministerium Heeresabteilung, 18.3.24., Volkskrieg und Grenzschutz; Geyer, "Insurrectionary Warfare," 500; Gli-li Vardi, "Joachim von Stülpnagel's Military Thought and Planning," *War In History*, 2010, 17 (2): 193-216, 199-201; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 317-319.

Other members of the General Staff echoed Stülpnagel's thoughts regarding civilians' role in a future conflict, although most remained reluctant to take them to such drastic ends. For example, Hans von Seeckt, the Reichwehr's Chief of Staff, rejected the concept of an unrestrained war inside Germany, instead preferring to rely on a professional army capable of deploying quickly. He recommended that the military only deploy well-trained militias in times of extreme crisis.[579] Regardless, the preparations for an *Endkampf* on German soil exposed the experience of defeat in 1918. This event caused a reevaluation of the civilian participation in conflict by removing any considerations concerning their well-being if defeat loomed.[580] As Matthias Strohn noted, the "concept of involving the civilian population in the war to a high degree turned the enemy's civilians into legitimate targets, but the radicalization also meant one's own civilian population had to participate in the fighting."[581] Such thinking thus opened up new horizons within military culture, erasing distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, both at home and abroad. This shift placed a greater emphasis on national strength during times of crisis, and therefore complimented criminological discussions regarding decline and regeneration that highlighted the danger crime and other "selfish acts" posed to home front morale.

The Nazi regime's plans to defend the Reich reflected the enduring influence of this new conception of warfare. They too imagined a general mobilization of German society in which all

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[579] Strohn, *The German Army and the Defence of the Reich: Military Doctrine and the Conduct of the Defensive Battle, 1918-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 99-100.

[580] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 315.

[581] Strohn, *The German Army and the Defence of the Reich*, 144.

males between sixteen and sixty-five joined *Volkssturm* (militia) units sent to fight at the front, adolescent boys built fortifications, and women harvested fields and worked in factories. They also planned to dismantle industries essential to the war effort in areas threatened by the enemy and transport the equipment to safer locations, where it could again produce goods for the country's defense.[582]

These plans drew upon the preparations for a final battle in 1918. However, the crucial difference between the Nazi vision and its forbearers was its unconditional commitment to absolute, unyielding struggle in which civilian militias did not simply buy the German military time to regroup and counter the invasion, but carry out the very types of partisan warfare the regime outlawed so brutally in occupied Europe.[583] This desire to wage a guerilla war inside parts of occupied Germany intended to carry out Stülpnagel's radical call for Germans to resist until the *Volk* was annihilated.

Writing to Himmler on September 19, 1944, an officer from Bach-Zewlewski's Office for Anti-Partisan Operations recommended establishing resistance cells "in preparation of a German partisan war on all fronts." Urgently declaring "now is the time to call up and organize a *Volkskrieg* in the broadest sense possible," he recommend that catches of weapons, explosives, medical supplies, food, and ammunition be hidden in difficult, hard to reach areas of the border regions in both the east and west. Later, resistance cells led by military and security officers could access these hideouts and use the supplies to hinder the enemy's advance. He planned for

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[582] HStAD, RW 34-34, p. 58, RSHA Berlin, 19.9.44., Vorbereitungen zur Verteidigung des Reiches.

[583] Kunz, *Wehrmacht und Niederlage*, 146.

these groups to target railways, bridges, depots, and other forms of infrastructure in order to sap the enemy's strength by cutting off their access to supplies. He also noted they should encourage resistance by distributing inflammatory propaganda and carrying out attacks that brought reprisals against civilians, sparking a popular rebellion against the occupation. Most notably, the officer recommended that Himmler pick veterans "with eastern experience" to lead the groups left behind the front, denoting the central role the occupation of Europe played in planning a partisan war inside Germany.[584]

This call to organize an insurgency against the invaders did not go unheeded. The very same day he received the letter, Himmler placed Hans-Adolf Prützmann in charge of Operation Werwolf, the creation of a guerilla movement inside parts of Germany in danger of being captured by the enemy. Having served on the eastern front since July 1941, many security officers considered Prützmann an expert on anti-partisan warfare. As Higher SS and Police Leader Russland Nord he oversaw the destruction of the local Jewish population, before Himmler sent him to the Ukraine where he planned counterinsurgency operations.[585]

The *Reichsführer* tapped Gottlob Berger, the Waffen-SS chief of staff, to assist Prützmann's plans for a guerrilla war inside the Reich. A veteran of World War I, during the 1920s he trained German separatist groups in the disputed areas of eastern Germany, and therefore held crucial experience in organizing civilian irregulars. Another important figure assigned to the project was Karl Tschiersky. The former commander of the SD's Eastern Desk,

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[584] USHMMA, RG 14.015, NS 19/2884, RFSS, 19.9.44., Brief Richard Hildebrandt.

[585] HStAD, Rep. 5, Nr. 1289, p. 4, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 30.7.49., Anklageschrift Karl Hennemann, u.A.; Perry Biddiscombe, *Werwolf! The History of the National Socialist Guerilla Movement, 1944-1946* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 16-17; Hasenclever, *Besatzungspolitik*, 446.

he oversaw Operation Zeppelin, the attempt create an anti-Soviet guerilla movement in the areas of the Ukraine and the Baltic overrun by the Red Army. Further reflecting the influence of the *Bandenkampf* on Werwolf planning, Prützmann sent a team to observe the Warsaw Uprising. The SS Office of Anti-Partisan Operations also constructed a special training facility in the wooded outskirts of Berlin modeled on the camps of Soviet partisans, in order to help train would-be German guerillas.[586]

The appointments of men such as Berger, Tschiersky, and Prützmann to the Werwolf project expose how the Nazi regime intended to draw upon its vast experience fighting partisans, transitioning from fighting a counterinsurgency abroad to creating an insurgency at home as it faced defeat. However, Werwolf's planners found it extremely difficult to get their own guerilla movement off the ground.[587] Not officially a part of the *Volkssturm*, RSHA, or the Waffen-SS, Operation Werwolf remained suspended in administrative limbo, unable to access the Reich's increasingly scarce resources.[588]

The training of these guerilla units in western Germany took place at the town of Hülcrath, where SS special operations chief Otto Skorzeny instructed Werwolf cadres. He frustratingly found many of them lacked both fitness and aptitude. At this stage, neither RSHA nor the Waffen-SS had incentive to send competent and experienced personnel on suicide missions behind enemy lines, when they could use them to greater effect elsewhere.

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[586] Telford Taylor, International Military Tribunals (Nuremberg: Office of the Military Government, Germany, 1948), 19, 21, 23, Blood, *Hitler's Bandit Hunters*, 170.

[587] Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 13, 15-16; USHMMA, RG 14.015, NS 19/288, RFSS, 1. 19.9.44., Brief, Richard Hildebrandt.

[588] HStAD, Rep. 5 Nr. 1289, p. 4, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen. 30.7.49., Anklageschrift Karl Hennemann, u.A.

Consequently, many of the Werwolf's 6,000 trainees turned out to be soldiers sent straight from recruitment depots or culled from impressionable Hitler Youth cadres. Over the course of late September, a host of middle aged men also descended on the training camps after Dr. Walter Albath, the Inspector of Security Police in the Rhineland issued a call for Party members to train for special missions behind enemy lines. During their screening by the Cologne and Düsseldorf Gestapo, some of these recruits turned out to be of exceptionally poor quality. Officers discovered they were sent from other organizations that recognized the opportunity to get rid of their troubled, lazy, or out of shape personnel. Adding insult to injury few, if any, members of the small six man teams formed to spread havoc among the Allies had prior experience in anti-partisan warfare.[589]

Like many other Nazi projects, political infighting and personal rivalries also hindered Werwolf's development. Ensconced at Rheinsburg, northwest of Berlin, the Reich's shattered communications system cut Prützman off from daily contact with his subordinates, and he remained a reactive rather than proactive leader. Frustrated by the challenges of securing support for the orphan organization, Prützmann resorted to posturing in order to protect his position. He flaunted high tech prototypes of espionage gadgets at meetings, and visited the nearby Criminal Technical Institute to dabble in developing a poison capable of quickly contaminating water supplies if the Allies overran the country. These efforts to conceal Werwolf's increasing irrelevance did not go unnoticed. As one SS officer later recalled, "I

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[589] HStAD, Rep. 5 Nr. 1289, p. 10, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 24.1.50., Strafsache Heidorn, u. A.; Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 14-16, 19, 32-36.

gained the impression he [Prützmann] was trying to find a niche for himself and beyond that had nothing more to do with the Werwolf organization."[590]

Devoid of leadership and guidance, fissures quickly developed within the organization. Tschiersky competed with Skorzeny, the one individual able to attract Himmler's support, and the growing rivalry between the two officers encouraged friction between junior personnel, crippling efforts to train recruits. The *Reichsführer*, belatedly recognizing the supply problems caused by the organization's lack of patronage, finally interceded on its behalf. At a meeting in November 1944, in front of a visibly shaken Prützmann who sat nearby helplessly shuffling papers, he offered Skorzeny command of Operation Werwolf in an attempt to bring it into the logistical sphere of the Waffen-SS. Skorzeny begged off on the grounds that he needed to pay closer attention to the needs of his own special operations unit.[591]

While Operation Werwolf never achieved major success, it revealed the regime's fantasies regarding an *Endkampf* and its desire to push the civilian role in the coming battle beyond a static defense by militias of old men and boys. The plan for Germans' participation in a guerrilla war inside the Reich, the final effort to resist defeat, was double edged. On the one hand it expressed the desire to bring the Allies to the bargaining table by making invasion and occupation unbearably difficult, securing Germany's independence. On the other, the call for *Volkskrieg*, if unsuccessful in securing victory, demanded that Germans snuff themselves out of existence in order to stave off the unbearable humiliation of defeat.

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[590] HStAD. RW 34-18, p. 18, Inspekteure der Sicherheitspolizei und SD Albath, 15.9.44., Sprengungsmassnahmen beim Vorrücken des Feindes; Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 17, 20, 36, 48, 94.

[591] Ibid. 17, 46.

To cultivate fanatical resistance in a country worn out by five years of war the regime created new national myths. Although Nazism always expressed the idea that the nation stood together against the machinations of outside enemies and internal traitors, as the Reich prepared for invasion it encouraged Germans to abandon commonly held notions of *Durchhalten*, the act of simply sticking it out until the end. This grim determination to endure and carry on served the regime well as the air war intensified, bringing danger into everyday lives of most *Volksgenossen*. However, *Durchhalten* was also ambiguous. In some instances it encouraged civilians to act in their own self-interest, cutting against the regime's attempts to encourage unconditional sacrifice. In response, the regime crafted a competing vision, one which amplified earlier notions that all Germans should either perish or survive as a collective *Volk*. This concept of a community bound together by fate left no place for any forms of behavior other than those demanded by the Reich's pursuit of victory.

To foster continued struggle, the regime declared that the enemy wanted to annihilate the German people. In a crassly ironic fashion, the regime projected many of its own past crimes onto their victims, in particular the Jews, who they claimed were a shadowy force bent on eliminating the *Volk*. A forty-two page pocket pamphlet entitled *Never!* issued to soldiers and civilians reflected this apocalyptic fantasy. Selectively drawing upon segments of Allied press statements, radio announcements, and news articles, the booklet tacked together a bricolage of foreign media material into a terrifying, if disjointed, prediction of a defeated Germany's future. The booklet cast the British and Americans as distinctly non-European, profit hungry imperial powers spurred by international Jewry into conquering the world. This goal, the tract claimed, could only happen if the enemy destroyed Germany, the guardian of Europe. As punishment for their resistance, the Allies intended to make Germans endure an occupation lasting "until the

year 2000," an appropriately millennial date which marked the moment when Germans "disappeared from world history" through sterilization and extermination by forced labor.[592]

However, alongside the grim picture of catastrophe and defeat, the authors provided rays of hope for their readers. They pointed out that civilians now knew about the "tricks of 1918", and Allied attempts to weaken the war effort by sowing discontent on the home front. Pointing out that the German people had already weathered five years of total war, they underscored the need, now more than ever before, for the "hard nerves and great beliefs" capable of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.[593] Other propaganda touched on similar themes, reinforcing the notion that all Germans shared a fate that only they could change by fanatically resisting the enemy.

For example, another article entitled "From the Family Grows the People's Strength," attempted to soothe soldiers' concerns for their loved ones at home by reminding them that they also served the Reich. The document claimed soldiers' and civilians' dedication to country and nation, bound them together "into a community of fate struggling to live."[594] Other literature also built upon this theme of comradeship as the glue binding together the nation. One essay entitled *Comradeship Above Everything* informed its readers "life depends on comradeship," and that national unity unleashed the martial, self-sacrificing character needed to obtain victory.

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[592] NARA, RG 242, T 77, 852/5598157, *Niemals!*, p. 30, 33-34, 41.

[593] Ibid. p. 3-4.

[594] Ibid. 852/ 5598269, "Aus der Famillie wächst des Volkes Kraft."

Such qualities, the piece took care to note, were exclusively German and not shared by their morally corrupt enemies.[595]

These documents argued that unconditional commitment to national unity was not confined to the trenches, contrasting the current situation with the alleged internal weaknesses which caused defeat in World War I. This time, according to the propaganda, women and children also shared in the burdens of struggle, "thinking and acting German" as they toiled in factories, dug fortifications, or harvested fields. Even the war dead played their part. Leaflets such as *Auf Gut Deutsch!* (In Plain German) and *The Highest Duty* noted that those Germans who already paid the ultimate sacrifice for their people now watched protectively over the Reich. From the afterworld, these martyrs in "the struggle for freedom" exhorted their fellow *Volksgenossen* to "resist fanatically", and shamed those who failed to defend the Reich. Along similar lines, flyers passed out to troops as they settled into their positions along the fortifications of the *Westwall* starkly reminded them "there are only two choices: believe in victory or do not believe in victory," indicating that the *Volk*'s survival depended on their will to resist.[596]

The propaganda circulated among Rhinelanders thus declared that victory hinged on the resolve and sacrifice of the entire German people. Although the regime continued to play up the role of the Reich's "miracle weapons" such as V-2 rockets in the coming victory, they stressed the real secret weapon was the people's fighting spirit. In an article entitled "The Reich Looks to Us" the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* reported that "the Rhenish people prepare for the highest

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[595] USHMMA, RG 14.016, NS 6/312, p. 58-60," Grundsätze der Mannschaftsführung im Deutschen Volkssturm," 58-60.

[596] Ibid. p. 60, "Die höchste Verpflichtung," 62;"Das Gebot der Stunde;" p.67, "Auf gut Deutsch!"

service to the nation." Exposing the Allies' plans to "erase Germany from the map" and scatter its people as slaves across the planet, it claimed Rhinelanders prepared to meet the coming threat. The article reminded its readers of the burdens created by the interwar occupation of the region, which it described as "child's play" compared to the one promised by today's "sadistic and cruel" enemy. However, it reassured them Rhinelanders remained determined to fight for their freedom, and that women and teenagers stood ready with spades and pickaxes to fortify the border. Meanwhile, the article portrayed "workers, farmers craftsmen, and office employees," the groups supposedly riven by class conflict during World War I, as one unified body marching to the front to defend their homes.[597]

Expressing Nazism's penchant for Darwinian racial struggle, another article cast the determination of Rhinelanders in moral terms, as a "test of character" which proved whether or not "the nation, at its core remains healthy enough to demonstrate who is prepared and capable to contribute his part and master our fate." Naturally, the essay found Germans ready to resist the approaching invaders, as they "held the conviction the people will collectively see through the crisis. Every German knows their lot...better dead than a slave!" Still, if future misery at the hands of the enemy was not enough to convince readers to do their duty, the *Westdeutscher Beobachter* also appealed to their readers' sense of parochialism. It remarked, "We know that our co-workers, neighbors, wives, and children look to us." Continuing on, it switched to the familiar "Du," and closed by warning readers that those who failed to do everything they could

[597] USHMMA, LM0394, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 7.9.44., "Das Reich schaut auf uns."

for the war effort would spend the rest of their lives hated by their friends and family, whom they betrayed.[598]

The article also drew upon the myths surrounding November 1918, and compared that disaster with the current situation. It argued that whereas at the end of World War I, when Marxism took root amongst the people and encouraged them to sympathize with "a handful of deserters and inferior fellows," the same could not be said today. Rather, if one wanted to find the real spirit of Germany, he or she needed to look no further than the air raid shelters, where people stoically endured hardship. Attempting to down play the significance of the July 20 attempt on Hitler's life, the paper used this event an example of the German national spirit and declared that unlike during World War I, the people did not support the conspiracy but instead rallied around their government.[599]

Propaganda also took care to inform its readers about Rhinelanders' contribution to the defense of the Reich. One article reported on the experiences of teenagers sent to dig fortifications at the front. Surprising any readers even remotely familiar with the situation along the border, it cast the students' experiences in terms similar to a summer camp outing. The paper claimed that the teens only worked four hours a day, and then devoted the rest of their time to keeping up with their studies or socializing at structured events such as concerts or sports activities, before sleeping in a local school whose conditions one reporter described as clean and orderly. It further assured anxious mothers that their children were well-fed, eating sandwiches

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[598] USHMMA, LM0394, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 7.9.44., "Die Charakterprobe."

[599] Ibid. 8.9.44., "Die Stimmung in Deutschland."

piled high with slices of Dutch cheese "as thick as a finger." While working outside in the fresh air they also received treats of buttered bread and hot coffee, which only encouraged the competition to see how many meters of trenches they dug in a single day. Returning to the camp in the evening, the child workers found bowls of hearty stew provided by officials from the Nazi welfare service waiting for them. When correspondents asked one teen if the food was sufficient, they claimed he simply grinned and rubbed his stomach before telling them his own mother could not make a better meal.[600]

The idyllic conditions described by the paper would have surprised the teenagers digging trenches and bunkers at the front. On September 2 Himmler, now in charge of overseeing the Reich's defensive preparations, met with military officers and Party officials in the Rhineland. They informed him of the critical state of the *Westwall*'s ageing border defenses. After years of neglect, many of the concrete fortifications flooded, while others now served as air raid shelters for civilians, and they estimated the military needed over 200,000 laborers to quickly refurbish western Germany's defensive network. To meet these demands, the *Reichsführer* authorized the mobilization of school students for work details along the border [601]

The call up began on September 10, in the midst of the panic and disorder caused by the Allied advance on Aachen, and many teenagers braved bombing raids as they travelled to the front, only to find hastily arranged and undersupplied accommodations awaited them. Given the

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[600] USHMMA, LM0394, *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 12.9.44., "Zwischen den Jungen an der Grenze."

[601] NARA, RG 242, T77, 1513/5578612, Kriegstagebuch OKW; HStAD, RW 23-13, Gauleiter Köln-Aachen, 7.9.44., Festung Dienstelle Düren; RW 37-7, p. 4, HSSPF West, 5.9.44., Lage an der Grenze; Christoph Rass, "Die Bedeutung des Westwalls für die nationalsozialistische Politik und Kriegsführung," in Karola Fings and Frank Möllser, eds., *Zukunftsprojekt Westwall* (Weilerswist: Verlag Landpresse, 2008), 52-53.

desperate need to reinforce the crumbling *Westwall*, workers arrived at their job sites before dawn and toiled until after sundown, often under artillery and air attack.[602] Some camps did not even provide shelter from enemy bombardment. At the village of Nörvenich, thirty-two Hitler Youth members sent to work at the front died in their barracks during a bombing raid. A local informant for the Gestapo noted that parents' anguish quickly turned to outrage when they discovered that their children cowered underneath bunk beds because the camp lacked an air raid shelter, the most basic of necessities for anyone living in the region.[603]

They were hardly alone in expressing their anger—in late November American troops encountered a group of refugees who told them of heated arguments between villagers and Party officials, after they ordered children as young as ten to help build defenses. Parents who kept their children home received visits from the police warning them of the harsh consequences of refusing the directive, and the mounting tension culminated when the town's mayor awoke one morning to find a pile of discarded Party membership cards, badges, and uniforms on his doorstep.[604]

Faced with the prospect of death or injury on top of poor living conditions, inadequate food, and long hours working in conditions which turned wet, cold, and miserable by the end of September, many teens abandoned their work sites and returned home. Once they reached their towns and villages, some found their family members and friends begged them not to return and

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[602] HStAD, RW 23-13, p. 25, NSDAP Kreisleitung Jülich, 6.9.44., Abschnittsbefehl 4/44, Einsatz Westwall.

[603] Ibid. RW 34-32, p. 11, Stapostelle Köln, 10.10.44., Stimmungsbericht, G1 021.

[604] NARA, RG 407, Box 11995, p.6, U.S. VII Corps, 24.11.44., Intelligence report.

took great personal risks to hide them from the police. Even public figures, such as Dr. Deutzmann, the mayor of Stolberg, tried to protect their children rather than send them back to the front. Well aware of the carnage awaiting his teenage son, he encouraged him to leave his labor squad and hid him in the cellar of their house. They lived in the town's ruins until Americans troops arrived in December. Other children, such as Werner Mooken from Jülich, returned to find their towns evacuated and their families gone. Deciding to desert or hide loved ones who fled from the front was to commit to living on the other side of the law. Fearing for their lives some of these fugitives, such as Dr. Deutzmann and his son, literally remained underground, hiding and only coming out under the cover of darkness until American troops occupied the area. Others, such as young Werner, even snuck across the frontlines rather than risk capture by security patrols.[605]

Groups of workers making their way eastwards towards home became such a common sight during the early autumn that one security unit reported it returned 395 workers to their camps over the course of just three days of routine patrols. Indeed, they encountered so many teenagers that officers gave up attempting to discipline them, and simply returned them to their labor camps. In other places, Party officials complained they tried to bribe workers back with offers of pay and extra tobacco rations, but to no avail.[606] Further evidence of the negligence caused by the hasty preparations to defend the Rhineland were found in the fact that some labor squads failed to complete their work. Although Nazi officials proudly informed Himmler that

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[605] NARA, RG 407, Box 11995, p. 8, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, G2 intelligence report, 29.11.44., Interrogation, Dr. Deutzmann, p. 2, U.S. 29th Infantry Division, G 2 intelligence report, 25.11.44., Interrogation, Werner Mooken.

[606] HStAD, RW 34-32, Stapostelle Köln, no date given, Erstattung von Ereignismeldungen; RW 37-7, HSSPF West, 17.9.44., Reichsverteidigung.

workers created almost 200 kilometers of fortifications by late September, army units who arrived to take up their fighting positions sometimes found them unfinished, and others placed in useless locations without clear fields of fire.[607]

The tension caused by the use of children as labor at the front was only one of the many rifts opening up between the Party and people in the Rhineland. Called upon to sacrifice their homes, families, and property, many civilians proved less than enthusiastic about the regime's call for *Volkskrieg*. Instead of turning her heart and home into a fortress, in letters to her fiancée Theo, Rosalie Schüttler imagined the coming People's War as an apocalypse in which "fear and blind fatalism would reign" as soldiers fought street by street, turning villages and towns into flaming ruins.[608]

Not all Rhinelanders shared her pessimism. Serving on the eastern front, Günther Dünnwald wrote his mother to reaffirm his desire to continue fighting until the bitter end. Hearing of the region's soaring crime rate, especially in his hometown of Cologne, he asked her "do you have partisans at home?" a query that exposed his association of disorder with insurrection. Echoing the regime's propaganda, he also informed his mother that the Jews and their puppets desired to see "Germany in misery and slavery, whatever the cost." In one of his last letters home, he vowed to fight on, and claimed the enemy could only be stopped "as long as the German people fight with weapons in hand, once they are laid down, everything is lost. This is known by every soldier, hopefully this is also known at home."[609]

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[607] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 274/2771485, Gau Köln-Aachen, 28.9.44., Reichsverteidigung.

[608] Rüther, *Köln im Zweitem Weltkrieg*, 801.

[609] Ibid. 851-852.

In contrast to this call to arms, Cologne resident Anneliese Hastenplug reluctantly set aside her hopes for a peacetime wedding and admitted that unlike some of her neighbors, she was not filled with a desire for victory. Instead, she feared she might "become a casualty or a homeless refugee displaced from family and friends." Likewise, Eva Schwedhelm recorded her "feelings of terrifying hopelessness" in her diary after hearing the news that the regime planned to transform the Rhineland into a battlefield. She confided that she soon expected officials to force her to work around the clock in an armaments factory. Ripped from the comfort of home and the simple pleasures of spending time with her family and friends, Eva wrote, "Then what will be left to make life worth living?"[610] Her comments encapsulated the fears of many Rhinelanders, who the regime now expected to abandon all concerns other than the pursuit of victory, an incredibly daunting prospect, especially since the war appeared lost.

Reluctant Rhinelanders who failed to set aside what the regime considered their selfish personal needs and unconditionally defend the Reich quickly found themselves risking arrest as traitors to the nation. Hitler belatedly launched the preparations for *Volkskrieg* on September 16, when he ordered the activation of the Reich Defense Decrees. The directives in many ways simply made official the efforts already taking place in the Rhineland, such as the evacuation of Aachen and the call for civilians to dig fortifications along the border. More importantly, they placed the power of everyday decision making in the hands of regional Party and security officials. As a result, the Decrees ensured pragmatism and de-escalation remained unlikely by placing committed officials in charge of daily affairs.[611]

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[610] Rüther, *Köln im Zweitem Weltkrieg*, 743,745, 801-802, 822, 828.

[611] Kershaw, *The End*, 11, 41-43; Kunz, *Wehrmacht und Niederlage*, 129-133.

In the Rhineland, the regime appointed Josef Grohé, the Gauleiter of Gau Köln-Aachen, Reich Defense Commissioner. A self-proclaimed "soldier of Adolf Hitler," described by his contemporaries as "an energetic leader of the movement," the Party could depend on the forty-two-year-old Grohé to put up a determined fight. Hailing from an agricultural background and socialized in *völkisch* nationalist circles during his youth, Grohé joined the Nazi Party in 1922 as one of the founding members of its Cologne branch. A close friend of Robert Ley, the head of the German Labor Front, he held several positions within the Party before his promotion to Gauleiter in 1933.[612]

An "old fighter" who remembered the French interwar occupation well, Grohé recognized both the strategic significance of the Rhineland and the supposed dangers lurking within its population. In a biography published in 1943 to honor his service to the Reich, he discussed the threat of subversion in the region and blamed Germany's humiliation in 1918 on the Rhineland's strong Marxist traditions. Casting further suspicion on the residents' political loyalties, he claimed the popular, and after 1933 defunct, Catholic Center Party worked to further Jewish plots to destroy the country.[613]

As the enemy approached in September 1944, Grohé issued an impassioned call for his fellow Rhinelanders to resist the enemy. Informing them that the Allies now stood on the Reich's borders, poised to wipe the German people out of existence, he called upon them to heed the *Führer*'s orders to fight the invaders. Recalling the "hard war years that already lie behind

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[612] Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2003), 202.

[613] Peter Schmidt, *Zwangzig Jahre Soldat Adolf Hitlers. Zehn Jahre Gauleiter. Ein Buch von Kampf und Treue* (Köln: Verlag Westdeutscher Beobachter, 1942), 36-37, 93, 117, 132, 275.

us," he reminded them not to forget their duty, and to join militia units or labor details. In closing, he declared that anyone who failed to obey brought not only "mortal danger" to themselves but the entire nation.[614]

As Reich Defense Commissioner, Grohé worked closely with Karl Gutenberger, Higher SS and Police Leader West. A former bank employee from Essen, by September 1944 he wielded extensive power as the individual responsible for coordinating security in Wehrkreis VI, the military administrative area of Rhineland and Westfalen. Unable to find stable work during the turbulent early 1920s, Gutenberger joined the SA and quickly rose through its ranks. His dedication and energetic political activity soon caught the attention of the Party, and during the 1930s Gutenberger served as one of its representatives in the Reichstag. Appointed Police President of Essen in 1937, he gravitated towards Himmler and joined the SS in 1940.[615]

Like many other Higher SS and Police Leaders, Gutenberger owed his position to the *Reichsführer*'s patronage. His status as a favorite of Himmler was cemented the following year, when the SS chief tapped him to replace Friedrich Jeckeln as Higher SS and Police Leader West. Unlike his predecessor, who moved on to become a key figure in the brutal racial reordering of Eastern Europe, Gutenberger had little involvement in security activity prior to autumn 1944. Responsible for overseeing civil defense projects, he filed daily reports on the damage caused by

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[614] HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 124-126, Gauleitung Köln-Aachen, 9.44. No date or subject given.

[615] NARA, RG 242, A 3343/044A, Personnel file Karl Gutenberger; HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, Band I, p. 211, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 23.9.48., Vernehmung Karl Gutenberger; Birn, *Die Höheren SS-und Polizeiführer*, 335; Thomas Köhler, "Himmlers Weltanschauungselite: Die Höheren SS-und Polizeiführer West-eine gruppenbiographische Annäherung," in Wolfgang Schulte, ed. *Die Polizei im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2009), 62-63.

air raids, toured bomb damaged neighborhoods, and planned the evacuation of residents who lost their homes.[616]

Although something of an anomaly when compared to the majority of Higher SS and Police Leaders, who became deeply involved in crimes against civilians in occupied Europe, Gutenberger was no stranger to violence. During his years in the SA he fought against the Party's Leftist opponents and participated in resistance activities in the Saarland. After the activation of the Reich Defense Decrees he openly expressed his intolerance for forms of behavior which cut against the fanaticism he expected from Rhinelanders, and in reaction to the panicked flight of civilians, security officers, and Party officials from Aachen demanded they defend the city "to the last bullet."[617]

Most of Aachen's residents ignored his call to action. On September 16, the regime launched another evacuation of the city. The effort was in response to a report that Grohé sent Himmler which noted that despite the damage to their homes and lack of electricity and water, many of the city's remaining residents no longer wanted to leave.[618] In order to ensure they obeyed the order to evacuate, the regime sent an ad hoc force of 800 SA men and Hitler Youth to force stubborn residents from their homes, often by beating or threatening them.[619]

Although the Party claimed publicly that the evacuations intended to protect civilians from enemy shelling, Gutenberger told Richard Bach, the commander of the Aachen Gestapo,

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[616] Thomas Köhler, "Himmlers Weltanschauungselite," 52, 68, 75.

[617] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 58, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 28.7.48., Vernehmung Emil Krenkel.

[618] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 274/2771485, Gau Köln-Aachen, 29.9.44., Reichsverteidigung Bericht.

[619] Jaud, *Landkreis Aachen in der NS-Zeit*, 731-732.

that the clearances ensured no one stayed to welcome the Americans.[620] On September 29, he sent Bach and roughly fifty Gestapo and Kripo officers to conduct one last sweep of the destroyed city and remove any remaining residents.[621]

Arriving under the cover of darkness, Bach sent his men out in small groups with lanterns and flashlights to scour the ruins, rounding up 140 prisoners.[622] Moving from cellar to cellar in an attempt to avoid American artillery fire, they arrested the men and women they encountered and took them back to their headquarters for interrogation and transport to a prisoner collection point at Erkelenz. Members of the Aachen police assisting the patrols recalled that many security officers were drunk as they made their way through the rubble, at one point losing a suspect.[623] Others, such as a group led by Bach's second-in-command, Emil Krenkel, refused to patrol and instead stayed inside the cellars of abandoned buildings.[624]

Later that evening, one group returned with a man suspected of spying for the Americans, generating excitement among the officers gathered inside the air raid bunker that served as their headquarters. Bach personally questioned the prisoner and repeatedly struck the man in the face, knocking him to the ground. During the interrogation, the alleged spy, named Franz Salvini, revealed he deserted from his civil defense unit during its retreat from the city a few weeks

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[620] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 58, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 28.7.48., Vernehmung Emil Krenkel.

[621] Ibid. Nr. 19, p. 388g, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach.

[622] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 224/2763262, Polizei Kampfgruppe III, 18.10.44., Räumung.

[623] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 7, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 10.5.47., Zeugevernehmung Paul Z., p. 18, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 10.10.47., Zeugevernehmung Karl W.

[624] Ibid. p. 58, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 28.7.48., Vernehmung Emil Krenkel.

earlier. Despite the man's desperate pleas, his "Italian sounding last name" only heightened Bach's suspicions that he spied for the Americans.[625]

Having worked in Italy for several months during the early 1930s, Bach tried to engage the bloodied prisoner in Italian, bewildering the stunned man.[626] Unable to find concrete proof Salvini spied for the enemy, he instead decided that his close proximity to the frontlines was damning enough evidence. Assembling his men, in derogatory terms he described Salvini as a homosexual [*Schwuler*], tying together the imagined links between treason, desertion, cowardice, and effeminacy, contrasting the prisoner's behavior against his men's courageous effort to secure the city.[627] A short time later Bach, along with another officer, took Salvini to Erkelenz. He returned early the next morning, and told his men that they shot the prisoner because he tried to escape.[628]

The Red Cross workers who found Salvini's body told West German investigators a much different story several years later. Around 5 A.M. on September 30, a truck arrived in the small town of Baal, twenty-five miles northeast of Aachen. Summoning the mayor, a high-ranking Gestapo officer informed him that the body of a man killed while attempting to escape their custody lay in a nearby patch of woods and needed collection for burial. The man then drove

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[625] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 19; p. 388g, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50, Vernehmung Richard Bach.

[626] Ibid. p. 17, 10.10.47., Zeugevernehmung Paul Z.; p. 73, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 26.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Bernhard H.; p. 113, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 26.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Karl W.; p. 388g, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50, Vernehmung Richard Bach.

[627] Ibid. p. 113, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 16.10.48., Zeugevernehmung Emil C.

[628] Ibid. Nr. 18, p. 8, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 10.5.47, Zeugevernehmung Paul Z., p. 40, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 19.5.48., Zeugevernehmung Paul F.

away in the direction of Aachen. Following the information given to them by the mayor, the town's two Red Cross officials found the corpse inside a small patch of woods several meters off the main road between Aachen and Erkelenz. Both men immediately noted the positioning of the body contradicted the officer's description of an escape attempt.

The victim, who they estimated as between forty and fifty years old, lay face down with his head resting on this crossed forearms, and three spent shell casings lay just behind the man's crossed feet. It appeared that whoever shot him also searched the body, as the men found no identification or personal affects other than a Red Cross armband. Given the location and position of the corpse, it appeared the security officers forced the man to lay on the ground before shooting him, a means of execution often used during the mass shootings carried out by the security forces in occupied Europe. Bach, a former member of an Einsatzgruppe during in the invasion of Poland, would have undoubtedly been familiar with such methods.[629]

The motives for Salvini's death remain unclear. Facing trial for the murder in 1950, like thousands of other Nazi perpetrators Bach claimed he acted out of *Befehlsnotstand*, the fear his superiors might harm him if he did not carry out their orders.[630] However, it appears Salvini's execution instead allowed Bach to reaffirm his position within the regional security apparatus. As the leader of the Aachen Gestapo, responsibility for the office's premature and panicked retreat rested on Bach's shoulders, and his secretary recalled that he faced charges of

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[629] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 128, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 12.10.48, Zeugevernehmung Wilhelm M.; p. 130, Oberstaatsanwalt, Aachen, 14.10.48., Zeugevernehmung Josef L.; Nr. 19, p. 388a, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach.

[630] Ibid. Nr. 18, p. 388e, 388g, 388l, 388m, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50, Vernehmung Richard Bach.

cowardice.[631] It is telling that Gutenberger ordered his unit to return to the city rather than another considered more reliable, and the clearance operation thus provided Bach with the chance to redeem himself. Salvini's capture offered just such an opportunity. After returning to Erkelenz on the morning of September 30, witnesses recalled he immediately drafted a report to Gutenberger detailing the previous night's events, and played up the capture and execution of a spy.[632] It therefore appears Bach used the atrocity to restore his unit's reputation in the eyes of his superiors. Franz Salvini was not the last Rhinelander to die at the hands of the regime's security forces. As American troops tightened their hold on the besieged city of Aachen, they turned to the tactics of anti-partisan warfare in an effort to coerce the Rhineland's reluctant population to support a final battle against the enemy.

[631] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 19, p. 38, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 15.5.48., Zeugevernehmung Mimi M.

[632] Ibid. p. 402, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 3.8.50., Zeugevernehmung Mimi M.

Chapter Six
Misery without End:
The Rhineland Deportations

The evacuation of the people imposes hardships.
But hardships are necessary if National Socialism
should survive this war.

—"Why Must Civilians Be Evacuated?" [633]

"My advice is to avoid evacuation at all costs."

—Theo Hoffmann to his fiancée, 27.9.44.[634]

In response to the widespread disorder occurring in the Left Bank Rhineland, the region's security forces turned to the tactics of anti-partisan warfare. On September 21, Himmler summoned Gutenberger to a meeting aboard his private train in the town of Wesel, and ordered him to deport all civilians living along the border and in parts of eastern Holland.[635] The goal of this operation was three-fold. First, it assured rear area security by removing the population, hindering the Allies' ability to take advantage of the chaos and slip agents behind the front to sabotage German supply lines or incite foreign workers to rebel. Second, echoing the "dead zone" operations in occupied Europe, the removal of the population allowed the regime to more

[633] NARA, RG 407, Box 11956, p. 8, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, translation of captured German document "Why Must Civilians Be Evacuated?"

[634] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 802.

[635] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 39, p. 20-21, Landgericht Wuppertal, 28.4.48., Vernehmung Walter Albath; RW 37-7, p. 34-72, HSSPF West, no date given, chronicle of Police orders, October 1944-January 1945; RW 23-5, p. 117-122, Reichsverteidigungskommissar Gau Köln-Aachen, 19.9.44., Räumung der roten Zone.

effectively harness civilian resources by forcing able bodied men and teenagers into militia and labor units. Lastly, it enabled the security forces to screen the deportees and root out spies, deserters, and other so-called "defeatist elements" hiding within the population, preventing them from crossing into the interior of Germany and stirring up further unrest.

This plan reflected a shift in the regime's perception of the Left Bank Rhineland's residents, who appeared to be failing in their duty to the *Volk*. Gutenberger fully revealed the extent of the *Reichsführer*'s frustration the next day, when he met with the leaders of the region's security offices. He informed the gathered men, all of whom were veterans of the eastern front, that "from now on all criminals, deserters, and other riff raff [*Gesindel*] will be dealt with gun in hand … Take these people into the forest, you know what to do with them."[636]

The task of organizing the deportations and violently weeding out "defeatist elements" fell to Dr. Max Hoffmann, the chief of the Cologne Gestapo. Another native of Silesia, in 1942 RSHA sent him from the Potsdam Gestapo to the Lemberg security office in the General Gouvernment, and he only returned to Germany in June 1944 during the retreat from the East.[637] An experienced *Bandenkämpfer* who also took part in Operation Reinhard, one of the most destructive phases of the Holocaust, Hoffmann showed little hesitation in deploying counterinsurgency methods at home.[638]

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[636] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 58, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 28.7.48., Vernehmung Emil Krenkel; Nr. 19, p. 388n, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 4.7.50.; Vernehmung Richard Bach, p. 402, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 3.8.50., Zeugevernehmung Mimi M.; p. 409, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, Anklageschrift Richard Bach; p. 462, Landgericht Aachen, 3.11.50, Vernehmung Walter Albath.

[637] NARA, RG 242 A 3343/108A, Personnel File Max Hoffmann; HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 140, p. 50, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall III- die festgestellten Tatsachen; Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 97, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 17.2.61., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

[638] For details on Aktion Reinhard see Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death*

He formed four special task forces, or Einsatzkommandos, which spread out behind the front to search for criminals, saboteurs, and deserters. Numbering roughly eighty men each, these units were composed of Gestapo officers, and personnel from the Kripo and Border Police subordinated to him on the orders of Himmler.[639] Hoffmann stationed three of the Einsatzkommandos at the towns of Düren, Jülich, and Erkelenz, important crossroads which controlled the main road arteries leading to and from the frontlines. He assigned a fourth unit to the town of Schleiden, in the Eifel Mountains, and stationed a fifth, *Kommando Mohr*, in Cologne.[640] Comprised of well-armed younger personnel led by Friedrich Mohr, a veteran of the occupations of Poland and France, Hoffmann tasked this unit with crushing gang activity inside the city.[641] He supplemented the Einsatzkommandos with detachments of Hitler Youth and *Volkssturm*, as well as four battalions of police reservists.[642]

Hoffmann planned the clearance of the Left Bank Rhineland as a phased operation. He divided the region, now known as a "security zone" into two sectors; "red," an area ten to fifteen kilometers behind the front that needed immediate clearance, and a "green," section farther east prepared for future deportation.[643] These designations remained flexible, and the red zone

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Camps (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[639] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 1, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Die Tätigkeit Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; Rep. 248, Nr. 57, p. 911, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 27.10.67., Zeugevernehmung Friedrich K.

[640] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 152, p. 13, Stapostelle Köln, 24.9.44., Einsatzbefehl; RW 34-8, p. 2-3, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Die Tätigkeit Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; Rep. 248, Nr. 55, p. 484, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 10.5.67., Zeugevernehmung Heinrich K.

[641] Ibid. Nr. 57, p. 945, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 17.11.67., Vernehmung Friedrich Mohr.

[642] Ibid. RW 37-11, p. 20, HSSPF West, Organisation HSSPF Führungstab.

[643] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 2, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; RW 37-21, p. 68, HSSPF West, 20.10.44., Überschreitung die Abschirmlinie im Westen, RW 23-5, p. 134,

continued to creep eastwards throughout the autumn, as the Allies advanced deeper into the Reich.[644] This spatial conceptualization reflected the techniques developed during earlier anti-partisan operations and encouraged Manichean, simplistic forms of thinking among security personnel, who viewed all civilians in the area as potential threats. The accompanying disruption of daily life generated further security anxieties that reinforced the reliance on preemptive, violent solutions.[645]

Over the course of the clearances, civilians became increasingly suspect, as security personnel confronted the jarring disconnect between their expectation that the *Volk* was ready to sacrifice to achieve victory, and the reality of a war weary population unenthusiastic about fighting an *Endkampf* on their very doorsteps. For example, in the town of Geilenkirchen located just north of Aachen, personnel found that a "mood of panic" reigned among the residents, who the local authorities only gave a few hours' notice to vacate their homes. Ordered to assemble on the town square after sunset in order to avoid roving enemy fighter planes, they arrived to find not only welfare officials but also a contingent of security personnel waiting for them. As artillery thundered and flashed on the horizon, the officers waded through the crowd, separating abled bodied men and teenage boys from their families. To the residents' further dismay, they also appropriated livestock and other personal property, such a food, coal, and clothing, for the war effort. Tensions quickly mounted, and angry civilians heckled and spat

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Reichsverteidigungskommissar Gau Köln-Aachen, 23.9.44., Anordnung A 12/44.

[644] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 118, HSSPF West, 8.12.44., Neufestsetzung der Abschirmslinie im Westen; p. 127, HSSPF West, 13.1.45., Veränderungen in Abschirmslinie; p. 144, HSSPF West, 29.11.44., Abschirmlinie.

[645] Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 93-103, 243-262.

upon security officers and Party officials as they forced them out onto the roads and towards the trains waiting to take the deportees into the interior of Germany. The next day, the astounded commander of the operation discovered that some of them had already returned to their homes, claiming they refused to leave again, "under any circumstances."[646]

The incident was hardly exceptional—throughout the region, security personnel encountered civilians reluctant to leave their homes. Entering towns and villages, shocked officers overheard a plethora of "defeatist" comments such as, "it's a good thing the enemy is coming, that means the war will finally be over." Other angry Rhinelanders blamed Hitler for their misfortune and denounced him as a "scoundrel" and "mass murderer." They also castigated the officers and Party officials assisting the deportations as "rascals and criminals," warning them that "soon all the Brownshirts will be strung up." In one town, personnel even encountered an elderly man who told them "it's a shame he [Hitler] survived" the July 20th assassination attempt.[647] Others informed them that the situation was lost, and that "things will soon come to an end, it won't be long … the state will soon kick the bucket."[648] However, not everyone was so confrontational—one Rhinelander, commenting on his bomb-damaged home joked "Comrade Ley [the Reich Labor Minister] has given us workers sunny and airy apartments," a sardonic play on the regime's pre-war promises to improve the lives of working class Germans.[649]

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[646] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 58-59, HSSPF West, Reichsverteidigung.

[647] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 10, Stapostelle Köln, 3.10.44., Wochenbericht 24.9.-30.9.44; p. 29, Stapostelle Köln, 7.11.44., Wochenbericht 29.10-4.11.44.; RW 37-21, p. 40, HSSPF West, 5.11.44., Nichtbeteiligung der KG III an Räumungmassnahmen.

[648] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 14, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 8.10.-14.10.44.

[649] Ibid. p. 14, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 8.10.-14.10.44.

In addition to these so-called "defeatist" remarks, security officers also encountered physical violence. Scuffles between police and civilians were common place during the clearances and in one village, an elderly gentleman threatened to stab a Party official in the throat.[650] At another location, a man brandished a pistol at the police, and later shot a soldier through the upper leg before officers subdued him.[651] Angry civilians or desperate fugitives also killed or wounded several policemen, and these incidents exposed the fact that many Rhinelanders were armed, sometimes better than the security forces.[652] At checkpoints, surprised personnel also encountered civilians who possessed pistols, automatic weapons, and even hand grenades.[653] These weapons, which residents bought or stole from Wehrmacht soldiers, revealed the insecurity that many people in the region felt as supply infrastructure collapsed and crime rose.

Sometimes the efforts to harness resources for the Reich's defense broke down into opportunistic acts of theft on the part of the regime's security forces as well, causing further rifts between the regime and its *Volksgenossen*. One woman who returned to her home to collect valuables from a small safe discovered that the police broke it open and raided the contents. Some civilians even marched eastwards barefoot, because they were robbed by soldiers eager to

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[650] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 10, Stapostelle Köln, 3.10.44., Wochenbericht 24.9.-30.9.44.

[651] Ibid. p. 29, Stapostelle Köln, 7.11.44., Wochenbericht 29.10-4.11.44.

[652] Ibid. p. 1, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[653] Ibid. p. 10, Stapostelle Köln, 3.10.44., Wochenbericht 24.9.-30.9.44.; p. 14, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 8.10.-4.10.44.; p. 29, Stapostelle Köln, 7.11.44., Wochenbericht 29.10-4.11.44.; p. 36, Stapostelle Köln, 14.11.44, Wochenbericht 5.11.-11.11.44.; p. 39, Stapostelle Köln, 21.11.44.; Wochenbericht 12.11.-16.11.44.; p. 48, Stapostelle Köln, 28.11.44., Wochenbericht 19.11.-26.11.44.; p. 67-70, Stapostelle Köln, 26.11.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2.; p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Widerstandsbewegungen.

replace the worn out boots they'd returned with from France.[654] As these incidents indicate, the deportations caused the very unrest they intended to eliminate.

Dr. Walter Albath, the Rhineland's Inspector of Security Police, wrote a report detailing the "tense situation" his officers encountered in the Rhineland. In it, he noted armed attacks on security officers and Party officials throughout the region and that farmers barricaded themselves in their homes, in several cases firing on approaching patrols in order to protect their property.[655] In response, indicating how experience reinforced institutional practices, Gutenberger authorized security personnel to carry out their "collections" with "the sharpest means."[656]

It is important to note that initially the regime was sympathetic to the plight of civilians. In particular, officers understood the population's deep attachment to their homes and, denoting the growing divide between the military and Party, they attributed resistance to fears that the Wehrmacht would loot their property.[657] Although these accusations reflected the regime's growing suspicion of the military after the July 20th coup attempt, they were not entirely unfounded—the Wehrmacht High Command repeatedly issued orders that demanded their men stop stealing from civilians' homes.[658]

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[654] NARA, RG 407, Box 11954, p. 13, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, G 2, 24.11.44., Report.

[655] Ibid. RG 242, T 175, 274/2762941, Polizeikampfgruppe I, 13.2.45., Lagebericht.

[656] Ibid. 2771490, Stapostelle Köln, 28.9.44., Bericht des Gauleiter Grohé, 274/27717448-49, Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD Düsseldorf, 11.10.44., Räumung des Landkreises Aachen; 274/2763041, HSSPF West Verbindungsführer Bach, 6.10.44., Befehl.

[657] Ibid. 274/2771489, Stapostelle Köln, 28.9.44., Bericht des Gauleiter Grohé.

[658] Ibid. T 77, 788/5816967, OKW, 11.28.44., Verhalten von Wehrmachtsangehörigen in den von der deutschen Bevölkerung geräumten Gebieten; 788/5616861, OKW, 9.2.45., Plünderungen durch Soldaten im Heimatskriegsgebiet.

However, security personnel refused to let empathy with the region's residents hinder the plans to resist invasion. Grohé and Gutenberger both ordered officers and welfare officials to comb through houses and search for anything useful for the war effort. In addition to taking items such as clothing and bed linens, these teams even removed radios from houses as a security measure. Military and security personnel also tore down damaged buildings and used the materials to build fortifications.[659]

Once stripped of their property, Rhinelanders endured dangerous treks eastwards to refugee camps in central Germany. While administrators sent special emergency trains to pick up the deportees, these quickly became targets for Allied aircraft, which also destroyed many of the region's rail stations.[660] This meant that civilians, with the exception of the very young and very old, who officials loaded into trucks and carts, marched on foot. Thus, a trip which under normal conditions only took several hours now often took several days, as groups of deportees slowly made their way towards the Rhine. Soldiers also often pressganged them into helping repair damaged roads or prepare fortifications for a "second Westwall" behind the Rur River, further slowing down the deportations.[661] Worst of all, columns of civilians marching eastwards frequently fell victim to enemy shelling or Allied pilots who mistook them for Wehrmacht units,

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[659] NARA, RG 242, T 77, 788/5816950, OKW, 16.11.44., Bergung und Nutzbarmachung von Rücklassgut für die Truppe in den geräumten Gebieten hinter der HKL; T 175, 224/2763019, HSSPF West, 30.10.44., Aufgaben der Kampfgruppen.

[660] HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 190, Gauleitung Köln-Aachen, 12.10.44., Rundschreiben 78/44.

[661] Ibid. p. 31, Reichsverteidigungskommissar Gau Köln-Aachen, 23.9.44., Instandhaltung lebenswichtiger Strassen; p. 178, Reichsverteidigungskommissar Gau Köln-Aachen, 17.11.44., Anordnung A 40/44.

and these attacks caused massive casualties among the women, children, and the elderly frantically trying to make their way to safety.[662]

The sanctuaries offered by the regime proved just as dangerous as the journey. Civilians taken south into the Eifel Mountains endured constant artillery and air attacks, and competed with hungry soldiers for limited food supplies as the struggle for the nearby Hürtgen Forest dragged on. As this safe haven became overcrowded, security officers took most of the estimated 250,000 Rhinelanders removed from the Left Bank Rhineland to camps in Hannover, Saxony, or Thuringia. However, these also later became targets, as the air war reached into every town and village across Germany.[663] The deportees dumped in the towns of Jülich, Erkelenz, and Düren halfway between the frontlines and the Rhine suffered the most. As the authorities ran out of available housing, they planned to temporarily keep civilians in the green zone until they found places for them elsewhere. Many of these unfortunates perished on November 16 when, in the span of twenty minutes, American and British bombers flattened the towns in preparation for an offensive Allied planners later cancelled.[664]

An exchange of letters between Rosalie Schüttler and her fiancée Theo Hoffmann aptly summed up the dangers the deportations posed to civilians. She considered fleeing the region but Theo, a veteran of the eastern front, encouraged her to stay. Reflecting on his experiences in

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[662] HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 17, Gauleitung Köln-Aachen, 19.9.44., Anordnung Nr. A 11/44g; NARA, RG 242, T 175, 274/22771488, Stapostelle Köln, 28.9.44., Bericht des Gauleiter Grohé.

[663] Michael Krause, *Flucht vor dem Bombenkrieg,* 181-183.

[664] HStAD, Rep. 145, Nr. 630, p. 61, Generalstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.9.63., Vermerk; NARA, RG 407, Box 11962, p. 8, U.S. 1st Infantry Division, 24.2.45., G 2 report; Horst Wallraff, *Nationalsozialismus in den Kreisen Düren und Jülich: Tradition und "Tausenjähriges Reich" in einer Rheinländischen Region 1933 bis 1945* (Düren: Hahen & Schloemer Verlag, 2000), 534-534, 542-545.

the East, he remarked, "Evacuation to the interior [of Germany] means misery without end," and advised her to wait out the coming fighting.[665] The situation was worse for the estimated 38,000 Dutch civilians driven from their homes by security units anxious to secure the border area from the threat of resistance activity. Officers transported them to northern Holland, where many starved during the infamous "Hunger Winter," caused by a German food embargo.[666]

Given the danger and ill treatment they faced, civilians often tried to slip away from the columns marching eastward and return to their homes. Despite their best efforts, throughout the clearances officers continued to contend with hundreds of deportees who slipped back into the red zone. Many of them claimed they heard of the poor treatment of civilians in parts of central Germany, stories which echoed those of Rhinelanders displaced earlier during the air war.[667] Some security personnel harbored similar concerns—responding to the news that officers refused to evacuate their families, Gutenberger intended to court martial and execute one unlucky man, only to rescind the order after discovering he died during an air raid.[668]

The illegal movement of civilians in particular provoked security anxieties and encouraged officers to draw upon the assumptions about disobedience and subversion crafted in the occupied territories. In the eyes of the security forces, as the deportations dragged on the

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[665] Rüther, *Köln im Zweitem Weltkrieg*, 802.

[666] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 34-72, HSSPF West, no date given, chronicle of Police orders, October 1944-January 1945; Henri A. van der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-1945* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

[667] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 58, HSSPF West, 17.9.44., Reichsverteidigung.

[668] Ibid. p., 153, HSSPF West, 27.1.45. Räumung der roten Zone; p. 156, HSSPF West, 2.2.45., Räumung der roten Zone; p. 158, HSSPF West, 15.2.45., Räumung der roten Zone.

people who refused to leave or tried to return generated uncertainty and raised troubling questions about the loyalty of some Rhinelanders, who appeared willing to endure enemy occupation. Their presence in evacuated areas also exposed the security forces' inability to master the situation. While the Cologne Gestapo received a welcome influx of experienced personnel who arrived during the retreat from France and Belgium, it still remained understaffed, and its roughly 800 officers remained responsible for an area of operations forty kilometers wide by one hundred and ten kilometers long, stretching into parts of eastern Holland.[669] However, not all of these men proved fit for duty in the field—several older officers accustomed to sitting behind desks collapsed from heart attacks, or emotionally collapsed under the strain of struggling with angry civilians.[670]

The poor communication between these units only compounded the challenges facing the region's security forces. Allied bombing raids repeatedly destroyed offices, prisons, and checkpoints, and to avoid enemy radio surveillance, Hoffmann ordered his men to use couriers and meet face-to-face, creating additional communication problems.[671] Due to these difficulties, personnel failed to entirely clear parts of the region. Indicative of the situation was an angry telegram Himmler sent to the Cologne Gestapo after he discovered that civilians remained in several villages along the border. He angrily remarked, "Why have these locations not been

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[669] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 1-6, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; RW 37-7, p. 58-59, HSSPF West, 17.9.44., Reichsverteidigung; RW 37-21, p. 145, HSSPF West, 7.2.45., Bericht.

[670] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 1-6, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[671] Ibid. RW 34-10, p. 68-71, IdS Albath, 23.10.44.Vorsorgliche Massnahmen. Verhalten die Polizei bei Feindberührung.

evacuated?" and demanded that Hoffmann redouble his efforts to thoroughly remove the region's population.[672]

Another order issued by the *Reichsführer* in early November further evidenced the problems posed by the Reich's deteriorating communication network. It commanded that security offices contact RSHA headquarters in Berlin regarding the execution of all German and West European prisoners.[673] The directive thus intended to head off unauthorized executions and rein in overzealous officers such as Higher SS and Police Leader Gutenberger, who in early September ordered his men to round up and execute all Rhinelanders of Jewish or half-Jewish descent, an order so radical that even hardened former Einsatzgruppen officers ignored it.[674]

Political concerns, rather than humanitarian impulses, drove Himmler's call for restraint. The regime needed to make Rhinelanders feel secure, rather than undermine its legitimacy by unleashing indiscriminate atrocity. Consequently, security officers took their German prisoners to the Cologne Gestapo's headquarters, the city's Klingelpütz prison, and Müngersdorf AEL to await sentencing. Due to the unexpected volume of arrests, these facilities quickly became overcrowded, and Hoffmann established a series of smaller detainment centers throughout the region. He also ordered Richard Bach, the former commander of the Aachen Gestapo, to construct three large AELs in the red zone to house the unexpected number of prisoners captured

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[672] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 160, HSSPF West, 1.10.44., Evakuierung und Selbstverteidigung.

[673] Ibid. RW 34-10, p. 74, IdS Albath, 1.11.44., Richtlinien für Hinrichtungen.

[674] Ibid. Rep. 270, Nr. 18. p. 525, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 6.12.50. Vernehmung Gustav Noske.

along the border.[675] Still, these efforts did little to ease the pressures caused by the endless number of detainees brought in by the Einsatzkommandos operating behind the front.

The high number of arrests was caused by their discovery that many Rhinelanders seemed quite reluctant to do their part for the war effort. Aside from the hundreds of teenagers who left their work camps at the front, officers also encountered civilians who refused the *Führer*'s call to join militia units.[676] These incidents were especially common among young men between the ages of sixteen to eighteen, the generation which spent its formative years living under Nazism, and the regime expected these teenagers to fanatically defend the Reich.[677] Officers reported that in some cases men and teenage boys ran into the surrounding woods or hid in fields to avoid being rounded up and taken away to join the fighting. In particular, this behavior encouraged veterans of the East to draw parallels between Rhinelanders and so-called "partisan helpers" in Eastern Europe, who also tried to avoid working for the occupation by fleeing into the forests.[678] These assessments reveal how the increased idealization of proper, "normal" behavior during the regime's final months narrowed distinctions between the Reich and the occupied territories in the minds of security officers.

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[675] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 5-6, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44. Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln am September und Oktober 1944; Rep. 72, Nr. 31, p. 45, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 14.7.51., Vernehmung Walter Bockmühl.

[676] Ibid. RW 23-5, p.4, Kreisleitung NSDAP Rhein, Bergischer Kreis, 23.10.44., Befehl Nr. 1, Organisation der Deutschen Volkssturmes in Rhein Bergischer Kreis.

[677] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 274/2771750, Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei, 11.10.44., Räumung des Landkreis Aachen.

[678] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 33, HSSPF West, 19.9.44., Meldung.

The regime's inadequate efforts to arm and equip the local *Volkssturm* assuredly encouraged civilians to avoid the draft. Rhinelanders who reported for duty often discovered they were armed with elderly "museum piece" weapons or captured enemy rifles that lacked adequate supplies of ammunition.[679] Their officers issued other unlucky militia members single shot anti-tank rockets, if they armed them at all—the Wehrmacht sent some *Volkssturm* companies to the front, not to fight, but to dig fortifications.[680] The lack of uniforms also concerned many draftees. They feared the enemy would not treat them fairly under the laws of war unless they wore full military uniforms, rather than the small armband *Deutsches Volkssturm* their commanders gave them to attach to their civilian clothing.[681] These concerns cut against the regime's desire to encourage civilians to wage a guerilla war behind enemy lines, since so many militia men demanded treatment as conventional soldiers rather than risk being labelled partisans by the enemy, a fear that also revealed their expectation they would soon be taken prisoner.

Just as they had with the hordes of teenage laborers absconding from the front, security officers issued warnings to reluctant militia members. There were simply too many draft dodgers in the region, and personnel pragmatically concluded they needed to threaten first time offenders rather than waste such valuable human resources by cramming them into the already

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[679] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 148, p. 16, Landgerichtsrat Mechernich, 7.6.62., Zeugevernehmung Johannes W.; Horst Matzerath & Brigitte Holzhauser, eds., *"...vergessen kann man die Zeit nicht, das ist nicht möglich..." Kölner errinern sich an die Jahre 1929-1945* (Köln: Stadt Köln, 1985), 286.

[680] HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 9, Kreisleitung NSDAP Rhein, Bergischer Kreis, 23.10.44., Verfügung Nr. 4/14; Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 19, 163.

[681] HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 14, Kreisleitung der NSDAP Rhein, Bergischer Kreis, 23.10.44., Soldbuch und Armbinde für den Deutschen Volkssturm.

overcrowded prisons.[682] They only took into custody civilians who repeatedly tried to evade muster, such as a man officers caught trying to flee across the Rhine dressed as a woman.[683]

While the failure of Rhinelanders to report for labor and militia service disturbed the authorities, they viewed the widespread crime taking place in the region as the most serious threat to the war effort. In particular the situation inside Cologne, the important transportation hub linking the front with the interior of Germany, hardened the security forces' perception of the civilian population. Over the course of September and early October, the rising crime wave inside the city claimed the lives of several Party officials and security officers.[684] Most of these attacks occurred in the unruly Ehrenfeld neighborhood in the western part of Cologne. After a group of unknown assailants shot Heinrich Soentgen, a Party official in the district, off his bicycle during the nighttime hours of September 28, Hoffmann decided to decisively crush all crime inside the city.[685]

Already stretched thin due to the deportations, the security forces were initially unable to destroy the gangs in Ehrenfeld. To help regain control of the city, Gutenberger detached several companies of Order Police from the front and sent them to assist Hoffmann, who also formed a sixth Einsatzkommando in order to help crack down on unruly *Räuberfeld*.[686] Sweeping through

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[682] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 19, Stapostelle Köln, 16.10.44., Wochenbericht 9.10.-15.10.44.; p. 21., Stapostelle Köln, 6.11.44., Wochenbericht 31.10-5.11.44.; p. 24, Stapostelle Köln, 31.10.44., Wochenbericht 23.10.-30.10.44.; p. 32, Stapostelle Köln, 13.11.44., Wochenbericht 6.11.-13.11.44; p. 37, Stapostelle Köln, 20.11.44., Wochenbericht 13.11.-19.11.44.; p. 41, Stapostelle Köln, 27.11.44, Wochenbericht 20.11.-26.11.44.

[683] Ibid. p. 50, Stapostelle Köln, 3.12.44., Wochenbericht 27.11-3.12.44.

[684] Ibid. p. 4-5, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[685] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 63, p. 121, Stapostelle Köln, 28.9.44.; Abschrift, Nr. 56, p. 637, Stapostelle Köln, 29.1.45., Bericht.

[686] Ibid. RW 34-31, p. 85-88, Stapostelle Köln, 25.10.44., Die Aufgaben des Kommandos Köln; Rep 248, Nr. 56, p.

the charred ruins of the badly damaged neighborhood, security patrols quickly stumbled upon a *Bandennest*, or "bandit hideout" located across the street from the Ehrenfeld train station.[687]

Descending down into the basement of a destroyed building, they discovered a labyrinth of interconnected cellars that gang members created by knocking holes in the walls and tunneling into the adjoining buildings. Hidden inside were stockpiles of stolen goods, such as meat, chocolate, and liquor, which sold for high prices on the city's black market. Even more disturbing, the search also uncovered various bits and pieces of Wehrmacht uniforms, eleven rifles, twenty-four hand grenades, a machine pistol, thousands of rounds of ammunition, and an American machine gun, stark evidence of the apparent relationship between common crime and insurgency.[688]

During the raid, officers also arrested several members of the gang. The prisoners revealed that their leader was none other than Hans "Bomber" Steinbrück, who escaped from the city's SS construction brigade a year earlier.[689] The officers also learned that the group, which largely comprised German soldiers and teenagers who deserted from the front, frequently associated with fugitive foreign workers, including several Ukrainians suspected of killing a guard at a nearby work camp.[690] Fearing they uncovered a base camp for a resistance group,

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1009, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 2.2.68., Zeugevernehmung Heinrich K.; Nr. 58, p. 1104, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 25.5.68., Vernehmung Walter Hirschfeld.

[687] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 294, p. 8a, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 30.7.48., Vernehmung Josef Hoegen.

[688] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 63, p. 151, Stapostelle Köln, 30.9.44., Bericht.

[689] Ibid. p. 149, Stapostelle Köln, 29.9.44., Bericht; p. 171, Stapostelle Köln, 1.10.44. Vernehmung Ruth und Sara K.

[690] Ibid. RW 38-8, p. 67-70, Stapostelle Köln, 26.11.44., Tagesbericht Nr. 2.

officers arrested Steinbrück's pregnant girlfriend, and left a team of officers and Hitler Youth at their apartment to capture him if he returned.

Learning of his girlfriend's arrest, under the cover of darkness Steinbrück rounded up six other gang members for a rescue attempt. Piling into a stolen truck, armed with handguns and a machine pistol, the intoxicated teenagers descended on the building at full speed before coming to a screeching halt and opening fire on the stakeout team. In the first fusillade they killed a Hitler Youth member and wounded a Gestapo officer. As the stake out team returned fire, Steinbrück and Roland Lorent, a Luftwaffe deserter who joined the gang, flanked the building by climbing up the side of the elevated train line. On their way, they shot and killed an SA man, before discovering they were badly outnumbered. Fleeing the scene, the gang stopped to rob a nearby store, before returning to their new hideout in one of the city's parks.[691]

Angered by their failure to free the woman, over several more bottles of alcohol, they concocted a plan to steal explosives from a supply depot and car bomb the Gestapo's headquarters, a fantastical plan which reflected the gang's largely teenage composition. However, guards at the supply dump chased them away, and they returned to their hideout empty handed. After a night fuelled by adrenaline and liquor, already frayed tempers reached their breaking point and the group split up after Steinbrück blamed their failures on Lorent's heavy drinking.[692] Almost two weeks later, security officers arrested Bomber Hans at the apartment of another girlfriend. He was not the only one taken into custody—over the next several weeks, the

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[691] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 59, p. 1325-1326, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht, Nr. 64 II, p. 330-331, Stapostelle Köln, Akten Hans Steinbrück.

[692] Ibid. p. 1327, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht.

security forces continued their sweep of Ehrenfeld, rounding up 200 German civilians and fugitive foreign workers who they brutally interrogated at the notorious Brauweiler Abbey located on the city's outskirts.[693]

The regime was determined to make an example of these prisoners. On October 24, officers from the Cologne Gestapo hanged eleven foreign workers accused of looting and attacks on civilians and police in front of an assembled crowd of onlookers at an empty lot next to the Ehrenfeld train station.[694] They carefully photographed the execution from start to finish, most likely to keep Himmler apprised of the punishment. The gruesome series of photos revealed that one prisoner proved too tall for the makeshift gallows, and that a plain clothes security officer held his feet until he expired. Notably, the cameraman also took care to film the crowd's horrified reaction to the incident, and security personnel left the prisoners' bodies to hang throughout the day as a warning to other would-be lawbreakers.[695] Gutenberger underscored the regime's intolerance for crime, remarking that "for the protection of German life, I have ordered that eleven of these terrorists be publicly hanged. The rest will not be spared, rather after their investigations they will meet the same fate."[696]

He fulfilled this promise seventeen days later, on November 10, when the Cologne Gestapo hanged thirteen German gang members, including Hans Steinbrück and Roland Lorent,

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[693] HStAD, Rep. 249, Nr. 59, p. 1328; RW 34-8, p. 67-70, Stapostelle Köln, 26.11.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2.

[694] Ibid. Nr. 64 I, p. 483, Stapostelle Köln, Sonderkommission Brauweiler, 27.27.10.44., Exekutierung von 8 Ostarbeitern.

[695] Hermann Daners & Josef Wißkirchen, *Was im Brauweiler geschah. Die NS-Zeit und ihre Folgen in der Rheinischen Provinzial-Arbeitsanstalt* (Pulheim: Verein für Geschichte Pulheim, 2006), 101-104.

[696] HStAD, RW 37-11, HSSPF West, 27.10.44., Tgb. 2167/44.

at the same location. The youngest victims, Günther Schwarz and Bartholomäus Schink, were sixteen years old.[697] Although they did not photograph the execution, they left the bodies of the victims to hang throughout the day as a reminder of the consequences of crime and disobedience.[698]

The timing and location of the execution were significant. The killings took place the day after the anniversary of the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, a date of deep importance to the regime which allowed them to juxtapose the self-sacrifice and purity of those early Nazi martyrs against gang members who betrayed their *Volk* by stealing and associating with foreign "criminals."[699] The executions also took place in the heart of Ehrenfeld, and like similar atrocities carried out in occupied Europe, they intended to terrorize the neighborhood's residents, who passed the bodies on their way to and from the still operating train station. The location proved doubly significant because it stood directly across the street from the gang's hideout, and the authorities therefore engaged in a symbolic reclamation of physical space by carrying out the executions at the alleged source of unrest.

Despite the operation to ruthlessly crush gang activity in Ehrenfeld, crime continued to occur inside Cologne. As they swept through the ruins, officers uncovered well-armed groups of fugitives. Even more disturbing, they encountered other Germans apparently willing to set aside

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[697] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 64 I, p. 697, Stapostelle Köln, Sonderkommission Brauweiler, 6.11.44, Hinrichtung von 13 Reichsdeutschen als Täter und Mitbeteiligte der Terrorgruppe in Köln Ehrenfeld; p. 826, Stapostelle Köln, 20.11.44, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[698] Ibid. Nr. 53, p. 39, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 8.6.65., Zeugevernehmung Maria S.

[699] Jay Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 42.

their allegiance to the *Volk* to rob and steal alongside fugitive eastern workers. Worse, these people were not the social marginals commonly associated with crime, but the kinds of upright *Volksgenossen* the regime relied on to turn the tide of victory in favor of the Reich. For example, surprising another gang inside their hideout in the city center, security personnel arrested a mixed group of French, Russians, and Ukrainians led by a member of the city's fire department. The stunned officers also discovered that another captured German turned out to be a card-carrying member of the Nazi Party, revealing the supposedly morally corruptive influence of foreign workers.[700]

As the deportations continued, the security forces therefore discovered that the crime committed by Germans was much more widespread than they initially anticipated. As the supply situation in the region continued to deteriorate, increasing numbers of Rhinelanders turned to looting and petty theft in order to survive. On a daily basis, officers arrested dozens of civilians in possession of food, clothing, or other items stolen from empty stores or houses. They arrested these people for looting, a crime punishable by death.[701]

Although RSHA guidelines continued to govern executions regarding civilians, the security forces made full use of their legal mandate to kill foreign workers accused of crime, and typically shot east Europeans on the spot. Officers often described these victims as "shot while attempting to escape" in order to provide a veneer of justification for their murder, but in several cases officers also used the term "given special treatment," a phrase commonly used in occupied

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[700] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3.

[701]Ibid. p. 9, Stapostelle Köln, 01.10.44., Wochenbericht 24-9.-30.9.44.; p. 14, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 8.10.-14.10.44.; p. 19, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 9.10.-15.10.44.; p. 21, Stapostelle Köln, 6.11.44., Wochenbericht 31.10.-5.11.44.

Europe used to describe the execution of suspects, indicating how the mentality of the *Bandenkampf* began to emerge as the security operation dragged on.[702]

Sometimes civilians took part in these killings as well. After an air raid on the town of Mechernich, in the Eifel Mountains, the owner of a shoe store returned to his shop to find the cellar door pried open. Returning with his son and a local Party official, the man climbed down into the cellar. Once inside, they found a foreign worker digging through piles of shoes and other goods. They shot him before summoning several members of the local *Volkssturm* to search through the belongings of other laborers held at a local school. Uncovering dozens of pairs of shoes hidden in the straw that covered the floor of the prisoners' sleeping quarters, the Party official and his men rounded up eight suspects, who they handed over to a nearby security unit for execution. This was apparently not the first time a theft occurred in Mechernich after the prisoners arrived—one townsperson later recalled that clothes someone stole clothes from clotheslines and that a plate of his wife's Christmas cookies also disappeared, "crimes" he blamed on the foreigners.[703]

The items taken by *Zwangsarbeiter*, such as food, clothing, and shoes, indicate the desperate conditions they faced as the war neared its end. For these people, theft was not a matter of selfish opportunity, but of survival, since guards reduced their already meager rations

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[702] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 32, Stapostelle Köln, 13.11.44., Wochenbericht 6.11.-12.11.44.; p. 37, Stapostelle Köln, 20.11.44, Wochenbericht 13.11.-19.11.44.; p. 39, Stapostelle Köln, 21.11.44., Wochenbericht 12.11.-16.11.44.; p. 41, Stapostelle Köln, 27.11.44., Wochenbericht 20.11.-26.11.44.; p. 66, Stapostelle Köln, 3.12.44., Wochenbericht 24.11.-1.12.44.

[703] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 148, p. 13-15, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 7.6.62., Zeugevernehmung Nikolaus K.; p. 317-19, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, Vernehmung Theodor Kisters; p. 12, Landgerichtsrat Mechernich, 6.7.62., Vernehmung Leo Wunderlich.

as the region's supply infrastructure collapsed. As Sascha Knysch later recalled, he and his fellow forced laborers spent every spare moment in autumn 1944 searching for food.[704] Marched eastwards as a valuable labor reserve, these hungry, threadbare, and barefoot prisoners were in fact now nearly useless to the regime. They took every chance to improve their condition, especially as the sunny skies and warm temperatures of September faded away into the cold, wet weather of late autumn.

For the security forces, the relationship between foreigners and crime was a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to Nazi security logic they were dirty, desperate, and depraved not because they were ill fed, mistreated, and poorly clothed, but because that was their very nature. They feared that if given the chance these prisoners might rebel, carrying out acts of resistance behind the front, sowing unrest that weakened home front morale.[705] These anxieties only continued to mount as Allied troops pushed into the Reich during late September and early October, prompting Himmler to issue an order declaring that if prison camps were about to be overrun by the enemy, the security forces should massacre the inmates rather than let the enemy release them to attack civilians.[706]

The regime's stance hardened towards its fellow *Volksgenossen* as well. News that Germans living in parts of the country occupied by the enemy seemed to be enjoying themselves only stoked the regime's disappointment with the region's stubborn residents. Throughout the

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[704] NSDok, Z 20788, 13.09.2003, Zeitzeugen Unterredung Sascha Knysch.

[705] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 6. Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[706] Ibid. RW 34-31, p. 8, Inspekteur Sicherheitspolizei Albath, 01.10.44., Erlass.

autumn, the security forces sent patrols across the front to spy on the Americans and make contact with Rhinelanders ready to carry out attacks against the invaders. Instead, they discovered most civilians developed a good relationship with the enemy. Unlike the Wehrmacht, American soldiers did not requisition people's homes, and also shared their supplies. The distribution of food, especially rare items such as coffee, tobacco, and chocolate, greatly helped thaw relations between occupier and occupied, and security patrols reported back that civilians did not want the German army to return because the Americans treated them so well.[707]

Learning of the fraternization between Germans and the enemy, Himmler furiously demanded that the Cologne Gestapo draw up lists of these collaborators for future assassination.[708] For the most part, these plans never reached fruition. Although Werwolf operatives killed Franz Oppenhoff, the American appointed mayor of Aachen, in March 1945 it appears the security forces targeted very few German and Belgian civilians living in the towns and villages occupied by the enemy.[709] Likewise, although a special security unit, Einsatzgruppe K, led by former Cologne Gestapo commander Emmanuel Schäfer, followed the Wehrmacht into Belgium during the Ardennes offensive in December 1944, little remains known about its activities.[710]

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[707] HStAD, RW 34-32, p.10-13, Stapostelle Köln, Einsatzkommando IV, 17.9.44, Bericht; RW 37-11, p. 22, HSSPF West, 10.2.45., Polizeikampfgruppe III, Bericht.

[708] Ibid. Rep. 5, Nr. 5, p. 3, RFSS, 18.10.44., Geheimerlass; RW 34-31, p. 53, Stapostelle Köln, 14.11.44, Schreibung von 27.10.44.; p. 80, Stapostelle Köln, no date given, Die Aufgaben des Kommandos Köln; p. 62, Stapostelle Köln, 26.2.45., Sonderaktionen beim Vorrücken der Anglo-Amerikaner.

[709] Ibid. Rep. 5, Nr. 1289, p. 1-14, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 30.7.49., Anklageschrift,

[710] Ibid. Rep. 231, Nr. 172, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.12.52., Vermerk; Rep 409, Nr. 148, p. 17, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 18.3.63., Voruntersuchungsverfahren gegen Arnold Schneider; Mallmann, "Menschenjagd und Massenmord," 312-313.

However, Himmler's anger regarding collaborators reflected the regime's growing fear that frustrated Rhinelanders might switch sides and aid the enemy. These anxieties brought Nazism's longstanding fears of internal collapse to their logical conclusion, heightening the reliance on anticipatory security logics in order to preemptively root out danger. The deluge of Allied propaganda raining down on the region from enemy airplanes only encouraged security officers' concerns.

These pamphlets targeted both soldiers and civilians. As American forces encountered Germans who fled the deportations, they eagerly seized on their stories about life behind the front, printing leaflets such as "*Was kann Mann tun?* (What Can One Do?)," which pointed out that "every German knows the war is lost." The flyer asked Germans to do everything they could to shorten the war, in particular by refusing to join the *Volkssturm* or work at the front.[711]

These documents reflected a disturbing awareness of the issues, such as forced labor round ups and the appropriation of property, which generated tensions between civilians and the regime. Capitalizing on the growing rift between *Staat* and *Volk*, one flyer dropped over the Rhineland informed Germans that after their deportation, the Wehrmacht and Gestapo looted the homes of "thousands of Aacheners." The propaganda pointed out that while the regime claimed they conducted the clearances to protect the German people, "security" according to the Gestapo meant deportation or digging fortifications under enemy artillery fire and air attacks.[712] After occupying parts of the border region, American troops also distributed newspapers which

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[711] Hoover Institution Archives, hereafter cited as HIA, Hallgarten Papers, Box 7, Folder 5, "Was kann Mann tun?"

[712] Ibid. "In Sicherheit."

informed civilians and captured German soldiers about the massive defeats the Reich experienced on both the eastern and western fronts, forcing any remaining resolute Rhinelanders to confront the reality that the war was lost.[713]

To counter this propaganda, the regime sent special political officers to the region. They distributed flyers justifying the deportations, which caused consternation among soldiers who witnessed crying women and children being forced from their homes as their property was carted off. One tract candidly informed them that the clearances were undertaken for military, not humanitarian reasons, and that they prevented the enemy from using civilian labor against the Reich. While it admitted that the deportations caused hardships, the document noted "but hardship is necessary if National Socialism is to survive this war," equating the survival of the Reich with the survival of the nation. Further attempting to drive home the notion that the *Volk* was a community of fate, the document reminded its readers that "in this war everyone is a solider."[714] To ensure troops continued to do their duty, the security forces also took radios out of homes near the front, in order to prevent them from tuning in to enemy broadcasts.[715] These efforts had little effect. American forces continued to capture personal correspondence in which German soldiers "expressed increasing pessimism" as they worried about their families and civilians, who they saw digging fortifications in bad weather and under constant artillery fire.[716]

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[713] HIA, Hallgarten Papers, Box 7, Folder 5, *Die Neue Zeitung*, 27.11.44., "Strassbourg wurde befreit," *Nachrichten für die Truppe*, 19.11.44., "USA-Panzer 40 km vor Köln."

[87] NARA, RG 407, Box 11956, p. 8, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, G 2 Report, 1.12.44., translation of captured document: "Why must civilians be evacuated?"

[715] Ibid. RG 242, T 77, 788/5816950, OKW, 16.11.44., Bergung und Nutzbarmachen von Rücklassgut für die Truppe in den geräumten Gebieten hinter der HKL.

[716] NARA, RG 407, Box 11956, p. 6, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, G 2, 1.12.44., Report.

Enemy propaganda also forced security officers to siphon off some of their precious manpower to police the home front in areas not slated for deportation. Farther eastwards in Cologne and other areas along the Rhine, they formed special patrols which searched *Zwangsarbeiter* camps for Allied leaflets, stolen weapons, and radios in order to head off the uprising they expected to occur in the region.[717] In most of these cases, they relied on their wide-ranging network of informants in areas not disrupted by the clearances. Instead of letting these suspects off with warnings, officers sentenced them to concentration camps.[718]

Security personnel arrested other civilians simply because they attributed their remarks to forbidden radio broadcasts. For example, Irmgard S., a secretary from Siegburg, found herself in custody after making "anti-German comments" about the situation along the border that a hysterical co-worker suspected came from enemy radio messages.[719] Heinrich W. was more fortunate—accused of listening to enemy broadcasts in an air raid bunker, officers later released him because they discovered his sister fabricated the charge in order to settle a personal score. The report did not give any indication as to whether or not they arrested the woman for providing a false denunciation, indicating how some overworked officers shortened their reports. Regardless, the incident underscored how Germans continued to work through the security

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[717] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 34-38, Stapostelle Köln, 6.11.44., Über die Arbeitsprechung von 6.11.44. in Rossenau; RW 34-8, p. 66, Stapostelle Köln, 3.12.44., Wochenbericht Aussenposten Gummersbach.

[718] Ibid. p. 47, Stapostelle Köln, 27.11.44. Lagebericht; p. 49, Stapostelle Köln, 28.11.44., Wochenbericht 20.11.-27.11.44.

[719] Ibid. p. 10, Stapostelle Köln. 3.10.44., Wochenbericht 24.9-30.9.44.

apparatus, manipulating its anxieties to achieve their own ends, even as the regime expected the *Volk* to come together and defend the Reich.[720]

During their attempts to regain control over Cologne's ruined neighborhoods, officers also discovered propaganda produced by their fellow *Volksgenossen* calling for the end of the war. At prominent landmarks and high traffic areas throughout the ruined city, broadsheets appeared encouraging soldiers to desert from the front, proclaiming, "We don't want a blood bath on German soil. We don't want the total destruction of our homeland! We don't want any more terror bombings. WE WANT PEACE! WE WANT FREEDOM!" Even more disturbing, the posters were signed "A Committee for a Free Germany."[721]

Appearing in the midst of the greatest crisis the Reich faced to date, evidence of a resistance group near the front shook the security forces to their core. They need not have worried. While the Cologne Gestapo imagined that Jewish agents directed the group, the Committee for a Free Germany was in fact the work of a handful of the city's residents rather than a well-organized group of professional revolutionaries.[722] The Committee, formed in the Klettenberg district in the southwestern outskirts of Cologne during the latter half of 1943, numbered several former members of Leftist political parties, along with a Jehovah Witness and several disgruntled youths. They did not carry out any resistance activity, and spent much of their time meeting in private homes to discuss life in Germany after the regime's defeat.[723]

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[720] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 14, Stapostelle Köln, 19.10.44., Wochenbericht 8.10.-14.10.44.

[721] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 71-73, Stapostelle Köln, 8.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2, Widerstandbewegungen.

[722] Ibid. p. 71-73, Stapostelle Köln, 8.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[723] Ibid. Rep. 231, Nr. 275, p. 14, British Army of the Rhine, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), 27.4.47., Statement Karl B.; Daners & Wißkirchen, *Was in Brauweiler geschah*, p. 110; Mehringer, *Widerstand und*

However, in autumn 1944, anticipating the quick arrival of the Allies they took the bold step of reaching out to the Steinbrück gang and several groups of fugitive foreign workers in a poorly planned attempt to organize armed resistance. Two younger members of the Committee, who escaped from the SS construction brigade based in the city, knew Steinbrück and tried to recruit him to provide weapons for fugitive foreign workers. They quickly gave up in disgust after discovering that Steinbrück and his colleagues only appeared concerned about living out the last days of the war in comfort.[724] However, their association with the gang proved disastrous for the Committee. Cracking under torture, captured gang members gave up the names and addresses of its members, and by late November the entire group was in the Cologne Gestapo's custody.

Despite their success at crushing these "defeatist elements" lurking within the *Volk*, a grave disjuncture remained the between the regime's vision of the ideal German and the reality of a frustrated, angry population apparently unwilling to support the war effort. Distressed by Rhinelanders' apparent lack of interest in defending their homes, Gutenberger and other officials began to describe civilians ready to sacrifice for the Reich as *deutschbewusst*, conscious of their duty as Germans.[725] Other phrases also emerged in correspondence over the course of the evacuations that further sharpened this vision of the ideal German. For example, Gauleiter Grohé repeatedly contrasted those civilians he evaluated as "unconditionally German" and

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Emigration, 179.

[724] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 55, p. 514, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 24.5.67., Zeugevernehmung Antonious F.; Nr. 59, p. 1311-1312, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 7.3.69., Bericht.

[725] Ibid. RW 34-31, p. 53-56, Stapostelle Köln, 14.11.44., Schreiben von 27.10.44.

willing to carry out the regime's demands with "discipline and cooperativeness" against surly civilians. He described these people as traitors who "do not identify with the nation."[726] This uncompromising definition of Germaness as an act of unconditional sacrifice demanded that civilians remain hardworking, orderly, morally upright, and ready to resist the enemy. The grim reality was that few Rhinelanders exhibited these ideal characteristics.

These attempts to categorize civilians as either "Germans" willing to defend the Reich or selfish community outsiders created a rigid juxtaposition between the "reliability" the regime expected of its *Volksgenossen* and most war weary Rhinelanders.[727] The kinds of behavior the security forces encountered in the field only reinforced this growing sense of frustration with civilians. While the majority of the population did comply with the orders to leave the region or join the war effort, the level of unexpected protest stunned officers. The resulting clash between the expectation that *Volksgenossen* would come together to defend the Reich, and the war weariness, apathy, and anger they encountered generated deep disdain and suspicion. This shift in turn caused the security leadership to draw upon their experiences in the East, as they struggled to mentally order and physically master the situation that confronted them in the Rhineland.

Their view of Rhinelanders worsened as they emptied the region of its population, and only those who resolutely resisted the orders to leave remained. As the clearances continued, security officers ceased referring to civilians as "refugees [*Flüchtlinge*]" and described them as

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[726] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 274/2771487, Stapostelle Köln, 28.9.44., Bericht des Gauleiter Grohé; HStAD, RW 23-5, p. 25, NSDAP Kreisleitung Jülich, 6.9.44., Abschnittsbefehl 4/44; p. 126, Reichsverteidigungskommissar Gau Köln-Aachen, 11.9.44., Rundschreiben Nr. 4/44.

[727] Ibid. T 77, 869/56191920, Parteikanzlei, 23.9.44., Führerbefehl über die Bildung der Deutschen Volkswehr.

"deportees [*Zwangsevakuierten*]," denoting how they unsympathetically viewed the remaining civilians in the area behind the front as a security threat.[728] Officers even described some obstinate civilians in their reports as *geisteskrank*, mentally ill, indicating how they refused to believe that their fellow racial comrades could reject the idea of an *Endkampf* unless they were truly deranged.[729]

Disgruntled officers also referred to the "clearance," or *Räumung*, of the Left Bank Rhineland, rather than the "evacuation" of its residents.[730] The use of this term, one frequently used during anti-partisan operations is telling, as it indicates how security personnel resorted to counterinsurgency methods on the home front. The choice of wording also exposes how officers associated the region with the kinds of unrest they previously encountered in the occupied territories, and other phrases and words from the *Bandenkampf* emerged in reports that paired the Rhineland with the "Wild East." Hoffmann, a veteran of several years fighting guerillas in the Ukraine and Poland, was especially quick to draw parallels between the Cologne Gestapo's operations and his experiences abroad. In correspondence sent to RSHA headquarters in Berlin, he described the office's activities as *Bandensicherungsaufgaben*, efforts to secure the Rhineland from "bandits."[731]

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[728] HStAD, RW 37-21, p. 15, HSSPF West, 5.11.44., Nichtbeteiligung der KG III an Räumungsmassnahmen, p. 96, HSSPF West, 30.10.44, Räumung; RW 37-7, p. 37, HSSPF West, 16.12.44. Tagesrapport, Stapostelle Köln.

[729] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 10, Stapostelle Köln, 3.10.44., Wochenbericht 24.9-30.9.44.

[730] Ibid. RW 37-21, p. 57, HSSPF West, 17.9.44., HSSPF West, Reichsverteidigung, p.121, HSSPF West, 3.9.44., Evakuierung Alsdorf, p. 176, HSSPF West, 27.9.44., Besondere Massnahmen an der Grenze; RW 34-8, p. 5, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

[731] Ibid. p. 5, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

The use of the word is striking, considering its widespread use in occupied Europe, especially in the East, to describe resistance activity. While the security forces did encounter criminal gangs, or *Banden*, in Cologne and other areas of the Rhineland, by autumn 1944 the word was synonymous with partisans. It reflects how Hoffmann, one of the leading security officers in western Germany, drew comparisons between German civilians who avoided evacuation, engaged in criminal acts, or deserted from militia units with the kinds of rebellious peoples he fought in the East.[732] Further reflecting the similarities personnel drew between suspect Rhinelanders and their prior experiences abroad, another report written by the commander of a police battle group noted his efforts to hunt down *Ortsfremde*, or transients, additional indication of how the confrontation with obstinate civilians reinforced the basic institutional assumptions honed during the *Bandenkampf*.[733]

Other evidence that security officers viewed the Rhineland as a dangerous, unruly space is indicated by other kinds of counterinsurgency terminology they used in their correspondence. Personnel described gangs as a "bandit menace," hearkening back to anti-partisan operations on the eastern front, and also as "terror gangs," revealing how officers imagined groups of fugitives and criminals as an insurrectionary threat despite their desperate attempts to simply survive the end of the war. They also spoke openly about the dangers posed by "terrorists," and even of a "resistance movement" operating in the region.[734] As previously noted, no organized resistance

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[732] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 67-70, Stapostelle Köln, 26.11.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[733] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 224/2763257, Polizeikampfgruppe II, 5.10.44., Bericht; Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 105.

[734] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 36, Stapostelle Köln, 14.11.44., Wochenbericht 5.11.-11.11.44.; p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3, Widerstandsbewegungen; RW 34-31, p. 34-38, Stapostelle Köln, 6.11.44., Über die Arbeitsprechung vom 6.11.44. in Rosenau.

occurred in the Rhineland, and the use of these terms reveals the destructive fantasies and security anxieties generated by the disorder officers encountered. The language of the anti-partisan war helped frame these experiences, and consequently structured officers' response to civil unrest.[735]

For example, as security personnel emptied the red zone, just as in the East, they described those civilians captured in the now off limits area behind the front as *Überläufer*, traitors who sought sanctuary behind enemy lines.[736] Always deeply concerned about the danger posed by unauthorized civilian movement, officers not only feared Germans fled to the Americans, but that the enemy sent agents disguised as civilians across the front to spy on the Wehrmacht.[737] The punishment of fugitives caught behind the front reflected this concern. Security officers accused the majority of Germans and foreign workers arrested in the zone of spying for the Allies, often despite a clear lack of evidence they actually assisted the enemy.

These incidents expose the intuitive and catastrophic nature of Nazi security logic, which associated civilians caught behind the front with subversive plots, regardless of their real motives. According to organizational culture, their mere presence in off-limits areas warranted suspicion, and officers turned these prisoners over to Kurt Matschke. Because of his previous experience vetting the prisoners of Sonderkommando 7a, Hoffmann placed him in charge of all counterintelligence operations in the region. Denoting how language and practice became

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[735] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 95.

[736] HStAD, RW 37-7, p. 176, HSSPF West, 27.9.44., Besondere Massnahmen an der Grenze; p. 57, HSSPF West, 16.12.44., Tagesrapport Stapostelle Köln; RW 34-8, p. 7, Stapostelle Köln, 2.10.44., Wochenbericht 25.9.-1.10.44.

[737] Ibid. p. 57, HSSPF West, 16.12.44., Tagesrapport Stapostelle Köln.

mutually reinforcing, just as in Klinzy in spring 1943, few suspects arrested in the red zone survived their incarceration in the Gestapo's headquarters, the notorious EL DE Haus in Cologne.[738]

Over the course of late October and early November, the security forces thus came to associate the Left Bank Rhineland with rebellion. Faced with impending invasion, civilians who engaged in criminal acts or ignored orders to defend the Reich, regardless of their reasons for doing so, became dire threats to the country's stability in the minds of security officers.[739] This fantasy exposed how personnel used their prior experiences in occupied Europe to structure reality and provide cognitive stability.[740] Their reference back to tried and tested assumptions about civilian behavior encouraged officers to conceive of the Rhineland as an unruly space, and they resorted to the practices that offered the best means of quickly restoring order; deportation and violence.

This process was best reflected in their efforts to tie the Steinbrück group and other fugitive gangs to the Committee for a Free Germany, fabricating an overarching conspiracy from disparate groups with very different motives. This incident not only evidenced their fears regarding the *Volk*'s reliability. By conjuring up the specter of resistance in the Rhineland, the

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[738] HStAD, RW 34-34, p. 20, Stapostelle Köln, 6.10.44., Betrifft: S.A.S.; RW 34-8, p. 7, Stapostelle Köln, 2.10.44., Wochenbericht 25.9.-1.10.44.; p. 29, Stapostelle Köln, 29.10.44., Wochenbericht 23.10.-29.10.44.; p. 49, Stapostelle Köln, 28.11.44., Wochenbericht 20.11.-27.11.44.; NARA, RG 242, T 175, 62/257804, RFSS, 21.10.44., Französische Kriegsgefängene, Westarbeiter; RW 34-31, p. 34-38, Stapostelle Köln, 6.11.44., Über die Arbeitsprechung vom 6.11.44. in Rosenau; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 293.

[739] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 71-73, Stapostelle Köln, 8.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 2, Widerstandsbewegungen; Neitzel & Welzer, *Soldaten*, 402.

[740] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 247-248; Neitzel & Welzer, *Soldaten*, 402-404.

security forces ordered their encounters with unruly civilians and fugitive foreign workers to fit their world view. Perceived resistance on German soil ordered experience and offered solutions by referencing the *Bandenkampf*. It also complemented the *Dolchstoss*, or "stab in the back" myth, providing further incentive for violence.

Hoffmann revealed these fears in an order he issued to his men, which reminded them that "militarily, Germany was not defeated in 1918. Instead, certain people and foreigners stabbed the country in the back. Today, our enemies are attempting to use the same weapons, because they know we cannot be defeated militarily… the activities of our office are focused on one goal, namely victory. By all means, the weakening of Germandom—internally as well as externally—is to be prevented… the prevention of these crimes is the responsibility of the Secret State Police."[741] To combat these vaguely defined threats posed by "certain people," he declared that "the *Kommandos* at home will fulfill their tasks just as they have in the occupied territories," underscoring how home became front as security officers struggled to prevent the *Volk*'s collapse.[742]

Yet, more than any other factor the deaths of security officers in armed confrontations with fugitives prompted personnel to view the Rhineland in ways similar to the recently abandoned East.[743] The impact of these losses was heightened by the fact that in many of these incidents, hunter became hunted. Officers often found themselves outgunned by gang members armed with automatic weapons and hand grenades, who fought on terrain of their choosing

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[741] HStAD, RW 34-17, p. 8, Stapostelle Köln, no date given, Die Aufgaben der Geheime Staatspolizei im Kriege.

[742] Ibid.

[743] Ibid, RW 34-8, p. 1-6, Stapostelle Köln, Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

before again slipping away into the ruins. These kinds of tactics further encouraged them to draw parallels between these groups and the partisans they fought in occupied Europe.[744]

These perceptions revealed the fears of the security forces rather than the motives of their would-be victims. German and foreign gang members were only concerned with surviving what appeared to be the last few weeks of the war. Excluded from the region's already strained supply infrastructure, they turned to crime and foraging in order to survive. Living a precarious existence as social outsiders and threatened not only by the security forces but civilians and other fugitives, these gangs armed themselves, an easy feat due to the proliferation of weapons in the region. While violence did indeed rise in the Rhineland during autumn 1944, research shows that gangs typically turned on each other rather than against the authorities.[745] They only fought them when cornered and faced with the prospect of arrest and possible execution, since the arrival of the Allies seemed only a few weeks away.

The rationale behind the gangs' will to resist mattered little to the security forces, especially after the death of their leader on November 26, 1944. After exhorting his men "to give their best, in pride and honor by exemplifying the struggle of National Socialism," Hoffmann fulfilled his obligations to *Volk* and *Führer* by leading an attack on a gang hideout. In the ensuing fight he was mortally wounded.[746] Surrounded and outnumbered, the fugitives

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[744] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[745] Roth, *"Verbrechensbekämpfung,"*543-545.

[746] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3, Widerstandsbewegungen; Rep. 248, Nr. 57, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 17.11.67, Vernehmung Friedrich Mohr.

continued to resist for twelve more hours, and the fighting only ended when a squad of military engineers blasted them out of their fortified cellar.[747]

Hoffmann's death stunned his men, and confirmed their suspicions that they were fighting an anti-partisan war on the home front. Despite the danger posed by enemy aircraft, the heads of the Einsatzkommandos gathered in Cologne to pay respect to their fallen leader. At the memorial ceremony Foltis, who took temporary command of the security forces, swore the operations to stamp out "terrorists" would continue.[748] Indeed, after his tenure began they intensified their efforts, spreading out across the shattered city armed with machine guns and hand grenades, showing no mercy to those who resisted.[749]

Although violence spiked after Hoffmann's death in late November, it is important to note that atrocity took place throughout the deportations. As evidenced by an execution list from the Einsatzkommandos operating behind the front, they killed 115 Germans and foreigners between late September 1944 and early January 1945. The police battle groups operating near the frontlines shot at least another eighty suspects.[750] East Europeans comprised the largest number of victims, and many of them were executed for crimes such as looting and petty theft, in contrast to the few German prisoners listed, who all died for suspected treason.[751]

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[747] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[748] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 140, p. 50, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall II, Die festgestellen Tatsachen.

[749] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 74-77, Stapostelle Köln, 20.12.44., Tagesrapport Nr. 3, Widerstandsbewegungen.

[750] Ibid. p. 79-89, Stapostelle Köln, 5.1.45., Erschiessungen. Dortige Verfügung 4.1.45, RW 37-11; p. 22, HSSPF West, 30.10.44. Organisation HSSPF Führungsstab und KGs.

[751] Ibid. RW 37-11, p. 22, HSSPF West, 30.10.44. HSSPF Führungstab und KGs.

Officers also murdered prisoners at the Cologne Gestapo's headquarters. After an Allied air raid partially destroyed the building, the security forces evacuated their non-essential personnel and equipment to Marienheide, on the other side of the Rhine.[752] They continued to use the ruined building as a prison and execution site, executing the inmates at a poorly constructed gallows in the courtyard.[753] One prisoner, Marija Schabanowa managed to escape after bribing a Ukrainian interpreter who worked for the security forces. The man hid her in a cartful of corpses taken to the city's western cemetery, where she lived for two weeks before being rescued by Germans who later took her to a Displaced Persons camp.[754] Despite her harrowing experiences she was extremely fortunate—on the orders of Kurt Matschke, officers from the Cologne Gestapo murdered at least 400 prisoners at the EL DE Haus, many just days before American troops captured the city.[755]

The violent depopulation of the Left Bank Rhineland was ultimately a success, if only a temporary one. Although security officers crowed that "the situation is once again quiet," in the same breath, their reports warned "a high degree of apathy is prevalent among the people," and noted that many Rhinelanders remained obsessed with one question—"how the end would

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[752] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 662, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.8.67., Zeugevernehmung Gertrud M.; p. 937-38, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 16.11.67., Vernehmung Erich Best.

[753] Ibid. Nr. 53, p. 90-104, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.10.65. Vermerk; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 293-95.

[754] NSDok, Z 20 545, Zeitzeugen Unterredung Marija Schabanowa, 22.9.91.

[755] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 293.

come?"[756] The answer came on the night of February 23, when American forces on the western side of the Rur River unleashed a massive artillery barrage, starting their push to the Rhine.[757]

Instead of fanatically resisting, German troops quickly caved under enemy pressure, and on March 4, the enemy reached Cologne. Although Nazi officials declared that *Volkssturm* units armed with disposable, one shot rocket launchers were more than a match for the tanks approaching the city's outskirts, few militia men carried out this suicidal mission. Most, like the teenager Willy Weirauch and his elderly commanding officer, tore off the insignia attached to their civilian clothing and left to search for their families.[758] Others, such as Hans Diefenbach, a World War I veteran recalled to the colors, passed the time drinking wine and schnapps in their bunker, before emerging to discover a terrible scene of unburied corpses and mobs of civilians plundering storehouses and picking over ransacked and bombed out shops.[759]

Despite the orders to evacuate the city, between 40,000 and 50,000 civilians remained trapped inside, after the badly damaged Hindenburg Bridge collapsed on February 28, sweeping hundreds of evacuees into the frigid, fast flowing Rhine swollen by the spring thaw. The Wehrmacht did not open the Hohenzollern Bridge to civilian traffic until the enemy reached Cologne's outskirts, and it too went down on March 6, the day before American troops captured the city center. Entering the ruined *Rheinstadt*, they encountered desperate civilians who spent the last several weeks living without electricity, running water, or basic sanitation. As one

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[756] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 229/ 2767630, RSHA Berlin, 22.2.45., Zur politischen Lage.

[757] Zumbro, *Battle for the Ruhr*, 69.

[758] Ibid. 71.

[759] Rüther, *Köln im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 870-871.

Kölner recalled, "Robinson [Crusoe] couldn't have lived a more desolate existence."[760] To make matters worse, German troops also looted the remaining supply depots, causing the hungry residents to panic. However, in the midst of the chaos American soldiers still managed to meet a German child who offered them a piece of candy, undoubtedly the warmest welcome they received in the lawless city.[761]

Just before the enemy arrived the security forces escaped across the Rhine with their remaining German and West European prisoners.[762] During the retreat, the office's temporary commander, Richard Foltis, disappeared. Rumors circulated among his men that the Wehrmacht executed the veteran officer for cowardice, although West German authorities later confirmed he died in a bombing raid.[763] After crossing the Rhine, the security forces were scattered across locations ranging from Bonn, to Marienheide, and points farther east such as Siegen, and north, inside the Ruhr industrial region.[764]

During this period Egon Kulzer took command of the surviving security personnel.[765] A so-called "March Violet," who opportunistically joined the Nazi Party shortly after the seizure of power, he joined the Secret Police in 1938. Kulzer later served as head of the Troppau Gestapo

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[760] Matzerath & Holzhauser, *"...vergessen kann man die Zeit nicht,"* 282.

[761] NARA, RG 407, Box 11954, p. 3, U.S. 104th Infantry Division, 13.3.45., G 2 report.

[762] NSDok, Z 20 364, 21.9.02., Zeitzeugen Unterredung, Marie van Reem-Trubchanina.

[763] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 53, p. 591, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 14.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Josef K.; Nr. 56, p. 963, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 21.11.67., Vernehmung Kurt Bethke; NARA, RG 242, A3343/215, Personnel File Richard Foltis.

[764] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 58, p. 1082, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 11.4.68., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke; Daners, *Was in Brauweiler geschah*, 132.

[765] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 278.

in Silesia, before RSHA reassigned him to the Saarland before sending him to replace Foltis.[766] He had little time to reorganize his men. On March 7, American troops captured the Ludendorff Bridge, located at the small town of Remagen, ten miles south of the besieged city of Bonn. Over the next several weeks, the enemy poured across this vital connection between the Rhineland and central Germany. Reeling from their relentless advance, retreating German troops were pelted with manure by angry civilians as they tried to prepare bridges and other vital infrastructure for demolition. They also reported the appearance of white flags in many houses, and that entire *Volkssturm* units deserted.[767] Demoralized, the troops continued to stream northwards, pursued by American forces.

The situation worsened into a true crisis on the night of March 24, when British and Canadian forces crossed the Rhine at Wesel. As these troops pressed towards the south, American units continued to drive northwards, and on April 1 captured the town of Lippstadt sixty-five kilometers east of Dortmund, trapping Wehrmacht and security forces in what became known as the Ruhr Pocket.[768] With communication to Berlin no longer possible, Gutenberger took command of the remaining security units. Due to the rapidly changing conditions, he established two *Kommandeure der Sicherheitspolizei* (KdS), or security police commanders, to better coordinate activity between his units. These officers, Kurt Venter and Rudolf Batz, both recently returned from occupied Europe. A hardened security officer, Batz deployed to Eastern

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[766] NARA, RG 242, A 3343/ 230A, Personnel File Egon Kulzer; HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 58, p. 1018 Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 11.4.68., Vernehmung Kurt Matschke.

[767] NARA, RG 242, T 77, 783/511350, OKW Chef des NS-Führungsstabes 19.3.45., Abschrift.

[768] Zumbro, *Battle for the Ruhr*, 140, 250.

Europe twice, first with Einsatzgruppe A in 1941, and later as KdS of Krakow, where he received glowing praise from his superiors for his success destroying Polish partisan groups. Venter served as the second in command of Paris security office, and RSHA also commended him for crushing several French resistance movements.[769] Due to their expertise in fighting insurgencies, it is likely RSHA headquarters in Berlin sent them to help maintain order in the region.[770]

Although Gutenberger established the KdS positions to restore a sense of command and control, the presence of these veteran officers greatly encouraged the escalation of violence as the Ruhr Pocket imploded. While the security forces initially evacuated some inmates, particularly Germans, to other locations farther east, in early April the security forces began the wholesale liquidation of their prisoners as the enemy closed in. Between March 24 and April 12, security offices in cities such as Essen, Duisburg, Gelsenkirchen, Hagen, Wuppertal, Düsseldorf and Bochum all murdered their prisoners.[771] They acted not independently, but under a secret directive issued by Himmler which commanded the security forces to execute their captives if they were in danger of being overrun by the enemy.[772] Fearing released inmates might attack civilians, General Walter Model issued additional orders on April 7 for security officers to kill their prisoners.[773]

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[769] NARA, RG 242, A3343/204 B, Personnel File Kurt Venter; A3343/038, Personnel File Rudolf Batz; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 278.

[770] Ibid.

[771] Ibid. 304-306.

[772] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 8, IdS Albath, 25.1.45., Geheimerlass.

[773] Ibid. Rep. 240, Nr. 180 (Band I), p. 3, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 20.6.49., Ermittlungsverfahren Mordes und

The Commanders of Security Police passed this information on to the various security outposts in the region, and Batz carried out the orders in a particularly zealous fashion. Arriving in Dortmund on March 30, despite directives to screen the prisoners held by the city's Gestapo office, he ordered the unit's commander, a veteran of the anti-partisan war in the Balkans, to liquidate the entire inmate population. These executions, some of the largest in the region, claimed the lives of 300 prisoners, including an estimated fifty Germans arrested as suspected communists. Personnel carried out the murders in the woods of Romberg Park on the southern outskirts of the city between March 30 and April 9.[774]

This last wave of organized atrocity ended on April 12 when security officers executed seventy-one prisoners, mostly Germans criminals, in the woods outside the village of Hilden. The arrival of American troops fortunately cut short their plans to wipe out the remaining prisoners held at the Lüttringhausen workhouse. The end was now undeniable, and security officers desperate to escape capture changed into civilian clothes and slipped away into the crowds of refugees wandering the roads in search of food and shelter.[775]

The earlier deportations in the Left Bank Rhineland made possible this last wave of violence which epitomized Nazism's cataclysmic *Götterdämmerung*. Surprised by the Allies' swift advance from France, the regime scrambled to defend the Reich by calling the Rhineland's citizens to arms and removing the region's resources. Premised on the Nazi doctrine of total war

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Verbrechens gegen die Menschlichkeit; p. 214, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 3.2.49., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

[774] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1439, p.114, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 7.3.61., Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Rudolf Batz, wegen Mordes.

[775] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 50, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 1.2.46. Zeugevernehmung Nikolaus S.; Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 919, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 27.10.67., Zeugevernehmung Friedrich K.

and modeled on anti-partisan operations in occupied Europe, the plan to clear the region generated the very kinds of unrest it intended to eliminate.

The decision to remove the population tested the already thin patience of civilians who endured enemy shellfire and soaring crime rates caused by the collapse of infrastructure. While most Rhinelanders complied with the regime's demands, the widespread grumbling, anger, and apathy the security forces encountered in the region contradicted the image of a fanatical *Volk* ready to defend the Reich. Disappointment quickly led to anxiety and frustration, as security officers found themselves facing off against angry civilians and armed gangs of German deserters who robbed their fellow *Volksgenossen*. Just as in occupied Europe, in the minds of security personnel these incidents called into question the reliability of the population.

Evidencing the influence of the anti-partisan war, Hoffmann's bi-furcation of the Left Bank Rhineland into security zones in particular played an important role in reshaping officers' perception of civilians. This spatial division encouraged them to view the region as dangerous, and they resorted to extreme but well-tested methods of population control. The attempt banish uncertainty was also an expression of fear. Just as in the East, officers only considered this space secure once they removed its population.

Yet the efforts to master the region only exposed more apparent contradictions, as deportees continued to return to their homes, fought with the security forces, or hid to avoid the deportations. This inability to achieve total control, once placed alongside the plethora of incidents involving criminals, angry civilians, and gun toting fugitive *Zwangsarbeiter* provoked the security imagination to envision catastrophe. The parallels officers drew between the current situation and the national disaster of November 1918 best evidenced these anxieties. This paring

of past and present further prompted officers to draw upon violent counterinsurgency practices honed abroad in order to prevent collapse at home.

The use of these methods collapsed distinctions between home and front, as veteran officers began to describe obstinate Rhinelanders as "bandits," "spies," or *Überläufer*, using the language of the *Bandenkampf* to make sense of their experiences in the region. However, despite their willingness to turn methods of population control developed in occupied Europe against their own citizens, there were limits to atrocity. The final two chapters consider the reasons why mass violence never occurred against civilians in western Germany, even as defeat engulfed the Reich.

Chapter Seven
Between Continuity and Collapse: The Rhineland's Prisons

"Here we do hard work. When prisoners don't sing
we work them over for a long time with our truncheons
until they confess."

—Kriminalkommissar Ferdinand Kütter[776]

"I was treated like an animal while I was at Brauweiler."

—Postwar statement, Heinrich T.[777]

As the Reich collapsed, the regime's security forces struggled to maintain internal cohesion, and these efforts led to an increasing reliance on institutional protocol. Despite their willingness to turn tried and tested practices of population control against their own citizens, the desire to adhere to established procedures often served to blunt the organization's most radical tendencies. Thus, in contrast to the East Europeans arrested by the security units operating behind the front, German and West European suspects were not executed, but instead incarcerated and left to languish in the region's overpopulated and undersupplied prisons. For most of their imprisonment, disease and abuse remained responsible for the deaths of these inmates rather than an organized murder program, as argued in much of the historiography on Nazism's End Phase.[778] Instead, legal guidelines continued to govern the use of violence against

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[776] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 48, French War Crimes Mission 1. Corps District North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 30.1.46., Statement Nikolaus S.

[777] Ibid. Nr. 276, p. 54, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group North West Europe, 23.1.47, Statement Heinrich T.

[778] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 237-250; Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 43; Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*, 270, 282;

German and West European prisoners, even after the Allies cut off the security forces in the Ruhr Pocket.

An important factor governing the treatment of prisoners was the fragmented nature of the Rhineland's prison system. Throughout late September and early October 1944 the security forces scrambled to house the large number of suspects arrested by units in the field. Although the Einsatzkommandos established their own holding centers, these quickly grew overcrowded. Gutenberger initially ordered his men to send suspects to the Cologne Gestapo's headquarters for processing, but these sites were also inundated with large numbers of prisoners.[779] The problem of overcrowding was directly related to another pressing concern—the woeful state of the region's roads. The civilians and foreign laborers captured along the border often could not be sent to Cologne, due to the air attacks and chronic traffic jams which plagued the region. The transport of prisoners proved an enduring problem for the security forces, and underscored the need to expand the number of detainment sites.[780]

On October 3, 1944 Hoffmann ordered Richard Bach to create three prisons behind the frontlines in order to solve the problem of housing civilians arrested during the evacuation of Aachen and the towns and villages near the front. These facilities also intended to relieve pressure on the Klingelpütz prison and the Müngersdorf work camp, the main detention sites inside Cologne.[781] Bach established these new detentions centers on the grounds of abandoned

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Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 347.

[779] HStAD, RW 37-11, p. 34-36, HSSPF West, 16.2.45, Ereignismeldung, 10.44-2.45.

[780] NARA, RG 242, T 175, 487/9348200, Stapostelle Köln, 11.11.44, Verkehrsbericht.

[781] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 5, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln in September und Oktober 1944; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 276.

foreign worker camps located in the towns of Alsdorf, Hückelhoven, and Grebben bei Heinsberg.[782] Although former guards later described them as work reeducation camps, they were more indicative of what one historian termed "expanded Gestapo prisons"—impromptu incarceration sites created by local security personnel, with little to no oversight from supra-regional authorities.[783] These detainment sites were thus reminiscent of the "wild" concentration camp system created during the first months of the Third Reich. Once paired with a discussion of the conditions inside the Brauweiler workhouse located on the outskirts of Cologne, they offer important insights into conditions inside the region's prisons. An investigation of this system at the end of the war exposes the tensions caused by the security forces' quest to preserve their internal cohesion as the Reich imploded.

Responsible for the AELs along the border, Bach delegated day-to-day operations to several of his subordinates from the Aachen Gestapo, who formed guard details from local militia units.[784] The postwar investigations regarding the Hückelhoven camp reveal that pensioned miners equipped with equally elderly weapons and equipment comprised the manpower for these units, a point highlighted by the fact that the camp's first commandant, Walter Bockmühl, injured his hand when his rifle exploded during a training exercise.[785]

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[782] HStAD, Rep. 72, Nr. 31, p. 45, Polizeiverwaltung Korbach, 14.7.51.,Vernehmung Walter Bockmühl; RW 37-11, p. 38, HSSPF West, 5.10.44., Befehl.

[783] Thalhoffer, *Entgrenzung der Gewalt*, 17, 36-40.

[784] HStAD, Rep. 72, Nr. 29, p. 39, Polizeistation Hückelhoven, 11.6.51., Zeugevernehmung Jakob K.; p. 41, Zeugevernehmung Julius K.; p. 42, Zeugevernehmung Max L.

[785] Ibid. Nr. 31, p. 45, Polizeiverwaltung Korbach, 11.6.51., Vernehmung Walter Bockmühl.

Despite their lack of training and equipment, Hückelhoven's staff soon found themselves guarding over two hundred prisoners, many of whom were military age Dutch men rounded up by security units and taken into the Reich to prevent them from supporting the approaching enemy. After arriving at the camp the prisoners brought in the late summer harvest, and spent their days dodging Allied air attacks as they dug up potatoes in the surrounding fields. The camp itself was no safer—Allied aircraft bombed and strafed Hückelhoven several times, wounding the camp's second commandant, Emil Krenkel, and these attacks eventually forced the security forces to abandon the prison.[786]

Although the guidelines issued by the Reich Security Main Office made it clear officers should only execute their prisoners if the prison was in danger of being overrun by the enemy, the crimes committed at Hückelhoven reveal that the camp served as an execution site for the Cologne Gestapo. Bach also acted independently and sentenced several inmates to death without the sanction of Gutenberger or Hoffmann. The murders committed at Hückelhoven thus expose the friction caused by Himmler's desire to maintain a clear chain of command between Berlin and the Rhineland, which cut against the personal initiative so prized in the security forces' organizational culture.[787]

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[786] HStAD, RW 37-11, p. 38, Polizei KG II, 9.10.44. Ereignismeldung; Rep. 72, Nr. 31, p. 45, Polizeiverwaltung Korbach, 11.6.51, Vernehmung Walter Bockmühl; p. 48, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 23.6.51.,Vernehmung Richard Bach; Nr. 29, p. 249, Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 12.6.45., Zeugevernehmung Wilhelmus B.; p. 250, Zeugevernehmung Martin H.; p. 254, Zeugevernehmung Adriananus van H.; p. 259, Zeugevernehmung Wilhelm M.

[787] Ibid. RW 34-10, p. 74, RFSS 1.11.44., Antrage auf Sühne bzw. Vergeltungsmassnahmen für Terror und Sabotage Handlungen.

Alongside the large number of Dutch farmers captured during the last weeks of September, Hückelhoven housed German civilians and foreign laborers arrested during the evacuation of Aachen. These inmates, who tried to avoid deportation, bore the brunt of the guards' abuse. The first prisoner to die at the camp, Josef Goldbach, a half-Jewish baker's apprentice from Cologne, was murdered on the morning of October 28 after guards summoned him to the camp hospital. Although the guards told several prisoners they killed him because he attempted to escape, former inmates later recalled Goldbach's wounds were delivered at close range to the back of the head, belying the claim. They also remembered that as a half-Jewish prisoner arrested for black marketeering, the staff singled out Goldbach for the worst abuse, both as a parasitic war profiteer and for his Jewish heritage.[788]

Other executions soon followed. A few weeks later, the Cologne Gestapo ordered the commandant to execute two East European prisoners arrested for looting.[789] Things then remained quiet until early December, when military police brought a German woman to the camp. They arrested her on charges of espionage because they found her in an area where highly accurate enemy artillery fire recently struck Wehrmacht positions.[790] Krenkel found the new prisoner incorrigible, as she attacked the camp's staff every time they attempted to question her.

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[788] HStAD, Rep. 10, Nr. 41, p. 4, Polizeiverwaltung Rattheim, 2.10.45., Zeugevernehmung Franz T.; p. 8, 2.11.45., Zeugevernehmung Johann E.; Rep. 72, Nr. 29, p. 41, 11.6.51., Polizeistation Hückelhoven, Zeugevernehmung Max L.

[789] Ibid. 29, p. 36, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 29.5.51., Vernehmung Richard Bach; p. 27,, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, Vernehmung Emil Krenkel; p. 37, 6.6.51., Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 15.12.50.; Vernehmung Richard Bach; p. 39, Polizeistation Hückelhoven, 11.6.51., Zeugevernehmung August W.

[790] Ibid. Rep. 72, Nr. 41. p. 27, Staatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 15.12.50., Vernehmung Emil Krenkel; p. 37, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 6.6.51.; Vernehmung Richard Bach; p. 39, Polizeistation Hückelhoven, 11.6.51., Zeugevernehmung August W.

After experiencing her aggressive behavior first hand during a visit to the camp, Bach assessed her as mentally ill and ordered the guards to kill the woman.[791]

Two more killings took place shortly before the security forces abandoned the camp in mid-December. One of these involved a Polish forced laborer accused of sexually assaulting a teenage German girl. Bach arrived at Hückelhoven to personally interrogate the prisoner and after violently questioning the man, shot him at the edge of a bomb crater.[792] The last two prisoners killed before the camp was evacuated were Dutch civilians arrested for using a radio and flashlights to communicate with Allied troops on the other side of the Maas River. During this period, Bockmühl returned to take charge of the camp, and he personally shot the prisoners at a cemetery in a nearby village on the orders of the Cologne Gestapo.[793]

The executions at Hückelhoven demonstrate how a range of motivations fueled atrocity. At times, ideological constructs such as the supposed barbarity of eastern workers, Jewish conspiracy, and notions of the mentally ill as unproductive framed security logic and encouraged officers to kill. In other cases, the accusation of espionage enabled violence. The brutal crimes security officers committed at Brauweiler prison, which epitomized Nazi repression for many Rhinelanders, also evidenced this range of motives.

On September 28, 1944, a small team of security officers arrived at Brauweiler Abbey, located ten kilometers northwest of Cologne. Meeting with the warden of the workhouse located

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[791] HStAD, Rep. 72, Nr. 29, p. 56, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 1.8.51., Anklageschrift Richard Bach.

[792] Ibid. p. 39, Polizeistation Hückelhoven, 11.6.51., Zeugevernehmung August W.; p. 41., Zeugevernehmung Max L.; p. 106, 17.1.52., Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, Strafsache gegen Richard Bach.

[793] Ibid. p. 104, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 17.1.52., Strafsache gegen Richard Bach.

on the grounds, their commander, Kriminalkommissar Ferdinand Kütter, informed him they were tasked with eliminating "terrorists" in nearby Ehrenfeld.[794] A few days later, the first of 200 civilians and foreign workers arrested during the efforts to regain control of the unruly district arrived, marking the beginning of a period of widespread abuse and murder.

For generations, Rhinelanders had associated Brauweiler Abbey with misfortune and misery. Founded in 1024 by the Benedictine order, Napoleon secularized and converted the grounds into a home for beggars 1803. Later, during the Kaiserreich the workhouse grounds were expanded to include a women's prison, a new cell block, and several workshops to house "asocials" such as prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, beggars, and alcoholics. The poor food and physical, monotonous work provided a grim contrast to the lively bustle of the sprawling metropolis of Cologne. Indeed, as one former warden recalled, parents often used the abbey's name to discipline their wayward children, warning them that if they misbehaved the police would take them away to Brauweiler.[795]

After 1933 the workhouse remained in operation and served as a center for criminal-biological research. The Cologne Gestapo also periodically used the prison during large scale arrest operations, such as the roundup of Jewish men after the 1938 Kristallnacht pogroms and the destruction of underground resistance networks of Polish and French prisoners in April 1944.[796] As the Allies approached the Reich, the prison transported most of its inmates to

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[794] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 278, p.754, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20. 7.49., wesentliches Ermittlungsergebnis, Archiv des Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland, Pulheim-Brauweiler, hereafter cited as LVR, Direktor Brauweiler, 22.10.44., Arbeitserziehung für männliche Jugendliche.

[795] Ibid. Nr. 276, p. 265, Leiter der Prov. Arbeitsanstalt Brauweiler, 16.12.45., Abschrift; Daners & Wißkirchen, *Was im Brauweiler geschah*, 8-9.

[796] USHMMA, Shoah Foundation, Interview 46089, 4.6.98, Stanislaw Ochalski; *Kölnische Rundschau*, 4.9.09,

Hannover or sent them to the Wehrmacht. Largely emptied by late August, the security forces used the site to hold several high profile political prisoners arrested during the roundup of dissidents after the July 20 attempt on Hitler's life. The most prominent of these inmates was Konrad Adenauer, the former mayor of Cologne the Nazis forced from office after they came to power in 1933.[797]

The prison received renewed interest from the security forces during the crisis of early autumn. Although located within striking distance of the troublesome Ehrenfeld district, Brauweiler still remained isolated enough to ensure the officers housed their prisoners securely. Most importantly, Brauweiler allowed Hoffmann to take some of the pressure off his other detention centers in the region. By late September, well before the Rhineland deportations reached their peak, these sites were already dangerously overcrowded and threatened to overwhelm the prison system's already sagging infrastructure.[798]

Led by Kriminalkommissar Ferdinand Kütter, a World War I veteran who previously commanded the Bonn Gestapo's anti-Marxist office, Sonderkommando Brauweiler epitomized the wartime decline in the quality of the Reich's security personnel. In contrast to the cohesive

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"Besuch der Vergangenheit."

[797] Daners & Wißkirchen, *Was im Brauweiler geschah,* 28, 82-94; LVR, Landesrat Düsseldorf to Arbeitsanstalt Brauweiler 25.8.44., Umstellung der Arbeit aus Anlass des totalen Kriegeinsatzes; 7.11.44, Brief, Erziehungsheim Hannover-Kleefeld to Arbeitsanstalt Brauweiler; 12.7.44, Bericht, Landesrat Düsseldorf to Arbeitsanstalt Brauweiler, notes that of the eighty male prisoners released between 1.7.44-30.11.44 all but six were sent to join military units; HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 275, p. 6. Undated, most likely from early 1946, Report, Field Investigative Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Murder and ill treatment of German political prisoners at Brauweiler, May 1944- February 1945.

[798] NARA, RG 242, T 1021, 17/542, Gefängnis Klingelpütz, 16.12.44, Fleckfiebererkrankung; 17/550, Gefängnis Klingelpütz 3.2.45., Vorführungsbefehle; HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 750,Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 16.6.51., Vernehmung Walter Hirschfeld.

and dynamic command structure of the Cologne Gestapo, the officers assigned to the unit hailed from a myriad of professional backgrounds. One, Horst Gegusch, was a former member of the Brussels security office sent to the unit during the retreat from Belgium. Another, Josef Hoegen, a former Kripo officer, joined the Cologne Gestapo in 1933. Another veteran of the Great War, he worked in the office's anti-Marxist section and RSHA briefly assigned him to Einsatzgruppe B in 1942.[799]

Of the three remaining officers, only one was a member of the security forces prior to the outbreak of the war. Walter Hirschfeld joined the Aachen Kripo in 1934 after failing to establish a career selling musical instruments. Reassigned to the border city's Gestapo office in 1942, Bach later sent him to Cologne, where his career continued to plateau. Remembered as a mediocre, "colorless bureaucrat," Hirschfeld failed to achieve promotion despite the difficult personnel situation the office faced as the war continued.[800] Further evidencing the pressures posed by wartime conditions, one member of the unit was a former truck driver recruited by the Aachen Gestapo in 1942.[801]

Due to the manpower shortage, Sonderkommando Brauweiler's officers worked alongside the Hitler Youth and *Volkssturm* patrols searching the ruins of *Räuberfeld* for gang members and fugitives.[802] Their participation in these sweeps meant that suspects arrested and

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[799] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 278, p. 749, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.7.49., wesentliches Ermittlungsergebnis.

[800] Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe,* 213.

[801] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 281, p. 1116-1120, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 3.8.50, Strafsache gegen Hoegen u.A.; Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe*, 212; Daners, *Was im Brauweiler geschah*, 97-99.

[802] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 280, p. 1072, 1082, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, Anlage zum 1 Protokoll, 17.11.49.

taken to Brauweiler were often questioned by the very same officers who apprehended them, sometimes after shoot outs or chases through the rubble, encouraging their abuse at the hands of angry and frustrated personnel.[803]

These interrogations were brutal affairs. Regardless of age or sex, after arriving at Brauweiler officers savagely beat the prisoners, repeatedly striking them in the face and body with fists, keys, pistol butts, and truncheons. The officers also used a thick wooden table leg to strike prisoners across the head or back, and they nicknamed the weapon "Clock of the Rhine" because it left prisoners' "ears ringing."[804] The men used the beatings as a form of "welcoming" their detainees to the prison. Afterwards, officers tightly handcuffed the bloodied prisoners' arms behind their backs and placed them in solitary confinement for a period ranging from a few days to two weeks. The handcuffs caused the prisoners' hands to swell painfully, "like fat sausages" in the recollection of one former guard, and the officers often ripped them off, causing severe injuries to the inmates' arms.[805] Guards also humiliated the inmates, forcing them to eat a watery soup, as one former prisoner recalled, "Like an animal" by lapping it out of a bowl. This inhumanity was not without its own twisted logic—according to one of Sonderkommando

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[803] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 280, p. 1082, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 17.11.49, Anlage 1 zum Protokoll 17.11.49.; Nr. 288, p. 95, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 29.11.49., Zeugevernehmung Harold S.

[804] Ibid. p. 10, French War Crimes Mission, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 12.11.45., Witness Statement Heinrich T.; p. Nr. 287, p. 84, 9.11.48, Landgericht Köln, Zeugevernehmung Irmgard W.; Nr. 284, p. 288, 12.9.50., Schwurgericht Landgericht Köln, Revisionsbegründung in der Strafsache gegen Hoegen u.A.;Nr. 275, p. 25, 21.3.47., Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement Else K., p. 47, 3.3.47, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement, Hans S.; p. 55, 19.3.47, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement Werner T.

[805] Ibid. p. 34, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), 17.3.45., Witness Statement, Kurt K.

Brauweiler's former secretaries the combination of beatings and psychological abuse intended to mentally break the inmates, making them pliable for future interrogation.[806]

These techniques fell well within the guidelines issued by the Reich Security Main Office in June 1942, which ordered officers to resort to "intensified interrogation methods" if they suspected prisoners knew about threats to state security. They specifically recommended they use sleep deprivation, reduced rations, solitary confinement, and physical force against "Communists, Marxists, Jehovah's Witnesses, saboteurs, terrorists, members of resistance movements, enemy agents, asocials, and Polish and Soviet workers who leave their job sites or refuse to work." In February 1944, RSHA broadened these interrogation methods to encompass crimes such as "murder, robbery, and the stockpiling of stolen goods," reflecting the security forces' merger of political and domestic crime as the situation on the home front worsened.[807]

However, postwar investigation revealed that despite official decrees, for years security officers used these brutal methods as a standard means of extracting information from suspects. For example, the West German courts charged Josef Hoegen with over one hundred and four counts of abuse and torture spanning the period between 1933 and 1945, after Cologne's

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[806] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 280, p. 7, Report, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), no date given, Murder and Ill Treatment of German Political Prisoners at Brauweiler, May 1944-February 1945; p. 14, 27.4.47., Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement Karl B.; p. 34, 17.3.45., Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement Kurt K.,; p. 48, 7.3.47, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE); p. 54, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), 23.1.47.,Witness Statement Heinrich T.; p. 56, 19.3.47., Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement Werner T.; p. 57, 17.3.47, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), Witness Statement, Hans Z.; Nr. 287, p.88, Landgericht Köln, 9.11.48., Zeugevernehmung Irmgard W.; Nr. 286, p. 1, French War Crimes Mission, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 14.11.49., Witness Statement Klaus A. Nr. 287; p. 34, Landgericht Köln, 6.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Katharina W.

[807] Ibid. p. 1091,, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, 24.2.44, Verschärfte Vernehmung; p. 1092, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, 12.6.42., Verschärfte Vernehmung.

Association for the Victims of National Socialist Persecution volunteered information to the courts regarding his treatment of the Social Democrats and Marxists arrested during the Reich's early years.[808]

The interrogations carried out at Brauweiler departed from standard practice in one significant way—officers used these methods indiscriminately rather than selectively, against German citizens with no connection whatsoever to either criminality or an underground resistance movement. In some cases security personnel rounded up entire families and took them to Brauweiler for merely associating with deserters or gang members. There was also little insight from the unit's superiors in Cologne, and conditions inside Brauweiler soon resembled the prisons used to house Leftists and Jews in the months after the Nazis came to power in 1933 as officers abused inmates for their own entertainment, in clear violation of orders to curb violence against Rhinelanders.

Anti-communism was a central factor that motivated officers' brutality against German civilians and foreign laborers at Brauweiler. Significantly, the unit's main interrogators, Kütter, Hoegen, and Hirschfeld, were all former members of the Gestapo's anti-Marxist section. As historians have noted, blame for defeat in 1918 was directed at members of the political Left, whose commitment to ideas such as pacifism and internationalism allegedly made them puppets of a Jewish conspiracy aimed at destroying Germany. This perception allowed some Germans to

[808] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 276, p 225, Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes, 22.6.48., Brief; Nr. 280, p. 1120, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 3.8.50., Strafsache gegen Hoegen U.a.

fall well outside the *Volk*'s boundaries of belonging due to their behaviors and political beliefs.[809]

Officers working in the Cologne Gestapo's anti-Marxist section were particularly apt to view East European workers as carriers of moral corruption, and Germans with communist sympathies as the worst kind of traitors. As Robert Gerwarth notes, this enemy was one which could be "tortured and killed without remorse, because these acts were necessitated by the holiness of the cause: the salvation of the nation from the socialist abyss."[810] At Brauweiler security officers brutalized *Volksgenossen* suspected of communist activity as the epitome of betrayal during the Reich's last desperate months.

For example, the leaders of the group Committee for a Free Germany, Lambert and Elisabeth Jansen perished in Brauweiler prison. Officers subjected them to savage beatings, and hanged Theo in his cell. Hoegen later took Elisabeth to view his body as a means of procuring her confession. The same night she committed suicide, and left a note scratched into the floor of her room in which shed begged Hoegen to spare her teenage son, who was also a prisoner at Brauweiler.[811] Guards also beat several other members of the group to death, hanged them in their cells, or subjected them to vicious torture, such as forcing their hands inside the furnace

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[809] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, 450, 463; Brian E. Crim, "Our Most Serious Enemy:" The Specter of Judeo-Bolshevism in the German Military, 1914-1923," *Central European History*, 44 (2011): 624-641, 624, 633-34; Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 134.

[810] Robert Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution" Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria, and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present*, Volume 200, Issue 1: 175-209, 195.

[811] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 63, p. 74, Sonderkommando Brauweiler, 24.10.44., Bericht; p. 110, Nr. 64 I, p. 564, Sonderkommando Brauweiler, 1.11.44.,Bericht; p. 567, Sonderkommando Brauweiler, 6.11.44., Meldung; p. 567a, Sonderkommando Brauweiler, Brief, transcription of Elisabeth Jansen's suicide note; Rep. 231, Nr. 291, p. 20, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 9.8.48., Vernehmung Josef Hoegen.

located in the unit's office.[812] The overseer of the abbey's cemetery also recalled seeing badly emaciated bodies taken from the cell block which bore strangulation marks and broken fingers, evidencing the abuse which took place inside the prison.[813]

The officers of Sonderkommando Brauweiler also specifically targeted East European prisoners, who they viewed as carriers of morally corruptive Judeo-Bolshevism. In her study of the concentration camp system, Karin Orth argued that the staff used the mistreatment of prisoners to instill institutional values, such as hardness and comradeship, among their rank and file.[814] Similar rituals took place at Brauweiler, where members of the unit collectively abused prisoners, in particular East Europeans, to help generate a sense of belonging and purpose. Several officers later admitted Kütter encouraged them to beat inmates, not only as a form of entertainment but also to test their willingness to commit violence. One Border Police officer assigned to Sonderkommando Brauweiler remembered that when he arrived at the prison, Kütter informed him, "Here we carry out hard work, when the prisoners don't 'sing [talk]' we go at them with truncheons until they confess." When he refused to participate in the abuse, Kütter disdained him as "too weak" for the unit and reassigned him to transport prisoners.[815]

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[812] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 41, French War Crimes Commission, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 1.2.46., Witness Statement Ludwig U.

[813] Ibid. Nr. 287, p. 68, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 24.11.49., Zeugevernehmung Gottfried B.

[814] Karin Orth, *Die Konzentrationslager-SS* (München; Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 120-132.

[815] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 291, p. 20, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 9.8.48., Vernehmung Josef Hoegen; p. 27, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 11.8.48., Vernehmung Josef Schiffer; Nr. 286, p. 48, French War Crimes Group, I Corp District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 30.1.46., Witness Statement Nikolaus S.

Other rituals centered on vengeance, reflecting the officers' anger and frustration at the fugitives they apprehended. Officers once summoned the unit's female secretaries in the middle of the night to watch them beat East European inmates after they learned that a gang member killed one of their colleagues in Cologne. This incident was also ingrained in the postwar memory of Konrad Adenauer, who remembered he could hear the cries of the prisoners inside his cell above the unit's offices.[816] The women later recalled that Hoegen, a close friend of the deceased officer, yelled the man's name as he repeatedly punched the prisoners in the face. Two of the victims later died, and other inmates recalled seeing the survivors in the cell block showers, "reduced to a picture of terrible abuse," and barely recognizable after the beating they endured.[817]

The presence of the young secretaries also influenced the brutality which took place inside Brauweiler. Both younger and older officers alike enjoyed proving their masculinity by practicing boxing techniques during interrogations, competing to see who could impress the women by landing a knockout blow. Although the secretaries later claimed they were horrified by the abuse, former prisoners remembered that the women seemed to delight in the violence, laughing as officers beat their victims senseless.[818] Apparently, some of the men found it difficult to keep up the pace of competition—after discovering one German inmate was a former

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[816] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 291, p. 28, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 11.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Konrad A.

[817] Ibid. Nr. 287, p. 91-92, Landgericht Köln, 9.11.48., Zeugevernehmung Irmgard W.; Nr. 275 p. 10, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), 26.3.47., Witness Statement Jakob A.

[818] Ibid. Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 33, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 18.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Hannelore L.; p. 34, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 16.8.48., Zeugevernehmung Katharina W.; Nr. 275; p. 14, Field Investigation Section War Crimes Group (NWE), 24.4.47., Witness Statement Karl B.

masseuse, Josef Hoegen moved the man to a better cell and provided him with extra food and luxury items such as tobacco in exchange for massages on his aching shoulders. The sessions ensured that he maintained his reputation as one of Sonderkommando Brauweiler's most feared interrogators.[819]

In one incident, the mere presence of a woman encouraged the use of violence. One morning, Hirschfeld stormed into the unit's office, disrupting a coffee break that included Kütter and one of the secretaries. He informed them that one of the prisoners, a middle-aged and usually quiet man, caused a disturbance on the upper floor of the cell block. Kütter ordered him to subdue the prisoner, and Hirschfeld returned a few minutes later, reporting that the inmate attacked him and knocked his glasses off. The young woman's presence likely exacerbated the humiliating nature of the incident, and Kütter accompanied him to the cell, where Hirschfeld executed the man.[820]

Aside from committing countless acts of sadism and abuse, the unit also killed eight of their prisoners, five of whom were German civilians. Among the three eastern workers murdered by Sonderkommando Brauweiler were two teenage women, Vera Suchowerchowa and Nina Sawina, who assisted Steinbrück while he attempted to hide from the police after they raided his hideout. Although the unit sent the rest of their East European inmates to Cologne for execution, Kütter protested the women's impending transportation to a concentration camp and

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[819] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 291, p. 23, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 9.8.48., Vernehmung Josef Hoegen; Nr. 286, p. 10, French War Crimes Section, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 23.11.45., Witness Statement, Heinrich T.

[820] Ibid. Rep. 213, Nr. 281 I, p. 1196-1197, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 3.8.50., Strafsache gegen Hoegen u.A.; Nr. 275, p. 30, Field Investigation Division (NWE), 5.3.47., Witness Statement Kurt K.; p. 48, 7.3.47., Witness Statement Hans S.

successfully lobbied his superiors to execute them, along with a Ukrainian man accused of murdering a Party official in Ehrenfeld.[821]

On February 15, 1945, as the front approached, the unit marched its surviving German prisoners, along with the few remaining female inmates of the abbey's workhouse, eastwards towards the Rhine. Many of the prisoners were now weak from the constant abuse, malnutrition, and disease they suffered over the last four months of their confinement, and the unit forced them to ride aboard open trucks in the freezing conditions. The march took place under the cover of darkness and a few prisoners in good physical condition managed to slip away across the snow covered fields and find shelter with local farmers.[822] The rest were not so lucky—once transported across the Rhine, the security forces sent them to unsanitary and vastly overcrowded work reeducation camps and prisons in the Right Bank Rhineland, where they killed many of them as the Ruhr Pocket imploded.

During this period, Kütter frantically drove through the valleys and along the winding roads of the Ruhr with a carload of case files, desperately seeking a judge to review the material and sanction the execution of his remaining prisoners. Court officials, astutely recognizing the personal danger involved in ordering the execution of German civilians now that the end appeared near, repeatedly rejected his pleas. Dodging enemy patrols, Kütter then travelled to the

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[821] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 65 I, p. 888, Sonderkommando Brauweiler, 9.2.45., Vermerk; Rep. 231, Nr. 275, p. 65, Field Investigation Division (NWE), 15.5.47., Statement Walter Hirschfeld; Daners & Wißkirchen, *Ab nach Brauweiler*, 116-125; Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe*, 454.

[822] USHMMA, Shoah Foundation, Interview 46458, 3.10.98., Interview Joanna-Elisabeth Kaneshiro; HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 11, French War Crimes Division, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 23.11.45., Witness Statement Heinrich T.; Nr. 275, p. 13, Field Investigation Division (NWE), 26.3.47., Witness Statement Jakob A.; p. 57, 17.3.47., Witness Statement Jakob Z.; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 298.

largely destroyed city of Wuppertal to meet with Gutenberger, who agreed to liquidate the prisoners. However, his triumph was short lived—several days later reports filtered in that American troops overran most of the prisons in the region and were now advancing on Wuppertal. While his colleagues changed into civilian clothes and burned their identification papers, Kütter locked himself in the bathroom of the police headquarters and committed suicide.[823]

Despite his personal difficulties obtaining orders to execute prisoners, atrocity began to move east, and February 1945 marked the beginning of the most violent period within the Rhineland's prison system. During this phase, security personnel prepared the facilities in the Left Bank Rhineland for evacuation, and an important facet of these plans was the systematic elimination of East European prisoners. As supposed racial inferiors officers executed them, both as a security measure and to also help relieve the pressure on the already overburdened prison system in the Right Bank Rhineland. Just prior to fleeing Brauweiler Abbey, Kütter's unit transported their east European inmates to the Gestapo's headquarters in Cologne. Located just a few blocks from the blackened spires of the city's magnificent cathedral, the notorious EL DE Haus was by this time a half-ruined shell due to the around-the-clock air raids hammering the city.[824]

The building continued to serve as a holding facility for prisoners, in particular those arrested by Kommando Mohr and other security units operating inside the city. It also doubled

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[823] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 50, French War Crimes Division, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 30.1.46., Witness Statement Nikolaus S.

[824] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 53, p. 427, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 20.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Heinrich S.; p. 588, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 13.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Maria M.

as an execution site for prisoners sentenced to death by the Cologne Gestapo. Witnesses later recalled that every Friday between November 1944 and March 1945, a transport arrived from Klingelpütz or one of the other regional prisons, delivering inmates for execution.[825]

As the enemy approached during late February and early March 1945, the pace of the killings intensified, and an estimated sixty to eighty prisoners a day arrived at the ruined building, where officers hanged them at a poorly constructed gallows on the orders of Kurt Matschke.[826] Personnel also shot several other prisoners, and after capturing the EL DE Haus, American troops discovered several corpses buried underneath a pile of rubble, who security officers killed with a shovel just hours before they retreated across the Rhine.[827] The exact number of victims who died during this period remains unknown. Although West German investigators placed the figure at 400, a number based on surviving records from the city's western cemetery, court officials suspected the security forces used other burial sites or cremated their victims, and that the number murdered by the security forces in late 1944 and early 1945 was as high as 1,800.[828]

During this final purge of the Left Bank Rhineland's prison system, personnel transported their German and West European inmates across the Rhine River and took them to facilities in

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[825] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 53, p. 92, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, undated, Vermerk; p. 561, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 4.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Josef K.; p. 600, 17.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Wilhelmine H.

[826] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 293.

[827] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 53, p. 575, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 12.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Adam P.

[828] Ibid. p. 89-92, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, undated, Vermerk; p. 189, *Köln Stadt-Anzeiger*, 12.12.66., "Ein Kranz an der Klingelpützmauer,"; Rep. 409, Nr. 140, p. 135, Bundesministerium Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall IV, festgestellten Tatsachen; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 302, 304.

Siegen, Wipperfürth, Siegburg, and the Hünswinkel work reeducation camp.[829] The decision to transport these prisoners is significant, especially given the risk posed by the close proximity of the front and enemy air superiority. These movements expose the paradox the Nazi regime faced during the final months of the war; that the indiscriminate, collective punishment of German civilians was tantamount to admitting defeat. As *Volksgenossen* they required careful investigation and sentencing, if the state wanted to avoid undermining civilian support for continued struggle.[830]

The efforts made by security officers to sentence German and West European prisoners to the Buchenwald and Ravensbrück concentration camps reflected their reluctance to adjudicate independently regarding this cases. As evidenced by the experience of a group of civilians arrested along the Dutch border, the Cologne Gestapo sentenced these suspects themselves, since the region's courts no longer functioned. Their arrest reveals the twisted nature of Nazi security logic, which conflated contradictory civilian behaviors with betrayal and subversion.

Around midnight on December 17, security officers from Einsatzkommando I, based at Wassenberg, received a transport of civilians captured by military patrols near the front. The group included the Tholen family, a middle-aged Dutch couple from Königsbusch, and their twenty-one-year-old son, Peter. Farmers by trade, the family fled the initial evacuation of the town in November, and residents in villages farther east took them in. After waiting out the

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[829] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 53, p. 90, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, undated, Vermerk; Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 3, French War Crimes Division, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 19.11.45., Witness Statement Werner T.; p. 26, 3.12.45., Witness Statement Leni W.; p. 29, 4.12.45., Witness Statement Maria B.; p. 32, 5.12.45., Witness Statement August S.; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 298-299.

[830] Ibid. Rep. 145, Nr. 630, p. 61, Generalstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.9.63., Vermerk; Rep. 248, Nr. 55, p. 445, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 24.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Willi W.

deportations, under the cover of darkness they tried to cross over the lines to return to their home. Because they ignored the order to leave, security officers assessed the family as *Überläufer* (defectors), and suspected the Americans sent them across the front to spy on the German military.[831]

Initially, they detained the family at Wassenberg along with a group of other civilians caught in the red zone. The prisoners included Charles Memler, a fifty-seven-year-old man from Aachen deemed "stateless" because he was "married to a Jew." It is likely he fled the city with his wife in September, either during the evacuation or the roundup of the remaining Jews and Germans of Jewish descent. Instead of seeking refuge with their daughter inside Germany, the couple initially travelled to Holland, but again became fugitives when security personnel cleared the Königsbusch area. The arrest report made no mention of Memler's wife, and it is possible she became a casualty of the constant air and artillery bombardment visited on the region. In a phrase dripping with disdain and anti-Semitic conspiracy, officers described Memler as a "renegade" who tried "to cross over to the enemy lines because his wife is a full-blooded Jew," indicating how they associated treason with the influence of an imagined Jewish conspiracy.[832]

Another member of the group was Leonard Hermanns, a wealthy German farmer from Broichhoven. During the evacuation of the border region he buried a large sum of money and valuables on his property, before he loaded his family into a truck and took them to his brother-in-law's home inside Holland. He later tried to cross over the front to recover his money and

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[831] HStAD, RW 34-28, p. 139, Stapostelle Köln, 28.1.45., Festnahme Peter Tholen.

[832] Ibid. p. 135, Stapostelle Köln, 28.1.45., Festnahme Charles Memler.

other goods.[833] Setting aside the personal plight of the civilians they captured, the officers of Einsatzkommando I described these people as a security risk.[834]

Officers then took the group of prisoners to Klingelpütz prison, before transporting them to the Buchenwald and Ravensbrück concentration camps. Based on surviving transit lists from the prison, it appears the Cologne Gestapo started to send their prisoners to these locations in January 1945.[835] This was likely due to both the foggy winter weather and the Ardennes offensive, which forced Allied air power to redirect its strength towards targets of more immediate significance, temporarily easing the intensity of the attacks on Germany's rail system.

Some of the prisoners may have actually been optimistic about their quick departure from Klingelpütz. The inmate population suffered from a massive outbreak of typhus caused by the squalid and overcrowded living conditions, and by early 1945 the prison's staff routinely sent sick prisoners to the Cologne Gestapo's headquarters, where security officers executed them. Klingelpütz's guards also killed prisoners, and the warden even offered staff members an extra 200 cigarettes a month for their participation in the executions.[836]

Thus, to some of the prisoners', their speedy transportation to a concentration camp might have seemed fortuitous. Yet any cautious optimism they harbored was short lived, as the

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[833] HStAD, RW 34-28, p. 137, Stapostelle Köln, .22.12.44, Festnahme Leonard Hermanns.

[834] Ibid. p. 138 Stapostelle Köln, 31.1.45., Strafsache gegen Leonard Hermanns; p. 140, Stapostelle Köln, .31.1.45., Stafsache gegen Peter Tholen, Arnold Tholen, Maria Tholen.

[835] NARA, RG 242, T 1021, 17/556-582, Stapostelle Köln, 26.1.45., Sonder Transportliste, Gefängnis Klingelpütz.

[836] Ibid. 17/543-544, Gefängnis Klingelpütz, 16.2.45., Fleckfiebererkrankung; 17/551, Stapostelle Köln, 31.1.45., Unverautete Revision der Häftlinge des Pol. Gef. Klingelpütz; HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 55, p. 575-579, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 12.4.67., Zeugevernehmung Adam P.; Nikolaus Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons. Legal Terror in Nazi Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 319.

prisoners arrived during one of the most lethal phases of the concentration camp system. Already facing increasingly insurmountable logistical challenges, in early 1945 the camps inside central Germany experienced an influx of inmates evacuated from others farther to the east. The overcrowded living conditions, poor diet, and lack of medical attention quickly led to the outbreaks of disease which became the primary killer of inmates at the end of the war.

This was particularly true in the case of Buchenwald, the destination for the majority of prisoners transported from the Rhineland. By autumn 1944 this essential component of the concentration camp universe was now its own distinct galaxy.[837] The eighty-seven satellite camps [*Aussenlager*] extended its control well beyond the main installation located near the city of Weimar. These subcamps were scattered throughout western Germany, and extended north into parts of Hannover as well into towns such as Colditz, east of the Elbe River.[838] By early 1945, the main camp served as the final destination for inmates evacuated from Gross-Rosen and Auschwitz, leading to a catastrophic breakdown in Buchenwald's logistical system.

Conditions were worst at the so-called "small camp [*kleines Lager*]" which served as the clearing house for new arrivals later sent out to the various satellite camps. Here, separated from the main facility by a double barbed wire fence, the staff crammed up to 1,500 people into four story bunks inside a squalid, unheated former stable or army tents which offered no real protection from the harsh winter weather. As a result of the unhygienic conditions and cramped living space typhus quickly became rampant. Unable to stem the spread of the epidemic, the

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[837] Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors: Das Konzentrationslager,* 5. Auflage (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2004), 23.

[838] Orth, *Das System*, 226.

staff began to candidly refer to the *kleines Lager* as a "camp of death and disease" and made no attempt to curb its spread. Due to epidemics, malnutrition, and exposure to the elements, 14,000 of the camp's 48,000 prisoners perished between January and liberation in April 1945.[839]

The records of prisoners from the Left Bank Rhineland bear stark testimony to the horrific living conditions and staggering attrition rate inside Buchenwald. An investigation of inmate files reveals that a quarter of them died within a month of their arrival. Although this survival rate was higher than that of the exhausted and badly malnourished prisoners arriving from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen, it also denotes how even relatively healthy prisoners rapidly succumbed to the catastrophic situation inside the camp. Already weakened by the Rhineland's unheated and disease-ridden prisons, even younger inmates quickly contracted typhus or other fatal diseases that rampaged through Buchenwald's inmate population. The fact that the staff dispensed with drafting death certificates for deceased prisoners and instead simply marked their information cards with a small red cross itself indicates the astounding mortality rates at the end of the war.[840]

Yet, ironically, the rapid transport of these prisoners to Buchenwald might also have saved some inmates' lives. If they languished inside Klingelpütz for a longer period of time, it

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[839] Geoffrey P. Megargee, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume I: Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA)* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 293; Orth, *Das System*, 228.

[840] Häftlings-Personal-Karte, Koob Engberts,8.2.45/1.1.5.3./ 5820069/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; 8.2.45../1.1.5.3./ 5820069/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Totenmeldung, Eduard Giesen, 9.3.45/ 5947426/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Häftlings-Personal-Karte, Vincent Cugini , 5705154/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Häftlings-Personal-Karte, Johann Kulinski, 14.2.45./16405224/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Häftlings-Personal-Karte, Johann Thomer, 20.2.45./7272216/1.1.5.3./ITS Office Bad Arolsen; Häftlings-Personal-Karte Petrow Osip, 11.2.45/ 6810548/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

was likely that their health would have continued to deteriorate, making them candidates for execution. Their arrival at the camp thus proved crucial for those who survived the *kleines Lager*. In good physical condition compared to prisoners from the eastern concentration camps, even older inmates who fell dangerously low in the camp's racial hierarchy, such as the forty-one- year-old German-Jewish Ernst Dreyer, proved attractive prospects for forced labor or within the camp's debilitated administration. The camp staff sent them to other locations where the conditions, although terrible, were an improvement over those inside the *kleines Lager*.[841] Such cases firmly demonstrate that the need for labor trumped the seemingly arbitrary and vindictive motives for violence commonly attributed to the concentration camp system, which continued to adhere to its own consistent, if brutal, logic even as it collapsed. In some cases, as demonstrated above, the staff's desire to exploit the human resources at their disposal, alongside the conditions brought about by logistical collapse in fact shifted the meaning and intent of the system and unwittingly led to some prisoners' survival.

This being said, location and one's job within the camp mattered. While prisoner records do not contain information about the kind of work the staff assigned inmates to do, gaining a position in which one was either indoors or had ready access to food or materials that could be stolen or traded with other prisoners proved crucial. An inmate's ability to be crafty, innovative, and at times ruthless was also essential to survival.[842] This was particularly true in Buchenwald, where the prisoner population was riven by a rivalry between groups for control of resources and

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[841] Häftlings-Personal-Karte Ernst Dreyer, 27.1.45/5781364/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[842] Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors,* 137-138, 156-157.

influence. This ongoing struggle between German criminals backed by the camp's administration, and a well-organized Leftist underground led to an uneven distribution of resources which often meant the difference between life and death. Classified as political prisoners, in some cases, the arrivals from Cologne were able to manipulate their status to gain protection, increased rations, and other important resources.[843]

Alongside these challenges, inmates also navigated the daily violence which undergirded the camp. On February 17, 1945, almost a month after his arrival at Buchenwald, Peter Tholen, the twenty-one-year-old Dutch farmer from the Köningsbusch area arrested by Einsatzkommando I, died of "heart weakness."[844] The camp's guards often used this phrase as a euphemism to denote that an inmate died due to physical violence, and it is suspicious that a young man accustomed to physical labor due to his rural upbringing suddenly collapsed from heart trouble. Although ultimately unconfirmed by the existing records, it is likely Peter ran afoul of abusive guards or predatory prisoners. The family's tragedy deepened, when after liberation Arnold Tholen discovered his wife also perished from disease in Ravensbrück roughly a week before their son died.[845]

Despite the dangers inmates confronted in the concentration camp system, prisoners arriving in Buchenwald faced mixed prospects. On the one hand, rampant disease and the

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[843] Megargee, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume I,* 291; Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors*, 170, 177.

[844] Krankengeschichte Peter Tholen,17.2.45/727120102/1.1.5.3./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[845] Sonderstandesamt Arolsen, Sterbekunde Maria Tholen, 10.8.65/46881689/1.1.35.2./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

chronic neglect generated by the system's imploding infrastructure claimed the lives of many inmates. Others quickly escaped the miseries of the *kleines Lager* due to their good physical condition, because the camp administration placed in work positions elsewhere. Even the hardest and most grueling of these tasks was better than the situation inside the transit camp, allowing prisoners access to steady, if still inadequate, food and resources that they bartered for other life-saving goods. An inmate's status also mattered, and they quickly learned to manipulate their designation as political prisoners or their work responsibilities in order to make inroads into powerful groups within the camp population.

In this respect, because it offered more opportunities, and therefore more chances for survival, Buchenwald appeared to be the lesser of two terrible options when compared to regional prisons such as Brauweiler and Klingelpütz. In the Rhineland, prisoners had little, if any, ability to improve their conditions. This meant that the health of inmates kept in these facilities steadily declined and they were likely to either die of disease or at the hands of their guards, who sought to solve the problems of disease and overcrowding by killing sick prisoners. Once transported across the Rhine, the remaining prisoners faced even worse conditions and many became victims of the final wave of violence that security officers carried out inside the Ruhr Pocket in late March and early April 1945.

As American forces advanced deeper into Germany, the security forces frantically scrambled to evacuate their remaining prisoners from the Left Bank region. After transporting German and West European prisoners across the river, they sent them to prisons and camps located in Wipperfürth, Siegburg, Hunswinkel, Siegen, and Wuppertal.[846] The scattering of

[846] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 275. p. 18, 18.3.47., Witness Statement Käthe B.; p. 57, 17.3.47., Witness Statement Jakob

prisoners to several different locations highlights the logistical challenges posed by overcrowding and the breakdown in command and communication occurred as the last vestiges of the Third Reich's administrative structure disintegrated.

The prisoners found their new conditions were much worse than their previous ones. Located in the isolated Lister Valley, fifty kilometers east of the Rhine, the Hunswinkel work reeducation camp housed many of the security forces' prisoners during this period, and was the site of some of their last crimes. One of the earliest AELs established in the Reich, by the time the 600 prisoners from the Left Bank Rhineland arrived at the camp in early 1945, it had already ceased to function, and now served as an overcrowded detainment facility, since its inmates could no longer be released or transported to other camps.[847]

Due to both the AEL's isolated location and the general breakdown in logistics across the Reich, the already woeful conditions at Hunswinkel dramatically worsened over the winter, as food and medicine became scarce. Once combined with the severe weather conditions, the lack of proper housing, sanitation, and poor diet led to the outbreak of disease.[848] Weakened by the abuse they experienced in prisons such as Brauweiler and suffering from malnutrition, many of the prisoners who arrived at Hunswinkel succumbed within two months to the typhus epidemic which ravaged the inmate population.[849]

Z., Nr. 268; p. 26, French War Crimes Mission, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 3.12.45., Witness Statement Leni W.; p. 27, 13.12.45., Witness Statement Elli B.

[847] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 749, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, .16.6.51., Vernehmung Josef Schiffer; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 296.

[848] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 300.

[849] Kreisverwaltung Lüdenscheid, 11.4.46., Sterbekunde Jakob Westeenen/76898984/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; Amtsverwaltung Lüdenscheid, 31.1.50., Ergänzungsliste, 12.3.45,Anton Kasdorp/76774307/ ITS Digital

Yet conditions in the region were much different than in other parts of the disintegrating Reich. Whereas most historians have interpreted the late war "Death Marches" as pointless and arbitrary treks designed to kill prisoners, the seemingly uncoordinated movement of prisoners throughout the Right Bank Rhineland in the last two months of the war tells a much different tale.[850] These marches did have a purpose, and reflected the desire of security and prison officials to find some solution to the problem of overcrowding or the rapid advance of American troops, indicating their desire to maintain the system's structure, even as the Reich collapsed.[851] They dispatched small numbers of prisoners from location to location in a desperate bureaucratic shell game which not only proved fatal for some prisoners, but also ironically saved the lives of others.

In the case of the inmates of Hunswinkel, the chances for survival improved for those security officers later moved on to other locations. For example, in early March, although already sick with typhus, two German prisoners from Brauweiler, Maria B. and August S., took part in a fifty kilometer march westwards to a workhouse at Siegburg. Despite the epidemic that broke out in this overcrowded facility, both recalled the staff "treated the prisoners normally" and that they provided life-saving medical attention, although this was likely because the prisoners were German.[852] Regardless, these efforts were largely due to the fact that the staff

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Archive, Bad Arolsen; Kreisverwaltung Lüdenscheid, 18.4.46., Sterbekunde, Heinrich Drehmanns/76732179; HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 275, p. 35, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 17.3.45., Zeugevernehmung Kurt K.; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 303-304.

[850] Daniel Blatman, Chaya Galai, trans., *The Death Marches*, 9-10, 186, 417.

[851] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 518, p. 18, 18.10.52., Staatsanwalt Köln, Fragebogen Dr. Paul D.

[852] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 286, p. 29, French War Crimes Mission, I Corps District, North Rhine Province, British Army of the Rhine, 4.12.45., Witness Statement Maria B.; p. 32, 5.12.45., Witness Statement August S.

stood outside the purview of the security forces' organizational culture and, recognizing the dangers posed by overcrowding and disease, labored to fight its spread rather than leave the inmates to fend for themselves.

Others were less fortunate. Marched from Klingelpütz to Siegburg, and then again eastwards to Wipperfürth, Peter Ponitschow died from fatigue on March 17, 1945.[853] The tragedy of his death was heightened by the fact that a few weeks later the camp's commandant, Friedrich Jentsch, released prisoners as the Ruhr Pocket imploded. Jentsch, who oversaw the selection of prisoners for execution at Klingelpütz, did not act out of humanitarian impulses, but rather out of pragmatism when faced with severe overcrowding and the imminent arrival of the enemy. Nevertheless, the decision managed to save the lives of some prisoners at the Wipperfürth AEL.[854]

The regional camps and prisons in west-central Germany also served as execution sites during the last weeks of the war. Scholars attribute these killings to part of a "wild" period of atrocity encouraged by chaos, autonomy, and defeat. However, postwar investigative material reveals a different motive. Incredibly, it appears that a chain of command still existed in the region until German forces inside the Ruhr Pocket surrendered in April, 1945. The executions carried out at Hunswinkel by members of the Dortmund Gestapo evidence the continued existence of a leadership structure.

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[853] Standesamt Wipperfürth, Sterbekunde Peter Ponitschow/76740892/2.3.2.1./ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[854] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 300.

In mid-February, the staff received a telegram from RSHA headquarters in Berlin ordering officers to execute fourteen eastern workers arrested for looting in the towns of Bochum and Hagen.[855] Appointed the leader of the execution detail, an officer named Egon Weisenick contacted Kriminalsekretär Gertenbach, the commandant of Hunswinkel, and requested that he order his inmates to prepare a mass grave in the woods near the camp. The next day Wesenick and his men picked up the prisoners and drove them into the Lister Valley, turning off on a side road and into the woods not far from the camp.

A longtime member of the Dortmund Gestapo assessed as "not hard enough" for a posting in the occupied territories, Weisenick appeared ill prepared to carry out the shootings. Ordering the vehicle directly to the execution site, he dismounted and walked over to confer with Gertenbach at the edge of the grave. One member of the execution squad, a veteran Gestapo officer who served with anti-partisan units in Poland and the Ukraine, later recalled that when they recognized their fate, the prisoners attacked their guards and escaped into the woods. The officers killed most of the prisoners during the ensuing chase or dragged them back to the execution site, where they were shot. Another disgusted former member of the detail later described the incident as "highly abnormal" and "not carried out in any kind of civilized manner."[856]

While indicative of the poor planning that characterized many End Phase crimes, this execution took place during a period of relative stability for the security forces east of the Rhine.

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[855] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1436, p. 150, 152, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 21.4.52., Strafsache gegen Egon Wesenick u.A.

[856] Ibid. p. 152-154, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 21.4.52., Strafsache gegen Egon Wesenick u.A.; Nr. 1439, p. 104, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 23.1.51.,Vernehmung Karl Nolte.

These kinds of killings were rare, and few took place within the Ruhr's camps and prisons until American troops crossed the Rhine. From March 12 on, executions became increasingly common, initially targeting East Europeans before expanding to encompass German and West European prisoners by the end of the month. At this point violence escalated, as American troops cut off the security forces from contact with the rest of Germany. It was only during this period that officers tried to murder their remaining prisoners, unleashing one final wave of atrocity.

As comparison between suspects sentenced to concentration camps and those who remained in western Germany demonstrates, transport to locations such as Buchenwald offered prisoners a better chance of living to see the end of the war. While they still faced dramatically reduced chances of survival due to disease and malnutrition, the concentration camps offered more opportunities for prisoners to marginally improve their conditions, in contrast to the regional prisons. Small things, such as assignment to work details where inmates could possibly access food and other resources, meant the difference between life and death.

These opportunities were non-existent in the Rhineland, where the security forces' prisoners languished in overcrowded, unheated, disease-ridden cells for months on end. Preemptive policing thus caused the very chaos it sought to prevent by further taxing the already overburdened prison system, leading to outbreaks of disease which encouraged neglect and even outright murder to relieve logistical pressures. However, guards in the concentration camps did not target their prisoners for mass murder, and simply fled as the enemy approached, leaving the starving inmates to fend for themselves. In contrast, under the aegis of a committed command structure which feared a final "stab in the back" inside the Ruhr Pocket, prisoners died in their hundreds at the hands of security officers. Yet the reliance on command, particularly orders

from Berlin regarding executions, also ironically saved lives. It meant officers evacuated their prisoners and moved them from location to location until communication with Berlin became impossible and defeat loomed. The security forces' desire to maintain of internal cohesion, along with several other factors, reveals the uneven, complex, and often paradoxical nature of the violence which occurred in the Rhineland.

Chapter Eight
Bandits, Slavs, and Criminals:
The Rhineland's Topography of Violence

"We were not militarily defeated in 1918. Rather we were stabbed in the back by foreigners and asocial elements. Today our enemies try to use these same forces against us... The struggle against these criminals is the task of the Secret State Police."

—Dr. Max Hoffmann, November 1944.[857]

"You coward! Can't you stand the sight of blood?"

—Kriminalsekretär Enders, April, 1945.[858]

While the Rhineland deportations conducted between September 1944 and February 1945 drew upon the practices of the anti-partisan war waged in occupied Europe, violence against civilians never reached the levels commonly associated with those operations. Indeed, recent research estimates that only 1,000 Germans numbered among the over 10,000 civilian victims of the Nazi regime's End Phase crimes. Foreign workers, prisoners of war, and slave laborers, particularly East Europeans, composed the majority of those who died during the war's final weeks. As Sven Keller notes, the largest number of *Volksgenossen* killed by their government came from the military, whose ranks were purged of up to 7,000 "defeatists" as the Reich collapsed.[859]

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[857] HStAD, RW 34-17, p. 8, Stapostelle Köln, 11.44. (no day given), Die Aufgaben der Geheimen Staatspolizei im Kriege.

[858] Ibid. Rep. 240, Nr. 180, p. 51. Landgericht Wuppertal, 5.3.48., Zeugevernehmung Reiner M.

[859] Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*, 52.

This next section considers why atrocity was not more extensive, especially since the region's security officers were led by veterans of the eastern front. In contrast to much of the historiography, I argue that as the Reich neared defeat, the security apparatus in western Germany became increasingly conservative, as it relied heavily on institutional guidelines issued from Berlin which intended to restrain personnel and prevent the kinds of mass atrocity so common in occupied Europe. The regime still needed the *Volk*, and sought to curb its security officers' most radical impulses. This effort created an uneven topography of violence, in which intervention from above, the advance of the enemy into Germany, and push back from personnel at ground level served to both encourage and simultaneously blunt atrocity during the regime's final months, depending on location and circumstance.

Focused on explaining the sources of violence rather than its limits, scholars have paid little attention to the question of why atrocity was not more extensive. The End Phase's historiography commonly attributes these crimes to, as Eric Johnson described it, a final "reign of insanity" created by the Reich's collapse.[860] According to this thesis, the resulting chaos unleashed fanatical Nazis, who ran amok punishing a now unworthy civilian population that failed to resist the invaders.[861] Nuancing this interpretation, other historians downplayed fanaticism in favor of so-called "functional factors," such as the decentralization of command and breakdown in communication that allowed individual officers to act independently.[862]

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[860] Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 346.

[861] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 240; Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe*, 32, 94, 106-107; Fritz, *Endkampf,* xi-xiii, 221, 270; Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 58.

[862] Paul, "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt," 549-551, 562-566.

Alongside these motives, we could also place the deep fear and hysteria caused by societal breakdown.[863] Regardless of the influences, scholars agree they led to a "cumulative radicalization" that allowed atrocity to explode across Germany in March and April 1945.[864]

These explanations help demonstrate why security officers carried out violence against their fellow *Volksgenossen*. However, they are also problematic. These interpretations remain teleological and therefore portray atrocity as seemingly inevitable, constantly accelerating until the war ended.[865] While a propensity for violence clearly existed within the Nazi security system, these kinds of explanations assume too much consistency in its intensity and scope. They also view these atrocities as irrational, arbitrary acts of vengeance, when in fact the security forces always ordered their actions with reason and purpose.[866] Furthermore, the scholarship still focuses on the last weeks of the war. The periodization of the End Phase is far too short—as we have seen, the regime turned violence against its own citizens much earlier than April 1945. This narrow conception of the End Phase overemphasizes chaos and ideological conviction at the expense of other influences that encouraged violence.

This chapter jettisons teleological notions of trajectories in favor of exploring the Rhineland's topography of violence. The choice of wording here is deliberate—it seeks to chart

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[863] This subject has yet to be pursued in the literature on the End Phase. I direct the reader to Benjamin Sims, "Disoriented City: Infrastructure, Social Order, and the Police Response to Hurricane Katrina," in Stephen Graham, ed., *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 44-53.

[864] Paul, "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt," 543.

[865] Alon Confino, *Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 100-103.

[866] Nils Brunnson, "The Irrationality of Action and Action Rationality: Decisions, Ideologies, and Organizational Actions," *Journal of Management Studies*, (19): 29-44, 29, 31-36; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 97; Welzer, *Täter*, 16.

the undulations and shifts of atrocity in order to provide a more accurate accounting of how it unfolded.[867] For example, throughout autumn 1944, violence erupted in Cologne and parts of the northern sector, while the southern area near Bonn remained relatively quiet in comparison. Mapping the peaks and valleys of violence helps explain why it never reached the intensity associated with anti-partisan operations in occupied Europe. All too often, historians portray the Nazi regime, particularly its security apparatus, as omnipotent and unrestrained. During the Third Reich's collapse, practices tried and tested by experience abroad confronted new realities that simultaneously called for violence and restraint, a paradox which generated internal tensions that in some cases unintentionally checked atrocity. The security forces never evenly applied their violent practices, and examining the limits of mass violence explains why relatively few German civilians died during the End Phase in western Germany.

We can divide the atrocities that took place in the Rhineland into three general phases. The first was an initial burst of atrocity in early September 1944, as the security forces scrambled to help prepare the Reich's defense. A second occurred in February 1945, as they retreated across the Rhine, and a third, final wave of atrocity took place in late March and early April as the Ruhr Pocket collapsed and German forces surrendered. However, this overview also needs to account for the sporadic episodes of violence that continued throughout the region, even during the "quiet" period between late November 1944 and January 1945, such as the execution of German civilians in Ehrenfeld or the murder of captured *Zwangsarbeiter* at Brauweiler,

[867] Here I draw inspiration from John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Cologne, and in the Eifel Mountains, crimes which occurred after the regime reasserted its control over the now largely depopulated region.

The security leadership in Berlin's ceaseless efforts to control their personnel in the Rhineland created this ebb and flow of atrocity. From the start of the deportations in early September, the regime intended to use force against the civilian population. Always fearful of the home front's collapse, once faced with defeat it enacted the kinds of coercive, violent policies it attempted to shield *Volksgenossen* from earlier in the war. Gutenberger's bloodthirsty call in September 1944 for his officers to execute all criminals, deserters, and other "riff raff" best evidenced this change.[868] However, these uncoordinated early efforts to restore order, issued without clear guidelines, ran up against opposition, even among hardened veterans of the eastern front. This tension within the security apparatus forced the regime to reconsider the application of violence inside western Germany.

The idea of violently and indiscriminately purging the *Volk* of elements that might undermine the war effort was initially encouraged by the lack of clear guidance from Berlin. In early September, RSHA's leadership remained uncertain about the extent of the unrest in the region and how to address it. Their failure to quickly craft a uniform policy proved fatal for some prisoners, as it gave Gutenberger and other security officers who favored the use of violence a window of opportunity to act free from outside oversight.

As Richard Bach later recalled, Gutenberger returned from his meeting with Himmler at Wesel and informed his officers the *Reichsführer* had given him full authority in the region, and

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[868] HStAD, Rep. 72, Nr. 29, p. 53, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 1.8.51., Anklageschrift Richard Bach.

that they should exercise violence at their own discretion.[869] This order stemmed from fears that the Allies would quickly overrun the border areas, and reflects how the anxiety surrounding the threat of invasion encouraged preemptive thinking on the part of Gutenberger. Concerned the enemy might soon capture the area, he issued orders which he felt were in tandem with those used to secure territory behind the frontlines in occupied Europe.[870]

However, Gutenberger's subordinates largely ignored his call for them to commit indiscriminate violence on the home front. In particular, their failure to carry out his orders to round up and execute the Rhineland's Jewish and half-Jewish residents evidenced his officers' reluctance to carry out mass atrocity. This refusal did not stem from their desire to protect the Reich's few remaining Jews, but rather the manner in which Gutenberger issued the directive. Times of crisis generate uncertainty, and organizations attempt to solve these challenges by referring to rules and guidelines that provide the internal stability needed to undertake action. Therefore, personnel tend to become more conservative, rather than radical, as they sort through possible options by stringently reverting to protocol.[871] This tendency was evident within the Rhineland's security leadership in September 1944. Although accustomed to the use of preventative violence, veteran officers erred on the side of caution and balked at Gutenberger's orders to kill rather than risk undermining home front morale.

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[869] HStAD, Rep. 72, Nr. 18, p. 388b, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach; p. 452, Landgericht Aachen, 30.11.50., Vernehmung Walter Albath.

[870] Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*, 230.

[871] Turner, "The Organizational and Interorganizational Development of Disasters," 378-379.

For example, Gustav Noske, the commander of the Düsseldorf Gestapo, and a veteran of Einsatzgruppe D's murder campaign in the Caucasus, refused to carry out the order to kill the Rhineland's Jews. He was suspicious of the directive because Gutenberger issued it verbally instead of documenting it in written correspondence, and Noske viewed his actions as a breach of protocol. He therefore considered Gutenberger's order illegitimate, and recalled that he "suspected his professional competency." He refused to carry out the executions, fearing the Higher SS and Police Leader acted independently rather than at the direction of RSHA.[872] Although the Reich Security Main Office later court martialed Nokse for insubordination, the incident attracted the attention of Himmler, who ordered the deportation of the Rhineland's Jewish and half-Jewish residents to labor camps in Kassel.[873]

Other officers doubted Gutenberger. Both Noske and Bach recalled Hoffmann also expressed his concerns about the legitimacy of the Higher SS and Police Leader's directive, remarking that in his opinion "the orders went too far."[874] Likewise, despite following his superior's commands during the sweep of Aachen, Bach also ordered his secretary to carefully transcribe his meetings with Gutenberger because he feared that RSHA's leadership might hold him accountable for carrying out illegal orders. In particular, he was concerned that Gutenberger refused to allow these directives documented, and only issued them verbally. His reluctance to

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[872] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 18, p. 525, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 6.12.50., Vernehmung Gustav Noske; Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord. Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg: HIS, 2003), 201, 238, 324, 418.

[873] HStAD, RW 34-8, p. 4, Stapostelle Köln, 9.11.44., Tätigkeit der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944; Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 269.

[874] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 15, p. 526, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 6.12.50., Vernehmung Gustav Noske; p. 388e, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach.

put pen to paper led Bach to believe Gutenberger violated the chain of command that still existed between Berlin and the Rhineland.[875]

While Bach undoubtedly used these statements to help shield himself from postwar prosecution they also reveal how senior officers viewed Gutenberger, who lacked proven "frontline" experience, as an outsider. Indeed, the Higher SS and Police Leader might have felt that he needed to issue such bloodcurdling orders to impress these veterans of the East. If this was the case, the ploy failed. When faced with uncertainty on the home front, in spite of their violent experiences abroad and the emphasis placed on initiative by their organizational culture, the Rhineland's security leadership reverted to institutional guidelines rather than act independently or carry out orders that they thought were not approved by Berlin.

Further evidence of the attempt to rein in Gutenberger and other overzealous officers exists in the form of an order issued by Himmler regarding the treatment of prisoners. He commanded officers to send their requests to execute Germans and West Europeans to RSHA headquarters for final approval, providing a fail-safe against the kind of destructive individual autonomy so characteristic of the security forces' organizational culture. Significantly, the *Reichsführer*'s directive allowed regional security commanders to order executions if communication with Berlin became impossible.[876]

The order was notably silent regarding the treatment of East Europeans, and Himmler gave the security forces full autonomy to act against these offenders as they saw fit, as per

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[875] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 15p. 38, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, 15.5.48., Zeugevernehmung Mimi M.; p. 388d-388e, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach.

[876] Ibid. RW 34-10, p. 74-75, RFSS, 1.11.44., Richtlinien für Hinrichtungen.

existing RSHA guidelines.[877] He provided additional encouragement to persecute these individuals in another circular that noted "first and foremost foreigners should be targeted as revenge for enemy air attacks or acts of sabotage… orders for the punishment of Germans are to be given by me alone."[878] This restriction, ironically, ensured that the security forces' efforts to punish Germans were prevented until the last days of the Reich.

These guidelines demonstrate RSHA's desire to retain a monopoly on violence, rather than allow its officers to run amok and act independently. Himmler and other security commanders feared that encouraging autonomy might extend violence to the *Volk* too indiscriminately, undermining the regime's efforts to cultivate resistance to the coming invasion. Although the security forces decentralized to cope with the devastating effects of Allied bombing, they continued to report to Berlin rather than take orders directly from Gutenberger. While he served as an interlocutor between Himmler and the region's security forces, after September 1944, Gutenberger largely busied himself micromanaging the four reserve police battle groups which remained under his command, and he continued to pressure these units to execute their prisoners.[879]

Himmler's attempt to curb his officers' initiative also exposed another crucial factor that influenced the atrocities taking place in the Rhineland—the adherence to legal guidelines. The decentralization of command and the values of the *Führerprinzip* threatened to undermine the

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[877] USHMMA, RG14.106, R 58/473/275, Der Reichsführer-SS und Chef der deutschen Polizei, 6.1.43., Durchführungsbestimmungen für Executionen.

[878] HStAD, RW 34-10, p. 76-77, RFSS, 4.11.44., Antrage auf Sühne bzw. Vergeltungsmassnahmen für Terror und Sabotage-Handlungen.

[879] Ibid. RW 34-8, p. 1-4, Stapostelle Köln, Tätigkeitsbericht der Stapostelle Köln im September und Oktober 1944.

regime's increasingly strained relationship with its *Volksgenossen* in the Rhineland. While the Nazi leadership considered preemptive violence necessary to eliminate perceived dangers, its broad application threatened to greatly weaken the regime's legitimacy among an already war weary and frustrated population. The maintenance of legal guidelines thus restrained security personnel and, in theory, prevented counterproductive acts of violence. Most importantly, this reliance on legal codes intended to justify the regime's actions and prevent mission creep by ensuring personnel followed the instructions issued to them.

These efforts to maintain structure constrained the scope of violence in the Rhineland, and this fact helps explain why atrocity was not more widespread. Although some Germans did fall victim to execution squads, East Europeans remained the primary targets of violence. It is likely that in many cases these unfortunates died as proxies; victims of the anger, fear, and frustration of officers who were prevented from carrying out violence against German civilians. As Hoffmann informed Bach, the Einsatzkommandos "have the right to act against Poles and eastern workers under the guidelines of RSHA," sending a clear message to his men to pursue this category of suspects without restraint.[880]

Still, as a surviving execution list from one of the Einsatzkommandos operating in the Left Bank Rhineland indicates, German civilians did fall victim to the security forces. Of the eleven *Volksgenossen* included on the list of eighty-one victims, the security forces executed them for either attempting to cross over to the enemy lines, or engaging in "acts of resistance"

[880] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 15, p. 388e, Oberstaatsanwalt Mönchengladbach, 24.6.50., Vernehmung Richard Bach.

ranging from the distribution of anti-war flyers to soldiers or spying for the enemy rather than for theft or looting, as in the case of East European *Zwangsarbeiter*.[881]

These killings point to the tensions caused by the security force's organizational culture, which after five years of bloody experience abroad favored violent solutions and independent action structured by loose guidelines. Thus, some officers continued to exercise initiative regardless of orders from above, and this friction between personnel and their superiors in Berlin in some cases enabled violence from below.

Regardless, these incidents were rare and efforts to adhere to orders continued even after the security forces retreated across the Rhine, as demonstrated by the execution of prisoners at the Hunswinkel AEL in March 1945 on the orders of RSHA.[882] While Nazi security culture favored violence, in response to the dangers posed by poor communication, social breakdown, and impending defeat, officers increasingly relied on directives from above to delineate objectives and structure their response to the plethora of contradictions emerging within the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[883]

For example, in January 1945 the Rhineland's Inspector of Security Police, Dr. Walter Albath made a harrowing journey to Berlin. Meeting with Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo, he begged him to allow his officers in the Rhineland to execute German prisoners without approval from Berlin. The security chief rejected his plea. Reiterating Himmler's

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[881] HStAD, RW 34-30, p. 80-89, Stapostelle Köln, 5.1.45., Erschiessungen, Dortige Verfügung vom 4.1.45.

[882] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1440, p. 153, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 21.4.52., Strafsache gegen Egon Wesenick u.A.

[883] Brunnson, "The Irrationality of Action and Action Rationality," 29, 33, 35; Turner, "The Organizational and Interorganizational Development of Disasters," 378, 388; Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 97.

instructions, he informed Albath that only the commanders of regional Gestapo offices held the authority to carry out death sentences, and ordered them to only use this executive power as a last resort.[884]

The continued adherence to organizational protocols is also demonstrated by the creation of *Kommandeure der Sicherheitspolizei* (KdS) in order to better coordinate operations inside the Ruhr Pocket in early April 1945. By this time, the region's security forces already suffered the loss of several of their commanders, and the retreat from the Left Bank Rhineland scattered its personnel across the region. The formation of these new leadership positions reflected Gutenberger's desperate effort to maintain a clear chain of command, even as the security forces' cohesion unraveled during the war's final weeks.

As the enemy advanced, Gutenberger, who now oversaw the security forces trapped inside the Ruhr Pocket, issued orders to liquidate their remaining prisoners. Although the historiography has attributed this last wave of violence to the fanaticism and independent action of security personnel, Gutenberger acted in accordance with a telegram sent by Himmler on January 25, 1945. This directive commanded security offices in danger of being overrun by the enemy to eliminate their prisoners.[885] He also passed on General Model's call for officers to execute all "criminals" in their custody in order to protect the civilian population as the Pocket collapsed. The security forces did not carry out these orders until the enemy threatened to capture many of the prisons, and some fell into American hands before the guards could kill their

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[884] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1442, p. 22, 16.7.67., Justizminister des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen to Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Walter Albath.

[885] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 8, RFSS, 25.1.45., Geheimerlass.

inmates, denoting how uncertainty caused hesitation and slowed officers' violent reaction to defeat. Although hundreds of prisoners died during this period, the reliance on command and protocol ironically prevented a complete massacre inside the Ruhr Pocket.[886]

These events call into question the autonomy commonly attributed to End Phase crimes. Unlike the atrocities committed by *Volkssturm* members and Party officials, even during the war's final days the security forces continued to follow orders that limited their operational horizons rather than resort to indiscriminate violence against civilians. In fact, the estimated 675 people murdered by them inside the Ruhr Pocket died because they continued to follow the guidelines issued by RSHA, killing prisoners arrested during the deportations rather than turning against the civilian population once the war was clearly lost.[887] As Hans Henschke, the officer who replaced Noske as commander of the Düsseldorf Gestapo, later remarked "Without Gutenberger's orders no executions would have been committed, as everyone followed directives rather than *Führerprinzip*," indicating the continued presence of a command structure during the war's final days, and how it continued to limit officers' personal autonomy.[888] The dependence on directives from above played an important, and unintentional, role in preventing greater violence. However, another key factor that prevented mass atrocity was the composition of the personnel available to the region's security commanders. While their experiences abroad

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[886] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180 (Band I), p. 214, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 3.2.49., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

[886] Ibid. Rep 409, Nr. 150, p. 223, Landgericht Bonn, 15. 5. 63., Vernehmung Arthur Hennecke.
p. 219, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 16.3.49., Zeugevernehmung Wilfried H., p. 220, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 8.4.49., Zeugevernehmung Caspar D.

[887] Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo*, 304-306.

[888] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180 (Band I), p. 181, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 20.1.49., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

socialized these men to violence, their subordinates were typically older men unaccustomed to murdering civilians and prisoners.

The security offices in the Rhineland and the industrial cities of the Ruhr suffered manpower shortages since 1939, as RSHA sent its younger officers abroad to oversee the populations of occupied Europe. While the arrival of personnel from dissolved security offices in France and Belgium reversed these losses autumn 1944, the bulk of manpower available to the Cologne Gestapo came in the form of Border Police and Customs officers. These men had little enthusiasm for atrocity. Unfamiliar with the violent practices advocated by their new commanders, they were reluctant to inflict violence, both against their fellow Rhinelanders and fugitive foreign workers. A study of Einsatzkommando IV (EK IV), a unit entirely comprised of these officers, exposes the difficulties the security leadership had encouraging their ad hoc personnel to kill.

The Cologne Gestapo formed the unit in mid-September 1944, after the retreat from Belgium. As American troops advanced northwards, resistance groups attacked the columns of German soldiers retreating towards the Reich. In order to crush these threats, Hoffmann formed the roughly sixty Border Police and Customs officers based in the area around Verviers and Eupen into a battle group led by Arnold Schneider, the commander of the Eupen Border Police.[889] Ignoring Hoffmann's orders to execute civilian hostages in retaliation for several recent attacks, Schneider and his men fled in panic on September 8, when they sighted American troops on the outskirts of Verviers.[890]

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[889] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 223, Landgericht Bonn, 15. 5. 63., Vernehmung Arthur Hennecke.

[890] Ibid. p. 140, Landgericht Bonn, 23.1.63., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider; Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 133, Landes

Once safely ensconced in the Eifel Mountains behind the southern sector of the front Hoffmann ordered the officers to relocate to Schleiden, twenty-five miles southwest of Bonn. After arriving in the town, they men learned that Himmler ordered all Border Police units in the region under the command of the Cologne Gestapo.[891] They were further alarmed when they heard that their unit, designated Einsatzkommando IV, was under investigation for acts of cowardice during its retreat from Belgium.[892] Indeed, one officer was already in Gestapo custody at the notorious EL DE Haus.[893]

Despite the scrutiny from their superiors in Cologne, the officers of Einsatzkommando IV remained less than enthusiastic about carrying out patrols or sifting through the thousands of deportees crowding into the villages of the Eifel. Spread out along the roads in small groups, EK IV's personnel typically avoided searching civilian traffic and spent their time tucking into bottles of spirits they bought from local farmers. Remarkably, some officers even developed a live-and-let-live policy towards the foreign workers they encountered traveling the roads.[894]

Kriminalpolizei Amt Solingen, 16.3.61., Zeugevernehmung Franz H.; Nr. 194, p. 75, Oberstaatsanwalt Aachen, Vernehmung Gerhard Stevens.

[891] HStAD, Rep. 248, Nr. 56, p. 911, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 27.10.67., Zeugevernehmung Friedrich K.; p. 915, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 27.10.67. Der Zollgrenzschutz der Reichszollverwaltung bis zum 8. Mai 1945 -unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Einsatzes im Raum Köln; Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 120, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 18.3.63., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

[892] Ibid. Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 89, Landgericht Bonn, 6.2.61., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider; Rep. 145, Nr. 632, p. 20, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.9.63., Anklageschrift gegen Schneider u.A., Rep. 409, Nr. 151, p. 13, Geheime Staatspolizei Köln, Abschrift, 24.9.44., Einsatzbefehl.

[893] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 192, p. 52, Staatsanwalt Bonn, 26.5.53., Vernehmung Gerhard Stevens; Nr. 193, p. 124, Landgericht Bonn, Zeugevernehmung Agnes H.; NSDok, Z 20 618, 23.9.97., Zeitzeugen Unterredung Klawdija Alfons Myrtner

[894] Ibid. Nr. 153, p. 66, Landgericht Bonn, 22.1.63., Zeugevernehmung Franz E.; Nr. 146, p. 13, Landgericht Bonn, 23.3.63., Vernehmung Konrad Schoenauer.

Throughout much of the early autumn, the only hazardous duty the members of the Einsatzkommando carried out were nighttime patrols across enemy lines. They attempted to not only gather information about nearby American forces, but to also gain insight into how civilians behaved in areas occupied by the enemy.[895] Attempting to protect his men, Schneider initially sent foreign laborers across the lines, instead of putting his officers at risk. Unsurprisingly, these scouts simply surrendered to American troops, and he then asked for volunteers to undertake the dangerous mission of sneaking across enemy lines. Several of these men were killed, as small groups of inexperienced officers dressed in civilian clothing fell prey to American ambushes or wandered into their own minefields.[896]

Despite initially taking heavy casualties, the patrols' performance improved by late autumn as they gained experience and evolved into a small group of hardened, thrill seeking younger personnel. These men stood in marked contrast to the majority of EK IV's older officers, who were simply content to wait out the end of the war.[897] As its former secretaries noted, the unit thus became divided into two groups; regular officers, and a smaller clique of "Nazis" willing to volunteer to cross the frontlines.[898] Several of these men later carried out

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[895] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 7, Kommando Schneider, 10.11.44., Besonderer Auftrag des Sturmbannführers Paul S.; p. 51, IdS Albath to Leiter Stapo Köln, 27.10.44.; Rep. 409, Nr. 142; p. 11, Landgericht Bonn, 18.3.63., Voruntersuchungsverfahren gegen Schneider; Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 92, Landeskriminalamt Osnabrück, 16.2.61., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

[896] Ibid. RW 34-32, p. 10, Kommando Schneider, 17.9.44., Bericht; p. 20-23, Kommando Schneider, 21.9.44., Bericht; Rep. 145, Nr. 632, p. 147-148, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.3.61., Vernehmung Georg Heidorn.

[897] Ibid, Rep. 409, Nr. 148, p. 39/4, Landgericht Bonn, 12.7.62., Vernehmung Rudolf Manowski; Nr. 149, p. 3, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 27.2.63., Zeugevernehmung Ernst W.

[898] Ibid. Rep. 270, Nr. 192, p. 127, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.2.61., Zeugevernehmung Agnes H.; Rep. 409, Nr. 147, p. 79, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 5.2.63., Zeugevernehmung Renate H.

executions, and due to their knowledge of the region they also took part in Operation Karneval, the assassination of the mayor of Aachen in early 1945.[899]

These officers proved successful at developing connections with civilians in enemy territory, and their efforts allowed Schneider and EK IV to work their way back into the good graces of their superiors in Cologne. Although he served in World War I and helped suppress Leftist uprisings in Berlin and the Ruhr as a member of the Free Corps movement, Schneider had little appetite for the murder of civilians and foreign workers.[900] The unexpected arrival of American forces in Belgium catapulted him into a leadership position that he never seemed entirely comfortable with, and his chief priority only appeared to be the survival of his men.

Described by his former secretary as a "typical bureaucrat" who "very much lacked independent initiative," Schneider manipulated the unit's isolated location in the Eifel Mountains in order to protect it from becoming involved in the wave of atrocity sweeping across the region. Throughout the autumn, he falsified reports about EK IV's activities and routinely released prisoners, or transported them to Cologne rather than follow Hoffmann's orders for his units to execute East European prisoners at their own discretion.[901]

While still reluctant to order his men to commit murder, the success of Einsatzkommando IV's excursions across the frontlines helped ease tensions between Schneider and Hoffmann.

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[899] HStAD, Rep. 145, Nr. 632 , p. 27-28, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.9.63., Anklageschrift; Nr. 193, p. 33, Landeskriminalamt Trier, 10.1.61., Zeugevernehmung Rudolf M.

[900] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 142, p. 87, Kriminaldienstelle Solingen, 7.1.51., Lebenslauf Arnold Schneider.

[901] Ibid. Nr. 147, p. 75-76, Landgericht Bonn, 5.2.62., Zeugevernehmung Renate H.; p. 99, Landgericht Bonn, 23.1.63., Vernehmung Konrad Schönauer; Rep. 145, Nr. 630, p. 86, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.9.632., Anklageschrift; Rep. 270, Nr. 192, p. 129, Landeskriminalamt Osnabrück, 23.2.61., Zeugevernehmung Renate H.

Although of limited value, the information gathered by the patrols surpassed the efforts of the Einsatzkommandos operating farther north. Their ability to chart American troop movements in particular improved the relationship between the unit and the Cologne Gestapo's commander. Pleased with their work, Hoffmann later acknowledged the warming of relations in a report, remarking that "the customs officers from Eupen have redeemed themselves for their earlier performance at Verviers."[902]

This respite from scrutiny proved short lived. In mid-November, police in the neighboring town of Mechernich arrested Lydia Kuscharenko, a young Ukrainian woman accused of stealing clothing from the local hospital after an air raid.[903] The town's police captain mistakenly contacted Erich Best, the Cologne Gestapo's liaison to the Wehrmacht, about her alleged crimes. The error left Schneider little room to maneuver—Best passed on the report to Hoffmann, who ordered Einsatzkommando IV to execute the woman.[904] He also demanded that Gerhard Stevens, the Border Police officer previously arrested for cowardice, carry out the execution in order to prove his reliability. Under this pressure from Hoffmann, Schneider apparently felt he had no choice but to carry out the orders, and Stevens executed the woman the following evening in front of a crowd of foreign laborers.[905]

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[902] HStAD, RW 34-31, p. 53, Leiter Stapo Köln to IdS Albath, 14.11.44.

[903] Ibid. RW 34-30, p. 80-89, 5.1.45., Staatspolizei Köln, Erschiessungen in der Zeit 15.9.44. bis heute wurden von dem Kommandos I Erkelenz, II Jülich, III, Düren, IV Schleiden.

[904] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 153, p. 95, Landgericht Bonn, 22.2.63., Zeugevernehmung Erich Best.

[905] Ibid. Nr. 150, p. 123, Landgericht Bonn, 18.3.63., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider; Rep. 145, Nr. 630, p. 18, Generalstaatsanwalt Köln, 11.62. (no day given) Vernehmung Gerhard Stevens; Rep. 270, Nr. 192, p. 48-49, Staatsanwalt Bonn, 22.5.53., Zeugevernehmung Albert R.; p. 52, Staatsanwalt Bonn, 25.5.53., Vernehmung Gerhard Stevens.

This would not be the last atrocity committed by the unit. A few weeks later, military policemen arrested two East European workers who tried to cross through the frontline area. During their interrogation, officers found a compass of suspected American origin on one of the prisoners, and they accused the men of spying for the enemy.[906] Although Schneider informed Hoffman of the arrests, this time he attempted to convince his superior to allow him to transport the suspects to Cologne. Hoffmann replied that fuel was in short supply and ordered Schneider to execute the prisoners. After receiving the order, Schneider again tried to stall the impending execution by arguing that he lacked enough investigative information to carry out the sentence legally. In response to the request, during a heated telephone conversation Hoffmann browbeat Schneider and accused him of being too squeamish. Ending the conversation, he bragged about the prisoners he executed while stationed in the East, and told Schneider that he should not "have such a weak heart."[907] After the conversation, Einsatzkommando IV's shaken commander passed on the execution orders to two younger officers with a reputation for strong nerves due to their repeated patrols behind enemy lines. The next day the men drove the prisoners in the nearby woods and executed them.[908]

A few weeks later, Hoffmann arrived at EK IV's headquarters to personally exhort Schneider's men to carry out executions. At a breakfast meeting held in his honor, he informed they should no longer send prisoners to Cologne, and ordered the unit to execute East European

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[906] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 128, Landgericht Bonn, 18.3.63., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

[907] Ibid. Rep. 270; Nr. 193, p. 99, Landeskriminalamt Osnabrück, 17.2.61., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

[908] Ibid. p. 149, Landgericht Bonn, 23.3.61., Vernehmung Georg Heidorn; Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 128, Landgericht Bonn, 18.3.63., Vernehmung Arnold Schneider.

suspects on the spot. He then reminisced about his own experiences in the East, and claimed he "killed thousands" while stationed there. Hoffmann closed his speech by instructing the stunned officers on how to kill their victims by delivering a shot to the back of the head. This statement in particular indicated how veteran officers passed on their knowledge of violence to their inexperienced subordinates and promoted the security forces' culture of killing.[909]

They were soon tested. In early December, word reached the unit about eleven east European prisoners arrested in Mechernich for stealing shoes during an air raid. This time, Schneider did not attempt to stall for time by contacting Hoffmann, and instead formed an execution detail of four men. While all the members of the Border Police spent six weeks of training at the Border Police School in Pretsch, the squad was completely inexperienced in carrying out executions, as revealed by the way in which they committed the atrocity.[910] While the men knew Schneider sent them to kill the prisoners, they were not given any specific instructions from their commander. Instead, the men discussed the best method of execution among themselves during the drive to Mechernich. Along the way, the officers located a side road into the woods and decided to take their prisoners into the forest and force them to dig their own graves before shooting them.[911]

Arriving in the town, the men discovered that seven of the prisoners escaped the night before by kicking down the door of their cell and running away into the surrounding woods.

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[909] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 140, p. 50, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Die festgestellten Tatsachen; Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 126, Landeskriminalamt Osnabrück, 23.2.61., Zeugevernehmung Renate H.; Welzer, *Täter*, 202-203.

[910] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 143, p. 28, Landgericht Bonn, 17.3.62., Voruntersuchungsverfahren gegen Schneider u.A.

[911] Ibid. Nr. 140, p. 444, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall III- Die festgestellten Tatsachen.

Relieved that their task now seemed more manageable, the group loaded the remaining four prisoners into the truck and then drove them to the prearranged execution site. Dismounting, they marched them into the woods and forced them to dig a grave. When the victims finished, the officers ordered two of the unfortunate men to gather sticks and brush to cover the pit. While they were gone, they executed the other two prisoners. During the shooting, one nervous officer's pistol jammed, and the terrified prisoner scrambled out of the grave, before being gunned down by another shooter. Meanwhile, reacting to the gunfire, the other two Border Policemen killed the remaining two victims, and then dragged their bodies to the grave, which the officers covered with loose earth and leaves.[912] When the men returned to camp that afternoon, they reported to Schneider, who cruelly joked "did you at least recover the shoes?" reflecting his own sense of growing cynicism regarding his unit's activities.[913] He then distributed bottles of schnapps and cigarettes as a reward for their participation in the executions.[914]

News of the shootings circulated throughout the unit. Some men justified the killings because the victims were looters, underscoring how concerns about crime resonated with officers who lived and worked in the region for years.[915] Others worried that if they did not carry out the

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[912] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 163, Landgericht Bonn, 5.4.61., Vernehmung Hans Kokenbrink; Rep. 409, Nr. 146, p. 8, Landgericht Bonn, 3.3.61., Vernehmung Konrad Schönauer; Nr. 150, p. 95, Landgericht Bonn, 23.1.63., Vernehmung Konrad Schönauer.

[913] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 146, Nr. 145, p. 7, Landgericht Bonn, 23.3.63., Vernehmung Karl Martin.

[914] Ibid. Rep. 270, Nr. 143, p. 36, Landgericht Bonn, 17.3.62., Voruntersuchungsverfahren gegen Schneider u.A.

[915] Ibid. Rep. 145, Nr. 631, p. 58, 91, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.9.63., Anklageschrift; Rep. 270, Nr. 193, p. 58, Landeskriminalamt Köln, 25.1.61., Zeugevernehmung Hans B.; p. 223, RFSS Himmler, 1.11.44., Anordnung von Executionen; p. 245, 12 Infanterie Division, 22.9.44., Weitere Anweisungen und Hinweise für den Kampf auf Reichsgebiet,

shootings, the Cologne Gestapo might execute officers who failed to participate. News brought back from the couriers sent to the EL DE Haus in Cologne only encouraged these fears. They recounted stories about a gallows constructed in the ruined building's courtyard and rooms stacked with the bodies of the Gestapo's victims.[916] Some officers felt they simply had no choice in the matter, and late night conversations turned morbid as they sought out the handful of men who fought against partisans in Eastern Europe for advice on how to kill prisoners. Others devised ways to avoid participating in murder. For example, one worried officer assigned to an execution detail met with his roommate to discuss what he should do. The man and his girlfriend urged him to shoot in the air, a tactic which allowed him to participate in the atrocity and remain free from scrutiny, but also ensured his conscience remained clean.[917]

The pressure to carry out executions intensified after Hoffmann's death at the hands of gang members inside Cologne. In early December, EK IV relocated to Gut Hombusch, sixteen miles southwest of Bonn. Shortly after their arrival, they arrested a foreign worker on suspicion of looting. The prisoner did not speak German, and Schneider attempted to use the language barrier to stall the impending murder, claiming he needed an interpreter in order to properly interrogate the prisoner. When one could not be found, he contacted the Cologne Gestapo and tried to send the prisoner to their headquarters for questioning, and most likely, execution. Foltis, now in command of security operations in the region, denied the request and ordered him to shoot the prisoner. Schneider then passed on the directive to two of his officers, describing

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[916] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 144. p. 31, Landgericht Bonn, 11.4.61., Vernehmung Friedrich Grau.

[917] Ibid. p. 125, 130, 135, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall IV- Die festgestellten Tatsachen; Nr. 140, p. 43, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66, Fall III,- Die festgestellten Tatsachen.

the man as a looter. This latest atrocity in particular reflected officers' lack of experience in regards to carrying out violence. The men drove their prisoner two hundred meters into the woods surrounding Gut Hombusch, shot the man, and then simply dumped his body into a large hole at the base of a tree.[918]

The unit's relative independence ended in February 1945, when Foltis ordered it to relocate to the village of Mülheim-Wichterich as American forces pushed towards the Rhine. When they arrived at their new home, Schneider discovered the Gestapo commander had reassigned his men to a police battalion preparing to defend Bonn.[919] The Border Police officers found their new unit's morale at an all-time low—hastily called up and armed with outdated weapons and equipment, it suffered heavy casualties during the fighting in the Hürtgen forest the previous autumn.

To make matters worse the men gave their commanding officer, Arthur Hennecke, the chilling nickname *Ritterkreuzjäger* (Knight's Cross Hunter) due to his willingness to sacrifice them to achieve the accolades of his superiors.[920] A World War I veteran and retired police officer called back to duty because of wartime manpower shortages, the regime posted the elderly Hennecke to frontline service in September 1944.[921] Known as a stickler for regulations, his stern demeanor rubbed many of his subordinates the wrong way, especially in the aftermath

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[918] HStAD, Rep. 145, Nr. 632, p. 71, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 23.9.63., Anklageschrift.

[919] Ibid. Rep. 409, Nr. 140, p. 122, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall IV- Die festgestellten Tatsachen.

[920] Ibid. Nr. 147, p. 23, Landgericht Bonn, 27.6.63., Zeugevernehmung Hermann B.; Nr. 148, p. 123, Landgericht Bonn, 1.7.63., Zeugevernehmung Hubert M.; p. 184, Landgericht Bonn, 30.4.63., Zeugevernehmung Gottfried K.

[921] Ibid. Nr. 144, p. 15, Berlin Document Center to Landgericht Bonn, 21.3.63., Personnel File Arthur Hennecke.

of the Hürtgen fighting, when he threatened to personally shoot anyone who refused to return to the front.[922] However, the few men who served abroad with other security units in occupied Europe, such as his second-in-command, felt Hennecke was a poor commander who relied too heavily on the rule book to compensate for his failings as a leader.[923]

Hennecke made his stern demeanor readily apparent to his reinforcements. Unimpressed with EK IV's personnel, he kept them confined to camp and also refused to allow Schneider to join the battalion's staff meetings.[924] However, their outsider status changed during the retreat towards Bonn. The day before the unit left Mülheim-Wichterich, Hennecke summoned Schneider to his office and ordered him to execute five Flemish prisoners who worked in the unit's field kitchen. The men were popular among both the policemen and the local population, and when Schneider questioned the order, Hennecke described them as "unnecessary ballast" that the unit no longer needed. He then ordered him to shoot the prisoners at a nearby gravel pit.[925] Already conditioned to carrying out similar orders and again offered little room to act independently, Schneider carried out the command.

This time, he turned to an experienced shooter, and chose Friedrich Grau to commit the crime. The man was a logical choice—although remembered for his passion for stamp collecting, the mild mannered officer participated in several mass executions while stationed in

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[922] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 149, p. 133, Landgericht Bonn, 9.5.63., Zeugevernehmung Albin T.

[923] Ibid. Nr. 147, p. 20, Landgericht Bonn, 26.6.63., Zeugevernehmung Aloysius G.; p. 184, Landgericht Bonn, 30.4.63., Zeugevernehmung Gottfried K.; p. 27/zII, Landgericht Bonn, 1.7.63., Zeugevernehmung Hubert M.

[924] Ibid. Nr. 148, p. 38/1, Landgericht Bonn, 4.7.63., Zeugevernehmung Erich H.; Nr.140, p. 128, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall IV- Die festgestellten Tatsachen.

[925] Ibid. Nr. 148, p.123, Landgericht Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall IV- Die festgestellten Tatsachen.

the Balkans.[926] The day before the shooting, Schneider and Grau visited the site and decided that each prisoner, whom Grau repeatedly referred to as "Slavs" in his postwar testimony, would be individually escorted into the pit and killed. Their plan unfolded without incident, and Police Battalion Hennecke slipped away towards Bonn the next day.[927]

The lives of many members of the unit were themselves snuffed out over the succeeding weeks during the defense of the city. In the midst of the fighting, the notorious *Ritterkreuzjäger* mysteriously developed stomach problems, and was evacuated to a hospital in Siegburg just days before American troops killed or captured most of his men.[928] During the defense of Bonn, Einsatzkommando IV was also destroyed, and only a few of its officers managed to escape across the Rhine. Among them was Schneider, who reorganized the survivors and led them until they surrendered to American troops in April 1945.

The shootings at Mülheim-Wichterich proved to be the last atrocities committed by the unit. Regaining a degree of independence after retreating across the Rhine, Schneider avoided carrying out several other executions, including the murder of eleven German women arrested for protesting continued fighting. He told his superiors that due to transportation problems and air attacks, his men failed to reach the prison. When he did finally send the death squad to the town, its officers spent the afternoon fishing and drinking schnapps with several soldiers under a

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[926] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 144, p. 29, Landgericht Bonn, 11.4.61., Vernehmung Friedrich Grau; p. 36, Landgericht Bonn, 21.3.63., Vernehmung Friedrich Schlosser.

[927] Ibid. p. 29, Landgericht Bonn, 29.4.63., Vernehmung Friedrich Grau.

[928] Ibid. Nr. 153, p. 3, Landgericht Bonn, 18.6.63., Zeugevernehmung Erich H.; p. 27, 1.7.63., Zeugevernehmung Hubert M.

bridge before returning to camp and reporting they failed to find the women.[929] As this incident demonstrates, when allowed to act free from oversight, Schneider consistently attempted to prevent his officers from engaging in atrocity and carrying out acts he found morally repugnant. He only complied with his superiors' orders when he felt constrained by their direct intervention or scrutiny.

This reluctance to commit atrocity appeared evident in all of the Einsatzkommandos operating in the Rhineland. Largely staffed by middle-aged Border Police and Customs officers with a deep sense of parochialism but little attachment to Nazi ideology, these units often frustrated the security leadership. On October 27, 1944, IdS Albath, who travelled throughout the region to check on security outposts, complained to Hoffmann that "a tighter and more energetic leadership is necessary" in regards to the personnel at the Cologne Gestapo's disposal.[930] Other officers, such as Egon Kulzer, who took command after Foltis's death, remarked that the Border Police were "so unreliable that they cannot be used for executions," denoting their perceived unreliability as late as March 1945.[931] In the case of Einsatzkommando IV, this criticism appeared accurate—the unit accounted for only eleven of the 115 prisoners listed on a surviving compilation of the Einsatzkommandos' executions. Even more noteworthy,

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[929] HStAD, Rep. 409, Nr. 150, p. 98-99, Landgericht Bonn, 23.1.63., Vernehmung Konrad Schönauer, p. 137, Landgericht Bonn, 28.2.63., Vernehmung Johann Schwartz.

[930] Ibid. RW, 37-21; p., 144, IdS Düsseldorf, 29.11.44., Abschirmslinie; RW 34-31, p. 51, IdS Düsseldorf to Stapostelle Köln, 27.10.44., Reisebericht.

[931] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 57, p. 917, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 27.10.67., Zeugevernehmung Friedrich K.

Einsatzkommando I, led by Richard Bach, accounted for the majority of the victims, indicating how the presence of veteran officer played a critical role in encouraging violence.[932]

Thus, the presence of committed authority figures played the crucial role in promoting atrocity in these particular units.[933] While the historiography has placed primacy on the destructive role played by individual autonomy during the End Phase, the case study reveals that independent action did not always lead to atrocity, even among the security forces.[934] Taking full advantage of the latitude in decision making offered to him, Schneider attempted to limit his unit's role in security operations as a means of avoiding moral culpability. He remained successful until the intervention of a superior such as Hoffmann, Hennecke, or Foltis, who applied pressure for his men to carry out atrocities.

The reluctance of Schneider and his men to conduct executions reveals the types of problems which faced the region's security leadership. As veterans of the East, they were accustomed to the use of violence and favored it as a means of restoring order. This was particularly the case in regards to the Cologne Gestapo. These officers shared a remarkably cohesive set of life and professional experiences. All three not only served in killing squads in Eastern Europe, but grew up in Silesia and participated in right wing nationalist activity while attending Law School at Breslau University. Furthermore, Foltis and Matschke served in the same Einsatzgruppe unit. Due to their social milieu and professional experiences, these men

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[932] HStAD, RW 34-30, p. 80-89, 5.1.45., Staatspolizei Köln, Erschiessungen in der Zeit 15.9.44. bis heute wurden von dem Kommandos I Erkelenz, II Jülich, III, Düren, IV Schleiden.

[933] Welzer, *Täter*, 109.

[934] Paul, "Diese Erschiessungen haben mich innerlich gar nicht mehr berührt," 549-551; Keller, *Volksgemeinschaft am Ende*, 424-433.

understood that violence was an integral part of the deportations in the Rhineland. However, the legal structures imposed by RSHA and the reluctant personnel available to them hindered their ability to act.

The limits imposed by the composition of the security forces' manpower were not solely confined to the Border Police. Officers from the Gestapo and Kripo who did not serve abroad also expressed little enthusiasm to participate in atrocities. Even within the confines of the Ruhr Pocket, the security leadership still had difficulties getting their men to participate in murder. Several in Essen, including Werner P., a retired policeman recalled to active duty, did not shoot prisoners in March 1945. He refused on the grounds that he was "a policeman, not an executioner." Despite being chastised as a coward by his commander, Kriminalassistent Enders, Werner avoided taking part in the executions.[935] Officers also refused to kill at Hilden, despite being castigated as "weaklings" by their colleagues.[936]

The security leadership thus often relied on officers who previously served abroad to carry out executions. For example, a veteran of the occupation of the Balkans organized the shootings at Romberg Park, and another central figure in the killings was an officer who recently returned from fighting partisans in the Ukraine.[937] In order to drum up participation in murder, security commanders also resorted to playing up the alleged criminality of their victims,

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[935] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 42, p. 110-111, Landgericht Essen, 28.8.48., British Military Court, Liste der Beweisstücke, Statement Werner P.

[936] Ibid. Nr. 180, p. 51. Landgericht Wuppertal, 5.3.48., Zeugevernehmung Reiner M.

[937] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1434, p. 13-14, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 1.12.50., Allgemeiner Teil der Ermittlungsergebnisse auf dem Strafverfahren gegen Muth und Gietler; Nr. 1436, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 21.4.52., Strafsache gegen Egon Weisenick u.A.

describing them as "looters" and "dangerous criminals" to encourage their inexperienced subordinates to kill. Sometimes this worked; one former officer of the Wuppertal Gestapo recalled that during the final days in the Ruhr Pocket he formed the impression that his unit needed to execute "criminals and asocials" because they endangered civilians, bringing full circle the longstanding fears about crime developed during the interwar period.[938] Still, the security forces remained most destructive in areas where the presence of veteran officers and concentrated prisoner populations combined to ensure mass violence occurred.

The crimes by security officers inside the Ruhr Pocket reflected the key role played by the security leadership. In contrast to the uneven series of executions committed by the Einsatzkommandos in the Left Bank Rhineland, the violence that occurred in the Ruhr was relatively uniform in nature. Because these prisoners were concentrated in the region's overcrowded prisons, the trapped inmates fell victim to executions organized by experienced officers. These crimes have received the most attention from scholars, who attributed them to a handful of diehard fanatics.[939] Reflecting the emphasis placed on officers' autonomy, as one scholar noted, "As chaos and confusion overwhelmed the entire system, they tried to hinder the creation of a postwar occupational government by liquidating members of the political opposition, or to eliminate surviving witnesses to their crimes."[940] This emphasis on chaos and

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[938] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 42, T98/16, Landgericht Essen, 28.8.48. British Military Court, Liste der Beweisstücke, Statement Günther B.; p. T 98/23, Landgericht Essen, 28.8.48. British Military Court, Liste der Beweisstücke, Statement Walter Albath; p. 104, Landgericht Essen, 28.8.48. British Military Court, Liste der Beweisstücke, Statement Hans Henschke; Nr. 180, Band I, p. 8-10, Landgericht Wuppertal, 20.6.49., Ermittlungsverfahren Mordes und Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit, Anordnung 5.3.48.-27.1.48.; p. 20, Zeugevernehmung Ernst V.

[939] Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 58; Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 254-255; Kershaw, *The End*, 324.

[940] Ibid. 209.

initiative is in fact misleading—on the contrary, the atrocities inside the Ruhr Pocket were the direct result of the security forces' desire to maintain structure and cohesion.

The retreat across the Rhine left German forces in disarray by early March 1945. Indeed, the Ruhr Pocket was something of a misnomer. The enemy continually pressed the Wehrmacht, before closing the encirclement of Model's forces on March 29 at Paderborn.[941] During the retreat, Gutenberger found himself in command of all the security forces trapped inside the Pocket, and he struggled to prevent a complete breakdown in command.

The enemy's advance also meant that security offices east of the Rhine, in the ruined cities of Duisburg, Essen, and Düsseldorf, once in the interior of Germany, now became "frontline" posts, changing the manner in which they operated. For the last eight months these offices arrested suspects in hope of later carrying out investigations and sentencing. Many of the inmates were foreign workers and Germans who committed acts of petty theft and looting. Now, as Allied troops closed, in the threat that these large groups of alleged criminals might rebel grew in the eyes of security officers. The activities of the Duisburg security office, which executed twenty-nine foreign workers on March 21, several days before they fled the city evidenced this shift in practice.

Throughout the winter, Duisburg became a dumping ground for foreign workers the security forces removed from the Rhineland, and due to the poor supply situation many began scavenging in houses and stores in the largely deserted city. By early 1945 officers had arrested over one hundred suspects accused of looting or acts of petty crime.[942] As the enemy reached the

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[941] Zumbro, *Battle for the Ruhr*, 96, 138-140, 208.

[942] USHMMA, RG 14.101, B 162, 14.087, p. 6-8, Landgericht Duisburg, 18.4.57., Urteil 14 Ks 1/57.

Rhine, fears concerning the *Zwangsarbeiter* population reached their peak. In a fashion similar to the Ehrenfeld executions, officers linked disparate criminal cases together into an overarching conspiracy aimed at undermining the *Volk*. Officers fabricated these incidents into a narrative in which several hundred foreign workers organized and led by an escaped Ukrainian prisoner preyed upon the city's remaining residents, again reflecting how the Nazi security imagination conflated crime with insurrection. Undertaking a counterterror operation on the orders of RSHA headquarters in Berlin, in early February the security forces executed over twenty members of the supposed group, including their leader. Despite this effort to repress perceived uprising, officers' fears continued to mount as the enemy approached.[943]

The orders of Hans Henschke, the commander of the Düsseldorf Gestapo, reflected the influence of these anxieties. A veteran of Einsatzgruppe A and the Paris security office, he was familiar with the techniques used to secure frontline areas, and later admitted his concern about the "acute danger" prisoners posed to security inside the Ruhr Pocket. After contacting RSHA headquarters in Berlin, Henschke ordered the Polizeipräsident of Duisburg, Franz Bauer, to organize an execution detail and eliminate suspects he considered threatening to rear area security.[944] A decorated soldier who fought in both world wars, Bauer recalled that he was

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[943] USHMMA, RG 14.101, B 162, 14.087, p. 21, Landgericht Duisburg, 18.4.57., Urteil 14 Ks 1/57.

[944] Ibid. p. 19-23; HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 42, p. 104, Landgericht Essen, 12.9.48., Vernehmung Hans Henschke; Gerhard Paul, *Staatlicher Terror und gesellschaftliche Verrohung. Die Gestapo in Schleswig-Holstein* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1996); p. 103, Bernhard Brunner, *Der Frankreich-Komplex. Die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen in Frankreich und die Justiz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2004), 94.

untroubled by the order and quickly formed an execution squad to kill the prisoners he evaluated as dangerous.[945]

While the participants in the executions described the prisoners they murdered at the city cemetery as East Europeans, Duisburg's citizens discovered that eight of their fellow citizens numbered among the dead. The victims included a twenty-one-year-old mother of two, who disappeared into police custody a few days earlier after allegedly making "defeatist remarks." Her murder in particular denotes how extreme the Nazi security imagination became as the enemy closed in. Shocked residents also discovered that officers killed some of the other German victims by driving pencils into the inner ear, an intimate and gruesome method of execution that revealed the killers' anger and sense of betrayal at their alleged crimes, such as encouraging desertions from the local *Volkssturm*.[946]

Denoting how uncertainty often generated contradictory responses from security personnel, during this period officers also transported prisoners from Duisburg to Essen. Shortly after their arrival they killed them in a series of executions carried out at a park in the city center which claimed the lives of an estimated one hundred prisoners.[947] By this point, communication with Berlin had broken down, and rumors circulated among security officers that they now had the authority to act independently. This speculation was undoubtedly fueled by the vague directives issued by RSHA the previous fall and winter, which ordered commanders of regional

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[945] USHMMA, RG 14.101, B 162, 14.087, p. 7-9, Landgericht Duisburg, 18.4.57., Urteil 14 Ks 1/57.

[946] Ibid. p. 22-23.

[947] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 42, p. T 98/ 17, Landgericht Essen, 28.4.48., Vernehmung Günther Bovensiepen.

security officers to carry out executions at their own discretion if communication with Berlin proved impossible. [948]

These orders created difficulties for Gutenberger. Because of the retreat, personnel from various offices became mixed together, while advancing Allied forces cut off some security units preventing them from communicating with their superiors. Fearing that the monopoly on violence was unraveling, Gutenberger sent IdS Albath to form judicial committees in each unit, in an effort to control their activities. He ordered a security officer who held a law degree to lead each panel, in an attempt to ensure that the legal protocols regarding executions remained in place.[949]

In the case of the Essen security office, the panel, personally overseen by Henschke, continued to communicate with both Gutenberger and RSHA headquarters in Berlin throughout the review process. After the war, Henschke claimed the tribunal "acted as the courts acted" and weighed the evidence in the case files regarding the foreign prisoners slated for execution. However, it appears the members did not thoroughly deliberate. Out of the first group of thirty-eight foreign suspects, the committee found thirty-five guilty of crimes such as looting, resisting arrest, and possession of weapons, and sentenced them to death.[950]

On the surface, Gutenberger's push to reestablish restrictions stood in stark contrast to his previous efforts to encourage atrocity in early autumn 1944. As enemy troops encircled and cut

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[948] HStAD, RW 34-10, p. 74-75, Reichsführer SS, 1.11.44., Richtlinien für Hinrichtungen; Rep. 240, Nr. 42, p. 96, 12.9.48., Zeugevernehmung Walter H.; p. 97, 12.9.48., Zeugevernehmung Walter B.

[949] Ibid. Rep. 420, Nr. 43, p. 80-81, Landgericht Essen, 28.4.48., Vernehmung Walter Albath; p. 105, 28.4.48., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

[950] Ibid. p. 110, Landgericht Essen, 28.4.48., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

off German forces in the region from the outside world over the course of March 1945, he became the leading authority for all security personnel trapped inside the Pocket. Instead of encouraging autonomy, which caused so many command problems and brought him Himmler's dissatisfaction the previous autumn, Gutenberger reiterated the guidelines regarding executions. His efforts denoted both the priority the security forces placed on maintaining cohesion during this period of deep uncertainty, and his desire to avoid drawing his patron's ire, further indicating how crisis in some cases caused conservatism.

However, his efforts relied on the Inspector of Security Police, who travelled throughout the region, transmitting orders and coordinating the activities of the Ruhr security offices. When Allied troops captured Albath in late March 1945, this key position passed to Rudolf Batz, a crucial personnel change that encouraged the final wave of violence inside the Ruhr Pocket.[951] The forty-two-year-old officer returned to Germany after serving as Commander of Security Police in Krakow, and RSHA headquarters promoted him as a reward for his "great success in fighting against the Polish resistance movement."[952]

The posting was not his first in the East—formerly a leading security officer in occupied Holland, Batz took part in the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, as the commander of Einsatzgruppe A's Einsatzkommando 2. This unit's interpretation of its mission was so violently radical that his commander, Walther Stahlecker, even viewed it as counterproductive. After the initial murder campaign in summer 1941, RSHA promoted Batz to Commander of Security

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[951] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1439, p. 101, Staatsanwalt Dortmund, 7.11.50., Vernehmung Karl Gutenberger.

[952] NARA, RG 242, A3343/ Personnel File Rudolf Batz.

Police, Latvia. Stationed in Riga, under the command of Higher SS and Police Leader Friedrich Jeckeln, he played an important role in the "ultimate solution of the Jewish question in the territory of Reich Commissariat Ostland," which by December 1941 cost the lives of an estimated 12,000 people.[953] Clearly willing to resort to violence as a means of restoring "order," after returning to Germany Batz played a central role in the last atrocities committed by the regime's security forces.

In early April, shortly before the Americans closed the Pocket and cut off communication with the rest of Germany, Batz arrived in the eastern Ruhr. After meeting briefly with Gutenberger, he traveled to Dortmund to liaison with the commander of the city's Gestapo office. Throughout the winter, officers carried out operations to disrupt suspected resistance movements inside the largely destroyed city, and they arrested over fifty residents. Many of the suspects found themselves in the office's overcrowded cells simply because they associated with an informant, or belonged to Leftist organizations in the 1930s.[954] Other mass raids netted German and foreign prisoners suspected of criminal activity, and the office's cells now overflowed with sick and malnourished prisoners. After arriving in Dortmund, Batz ordered the office to vet them for execution.[955]

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[953] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1439, p. 42-58, Staatsanwalt Dortmund, 18.8.59., Schriftverkehr, Staatsanwalt Frankfurt; Nr. 1440, p. 23-25, Staatsanwalt Dortmund, 15.11.60., Vernehmung Rudolf Batz; NARA, RG 242, SSO/A3343, Personnel File Rudolf Batz; Angrick & Klein, *The "Final Solution" in Riga*, 44, 79, 130, 288.

[954] HStAM, Q 223, Nr.1434, p. 6, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 1.12.50., Allgemeiner Teil des Ermittlungsergebsnisse aus dem Strafverfahren gegen Muth und Gietler.

[955] Ibid. Nr 1439, p. 108-109, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 6.9.61., Vernehmung Rudolf Batz.

While Batz later claimed to West German investigators that he only discussed eighteen to twenty cases, subsequent events revealed he in fact planned to liquidate all of the inmates.[956] Between March 30 and April 9, 1945 the office's commander organized the execution of an estimated 300 prisoners in the woods of Romberg Park, just south of the city center.[957] Among the victims was a half-Jewish woman an informer denounced to the police after she evaded the earlier deportation of all Germans of Jewish descent. Officers arrested another German prisoner for public intoxication, further revealing both how broad their interpretation of subversion became during the Reich's final weeks. Personnel forced their last three remaining prisoners, eastern workers arrested for looting, out of the Gestapo's headquarters and shot them in a nearby rail yard as American forces closed in.[958]

Concerns about criminality reached new heights elsewhere, as the Ruhr Pocket collapsed. At Hilden on April 12, Kripo and Gestapo officers from Wuppertal executed seventy-one prisoners from the nearby Lüttringhausen workhouse. All these victims were petty criminals, and several had actually finished serving their sentences. In contrast to many crimes which took place across the region during this period, only seven were foreign workers accused of looting.[959]

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[956] HStAM, Q 223, Nr.1439, p. 110, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 6.9.61., Vernehmung Rudolf Batz.

[957] Ibid. p. 24, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 1.12.50., Allgemeiner Teil des Ermittlungsergebsnisse aus dem Strafverfahren gegen Muth und Gietler; p. 114, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 7.3.61., Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Rudolf Batz, wegen Mordes.

[958] Ibid. p. 7-11, 97, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 1.12.50., Allgemeiner Teil des Ermittlungsergebsnisse aus dem Strafverfahren gegen Muth und Gietler; Nr. 1439, p. 114-116, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 7.3.61., Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Rudolf Batz, wegen Mordes.

[959] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, Band I, p. 12, Landgericht Wuppertal, 20.6.49., Ermittlungsverfahren Mordes und Verbrechens gegen die Menschlichkeit, Anordnung 5.3.48-27.1.48.

Participants recalled they carried out the shooting on the orders of General Walter Model, the commander of the German forces trapped inside the Pocket.

As defeat loomed, on April 7 he issued a directive to Gutenberger ordering the Ruhr's security forces to liquidate their remaining prisoners. The operation prioritized the targeting of criminals and so-called "asocials," whom he feared might harm civilians if the enemy released them. Model's directive indicated how the category of the enemy within changed one final time. As the Reich collapsed, the security forces abandoned their efforts to eliminate political prisoners and instead attempted to protect the *Volk* from "vengeful" criminals they feared the Allies might free, highlighting how enemy invasion exacerbated the anxieties surrounding criminality.[960]

In the western part of the Pocket security officers murdered six foreign workers accused of looting in the woods on the outskirts Düsseldorf on the orders of Hans Henschke.[961] They described these victims, who were Dutch, as "Russians" denoting how they racialized criminality.[962] A few days later, they carried out a raid on the devastated port area along the Rhine, a neighborhood now home to many escaped foreign laborers since it was under observation by American forces on the other side of the river. Systematically searching the ruined buildings, they killed several of these fugitives before retreating back into the safety of the

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[960] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 181, p. 4, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, 7.4.45., Generalfeldmarschall Model, Nr. 180, Band I; p. 5, Landgericht Wuppertal, 20.6.49., Ermittlungsverfahren Mordes und Verbrechens gegen die Menschlichkeit, Anordnung 5.3.1948-27.1.1948; p. 20, Landgericht Wuppertal, 18.3.48., Zeugevernehmung Ernst V., Nr. 180, Band II; p. 157, Landgericht Wuppertal, 21.9.48., Vernehmung Karl Beine; p. 219, 16.3.49., Landgericht Wuppertal, Zeugevernehmung Wilfried H.

[961] Ibid. p. 214, Landgericht Wuppertal, 3.2.49., Vernehmung Hans Henschke.

[962] Erika Münster-Schröer, "Frühjahr 1945: Executionen im Kalkumer Wald und anderswo. Die Ermittlungen der britischen War Crimes Group im Wehrkreis V- Raum Düsseldorf," *Ratinger Forum: Beitrage zur Stadt-u. Regionalgeschichte*, Vol. 6, 1999: 145-184, 159-163.

city center. In addition to this operation, Henschke's officers killed five German residents on April 16, just before American troops arrived. The victims, who included Franz Jürgens, the commander of Düsseldorf's Order Police, tried to surrender the city and spare it from further destruction.[963]

The crimes in the Ruhr Pocket expose the shifting nature of atrocity in the region. As the enemy advanced, security risks heightened in the face of extreme uncertainty, and security officers targeted prisoners labelled "criminals" as a priority for destruction, in order to prevent them from possibly harming civilians. Although perceived as dire threats due to local circumstances, their murder indicates the continued influence of much older notions of crime as insurrection because it weakened the *Volk*'s resolve. The security forces' efforts to maintain cohesion also played an important role. Faced with defeat, personnel acted in accordance with earlier directives from Berlin to eliminate their prisoners. Trapped inside the Ruhr Pocket, structure no longer attempted to prevent mass violence but instead created it.

The examples provided expose the uneven nature of the violence that took place in western Germany at the end of the war. They highlight the ways in which security culture cut against itself, blunting the full radicalization argued by many historians. This is reflected by both the composition of the personnel, and the desire to maintain organizational structure. As the war neared its end, despite the horrendous nature of the crimes they committed, the regime's security forces became more conservative rather than radical. Despite their desire to turn counterinsurgency practices against their fellow *Volksgenossen,* the Rhineland's security

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[963] Münster-Schröer, "Frühjahr 1945," 164-197.

leadership remained uncomfortable carrying out the kinds of indiscriminate violence that accompanied these methods in occupied Europe. To control the scope of atrocity they relied on institutional guidelines, instead of unbridled autonomy. Such efforts rested on ensuring command and control remained intact, and this increasing dependence on structure further constrained the application of violence. When mass atrocity did occur, it took place when the Allied advance threatened security offices. Time and again, from Cologne to Dortmund, personnel clung to Himmler's orders, and only carried out large executions when endangered by the enemy advance. As demonstrated here and in chapter seven, this adherence to protocol ironically, and unintentionally, prevented a full scale massacre inside the Ruhr Pocket, as the Allies captured some prisons before the security forces could murder the inmates.

The case studies also reveal another important characteristic of the violence which took place in the Rhineland—the criminalization of the victims. During the Reich's final days crime continued to articulate social anxieties, and allowed ideological influences to intersect with popular concerns about morality and the perceived breakdown of order. In particular, the priority given to eliminating common criminals exposes the influence of deep seated fears regarding social collapse. Embedded within these anxieties were concerns about the reliability of the *Volk*, as evidenced by the references security officers made to the disaster of November 1918.

Crime, perceived or real, therefore played a crucial role in reshaping the security forces' relationship to the civilian population. The widespread acts of looting and disobedience they encountered in the Rhineland encouraged officers to view themselves as distinctly different from other Germans. For example, as the deportations continued and the Rhineland's infrastructure crumbled, leaving many civilians without food, electricity, or fresh water, Hoffmann issued

orders for his men to remain clean shaven, noting that "under no circumstances will the current difficulties hinder the Gestapo's work."[964] This short and seemingly mundane directive is telling—to remain physically clean was to maintain the division between order and chaos, between purity and contamination, and between resolve and collapse.[965]

Such efforts to avoid "secular defilement" expose how the *Volk* at large became suspect as the situation worsened, a point underscored by the numerous cases in which conceptions of crime were racialized.[966] As revealed by both the postwar investigations and contemporary security correspondence, time and again officers recast those who allegedly committed crimes, regardless of their ethnicity, as "Slavs," "Russians," or "Poles," reflecting how these terms conjured up visions of barbarity, deviance, and unrest in the minds of security personnel.[967]

A new and surprising phenomenon thus occurred in late 1944 and early 1945. Germans for the first time became "Slavs" in the eyes of some veteran security officers. Nazi officials' warnings about the danger of fraternizing with eastern peoples only seemed confirmed as personnel uncovered gangs of fugitives which included Germans alongside Ukrainians, Poles, French, Dutch, and Italians. The fact that many Germans who joined these groups were military deserters only confirmed in the minds of security officers the self-fulfilling prophecy that contact with eastern peoples ideologically and morally poisoned the *Volk*, causing it to collapse.

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[964] HStAD, RW 34-10, p. 84, Chef der Stapoleitstelle Köln, 15.11.44., Veränderungen in Arbeitsfolgenplänen und Massnahmen.

[965] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 40-43.

[966] Ibid. 45.

[967] Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*, 138-13; Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East*, 7, 44, 52.

During this period, crime truly became an enemy within. The fears generated by widespread unrest allowed officers to associate Germans who committed criminal acts with the "bandits" they faced in the East, paving the way for the use of violence. This was starkly evidenced by the events in Ehrenfeld, where security officers cast German gang members with connections to fugitive foreign workers as "terrorists," regardless of the fact that both groups engaged in crime rather than resistance.[968] Hitler's own hyperbolic comment in August 1944 that the rising unrest inside Germany was the work of "a rebellion of the subhumans… deserters, Jews, asocials, and criminals," epitomized this imagined collusion between criminality and revolt.[969]

The blending of ideas regarding criminality and resistance did not simply assist security personnel in negotiating the contradictions between the expected behaviors of their fellow *Volksgenossen* and the reality of a war weary population. It also enabled the extension of violence to German civilians. The widespread use of words such as "Slavs" and "bandits" offered some zealous officers the opportunity to side-step their own regulations and punish recalcitrant Germans by simply describing them as otherwise in their reports. While the targeting of east European fugitives remained one of security officers' highest priorities, the overuse of terms related to these foreign workers raises the question of accuracy—were all of the victims described in these reports really East European?

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[968] HStAD, RW 37-11, p. 7, HSSPF West, 27.10.44., Tagebefehl 2167/44.

[969] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden*, 551.

Unfortunately, available contemporary and postwar archival material cannot answer this question beyond the cases discussed here. While the authors of security reports often took the time to detail the nationalities of their victims, this does not apply to the accuracy of the information officers in the field gave them. Depending on time constraints, these documents also sometimes folded suspects under the vague rubric of "eastern workers" or simply "Russians."[970] West German prosecutors were themselves often at a loss to pin down the exact number of victims, their nationalities, and the locations of their murders.[971]

Despite the dearth of hard evidence, it cannot be discounted that some security officers manipulated their reports and classified German victims as other nationalities in order to work around the regulations regarding executions, or because they associated specific acts or forms of behavior with the East. These security assumptions reflect the centrality of the experience of occupation on security culture, as well as the influence of Nazi racism and longstanding tropes of crime as destabilizing and rebellious. Still, institutional protocols limited the overall scope of violence in the Rhineland. They prevented officers from fully unleashing violence against civilians, even as their internal cohesion broke down during the war's final weeks.

Yet even during this period, the security forces collectively failed to abandon the regulations set down by their superiors. They continued to delineate their mission by targeting

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[970] See for example, HStAD, RW 34-30, p. 35, Stapostelle Köln, 5.1.45., Erschiessungen. Dortiges Verfügung vom 4.1.45.; RW 34-8, p. 19, Stapostelle Köln, 15.10.44., Wochenbericht; p. 39, Stapostelle Köln, 21.11.44., Wochenbericht. These reports simply list "eastern workers" and provide no accounting for the nationalities of those arrested or executed, in contrast to other reports drafted during the same period.

[971] Ibid. Rep. 248, Nr. 52, p. 91-92, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 19.10.65., Vermerk; Rep. 409, Nr. 140, p. 50, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 3.1.66., Fall II die festgestellten Tatsachen; HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1434, p. 47, Oberstaatsanwalt Dortmund, 1.12.50., Allgemeiner Teil des Ermittlungsergebnisse aus dem Strafverfahren gegen Muth und Gietler.

the groups they perceived as most threatening to the maintenance of law, order, and rear area security. Thus, while we can conclude that social collapse generated violence and offered a certain degree of latitude in terms of individual decision making, it also generated conservatism and restraint.

The region's security forces continued to adhere to the institutional mandates issued by Himmler due to the increasing uncertainty they faced. Guidelines and the maintenance of a clear command structure helped order the ambiguities created by unrest and invasion. When the opportunity presented itself, such as in the case of Gutenberger's notorious September call to eliminate "riff raff," most personnel expressed reluctance to deviate from the instructions issued by their superiors in Berlin. To do otherwise ushered in chaos and confusion, the very forces the organization was formed to battle against. Unrestrained violence against German civilians also meant defeat, since the *Volk* was no longer reliable. This was simply unacceptable for many officers who devoted their professional lives to the pursuit of a Greater Germany's historical mission. Therefore, they used violence selectively, as a means of coercion, rather than to destroy a failed social experiment.

In closing, it is important to note that circumstance dictated the degree and nature of violence and that the security forces were never an omnipotent force. Indeed, as the case study of Einsatzkommando IV reveals, there was never a direct one-to-one correlation between autonomy and violence. In some cases, the *Handlungsspielraum,* or freedom of action, prized by historians and postwar prosecutors alike as the reason for End Phase crimes, in fact allowed personnel to avoid participating in violence. Atrocity was never uniform, nor mono-causal. It remained contingent on the personnel available, the presence of committed leadership, and local conditions. The security forces in western Germany reacted to a variety of perceived threats in a

variety of different ways and yet still, with some notable exceptions, adhered to guidelines and regulations which unintentionally worked against their most violent tendencies.

Conclusion

The knock at the door was unexpected. The small, unassuming apartment received few visitors, especially when they were unannounced. Opening the door, the man found it flanked by two men accompanied by several uniformed policemen. After producing identification, they requested that he accompany them to Dortmund for questioning. As he gathered his things and locked the apartment, one of the officers sneered "Happy Birthday Mr. Batz," causing the man's blood to run cold.[972] It was indeed Rudolf Batz's fifty-seventh birthday, and a fifteen year manhunt had just ended.

However, West German investigators' triumph was short lived. After admitting his role in the executions carried out in Dortmund, Batz committed suicide. With him died the last opportunity to bring a senior security officer to justice for the atrocities committed in western Germany. Several security commanders, such as Kütter, Hoffmann, and Foltis died during the war, and the courts only punished Hans Henschke, Richard Bach, Walter Albath, and Karl Gutenberger for their crimes.[973] Although initially given stiff sentences, by 1955 all these men were free on appeals, with the notable exception of Gutenberger, who remained in prison until he died in 1967.[974]

The new Bundesrepublik's efforts to restore stability to postwar German society facilitated their release. Recognizing that bringing every Nazi supporter to trial would have

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[972] HStAM, Q 223, Nr. 1441, p. 7, *Freie Presse*, 12.11.60. , "Gestapo-Massenmörder lebte wie ein Biedermann in Bielefeld."

[973] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, , Band II, p. 181, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 20.1.49., Abschrift; Rep. 270, Nr. 20, p. 631, *Aachener Nachrichten*, 15.12.50, "Als Aachen geräumt wurde"; Brunner, *Der Frankreich-Komplex*, 364.

[974] HStAD, Rep. 240, Nr. 180, Band II, p. 320, Oberstaatsanwalt Wuppertal, 27.2.68., Antwort nach Landrat Wuppertal.

derailed the country's reconstruction, in May 1951 Chancellor Konrad Adenauer issued the notorious Law 131, a piece of legislation which allowed former Nazis to receive their pensions or return to government positions. The amnesty even extended to the *Bundeskriminalamt* (BKA), the organization responsible for bringing Nazi perpetrators to justice. By 1959, forty-five out of its forty-seven senior officers were former members of the Third Reich's security services.[975]

For decades, the leadership of the BKA suppressed evidence and made sure cases landed on the desks of judges unsympathetic to investigations regarding wartime atrocities. The lack of contemporary evidence aided their attempts to blind justice. Captured security documents did not return to the West German archives for several decades, and their absence crippled the efforts to punish former Nazis for their crimes.[976] Investigators not only lacked written proof that tied the accused to their wartime activities. The court's statute of limitations, which stated that investigations must be conducted within fifteen years of when the crime was committed, further hindered the pursuit of justice.[977] The law created a frustrating paradox—as the structure of the West German courts improved and contemporary documents returned home over the course of the late 1960s, prosecutors were often forced to settle for much lighter sentences.

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[975] Jürgen Matthäus, "Alte Kameraden und neue Polizeimethoden. Die Sonderkommissionen zur Aufklärung von NS-Gewaltverbrechen," in Klaus-Michael Mallmann & Andrej Angrick, eds., *Die Gestapo nach 1945: Konflikte, Karrieren, Konstruktionen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 181, 189; Schenk, *Auf dem rechten Auge Blind*, 282-283.

[976] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 194, p. 55, Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, 8.11.63., Antwort: Generalstaatsanwalt Köln, the letter noted that the captured files of the Cologne Gestapo are set to return from the United States.; On the seizure and return of wartime documents see Astrid Eckert, *Struggle for the Files: The Western Allies and the Return of German Archives after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[977] Annette Weinke, "Amnestie für Schreibtischtäter. Das verhinderte Verfahren gegen die Bediensteten des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes," in Mallmann & Angrick, eds., *Die Gestapo nach 1945*, 215-216.

The punishment of the *Rädchen*, or "small cogs" in the machinery of repression best reflected the limits of postwar justice. The West German courts were often lenient to these former officers because they supposedly acted under pressure from their superiors. Even Josef Hoegen, the infamous torturer of Brauweiler prison, only received a nine year prison sentence, and his accomplice Walter Hirschfeld received two, much to the incredulity of many Rhinelanders, who awoke to newspapers headlines which declared "The Accused Have the Last Word."[978] Only if they acted autonomously, exceeded orders, or behaved in a particularly brutal fashion did junior officers receive lengthy prison sentences, and the courts reserved their heaviest punishment for the security leadership. This was the case in regards to Arnold Schneider, who in 1966 received a seven year prison sentence for the deaths of Einsatzkommando IV's prisoners. Bonn's prosecutors dropped the charges against the killers, because they carried out the murders on his orders.[979]

In an ironic twist of fate, the trial of Kurt Matschke, the only leading officer of the Cologne Gestapo to survive the war, made Schneider's punishment possible. Having already served a two year sentence in 1955 for his role in the deportation of Cologne's Jews, West German police rearrested him as part of an investigation into the activities of Sonderkommando7a.[980] In a landmark ruling, the court decided to punish the unit's junior

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[978] HStAD, Rep. 231, Nr. 281, p. 1116, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 3.8.50, Strafsache gegen Josef Hoegen u.A.; p. 1280, *Welt der Arbeit*, 1.6.50, "Menschenschinder fand milde Richter"; p. 1290, *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*,17.12.49, "Die Angeklagten hatten das lezte Wort."; Daners & Wißkirchen, *Was in Brauweiler geschah*, 140-141.

[979] HStAD, Rep. 270, Nr. 195, p. 62, Oberstaatsanwalt Bonn, 14.2.66., Ermittlungsverfahren gegen den Polizeiobermeister Gerhard Stevens u.A. wegen Beihilfe zum Totschlag.

[980] Ibid. Rep. 231, Nr. 520, p. 2, Oberstaatsanwalt Köln, 9.7.54, Verurteilen gegen Kurt Matschke.

officers alongside its commander Albert Rapp, and Matschke received a five year prison sentence for assisting in the murder of over 3,000 people.[981] However woefully inadequate this punishment was, West German prosecutors considered the sentence an important victory—by this point, of the 16,028 persons under investigation for Nazi crimes, ninety-two were convicted and only fifteen sentenced to life in prison. This astounding disparity speaks volumes about how a generation of criminals reintegrated into West German society.[982]

During both of Matschke's trials, information came to light which exposed his role in crimes committed during the End Phase. Perhaps due to the scope of the investigations or lack of archival evidence, prosecutors failed to follow up on this information. Consequently, they never held him accountable for his role in the murder of German civilians and foreign workers as the Reich collapsed. Historians later replicated the West German courts' failure to consider the brutal occupation of Eastern Europe and crimes committed on the home front as part of one overarching system of violence.

As this study demonstrates, Nazi atrocity never remained confined to the "bloodlands" of the East. Security officers later imported the ruthless techniques of population control perfected in the region back into Germany in autumn 1944. The deliberate decision to deploy policemen and security officers as counterinsurgents in occupied Europe made this transmission of violent practices possible. Upon returning home, they resorted to the tactics of the *Bandenkampf* in an attempt to prevent what they perceived as the collapse of civilian morale.

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[981] HStAD, Rep. 299, Nr. 795, p. 338, Landgericht Essen, 29.3.66, Strafsache gegen Matschke, Spengler, Tormann; Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Lebenslänglich. Wie die Beweiskette gegen Albert Rapp geschmiedet wurde." in Mallmann & Angrick, eds., *Die Gestapo nach 1945*, 283.

[982] Mallmann & Angrick, "Die Mörder sind unter uns," 25.

This fear rested at the center of German security thought. Faced with a seemingly endless series of dangers posed by rampant political unrest, economic upheaval, and the perceived moral degeneration of society, during the interwar period police officials and criminologists advocated new forms of preventative policing that aimed to neutralize threats before they occurred. Security shifted from prediction based on analysis to prediction based on possibility as the police sought to restore stability to German society. This transition created a special kind of relationship to the future in which a reliance on the imagination and the intuition of trained professional "experts" supposedly managed uncertainty by making it knowable and calculable.[983] The post-1918 German discourse on crime evidences these ideas. Although the police accumulated ever larger amounts of knowledge about criminal activity, their interpretations increasingly strayed from reality. Criminologists such as Robert Heindl used wartime metaphors to warn of an unseen "army" of traitors, who they described as selfish individuals weakening the country from within. These fears not only centered on a class of professional criminals but also "asocials" such as vagrants, juvenile delinquents, and prostitutes. As both its cause and effect, crime was a means of articulating perceived crisis.

Using criminality as a way of discussing perceived national decline raised the stakes in its suppression. Since the definition of criminal activity continued to dramatically broaden, officers had to imagine threats and quickly evaluate suspect behaviors, projecting crime fighting into the future rather than grounding it in the present. This expansion of the concept of what constituted a "criminal" generated additional uncertainty, as due to these broad new interpretations crime seemed to grow faster than officers suppressed it. In response to these anxieties, officials called

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[983] Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility*, 7.

for increasing intervention into the lives of Weimar's citizens. However, these efforts ran up against the Republic's commitment to civil rights, generating frustration and self-victimization on the part of the police.

After 1933, preventative policing received a new lease on life. Desiring to meld all Germans into a classless, unified *Volksgemeinschaft* the Nazi regime recognized security as a ceaseless effort to protect the nation from threat. To guard against these dangers, it aimed to seamlessly merge state and society through a commitment to *völkisch* forms of policing armed with unlimited powers of surveillance and new racial conceptions of national belonging. The security forces, not only the Political Police, but also the Criminal Police, emerged as the vanguard of these efforts, and the regime freed them from the legal restrictions imposed by Germany's courts. After Himmler gained control of the Reich's security apparatus, it became a technocratic elite led by a generation of young, politicized officers who blended activist academic culture with the martial values of the SS. Most crucially, these men prized intuition, initiative, dynamic action, and one's ability to imagine hidden danger as the core values of their institution, ensuring preventative policing continued to evolve free from the outside oversight that might have checked its most radical impulses.

Established in September 1939, from its inception RSHA was tasked with suppressing enemies at home and abroad. The organization perceived no boundaries between the two spheres, and sent its officers out across Nazi Europe to govern conquered enemy populations. The deployment of security personnel to so-called "frontline postings" marked the further dangerous evolution of preventative policing. Occupation generated its own anxieties, especially in the East, the home of the Reich's most dangerous racial and ideological enemies. To combat uncertainty, police work such as the regulation of civilian movement and the registering of

villages, combined with terror. Policing thus became a form of preemptive warfare aimed at heading off an expected rebellion by physically wiping out civilians whose behaviors contradicted the image of the docile occupied subject.

However, brutal methods of social control not only generated resistance but also fragmented society, creating further uncertainty. These security anxieties in turn formulated more extreme methods, and by early 1942 officers began exterminating or removing entire populations as a means of quickly restoring order and banishing contradiction. Such methods never remained confined to the East, and security officers exported them abroad to other parts of occupied Europe. By 1944 mass violence and depopulation were integral parts of Nazi security logic.

As the fortunes of war turned against Germany, security activities on the home front became a means of managing crisis. Air raids, evacuations, increasing numbers of foreign workers, and collapsing logistics stretched thin the capabilities of security offices across the Reich. In the midst of this upheaval, veteran officers socialized to view violence as a solution to social disorder returned home. By September 1944, when the Allies arrived on Germany's borders, all the pieces were in place to ensure atrocity erupted on the home front.

In response to the crime and unrest in areas threatened by the enemy's advance into western Germany, security offices in the Rhineland, led by veterans of the eastern front, deployed the techniques of the *Bandenkampf*, removing the population in order to secure the region. However, while similar in practice to operations carried out abroad, the Rhineland deportations differed in terms of application, and the scope of violence remained constrained in comparison to similar operations carried out in occupied Europe. The security forces became increasingly conservative in the face of social collapse, relying on institutional protocols and

guidelines rather than personal initiative. When confronted with contradiction on the home front, officers often resorted to arrest rather than execution in order to prevent undermining the regime's relationship with the *Volk*, and reserved their worst violence for fugitive foreign laborers.

Still, the deportations revealed the region's widespread war weariness and apathy, causing conceptions of civilians to shift. While security officers initially arrested Germans rather than executed them, when faced with disorder on the home front their interpretation of threat dramatically expanded to include minor crimes, such as public intoxication, petty theft, and even mental illness, just as they had in occupied Europe. This broad application of preventative policing indicated how the desire to conquer uncertainty only generated new fears about the resilience of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Often, security officers made these evaluations of civilian behavior by referring back to the institutional practices and assumptions forged during the anti-partisan war, as its methods appeared to offer the best means of quickly restoring order.

The events that occurred in the Rhineland at the end of World War II represent some of the worst possible outcomes of police militarization. They thus offer warnings about this phenomenon in our own time. The contemporary endless pursuit of "known unknowns," one that all too often occurs free from public and legal scrutiny, generates its own anticipatory security logics.[984] This quest to master uncertainty has produced a merger of police and military practices whose inherent volatility is concealed by claims that its methods cleave to careful intelligence analysis and discriminate violence confined to war zones abroad. However, if there

[984] Department of Defense news briefing 2.12.2002. http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2636

is one lesson the Rhineland offers, it is that preemptive security practices based on catastrophic imaginings threaten to unravel restraint and produce the very kinds of disasters they intend to prevent.

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Vita

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