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"The Commissar Order and the Seventeenth German Army:

From Genesis to Implementation, 30 March 1941-31 January 1942"

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August 2004

"A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy."

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ISBN: 0-494-12808-9

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Abstract

"The Commissar Order and the Seventeenth German Army:

From Genesis to Implementation – 30 March 1941-31 January 1942"

Robert B. Bernheim

An essential and critical component of the orders German front-line formations received in the ideological war against the Soviet Union was the Commissar Order of 6 June 1941. This order, issued by the High Command of the Armed Forces prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, required that front-line military formations, as well as SS and police units attached to the Army, immediately execute Soviet political commissars among prisoners of war. Soviet political commissars were attached to the Red Army at virtually every operational level, and were viewed by both Hitler and the High Command as the foremost leaders of the resistance against the Nazis because of their commitment to Bolshevik ideology. According to the Commissar Order, "Commissars will not be treated as soldiers. The protection afforded by international law to prisoners of war will not apply in their case. After they have been segregated they will be liquidated."

While there is no paucity of information on the existence and intent of the Commissar Order, this directive has only been investigated by scholars as a portion of a much greater ideological portrait, or subsumed in the larger context of overall Nazi criminal activities during "Operation Barbarossa."

Examining the extent to which front-line divisions carried out the charge to shoot all grades of political commissars is necessary if we are to understand the role and depth of involvement by front-line troops of the *Wehrmacht* in a murderous program of extermination during the German attack and occupation of the Soviet Union. Such an examination has simply not taken place to-date. My dissertation seeks to address this issue. The result is both a narrative on the genesis of the Commissar Order and its attendant decrees and agreements between the Army leadership and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, and a quantitative analysis of how many commissars were reported captured and shot by the front-line forces of the 17th Army over a seven month period.

Résumé

« Le Commissar Order et la Dix-Septième Armée :

Des Origines à l'Application : 30 mars 1941-31 janvier 1942 »

Robert B. Bernheim

Un élément fondamental de la guerre idéologique entre l'Allemagne nazie et l'Union soviétique fut la proclamation du Commissar Order le 6 juin 1941. Émis par le haut commandement des forces allemandes avant l'invasion nazie des territoires contrôlés par l'Union soviétique, cet ordre exigeait de toutes les unités militaires ainsi que des formations SS et policières d'exécuter *manu milirari* tout commissaire politique soviétique. N'étant pas considérés comme des prisonniers de guerre par les autorités allemandes, les agents politiques soviétiques membres de l'Armée rouge ont été perçus par Hitler et les hauts commandants allemands comme les potentiels instigateurs d'une résistance à l'occupation nazie. L'adhésion des agents politiques soviétiques à l'idéologie bolchévique en faisaient des adversaires éventuels aux visées militaires allemandes. Selon le Commissar Order, « les agents ne doivent pas être traités comme des soldats. La protection de la loi internationale sur les prisonniers de guerre ne s'applique pas à eux. Une fois arrêtés, ces prisonniers doivent être exécutés. »

Étant donné la rareté des analyses sur l'existence et l'application du Commissar Order, cette directive a été pendant longtemps associée au cadre idéologique global du nazisme. D'autres analystes l'ont étudié indirectement dans le cadre des activités criminelles nazies de l'Opération Barbarossa.

Afin de bien comprendre le rôle joué par les militaires de tous les grades de la *Wehrmacht,* il est essentiel d'étudier l'application de ce programme visant ni plus ni moins à l'extermination des commissaires politiques soviétiques par les troupes au front. Une telle étude du rôle politique des troupes allemandes n'a jamais été réalisée. Ma thèse aborde cette question. Elle est organisée, premièrement, par une analyse détaillée des origines du Commissar Order, de ses décrets et des ententes réalisées entre le commandement militaire et les SS (SD) et des forces policières. Deuxièmement, une étude quantitative sera proposée afin d'illustrer le nombre de commissaires capturés et exécutés par les troupes au front de la Dix-Septième Armée sur une période de sept mois.

Acknowledgements

It is a privilege and an honor to undertake a study of this nature following in the footsteps of some of the great scholars of German history and the Second World War. Historians such as my advisor, Peter Hoffmann, Raul Hilberg, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Helmut Krausnick, John Erickson, Richard Breitman, Christopher Browning, Gerhard Weinberg, Jürgen Förster, Dieter Pohl, Frank Nicosia, Doris Bergen, Michael Marrus, Andrej Angrick, Peter Longerich, and so many others have delved into the deep recesses of archival sources to research, collate, and analyze data. They have produced thorough and thoughtful contributions which serve as hallmarks for all future studies. It is in the tradition of these scholars and their scholarship that I started my own research seven years ago.

However, pursuing such studies requires continual sources of funding. I am grateful to have been the recipient of the Max Stern Recruitment Fellowship (1997-1999) and the Max Binz McGill Majors Fellowship (1999-2000) in my first years at McGill University. In addition, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies Fellowship (2000), and the Edmund R. Brill Estate Fellowship (1997-2004) have helped me pursue archival research, write, and sustain my family along the way. For these sources of funding I am most appreciative.

I am also indebted to the men and women who staff the archives at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg, Germany, the Public Record Office in London, England, the library and archives at the United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum in Washington, DC, and the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Their assistance, insights, and suggestions helped provide the backbone of my research materials. The work and encouragement of Steven Rogers (United States Department of Justice – Office of Special Investigations) and the hospitality, friendship, and right hand of fellowship offered by Jörg and Sabine Dohnicht (Kenzingen, Germany) made my multiple trips to the archives in Maryland and Germany sources of both new discoveries and intellectual challenges.

Closer to home, I am grateful for the community of scholars whose examples of integrity, and passion for research and writing have served as models for me. Their words of support, suggestions, and honest feedback have been imprinted in the final text of this dissertation. Lawrence Langer, Debórah Dwork, David Scrase, Wolfgang Mieder, Frank Nicosia, Jonathan Huener, Kathy Johnson, Craig Pepin, Vadim Altskan, Alexander Rossino, Wendy Lower, Geoffrey Megargee, Martin Dean, and Madeline Vadkerty are among those who have made these contributions.

At McGill University, Gershon Hundert and Philip Longworth generously gave of their time to work with me in my minor fields of study, and offered their acumen and encouragement during the writing and research process. Mary McDaid, Colleen Parish and all those in the History Department at McGill worked behind the scenes to assist me with the details and rigors of navigating the bureaucratic infrastructure of the university system.

Since some of my research involved documentary sources in Russian, I am grateful for the translation work provided by Roger Cooke at the University of

Vermont, and Sardar Shokatayev and Marina Zaloznaya at Middlebury College from Russian into English. Kristin von Tschiltscke provided translation for a document from Russian to German from the Central Archive of the FSB [successor of the KGB] of the Russian Federation. Jean-Francis Clermont-Legros provided the translation of my abstract from English into French.

In addition, the support of friends and family make all the difference in how the day-to-day experience of full-time graduate work plays out. I am appreciative of the friendship offered by Sam Intrator and Rob Kunzman. A wise man once wrote that "iron sharpens iron," and this has truly been the case with these two men. I am grateful to the late Gilbert Siegal and his wonderful help-mate of more than five decades, Aranka Siegal, for their advice before and during the research and writing phase. Sharon Nichols, Ragnhild and Peter Baade, Dennis Marquardt, Art Adams, Casey Higgins, Brian and Naomi Benoit, Bud Irion, Shirley Pominville, Rob Eckstrom, Val Gardner, Andre LeChance, Connie Metz, and Mary Pennefather all deserve recognition for their encouragement. A special note of appreciation is reserved Chris Norton; his weekly calls and yearly visits have helped keep me sane and centered.

I am also grateful to my parents, Thomas Bernheim and Elizabeth Dennett, their spouses, Judith Bernheim and George Dennett; my sisters, Katherine Bernheim Fehlhaber and Anne Campbell and their families; my grandmother Gioia Bernheim; my uncle and aunt, Theodore and Lynn Reese; my uncle William F. Brooks, Jr.; my late uncle Charles R. Ross and my aunt, Charlotte Ross, my uncle and aunt William Bradford and Helen Patterson, my uncle and aunt Robert and

Rhea Brooks, and my other relatives who have cheered me on during this process. My mother- and father-in-law, Martha and Richard Callow and my wife's siblings and their families have also been tremendous sources of encouragement.

Nonetheless, my academic work would not be complete without the leadership, guidance, and acumen of my advisor, Dr. Peter Hoffmann. He has guided me in a pursuit of academic excellence, offered key career and personal advice, and provided me with opportunities to pursue my intellectual passions in a rigorous and challenging environment. Truly I have had the privilege of being trained under the supervision of one of the world's finest. For this I am most grateful.

Last, but certainly not least of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my immediate family – my magnificent wife Patricia, and our three wonderful daughters, Sarah, Rebekkah, and Lilja. It has been a wild ride the past seven years, and you never gave up on me. This dissertation is made possible by your love, support, words of encouragement, and prayers, which have buoyed my soul, mind, and body. I am eternally grateful.

However, I alone am responsible for the written content of this dissertation, and any errors that may be found are my own.

Robert B. Bernheim

Monkton, Vermont

August 2004

Chapter 1: Introduction

Armed with a great arsenal of manpower and weaponry, the soldiers of the Seventeenth German Army (*Armee Oberkommando* 17, *AOK* 17) launched their attack against the Soviet Union in the early morning hours of Sunday, 22 June 1941. Under the command of General Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, *AOK 17* went into combat with a full strength of three army corps (XXXXIX, IV, and LII Army Corps), comprised of thirteen divisions.[1] Each of these divisions had between 13,000 to 17,000 men divided among three regiments of three battalions each, with additional troops including reconnaissance and artillery battalions, and signal, engineer, and quartermaster supply units.[2] Among the divisions subordinated to the 17th Army, the infantry, light, mountain, and security divisions had ample supplies of small arms, heavy machine guns, and 81-mm mortars, while artillery regiments of the infantry divisions had 20-mm and 75-mm anti-tank guns, and 75-mm, 105-mm, 150-mm Howitzer guns towed by horses and motorized formations available for quick deployment.[3]

However, the soldiers of the 17th Army were armed with more than weapons when the invasion of the Soviet Union began. The terms of pre-invasion directives such as the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order (13 May 1941),[4] the Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia (19 May 1941),[5] and the Commissar Order (6 June 1941)[6] provided German troops on the field of battle with the full legal authority and support of the Nazi state under Adolf Hitler to shoot virtually anyone, soldier or civilian, whom they knew to engage in, or suspected of taking part in, resistance to

the Germans. Red Army political commissars and political functionaries, partisans and irregulars all came under the wide scope of potential enemies.[7]

In the pages that follow, I will examine the genesis of the Commissar Order and its implementation by the troops of the 17th Army. I will begin in chapter 1 by reviewing the historiography on the Commissar Order in the years after the Second World War. My own research would have been much more difficult without that historiographical foundation. The review of literature will follow a chronological approach by date of publication rather than by thematic treatment of the genesis of the Commissar Order and its implementation on the field of battle. The rest of the introduction will consist of a discussion on primary sources and research methodology.

In chapter 2, I will trace the development of the commissar system in the Red Army of the Soviet Union. In chapter 3, I will investigate the roots of Hitler's hatred for communists in general, and Red Army political commissars in particular. Using a top-down approach, I will set the Commissar Order in the corpus of directives and cooperative agreements issued and reached prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. I will then pursue a bottom-up approach in chapter 4, and examine the issues and results associated with the implementation of the Commissar Order by front-line formations subordinated to *AOK* 17 over a seven month period (22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942). I will present a summary of my research findings in chapter 5, and conclude with a collection of appendices, a map and a glossary of terms.

Review of Literature

The Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, "the world's first *post-mortem* examination of a totalitarian regime,"[8] produced an extensive collection of German contemporaneous documents relating to Nazi aggression, persecutions, and atrocities in Europe.[9] Justice Robert H. Jackson, the American Chief Prosecutor at Nuremberg, captured the uniqueness of such a series of trials by stating in his opening remarks on 21 November 1945:

> Never before in legal history has an effort been made to bring within the scope of a single litigation the developments of a decade, covering a whole continent, and involving scores of nations, countless individuals, and innumerable events.[10]

Jackson had written to President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, five months earlier that the task of the prosecution was to "[...] establish incredible events by credible evidence."[11] Among the documents presented as evidence during the course of the Nuremberg trials that the German General Staff and High Command had planned, prepared, carried out an illegal war, and committed war crimes[12] were those related to the Commissar Order.[13] These documents, and the subsequent testimony about them by prosecution and defense attorneys and witnesses, form the

first collection of primary source materials that trace the development of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order.

The Commissar Order, issued by the High Command of the German Armed Forces prior to their invasion of the Soviet Union, required that German military, *SS*, and police formations immediately execute Red Army political commissars whom they captured. Political commissars and non-commissioned political officers (politruks) were attached to the Red Army at virtually every level, and Hitler and his military and legal planners perceived them as the foremost leaders of potential resistance against the invasion forces because of their commitment to Bolshevik ideology. According to the Commissar Order (*Kommissarbefehl*) of 6 June 1941:

> In the struggle against Bolshevism, one *cannot* [emphasis in the original] assume that the enemy's conduct will be based on principles of humanity or of international law. In particular hate-inspired, cruel and inhuman treatment of prisoners can be expected on the part of *all grades of political commissars* [emphasis in the original], who are the real core [*eigentlichen Trägern* - dative in the original] of the resistance.[14]

For their perceived abilities as the true leaders of opposition to the German invaders, and the belief that commissars did not conduct themselves within the boundaries of international law, the Commissar Order provided apparent legal

validation to justify the battlefield execution of all Red Army political officers. The 6 June 1941 *Kommissarbefehl* stated:

> 1. To show consideration to these elements during the struggle or to act in accordance with international rules of war is wrong and endangers both our own security and the rapid pacification of conquered territory.
>
> 2. Political commissars have initiated barbaric, Asiatic methods of warfare. They must be dealt with *immediately* [emphasis in the original] and with utmost severity. As a matter of principle they will be shot at once whether *captured during operations or otherwise showing resistance* [emphasis in the original].[15]

It took almost a decade after the conclusion of the Nuremberg War crimes trials for scholars to begin to examine the issues, events, and individuals that helped shape the development of the Commissar Order and its subsequent implementation. The first scholar to do so was Heinrich Uhlig in a 1957 three-part article titled "*The Criminal Order*."[16] Uhlig, like the prosecution at Nuremberg, traced the genesis of the Commissar Order to a 30 March 1941 speech by Adolf Hitler before over 250 military commanders at the New *Reich* Chancellery in Berlin. Using a comprehensive collection of primary source documentation, Uhlig showed how the order evolved

through several permutations over a three month period prior to the German invasion of the USSR.[17]

Drawing heavily from Nuremberg sources (documents and sworn testimony before the Tribunal), diaries of eyewitnesses and participants, and personal correspondence with some of the principal participants in the first section of the article, Uhlig followed the drafting process of the order through the legal departments of the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (*OKH*- High Command of the Army) and *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (*OKW*- High Command of the Armed Forces) to its implementation. In doing so, Uhlig also highlighted the high degree of cooperation between the German Armed Forces and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in reaching pre-invasion agreements on areas of operations and limited jurisdiction.[18]

The second section of "*The Criminal Order*" contained a transcript of a round table discussion of the Commissar Order with a panel of eighteen participants, which included jurists, scholars in the field of German history and military history, and former *Wehrmacht* generals. Their discussion centered first on the legal questions of authority in relation to existing international laws of warfare, and then went toward issues associated with the implementation of the Commissar Order itself. It concluded with a focus on the difficulties and challenges this criminal order posed for those in the German military.[19]

The final section of Uhlig's article contained documents to which Uhlig referred in his article. Uhlig included copies of thirty orders, drafts of orders, and reports which had mainly been submitted as evidence at the Nuremberg War Crimes

trials. This collection of documents, however, addressed more the development than the implementation of the Commissar Order on the field of battle.[20]

Virtually every article or portion of a book published on the subject followed this same theme, and focused primarily on the development of the Commissar Order. Alexander Dallin, a British historian, published German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945: A Study of Occupation Policies in 1957, and also addressed the origins of the Commissar Order.[21] He too drew most of his sources from the records of the "Trial of the Major War Criminals" at Nuremberg in his four-page section on "The Army and the Commissar Decree," but examined instead areas in which German generals attempted to either circumvent the Commissar Order, or to protest against it. Since Dallin did not make the *Kommissarbefehl* and other criminal orders like the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order the central themes of his study, he did not offer any evidence of how the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order was implemented on the field of battle. However, he recognized that there were clearly discrepancies in its implementation, and concluded his section on the "The Army and the Commissar Decree" with the following:

> The gap between policy and practice – and between a large number of the generals and the servile sycophants of the Keitel variety – was growing just as the Eastern campaign got under way.[22]

Two years after Dallin's book on German occupation policies in the Soviet Union, another British historian, Gerald Reitlinger, published an article in the July 1959 edition of the American Jewish Committee magazine Commentary.[23] In light of a war crimes trial of two former *SS* guards from the German concentration camp of Sachsenhausen held earlier in 1959, Reitlinger argued that it really wasn't the underlings who were to blame for the murder of captured Red Army soldiers in places like Sachsenhausen before the spring of 1944, but rather the German generals who acquiesced to Hitler, and supported the Commissar Order when it was first drafted in the spring of 1941.[24]

In his article, "*The Truth about Hitler's Commissar Order*," Reitlinger sought to set the 6 June 1941 directive in historical context. But rather than going into detail about the body of pre-invasion orders, he tried to explain to his readers the concept of an ideologically-driven form of warfare using the examples of European religious wars. Reitlinger stated the following as a preamble to his description of the Commissar Order:

> The conception that war against an ideology differs from normal warfare, and is not subject to normal restraints, was by no means new in 1941. The religious wars of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance offered a precedent, while the belief that followers of certain political ideas were too vicious to be treated as human beings was at least as old as the French Revolution. That somewhat inflated apostle of

> liberty, Edmund Burke, had written in 1791: 'If ever a foreign prince enters into France, he must enter it as a country of assassins. The mode of civilized war will not be practiced; nor are the French, who act on the present system, entitled to expect it.
>
> This sounds much like Hitler's language in 1941. But in 1791 these threats were public, and had the effect of strengthening the determination of the French revolutionaries, so that, when there was a short-lived occupation of a portion of the French soil, the occupying power was too fearful to behave with anything but restraint. With Hitler it was otherwise. His plans were made in secret, and it only became apparent after the invasion had begun that 'the mode of civilized warfare' would not be practiced.[25]

Reitlinger then followed a chronological path over a three month period from March to June 1941 to describe how the Commissar Order was shaped by the prevailing Nazi ideology with regard to the Soviet Union in general, and Red Army political commissars in particular. Much of his attention centered on the role of leading military authorities, and their responses to the criminal nature of the Commissar Order. He began this section of the article by stating that: "the history of

the drafting and circulation of the Commissar Order was that of a long struggle by the generals to save face."[26] Yet, according to Reitlinger, none of the military leaders, such as Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris, head of the *Abwehr* (military intelligence), Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, *Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht* (Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces), Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, *Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres* (Commander-in-Chief of the Army), General Walter Warlimont, Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff/National Defense Branch of *OKW*, succeeded. Their apparent lack of willingness to stand up to Hitler against blatant violations of international law resulted in further propagation of criminal acts.[27]

In the rest of the article, Reitlinger examined the Commissar Order in the greater context of German POW policy. He noted that resistance to the Commissar Order, once the order had been issued, emanated from individual commanders, including Field Marshal Fedor von Bock in the form of a memorandum written by his operations officer, Henning von Tresckow, in the fall of 1941.[28] However, Reitlinger showed that very few of the commanders had an impact upon rescinding the Commissar Order. He concluded the article by affixing blame for the murderous treatment meted out to Soviet POWs through the Commissar Order and other subsequent directives squarely on the shoulders of Hitler's leading generals.[29] The article closed with the following:

> The regulations comprised in Hitler's Commissar Order were the most monumental abuse known to history of what Edmund Burke had called "the mode of civilized warfare." Among the generals who carried out the regulations, Keitel and Jodl were hanged; Brauchitsch, Leeb, Rundstedt, Lehmann, Rocques have been released from prison. Some are writing memoirs to explain how Hitler lost the war for them, and others still are back on the army list.[30]

Within a year of publishing his article on the Commissar Order, Reitlinger published a larger analysis of Hitler's war in the East titled The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939-1945.[31] Based primarily on Nuremberg sources as well as diaries and narratives by participants in the colossal conflict against the USSR, Reitlinger devoted a chapter to the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.[32] "Leaving the Courts at Home" first examined the roles played by *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler and his second in command, Reinhard Heydrich, head of the *SD* (*Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführer-SS*) and *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (*RSHA - Reich* Security Main Office)[33] in helping to develop the ideological agenda for the invasion of the Soviet Union. As he had done in his article for Commentary in 1959, Reitlinger argued that the leadership of the German Army, led by Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch and Chief of the General Staff (*OKH*) General Franz Halder, caved in to the demands of the *SS* (*SD*) and

Security Police in allowing the *Einsatzgruppen*[34] a prominent role in the order of battle for the coming invasion.[35]

The second part of Reitlinger's chapter on "Leaving the Courts at Home" dealt with the drafting process of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941 and the Commissar Order of 6 June 1941. In this section, Reitlinger focused on the work of several individuals who took part in the actual writing of the aforementioned orders at the request of Hitler. These included General Walter Warlimont, chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff/National Defense Branch of *OKW*, and deputy to General Alfred Jodl, chief of *Wehrmacht* Operations Staff; Dr. Rudolf Lehmann, Director of the Legal Department at *OKW*; and General Eugen Müller, on special assignment to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Reitlinger followed the development of the orders through a series of phases as outlined by the testimony of the architects themselves from several of the war crimes trials at Nuremberg.[36]

The final section of Reitlinger's chapter on the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order addressed "the Orders in Practice." Like his Commentary article, this section dealt with the larger issue of German screening and treatment of Soviet POWs, of which commissars were only a small portion. Reitlinger also made mention of conflicting testimony given by a number of German generals during the post-war trials at Nuremberg. However, there was little evidence of the degree of implementation of the Commissar Order from formations in the field. Reitlinger cited Nuremberg documents in the "Trials of War Criminals under Control Council Law No. 10 - High Command Case" of February 1948, and testimony detailing some of the statistics of commissars reported executed by the troops under the command of

Ritter vom Leeb in Army Group North as an example of how commanders worked to sabotage the Commissar Order.[37]

As a result, Reitlinger concluded that it was very difficult to get an accurate assessment of just how many commissars were executed as political officers under the terms of the 6 June 1941 directive. He closed the chapter with the following example as an illustration of the elasticity of the application of the term "commissar:"

> The final ridicule of the Commissar Order appears in the report which the Intelligence Officer or *Ic* of the XXVIIth Corps sent to the 18th Army Headquarters on 27 September 1941. A railway protection battalion of elderly Russian reservists had been encircled and captured. Among them a white-haired academic gentleman was found asleep on the bank of a river. He was discovered to be Professor Kanaiev, author of a history of Russian literature. It seems that the Professor had emerged from beleaguered Leningrad in order to run a cinema-van for these veterans – rather like a WVS lady and her bun-wagon. But, since Kanaiev was the secretary of the Literary Institute of the Academy of Sciences and therefore an official of the Soviet State, he was classed as a Political Commissar and shot. On the same grounds they might have picked a member of the British

council or a stage-manager from ENSA or a lecturer on the British Way and Purpose.[38]

Two years later, one of the participants in the drafting of the Commissar Order whom Reitlinger had written about, retired General Walter Warlimont, published his memoirs, Im Hauptquartier der deutschen Wehrmacht, 1939-1945 (Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945).[39] A witness at the "Trial of the Major War Criminals," Warlimont also cited sources from these initial trials at Nuremberg in his reconstruction of the events leading up to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. As one who worked on the drafts of the Commissar Order, Warlimont offered insight into the cooperation between the legal departments of the *OKW* and the *OKH* in forging a finalized version,[40] as well as the issues associated with pre-invasion cooperative agreements between the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. He also re-emphasized the role Hitler played in driving the development of the Commissar Order, but restricted his comments on its implementation to what he called "a conspiracy of silence" among generals like Wilhelm Keitel and Alfred Jodl for allowing such a criminal order to get passed along the chain of command.[41] The focal point of his memoir, however, was clearly not this one order.

In 1964, Alexander Werth published a major work on the Russo-German war. A Russian-born correspondent with the London Sunday Times, Werth went to the Soviet Union when the Germans attacked in the summer of 1941. He witnessed the course of the war, and recorded his observations. His book, Russia at War, 1941-

1945, dealt only peripherally with the Commissar Order. On addressing the subject of German crimes in the Soviet Union, Werth stated:

> There were special orders, such as the Commissar Order under which commissars (or, in practice, any recognizable Communist, Jew, or other suspect, for that matter) were not to be treated as war prisoners, but simply shot. Several generals tried after the war to explain that this order was largely "theoretical", since it was not applied by the German Army. This is a gross overstatement, or a quibble, since the "commissars" were, as a rule, taken over by Himmler's SD before the other prisoners were sent to camps under Army jurisdiction.[42]

Another seminal work focusing on the Commissar Order also appeared in 1964. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen wrote a deposition on "*The Commissar Order and the Mass Execution of Soviet POWs*" for a German court in a trial of twenty-two former members of the staff of the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau held in Frankfort am Main in 1963-1964. Jacobsen was one of four historians from the Institute for Contemporary History (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte*) in Munich who contributed depositions which served as historical statements on the overall organization and function of the *SS*. These depositions were then published in a two-

volume edition in 1965 under the title Anatomie des SS-Staates (Anatomy of the SS State).[43]

Using the documentation (documents and sworn testimony) from both the "Trials of Major War Crimes" and the "Trials of War Criminals under Control Council Law No. 10 - High Command Case" at Nuremberg as a foundation, Jacobsen set the Commissar Order in the context of the ideological worldview of Hitler and the National Socialists. For Jacobsen, the Commissar Order was a top-down directive from the *Führer* himself, and a byproduct of an overall Nazi plan for complete political, economic, military, social, and racial hegemony over Europe. In his introduction to "*The Commissar Order and the Mass Execution of Soviet POWs*," Jacobsen argued that:

> The origins and development of the *Kommissarbefehl* (the order for the liquidation of the Commissars) [insertion in the original] of 6 June 1941 and the various orders regarding the execution of Russian prisoners of war from 1941 onwards can be judged in proper historical perspective only in the light of the political background outlined in the previous chapter. To consider them in isolation – even from the standpoint of the conduct of the war in the east – is to fail to recognize the measure of interdependence between the political aspirations of the national Socialist leadership and the directives and orders

> in the political, economic and military spheres that were consequent thereon – notably the extermination programme directed against specified sections of the Russian population.[44]

Jacobsen, like Uhlig before him, clearly articulated the evidentiary paper trail of the Commissar Order and in so doing, touched on other pre-invasion directives like the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order.[45] He also began to examine the enforcement of the Commissar Order during the campaign against the Soviet Union. Jacobsen cited several army group and army corps sources to support the fact that the Commissar Order had indeed been passed down by word of mouth in some parts of the front, including the following example from *Panzer* Group 3:

> The *Ic* (Intelligence Staff) [insertion in the original] of *Panzergruppe* 3, which had 'isolated and removed' 170 political commissars attached to the troops by the beginning of August, pointed out in its activity report of 14 August 1941 that the 'special measures taken against the political commissars with the army' had already become known on the Russian side and had led to considerable stiffening of resistance.[46]

Yet, Jacobsen also observed that the 17th Armored Division, under the direction of General Thoma, "had not shot the commissars it had captured."[47] While

the evidence Jacobsen presented for the degree of implementation of the Commissar Order is sparse at best, he implied in the following that further research was merited in this area:

> Difficult though it may be to obtain an historically accurate picture of the *de facto* manner in which the *Kommissarbefehl* was put into force by the military, there is nevertheless definite evidence that some formations carried out the order to the letter, others tried to circumvent it, and others again ignored it completely – as was proved by the subsequent segregation in prisoner-of-war camps.[48]

While Jacobsen himself stated at the end of the last section of his article dealing with the "*Mass Execution of Soviet Prisoners of War*" that he had "nothing more to add,"[49] other scholars certainly did, and his work served as "a bridge to later material."[50] Several prominent German historians dealt with the topic of the Commissar Order in the context of studies on the German Army. In 1969 Manfred Messerschmidt, for example, examined the Commissar Order and the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order as part of a study on the relationship of the *Wehrmacht* to the legal and ideological underpinnings of the Nazi regime. Messerschmidt argued that the German Army, in order to protect itself in an ideologically driven regime, involved itself early on during the mid-1930s in violations of legal and human rights. Therefore, by the time Hitler spoke of a directive to execute Red Army political

commissars on the field of battle in 1941, few in the officer corps could take a strong stand against it.[51] Werner Maser also addressed legal questions and issues of obedience relating to the Commissar Order and other directives as just a small portion of his 1977 book, Nürnberg – Tribunal der Sieger. (Tribunal of the Victors).[52]

One year after Maser's book on the Nuremberg trials, another seminal work on the Commissar Order appeared. Helmut Krausnick, one of the participants in Uhlig's round table discussion in 1957, published an article titled "*Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht*".[53]

Krausnick began his own study by setting it in the historiographical context of the scholarship which had preceded it. From Uhlig to Dallin, and Jacobsen, to Hermann Dieter Betz,[54] and Maser, Krausnick identified major and minor contributions to the body of research on the Commissar Order in the three decades since the conclusion of the last of the Nuremberg war crimes trials.[55] A central component of his article focused on the mechanics and individuals involved in drafting both the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order. Krausnick chose to look beyond Hitler as the key figure in the development of the criminal orders, and dissected the evidentiary trail from one draft to another. Krausnick was especially interested in how the concept of killing Red Army political commissars moved from idea to reality through the bureaucratic infrastructure of the legal departments from March through early June of 1941. As did Reitlinger, Krausnick followed Lehmann's, Warlimont's and Halder's testimonies and written work, as well as the drafts produced by General Eugen Müller to trace the development of the

Wehrmacht's active role in the killing process that would take place once the Germans unleashed their attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941.[56]

Krausnick then turned his attention to address the German military leadership's tacit acceptance of criminal orders for the *Barbarossa* campaign. In this section, Krausnick noted that it was highly unlikely that Hitler would have backed off his demands for the liquidation of commissars on the field of battle had his generals threatened to resign *en masse*, as Reitlinger implied in his 1959 Commentary article.[57] Yet, had Hitler's generals resigned in protest over the criminal orders, there may never have been an invasion of the Soviet Union, and the Commissar Order would not have been implemented.

Krausnick also examined issues involving the treatment of Jews and the German military leadership, with a close-up look at the long-standing stereotypical equation of Jews and communists, especially the association of Jews with commissars. Here, he turned from Nuremberg trial sources, and looked at contemporaneous documents and personal diary entries of German senior military commanders like Field Marshal Fedor von Bock and diplomat Ulrich von Hassell. Krausnick used these accounts as a contrast to the vast majority of the officer corps that appeared to acquiesce to the ideological rhetoric of the *Führer* regarding Jews and the communist system of the Soviet Union.[58]

Krausnick, like Reitlinger before him, closed his article with a brief assessment of how the Commissar Order was implemented and reported. Citing Halder's diary entries as evidence that front-line *Panzer* divisions were not carrying out the Commissar Order, but that Red Army political commissars were mostly

discovered in the POW camps, Krausnick noted that there was a wide spectrum of implementation.[59] He attributed this to what he saw as an increasing expansion of the definition of political commissar, and the sometimes apparent confusion about whether a prisoner was to be executed as a political commissar in accordance with the Commissar Order, or an irregular in accordance with the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order.[60]

However, virtually all of the sources Krausnick quoted for statistical purposes were from *Panzer* groups or corps, and not infantry divisions. For example, Krausnick cited a report from *Panzergruppe* 4 (General Erich Hoepner) for the period covering 22 June 1941 to 8 July 1941 that "101 [commissars] were eliminated," and another from *Panzergruppe* 3 that up until the start of August 1941, "about 170 political commissars [...] were taken in as prisoners and [...] forcefully separated." These statistics came from the "High Command Case" of the "Trials of War Criminals under Control Council Law No. 10" at Nuremberg involving Field Marshal Leeb of Army Group North in February 1948, and were part of the collection of documents included in Uhlig's 1965 article on the Commissar Order.[61]

At no point in his own article did Krausnick provide a comprehensive statistical analysis of the number of commissars reported executed by front-line divisions. He simply culled material previously available to scholars on corps and *Panzer* groups as evidence that these formations filed reports which addressed the number of commissars captured and immediately executed, or sent to the rear. Not convinced that the numbers provided by the *Panzer* groups in Army Group North were completely accurate, he used Halder's diary entries of 1 August 1941 and 21

September 1941 to conclude that "most of the commissars, [their] functionaries, representatives, etc. were not killed at the front [...]," but rather only after discovery in the POW camps in the rear.[62]

The larger subject of the German treatment of POWs, including the development and implementation of the Commissar Order, was examined in more detail in the year following Krausnick's publication of the "*Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht.*" In 1978, Christian Streit published a study, Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945, which addressed how the German military designed and implemented POW policy toward captured Red Army soldiers. [63]

In this book, Streit demonstrated that more than half of the Soviet POWs in German custody died during the first year of the German campaign against the USSR through terrible conditions endured during forced marches to transit and POW camps, systematic starvation imposed in the camps themselves, waves of epidemics of typhoid fever that swept through the camps, and by individual and mass executions. These deaths occurred despite several protests against the policy of destruction, most notably by Alfred Rosenberg, *Reich* Minister for the Eastern Occupied Territories, and Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris. While Rosenberg and Carnaris stated that the killing of Soviet POWs was incongruent with German strategic interests, they did not necessarily disagree, according to Streit, with the overall goal and aim of the German treatment of Soviet POWs, but considered the methods employed to be counter-productive. After the middle of 1942 the death rate among Soviet POWs decreased as

military authorities integrated more prisoners into the war economy in the areas of agriculture, mining, construction, and heavy metals.[64]

Streit devoted a section to the Commissar Order in a larger chapter on "The Inclusion of the *Wehrmacht* in the National Socialist Policy of Destruction" (*Die Einbeziehung der Wehrmacht in die nationalsozialistische Ausrottungspolitik*).[65] He observed that in the war crimes trials and memoir literature produced by German generals, more time and effort have been devoted to the Commissar Order than to the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the overall treatment of Soviet POWs. He attributed this to the simple fact that the Commissar Order flagrantly violated the Article IV of the first Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1899) which required that POWs be treated humanely.[66]

Like Uhlig, Reitlinger, and Krausnick before him, Streit set the Commissar Order in the context of the National Socialist worldview. Hitler provided the vision for the Commissar Order, but the details were hammered out by Keitel, Brauchitsch, Jodl, Warlimont, and others. As a result, the drafting process and subsequent post-war testimony about it, especially on the question of how to treat subordinate functionaries and civilian commissars captured in the course of battle or behind the front lines, occupied a significant portion of Streit's section on the Commissar Order.[67]

For Streit, the question of complicity in issuing and following criminal orders was, therefore, not a moot one. In the conclusion of his initial section on the Commissar Order, Streit stated that: "The inclusion of the *Wehrmacht* in the National

Socialist policy of destruction was carried out in an irrevocable manner. The orders were passed along and obeyed."[68]

In his section on "Die Vernichtung einer Weltanschauung" ("The Destruction of a Worldview"), Streit examined the implementation of the Commissar Order along with the other criminal orders (the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia"). Citing Uhlig and Jacobsen, Streit noted that during the "Trials of Major War Criminals" and the "Trials of War Criminals" at Nuremberg, a number of German generals at divisional command and higher claimed that they had not passed the Commissar Order along to their troops. However, Streit demonstrated that the claims by these commanders were simply false by going to the official war diaries of the intelligence officers (*Ic*) in the divisions or corps in question. In the pages of these intelligence reports the quantifiable implementation of the Commissar Order was most visible.[69]

Streit also deconstructed the arguments Brauchitsch and Halder advanced in postwar trials that the High Command of the Army had little interest in the degree of implementation of the Commissar Order. By tracing the chronological development of the 6 June 1941 directive through the inclusion of politruks as eligible for immediate execution in August 1941, Streit showed the intimate involvement of *OKH* in the implementation of a policy of ideological destruction.[70]

As Uhlig, Jacobsen, and Krausnick had concluded, so Streit also believed that the Commissar Order was not carried out in all of the front-line formations, but rather in the POW camps. Streit did not investigate the extent to which the Commissar Order was obeyed by specific formations on the field of battle. But he did

demonstrate that in each army group commissars were killed. This included between "30-40 commissars finished off" (*erledigt*) in a POW transit camp (*Dulag* 182, Uman) under the jurisdiction of the 17th Army in mid-August 1941.[71]

That German commanders passed along the 6 June 1941 order to separate and execute Red Army political commissars among Soviet POWs was enough for Streit to prove the cooperation of the *Wehrmacht* in a larger war of annihilation. This war of destruction eventually made Soviet prisoners of war the second largest group of victims of the Nazi extermination policy, second in numbers only to the Jews of Europe. Streit noted that at least 3.3 million Soviet POWs died out of a total of some 5.8 million Red Army troops captured by the Germans between 22 June 1941 and the end of the war in May 1945. This 57.7% fatality rate of the total number of Soviet POWs captured was in stark contrast to the less than 4% of Anglo/American POWs who died while in German captivity.[72]

In addition, Streit stated in the 1978 edition of Keine Kameraden that the *Wehrmacht* turned over between 580,000 to 600,000 Soviet POWs to the *SD* as part of a series of mutual agreements involving a process of selection and screening in POW camps which began in mid-summer 1941. However, these statistics, more than ten percent of all Red Army soldiers taken prisoner, drew the ire of a number of scholars, including Alfred Streim, for appearing inflated.

Three years after Streit's publication of Keine Kameraden, Streim, published his own study of the German treatment of Soviet POWs. While he reached similar conclusions as Streit about the *Wehrmacht* policy of destruction toward Soviet POWs, his statistical analysis was different. Streim, then the director of the Central Office for

the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes (*Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen*) in Ludwigsburg, who was responsible for bringing a number of former Nazis to justice, based his conclusions on trial documents used in postwar cases. In his 1981 book, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa". Eine Dokumentation,[73] Streim stated that at least 2.5 million Soviet POWs had died while in German captivity, a figure almost a million less than Streit had estimated.[74]

Streim also dealt with the issue of the Commissar Order in connection with the "*Barbarossa*" Jurisdiction Order. Utilizing diaries of eyewitnesses among the German military leadership, the testimony of the drafters of the criminal orders, and Nuremberg documents from 1945-1948, Streim detailed the development of the two orders chronologically. Focusing on the drafting process, Streim expanded somewhat on the work done by Uhlig, Reitlinger, Jacobsen, and Krausnick.[75]

Streim examined the close cooperation of the *Wehrmacht* and the security forces of the *SD*, especially in relation to the Commissar Order. However, he set the Commissar Order in the context of the development of German policy toward Soviet POWs.[76] For this reason, he was less concerned with how specific armies, corps, or divisions implemented the Commissar Order, and more with how German policy on POWs evolved, especially with regard to the security forces behind the front lines.[77]

As a result, Streim presented very little information on how the directive to murder all Red Army political commissars on the field of battle was implemented. He claimed that since most of the killings of commissars appeared to take place in POW camps, the troops did not fully carry out the Commissar Order.[78] In a sharp contrast to Krausnick, he stated that German troops filed false reports on the treatment of Red

Army political commissars, and found ways to circumvent the 6 June 1941 order.[79] Streim also concluded that close to 140,000 Soviet POWs were handed over to the *SD*, and not the 580,000 to 600,000 as Streit had stated in 1978.[80]

Jürgen Förster, an historian at the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* in Potsdam,[81] published a number of essays which dealt, in part, with both the development and the implementation of the Commissar Order. The most notable of these essays appeared in an edited volume published in 1983 in the quasi-official history of Germany in the Second World War through the Research Institute for Military History on the invasion of the Soviet Union. *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Volume 4) covered numerous political, military, and economic themes associated with "Operation *Barbarossa*."[82]

In "Part 1: German War Policy and the Soviet Union 1940-41," Förster contributed an essay on "*Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation*."[83] Drawing heavily on the works of Jacobsen, and Krausnick, Förster also used primary source documents from the German Federal Military Archives located in Freiburg im Breisgau to trace the development of the Commissar Order. From these documents, Förster identified a source for what the German Army knew about Red Army political commissars prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union. Citing the official publication, The Wartime Forces of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics dated 15 January 1941 and an order by the Soviet War Commissar for Defense of 21 January 1941, Förster showed that the responsibilities of political officers were at least known to some of the military and legal leaders who helped draft the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order.[84]

Förster also placed the Commissar Order within the context of Nazi ideology. He argued that the National Socialist equation of Jews with Red Army political commissars, which began in the German Army as early as 1935, made the Commissar Order another example of how the war in the East was much more than a military conquest. Förster cited a draft of a leaflet from the Psychology Laboratory of the Reich War Ministry (*Psychologisches Laboratorium des Reichskriegsministeriums*) dated 2 November 1935, an ethno-psychological study of the national composition of the population of the USSR and possibilities of applying propaganda, which stated that "the gentlemen commissars and Party functionaries" were "mostly filthy Jews."[85] However, a draft of a study with no evidence of distribution throughout the German chain of command is little more than anecdotal evidence that Nazi military leaders equated Jews with Red Army political commissars in the pre-war period.

In an essay on "*Securing Living Space*," Förster attempted to document how the Commissar Order was implemented on the field of battle.[86] This had clearly been an area most scholars did not address, either because it was not in the scope of their study, or because there was insufficient evidence to draw any meaningful conclusions. Förster began his essay on the "*Implementation of the 'Commissar Order'*" by repeating a claim first made by Krausnick that:

> In postwar discussion of the two unlawful decrees – the restriction of martial jurisdiction and the treatment of the commissars – more attention has been devoted to the 'commissar order' of 6 June 1941 than to the '*Führer*

> decree' of 13 May. More people were actually killed as a result of the 'special measures' taken by the troops against the civilian population under the decree on martial jurisdiction. However, the violation of international law was more blatant in the case of the shooting of commissars. In the case of the commissar order, the shooting of a specific group in the Red Army was no longer justified even by the mere suspicion of resistance to the *Wehrmacht,* but simply by their position and function within the enemy system.[87]

Förster then argued that while former generals maintained in postwar trials and memoirs that they did not pass the Commissar Order along to their troops, the "numerous official reports of executions tell their own story."[88] Förster also took issue with Jacobsen and Streim, who claimed that since most executions of Red Army political commissars appeared to take place in POW camps, the soldiers did not actually carry out the Commissar Order.[89] However, citing reports from German intelligence officers in the field (*Ic* officers), Förster showed that German Army formations indeed reported on the execution of Red Army political commissars in accordance with the 6 June 1941 directive. These reports ranged geographically from across the invasion front, and varied in the total number of commissars reported shot, and the time the executions took place. Förster stated that:

> It is not surprising that large numbers of commissars were reported shot at the beginning of operations. At this stage they [commissars – explanation mine] were still recognizable by special badges on their uniforms. For example, Armoured Group A reported '172 disposed of' by 19 July 1941, Second Army '177' by 24 July, Armoured Group 3 'about 170 got rid of separately', and 44th Infantry Division '122 commissars disposed of' by the beginning of October.[90]

Like Streit, Förster extended his examination of how the Commissar Order was implemented beyond the few sources cited during the "Trials of Major War Crimes" and the "Trials of War Criminals" held at Nuremberg from the fall of 1945 through the winter of 1948.[91] Förster also followed the chronological framework that Streim and Streit had done in tracing the involvement of the *SD* in the killing of commissars in camps behind the front lines.[92]

Förster drew his examples from all three Army Groups involved in the invasion of the Soviet Union, but he did not provide any contextual assessment of how the 6 June 1941 directive to shoot Red Army political commissars was dealt with within each army group, army command, corps, division, or rear area. In the sampling of responses to the Commissar Order, Förster made no attempt at producing any comprehensive statistics to document how the *Kommissarbefehl* was actually implemented on the field of battle. These random samples, therefore, left open a

number of questions on the degree to which the Commissar Order was carried out. Repeating an assessment by Jacobsen, Förster admitted as much by stating:

> In the absence of any quantitative assessment, it is difficult 'to obtain an accurate overall view of the practical implementation of the "commissar order" by the troops'.[93]

Förster also published several other essays which dealt, in part, with the subject of the Commissar Order. For example, an article from 1985, "*New Wine in Old Wineskins? The Wehrmacht and the War of 'Weltanschauungen', 1941*," addressed the Commissar Order only as it related to Hitler's vision for a clash of ideologies in the war with the Soviet Union.[94] The same was true for "*The Relation between Operation Barbarossa as an Ideological War of Extermination and the Final Solution*,"[95] and "*Complicity or Entanglement? Wehrmacht, War, and Holocaust.*"[96]

Both Förster and Streit published essays in a collection edited by the German Historical Institute in 1986 under the title The Policies of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany.[97] In his essay, "*The German Army and the Policies of Genocide*," Streit used the Commissar Order as an example of how Hitler may have issued a directive to murder all the Jews of Europe. Although he was more concerned with the role of the *Wehrmacht* in carrying out Hitler's genocidal policy in the East against Jews, Streit argued that the murder of Jews could not have occurred without the ideological framework established for the war with the Soviet Union

toward POWs and civilians. This included the criminal orders of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.[98]

Förster's 1986 essay, "*The German Army and the Ideological War against the Soviet Union*," focused on the role of the German military in prosecuting Hitler's ideological war against Jews and Communists in the USSR. Förster maintained that "German historiography has far too long been preoccupied with the 'German catastrophe' (Frederick Meinecke), and has thus overlooked the Jewish and Soviet catastrophe."[99]

As a result, Förster treated the Commissar Order more in the context of its development, highlighting the involvement of leading German generals, and less in its implementation. As Förster stated, "concern for the discipline of the troops was obviously more important than scruples about illegal shooting of captive commissars or of civilians who were mere suspects."[100]

However, Förster did more than simply restate the main arguments of his 1983 essays in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV). Accepting Streit's figures that the German Army turned over upwards of 600,000 Soviet POWS to the *SD* between the start of the invasion and May 1944, and that 3.3 million captured Red Army troops perished while in captivity, Förster stated that:

> [...] the mass death of the Soviet prisoners of war was caused not by execution following political or racist criteria, but by the priorities of the German exploitation

> policy, which condemned hundreds of thousands of prisoners to death by starvation and endemic diseases.[101]

Förster argued that the ideological relationship between Hitler and the German Army was cemented in the implementation of the Commissar Order and the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. According to Förster:

> It would be incorrect to underrate or play down the effect the Commissar Order had on the conduct of troops or to assume (as do Nolte, Streim and Walle[102]) that the *Wehrmacht* generally found ways to circumvent or ignore it. Are we really still to believe that the order was not implemented at all or that official reports were deliberately manipulated,[103] as former soldiers apologetically claim? The large number of executions listed by the intelligence officers speak in too clear a language.[104]

However, the statistics Förster provided offer only a random sampling of formations. He did, however, also note that there was a growing discontent among some commanders that the Soviets were offering tougher resistance to the Germans, in part, because they appeared to be aware of the existence of German orders to execute Red Army political commissars immediately upon capture. As Förster stated:

> On 23 September 1941, the Army High Command requested an examination of the implementation of the Commissar Order, taking into consideration the development of the campaign. Hitler, however, refused any change. A similar request from the 16th Army was turned down in December 1941. It was only in May 1942 that the pressure exerted by senior commanders showed results. The Commissar Order was suspended in the operations area in order to encourage the tendency of Soviet soldiers to desert. One divisional commander instructed his soldiers not to shoot commissars or political army leaders as late as September 1942.[105]

Förster went on to describe what he saw as an expansion of the program to kill Red Army political commissars through the anti-partisan campaign. As Streit and others before him had done, Förster set the war against partisans in the context of the racial and ideological struggle envisioned by Hitler. Jews and communists were part and parcel of the same foe, and represented grave threats to the security of the German troops in the Soviet Union. Yet, Förster concluded that he disagreed with Streit, "who asserts that the Army's implementation of the 'Criminal Orders' contributed decisively to a situation arising in the autumn of 1941 in which the murder of European Jews became possible."[106]

In addition, other scholars also addressed the Commissar Order in studies on the history of the Third *Reich* in the two decades since the publication of the Förster's essays in the 4th Volume of Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union.[107] However, for most historians during this time frame, the Commissar Order appeared only as a peripheral notation of a larger study. For example, in an essay about military involvement in the killing of European Jews, Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm described the Commissar Order only with reference of those generals who initially protested to *OKW* and *OKH*:

> The first army protests, [...], which were aimed at abolition of the so-called *Kommissarbefehl*, seemed impractical, and in propaganda only counter-productive after the Red Army had given up the special insignia of the ranks for politruks and commissars. Later, commissars and "polit-workers" were handed over to the *SD* by special investigation commandos far behind the front line, and nobody protested.[108]

Omer Bartov, a professor of European History at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, dealt with the execution of Red Army political commissars in a small section of his 1985 book on The Eastern Front 1941-1945, German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare.[109] In this book, Bartov theorized that German troops became brutalized only in the course of fighting the Soviets on the Eastern

Front, and that this was due, in part, to the ideological nature of warfare prescribed by such directives as the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order. Bartov followed with similar examples in a 1991 publication of Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich.[110] In linking the drafting of the Commissar Order prior to the German invasion of the USSR with other Nazi ideological directives, Bartov wanted to show that the maltreatment of Soviet POWs was part of a larger program of annihilation. Bartov stated that:

> In the course of the Russian campaign over 5,700,000 Red Army soldiers were captured by the Germans, of whom no less than 3,300,000, or 57 percent, died. Indeed, even by early 1942 two million Soviet POWs were already dead. This unprecedented death rate was related to the execution of commissars by the troops upon capture; to the delivery to the *Einsatzgruppen* for "special treatment" of so-called "politically intolerable" (*politisch untragbaren*) prisoners, that is, all members of the intelligentsia (*Intelligenzler*), "fanatic communists," and Jews; and to explicit orders issued to the formations on the ground to supply POWs "only with the most primitive means," as well as to the lack of any serious preparations for the huge number of prisoners the *Wehrmacht* expected to take by employing its well-tried envelopment tactics against the Red Army.[111]

Bartov made reference to the Commissar Order and the treatment of Red Army political officers in other publications as well. However, he went back to the same sources he originally cited, including Krausnick, Streit, Streim, and his own works, while failing to explain how the killing of commissars directly impacted the deaths of over three million POWs.[112]

This pattern of referencing earlier works is to be observed in the majority of scholarly publications that mention the Commissar Order in the years since Förster's essays in the early 1980s. However, Theo Schulte's The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia is an exception.[113] Schulte, a senior lecturer in European history at Anglia Polytechnic University in Cambridge, England, set the Commissar Order in the context of the German military occupation policies and actions of rear area troops. For Schulte, the genesis and development of the Commissar Order was of much less significance. He simply cited Krausnick's 1977 article in the Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, and directed his attention to what he believed to be the more important question of implementation.[114] Schulte argued that scholars have directed most of their attention to front-line troops, when it was the troops in the rear who actually carried out the executions of Red Army political commissars. Schulte stated:

> It can be argued [...] that the role of the *Korücks* and Army Group Rear Areas in the process was probably of greater significance than that of front-line formations. Once it

> became apparent that special measures were being directed against the commissars many took to disguising themselves as regular officers or simple soldiers. Rather than being dealt with at the point of capture, the individuals concerned were subject to a selection process in various locations in the rear; in the first instance at the *Armee-Gefangenensammelstelle* (POW collection points) and subsequently at the *Dulags* (transit POW camps).[115]

Schulte also gave little attention to the series of directives in the summer and fall of 1941 which permitted *SD* to screen POWs in camps controlled by the *Wehrmacht*. He did, however, note that part of this screening process produced guidelines which established categories of prisoners and how they were to be treated. According to Schulte, POWs in the Army Group Rear Areas on 27 July 1941 were to be separated according to the following:

1. *Volksdeutsche* [ethnic Germans]. Ukrainians, Balts: Possible use as interpreters.
2. Asiatics, Jews, German speaking Russians: NOT to be sent to the *Reich*.
3. Political unreliables, Commissars, or Agitators: Not to be sent to the *Reich*/Special measures to be taken

by Camp Commandants on the basis of existing orders [*Aussonderungen*].

4. Officers: Unless required for tasks in the operational areas, to be sent to the Eastern borders of the regions under civilian administration.

5. Various: Unless required for tasks in the operational areas, to be sent to the Eastern borders of the regions under civilian administration.

All decisions in the Army Areas (*AOK & Korück*) are to be made by the troops; In the Army Group Rear Areas; special categories are to be handed over to the *Einsatzgruppen* of the *SD*.[116]

Taking exception to Streit's earlier assessments that the *SD* had full access to POW camps in order to select commissars and others for execution, Schulte argued that the documents for *Korück* 582, a formation operating behind the 9th Army in Army Group Center, showed otherwise. He stated that:

> Streit, in fact, asserts that there is an indication that despite these new directives the SD was involved in the scrutiny (*Überprüfung*) of POWs from the very start of the campaign. Evidence from the files of *Korück* 582, however, suggests that even where there was some measure of *SD*

> involvement in selection, the Army itself tended to deal with matters inside the camps.[117]

Addressing the "matters inside the camp" translated into executions. As Schulte indicated, the documents from the 9th Army "[...] made it quite clear that any persons found to be commissars were to be interrogated and shot." [118]

However, Schulte recognized that there were still limitations on how to assess the degree of implementation of the Commissar Order. Schulte cited the disagreement between Streim and Förster over whether the officers submitted false reports on the number of commissars shot (Streim) as a substitute for resistance to a criminal order, or whether there were simply incomplete records (Förster) which distorted the truly large numbers.[119] He also stated that:

> In the first instance it should be noted, as with so much work on occupation policy, that there is a marked lack of quantified research on this topic. Estimates as to the numbers of commissars killed vary considerably, from Streit's calculations which propose a figure in excess of 580,000, to Streim's much lower estimate of around 140,000. As Förster notes, even the variable tone of the language employed in reports caused confusion, with oblique references to: '*erschießen*' (shot); '*erledigen*' (disposed of); '*behandeln*' (attended to); '*erfassen*' (seized

- *sic*); '*abschieben*' (expelled); and '*umlegen*' (killed). While the more opaque of these terms were probably euphemisms for execution, certain historians, such as Joachim Fest, would contend that there is still uncertainty as to the fate of some of the commissars. The handing over of special categories of POWs to the *SD* may not automatically have resulted in them all being killed, since some could have been assigned to security duties in occupied territories.[120]

Schulte cited Joachim Hoffmann, an historian at the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* in Potsdam, for the reference in the preceding quotation to Joachim Fest, as one who took exception to "the frivolous manner in which figures are manipulated." In his essay on "The Conduct of War through Soviet Eyes" in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV), Hoffmann took Krausnick and Streit to task for what he perceived to be the careless ways in which they interpreted total numbers of POWS who died in temporary camps, in transit to POW camps, or after a transfer to the *SD*. Hoffmann maintained that:

> Neither transfer to the *SS*, or even the *SD*, can be simply equated with execution - especially as the entire auxiliary police ("protection squads," "order service," etc.) in the

> Reich Commissariats Ostland and Ukraine under the sole authority of the Reich Leader SS were largely recruited from prisoners of war.[121]

In spite of such challenges inherent in quantitative analysis, Schulte traced the documentary evidence in the files of *Korück* 582 of how the Commissar Order filtered into a rear area. Following a paper trail generated from above, he concluded that "at all levels of command [...] the tendency was for the *Kommissarbefehl* to be implemented." Yet, he did note that there were some '"exceptions to the rule," and "that there was a marked reluctance on the part of some POW camp commanders to cooperate with the *Einsatzkommandos*" in the handing over of commissars for execution. However, he did not offer any specific number of commissars killed in the areas under the jurisdiction of *Korück* 582. Rather, for Schulte, the focus lay more in the fact that some commanders acted without fear of retribution, and had latitude in the implementation of the Commissar Order under their authority.[122]

Another preeminent scholar, Richard Breitman, touched on the Commissar Order in his 1991 book on Heinrich Himmler, The Architect of Genocide. Breitman, a professor of History at American University in Washington, DC, cited Krausnick as the fundamental source for the following:

> At least twice more that month [March 1941 – explanation mine] Hitler emphasized the need to liquidate the bearers of Bolshevism, and on the second occasion, a speech to some

> 250 senior officers from the three armed services, he made it plain that the military too would have to play a role in this campaign. The German troops would have to hand over captured communist functionaries and political commissars to the *Einsatzkommandos*, or, if that was impossible, shoot the captives themselves; these people were not to be regarded as prisoners of war. Hitler's 30 March speech provided part of the impetus for one of the most infamous military orders of the war, which came to be known as the Commissar Order – the execution of alleged Soviet commissars without trial.[123]

Breitman then proceeded to set the Commissar Order in the context of his own research into the Nazi origins and development of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." Like Streit, he viewed the Commissar Order as part of the legal groundwork that prepared regular German troops for the racial war against the Jews which followed the invasion of the Soviet Union. Breitman added:

> In all likelihood, there was more behind this order than a simple desire to liquidate the Communist political officials assigned to the Russian army. Nazi propaganda dating back to 1935[124] closely identified commissars and party functionaries with Jews, and many German officers had

> come to accept this equation. The Commissar Order was a means to make use of the German military's anti-Bolshevist sentiment, which years of indoctrination had enhanced. The order would involve the army in the planned liquidation of commissars and move it toward acceptance of the general killings of Jews. The Armed Forces High Command guidelines for the troops in Russia, in fact, called for merciless intervention against Jews, Bolshevist agitators, guerrillas, and saboteurs; Jews qualified simply because of their race.[125]

Other historians operated in much the same way. New research results into the Commissar Order were not available, so they quoted whatever studies had been done, or they cited works that had references to older results of research on the topic. Colonel David Glantz and Jonathan House did the latter when they identified Omer Bartov, an historian who has never conducted any original research in the area of the Commissar Order, as the source for the following description in their 1995 book, When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler:

> The most obvious explanation for the German brutality was the horror of the Eastern Front itself, where German troops suffered heavy casualties while they were isolated from society and surrounded by a hostile populace and terrain. In

> fact, however, the German troops engaged in atrocities almost from the start of the war. Long before the Nazi forces arrived in a given region, the first troops to enter a Russian town frequently executed several people in an attempt to deter any resistance. The Commissar Order was often interpreted to mean the execution of anyone identified as a Communist Party member or anyone who appeared to be Jewish, since Nazi propaganda held that many Communists were Jewish. The troops frequently shot such people out of hand, even when ordered to turn them over to the Nazi security services for interrogation. Other prisoners were forced to clear land mines or engaged in similar actions too dangerous for German troops.[126]

However, not all scholars have gone the route of referencing those who had previously cited the results of someone else's original research. A catalogue of a photographic exhibition, "*Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*," on the participation of the *Wehrmacht* in criminal acts in the Soviet Union and the Balkans, was published in the original German in 1995; an English language edition appeared four years later. A collection of essays accompanied the catalogue.[127] The catalogue in English, with a preface written by Omer Bartov, made several references to the Commissar Order.[128] Bartov, in his opening essay to the catalogue, "*Professional Soldiers*," credited Jacobsen's research on the Commissar

Order with initiating a wave of studies on the subject of German military involvement in criminal and genocidal acts during the Second World War. Bartov stated:

> The publication in 1965 of the two-volume work *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, which included an important analysis by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen of the so-called Commissar Order (the instruction to kill on the spot all political officers attached to Red Army formations captured by the *Wehrmacht*), heralded the beginning of scholarly writings on the criminal activities of the *Wehrmacht* during its campaign in the Soviet Union.[129]

The exhibition, produced by tobacco heir Jan Philipp Reemtsma and the Hamburg Institute for Social Research which he funds, traveled throughout Germany and Austria from 1995-1999, and was seen by more than 800,000 people. Late in 1999, a Polish historian, Bogdan Musial, and an Hungarian historian, Krisztián Ungváry, proved that numerous photographs in the exhibition had been incorrectly captioned and identified, and did not show what they were described as showing, so that the credibility of the entire exhibition was called into question; the organizers withdrew the exhibition.[130]

While the credibility of the documents themselves was not questioned, some of the scholarship associated with the collection of essays accompanying the *Wehrmacht* exhibition, The War of Extermination, should have been. For example, in

The War of Extermination, Christian Streit again focused on the role of the *Wehrmacht* in the maltreatment of Soviet POWs. He cited the Commissar Order in connection with the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order as foundational directives in the prosecution of a war of destruction against Soviet POWs:

> The Commissar Order [...] required the troops to identify political commissars among the mass of prisoners, separate them out, and shoot them. Investigations have confirmed that, in contrast to what former soldiers repeatedly claimed, this order was almost universally followed in the summer and fall of 1941. In May of 1942 the order was rescinded at the urging of front-line commanders because knowledge of the shootings had drastically stiffened Red Army resistance.[131]

Streit cited his own 1978 book and Jürgen Förster's essay on "*Securing Living Space*" in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV) as references for his contention that "investigations have confirmed" that the Commissar Order "was almost universally followed." However, the references he provided were devoid of investigations, and such a sweeping conclusion about the implementation of the 6 June 1941 order needs more than supposition to be accurate and worthy of consideration.

Bernd Boll and Hans Safrian also covered the connection between the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order in their essay on "*The Way to Stalingrad: The 6th Army in 1941-42.*" However, they condensed the two directives into the following description:

> Before "Operation *Barbarossa*" began, the Decree on Jurisdiction and the "Commissar Order" defined certain segments of the civilian population and the Red Army as enemies and ordered measures aimed at their "complete elimination." Irregulars, political commissars in the Red Army, civilian commissars who resisted the *Wehrmacht* or fomented resistance, along with other "hostile civilians," were to be killed at once. The troops had sweeping authority to carry out these directives in the absence of specific orders. No binding order mandated the killing of civilians who were merely suspected of committing a hostile act. In those cases, decisions regarding life and death lay in the hands of the officer nearest at hand. Killing within the framework of "collective measures" aimed at localities from which attacks were launched against German troops could only be authorized by an officer from battalion command or higher. Commissars without hostile intentions were initially supposed to be left "unmolested,"

with the proviso, of course, that they would later be turned over to the *SD* (Security Service of the *SS*).[132]

Manfred Messerschmidt was much clearer on the development of the Commissar Order as part of a larger body of pre-invasion directives in his essay "*Forward Defense: The "Memorandum of the Generals" for the Nuremberg Court.*" In the section on "Criminal Orders," Messerschmidt identified the genesis of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order as coming from Hitler himself: "The starting point was Hitler's address to his closest military advisors on 3 [*sic*] March 1941."[133] Citing the research of Uhlig and his own work on the subject, Messerschmidt went through the machinations of the drafting process from April through the first part of June 1941 in order to establish the evidentiary paper trail of the criminal orders. He then juxtaposed the evidence with a memorandum written by Warlimont and several other German generals awaiting trial at Nuremberg after the war. This memorandum attempted to minimize the complicity of the army leadership in relation to such directives as the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.[134]

The *Wehrmacht* exhibition brought renewed academic attention during the 1990s to the institution of the German Army in World War II.[135] A flurry of publications appeared, mostly in German, which addressed the role of the *Wehrmacht* in the overall debate over *Geschichtpolitik* (the politics of history). A number of these scholarly contributions focused on aspects of the development and implementation of the Commissar Order. One example is Horst Rohde's essay „*Politischer*

Indoktrination in höheren Stäben und in der Truppe - untersucht am Beispiel des Kommissarbefehls" in a collection published under the title Die Soldaten der Wehrmacht. Rohde used the Commissar Order as a case study in the degree to which the German Army as an institution resisted or complied with the criminal orders of the Nazi regime. [136]

Rohde was much less concerned than most other authors with the origins and drafting process of the Commissar Order. His focus was also not on Nuremberg documents. Rather, Rohde drew directly from the records of the intelligence officers (*Ic*) as found in the official war diaries of a number of formations. His study was truly a grass-roots approach on how the Commissar Order was implemented. His focus on pre-invasion material was limited solely to what the intelligence officers were told about the treatment of Red Army political commissars in the days immediately before the invasion of the Soviet Union. Much of this information was to the effect that the Commissar Order was to be passed on by word of mouth, that officers and enlisted personnel were to be separated, that the experience of the Soviet-Finnish war proved that commissars were barbaric and not to be trusted, and that both military and civilian commissars were to be considered as one and the same, and taken out to be executed.[137]

Rohde was also interested in the mechanics of the reporting process. This included how divisions, corps, and army commands for both the infantry and mechanized formations summarized and passed on information on the total number of commissars captured or reported "treated according to instructions." For example,

among the reports culled from the 1st Army Corps were the following statements and statistics:

> 7 July – This morning a political commissar was shot. In the evening the commissar was reported as shot (8 July 1941).
>
> A commissar was shot while fleeing. (9 July 1941).
> Yesterday and today a commissar was captured and shot. (20 July 1941).
>
> Up until now 350 POWs, among them 1 political commissar, who was shot. (21 July 1941).
>
> [...] Today 4 commissars were shot. (14 August 1941).
>
> Today until now 360 POWs [...] Commissars: None at all. (30 August 1941).[138]

Covering the entire period that the Commissar Order was in operation (22 June 1941 – 6 May 1942), Rohde examined reports from at least twenty divisions, three army corps, and three rear army areas. Of particular interest to Rohde was the language employed by intelligence officers to report their statistical totals for

commissars captured and/or shot: "shot according to orders," or "taken prisoner and shot," and the different phrasing used by other intelligence officers who received the initial reports from divisions and passed them up the chain of command. Yet, in all the reams of documents, Rohde found a great many gaps in the reporting of commissars captured and shot.[139]

Rohde concluded that these gaps resulted from one of two possibilities: either the Germans simply did not capture a large number of Communist Party functionaries, or there was a "Front of Silence," which involved intelligence officers in a process of manipulation. Rohde ultimately sided with what he perceived to be a "Front of Silence." Inconsistencies in reporting on the number of commissars captured by some of the intelligence officers were methods to sabotage the implementation of the Commissar Order.[140] Yet, in all the thousands of pages of documents he read, he found partly relevant material on the treatment of Red Army political commissars in close to 50% of the records.[141]

With that said, Rohde still found it difficult to get a grasp on the numbers of commissars taken prisoner by the Germans during the time the Commissar Order was in force. Based upon his own research, the numbers found in Nuremberg sources, as well as those produced by other authors,[142] Rohde counted at least 700 commissars reported shot over an eleven month period across the invasion front and in the rear areas.[143]

However, Rohde believed that this figure was low, and did not take into account politruks executed, or those political officers handed over to the *SD*. How many beyond the 700 were considered politruks, and how many were turned over to

the *SD* were numbers he simply did not choose to speculate on. Clearly, "at least 700" commissars reported shot fortified Rohde's belief that the Commissar Order was predominantly carried out by formations invading the Soviet Union from 22 June 1941 through the first week of May 1942.[144]

In order to place the total of "at least 700" commissars in context, Rohde made an attempt to ascertain how many commissars were among the total number of Soviet POWs. Yet, he chose random formations, and random months within the first year of combat in the USSR.[145] The results of his samplings of some divisions, some corps, and some *Panzer* groups showed an extremely low number of commissars registered and reported shot. For example:

> 1st Army Corps through 31 October 1941: 25,000 POWs and 20 commissars among them.
>
> IIIrd Army Corps through mid-October 1941: 100,000 POWs and 85 commissars among them.
>
> Vth Army Corps for the same period: 62,000 POWs and 26 commissars among them.
>
> 4th *Panzer* Group through 10 August 1941: 170,000 POWs and 170 commissars among them.

23rd Infantry Division at the beginning of August 1941:

17,000 POWs and 5 commissars among them.

24th Infantry Division by the end of September 1941:

42,000 POWs and 11 commissars among them.

26th Infantry Division by the end of 1941: 14,000 POWs

and no commissars among them.[146]

Rohde speculated that the low numbers of political officers among the POW totals were, in part, due to the fact that Red Army political commissars had started to remove their insignia from their uniforms which made it more difficult to identify them. He also cited German front-line sources which stated that commissars were burning their identity papers so as to avoid detection in POW camps. Rohde used Halder's statements in his diary from 1 August and 21 September 1941, previously quoted by Krausnick, that commissars were being discovered in POW camps as another reason to explain such a small proportion of commissars to prisoners of war. Without specific statistics on how many commissars were turned over to the *SD*, in spite of the best efforts of other historians such as Förster, Messerschmidt, and Streit, Rohde stated that we may never know the final count.[147]

Rohde then turned his attention to witness testimony in postwar trials. Drawing heavily on a 1950 book by Nuremberg-trial defense counsel Hans Laternser, Rohde repeated claims that certain commanding generals did not pass along the

Commissar Order because they saw it as either a violation of international law and an affront to their code of conduct as officers, or because they felt it would possibly disrupt military discipline at a time when so much was at stake. Rohde also traced requests to have the Commissar Order lifted in late September 1941. Focusing on Field Marshals Leeb and von Bock, Rohde documented their protests and attempts to thwart the implementation of the Commissar Order. For Rohde, the high numbers of commissars reported shot in areas under Leeb in Army Group North and Bock in Army Group Center only proved that these were inflated statistics to keep the High Commands of the Army and the Armed Forces content that the troops in the field were fully implementing the 6 June 1941 directive to shoot Red Army political officers among POWs.[148]

Only at the end of his article did Rohde compare his findings to the findings of other scholars who had gone before him. Blocked together as "the aforementioned authors," Förster, Messerschmidt, and Streit were the central focus of his comparison on the issue of underreporting of commissars shot. Of the three, Rohde found the work of Förster the most thorough in investigating the concept of troops filing false reports on the number of commissars shot.[149]

In his summary section, Rohde stated that until scholars go through all the primary sources (official war diaries) relating to the Commissar Order, there would not be a complete picture of the extent to which it was implemented. As a result, the total number of commissars shot in German captivity either by front-line formations, rear area troops, or members of the security forces may never be known for certain. Rohde concluded his essay by placing the Commissar Order in the ideological context

of pre-invasion directives, and cautioned that there were other areas of criminal activity that the *Wehrmacht* was involved in during the four-year war with the Soviet Union which have still to be thoroughly investigated.[150]

However, Rohde's methodology and selection of sources did little to contribute to a comprehensive assessment of how the Commissar Order was implemented. Although he made an effort to provide a quantitative analysis of the total number of commissars reported shot, he never explained what rationale he used to select a certain formation for analysis over another or certain areas of the invasion front and rear areas over others, and his choices appeared to be random at best. While underreporting was certainly an issue, as evidenced by Halder's diary entries in August and September 1941, Rohde did not advance any theories beyond mere guesswork as to why so few commissars were reported as captured, shot, or turned over to the *SD*.

Other scholars during the time of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition debate also investigated the Commissar Order, but not to the degree of a grass-roots analysis employed by Rohde. For instance, a 1999 collected volume of essays edited by Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans-Erich Volkmann contained a number of references to the Commissar Order as an example of the depth of Hitler's ideological war in the East.[151] In an essay titled "*Die Wehrmacht und der Partisanenkrieg in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion*" (*The Wehrmacht and the Partisan War in the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union*), Timm Richter followed a chronological approach to establishing the legal foundation upon which German soldiers would combat partisans behind the front lines beginning in the summer of 1941. In doing so, he

made reference to the research of Krausnick, Uhlig, Jacobsen, and Streit with regard to the development of pre-invasion directives.[152]

In the same volume, Peter Klein cited the works of Jacobsen, Krausnick, and Streit as part of a brief review of historical writings on the nature of the war of annihilation in the East.[153] In addition, Jürgen Förster stated that while the University of Vermont political scientist (*emeritus*) Raul Hilberg was one of the first scholars to connect the German Army with the killing of European Jews (1961), German historical research also showed the participation of the *Wehrmacht* in the murder of Jews. As evidence that deconstructed the so-called myth of the "clean" *Wehrmacht*, Förster cited Jacobsen's article on the Commissar Order, Messerschmidt's book on the German Army and ideology, and Streit's book on the German military's treatment of Soviet POWs.[154] Ruth Bettina Birn, in an article on "*Wehrmacht und Wehrmachtangehörige in den deutschen Nachkriegsprozessen*" (*The Armed Forces and Members of the Armed Forces in the German Postwar Trials*), traced the connection between military and political leadership in the drafting of orders central to the war of annihilation. She included the Commissar Order in this corpus of criminal orders, and cited the works of Förster, Krausnick, and Streim as examples of those who have addressed the topic of *Wehrmacht* criminality in her own review of literature.[155]

The Commissar Order also appeared in a section of Michael Burleigh's book, The Third Reich: A New History, published in 2000.[156] Burleigh, a professor of Modern History at Cardiff University, identified the Commissar Order as the directive

that involved the German Army in a process of murder, which the mobile killing formations of the *SS* and *SD* (Security Police) had previously been responsible for:

> [...] Effectively, the Army was assuming the functions hitherto performed by the *Einsatzgruppen*: the killing of an entire group of people solely by virtue of their membership of that group and without formal process. The general intention, essayed earlier by both the Nazis and the Soviets in occupied Poland, was to destroy the ruling elite of the country concerned on the assumption that they were the bearers of national consciousness. Inevitably, there were weasel attempts to justify this in terms of the 'asiatic-barbarian' manner in which such cadres would treat German prisoners, or by arguing that the Red Army would swiftly disintegrate without these political fanatics.[157]

Burleigh recognized that the Commissar system, in which Red Army political commissars had equal power with military commanders, was not even in effect when the *Kommissarbefehl* was issued on 6 June 1941:

> Ironically, Stalin had virtually phased out the commissars as an unnecessary hangover from the Civil War. The

> supposed cruelty of the enemy – which was real enough in some instances – justified the *Wehrmacht*'s indiscriminate, systematic and wholesale resort to carnage. These measures were also quietly extended to so-called 'Politruks', that is more lowly Party functionaries attached to individual companies.[158]

While acknowledging the paradox that commissars did not even have the power ascribed to them by Hitler in the period before the *Barbarossa* campaign, Burleigh inserted a sweeping generality without providing evidence: that the "supposed cruelty of the enemy – which was real enough in some cases – justified [...]" the actions of the German military against Red Army political officers. It was not against the *Wehrmacht* that the Soviet armed forces fought in the winter of 1939-1940, so German troops were not the recipients of supposed excesses and atrocities committed by commissars. And it certainly was not Soviet treatment of Finns that prompted Hitler and the leadership of the German military to draft the Commissar Order, and then launch an invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 to correct the alleged humiliation poured out upon soldiers fighting under the flag of Finland. For Burleigh to state that the German Army was justified in instituting a policy of murder in blatant violation of international law is incongruent with the rest of the theme of the chapter: "*Crimes Without War.*"[159]

With the exception of Rohde, scholars have generally avoided any attempt at quantifying the total of Red Army political officers shot or sent to the rear as a result

of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order. Such studies require much research, collation, and analysis through thousands of pages of primary source documents, and present a formidable task to the researcher. However, Burleigh offered the following in his section on criminal orders: "Estimates of how many commissars were killed range between 140,000 and 580,000."[160]

Burleigh cited Schulte for the figures of 140,000 to 580,000,[161] and Schulte quoted the two sets of numbers from Streim and Streit. However, neither Schulte nor Streit ever implied or stated, as Burleigh does, that all of the Red Army POWs turned over to the *SD* were political officers. Such a connection did not take into consideration any other category of prisoner included in a series of directives issued by Heydrich over the first four months of the campaign which granted the *SD* authority to screen POWs.[162] These included:

1. All outstanding functionaries of the State and of the party, especially
2. Professional revolutionists,
3. Functionaries of the Comintern,
4. All leading Party functionaries of the Russian Secret Police [*KPdSU*] and their associated organizations in the Central, district, and county Committees,
5. All the People's Commissars and their assistants,

6. **All former political commissars in the Red Army** [emphasis mine],
7. All leading personalities of the Central and Middle offices among the State authorities,
8. The leading economic personalities,
9. All Jews,
10. All persons who are established as being instigators or fanatical communists.[163]

In addition, Burleigh, as Streit did before him in his essay for the War of Extermination,[164] offered no evidence to support the following statement: "That the Commissar Order was widely implemented is not doubted, even by those who draw attention to low-level exceptions within larger military formations[165] As to who drew attention to "low-level exceptions" is certainly not clear from Burleigh's text.

More recently, other scholars have attempted to use quantitative analysis when writing about the Commissar Order. British social historian Ian Kershaw cited new research results on the implementation of the Commissar Order in the second book of his two-volume study of Adolf Hitler.[166] In the endnotes to a selected piece on how "leading officers from Army Group B (to become Army Group Centre), General Hans von Salmuth and Lieutenant-Colonel Henning von Tresckow" had planned to persuade their divisional commanders to circumvent the 6 June 1941 order," [167] Kershaw stated:

> On reports of the order being implemented by different formations, see Krausnick, '*Kommissarbefehl*', 733-736. **According to the most meticulous, if still provisional, statistical analysis yet made, between half and two-thirds of front divisions implemented the order**. (emphasis mine) (Detlef Siebert, „*Die Durchführung des Kommissarbefehls in den Frontverbänden des Heeres. Eine quantifierende Auswertung der Forschung.*" I am most grateful to Detlef Siebert for providing me with a copy of this yet unpublished paper.[168]

Siebert, a former film editor and television producer in Germany, is presently an associate producer for historical programming with the BBC. Siebert contributed material on the Commissar Order for the BBC2 program "*War of the Century*," written and produced by Lawrence Rees, which aired in October 1999. Some of Siebert's material cited by Kershaw was also mentioned in a review article by Samson Madievski on "*The War of Extermination: The Crimes of the Wehrmacht in 1941 to 1944*" in the Routledge journal Rethinking History.[169] Madievski quoted Siebert's conclusions that the Commissar Order was carried out by "no less than 80% of army corps, if judged from their reports."[170] However, Madievski did not provide a source for Siebert's study, and until this research is published, Siebert's sources and theses are unavailable for scrutiny.

Unlike Kershaw, Wolfram Wette did not draw from new research into the Commissar Order in his 2002 book Die Wehrmacht: Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden.[171] Rather, he examined the development of the Commissar Order in the context of the role of the German Army and the annihilation of European Jewry. Like Breitman, Wette saw the military's acceptance of the Commissar Order as a precursor to the program of destruction that would follow against the Jews.[172]

While the aforementioned works represent a wide spectrum of responses and historical studies on the development and implementation of the Commissar Order, there are also a number of scholarly works on the war in the East that did not even touch on the subject. Alan Clark's Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-1945,[173] Albert Seaton's The Russo-German War, 1941-1945,[174] Bryan Fugate's Operation Barbarossa: Strategy and Tactics on the Eastern Front, 1941,[175] Gerhard Weinberg's A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II,[176] and Phillipe Masson's Die Deutsche Armee: Geschichte der Wehrmacht, 1935-1945,[177] as examples, concerned themselves more with strategic, operational, economic, and diplomatic issues than with the ideological and political questions central to the Commissar Order.

In spite of the fact that some studies have ignored the topic of the Commissar Order, or even marginalized it, the corpus of historical literature is still vast. Even though there is no paucity of information on the existence and content of the Commissar Order, scholars have mainly investigated this directive as a portion of a greater ideological portrait, or subsumed it in the context of overall Nazi criminal activities during "Operation *Barbarossa.*"

Yet, no comprehensive quantitative study of how a specific front-line army command and its subordinate formations in the field responded to this order has been completed. While it would be complementary to also examine the treatment of Red Army political commissars in the rear areas, the records for *Korück* 550, the Rear Army Area formation immediately behind the 17th Army in Ukraine during the *Barbarossa* campaign, and Army Rear Area 103, the formation immediately before the civilian occupation zone, are incomplete for the time frame of this study. Moreover, Hitler and the legal planners at *OKH* and *OKW* designed and intended the Commissar Order to be implemented by soldiers on the front lines. The only time commissars were supposed to be sent to the *SD* in the rear areas was if they were captured in a non-combat setting without offering resistance. Although it is clear from several sources, including two of Halder's diary entries[178] and a war diary of a division subordinated to the 17th Army,[179] that commissars were not always shot at the front, one of the central points of the 6 June 1941 order was that Red Army political officers were not to be given any opportunity to foment resistance and dissention in POW camps behind the front lines. Executing them immediately upon capture simply eliminated that risk.

Examining the extent that front-line divisions carried out the charge to shoot all grades of political commissars is necessary if we are to understand the role and depth of involvement by front-line troops of the *Wehrmacht* in a murderous program of extermination during the Nazi attack and occupation of the Soviet Union. Such a study has simply not been systematically examined to date, and my dissertation seeks

to address this gap in the historiography of what the Germans called the war on the Eastern Front.

As noted earlier, the contributions of Uhlig, Jacobsen, and Krausnick are distinguished for their attention to the role played by the highest ranking officers of the Armed Forces and Army High Commands, and not just Hitler, in the drafting of the Commissar Order. Yet, these seminal studies primarily provided a top-down perspective, from which we are not able to make conclusions on the extent to which the Commissar Order was implemented. Although Streit and Streim engaged in an intense debate on the total number of Red Army prisoners handed over to the *SD* from June 1941 to May 1944, the speculation that all of these POWs (anywhere from 138,000 to 600,000) could have been political officers and Communist Party functionaries is unsupported and unproductive. While Förster, to a small degree, and Rohde examined the records of a number of infantry and *Panzer* divisions, corps, and rear area formations, their sources came from different army commands at different places and times, and they did not concentrate at all thoroughly on any specific formations. This makes it difficult to develop any kind of comprehensive picture of the implementation of the Commissar Order on the field of battle because the context is lost in a random sampling amidst a vast collection of sources.

My dissertation thus seeks to provide both the chronological context of the top-down development of the Commissar Order, and the bottom-up perspective from front-line formations engaged in combat operations. The result is both a narrative on the genesis of the Commissar Order and its attendant decrees and agreements between the Army leadership and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, and a quantitative analysis

of how many commissars were reported captured and shot by the front-line forces of the 17th Army over a seven month period.

In addition, with the exceptions of a small portion of an essay by Joachim Hoffmann on "*The Soviet Union up to the Eve of the German Attack*" in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV), [180] and a brief mention by Jürgen Förster in another essay in the same volume,[181] most scholars have simply ignored the development of the Commissar system in the Red Army in conjunction with the development of the Commissar Order. What were the responsibilities of these political officers, and what was it that Hitler found so offensive in them that they had to be executed immediately? My dissertation attempts to address these questions by examining how political commissars within the Soviet military infrastructure obtained the status and reputation of power that Hitler and his military and legal planners ascribed to them, as well as what the German leadership knew about the Commissar system prior to the drafting of an order to liquidate all political officers in the Red Army.

My dissertation also seeks to fill another gap in the corpus of historical literature on the Commissar Order. Most academic studies of the Commissar Order focused exclusively either on how the 6 June 1941 directive took shape through the drafting process or on its connection to other criminal orders. However, within the reams of reports filed by front line formations there is more than just statistics about how many Red Army political commissars were captured, shot, or handed over to the *SD*; there is essential information about the process of implementation, the perception of Soviet political officers by German troops, and the purpose of carrying out an

order that was clearly a flagrant violation of international law. My dissertation attempts to synthesize these concepts in the pages that follow.

Lastly, the overwhelming majority of studies on the Commissar Order has been written in German by German scholars. While some of these studies, such as those of Jacobsen (although long out of print) and Förster, have appeared in English translations, there is relatively little on the subject available in English. My dissertation, therefore, attempts to bring together summaries of the excellent work done by German scholars on the Commissar Order with my own research in a manner that is approachable for those who may read only English.

In the next section of the introduction, I will address issues of primary sources and research methodology.

Primary Source Documents

The bulk of my research into the development and implementation of the Commissar Order centered on the official war diaries (*Kriegstagebücher* is the plural of *Kriegstagebuch* or *KTB)* of German military formations and daily activity reports (*Tätigkeitsberichte*) kept by the staff of the Third General Staff Officer (Intelligence Officer - *Ic*). According to Document NOKW-1878 presented as Prosecution Exhibit 42, in "The High Command Case" before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10:

> The Third General Staff Officer (*Ic*) [...] (24) *Ic* is the aide of *Ia* [the First General Staff Officer – explanation mine] in determining the enemy situation. Enemy information having come in via the front and secret intelligence service form, in addition to their own mission, the most important basis for an evaluation of the situation and the decision [. . .] (25) Close cooperation with the *Ia* is of importance. *Ic* must attempt on his own part to secure early and completely all details of the situation and the intentions of the command. Enemy information received by the higher commander, the chief of staff, or the *Ia* by telephone, on trips to the front etc., must be immediately reported to the *Ic*; he is also to be advised of important considerations and discussions.[182]

Typically, these war diary entries and reports of daily activities included such diverse subjects as unit and formation locations, POW tallies and interrogation of prisoners, lists of captured goods and equipment, combat conditions and results, weather, reconnaissance, supply line requests, and occasionally the number of Red Army political commissars executed "in accordance with instructions." Kept at the division, corps, and army command levels, intelligence staff officers filled out these reports, and passed them along the chain of command at least twice a day. Orders and directives from Army Group South, the army group to which 17th Army belonged in

1941, or from higher levels in the command structure, regarding intelligence matters to lower levels of the command in the field were also exchanged through this same infrastructure.

The originals of these war diaries and daily activity reports for the subordinated formations of the 17th Army are kept in the German Federal Military Archives (*Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv*) in Freiburg im Breisgau. Microfilmed copies of many of the originals of these same documents are part of the captured German records division at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) facilities in College Park, Maryland. I spent the majority of my research time at these two facilities over a five year period, and the citations in my dissertation generally indicate the source where I originally found the document.

I conducted additional research at the British Public Record Office in Kew Gardens, just outside London, England to read the more complete set of what historian Richard Breitman has called the German Police Decodes. These documents, intercepted messages of German police radio transmissions during the summer and fall of 1941, cover a wide variety of topics from the seemingly mundane, like a request for 30,000 bottles of mineral water for the *SS* in Riga, to the murderous, such as the execution of 1,255 Jews by Police Regiment South on 12 September 1941.[183]

Research Methodology

Before undertaking the research phase of my dissertation, the eminent Holocaust historian, Raul Hilberg of the University of Vermont, warned me that my

task of examining the development and implementation of the Commissar Order would be an arduous one, akin to looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.[184] He was correct, in that information on the treatment of Red Army commissars was often buried in thousands of pages of war diaries and activity reports.

The format and structure of these war diaries and activity reports was supposed to follow standard regulations and operating procedures. On 13 and 14 June 1941 the intelligence officers from the divisions in the 17th Army gathered in Reichshof (Rzeszów) to go over some of the finer points of record keeping for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union, and covered topics including the Commissar Order and POWs. Two days after the conclusion of the *Ic* meeting, intelligence officers received orders which detailed the times at which they were to report on such matters as POWs and war booty.[185] The 6 June 1941 Commissar Order had only said that intelligence officers were required to fill out reports. As Section I/4 of the Commissar Order stated:

> [...] a brief report (on a report form) is to be submitted on the incident [*Vorfall*]:
>
> a) By troops subordinated to a division to the Intelligence Section (*Ic*) of the division
>
> b) By troops directly subordinated to a Corps Command, an Army High Command, or the Command of an Army Group or Armored Group to the Intelligence Section (*Ic*) of the Corps Command and higher.[186]

Aside from the required 9:30 p.m. reporting on the summary of POWs taken in during the day, there were no clear guidelines at the start of the invasion for *Ic* officers to follow. As a result, the researcher is often devoid of a rubric when reading through the war diaries and activity reports of the formations. Virtually every *Ic* officer had a different style of organization, and while this may be frustrating at times, there are many nuances that make each war diary and activity report a unique record of events. For example, the war diary of the 24th Infantry Division[187] is very crisp and organized, typed in paragraph form, with dates underlined on the left-hand side, and thus transparent to the researcher. The categories covered for the daily entries are as follows:

a) Location of the command post.

b) Brief description of the combat situation or update if the division is on the march.

c) POW list which may or may not include commissars captured.

d) Summaries of POW testimony gathered through interrogations.[188]

In addition, the *Kriegstagebuch* for the 24th I.D. had a table of contents covering the three months period of reporting in one volume, and a separate

collection of attachments (*Anlagen*) corresponding to the documents or orders mentioned in the war diary.[189]

Reports produced in other divisions had clear categories for both POWs and Red Army political commissars. The *Ic* war diary entry of the 257th Infantry Division, part of the 17th Army for the entire seven month period of this study, for 14 September 1941 contained the following information:

A. How many political commissars were treated as irregulars? (1)

B. How many were given over to the *SD*? (3)[190]

However, other war diaries and activity reports were not so structured. The *Ic* war diary for the 57th Infantry Division, part of the 17th Army in September and October 1941, is written in the old style of German script, and is difficult to read on microfilm.[191] Others may have been typed, but flowed in seamless fashion without a single break until the entry for the next day, as the activity report for the 97th Light Infantry Division from June –December 1941 illustrates.[192]

The legibility and physical condition of war diaries and activity reports was a factor in collecting data on the number of commissars captured by forces of the 17th Army. The 4th Mountain Division, 68th Infantry Division, 71st Infantry Division, 111th Infantry Division, 125th Infantry Division, 262nd Infantry Division, 297th Infantry Division, and the 298th Infantry Division either had no recorded commissars listed as captured, or were not legible on microfilm. These divisional records were among

those formations which I did not get an opportunity to examine in Freiburg due to time constraints and limits on research funds. I did however, investigate those that were legible on microfilm at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

While most of the war diaries and activity reports for the formations subordinated to the 17th Army survived the war, not all archives contain complete collections. For example, the *Ic* and *Ia* records for the 4th Mountain Division, attached to the 17th Army throughout the summer months of 1941,[193] are missing – either lost or destroyed - in both Freiburg and the National Archives in College Park, MD.[194] On the other hand, the German Federal Military Archives in Freiburg has a collection of 295th Infantry Division materials purchased at an antiquarian book shop in Bielefeld, Germany in April 1972 which contains pamphlets, newspaper reports, enemy location reports, and descriptions of combat experiences which has not been copied for the National Archives.[195]

For the researcher, there are also no guarantees that the war diaries or activity reports will be in any semblance of order. For example, the activity report for the 100th Light Infantry Division from 19 August 1941 to 6 September 1941 has numbered pages, but it is not in chronological order. While the divisional *Ic* war diaries for the 24th Infantry Division are remarkably structured, a rare regimental diary from the First General Staff Officer (*Ia*) of a formation of the 24th I.D. survived that was filmed after the war in Alexandria, Virginia without frame numbers, thus making the citing and finding of references that much harder.[196]

The war diaries and activity reports of the first general staff officers (*Ia*) also provide the researcher with excellent sources to corroborate information on

commissars, location of formations, and orders for the day with material in the *Ic* records. While it was not required of the *Ia* officer to note how many commissars the division captured,[197] some General Staff Officers did keep such records which may not have been recorded in the records of the intelligence staff (*Ic*). For example, the *Ia* for the 295th Infantry Division, a unit subordinated to the 17th Army for most of the seven months covered by this study, often included POW tallies. These included the listing of "1 political commissar, 1 officer, and 304 enlisted personnel" for 23 July 1941. Two days later, the *Ia* also noted "1 political commissar and 213 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men."[198] However, these statistics did not always correspond to material in the records of the intelligence staff for the same days.[199]

While there may not be material on the treatment of Red Army political commissars in every war diary and activity report, there is certainly a wealth of information that describes how the war against the Soviet Union was experienced by German soldiers, as well as the Red Army troops brought in as POWs. For example, the daily activity reports (*Tätigkeitsberichte*) and enclosures (*Anlagen*) contained in the records of the 295th Infantry Division through December 1941 provide extremely detailed testimony by Soviet POWs which reveals the chaos, panic, fear, and absolute uncertainty immediately following the onslaught of the German attack on 22 June 1941.[200]

With great numbers of POWs pouring in, the war diaries also give the researcher a brief view of the logistics on how so many captured Red Army soldiers were moved to transfer points before ending up in POW camps. The 100th Light Infantry Division noted three days into the invasion that the Military Field Police of

the 100th Light I.D. had set up a gathering station for the POWs (*Gefangenen-Sammelstelle*). Using ten men from a replacement training battalion of the 100th Light I.D. to serve as guards and drivers, the Military Police orchestrated the transfer of these POWs behind the front lines as quickly as possible.[201]

At the same time, within the pages of the documents from the 295th I.D. there are lengthy accounts of combat experiences over the first eight days of the campaign in Ukraine. War correspondent Willy Kahlert wrote an article praising the glorious achievements of the 295th I.D. in the opening days of the war. The title of the article, "*We are the Lower-Saxons!*" ("*Wir sind die Niedersachsen!*"), played on the words of a popular song. Another article in the same file stated:

> Finally the order came to unleash upon the enemy [...] We were all full of spirit and enthusiasm. Enthusiasm carried us over the ground, and our success in the first eight days is tremendous. We are not hindered by stress and exhaustion, we know only one purpose: the complete throwback of Bolshevism![202]

To this account, the intelligence officer for the 295th I.D. (Wittke) appended the words of Hitler: "To the German soldier nothing is impossible" ("*Dem deutschen Soldaten ist nichts unmöglich*"), and noted that "we will make this saying of the *Führer* come true."[203] Another enclosure of the file contained a detailed report of a bloody struggle for a series of bunkers at Brusno Stara on the first day of fighting by

Infantry Regiment 561 of the 295th Infantry Division. On the last page of this seven-page report, it was written: "The path, upon which our blood flowed, has become a path of victory."[204]

The war diaries and activity reports also describe situations when the fighting ceased, and the German troops were welcomed as liberators by Ukrainian citizens celebrating what they perceived to be an end to Godless communist oppression. The intelligence staff of the 295th I.D. noted four days into the invasion that:

> The local population is extraordinarily Germanophile, and in their joy is prepared to give our troops an enthusiastic reception. At the entrance of towns, gates draped with Ukrainian and German colors are erected, women and young girls throw flowers and pass out bread, salt, milk, eggs, butter, etc.[205]

Other accounts of the fighting offer quantitative perspectives to the researcher. The 295th Infantry division and the 9th Infantry Division *Ic* war diaries, for example, provide a wealth of statistics that measure the progression into the heart of Soviet Ukraine in more than miles marched. Enclosure 375a from 6 December 1941 of the *Ic* war diary of the 295th I.D. included the following:

> 2. Of the 147 days since the war began [we have had] 83 days of combat.

43 days of marching – just over 1,200 miles from the *SS* camp at Debica, about 1,080 miles from the German-Russian border.

21 days of rest.

3. Medals awarded

1 Knight's Cross

286 Iron Crosses, 1st Class

2,714 Iron Crosses, 2nd Class

6. The Bicycle Reconnaissance Squad conducted 97 patrols in which they had contact with the enemy, and 37 patrols in which they did not have contact with the enemy.

8. POWs

80 Officers

2 political commissars[206]

16,633 non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel

14. Foodstuffs

The bakery company has baked 1,185,228 loaves of bread in this time period, which is equal to 3,555,684 portions.

To do so, they have used 1,114,452 kg of flour, and 12,922 kg of salt.

The butcher company was only fully employed for a short time, and made 6,727 kg of fresh sausage and 40,135 kg of fresh meat from 385 slaughtered animals.

15. Postal service.

7,000 sacks of mail containing approximately 3.5 million items were received. On average each man received 1.5 pieces of mail a day.[207]

The intelligence staff of the 295th Infantry Division also included a top secret report on casualties incurred since the start of the invasion in the same enclosure. There were 25 copies made of the report, and the one enclosed was copy number 22. It stated in part:

	Officers	Non-commissioned officers	Enlisted men	**Total**
Dead	25	150	702	**877**
Wounded	106	434	2,092	**2,632**
Missing	1	8	70	**79**
	132	**592**	**2,864**	**3,588**[208]

The 9th Infantry Division also had a statistical breakdown of casualties in the *Ic* records. However, their numbers were for the period of June through December 1941, and this division served under the 17th Army from 23 August through January 1942. Their numbers for the relevant period were as follows:

September		
Dead: 154	Wounded: 663	Missing: 0
October		
Dead: 67	Wounded: 387	Missing: 15
November		
Dead: 32	Wounded: 124	Missing: 5
December		
Dead: 115	Wounded: 356	Missing: 32[209]

In addition, the accounts in the war diaries offered unfiltered views about the difficult conditions and situations under which the German troops of the 17th Army operated during the first seven months of the invasion. An *Ic* report in the war diary of the 97th Infantry Division of 13 November 1941 noted the weather conditions, and their subsequent impact:

> 0 degrees Fahrenheit with a strong, icy wind. Several cases of frostbite. No winter clothing. Sewing parlors for the production of makeshift gloves. 1000 pairs already worn out. Difficulties with trucks not starting due to the failure of the antifreeze.[210]

The *Ic* war diary of the 257th Infantry Division in November 1941 covered the deaths of two commanding generals. The first was for the commander of the 257th I.D., Major General Braun, who was killed along with twelve other members of his staff by a mine on 14 November in Charkow. The war diary recorded the choral selection for Braun's memorial service as "*Jesus, my confidence*" (*Jesus, meine Zuversicht*"). The second was for General von Briesen, the commander of the LIInd Army Corps. General von Briesen died near Kegitschewka on 22 November 1941. The war diary entry for the day of von Briesen's memorial service included a drawing of the design of a memorial park in honor of the fallen commander, and the text of the eulogy given at the service.[211]

The 295th Infantry Division reported on criminal offenses committed by German troops during the campaign against the Soviet Union. This list, attached as an enclosure to the *Ic* war diary for the period of 25 October – 13 December 1941, offers a rare glimpse at disciplinary matters in a military environment that was freed of judicial restraint prior to the invasion through such directives as the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941:

The following criminal offenses were committed in the reporting period:

Absent without leave: 65 [...]

Theft from comrades: 38

Handling unsecured weapons: 8

Maltreatment: 1

Manslaughter: 2

Plundering: 10

Avoiding guard duty: 11

Disobedience: 4

Illicit sexual relations: 1[212]

The war diaries and activity reports also provide the researcher with a view of the ideological and racial influence of the Nazi Party. The intelligence officer of the division often noted the recreational options available to the troops, especially prior to the invasion. While the 100th Light Infantry Division was stationed in Slovakia in May 1941 awaiting word to mobilize for the invasion, the soldiers were given "Intellectual Care" (*Geistige Betreuung*). This often came in the form of films, which included the following, as noted in the *Ic* activity report for the period:

"*Jew Süss*" ("*Jud Süss*"), "*Clothes Make the Person*" ("*Kleider machen Leute*"), "*Humans, Animals, Sensations*" ("*Menschen, Tiere, Sensationen*") and "*The Eternal Jew*" ("*Der ewige Jude*").[213]

A document attached to a file for the same division noted on 31 May 1941 that:

> The population in Slovakia is interspersed with a large contingent of Jews, who are identifiable through yellow armbands [...] All contact with Jews is forbidden, [and] sexual intercourse with female Jews is race defilement [*Rassenschande*]![214]

However, the war diaries and activity reports do not always depict the official Nazi Party racial and ideological line with regard to the men of the 17th Army. They also provide the researcher with examples of how the soldiers still tried to maintain the traditions of home, especially during the winter holiday season. For instance, the collection of 295th Infantry Division materials purchased at an antiquarian book shop in Bielefeld, Germany in April 1972 had among its many enclosures a poem written by a member of the division titled: "Nikolaus comes to the staff headquarters of the 295th Infantry Division, 6. XII. 1941." The ten-page poem, an ode to the traditional visit paid to the homes of German Christian children every 6 December by the Saint

Nicolas man whom the children try to trap as he leaves them candy in their shoes, ended with the following words which only hinted at the reality of life and death at the front: "But now I must hurry again, Have good cheer!"[215]

Amidst the other seasonal material was a packet with the heading: "German Christmas Greetings in Russia 1941." Among other things, the packet contained traditional Christmas hymns such as "*Silent Night*" (first verse only).[216] This is an excellent example of one of the major differences in reading the original documents in Freiburg versus on the microfilm machines at the National Archives in College Park, MD. The packet was carefully adorned with traditional Christmas decorations and pine boughs along the edges, and was drawn by hand using green, red, and blue colored pencils. Such vibrant colors, somewhat faded by six-plus decades of storage, would never have the same effect on microfilm. There is something to be said for the tactile elements of the archive in Freiburg, the sight, smell, and feel of the documents that time, space, and film simply cannot duplicate, even though they are closer to home.

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[1] The following divisions with their corps designations were subordinated to AOK 17 at the beginning of the Barbarossa campaign in June 1941: 1st Mountain Division (XXXXIX), 24th Infantry Division (IV), 68th Infantry Division (XXXXIX), 71st Infantry Division (IV), 97th Light Infantry Division (XXXXIX), 100th Light Infantry Division (LII), 101st Light Infantry Division, 257th Infantry Division (XXXXIX), 262nd Infantry Division (IV), 295th Infantry Division (IV), 296th Infantry Division (IV), 444th Security Division (XXXXIX), and the 454th Security Division (XXXXIX). Some of the divisions were soon assigned to other armies, and other divisions were subordinated to 17th Army, so that the composition of the 17th Army was constantly in flux. For more details on these divisions and others subordinated to AOK 17 from time to time during the first seven months of the Barbarossa campaign, refer to Georg Tessin, Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im zweiten Weltkrieg, 1939-1945, Vol. 4, Die Landstreitkräfte 15-30, (Osnabrück: Biblo Verlag, 1976), Samuel W. Mitcham Jr., Hitler's Legions: The German Army Order of Battle, World War II (New York: Dorset Press, 1985), U.S. War Department Handbook on German Military Forces (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), and George F. Nafziger, The German Order of Battle: Infantry in World War II (London: Greenhill Books, 2000).

[2] Light infantry divisions and mountain divisions generally had fewer men (13,000 divided among two regiments of three battalions each) and less heavy artillery for quick pursuit. U.S. War Department Handbook on German Military Forces, pp. 85-99.

[3] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[4] Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, (hereafter cited as BAMA), RW 4/v. 577, The Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order, (German text), "Erlass über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet "Barbarossa" und über besondere Massnahmen der Truppe vom 13.5.41," pp. 72-74. It is reproduced with accompanying letters of transmittal in International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal: 14 November 1945-1 October 1946 (Nuremberg: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), (hereafter cited as IMT-TMWC), Vol. 34, Document C-50, pp. 249-255. A partial English translation with Dr. Lehmann's cover letter is located in Trials of War Criminals Before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10 (hereafter cited as IMT-TWC), (October 1946-April 1949), Volume 10, "The High Command Case" (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1951, Vol. 10, Document NOKW-209, pp. 1121-1123. A complete English translation without the cover letter is located in IMT-TWC, Vol. 11, pp. 521-523. A partial English translation also appears in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document C-50 (Jurisdiction Order with transmittal letters), pp. 1113-1118. A full translation in English appears in Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), (hereafter cited as NCA), Vol. 6, Document C-50, pp. 871-875. Copies of both the original German and English translations of the drafts and Barbarossa Jurisdiction order also appear in National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 238, Microfilm Publication T-1119 (cited hereafter as a letter followed by a number, i.e. T-1119), Roll 3, (hereafter cited as R), Frame Number(s) (hereafter cited as FN) 233-259.

[5] A copy of the "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" (Enclosure No. 3) distributed by the 17th German Army Command to its subordinated formations before the invasion to the divisional and regimental levels can be found in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, Roll 23, FN 511-60, Document NOKW 1692. Copies of these "Guidelines" also appear in the war diaries of the subordinated divisions of AOK 17. Examples can be found in the enclosures to the Ia war diary of the 97th Light Infantry Division, BA-MA RH 26-97/4, as well as the attachments to the Ia war diary of the 100th Light Infantry Division, NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459, and the 454th Security Division, NARA, T-315, R 2215, FN 000711-0007113. An English translation of Enclosure No. 3, "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" is part of Document NOKW-3485 in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 994-995.

[6] An original copy of the Commissar Order (*Kommissarbefehl*) is located in BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 41-44. A microfilm copy is located at NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 15, FN 1073-1078, (NOKW Document 1076). A partial translation of the Commissar Order and cover letters by General Warlimont and General von Brauchitsch appear in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1054-1059.

[7] German Field Marshal von Bock stated in his diary on 4 June 1941 with regard to the "Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order" that: "practically each soldier has the right to shoot – from the front or from behind – any Russian whom he stops/holds as an irregular or whom he suspects to be an irregular." Quoted from Heinrich Uhlig, "Der verbrecherische Befehl," in Vollmacht des Gewissens (Frankfort am Main: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1957), p. 319, and Helmut Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und „Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß" in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 25, (1977), p. 708.

[8] Statement by Justice Robert H. Jackson, International Conference on Military Trials (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 432(hereafter cited as International Conference).

[9] Nuremberg was the site for a series of war crimes trials after World War II. The first trials at Nuremberg took place from 18 October 1945 to 1 October 1946. These were presided over by the International Military Tribunal, a judiciary panel established as a result of the 8 August 1945 London Agreement between the United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union. The tribunal was composed of eight members from the four charter nations. At the conclusion of the first trials, the Americans then continued war crimes trials in Nuremberg through the U.S. Office of the Military Government for Germany (OMGUS). The American-led trials operated under the authority of Allied Control Commission Law Number 10 from 20 December 1945.

[10] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 2, p. 100. The full text of his opening remarks covers pp. 98-155, and NCA, Vol. 1, pp. 114-173.

[11] Robert H. Jackson, The Nürnberg Case (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 10.

[12] The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg considered "War Crimes" to be "violations of the laws or customs of war. Such violations shall include, but are not limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population or of in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity." IMT-TMWC, Vol. 1, p. 11. The Tribunal also determined that Crimes Against Peace and Crimes Against Humanity would also be included under Section II, Article 6 of Charter of the International Military Tribunal.

[13] The "High Command Case," which began 5 February 1948, was one of twelve held at Nuremberg between December 1946 and April 1949 by OMGUS, and contained the most extensive documentation on the Commissar Order. However, the Commissar Order was also presented as evidence in the trials of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in April 1946 and General Alfred Jodl in August 1946. The complete testimony of Keitel and three defense witnesses for just over four days is located in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 10, pp. 468-648 and IMT-TMWC Vol. 11, pp. 1-28. Jodl's testimony and that of four defense witnesses for most of five days is located in IMT-TMWC Vol. 15, pp. 248-561.

[14] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 41.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Heinrich Uhlig, "Der verbrecherische Befehl: Eine Diskussion und ihre historisch-dokumentarischen Grundlagen" in Europäische Publikation, e. V. (eds.), Vollmacht des Gewissens (Frankfurt am Main: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1965), pp. 287-410. The basis for the article first appeared in the weekly Das Parlament of 17 July 1957.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., pp. 299-304, and pp. 318-323 for examples.

[19] Ibid., pp. 327-347.

[20] Ibid., pp. 348-410.

[21] Alexander Dallin, German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945: A Study of Occupation Policy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Second Revised edition, 1981), pp. 30-34. One of the pages in this section included a chart on the command structure of the German High Command. There is scant mention again of the Commissar Order (pp. 74. 409, and 516n).

[22] Ibid., p. 34. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel served as Hitler's chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) during this part of 1941.

[23] Gerald Reitlinger, "The Truth about Hitler's 'Commissar Order': The Guilt of the German Generals," Commentary, Volume 28, Number 1, July 1959, pp. 7-18. I am grateful to the staff of the Starr Library at Middlebury College for help in tracking down this article.

[24] Ibid., p. 8.

[25] Ibid., p. 9.

[26] Ibid., p. 10.

[27] Ibid., pp. 10-14.

[28] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[29] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[30] Ibid., p. 18.

[31] Gerald Reitlinger, The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939-1945 (New York: Viking Press, 1960).

[32] "Leaving the Courts at Home:" The Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order, in ibid., pp. 66-97. The title of the chapter was based on a phrase from Hitler's 30 March 1941 speech about restricting the jurisdiction of the office of Judge Advocate General in the Barbarossa campaign.

[33] Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführer-SS: The security and intelligence branch of the Nazi Party. Reinhard Heydrich, appointed by Himmler in 1931, headed the organization designed to safeguard the interests of the Nazi Party. By 1936, Heydrich was in charge of both the Gestapo and the SD, and in 1939, the two organizations came under the aegis of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA – Reich Security Main Office). SD officers headed the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing formations), which followed the Wehrmacht into the Soviet Union. Upon the death of Heydrich in 1942, Himmler took over the responsibilities of the SD before appointing Ernst Kaltenbrunner in January 1943 to lead the RSHA. Like the SS, the SD was declared a criminal organization at the Nürnberg war crimes trials.

[34] The Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing formations (operational groups) comprised of members of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst - Security Service) of the SS as well as policemen for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Broken into four major formations of battalion size for "Operation Barbarossa," they played a key role in the initial phase of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. For several studies on the Einsatzgruppen, refer to: Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag, 1981), Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, (eds.), The Einsatzgruppen Reports (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), Ronald Headland, Messages of Murder: A Study of the reports of the Security Police and Security Service, 1941-1943 (Rutherford, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1992), Ralf Ogorreck, Die Einsatzgruppen und die Genesis der Endlösung (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), and Peter Klein (ed.), Die Einsatzgruppen in den besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42: Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (Berlin: Hentrich, 1997).
The role of the Einsatzgruppen and the SS was different in Poland than in previous territorial expansion actions in Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938. It was also significantly different than later invasions in the western theater of operations against Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France in 1940. This was largely due to the ideological nature of Hitler's war aims for Poland. In his opening statements to the International Military Tribunal in Nürnberg on 21 November 1945, Justice Robert H. Jackson quoted Adolf Hitler from his 22 August 1939 conference at the Bergdorf: "The main objective in Poland is the destruction of the enemy and not the reaching of a certain geographical line." For the full text of Justice Jackson's remarks, refer to IMT-TMWC, Vol. 2, pp. 138-139. Furthermore, a 23 May 1939 Reich Chancellery conference outlined plans for the destruction of Poland that went beyond mere acquisition of territory, industry, and natural resources. For the full text, refer to "Indoctrination on the Political Situation and Future Aims," Document L-79, IMT-TMWC, Vol. 37, pp. 546-556 for the German, and NCA,Vol. 7, pp. 847-854 for the English. For a detailed examination of the differences in the Polish campaign, and those territorial acquisitions prior to 1939 and the campaigns in the West in 1940, especially involving the Einsatzgruppen, see Helmut Krausnick, Hitlers Einsatzgruppen: Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, 1938-1942 (Frankfort: Fischer Verlag, 1998), pp. 13-88. This portion was originally the first part of Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag, 1981). Also Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945 (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), pp. 25-30.
[35] Reitlinger, The House Built on Sand, pp. 70-73.
[36] Ibid., pp. 77-85.
[37] Ibid., p. 95.
[38] Ibid., p. 97.
[39] The English language version appears as follows: Walter Warlimont, translated from the German by R.H. Barry, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945 (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1964).
[40] Ibid., pp. 161-170.
[41] Ibid., p. 163.
[42] Alexander Werth, Russia at War, 1941-1945 (New York: Dutton, 1964, p. 701. However, he does not offer any documentation to show that "as a rule" Red Army political commissars were given over to the SD.
[43] Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick, Anatomie des SS-Staates, Vol. I and II (Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag A.G. Olten, 1965). An English language edition appeared three years later, and was translated from the German by Richard Barry, Marian Jackson, and Dorothy Long. Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick, Anatomy of the SS State (New York: Walker and Company, 1968). The section on the Commissar Order appeared on pp. 505-535 in the 1968 English language edition. However, the English language edition only contained, with the exception of the text of the Commissar Order itself, a list of cited documents, and not the complete texts of the sources as first appeared in the German language edition.
[44] Jacobsen, Anatomy of the SS State, p. 512.
[45] Ibid. pp. 518-519.

[46] Ibid., p. 522.
[47] Ibid. General Thoma was certainly not the first nor the last to make this assertion. In an interrogation by Soviet intelligence agents six years after the end of the Second World War, Major Joachim Kuhn told his captors that while the order to shoot all political commissars had come through his division (28. Jägerdivision), it was not followed through with. The full text of the interrogation from 24 August 1951 is found in the Central Archive of the FSB [successor of the KGB] of the Russian Federation, P-46988, pp. 95-100. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Hoffmann for this reference. The translation of the document into German was provided by Kristin von Tschiltscke. According to Dr. Hoffmann, the original German version has not surfaced thus far, and is assumed lost or destroyed.
[48] Jacobsen, Anatomy of the SS State, p. 512.
[49] Ibid., p. 531.
[50] Theo Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia (Oxford: Berg, 1989), p. 8.
[51] Manfred Messerschmidt, Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat (Hamburg: R. v. Decker, 1969), pp. 390-412.
[52] Werner Maser, Nürnberg – Tribunal der Sieger (Düsseldorf und Wien: Econ Verlag, 1977), pp. 291-315.
[53] Helmut Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 25, (1977), pp. 682-738.
[54] Herman Dieter Betz wrote a dissertation in 1970 at the University of Würzburg for a law Ph.D. on "Das OKW und seine Haltung zum Landkriegsvölkerrecht im Zweiten Weltkrieg" in which he examined the questions of legal responsibility with regards to the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.
[55] Krausnick did not, however, mention Gerald Reitlinger's House Built on Sand until later in the article. Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," p. 733.
[56] Ibid., pp. 724-732.
[57] Ibid., pp. 712-713.
[58] Ibid., pp. 711-725.
[59] Ibid., p. 735.
[60] Ibid., pp. 735-738.
[61] Ibid., pp. 733-734.
[62] Ibid., pp. 735-736.
[63] Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945 (Düsseldorf: Dietz verlag, 1997 revised from the 1978 edition). The term „keine Kameraden" means that the Soviet POWs were not to be considered comrades in arms.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., pp. 44-49.
[66] Ibid., p. 44.
[67] Ibid., pp. 45-49.
[68] Ibid., p. 49.
[69] Ibid., pp. 84 and 335N. He did note one exception: Lieutenant General Hans-Jürgen von Armin of the 17th Panzer Division.
[70] Ibid., pp. 84-85.
[71] Ibid., pp. 88-89.
[72] Ibid., p. 10.
[73] Alfred Streim, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa". Eine Dokumentation (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller Juristischer Verlag, 1981).
[74] Since then, other scholars have weighed in with variant figures. The German military historian Joachim Hoffmann, stated that somewhere between 2-2.8 million Red Army prisoners perished in German captivity. For further discussion on the topic of the German treatment of Soviet POWs, refer to "Part C: The ideologically Motivated War of Annihilation in the East," pp. 214-219" by Gerd Ueberschär in Rolf-Dieter Müller and Gerd Ueberschär, Hitler's War in the East: A Critical Assessment (New York: Berghahn, 2002).
Sources from the former Soviet Union also reach different conclusions. Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century, edited by Colonel-General G.F. Krivosheev, (London: Greenhill Books, 1997), concluded that there were only 4,559,000 Soviet POWs in German captivity during the war, and not the over 5.5 million, which German historians often quote. The reason for the

discrepancy, as presented in Soviet Casualties, is that the German sources counted "not only servicemen but also personnel from special formations coming under various civilian departments (railway, sea-going and river fleets, defence construction, civil aviation, communications, healthcare, etc.) [...] Partisans, resistance fighters, members of incomplete people's militia formations, the local air defence, fighter battalions and the militia (police) were not servicemen either. However, citizens in all the above categories who were on territory taken by the Nazis were counted by the German Command as prisoners of war and sent to POW camps." Ibid., p. 236. As a result, it may just be a matter of semantics. Upwards of 6 million Soviets were taken into German captivity, and almost 60% died under Nazi care.

[75] Streim, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa". Eine Dokumentation, pp. 40-52.

[76] Ibid., p. 52-69.

[77] Ibid., pp. 69-72. Streim also closely examined the annihilation of Soviet Jewry and the role of the Einsatzgruppen in implementing Hitler's extermination orders (pp. 72-93). Streim maintained that the order to kill the Jews of the Soviet Union was not transmitted to the mobile killing formations of the SS until at least the beginning of August 1941. Such a conclusion raised objections from Helmut Krausnick, who stated that Hitler issued an oral order to kill the Jews of the Soviet Union shortly before "Operation Barbarossa" began in June 1941. The correspondence between the two is found in Simon Wiesenthal Annual, Vol. 4 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International, 1987), pp. 309-336, and Simon Wiesenthal Annual, Vol. 6 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International, 1989), pp. 311-329, and pp. 331-347. A more current examination of this subject is found in Peter Longerich, The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution (Charleston, SC: Tempus Books, 2001).

[78] Streim, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa," pp. 94-95.

[79] Ibid., pp. 52-53 and 244-245.

[80] Ibid. p. 244. In the 1997 edition of Keine Kameraden, Streit stated that the 140,000 POWs was the minimum number turned over to the SD. Streit, Keine Kameraden, p. 105.

[81] The Research Institute for Military History was previously located in Freiburg im Breisgau.

[82] Horst Boog, Jürgen Förster, Joachim Hoffmann, Ernst Klink, Rolf-Dieter Müller, and Gerd Ueberschär (eds.), translated from the German by Dean McMurray, Ewald Osers, and Louise Willmot, Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV) (New York: Clarendon Press, 1998). The original German edition appeared in 1983.

[83] Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation" in ibid., pp. 507-513.

[84] Ibid., p. 512. Förster cited OKH/GenStdH/OQu IV, Abt. Fr. H. Ost (II), No. 100/41, 15 January 1941 in BAMA, RHD 18/210, and Kdo.Pz.Gr.4, Ic No. 360/41, 6 May 1941, annexe 2; Befehl des Volkskommissars für Verteidigung der UdSSR [Order of the People's Commissar for the Defense of the USSR] No. 30, 21 January 1941, concerning military and political preparation of the forces for the training year 1941, BAMA, RH 21-4/265.

[85] Ibid., pp. 512-513. Förster cited Psychologisches Laboratorium des Reichskriegsministeriums [Psychology Labratory of the Reich War Ministry] No. 241/35, 2 November 1935, Völkerpsychologische Untersuchung 5: Die nationale Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung der UdSSR und die Möglichkeit für eine propagandistische Bearbeitung [Ethnopsychological study 5; The national composition of the population of the USSR and possibilities of applying propaganda], reprint, p. 7, BAMA, RH 2/v.981, in Ibid., p. 513.

[86] Ibid. pp. 1225-1235.

[87] Ibid., p. 1225.

[88] Ibid., p. 1226.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., pp. 1227-1228.

[91] Förster provided numerous examples from army, corps, and division levels. Ibid., pp. 1226-1234.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., p. 1226. Förster quotes Jacobsen, 'Kommissarbefehl', p. 153.

[94] Jürgen Förster, "New Wine in Old Wineskins? The Wehrmacht and the War of 'Weltanschauungen', 1941," in Wilhelm Deist (ed.), The German Military in the Age of Total War (Dover, NH: Berg, 1985), pp. 304-322.

[95] Jürgen Förster, "The Relation between Operation Barbarossa as an Ideological War of extermination and the Final Solution," in David Cesarini (ed.), The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-102.
[96] Jürgen Förster, "Complicity or Entanglement? Wehrmacht, War, and Holocaust," in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck (eds.), The Holocaust and History: The Known, The Unknown, The Disputed, and The Reexamined (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 266-283.
[97] Christian Streit, "The German Army and the Policies of Genocide," and Jürgen Förster, "The German Army and the Ideological War Against the Soviet Union," in Gerhard Hirschfeld, (ed.), The Policies of Genocide: Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany (London: The German Historical Institute, Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 1-14, and 15-29.
[98] Ibid., pp. 1-7.
[99] Ibid., p. 15.
[100] Ibid., p. 20.
[101] Ibid., p. 21.
[102] Ibid., p. 23. On p. 28, n. 30, Förster cites Ernst Nolte, Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche (Munich, 1963), p. 437, Alfred Streim, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener, and Heinrich Walle, „Ein Rundgang durch die Ausstellung," in Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (ed.), Aufstand des Gewissens: Militärischer Widerstand gegen Hitler und das NS-Regime 1933-1945 (Herford, 1984), p. 96.
[103] Förster, "The German Army and the Ideological War Against the Soviet Union," in Gerhard Hirschfeld, ed., The Policies of Genocide. Förster cites an affidavit of 12 April 1948 by Hemut Kleikamp, intelligence officer of the Army Group South in 1941, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich; George Meyer (ed.), Generalfeldmarschall Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen und Lagebeurteilungen aus zwei Weltkriegen (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 61, n. 240.
[104] Ibid., p. 23.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., p. 26, and Streit in ibid., pp. 1-14.
[107] An English language overview of the historical literature on the German invasion of the Soviet Union of works primarily written in German appears in Rolf-Dieter Müller and Gerd Ueberschär, Hitler's War in the East: A Critical Assessment (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
[108] Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, "Knowledge and Comprehension Among the German Army on the Final Solution," in Asher Cohen, Joav Gelber, and Charlotte Wardi (eds.), Comprehending the Holocaust (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 193. This collection of essays was first presented for a congress in June 1986 held in Haifa, Israel.
[109] Omer Bartov, The Eastern Front 1941-1945, German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 109.
[110] Omer Bartov, Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich (New York: Oxford University press, 1991).
[111] Ibid., p. 83.
[112] In Murder in our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 83, 212N, Bartov cites Krausnick, Streit, and his book, Eastern Front for sources, and on pp. 102 and 215N he cites Streit, Streim, and his own book Hitler's Army.
[113] Theo Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia.
[114] Ibid., p. 215.
[115] Ibid., pp. 215-216.
[116] Ibid., pp. 216-217. Schulte cites BAMA, RH 23/219 for the period of 24.2.1961 [sic] – 13.12.41 as the source for the treatment of POWs in Army Installations (Armeegefangenensammelstellen).
[117] Ibid., p. 217.
[118] Ibid., pp. 217-218.
[119] Ibid., pp. 218-219. Schulte cites Streim, Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangenen, p. 95, and Förster, „Zur Rolle der Wehrmacht im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion," in APZg, Vol. 45, 8 Nov. 1980, pp. 3-15.
[120] Ibid., p. 219. Schulte provided the translations from German to English of the sources cited for this reference.

[121] Joachim Hoffmann, "The Conduct of War through Soviet Eyes" in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV), p. 852, N. 71.
[122] Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia, p. 224. Schulte also contributed a study of Korück 582 in Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds.), The War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941-1944 (New York: Berghahn, 2000), pp. 314-328.
[123] Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991), p. 149. Breitman cites the entirety of the Krausnick article from "Kommissarbefehl und „Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß" in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 25, (1977), pp. 682-738.
[124] Breitman gives no reference for this statement. He may have been referring to Förster's reference in Germany and the Second World War (Vol. IV) to a November 1935 ethno-psychological study equating Jews with Red Army political commissars. The full reference is as follows: Psychologisches Laboratorium des Reichskriegsministeriums [Psychology Laboratory of the Reich War Ministry] No. 241/35, 2 November 1935, Völkerpsychologische Untersuchung 5: Die nationale Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung der UdSSR und die Möglichkeit für eine propagandistische Bearbeitung [Ethnopsychological study 5; The national composition of the population of the USSR and possibilities of applying propaganda], reprint, p. 7, BAMA, RH 2/v.981, in Germany and the Second World War (Vol. IV), p. 513. However, this is not propaganda, but a study for possibilities of propaganda.
[125] Breitman, The Architect of Genocide, pp. 149-150.
[126] David Glantz and Jonathan House, When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler (Lawrence, KN: University Press of Kansas, 1995), pp. 56-57. Glantz and House cite Bartov, The Eastern Front, p. 109. They also cite Alexander Werth, Russia at War, pp. 208, 373-376, and 700-709 for examples of German atrocities.
[127] The English language edition, Hannes Heer and Klaus Naumann (eds.), The War of Extermination: The German Military in World War II, 1941-1944 is cited for the purpose of this study.
[128] Hamburg Institute for Social Research (ed.), translated from the German by Scott Abbott with editorial oversight by Paula Bradish and the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, The German Army and Genocide: Crimes Against War Prisoners, Jews, and Other Civilians, 1939-1944 (New York: The New Press, 1999). References to the Commissar Order are found on pp. 12, 16, 29-30, 79, and 144.
[129] Ibid., p. 12.
[130] Bogdan Musial, "Bilder einer Ausstellung. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Wanderausstellung „Vernichtungskrieg – Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944", Vierteljahrhefte für Zeitgeschichte, XLVII, 4 (1999), pp. 563-591, and Krisztián Ungváry, „Echte Bilder – Problematische Ausstellung. Eine quantitative und qualitative Analyse des Bildermaterials der Ausstellung 'Vernichtungskrieg – Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944'" Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, (1999), pp. 584-595. The organizers of the exhibition eventually addressed the issues of credibility, and the exhibition re-opened in Berlin in 2001. A new catalogue of the exhibition was published in the same year. Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.), Verbrechen der Wehrmacht (Ausstellungskatalog) (Hamburg: Hamburg Institut für Sozialforschung, 2001).
For more on the politics and details of the national debate on the role of the Wehrmacht in war crimes, refer to Johannes Klotz, "Die Ausstellung 'Vernichtungskrieg – Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944.' Zwischen Gesichtswissenschaft und Geschichtspolitik," in Detlaf Bald, Johannes Klotz and Wolfram Wette, Mythos Wehmacht – Nachkriegsdebatten und Traditionspflege (Berlin: Aufbau Tachenbuch Verlag, 2001), pp. 116-176, and William Mulligan, "The Wehrmacht Exhibition and the Politics of History in Germany," in Judith Levin and Howard Clarke, (eds.), European Encounters: Essays in Memory of Albert Lovett (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), pp. 336-362.
[131] Christian Streit, "Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht," in Heer and Naumann, (eds.), War of Extermination, p. 84.
[132] Bernd Boll and Hans Safrian, "The Way to Stalingrad: The 6th Army in 1941-42," in Heer and Naumann, (eds.), War of Extermination, p. 240. They covered the chronological progression of the "criminal orders," and cited Jacobsen's article on the Kommissarbefehl and Jürgen Förster's essay on "Securing Living Space" in Germany and the Second World War, (Vol. IV), as references. Ibid., p. 242 and p. 265N.
[133] Manfred Messerschmidt, "Forward Defense: The "Memorandum of the Generals," in ibid., p. 389.
[134] Ibid., pp. 390-392.

[135] The Wehrmacht exhibit opened just before the publication of political historian Daniel Goldhagen's book, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996). Goldhagen's book was published in German shortly after its debut in America, and it generated tremendous press coverage as well. However, Goldhagen, like Christopher Browning before him, focused much of his attention on the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101, and not on the regular soldiers of the Wehrmacht. For more on the Goldhagen controversy, refer to Franklin Littell, (ed.), Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 1997), Christopher Browning, "Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men? A Reply to the Critics," and Daniel Goldhagen, "Ordinary Men or Ordinary Germans?" in Michael Berenbaum and Abraham Peck (eds.), The Holocaust and History: The Known, The Unknown, The Disputed, and The Reexamined (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 252-265, and pp. 301-308, Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, A Nation on trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), Robert Shandley (ed.), with essays translated by Jeremiah Riemer, Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), Geoff Eley, (ed.), The "Goldhagen Effect:" History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), and Omer Bartov, Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[136] Horst Rohde, „Politischer Indoctrination in höheren Stäben und in der Truppe - untersucht am Beispiel des Kommissarbefehls," in Hans Poeppel, (ed.), Die Soldaten der Wehrmacht (Munich: Herbig Verlag, 1998), pp. 124-158. A draft version obtained by the author was originally titled: „Politischer Einfluß und Indoktrination in höheren Stäben und in der Truppe - untersucht am Beispiel des Kommissar-Befehls."

[137] Ibid., pp. 128-131. Rohde quotes the 8th Infantry Division (Ic), the 30th Infantry Division (Ic), the 22nd Infantry Division (Ic) and the 3rd Army Corps as some of the examples from 12 June 1941 to 20 June 1941.

[138] Ibid., p. 132.

[139] Ibid., pp. 136-139.

[140] Ibid., pp. 139-141.

[141] Ibid., p. 142. A draft of the article obtained by the author originally stated 40%. Where the other ten percent came from is a mystery.

[142] Ibid., p. 143. Unfortunately, Rohde does not identify the other authors he drew his statistics from.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid., pp. 143-145.

[145] Ibid., pp. 144-145. Rohde cites the following sources at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg im Breisgau as including POW tallies: BAMA, RH 24-1/260, RH 24-3/137, RH 24-5/114 and 124, RH 21-4/271. RH 26-23/46, RH 26-24/76, and RH 26-26/58.

[146] Ibid., p. 145.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., pp.145-149.

[149] Ibid., pp. 149-152.

[150] Ibid., pp. 153-157.

[151] Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans-Erich Volkmann, (eds.), Die Wehrmacht: Mythos und Realität (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999).

[152] Timm Richter, "Die Wehrmacht und der Partisanenkrieg in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion," in
ibid., pp. 839-842.

[153] Peter Klein, "Die Erlaubnis zum grenzlosen Massmord – Das Schicksal der Berliner Juden und die Rolle der Einsatzgruppen bei dem Versuch, Juden als Partisanen'auszurotten,'" in ibid., pp. 925-927.

[154] Jürgen Förster, "Wehrmacht, Krieg und Holocaust," in ibid., p. 949.

[155] Ruth Bettina Birn, "Wehrmacht und Wehrmachtangehörige in den deutschen Nachkriegsprozessen," in ibid., pp. 1092-1093.

[156] Michael Burleigh, The Third Reich: A New History (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000). For this section on the Commissar Order, Burleigh simply used a portion of a book of essays he previously published. Michael Burleigh, Ethics and Extermination: Reflections on Nazi Genocide (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 67-70.

[157] Burleigh, The Third Reich: A New History, p. 520.
[158] Ibid. Burleigh cited Förster's essay on the Commissar Order in Germany and the Second World War (Vol. IV) for his source on the Commissar Order.
[159] Burleigh, The Third Reich: A New History, pp. 512-522.
[160] Ibid., p. 522.
[161] Theo Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia Theo Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia, p. 219.
[162] NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 123-126, (28 June 1941 and 17 July 1941) for examples.
[163] Ibid., p. 124.
[164] Christian Streit, "Soviet Prisoners of War in the Hands of the Wehrmacht," in Heer and Naumann, (eds.), War of Extermination, p. 84.
[165] Burleigh, The Third Reich: A New History, p. 522.
[166] Ian Kershaw, Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis (New York: Norton, 2000), pp. 353-360.
[167] Ibid. For the first part of this source, Kershaw cites a biography on Tresckow. For the full context, refer to Bodo Scheurig, Henning von Tresckow. Ein Preusse gegen Hitler (Frankfort am Main, 1987), pp. 113-114.
[168] Kershaw, Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis, p. 934, N. 86.
[169] Samson Madievska, "The War of Extermination: The Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 to 1944," in Rethinking History (London: Routledge, 2003), Volume 7, Number 2, pp. 243-254.
[170] Ibid., p. 249.
[171] Wolfram Wette, Die Wehrmacht: Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2002).
[172] Ibid., pp. 98-100.
[173] Alan Clark, Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-1945 (New York: Quill, 1965).
[174] Albert Seaton, The Russo-German War, 1941-1945 (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1971).
[175] Bryan Fugate, Operation Barbarossa: Strategy and Tactics on the Eastern Front (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1984).
[176] Gerhard Weinberg, A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
[177] Phillipe Masson, Die Deutsche Armee: Geschichte der Wehrmacht, 1935-1945 (München: Herbig, 1996).
[178] Generaloberst Halder, Kriegstagebuch in three volumes, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (ed.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-1964), Vol. 3, pp139, 243.
[179] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung. On 12 September 1941 the 257th Infantry Division reported sending „3 Commissars to the *SD*" near Kremenchug.
[180] Joachim Hoffmann, "The Soviet Union up to the Eve of the German Attack," in Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV), pp. 52-117.
[181] Ibid., p. 512.
[182] IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 254-256, "Extracts from The Handbook for German General Staff Service in Wartime, Part II, Operations Section b."
[183] Public Record Office (hereafter cited as PRO), HW 16-32, 7 August 1941.
[184] Interview with Raul Hilberg, Burlington, Vermont, 6 April 1999.
[185] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1830, FN 451-458 for the records of the 262nd Infantry Division. For example, 4:14 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Ic officers were to report on what was taking place with the formations, and at 9:30 p.m. they were to provide summary accounts on POWs and materials captured during the day.
[186] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 42.
[187] The 24th Infantry Division was part of the 17th Army from the start of the invasion in June 1941 to the beginning of October 1941.
[188] BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[189] BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[190] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsberichte Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[191] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 983.

[192] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941. The 97th Infantry Division was subordinated to the 17th Army through the entire period covered in this study.
[193] The files at the National Archive suggest that the 4th Mountain Division stayed with the 17th Army through the end of October 1941.
[194] There appears to be a variety of opinions about what happed to these documents, ranging from political intrigue to simple misfiling, or destruction by allied bombs at the end of the war.
[195] BAMA, RH 26-295/23, Merkblätter, Feindlage, Betreuung, Erkundung im Ostfeldzug, Gefechtsbericht,
1.6.1941-23.4.1942.
[196] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2368.
[197] IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 254-256, "Extracts from The Handbook for German General Staff Service in Wartime, Part II, Operations Section a.
[198] BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia, Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41.
[199] BAMA, RH 26-295/16, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 27.7.1940-12.12.1941.
[200] Ibid., and BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 27.7.1940-12.12.1941, Bd. 1.: 19.3.41-14.10.41.
[201] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, p. 27.
[202] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., Anlage 18a.
[205] BAMA, RH 26-295/16, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 27.7.1940-12.12.1941, p. 51.
[206] The totals given here through 6 December 1941 do not correspond to the number of commissars listed as captured in other parts of the divisional (Ic) war diary. I will address the subject of such discrepancies in the conclusion of the dissertation.
[207] BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941, Bd. 2.: 25.10.41-13.12.41, Anlage 375a.
[208] Ibid. This reflects a total casualty rate of close to 21% based on a divisional strength of 17,000 men.
[209] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 516, FN 705-707.
[210] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97.Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.
[211] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1039, FN 1024-1027, 1082-1085.
[212] BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941, Bd. 2.: 25.10.41-13.12.41, Anlage 376. Less than one percent of the full troop strength (about 17,000 troops in the German infantry division of 1941) is on record as committing a criminal offense.
[213] BAMA, RH 26-100/35, Tätigkeitsberichte, 10.12.40-15.5.41. "Jud Süß," and "Der ewige Jude" were virulently anti-Semitic films.
[214] BAMA, RH 26-100/59, Anlagen 1-250, Versorgungsangelegenheiten, Div.-Befehle, Bd.2: 25.5.-11.8.41. Race defilement goes back to the September 1935 Nuremberg Blood Protection Act (Blutschutzgesetz) which declared that all sexual contact was forbidden between Jews and German nationals.
[215] BAMA, RH 26-295/23, Merkblätter, Feindlage, Betreuung, Erkundung im Ostfeldzug, Gefechtsbericht,
1.6.1941-23.4.1942.
[216] Doris Bergen, professor of History at Notre Dame University, wrote an excellent study of the German Christian movement. In it she noted that "Silent Night" was one of the few hymns that was not "dejudaized" of its Hebrew roots, and the second stanza with the word "Hallelujah" was left in tact. However, for the packet of songs for Christmas in Russia, only the first verse was included. For more on the German Christian movement, refer to Doris Bergen, Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 171.

Chapter 2: The Political Commissar System in the Red Army: A Brief Historical Overview

As ground forces of the Seventeenth German Army Command (*Armeeoberkommando* 17/ *AOK* 17) fought their way across the western edges of Ukraine in late June and early July 1941, divisional intelligence officers filed activity reports (*Tätigkeitsberichte*) at least three times a day that dealt, in part, with prisoner-of-war testimonies. Common themes related by captured Soviet troops revolved around the perceived power and influence of Red Army political commissars. According to numerous POW testimonies recorded in the divisional daily activity reports in the first weeks after the invasion:

> The influence of political Commissars is very strong [...] All soldiers have great fear of officers and political leaders [...] Commissars have tremendous influence over young communists among the troops [...] Commissars are threatening to shoot anyone who tries to flee artillery bombardments and attacks by German troops.[1]

Such testimonies served to re-enforce a German pre-invasion portrait of the Red Army political officer. Based largely on the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order ("Directives for the Treatment of Political Commissars") issued at Hitler's behest by the High Command of the Armed Forces (*OKW*)[2] *Wehrmacht* soldiers were to expect

that the political commissar would be a formidable opponent, a powerful and ruthless defender of the communist system, who would stop at nothing to secure the loyalty and service of his troops. The observations of captured soldiers from the field of battle, detailing the fanatical resistance and ideological fervor of the Soviet political organs in the military, did little, therefore, to dispel this notion. Not surprisingly then, some of the same daily activity reports also documented the prescribed consequences for any Soviet political officer who fell into the hands of the German military by noting the immediate shooting of commissars and their assistants, or their transfer to the security services (SD) of the *SS*.[3]

Political officers and their non-commissioned assistants, however, were at this time not endowed with the power and authority that Hitler and his military and legal advisors had ascribed to them. Rather, the political organs of the Red Army had been restricted since August 1940 in the scope of their influence to advancing political literacy, recruiting membership for the Communist Party, and monitoring morale among the troops.[4] In fact, the image of the Red Army political commissar created by Hitler and the German military authorities simply did not exist when the *Wehrmacht* breached the borders of the Soviet Union in June 1941. It was not until almost a month later when Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin and the Chief of the Red Army's Main Political Directorate, Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis, reinstated the concept of dual command (*dvoevlastie*) that the Red Army political commissar again attained the status of an elite military-political authority.[5]

Yet, even though the position of political commissar carried little weight in the command structure of the Red Army between the end of the Soviet-Finnish War

and July 1941, it merited careful attention from Hitler and his military planners and analysts. In this chapter, I will examine how the commissar system in the Red Army evolved from 1917-1941, what information the German General Staff possessed about Red Army political commissars, and how the traditional functions of the political officer in the Red Army under dual command influenced Hitler and the German military authorities in the design of the Commissar Order.

Commissars under the Russian Provisional Government

Involvement of government agencies and political parties in the daily operations of the Russian military forces preceded the Bolshevik Revolution. Following the abdication of Czar Nicholas II in March 1917, the Dual Government composed of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd All-Russian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, sought to restore military discipline, and to stand against a perceived defeatist attitude among the rank and file of the Russian army facing the German armed forces.[6] In order to help promote the loyalty of the commanders and enlisted men, and to calm potential unrest, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, with the consent of the Provisional Government, introduced the position of political commissar on 19 March 1917.[7] While the term "commissar" had been used in connection with political workers within the military at various stages throughout European history, this marked the first use of the word in association with political activity among military forces in Russia.[8]

The 19 March 1917 order of the Executive Committee provided four reasons for creating the position of political commissar.[9] The first was directly connected to improving the political atmosphere in the army at a crucial juncture in the war with

Germany following the abdication of the Czar. Commissars were to bridge the gap and establish "firm and permanent relations between the troops and their organs and the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies."[10]

The second related to defusing potential conflicts in an army rife with internal struggles over class, politics, and overall direction. Political commissars were placed within the ranks "[...] to achieve quick and systematic solutions of problems arising in the internal and political life of the army."[11]

The third reason offered by the Executive Committee addressed the political inertia within the chain of command. Commissars were to be employed to "expedite the transmission of directives" relating to non-operational matters.[12]

Lastly, commissars were to serve as political watchdogs over the military, and were, therefore, attached to the Ministry of War, *Stavka* (General Staff Headquarters), commanders of individual fronts, and fleets. Yet, as of the end of March 1917, they were not assigned at the division level or below. They existed "for the purpose of preventing any wrong steps on the part of the organs now in charge of army life."[13]

However, the order offered few details on the specific tasks assigned to political commissars. Imbued with seemingly far-reaching power and authority from above, political commissars were to theoretically deal with all issues relating to "the internal or political life of the army and to the local population," including "demands, complaints, declarations, etc., [...], food supplies and quarters." Under the provisions of the Executive Committee order, commissars also would serve as teachers by clarifying and explaining current events to the military units.[14] Yet, such a wide variety of general tasks and responsibilities with little recourse to enforcement

resulted in uneven implementation among staff and front headquarters, and served as a source of resentment among commanding officers.[15]

A month later, Communist Party leader Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky ordered the creation of the Military Organization of the Central Committee through the Petrograd Soviet. Intended as a conduit to institute Marxist thinking within the ranks of the fighting units in April 1917, Lenin and Trotsky extended the model of commissar established in March. According to guidelines issued by the Military Organization of the Central Committee, these commissars were to take part in an assortment of "political activities" among the soldiers. While one such activity included the supervision of those deemed "politically unreliable" by Communist leaders, the tasks of political commissars were far from precisely defined under the aegis of the Military Organization of the Central Committee, and authority to carry out the orders appeared on paper only.[16]

The Provisional Government made one last attempt to clarify the scope and function of political commissars in the military based on the Provisional Government's political convictions. In an order signed by Minister-President Alexander Kerensky and War Minister Major-General Yakubovich on 15 July 1917, the Provisional Government, with the knowledge of the All-Russian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the All-Russian Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, and the Supreme Commander, decreed that military commissars would be assigned to the commanding officer at the Front, Army, division, and regimental levels. Their overall tasks would be to "promote the reorganization of the army on democratic principles,

the reinforcement of its fighting capacity, and to oppose counterrevolutionary attempts."[17]

However, a definition of such sweeping tasks as "reorganization of the army on democratic principles, the reinforcement of its fighting capacity," and opposition to "counterrevolutionary attempts" proved difficult to establish. With political upheaval and shifts in the power structure taking place throughout the summer of 1917, it was also painfully clear to political officers serving as commissars that their authority was based solely on the willingness and ability of the local military commanders and party organs to back them up. The pendulum of compliance could easily swing in either direction.[18]

On one hand, Assistant Minister of War, Boris Savinkov, also a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who drafted the 15 July 1917 order, declared his hope that political commissars would help "purge the entire high commanding personnel of all persons lacking a sense of civic responsibility." He also sought to empower commissars with the "strictest control in the application of the death penalty."[19]

On the other hand, opposition to the institution of political commissars came from leading military commanders within the Kerensky government. At a *Stavka* meeting the day after the 15 July 1917 order on "the Establishment and Jurisdiction of Military Commissars of the Provisional Government" was issued, General Anton Denikin, commanding officer of the Western Front, spoke out about a number of problems plaguing the army. Some of his harshest criticisms were leveled at commissars:

> Another cause for disintegration in the army is the commissar. Perhaps there are black swans among them who are beneficial, but generally speaking, the institution is incompatible with the army. There cannot be dual authority in the army. The army must have one head and one authority.[20]

However, the Provisional Government did not last long enough to fully address the issue of commissars as political officers and their authority in the Russian military. By maintaining a policy that continued the war against Germany, ignoring the problem of land redistribution, and postponing elections for the constituent assembly, the Kerensky government ultimately failed in October 1917, and opened the way for the return of Lenin, who had been in exile in Finland since July. After arriving in Petrograd, Lenin sought, among other policy initiatives, to reestablish the function of the military administration at the end of 1917. Nonetheless, in a decree issued on 16 December 1917, Lenin chose not to even address the concept of the political commissar in the Red Army. The absence of any mention of political commissars in the army reflected growing tensions within the communist hierarchy about the role of the Party in all aspects of military life.[21]

It was not until February 1918 when the Organization-Agitation Bureau of the Collegiate for the Formation of the Red Army met, that the roles of political commissars were first detailed beyond the scope of those established during the Dual Government. [22] Just a month earlier, Lenin had brought the Red Army into official existence, and he quickly charged the "The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army" with the task of "defending the gains of the October (1917) Revolution, the power of the soviets, and socialism."[23] According to the Organization-Agitation Bureau, commissars were to serve as agitators to gather recruits for the newly formed Red Army, and distribute propaganda to members of the armed forces. The Communist leadership, therefore, intended commissars to play an active role in the recruitment process to counter mass levels of desertions by troops fighting the Central Powers. For a political party that advocated an end to the fighting, this appeared to be a formidable task.[24]

The Organization-Agitation Bureau assigned commissars a number of specific tasks, including orders to provide instruction in class struggle, the path to Socialism, the Russian revolution, the concept of Soviet power, the Red Army, and techniques of agitation. [25] In spite of these specified tasks, the Communist Party and military officials were still not settled on the placement and role of commissars in the overall structure of the Red Army.[26] On 3 April 1918, the Organization-Agitation Bureau of the Red Army Collegiate was transferred to a newly created Bureau of Military Commissars (*Vseburovoenkom*) in the Main Political Administration of the Red Army (MPA).[27] According to Timothy Colton, this organization underwent a number of name changes between April 1918 and July 1941. The term "Main Political

Administration (MPA) of the Red Army" was the name of the organization from July 1941 through February 1946, and the term I will use here to avoid confusion.[28]

The process of integration of the Party into the Red Army, however, did not come without a price. Bureaucratic competition from rival military and civilian organizations created tensions that lasted over four years. The Bureau of Military Commissars had to struggle in 1918 to fend off four different competitors for the exercise of political party influence within the military. A civilian organization, the Main Political Enlightenment Committee (*Glavpolitprosvet*), managed to gain control of general political education in the army at the beginning of 1921, but due to open protests, the Military Organization of the Central Committee retook control late in 1922.

Almost immediately after its formation in April 1918, the Bureau of Military Commissars issued its first order regarding the tasks of political commissars in the armed forces (6 April 1918). These tasks were not widely publicized until the All-Russian Central Executive Committee met on 23 April 1918. At this meeting, Trotsky, as the newly appointed Commissar for War and the President of the Supreme War Council,[29] spoke about how he was reorganizing the infrastructure of the Red Army. Referring to the 6 April 1918 order detailing new responsibilities for political commissars, Trotsky unequivocally established a connection between the Party and the army in the person of the political commissar. According to Trotsky:

> The military commissar is the direct political organ of the Soviet power in the army. His post is one of exceptional

> importance. Commissars are appointed from among irreproachable revolutionaries, capable of remaining, under the most difficult circumstances, the embodiment of revolutionary duty.[30]

In addition to party recruitment, the 6 April 1918 order prescribed a supervisory role for the political commissar in the Red Army, which was communicated to delegates at the All-Russian Central Executive Committee meeting:

> The military commissar must see to it that the army does not become dissociated from the Soviet system as a whole, and that the particular military institutions do not become centers of conspiracy or instruments to be used against the workers and peasants.[31]

In order to apply the aforementioned principles, political commissars were to take on a teaching capacity. Most of the 6,389 commissars in 1918 had come from backgrounds in education, the arts, government civil service, and other professions where literacy was paramount. The leadership of the Red Army, who shared similar backgrounds, sought to enlighten the peasants in the armed forces to be educated, political citizens. As evidence that the leadership of the Red Army valued education

as an essential part of its mission, the Red Army's first emblem included a hammer and sickle for the workers and peasants, a rifle, and a book. [32]

However, commissars were far outnumbered by the 165,000 military specialists in 1918, and the task of educating the masses appeared insurmountable unless they could increase their numbers. The term "military specialists" refers to former officers in the Russian Imperial Army who joined the Red Army. Bolshevist hardliners often viewed them suspiciously, and frequently questioned their motives and ideological commitment.[33]

Under the plan for army reorganization, political commissars were also granted administrative responsibilities. According to Trotsky:

The commissar takes part in all the work of the military specialists (*voespety*), receives reports, and dispatches along with them, and counter-signs orders.[34]

In this capacity, the signature of a commissar on an order signified only that it was not counter-revolutionary in nature. The authority to counter-sign orders, in this case, was not the foundation for the concept of dual command. Rather, it was merely a method to signify that the order was in overall compliance with the political goals of the Communist Party. Military specialists maintained authority and jurisdiction over all aspects of operational activities, and political commissars simply did not have the power to interfere immediately with tactical matters. If a commissar objected to a strategic or operational decision of a military specialist, he had to express his disapproval in writing to the appropriate military superiors along the chain of

command, a process that was long, and laborious, and one that ultimately led few to file their protests.[35]

However, a stipulation in the 6 April 1918 order did grant political commissars in the Red Army some latitude in the area of fiscal responsibility and enforcement. Trotsky expressed the details of the provision to those assembled for the All-Russian Central Executive Committee:

> The commissar shall see to it that all workers of the Red Army, from the top to the bottom, fulfill their work faithfully and energetically, that all funds are disbursed economically and under the most stringent supervision; that all military property is preserved with all possible care.[36]

The rest of the order from 6 April 1918 detailed the appointments of commissars to each level of the military command structure. The Soviet of People's Commissars would be responsible to appoint political commissars at the highest level (the Supreme Military Council). Yet, with an acknowledgment of the importance of local councils in the administration of party organs, Trotsky stated that District and Regional political commissars would be assigned based on a joint recommendation from the Supreme Military Council and the local soviets. This stipulation was intended to recognize the vitality of local party influence, as well as an attempt to decentralize the process of political administration.[37]

Commissars in the Red Army during the first half of the Civil War, 1918-1919

In order to counter the forces of the opposition Whites in the developing Civil War in the spring of 1918, the Communist leadership sought to rebuild the Red Army in its own ideological image. As War Commissar, Trotsky played a central role in this reconstruction project, and was instrumental in establishing the foundation for political commissars to operate within the infrastructure of the Red Army.

Trotsky drew deeply from the theories of warfare of the nineteenth century Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz.[38] According to Clausewitz, war was a political act to be directed by the political leaders of a nation, and Trotsky believed this principle applied even more in the event of a civil war. For Trotsky, the Russian Civil War served as an extension of the class struggle, which, he hoped, would eventually result in a consolidation of political power. Politics, therefore, would be the driving force, which would dominate strategy, operational tactics, and overall organization for the Red Army.[39]

In order to infuse the armed forces with communist thinking, Trotsky sought to establish a system of political indoctrination within the Red Army. In the crucial initial phases of the Civil War, this was a particularly acute concern as officers trained under the imperial Russian regime made up over seventy-five percent of the Bolshevik officer corps by the end of 1918. By 1920, 40,000 "Red Commanders" had passed through Soviet military school and academies, and former Czarist officers constituted only 15.5 percent of the total number of commanders in the Red Army.

According to Timothy Colton, the 15.5 percent were disproportionately represented in senior command posts.[40]

Therefore, since Red Army political commissars represented party leadership imbedded within the military command structure, they were "to inculcate in soldiers [...] the necessity for revolutionary order and discipline" as part of the prescription for military and doctrinal success.[41]

However, much to the chagrin of staunch party advocates, Trotsky, with the support of Lenin, also believed in the necessity of drawing on those trained under the imperial army to combat the forces of the Whites, as communist officers were either in short supply, or lacking in military leadership. Bolshevik leaders had granted military specialists extensive power in areas of operations. Of the twenty officers commanding the Eastern and Southern fronts between 1918-1929, seventeen (85%) were former Czarist commanders. Virtually the same percentages were true among chief of staffs at the front and army level.[42]

At the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July 1918, Trotsky set forth a program that granted military specialists latitude in the tactical areas of operations, but also assigned political commissars greater authority to monitor and check the actions and attitudes of the former Imperial officers serving in the Red Army.[43]

The program outlined by Trotsky included the official institution of dual command, in which a political commissar at any level of the military infrastructure had full authority to countermand an order by a military specialist if the commissar believed it was contrary to the interests of the Communist Party.[44] Since Red Army political commissars were to serve as "the unifying link between the generals and the

masses, as well as the guardians of the military leaders," they needed to have substantially greater authority to carry out their missions. In order to ensure the loyalty of military specialists, Trotsky announced on 29 July 1918 that former Czarist officers who refused to serve or obey would be sent to concentration camps. Trotsky also issued an order on 30 September 1918 that instituted a hostage system for commanders to keep them from betraying the Red Army. If they refused to respond to a commissar's instructions, or sought to defect to the side of the Whites, their wives and children would be arrested.[45]

Yet, Trotsky also set the precedent to hold both commissars and commanders accountable for the lack of success of a military unit in the field of battle. According to Trotsky, military failure was ground for execution, and by 1921, scores of commissars, officers, and soldiers had been tried and executed before military tribunals as a result.[46]

However, dual command was also designed to "ensure the immediate and unconditional execution of commanders' operational and combat directives." Trotsky did not want to simply pit the representative of the Party against the military commander, but instead wanted to create a united front in prosecuting a war against counter-revolutionary forces.[47]

The presence of dual command also served to placate, to some degree, a vocal faction of the Communist Party which was loath to carry out military operations with former Czarist officers as commanders.[48] Nonetheless, within nine months, that faction, led by Vladimir Smirnov, argued that the Red Army was in need of serious reform, and that any program of reform needed to begin with a greater party presence

in the Red Army. The Eighth Party Congress, therefore, held in mid-March 1919, provided a showcase for those, like Smirnov, who were seeking a platform among the growing chorus of the discontented to debate the role of the party in military matters.[49]

Those seeking radical changes in the structure of the armed forces maintained that there were too many Czarist officers in positions of authority. This resulted in non-Bolshevik military specialists, and not party officials, driving the course of the Civil War, thereby jeopardizing any communist gains with potential acts of treason.[50] The reform-minded also advocated for increased power and authority to be given political commissars within the army as an ideological safeguard against the systemic failures and weaknesses of the imperial military worldview.[51] For these critics of the Red Army, the logical solution for the future would be a standing militia, rather than a full-time army, which would guarantee the preservation of party control at the local level.[52] They also argued forcefully for a change in tactical operations that favored the use of partisan warfare behind the front lines of the Whites.[53]

Lenin and Trotsky, however, did not concur. Grigorii Sokolnikov, speaking for Trotsky,[54] countered the local militia proponents at the Eighth Party Congress by declaring that in the midst of a turbulent civil war, the interests of the Party would be best served by a well-trained standing army with skilled officers. If those officers happened to have come out of the Czar's army, then so be it. Without an infrastructure built around competent military specialists, trained in the science of warfare, the achievements of the revolution would be put at great risk. Only in

winning the Civil War could the Communist Party restructure the military. As Trotsky wrote in "*Our Policy in Creating the Army*:"

> Yes, we are utilizing military specialists because the task of the Soviet democracy is not to dispose of technical forces which we can make use of for our historical work [...] Military specialists will supervise technical matters, purely military questions, combat issues [...] At the current point in time, we have no alternative. It is important to remember that besides enthusiasm [...] technical knowledge is also necessary.[55]

Lenin also weighed in on the topic. After a sub-committee had come out in favor of Smirnov's theses, Lenin addressed his comments to the entire congress before a final vote was taken. Like Trotsky, he believed that the Red Army needed to use military specialists because it was expedient to do so:

> If the ruling class, the proletariat wants to hold power, it must [...] prove its ability to do so by its military organization. How was a class, which had hitherto served as cannon fodder for the military commanders of the ruling imperialist class, to create its own commanders?[56]

For Lenin, it simply meant using what the old system had discarded until products of the new and better system were available. At the conclusion of the congress, Lenin, Trotsky, and others who argued that "military specialists were the key to success on the battlefield" won out. The delegates made it clear however, that they supported a standing army only as an expedient measure until the Civil War could be won.[57] Until then, militia units would be raised as reserve battalions with local Communist Party control, and a greater emphasis would be placed on the enforcement of discipline within the ranks of the Red Army. [58]

In addition, to facilitate the protection of ideological values in the military forces, the Eighth Party Congress declared political commissars in the Red Army members of the official party apparatus, thereby removing them from the sphere of military control. The so-called "Tsaritsyn Affair" also influenced policy matters for the Party Congress. Following a power struggle with local authorities in September-October 1918 over party influence in military operations, Trotsky had then-commissar Stalin removed from a supervisory position in the lower Volga city of Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad, present-day Volgograd). While Trotsky triumphed in the short-term, the Eighth Party Congress established the position of commissar solely as a Communist Party appointment devoid of input from government and military officials. Thus, a direct line from party headquarters ran through every level of the command structure to infuse and enforce, in theory, Marxist-Leninist doctrine throughout the military.[59]

Although they were part of the Red Army, political commissars were accountable solely to civilian authority within the Communist Party.[60] This meant that

ideological doctrine would be an integrated component of what Thomas Nichols described as an overall "military doctrine." As a result, all operational and military planning would be conducted under the aegis of the Communist Party's "scientific interpretation of reality."[61]

Such a shift in jurisdiction and authorization increased party influence in military matters, and resulted in a redefinition of duties for political commissars. Much of the new responsibilities were administrative, including organizing communist members of the Red Army into party cells.[62] Thus, by the spring of 1919 the roles of the Red Army political commissar to recruit members for the Communist Party, defend the values espoused by the Party, instruct soldiers in Bolshevik doctrine, counter-sign orders, and monitor the behavior and attitudes of officers and enlisted men alike were firmly in place.[63]

Nevertheless, Communist party leadership had not intended the responsibilities of political commissars to become institutionalized in the Red Army. Soviet military doctrinal theorists postulated that since Bolshevik-trained officers would eventually replace former Czarist military specialists, there would not be a need for political commissars, and single command[64] could again be restored. Accordingly, the Red Army Disciplinary Code of 1919 removed all references to the political commissar[65] with the belief that "the growth of Red officers from the proletariat [...] will render superfluous any special political guardianship over the army in the person of commissars."[66]

While party officials pursued the goal of single, or unitary, command, the political commissar continued to serve during the Civil War under the direct

supervision of the Main Political Administration of the Red Army (MPA). Granted more authority by the Eighth Party Congress as well as the Central Committee to institute party policies into the Red Army, the MPA, headed by Ivar Smilga, spearheaded a reform program of its own in the spring of 1919. Nonparty members among commissars and political workers were quickly replaced by dedicated communists in an effort to assert Bolshevik values at every level of the Red Army. According to official party statistics, 40% of all commissars and political workers in the Red Army at the end of 1918 were not even members of the Communist Party. By May of 1919, Smilga and MPA officials had reduced the percentage of nonparty members to 11.2.[67] However, the growing influence of the Party in military life was not without internal conflict.

First, commissars and military specialists continued to clash over operational and logistical issues. While some commissars and former Czarist officers got along amicably, many did not. Fedotoff White refers to the "good commissar" as the exception to the rule. He was the one who:

> [...] knew the details of the supply service and could adjust its shortcomings, who was well acquainted with the commanding personnel and knew the administrative machinery in his unit 'as well as he knew his five fingers,' who did not lose his head in action, and who, if necessary, could replace the commander in a critical moment. [68]

However, most military specialists appear to have resented the position of political commissar. Regulations by the MPA created a forced, and often artificial, working environment. Regardless of loyalty to the Bolshevik cause displayed in battle, military specialists continued to labor under the constant supervision of the Red Army political commissar.[69]

Second, political commissars during the Civil War often encroached on the operational and tactical responsibilities of the military specialist. Using the power of countermanding orders liberally, both commissars and military specialists reported increasing examples of commissars acting as commanders.[70] This often had a negative impact on the morale of troops. Accounts of soldiers killing the political commissar in their unit as a reaction to the unstable environment created by what they perceived as too much political agitation or efforts to wrest control from the commander were not uncommon.[71] As Mark von Hagen observes in Soldiers of the Proletariat Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930:

> From the beginning, however, dual command had introduced ambiguity, tension, and often hostility into officers' relations with commissars, thereby diminishing the authority of both groups in the soldiers' eyes. In practice, the lines of command had been fluid during most of the Civil War, and areas of jurisdiction confused and disputed, most often because commissars could not resist the temptation to involve themselves in operational matters

that were supposed to be the exclusive preserve of the military specialist.[72]

Third, in spite of the increased power and authority commissars experienced during the Civil War, there appeared to be a deepening animosity toward military specialists on the part of political officers. This was a matter of just rewards. Political commissars were long-standing fighters for the revolutionary cause in Russia. Until Smilga's MPA reforms, the vast majority of political commissars had served since early1917 in the cause of the revolution, and were committed Bolsheviks well before that. Military specialists, however, had only recently turned to the side of the Reds, and yet were sharing equally, if not disproportionately, in the accolades extended by the Lenin government for the military successes during the Civil War.[73]

As a result, it was clear to the leadership of both the Red Army and the Communist Party that changes needed to be instituted in how the Party and the armed forces interacted within the military. The pace and direction of change, however, were constant sources of debate and policy initiatives between military personnel and political party representatives over the next three years.

Commissars in the Red Army during the second half of the Civil War and the Russo-Polish War, 1919-1922

By 1919, the position of political commissar was well established in the Red Army, and reflected a belief by the Central Committee of the Communist Party that a political officer should serve and represent the interests of the Party in all facets of

military life. An intricate hierarchy of political officers, therefore, mirrored the military ranking system of the Soviet armed forces. At the front and army levels, the political officer served as both a political administrator and member of the military council during most of the period from 1918 through the beginning of the German invasion in June 1941. The military councils during the Civil War included chiefs of staff and logistics officers, as well as representatives from the local party. By the Second World War, the councils consisted of the senior military commander, the senior political officer (*chlen voennogo soveta*), a logistics officer, and the commanders of the artillery and aviation units in the front. The military councils often also included a chief of staff during wartime.[74]

Nonetheless, the Military Political Administration (MPA) felt that political commissars were so involved in monitoring and maintaining the abilities of their fighting units to engage in combat that they were neglecting two of their foremost responsibilities: political education and literacy. In order to address these needs, the MPA authorized the creation of a lower grade political instructor for the Red Army in October 1919. Called *Politruki,*[75] the full title for the position, *politicheskii rukovoditel* implied that the non-commissioned officer at this rank serving at the regimental level and below would be "a political leader or guide for those uninitiated in the appropriate ways of understanding the world and acting on it."[76]

Accordingly, politruks served as instructors in a program of political literacy (*politicheskaia gramota,*or *gramotnost')* intended by the MPA and the Central Committee of the Communist Party to be a flagship enterprise that would help bridge the gap between the uneducated among the peasants and their literate fellow soldiers.

The Red Army made a huge commitment to the eradication of illiteracy during the Civil War because the leadership of the Communist Party believed that a soldiers' ability to develop and form political beliefs was closely connected to his level of literacy. Since the lower ranks of the Red Army were composed primarily of peasants, this was a formidable task.[77]

In addition, politruks were to assist political commissars in the maintenance of morale among the troops. The Communist leadership believed strongly that men who were committed to, and convinced of, their cause, would fight longer and harder. Although there appeared to exist no conclusive measurable evidence to support this theory, the perception that it was true was reinforced by non-Bolshevik sources. According to a White officer's report quoted by Trotsky, political commissars successfully motivated their troops to press onward with attacks. "They conduct unceasing agitation taking advantage of every available opportunity and exploiting even the most trivial fact to highlight the benefits that the Bolshevik regime has brought to their lives."[78]

Furthermore, a French commander, Bertaud Serrigny, further solidified the perception that Communist Party organs greatly motivated soldiers to achieve battlefield success by stating: "The Bolsheviks were masters in the art of combining moral and military actions [...] The results that followed were amazing and deserve a profound study."[79]

However, not everyone admired the work of political officers in the Red Army. Opposition Whites, Poles, and Greens[80] also recognized the perceived power and influence of political commissars. Yet, their responses were often deadly. Under

wartime conditions, the state of the front fluctuated rapidly. In a bitter Civil War with ideology at the heart of the dispute, all sides sought to employ any means possible to root out the carriers of ideological resistance among POWs. According to Roger Reese:

> Some units would not take prisoners and boasted of it. Others would interrogate them first and then kill them. No less then three times in 1919 did Trotsky issue orders against the murder of prisoners.
>
> Of course the Whites and the Greens made it a habit to murder commissars, Bolsheviks and any Soviet officials that fell into their hands, and not just to reciprocate, but as a matter of principle. The difference is that the Soviet high command forbade the practice, but the leadership at the front did little to enforce it.[81]

The German historian Joachim Hoffmann also documented the tendency to target political commissars during the Civil War and the Russo-Polish War. In the fourth volume of a projected ten-volume history of Germany during the Second World War published in conjunction with the German Research Institute for Military History at Potsdam, J. Hoffmann states:

> The political importance attached to the commissars was reflected by the fact that, under the merciless conditions of civil and interventionist war, captured commissars were usually shot at once. British interventionist troops under Major-General Malleson also adopted these methods when, in 1918, they killed the celebrated 26 commissars, headed by the commissar-extraordinary of the government of the Russian socialist federative Soviet republic (*RSFSR*) for Caucasian affairs, Shaumyan, 'in a bestial manner.'[82]

While political commissars came directly under attack from forces on the outside, internal strife during the revolutionary period also threatened to undermine stability. In addition to political commissars in the Red Army, local Communist Party cells contributed to the injection of ideology into the culture of the military milieu. But the results were often more contentious rather than deadly. The local cells believed they should exercise control over the political training and supervision of soldiers while troops were serving or stationed in their district. In a nation under martial law, conflicts appeared with increasing frequency. For example, local Communist Party committees were fining soldiers they found to be in violation of party prohibitions. These included soldiers caught in a drunken stupor, those playing cards, and not attending political education meetings sponsored by the local soviet.[83]

To counter the measures by the local Party hierarchy to interfere in army affairs, military commanders, with the support of commissars, would sometimes call

for a mass mobilization of young men and women in the local *Komsomol* (Communist Youth League). Such a measure would deprive the local Party of valuable workers, and place them temporarily under military jurisdiction. Eventually, the hostility grew so tense, that the Central Committee of the Communist Party felt obligated to intervene to stop charges and counter-charges of localism, counter-revolutionary tendencies, and insubordination.[84]

When the Central Committee finally stepped in, it sided initially with the military, only infuriating local communist officials further. The result was a reorganization of how political departments in the military would both function and be structured. The MPA benefited most from the intervention, and increased its authority over party cells among soldiers beginning in December 1919. This reflected a trend toward the centralized organs of the Communist Party, and away from both local control and political commissars in the field of battle.[85] As Roman Kolkowicz observed:

> The relations between the Party's ruling elite and the military are in the nature of an armed truce, which on any occasion erupts into conflict, usually a result of the Party's attempt to keep the military under tight control while demanding from it high levels of performance. As long as the Party is in a firm position, it need not worry greatly about opposition from the military.[86]

In addition, questions of direction, purpose, roles and responsibilities extended to the highest levels of the Communist Party hierarchy during this same time period. After securing more authority for the MPA, the organization he headed, Ivar Smilga re-ignited the debate over the role of military specialists. Smilga stated that those former Czarist officers who had demonstrated loyalty to the Revolution should not be under the supervision of political commissars any longer. With the added authority for centralized party organs of the MPA, Smilga believed that commissars could soon be phased out.[87]

Trotsky, recognizing the delicate political implications of the matter, took a less strident tone in a speech given 12 December 1919. He stated: "If military specialists are good workers, there is no reason not to trust them completely in a political sense; it is always possible to organize observations of their actions. And that does not have to be done by a commissar." Yet, while he also did not call for the outright abolition of the position of the political commissar in a possible return to single, or unitary command, he made it clear that was the direction he was heading toward once the Red Army became a more stable force.[88]

All debates on the placement and function of political commissars in the Red Army, however, took a secondary role to securing victory in the Russo-Polish War during the first few months of 1920. It wasn't until the Ninth Party Congress, held from in late March to early April 1920, that the leaders of the Communist Party began to re-examine how the Red Army could begin to be transformed from a wartime to a peacetime force. With 103 of the 544 voting delegates at the Ninth Congress drawn from the ranks of the Red Army, the topic of party influence in military matters was

central to an evolving plan for eventual demobilization. Constituting a force of almost 5 million men in the summer of 1920, the Red Army was slated by delegates to be under 2 million strong by the fall of 1921. This meant that political officers would also be proportionately reduced. [89]

At the same time, Trotsky spoke in support of a plan to create labor armies from the demobilized soldiers. Rather than send the demobilized troops home, Trotsky advocated a program of labor militarization. Such a program would help put socialist planning to work in an economic environment in dire need of structure, reform, and rejuvenation.[90] As a result, commissars and *politruks* in the Red Army sought opportunities to get out of the armed forces since they could envision only a dull future as political workers in the army. As one commissar observed: "Why are we here? What are we going to do – twiddle our thumbs?"[91]

In addition, internal turmoil at the MPA also threatened to disrupt the political administration within the Red Army, and cast serious doubt on the future role to be played by commissars. A November 1920 attempt to unify all political work in the armed forces under the umbrella of the proposed Main Political Enlightenment Committee (*Glavpolitprosvet*), which itself would be directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, caused major political fissures. Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaia, who was to be the chief of the Main Political Enlightenment Committee, sought to direct all political work in such areas as literacy programs, schools, adult education classes, libraries, agitation trains and ships, as well as all soviet and party schools. Some of these had previously come under the administration of political organs in the military, but with an eventual shift toward

demobilization and decentralization, the future of political commissars in the armed forces was in question.[92]

However, the onset of the Russo-Polish War, and a renewed assault by White forces under General Petr Wrangel in the south caused all plans for the political administration in the military to be put on hold. The immediate military threat superseded debate on the structure of the peacetime military.[93]

Recognizing that their career work might be in jeopardy, Red Army commissars and *politruks* convened the All–Russian Second Assembly of Political Workers in the Red Army in December 1920. At this convention, they established a united front in support of political work within the military. Delegates at the convention placed blame for the political unrest in the Red Army and the uncertainty over their future squarely on MPA Director Ivar Smilga. Claiming Smilga lacked leadership skills and the courage to stand up against civilian political organs, the delegates called for a sweeping reform in the infrastructure of the military political administration. In doing so, they sought to trim what they perceived to be a bloated bureaucracy in the central apparatus, and advocated cutting administrative positions and promoting from within.[94]

In response, Smilga acknowledged that the MPA had been "dying out" in recent months, but he affixed blame on the Central Committee of the Communist Party for failing to provide the necessary financial support to keep the political departments in the Red Army at full strength. Nonetheless, Smilga's participation in a political blame game did not resonate well with those in authority, and Sergei Gusev replaced him as chief of the MPA. Gusev, whose real name was Iakov Drabkin, was a

Bolshevik military organizer who authored the pro-militia pamphlet titled "*How to Build a Soviet Army.*" His proposal to build up the Red Army centered around a program which relied less on former Czarist military specialists and more on newly trained commanders in local militias. However, Gusev had changed his position by the time he became head of the MPA from 1921-1922, and was appointed to replace Smilga over the objection of Trotsky.[95]

For Gusev, the work of political organs in the Red Army was vital to the success and future of the military in a communist system. According to the new head of the MPA, the fundamental aim of political work was to:

> [...] turn a large proportion of the peasants into international communists, and the rest – or, at least, the younger generation – into sympathetic supporters of the idea of a revolutionary war of aggression because the idea of a revolutionary war of defense was one which the peasant could grasp comparatively easier [...] Education in the spirit of internationalism naturally presupposes in the first place that the Red Army man will be familiar with the A.B.C. of communism. Without this theoretical basis we can make no progress. The crux of the matter is not, however, to be found in an abstract internationalism, but in the daily initiation of the soldier into the sphere of interest

of world revolution by way of his immediate peasant interests. Otherwise, the work will be useless.[96]

While the political officers and their assistants in attendance soundly supported such a position, and welcomed a new face in Gusev, Smilga still managed to address other concerns voiced by the delegates at the Second Assembly of Political Workers in the Red Army. One of these issues dealt with the future of the militia army. All plans for demobilization following the Russo-Polish War appeared to include a major reduction in the number of commissars and politruks. Once a staunch advocate of a professional standing army, War Commissar Trotsky had recently changed his position in favor of militias, with greater control given to local party organs over long-standing commissars and politruks.[97] Smilga, one of Trotsky's early supporters, lashed out at this policy reversal, and voiced support for political workers in the Red Army. Smilga simply reiterated positions taken by both Lenin and Trotsky at the Eighth Party Congress by stating that military expediency outweighed the ideological ideal of a militia.[98]

Furthermore, Smilga argued that the realities of the Civil War dictated that a standing professional army should remain in place for the foreseeable future. He reached this conclusion based on what he perceived to be the combination of backwardness among peasant communities throughout the Soviet republics and potential problems with rapid mobilization on a large scale. Since much of the rail network was under control of local councils that might not cooperate with a strong, centralized government administration, Smilga feared that mobilization could be

severely hampered in the event of a national crisis through the efforts of just one uncooperative local soviet.[99]

Nonetheless, Smilga's objections came to naught with his dismissal. However, Smilga's successor Gusev also resisted the concept of a militia to replace the standing Red Army. Fearing a militia army would become "the organized armed forum for the *petit bourgeois* and anarchist counter-revolution," Gusev instead proposed a continuation of the Red Army infrastructure. The majority of the political officers and non-commissioned officers in the armed forces allied themselves with Gusev's position, and stated through their delegates at the All-Russian Second Assembly of Political Workers in the Red Army that "in a peasant Russia the implementation of a militia system for the entire country would meet with insurmountable political and strategic difficulties." Since a militia system would be dependent on local peasant councils, many of whom had little or no literacy and military training, the delegates feared a fractured response to military operational crises at the local level.[100]

The delegates at the Second Assembly of Political Workers in the Red Army opted instead to support a permanent army. In a written communiqué, the delegates stated:

> The most expedient form of army for the RSFSR is at the present moment the standing army, not especially larger in numbers, but well-trained in military respects, politically prepared, made up of young men.[101]

By taking this position, the delegates offered a firm rebuke to the efforts of Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaia, to gather Red Army political workers under the aegis of the Main Political Enlightenment Committee, and also sided with those, like Gusev, who opposed Trotsky's concept of a militia-based military.

The concerns and issues raised by the political workers did not fall victim to the machinery of bureaucratic inertia under the fledgling communist system. Rather, they were at the forefront of the agenda as part of the overall plan and structure of a peacetime army to be considered by the delegates to the Tenth Party Congress, which met from 8-16 March 1921.[102] The importance of restructuring the military was heightened by the mutinies in Kronstadt and Tambov, which took place concurrently with the Tenth Party Congress. Distraught by the state of the economy and the harsh and repressive discipline in the navy, sailors in the port city of Kronstadt rebelled. This inspired an uprising in Tambov, which was put down by the Red Army.[103]

Speaking on behalf of those who favored both a standing army and an extension of political control within the Red Army, MPA chief Gusev reminded his fellow delegates that, in a time of mutinies, a state of peace did not actually exist, and that political operatives like commissars and politruks should not be so quickly dismissed. According to Gusev, "the issue of the political apparatus of the Red Army is the issue of the existence of the Red Army itself."[104]

The majority of the delegates to the Tenth Party Congress concurred, and all efforts to introduce a militia-based army were scrapped. The delegates agreed to a

resolution that "during the immediate future, the basis of our armed forces will be the current Red Army." This marked a clear reversal of the program adopted at the Ninth Party Congress in the previous year in which a militia-based military was highly desirable. This time, the delegates stated that "agitation on the part of some comrades for the practical liquidation of the Red Army and the immediate transition to militia is incorrect and dangerous," and any future plans would be based on "international and internal conditions, on the length of any breathing space (*peredyshka*), the relationship between cities and villages, and other factors."[105]

In order to secure a future for the standing army, delegates at the Tenth Party Congress continued to focus attention on developing the training program for Red Army commanders. As the Red Army had been in the process of demobilizing, the generals in charge of discharging officers, more often than not, chose to keep the military specialists, and let the Red commanders go. Citing their formal training in science of warfare, and their vast combat experience as the reasons for keeping them, the planners within the armed forces gave a strong endorsement to former Czarist officers. As a result, by 1920, only 10.5% of all officers were Red commanders.[106]

In order to reverse this downward trend, the delegates to the Tenth Party Congress placed a moratorium on releasing Red commanders from the military if the reason for dismissal was that they lacked technical expertise. Red commanders would be given increased levels of technical and strategic training, and Communist Party members of officer rank previously dismissed were to be reinstated. Thus, the Tenth Party Congress resolved that "increased attention by soviets, the Party, and

professional institutions and organizations to the all-around improvements of the conditions of military-educational affairs" must be made a priority.[107]

Other improvements slated by the delegates to Tenth Party Congress included ways to protect against further mutinies by strengthening the "proletarian element in the armed forces," and working to ensure the politicization of the military through the continued efforts of commissars and politruks. For the moment, supporters of the full-time standing army with political officers won out over a small, but vocal group which had suggested just prior to the Tenth Party Congress that political organs within the Red Army be completely eliminated. This "Army Opposition" group advanced the idea that all political functions should be handed over to local soviets or an independent organization. However, the so-called opposition never marshaled enough support to bring about an end to a system with political overseers.[108]

Nonetheless, there was no long-term blueprint put forth at the Tenth Party Congress to project how the Red Army would look and operate in peacetime. Prior to the March 1921 Congress, MPA chief Gusev and Mikhail Frunze, a celebrated Civil War commander, Old Bolshevik, and member of the Central Committee had drafted a series of "*Theses on the Reorganization of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.*" Yet, these "*21 Theses*" were never presented as part of the formal agenda for the Tenth Party Congress, due, in large part, to opposition from Trotsky. [109] It wasn't until June 1921 that the basis of the "*21 Theses*," or "Frunze Reforms" as they became known, was publicly outlined in an article in Armiia i Revoliutsiia.[110]

The "Frunze Reforms" were an attempt to plot the next chapter for the Red Army in peacetime and in the event of future wars, and were based on the feedback of leading political commissars, Red Army commanders, and military specialists. They also represented the first formal drafts assessing the "lessons" of the Civil War, including the significance of the Bolshevik victory and the role played by political organs and military strategy in the overall outcome of the domestic conflict.[111]

Frunze headed the list of suggested reforms by calling for a "unified military doctrine" and an expansion of the General Staff into the "military-theoretical staff of the proletarian state." Frunze based his concept of military doctrine on Marxist interpretations of the military policies of England, Germany and France. Frunze argued that these states conducted warfare in conjunction with the status of their class situation, and that the Soviet Union should not be different. As Fedotoff White observed:

> There was, thus, a very definite claim in these theses, that a thorough understanding and adherence to Marxian principles was necessary for the successful planning and executions of the campaigns of the Red Army. In other words, these theses attempted to establish an intrinsic dependence of the strategy and tactics, as well as of military administration, on Marxian theory.[112]

It was, therefore, Frunze's belief that military doctrine should be:

> A teaching accepted in the army of a given state, which establishes the character of the building of the armed forces of the nation. The methods of combat preparations of the troops and their leadership on the basis of the views of those ruling in the state on the character of the military problems facing them, and the means of their solution, which arise from the class experience of the state and [are] determined by the development of the forces of production of the nation.[113]

Since Frunze believed that the USSR had but an elementary military doctrine based on the experience of the Civil War and the Russo-Polish War, he felt future Soviet military doctrine could be honed and refocused. As Frunze and Gusev wrote:

> One of the basic conditions for the securing of the maximum of potency of the Red Army is to transform it into a monolithic organization, welded together from top to bottom not only by the common political ideology, but also by the unity of views on the character of the military problems facing the Republic, on the methods of solving

> these problems, as well as on the system of combat training of troops.[114]

As a staunch Marxist-Leninist, Frunze believed the responsibility for developing military doctrine rested solely on the shoulders of the Communist Party. As Frunze stated: "The concrete social-political content of this part of our future doctrine has been given to us as a whole, ready-made, in the ideology of the working class in the Program of the [Party]."[115]

Yet, Frunze's concept of military doctrine also had its roots in the theories of Karl von Clausewitz, whom Trotsky also so admired. Trained in military theory and practice by a senior Czarist officer, Frunze combined his political training with his military experience to develop the theory of Soviet military doctrine. As Thomas Nichols states:

> From a Marxist perspective, the Party must be the final source of the military doctrine: if doctrine is an expression of class interests, and the Party is the vanguard of the proletariat, then only the Party can properly express the proletariat's class interest in military doctrine. From a Clausewitzian perspective, Party dominance of military doctrine corresponds to Clausewitz's belief that the military

is a tool of the State, used by political leaders for political ends.[116]

However, Frunze's theoretical foundation for reform based on the concept of military doctrine did not resonate well with War Commissar Trotsky. Taking the contents of Frunze's article on military doctrine in Armiia i Revoliutsiia as a personal challenge, Trotsky fired back with an article of his own titled "*Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism?*"[117] In the article, Trotsky argued that there was no such thing as a proletarian military doctrine or proletarian form of warfare "any more than there was a distinct proletarian form of pottery or any other trade." According to the War Commissar, warfare was simply a skill to be learned and "there's for us but one single doctrine: Be on guard, and keep both eyes peeled."[118]

The clash of doctrines between Frunze and Trotsky spilled over to other areas as well, and impacted the debate on the future of the Red Army and its political organs. Frunze's proposals, as outlined in both the twenty-one theses co-authored with Gusev and the article in Voennaia nauka i revoliutsiia, also appealed to political commissars and politruks in the Red Army. Deeply opposed to the concept of a militia-based army, commissars and politruks found a kindred spirit in Frunze, who advocated implementing a unified military doctrine with the joint effort of military specialists and political workers in the Red Army. Since Frunze did not call for a reduction in force through massive demobilization, political organs in the military would be guaranteed a place in the armed forces not envisioned by those who supported a transformation to a militia-based army.[119]

At the Eleventh Party Congress, which opened on 27 March 1922, Trotsky took Frunze to task before the military delegates. He attacked Frunze's thesis that the Red Army would stand and fight side-by-side with the proletariat of other nations by sarcastically quipping:

> Well, now, how do you tell a Saratov peasant: either we shall send you to Belgium to overthrow the bourgeoisie or you will defend the Saratov province from an Anglo-French landing in Odessa or Archangel'sk?[120]

Trotsky also rebuffed Frunze's claim that offensive operations were always preferred over defensive actions. Mocking Frunze's reliance on foreign service military manuals as the basis for his theories of military doctrine, Trotsky stated:

> You see – strategy must be offensive, because in the first place it flows from the class nature of the proletariat, and in second place, because it coincides with the French Field Service Regulations of 1921![121]

Nevertheless, Frunze himself put the issue of defining Soviet military doctrine within the context of reforms for the armed forces by countering Trotsky's personal attacks with a patient reliance on ideology. At the Eleventh Party Congress, Frunze

cited Friedrich Engels, one of the founding fathers of Communism, as a principle source for his military doctrine. As Fedotoff White notes:

> [Engels] taught that the emancipation of the proletariat would create new forms of warfare. With a great deal of common sense and insight into the problem, he had warned, at the same time, that the first attempts at new methods of warfare by a proletarian state would be far from the ultimate military art of the emancipated working class. In other words, he saw clearly that it would take time and experience to introduce into the bourgeois methods of warfare any drastic changes that would be of value to the proletarian state.[122]

Frunze's line of defense placed Trotsky in an awkward situation: either attack a connection to Engels, or stand with the military specialists in defense of their positions before a host of delegates who were still deeply suspicious of the former Czarist officers.[123] While Trotsky may have appeared witty and entertaining with his caustic attack on Frunze's proposals, he offered little or nothing in its place, other than the *status quo*. In addition to Trotsky, Lenin was also in opposition to Frunze's proposals calling them "communist swaggering." However, Lenin was in failing health and his opposition was not such a decisive factor.[124]

Tearing apart Frunze's theses appeared to an increasing number of delegates at the Eleventh Party Congress as arrogant and patronizing, and while Trotsky succeeded in keeping Frunze's theses from coming to a vote on the floor of the Congress, there were those among the delegates who were clearly not amused by Trotsky's lampooning of Frunze's proposed reforms. Kliment Voroshilov, a close associate of Stalin's, and a future Defense Minister responded to Trotsky's comments on Frunze by stating: There's nothing funny here!"[125]

Trotsky may have gained a short-term victory by shunting the proposals for military reform to the side at the Eleventh Party Congress, but the long-term prospectus for change remained a persistent issue for the leadership of the Soviet Union. As Walter Jacobs, a biographer of Frunze observed: "Trotsky missed the fact that the Military Communists understood so well. This was a battle to the death."[126]

Nevertheless, Frunze's efforts at reform were hampered more by the state of the economy, the educational levels of those making up the bulk of the armed forces, and the lack of political transformation at all levels of the infrastructure, than by the political wrangling and degree of opposition from Trotsky. As Roger Reese observes:

> The economic situation in the early 1920s was marked by dismally low industrial output, which meant that industry had to concentrate first on recovery before it could make a serious effort to rearm the Red Army. The educational level of the population was characterized by continued mass illiteracy, which hindered the army's development of

> technical units. The political situation was complicated by the fact that organs of soviet power had still not extended completely throughout the USSR. In establishing its routines and methods, then, the Red Army had to adapt to less than ideal conditions.[127]

John Erickson added:

> [...] it wasn't until 1923, when the military was given a fixed budgetary allowance and the economic woes of the state were more thoroughly addressed that true reforms in the Red Army could begin. The first small-scale reforms included the widespread training of conscripts. This training included the basics of literacy, as well as technical instruction in the use of weapons and weapon systems.[128]

However, external issues influenced the pace of reform in the Red Army as well, and changes in the infrastructure of the Red Army were also directly related to the changes in the political landscape of power and influence.[129] The 16 April 1922 Treaty of Rapollo had formalized diplomatic relations with Germany, and opened further opportunities for collaboration between the Red Army and the German army (*Reichswehr*). While the first efforts at official collaboration had begun at about the

time of the Entente intervention (not later than 1918/19), the basis had been laid by the German Army High Command when they conducted Lenin and others from Switzerland through Germany and Finland to Petrograd. Among the Bolshevik leadership in exile, only Trotsky refused the opportunity, and traveled by boat.[130] To later commentators who had reasons to feel apologetic about it, it may have appeared disingenuous and an ideological anomaly for traditional foes to enter into an official treaty of cooperation. The Russian historians Yuri Dyakov and Tatyana Bushuyeva state that:

> Taking advantage of the contradictions in the capitalist world in order to improve relations with Germany was fully in keeping with the Leninist foreign policy line.[131]

In addition, as Sally Stoecker notes, "it must be recalled that the *KPD* (German Communist Party) was still very much a political force at this time to be nurtured and encouraged by the *Comintern*."[132] Four months later, the Red Army and *Reichswehr* concluded their own agreement in Moscow. Although the terms of this agreement only began to come out in 1923 within the Soviet Union, it was clear that the mutual assistance pact helped the Red Army to take on an expanded and progressive role in the wake of the Civil War.[133]

In addition, with Lenin in failing health for a good part of 1923, power struggles took place for leadership positions within the Communist Party and its

political organs in the military that impacted the command structure of the Red Army. In 1922 Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, a Trotsky appointee, who was not a proponent for maintaining the political infrastructure of the Red Army, had replaced Gusev as head of the MPA. While the Tenth and Eleventh Party Congresses maintained the presence of political workers in the Red Army, voices of dissent, like those of Antonov-Ovseenko, still echoed in the debates that followed, culminating in the appearance of Circular 200 in 1923. Circular 200 was purported to be published and distributed without the knowledge of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Antonov-Ovseenko was alleged to have written it himself. The circular provided opportunities for those in opposition to the commissar system to express themselves, and called for an "elective system of political organs, restriction of their activities, and transferring of their activities to Party cells." The circular was eventually condemned by the Thirteenth Party Congress, and annulled by the MPA.[134]

However, appointing Antonov-Ovseenko rallied political opposition to Trotsky, as Stalin and his supporters waged a political battle to reduce and eliminate the overall influence of the long-standing War Commissar. Within this clash for Party control, an official investigation was opened in the spring of 1923 into the overall efficiency of the Soviet military establishment. The commission, appointed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, directly threatened Trotsky's authority, and gathered reams of documentation throughout the rest of 1923 on the state of the Red Army. According to Soviet historians cited by Roman Kolkowicz: "The first measure of the RKP(b) Central Committee that was intended to improve the Red Army was the ouster of Trotsky and his associates from leading military organs."[135]

The results of the Central Committee of the Communist Party commission's report on military efficiency, issued one week after the death of Lenin in late January 1924, did little to fortify Trotsky's standing, and helped usher in some of the reforms sought by Frunze and his supporters.[136] The report concluded that there existed "instability" in the military of "dangerous proportions," which contributed to a failure to create a plan to mobilize in the event of war. The threat of another European war appeared to the leadership of the Soviet Union to be a real possibility in the first months of 1924. The previous year, the neighboring states in the Baltic, Poland, Finland, and Rumania all rejected Soviet disarmament proposals, and the resulting relations became tenser. The Soviet Union's only ally, Germany, had portions of the Ruhr valley occupied in January 1923 by French forces, and by May, the British issued the so-called "Curzon ultimatum" threatening the end of a 1921 trade agreement. In addition, the Poles invited French Marshal Foch and the British chief of the General Staff to Warsaw following the assassination of a Soviet delegate to the Lausanne conference, a gesture the Communist Party leadership interpreted as "a ratcheting up" of war tensions.[137]

Lacking even a basic inventory of the nation's resources to assist a possible mobilization, the committee chastised the army for its lack of preparedness. Noting that with a fifty-percent shortage of officers in some commands and "serious failings in the quality as well as quantity" of all others, the investigative committee determined that the Red Army was in need of a major overhaul of its infrastructure, purpose, and leadership.[138]

Another casualty in the military restructuring was Trotsky's appointee, Antonov-Ovseenko, who was replaced in January 1924 by Andrei Bubnov as head of the MPA. Bubnov began his work in the MPA by immediately revoking Circular 200, and reinstated the practice of appointing political workers.[139]

By March 1924, the process of rectifying some of the other problems outlined by the investigative committee had begun to be addressed. Frunze, with the assistance of Stalin, had become Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council and Deputy Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, and opposition from Trotsky and his supporters was virtually nullified. In fact, Frunze assumed Trotsky's position as War Commissar on 25 January 1925 without a struggle.[140]

With the appointment of Frunze, the Red Army staved off the transformation to a militia-based force, and began a period of internal reorganization. Although Frunze died while undergoing an operation for an intestinal condition in October 1925,[141] he had been able to introduce a program of modernization with an emphasis on using the latest technology for the advantage of the military. As part of the program of reform, Frunze divided the Soviet Union into military districts. Subsequently, he reorganized the draft based on the new districts, and initiated a comprehensive rearmament plan based, in part, on the recruitment and training of soldiers and officers. Frunze also addressed issues of discipline, training of "lower command personnel" at regimental training schools, and compensation packages for those serving full-time.[142]

In order to expedite the process of wholesale change in the Red Army, Soviet military academies began graduating more officers. During 1924, the first year of the

Frunze reforms, dismissals still outnumbered promotions and graduations. It wasn't until 1925 that Communist Party members among officers and administrative personnel began to increase significantly. For example, in 1923, 23 percent of officers and almost 19 percent of administrative personnel belonged to the Communist Party. By 1925, 41 percent of the combined staffs were Party members[143]

In addition, Frunze advanced social and political reforms within the Red Army that directly affected commissars and politruks. Concluding that the bureaucracy of the Red Army was bloated and divided, Frunze stripped the hierarchical organization of the ground forces, and created a leaner command structure.[144] Part of this program of compression resulted in the reintroduction of unity, or single command (*edinonachalie*). This system appeared to relegate political officers in the Red Army to a secondary role, as they would no longer have the power to countermand an order.[145] While some commissars took advantage of opportunities to enter training programs and become commanders, most did not care to enter a technical field of operations. Political workers in the Red Army could continue to gauge the political and moral state of affairs among the troops, but the growing sentiment among commissars and politruks was that the commanders wanted to free themselves of the political organs of the Party, and their educational programs, as quickly as possible.[146]

As a result, an army-wide forum held by political directors of commissars and politruks expressed their collective voice to Frunze and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (*RVSR*) during a November 1924 meeting. The (*RVSR*) was the supreme organ of martial law during the Civil War. It had been renamed the

Revolutionary Military Council (*RVS*) in August 1923, and coordinated all operational, administrative, and supply work of the Red Army.[147]

The political directors advocated that only those commanders who were Party members should be considered for promotion. They also sought to consolidate the roles of commissars and politruks in the Red Army by insisting that any transition to a single command not weaken or "in any way diminish the role of political work, or the significance of political organs in the Red Army."[148]

Furthermore, the political directors, as representatives of commissars and politruks, urged Frunze and the *RVS* to elevate political work in the Red Army to one of the foremost tasks of the new military. This posture was clearly a means of self-preservation, and was intended to counter the power of the commander in a system devoid of dual command. The representatives of political workers in the Red Army also called on Frunze and the *RVS* to implement the transition to unity of command slowly, and not in any way undermine the influence of political officers in the Red Army.[149]

While rejecting most of the directors' pleas, Frunze did make the unity of command conditional on party loyalty. He established a process wherein commanders had to demonstrate their fidelity. As a way to compensate for the reduced role of commissars and politruks in the reformed Red Army, the Revolutionary Military Council and the Central Committee of the Communist Party required all officers and officer candidates in military academies to complete a "minimum program of political knowledge" by the end of 1924. This included a commitment to take part in the "political enlightenment" of all soldiers, a responsibility which had solely been in the

camp of political workers in the Red Army prior to 1924. Frunze even tied promotions to the degree to which Red Army officers participated in the political education of their troops.[150]

By abolishing dual command, Frunze also appeared to eliminate the problem of "yes-men" commanders, those former Czarist officers and non-party members, who had gradually surrendered their rights and functions as commanders to their more influential commissars. In these cases, Frunze observed, "the commander gradually loses the most precious qualities of every good commander – the will power and ability to make independent, quick decisions."[151]

Yet, even though he was working in conjunction with the *RVS* and the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Frunze found that the reforms he sought did not take place as quickly as he would have liked. This was due, in large part, to the lack of qualified officers and commissars who could take on positions of responsibility, and implement the necessary changes to initiate unitary command from top to bottom in the Soviet armed forces. It was also a reflection of the uncertainty faced by commissars and military specialists in a restructured military. As a result, dual command was only phased out when the criteria of adequate personnel and the proper network of support were in place.[152]

Even under the new system, however, the role of political workers remained ill defined. Although the *RVS* ordered military commanders to maintain the autonomy of political commissars and politruks "to ensure the education and training of the personnel of the Red Army and Navy in a spirit of class cohesion and Communist enlightenment," it was clear that political officers felt betrayed. If they no longer had

equal authority with military commanders and the ability to intercede if the concerns of the Party were not met, then they wanted no part in the restructured Red Army. To combat the potential of mass resignation among members of the political organs in the military, Frunze created avenues for advancement.[153]

For those commissars who qualified, there were opportunities to participate in the single command of units by going through a commander training program for the "militarization of the political staff." This privilege was designated only for those who had demonstrated both loyalty and courage. Most were Civil war veterans, and held positions of authority in the political infrastructure of the Red Army. According to Roger Reese, by 1929, one-third of the "Commander Commissars" were former political commissars or politruks who had gone through the commander program. [154]

Believing that commissars and politruks still carried a great deal of authority within the fabric of the command structure, Frunze intended to "pave the way for the influential commissar element" by giving them advancement options along a different career path. While hundreds of commissars were re-trained as commanders, others were assigned to administrative tasks, often at a higher rank.[155]

Still, the large majority of political workers in the Red Army under the 1923-1924 restructuring plan for the military did not experience the benefits of advancement, but rather found themselves engaged in activities centered on "political enlightenment of the troops." [156] Andrei Bubnov, who had replaced Antonov-Ovseenko in January 1924 as head of the MPA, made several attempts to elevate the political organs in the Red Army. Although pay and living allowances were increased for officers, political officers, and soldiers in the Red Army, it was a difficult time of

transition for those in the armed forces. Bubnov also stumped across military districts to advocate a more disciplined Red Army, and issued a circular through the MPA on the "weakening of discipline." While these changes were small steps, the overall political infrastructure of the Red Army had to first be reformed, a task Bubnov had already begun.[157]

Bubnov based his overhaul of the political organs on a series of reports from the spring of 1924. One such report found that party recruits, who were called to service a month before their non-party colleagues, generally possessed extremely poor knowledge of "the Bolshevik Party line," as well as the Party's struggles with other groups and overall party tactics. Another report found that politruks, the political representatives and instructors at the company level, were "just barely educated themselves," with ninety-percent completing no more than two years of primary education, and having little competency in Russian history, geography, the natural sciences, fractions, percentages,[158] and the interpretation of literary and political texts. Only ten percent of the politruks examined could "read aloud in a distinct, competent, or expressive manner," and the authors of the report concluded that the lower-level political workers in the Red Army had simply become "superficial know-it-alls."[159]

However, the lack of formal education and political awareness among politruks reflected an overall pattern of widespread political illiteracy throughout the lower ranks of the Red Army in the mid 1920s. Political commissars and other members of army staffs frequently gave political literacy tests to new conscripts. The tests were then re-administered after commissars and politruks had begun a program

of political instruction to measure how much the troops had retained. These standardized vocabulary tests, which gauged the degree of knowledge of the political agenda and rhetoric of the nation's leaders and the army, utilized terms taken from party and military newspapers, as well as instruction guides and sessions on political enlightenment taught by commissars and politruks. As Mark von Hagen notes:

> On the basis of the vocabulary tests, the army's language specialists concluded that peasant soldiers had considerably smaller vocabularies – some estimates put them as low as 80 to 2,000 words in active use – than other social groups and that they were unfamiliar with many words that had entered the Russian language since the Revolution. "Let's be frank," a political worker admonished, "when we speak about banks, stock exchanges, parliaments, trusts, finance kings, and democracies, we are not being understood and we won't be understood."[160]

In addition to political illiteracy, one of the most glaring conclusions of the committee investigating the state of the Red Army in 1923 was the overall lack of military discipline. Aware of this conspicuous deficiency, Frunze initiated another round of military reforms in 1925. In a series of speeches, Frunze declared that "we are waging a decisive struggle against all slovenliness, loose discipline, negligence, and unconscious attitudes toward service."[161] Since discipline traditionally had been

under the aegis of the commanders, political officers in the Red Army were not the focus of these reforms. However, the MPA initiated its own reforms in 1925, which directly impacted the infrastructure of political organs in the Red Army.

To address overlapping areas of jurisdiction, the MPA consolidated all party, political, and political-enlightenment work within the Red Army. In order to do so, all political organs in the military were, therefore, to be accountable to the Central Committee of the Communist Party through the newly formed Supreme Political Enlightenment Department on orders of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR. As a result, the MPA ultimately oversaw:

1. Training of cadres of political workers in the army, the control of their activity, their appointment, transfer, and retirement.

2. Procurement of supplies for the various phases of activity of the political workers and the financing of these activities.

3. Political guidance of the military press.

4. Organization of propaganda among the civil population.

5. Inspection tours for the study and readjustment of the political apparatus of the army.[162]

In addition, a Conflict Commission was attached to the MPA, which also answered directly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The role of this commission was to resolve conflicts between military and political organs in the Red Army, especially those that arose between high-ranking commanders and political commissars. The Conflict Commission worked in close association with a Permanent Political Council within the MPA, whose job it was to "coordinate the work of various political organs of the army, and to work out the 'single political line' for the guidance of the local political organs."[163]

It was through the Permanent Political Council of the MPA that police and judicial authorities interacted. The United State Political Administration, also known as the Soviet Political Police (*OGPU*), coordinated its activities with the political departments in the Red Army, and served as the enforcers of the Party. If Red Army political commissars, politruks, or even commanders had difficulties with compliance with a political directive, they could readily call on members of the *OGPU* to bring the soldier or soldiers into line, most often by force, or threats of force.[164]

While the restructuring of the MPA did little to change the overall responsibilities of political workers, the restructuring of the military codes by Frunze for discipline in the Red Army did impact all levels of the command structure.[165] According to an army regulation manual published in 1926, political commissars at the regimental level were responsible to assist the commander in maintaining military discipline.[166] With a hierarchy of punitive measures, the new disciplinary codes from September 1925 were set up to address infractions and punishments for both the officer corps and enlisted men. Breaking with previous codes from 1919 and 1922,

the new measures also encouraged superiors to focus rewards on those who were obedient while meting out severe penalties for those who acted negligently or were insubordinate. Under combat condition, officers, including political commissars and members of the *OGPU*, were obligated to use "armed force" against any (including those of a higher rank) that refused to obey orders.[167]

However, the service manual of 1926 detailed far more than disciplinary measures for political commissars to follow. Rather, it served as a blueprint for how political officers and politruks should operate under a single, or unitary command structure. According to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, all party and political work would fall under the direction of the MPA and not the *RVS*. As in the post-Revolution period, this meant that control of political affairs in the military came directly from the Party, and not from the organization charged with the defense of the nation.[168]

According to the parameters of the single command structure, political commissars no longer wielded the power to countermand an order of the commander. In its place, however, were expanded responsibilities for "the guidance and immediate execution of party-political work, as well as assuring of training and education of the personnel in the spirit of class solidarity and communist enlightenment."[169]

The 1926 manual also stressed that commissars were far more than political representatives in the military, but the immediate representatives of the Communist Party. Such status directly connected political commissars as liaison officers with civilian party organs in the state, trade unions and *Komsomol* organizations. This

resulted in the subordination of the education program and any regimental school, club, and library to the political commissar. Regulations also specified that political commissars were to:

- Organize studies in the field of politics as well as general enlightenment, hygiene, military science, and the guidance of the soldiers' discussion circles.
- Engage in a certain amount of political work among the local civilian population.
- Direct the work of committees of economic assistance.
- Render help to the Red Army personnel in the field of improvement of their standard of living.
- Accept the complaints and depositions of the personnel of the regiment.[170]

At the company level, politruks were charged with providing instruction in political education and training for soldiers. With much smaller numbers of troops to work with, politruks were also given authority to administer the mobile company library, the "Propaganda Wagon," and the Party recruitment area known as "Lenin's Corner." Subordinated to the regimental political commissar in areas of political enlightenment, they were independent of their company commander in all matters of military service, answering only to the battalion commander. Since company

commanders in 1926 were supposed to be entirely staffed by Communist Party members, politruks were not, in theory, considered to be a threat, but rather intended to work as partners in political education and direction for the company.[171]

In practice, however, the partnership with commanders and the process of political education often were reduced to monitoring the opinions of non-party members. A July 1925 article in the Soviet military publication Red Star detailed methods for keeping track of the political thinking of soldiers by commissars and politruks. The best method, according to the article, was to gather together Communist Party and *Komsomol* members at various intervals, and ask them about the behavior of their non-party colleagues. This form of spying was to be complemented by the careful monitoring of question and answer sessions during the so-called "political hour," or time for political instruction, as well as the questions and statements made to politruks manning "Lenin's Corner" for party recruitment. In addition, the article suggested going through the private correspondence of demobilized soldiers who were returning to their villages and towns with a view to morale issues.[172]

The transition to single command took several years to evolve, yet for some political officers in the Red Army, the process was too fast and too radical a departure from the perceived norm. The first overt signs of opposition to the single command structure began in the Tolmachev Main Military-Political Academy (Byelorussia) during the spring of 1928. A group of political commissars at the academy took issue with what they perceived to be a "tendency to belittle the role of party organs and a muddying of the functions of party-political work in the army."[173]

While this group of political commissars, which came to be called the "inner-Army Opposition," was not necessarily opposed to unified command, it was clearly in opposition to what it deemed the rapid implementation of *edinonachalie* (single command). They reasoned that both political officers and commanders needed time to adjust to redefined roles, and placed the blame for the documented disciplinary problems denounced by Frunze and his successor Kliment Voroshilov on the loss of political influence by commissars and politruks in the Red Army since 1925.[174]

However, the voices of dissent were quickly silenced. The army leadership and the MPA forced the political officers in the "inner-Army Opposition" to quit their posts, and then forced them to make a public recanting of their statements before expelling them from the rolls of Communist Party membership. Ten years later, Lev Mekhlis singled out what he referred to as the "Tolmachev oppositionists" who were still in army service for further measures of repression.[175]

The Red Army had clearly established itself as part of the Soviet system. Having survived plans for its transformation to a militia-based force in the years after the Revolution and Civil War, it forged its identity based on a series of reforms initiated by Frunze. According to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the seemingly natural progression for the military appeared to be driven by unitary command. This next phase of growth meant that political commissars and politruks would focus more on political literacy rather than take part in a system of ideological checks and balances to keep commanders and soldiers in step with the regime.[176]

Even though "the political apparatus of the Red Army had remained a state within a state and endowed with **a** life of it is own, not integrated with the rest of the

armed forces," an uneasy balance characterized the relationship between commanders and political workers in the soviet military.[177] The Field Regulations of 1929 for the Red Army reflected the changing role of the political organs under unitary command. According to paragraph 18 of the 1929 codes, the political commissar, along with the commander, "was to bear full responsibility for the military and political efficacy of the units."[178] While the commander was made "solely responsible for operational direction of troops under his command," the commissar provided all the political intelligence necessary for the commander to reach his operative decisions. [179]

In spite of the elevation of the commander to the highest point on the command depth chart with full plenary authority, political officers managed to still wield power and influence under the terms of the Field Regulations of 1929. As Fedotoff White notes:

> The general aim of the political work in the army was defined by the regulations as to the securing and strengthening of the combat efficacy of the troops 'as the armed support of the proletarian dictatorship.' The principal task of the agitation-propaganda work in the army was set as educating the personnel in the sense of unlimited confidence, loyalty, and unity with respect to the ideas and slogans of the Soviet Government. The inculcation of the correct understanding by the army masses of the leading role of the proletariat in the union of the workers and

> peasants, as well as the right appraisal of the class aims of war and international interests of the working class and "all exploited" were set as goals for that activity, as well as the revolutionary will to victory.[180]

In addition, Red Army regulations of 1929 stated that commissars, as well as all Communist Party *Komsomol* members, were required to serve as examples of "self-sacrifice and courage under fire," and that "such examples in action had a decisive significance" in building and maintaining morale among the masses of the Red Army.[181] Such details of responsibility in matters of ideology also indicated a clear endorsement of the power of political commissars and politruks even though the overall command structure had shifted.[182]

However, the issue of unitary command versus dual command became subsumed in the economic crises confronting the Red Army and the Soviet Union as a whole in 1929-1934. In the summer of 1930, the Sixteenth Party Congress set the policy agenda for the Red Army by declaring that the foremost priority would be "the intensive development of the branches of industry which increase the defense capabilities of the Soviet Union."[183]

The Seventeenth Party Conference (30 January – 4 February 1932) and Seventeenth Party Congress (26 January – 10 February 1934) also established goals for the continued industrialization of the nation. In order to maximize the labor force, the representatives at these conferences called on Red Army soldiers to assist in a massive program of collectivization[184] During the first five years of the 1930s, these

policy priorities resulted in widespread industrial growth and corresponding technological developments in weapons and equipment production. However, the leadership of the Red Army realized that in spite of all the planning and procurement of resources, the Soviet Union "had not succeeded as yet in 'overtaking and surpassing' the levels of the more highly industrialized capitalist countries, notably Germany."[185]

The size of the standing army was also expanded as well during this period of increased industrial and military-technological growth. Between 1934 and 1935, the Red Army more than doubled in size from 562,000 to 1,300,000 men with an additional 150,000 troops from the Commissariat of the Interior (*NKVD*), which had absorbed the political police forces in June 1934, and 100,000 soldiers of the Frontier Guards.[186] Political officers under unitary command increased in proportion to the number of troops in the Red Army during this time of rapid expansion as well.[187]

However, the Red Army infrastructure was deeply shaken by Stalin's purge of high-ranking military commanders and political officers. The Red Army purges, which began in earnest in June 1937, were part of a series of previous purges in 1929-1930 and 1933-1934. Earlier actions at Stalin's behest against perceived political opponents and so-called enemies of the State had resulted in the expulsion of 11.5 % of party members as a whole. Yet, of those purged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, only 4.6 % came from the ranks of military commanders and just 2.8 % came from political officers in the Red Army. As a result, the military escaped relatively unscathed until the summer of 1937.[188]

Timothy Colton identifies the "Great Purge" in the Red Army as "a sustained act of externally managed terrorism" that "[...] far from being a measured action by the Party's organs in the army [...], was a crude assault upon [emphasis in the original] the party apparatus as well as upon the army command itself."[189] An 11 June 1937 announcement of the treason trial of Marshall Tukhachevsky and seven codefendants served as the springboard to initiate the full scope of the Red Army purges.[190]

In addition to the former Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, Tukhachevsky, the other seven were as follows: The commanding generals of the military districts, I.E. Iakir, I. P. Uborevich; the commanding officer of the Soviet War College, A. I. Kork; the deputy commanding general of the military district, V. M. Primakov; the head of the Administration of Commanding Personnel, B.M. Feldman; the former military attaché to Great Britain, G. K. Putna; and the president of the Central Council of the Osaviakim, R. P. Eideman. Another man charged, former deputy People's Commissar of Defense, Jan Gamarnik, who had headed the MPA, committed suicide prior to his arrest by the *NKVD*. As Roger Reese notes:

> The charges [in the treason trial - explanation mine] may have been based on falsified documents leaked to Soviet Intelligence by the Nazis, or perhaps were due to other fears of Stalin's of a military plot against him. The full story is still unknown.[191]

Kliment Voroshilov, the People's Commissar of Defense, had concluded that the eight accused had been part of a "treacherous, counter-revolutionary military fascist organization, which had secretly conspired to undermine the Red Army and had for a long time conducted dastardly, crippling, wrecking, and espionage work in the Red Army." According to the charges against "that band" of conspirators, their goal had been to "liquidate at any cost and by any means the Soviet order in Russia, and to annihilate the Soviet Government and restore in the USSR the yoke of land-owners and industrialists."[192]

Yet, such shrill language did not just appear in conjunction with the June 1937 treason trials. For three months prior to the treason trials there had been strident accusations against the MPA and its political organs in the Red Army. As a result, the military purges also targeted commissars and other political workers within the Red Army infrastructure with equal vigor as military commanders and members of the army high command. The MPA, headed by Ian Gamarnik since 1929, was charged with having "defended the spies [the original 8 accused – explanation mine] in every possible way," and for having attempted to "interfere with the unmasking of enemies of the people." Further charges against the MPA stated that it had "not mobilized the vigilance of party organizations" to combat enemies of the State, both real and imagined, and that it displayed "many examples of political carelessness and blunting of vigilance."[193]

Therefore, operating with the consent of the *Politburo* and the People's Commissar of Defense, Stalin ordered the *NKVD*, under the direction of Nikolai

Ezhov,[194] to ferret out and uncover all enemies of the State within the ranks of the military and the political organs. The results over the next year were stunning.[195]

In less than two weeks, after the initial trials, 980 military and political officers were taken in to "protective custody" by the *NKVD*. Executions followed for 3 of the 5 Marshals arrested as well as 15 of the 16 army commanders of the first and second rank, 60 of the 67 corps commanders, and 136 of 199 division commanders. Among political commissars, all 17 army commissars of the first and second rank, who had been arrested, were executed, as were 25 of 29 corps commissars.[196]

While actual figures may never be known, it was clear that "the terror treated commander and commissar with deadly equality." Command and staff organs appeared to suffer an attrition rate somewhere between a quarter and a half, while for political workers in the Red Army the rate may be closer to a half in the period from the summer of 1937 through the fall of 1938.[197] As Timothy Colton notes:

> Between May 1937 and September 1938 every single one of the original members of military councils and chiefs of political administrations of military districts perished (as did all district commanders). Most political workers at the corps, division, and brigade levels went down (compared to all corps commanders and almost all brigade and division commanders). Even Voroshilov was astonished at the turnover at a meeting of corps commissars in August 1938: 'You are all new, unfamiliar faces!' At the regiment level,

> about a third of the commissars were arrested (compared with about half of the commanders). Many political officers in the military education system were also liquidated.[198]

Yet, according to recent scholarship based on documentary materials from formally closed archives in Russia, arrests by the *NKVD* accounted for only a minority of those military and political officers removed from their positions during the Red Army purges. It was the Communist Party and the army, acting on the example set from above, which led the way in purging their own ranks.[199]

However, such a top-down program of expulsion was nothing new. While the scale and scope of the terror were much more encompassing during the late 1930s, expulsions and purges had been practices employed by both the Party and the army for at least a decade. In the wake of the Frunze reforms the Party and the army worked together to enforce military discipline, which had been lax in the best of times. One method they initiated was the *Chistki*, or Communist Party purges. Formulated in close cooperation with the military, these purges were intended to expel those, whose behavior or attitudes, were determined to be undeserving of the privilege of party membership. Grounds for expulsion included, but were not limited to: maintaining the wrong political world view (Menshevik or Trotskyite for example); not keeping the Communist Party line with others around; adding no value to the political apparatus; sexual depravity; lack of military discipline; associating with identifiable enemies of the state, like *Kulaks*; and having been married in a Christian Church ceremony.[200]

Rather than coming as a total surprise, *Chistki* were announced weeks or months in advance in the pages of military publications, or through memoranda to commissars and *politruks*. All party-affiliated organizations, therefore, had to get their files in order to facilitate examination by special verification investigative commissions.[201]

Taking the lead from Stalin, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and the People's Defense Commissar, party officials and military planners found to be blameless took the initiative and swept the army, navy, and air force clean of perceived enemies of the State. Using techniques similar to the *Chistki*, Communist Party cells encouraged soldiers that it was their nationalistic duty to turn in their comrades for anti-State, anti-party, and anti-people attitudes and remarks. Supported in their efforts by memoranda from leadership officials like Voroshilov, who called for help in "exposing enemies of the people," the Party organs still operating in the military engaged in an orgy of denunciations in the name of patriotic duty.

As a result of party and military cooperation, and not *NKVD* arrests, 34,300 military and political officers from all three branches of the service were discharged from the armed forces between June 1937 and the end of 1939. However, over 11,500 were reinstated to the very same positions through successful appeals to special reinstatement boards set up across Soviet military districts. Since the Red Army also increased its officer recruitment program during the "Great Purge," the military managed to have more officers in service at the beginning of 1939 than at the start of the terror in June 1937.[202]

Therefore, as Roger Reese notes, the "Great Purge" reflected the army's complicit approval of years of Communist Party interference with personnel matters:

> From the beginning, the army not only acknowledged the supremacy of the Communist Party, but also embraced it and the political and social order it was creating – the army was the Party's child. The army itself, in conformity with the growing Stalinization in 1931 established the precedent of discharging soldiers and officers for political deviance. The army, then, had tacitly agreed years before the purge that politically unsuitable officers should be expelled and either arrested or discharged, and that it would lend a hand, even taking a leading role, in the process. The *RKKA* [Red Army – explanation mine] gradually but surely fell into line with the trend in civil society to hunt for wreckers, diversionists, Trotskyites, and so on.[203]

Reinstatement of Dual Command

It was in this political environment of the Red Army purges that the Commissariat of Defense reinstated dual command at regimental level and above. Just over two months after the announcement of the treason trial for Marshal Tukhachevsky on 15 August 1937, Red Army military commissars were once again

authorized to countersign, along with military commanders, all orders which came through.[204] According to the first paragraph of the 15 August 1937 statute, the People's Commissar for Defense appointed military commissars on the recommendation of the MPA to "immediately carry out party-political work in the units of the armed forces, military schools, and administrative offices." [205]

MPA chief Mekhlis also addressed the re-defined role of the political commissar. According to Mekhlis, Red Army political commissars:

> [...] Should know all that is going on in every corner of the Red Army; they must be faithful instruments of the general line of the Stalinist Central Committee and together with the party organizations, nip all treason in the bud, safeguard our beloved army from spies, and see to it that no enemy (spies, diversionists, saboteurs) penetrates into our ranks.[206]

Furthermore, political commissars had to be prepared to study "every day and from every angle the personnel of the unit," and to then know "their moods, their needs and requirements."[207] As the 15 August 1937 statute also stated, political commissars under dual command were charged with directing all activities of the political organs of the military. These included all contacts with *Komsomol*, local party representatives and organizations, and political education programs intended to

guarantee the "undeviating allegiance and carrying out of plans and tasks in the field of combat and political training."[208]

Such activities would be under the aegis of the MPA and the Military District Councils. Since Red Army political commissars were responsible "together with commanders for all spheres of the military, political, and economic life of the unit" under the terms of dual command, then the commissars would share both the success and blame for the behavior of the troops on or off the field of battle. Increased authority and responsibility, therefore, also brought increased accountability.[209]

In order to further buttress the authority of the political workers in the Red Army, and handle the increased responsibilities under dual command, the MPA created two new positions below the regimental level. The deputy political instructor (*zamestitel' politruk*) was to assist the platoon commander, and the assistant political instructor (*pomeshchnik politruk*) was to assist the company politruk. Responsible for ensuring discipline, increasing political literacy, and protecting against treason from within, the ranks of these non-commissioned officers were quickly filled by junior commanders from the *Komsomol*. The deputy political instructor and the assistant political instructor were also not subordinate to the military commander, but were accountable solely to the political organs in the Red Army. In this way, in an environment charged with suspicion and a deep sense of skepticism, the Communist Party could, in theory, keep closer tabs on the rank and file membership of the Red Army for any signs of disloyalty and sedition.[210]

At the conclusion of the "Great Purge" in 1939, the Red Army entered a period of relative internal stability. The officer corps continued to expand in order to

address a crisis in the military command structure, which had been present even before the "Great Purge." With over 1.3 million men under arms in 1937, the Red Army would have needed at least 117,000 officers to lead combat units. However, the army was 10,000 officers short at that time to fully staff those combats units. By the start of 1939, the deficit in officers had grown to 93,000. While one-fourth of the shortfall was directly related to the "Great Purge," the rest corresponded to an increased need for officers for an ever-expanding ground force.[211]

The result of this crisis in command was a paucity of training, and the rapid upward mobility of men into positions of leadership with very little corresponding experience or education. In August 1937 as the "Great Purge" was well under way, the Commissariat for Defense under Voroshilov directed each Soviet military district and separate army to establish brief courses for noncommissioned officers to step up to the rank of junior lieutenant (*mladshie leitenant*). The courses were supposed to last three months, and then face cancellation. However, due to the continued growth of the army, the courses became institutionalized, and often a noncommissioned officer could simply gain a promotion by taking an exam with no further training.[212]

In the fall of 1936 "only 4 of 18 brigade- and larger-sized units had commanders of the appropriate rank." This condition existed throughout the command structure, with majors rather than colonels leading regiments, captains instead of majors commanding battalions, and lieutenants rather than captains in charge of companies. Coupled with a widespread failure to re-enlist large numbers of qualified non-commissioned officers as well as officers from both the non-political

and political organs of the Red Army in the wake of the "Great Purge," the need for trained officers was even more acute. According to Roger Reese:

> In 1936, nearly 38,000 officers were reassigned due to promotion or first duty assignment. In 1938 it leapt to 143,000, and in 1939 to over 198,000. The large number of new assignments and reassignments was not due solely to the purge. Not including reinstatement of purged officers, at most 23,500 officers would have had to have been reassigned to cover the losses of the *Ezhovshchina* (the Red Army purges led by *NKVD* chief Ezhov – explanation mine).[213]

In order to meet the growing leadership strains on the infrastructure of the military after the "Great Purge," the Commissariat of Defense restructured the framework of the chain of command system. Intended to compensate for a lack of skilled officers at the lower levels and address questions of loyalty, the restructured system reflected a core belief that only a few politically reliable officers with experience in the science of warfare could be trusted to usher the military through its ever-increasing growth period.[214]

At the top of the command hierarchy in August 1937 was the People's Commissar for Defense, Voroshilov. He was accountable directly to the Central

Committee of the Communist Party and Joseph Stalin. Under him were the 11 military district councils, each comprised of three members. One member of the military council was a commander, and the other two were usually political commissars. The commissars were also subordinated to the MPA, which answered directly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The ranks for political commissars in the Red Army were as follows from Army level on down: Commissar of the Army, first rank; commissar of the Army, second rank; Army corps commissar; division commissar; regimental commissar; battalion commissar; senior politruk; politruk; deputy political instructor; and assistant political instructor.[215]

The military councils were responsible to direct combat and political training of all troops (fleet and army) within the district, and handle all preparations for mobilization, including means of transportation and communication, as well as veterinarian, supply, and sanitary services.[216]

In addition, the People's Commissar of Defense charged the military councils with organizing the commanding personnel for their subordinated units, and establishing administrative support for their units. Anti-aircraft defense systems and programs for civil defense, draft boards, and defense construction projects also came under the aegis of the three-person military councils.[217]

Furthermore, political literacy and overall education for the soldiers and commanding personnel "in the spirit of unrestrained loyalty to the fatherland and the Soviet government, as well as in the spirit of relentless struggle with the enemies of the people – with spies, diversionists, and saboteurs" were also required of the military councils.[218]

As a result, all preparations for sustaining combat operations and political training in each of the eleven military districts were placed in the hands of three individuals. Regardless of the rank, experience, or political position of the chief military commander on the district council, all Armies in the district answered to the council and not the commander. As part of a system of ideological checks and balances, any order originating with the military council had to be signed by the military commander of the council, one of the other council members, and the chief-of-staff of the district. This included all orders and instructions relating to political matters.[219]

In the post-purge period before the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939, there appeared to be an increased effort within the military district councils to augment political training and literacy in conjunction with the MPA. However, for political commissars and *politruks*, training requirements were purposely kept low in order to expedite the process of promotion and installation of political officers into units of the expanding Red Army.[220]

A sixth grade education was all that was needed to become eligible for entrance into military schools for political workers.[221] At these institutions for advanced political training in each military district, the required reading list was also pared down to accommodate more recruits. For example, the works of Marx and Engels were not even included in the mandatory curriculum, which was comprised of the Short History of the Russian Bolshevik Party, The Red Army Man's Political Textbook, as well as several writing selections by Lenin, including The State and the

Revolution, Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism, and Stalin's report given at the Eighteenth Party Congress.[222]

The loosening of requirements corresponded directly with a massive recruitment effort. Political workers in the Red Army increased 126% from 15,000 in 1934 to 34,000 in 1939.[223] Yet, in spite of the lowered standards, such an increase in the total number of political workers stressed the training facilities and capabilities of the instructors to the limit. As a result, Red Army commissars and politruks trained in the period from 1937 to the German invasion in June 1941 received only a scant education in the political and philosophical underpinnings of communism. Since requirements for military-political schools during this time were less stringent than those of military academies for commanders, the chances that lesser educated individuals would be in such important positions of authority under the system of dual command greatly increased. As Fedotoff White states:

> It is important to note that up to the eve of Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia, the schools for political personnel continued to be recruited from the ranks of persons with an inferior general and military education, although these persons were placed, upon graduation, in positions of what amounted to control over the actions of commanders. This feature of an insufficiently high cultural and military educational level of political personnel undoubtedly made

for additional complications and difficulties in a situation already complex.[224]

However, the leadership of the Red Army appeared to be willing to sacrifice knowledge and training for the apparent safety and strength of sheer numbers. From the start of 1939 until June 1941, the Red Army created 111 infantry divisions and dozens of new tank divisions so that the total number of soldiers in the Red Army was close to 5.4 million by the start of the German invasion of the Soviet Union.[225] In 1940 conscription service increased from two to three years, and women were encouraged to join the armed forces.[226] Although Stalin had authorized Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov to sign a ten-year non-aggression treaty with Germany on 23 August 1939, which was intended to guarantee security for both countries, and declared that neither nation would take part "in any grouping of powers which is indirectly or directly aimed at the other party," he may not have trusted Hitler.[227] This deep-seated suspicion remained in spite of the secret protocols embedded in the non-aggression pact, which divided Poland between Germany and the USSR approximately along the lines of the Narev, Vistula, and San Rivers.[228]

As a result, Stalin continued to pursue an accelerated policy of expansion for the Red Army in the fall of 1939. He ordered the rapid growth of the military based partly on incorrect estimates of German military strength, as well as on his owns wavering lack of faith in Hitler's intents.[229] This policy of expansion produced increased expenditures to cover recruitment costs, equipment, technology, and

supplies, but did little to alleviate a crisis in training and the science of warfare, which appeared to plague the infrastructure of the Soviet military and party organs.[230]

The Russo-Finnish War and the Timoshenko Reforms

Few of the problems relating to the lack of adequate training came to light during the Soviet invasion and occupation of Poland in September 1939, the attack upon Finland in November 1939, and the attacks on the Baltic States of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia in 1940. With the exception of the Finns, there had been relatively few challenges to the military might of the Red Army in these limited campaigns, and any crises that had developed in the Far East were quietly and quickly swept aside as anomalies.[231]

There had been previous indications, however, that the Red Army was not prepared to engage in combat operations for a sustained period of time. The results of inadequate training, poor communications, and bureaucratic inertia were first noted in 1938 when Imperial Japanese and Soviet troops clashed at Lake Khasan over contested territory taken during the Japanese attack and occupation of Manchuria. Although Soviet forces managed to hold back Japanese soldiers over the nine-day battle, the post-action report listed numerous shortcomings on the part of the Red Army. These included what Roger Reese describes as:

> The complete lack of coordination between battalion-sized elements; the lack of coordination between infantry and armor units; the failure of the units to coordinate in code,

despite the fact that the corps had been alerted for combat a month ahead of time.[232]

Included in the report was the fact that during an initial retreat by Soviet troops, large quantities of weapons (machine guns, rifles, ammunition, etc.) and equipment (backpacks, supplies, radios, etc.) were simply abandoned, and fell into the hands of the Japanese. The conclusion of the post-action report stated that the greatest problem of all was the serious lack of training in military matters. The army had spent so much time in the area working on issues associated with the farming of the region, including the cultivation of hay, vegetables, and the chopping of firewood, that it had neglected the weightier matters of what it took to be combat-ready. [233]

However, little was done with the report at higher command levels to focus improvements on the Red Army as a whole. Further clashes with the Japanese produced similar outcomes, and the Battle of Khalkin-Gol, which lasted from May through September 1939, resulted in lengthy reports with suggested areas for improvements. Yet, the office of the People's Commissar of Defense and the relevant military councils virtually ignored the suggestions, and did not implement any "lessons" for the occupation of Poland and the planning for the attack on Finland.[234]

The disregard for the conclusions of the post-action reports from Red Army conflicts with the Japanese just months before continued to the very top of the Soviet military command. Stalin refused to consider the post-action reports, and ordered an attack on Finland on 30 November 1939. Designed to secure the Gulf of Finland and the northern Baltic approach to the Soviet Union from possible invaders, Stalin

clearly believed that his forces would achieve a rapid and decisive victory over the hapless Finns in much the same way they had during the brief Polish campaign. Over 446,000 Red Army personnel took part in the Soviet attack on eastern Poland under the terms of the secret protocols of the 23 August non-aggression pact with Germany. Soviet forces suffered less than a 1% casualty rate (3,522 total – 1,139 killed, of whom 180 were officers, and 2,383 wounded). Generally, most scholars attribute the low casualty rate to the fact that the Soviet armed forces were only in action for two weeks, and that the bulk of the Polish military was on the western frontier attempting to stop the Wehrmacht Blitzkrieg.[235]

The Red Army's weaknesses in training, communication, coordination, and supply, however, quickly became apparent, as did the tenacious will and tactics of the Finnish defenders. In the first month of the war, the bulk of the Red Army got bogged down on the Karelian Isthmus before it even reached the "Mannerheim Line, and suffered deep losses.[236] According to the German General Staff, which paid careful attention to the ability of the Soviet military to prosecute a large-scale war, the Red Army was:

> In quantity a gigantic military instrument. – Commitment of the 'mass'. – Organization, equipment and means of leadership unsatisfactory. – principles of leadership good. – leadership itself, however, too young and inexperienced. – [...] troops not very uniform [...] Fighting qualities of the troops in a *heavy* (emphasis in the original) fight, dubious.

– The Russian 'mass' is *no* [emphasis in the original] match for an army, with modern equipment and superior leadership.[237]

While this assessment appeared to be an accurate reflection of the Red Army in 1939-1940, Stalin and the Soviet General Staff were more concerned with the end results, and launched a massive attack on 1 February 1940. In just over a month, Finnish resistance had been crushed, and a dictated peace from Moscow followed.[238]

In contrast to the fighting in the Far East against Japan, Soviet military authorities made a concerted effort to assess what had gone wrong during the "Winter War" with Finland. A report, written by the People's Commissar for Defense Voroshilov shortly before he was removed from his position to accept a "promotion" in May 1940, identified serious shortcomings in the performance, structure, and preparations of the Red Army. The report by Voroshilov specifically addressed glaring systemic inadequacies of the Soviet ground forces brought to light by the combat experiences in Finland from November 1939 through 12 March 1940.[239]

According to Voroshilov's assessment, the Red Army had no overall operational plan for war either on the eastern or western front. Mobilization plans were inadequate, or simply non-existent in some military districts, and the three million men in the reserves were, in reality, no more than a paper tiger. Untrained and lacking basic principles of military discipline, the reserve units were led by equally poorly trained officers. As Roger Reese notes, "the [Voroshilov –explanation mine]

report bluntly stated, 'the quality of officer training is poor, especially in the platoons and companies.' Junior commanders received especially poor training."[240]

In addition, the officer corps as a whole was short one-fifth of its authorized staff, and military academies were simply not able to graduate properly trained officers. Even in the event of war, there was no comprehensive plan to conduct wide-scale training for officers and soldiers alike, and the army was allowing officers with both training and experience to leave active service.[241]

Furthermore, Voroshilov noted that in the field of combat there was very little coordination and communication between different arms. During the "Winter War" of 1939-1940, Soviet artillery units demonstrated a serious lack of knowledge in the science of warfare with regard to supporting armored attack units. The air force did not know the best ways to provide support for the ground forces, and soldiers lacked the basic training and knowledge to attack well-fortified positions, how to construct and secure fortifications, or even ford rivers.[242]

Supplies and support were also areas of concern to Voroshilov. A shortage of mechanics had almost paralyzed Soviet armor in Finland, and the soldiers in the rear areas were simply not ready, willing, or able to engage in combat operations. Military planners were equally dumbfounded, as it had been two years since any comprehensive plan for rear area support had even been prepared and planned.[243]

Voroshilov also noted in his report that the "lack of professionalism of Soviet commanders at all ranks, their inability to coordinate actions on the battlefield, and their unconcern for the life and health of the Red Army soldiers" contributed to the high casualty figure over such a short period of time (less than four months). Of the

848,570 men the Red Army committed to battle against the Finns, there were almost 400,000 casualties (about 46%).[244]

As a result, Stalin ordered another round of sweeping reforms in the Red Army. He commenced the initial phase of these reforms in May 1940 by "promoting" Voroshilov to deputy chairman of the Defense Committee, and naming Marshal Timoshenko to become the new Defense Commissar. Timoshenko, with the consent of Stalin, then initiated Order No. 120 on 20 May 1940. This order set in motion a total reorganization of the Red Army based on the results of Voroshilov's assessment of combat and organizational failures.[245]

Timoshenko gave careful attention to proper training and instruction for a variety of combat situations (offensive operations in wooded areas in all weather conditions; smashing fortified positions; hand-to-hand combat; swift strikes by advance mobile units, etc.). He also echoed a refrain from the Frunze era: discipline was to be tightened in order to achieve "complete combat readiness."[246]

Timoshenko attempted to focus foremost attention on military matters while de-emphasizing political training. During the war with Finland, reports had surfaced of commissars and politruks taking lead roles in operational areas for which they had virtually no training. This was abhorrent to Timoshenko. As John Erickson states: "The army was commissar-ridden. Voroshilov's picture of the commander and commissar as an 'integral unit' had turned out to be seriously distorted."[247]

Timoshenko believed that political commissars and politruks hindered the decision-making process of commanders. He initiated the return of unitary command through a decree issued on 12 August 1940. Thus, political commissars and politruks,

as they had been obliged to do from 1925-1937, were to stay out of the arena of operations, and were to focus their efforts instead on the political literacy and well being of the troops.[248]

The political organs in the Red Army offered little resistance to Timoshenko in the late summer of 1940. Political officers did not band together to protest the return of unitary command, nor did military-political training schools overtly oppose the reforms of the new People's Commissar for Defense. The poor battlefield performances at Lake Khasan in the Far East, and throughout the "Winter War" with Finland had clearly demonstrated to leading political commissars that something had to be done to arrest the deterioration of morale, and address the lack of preparation and training among all levels of the Red Army. Rather, as John Erickson observes:

> 'The secret' of Timoshenko's success in avoiding the all too obvious dangers inherent in any attempt at military reform in the Red Army – a head-on clash with the Party and the *NKVD* – seems to have lain not only in the urgency of the situation (the case for reform was plainly undeniable) but also in the method he used. Timoshenko attacked the problem in reverse; although the over-politicalisation of the army was the basic fault, the new defense Commissar laid down a positive policy of training and discipline [...] A gale of recrimination had swept the higher levels of the command. The commissars were isolated but not excluded.

(In the last resort, it could be reduced to the fact that Stalin trusted Timoshenko as he had never trusted Tukhachevsky.)[249]

Thus, while Timoshenko desperately attempted to prepare rapidly expanding and poorly trained forces for a potential war with Germany,[250] political organs in the Red Army turned their attention to recruitment for the Communist Party, political training, enforcement of discipline, and the monitoring of morale. For the ten months leading up to the German invasion of the Soviet Union, these tasks for political commissars and politruks did not change. The 12 August 1940 Timoshenko order authorizing the reinstitution of unitary command made it clear that, while political commissars lost equal status with commanders, the rest of the political system remained the same.[251]

As a result, even when the status of the command structure changed, the political establishment in the Red Army was virtually unaltered. Having grown from a seemingly small idea during the period of the Provisional Government, to a vast and formidable political institution within the Red Army, the roots of the commissar system were firmly fixed.[252]

Hitler, the German General Staff, and Knowledge of the Commissar System

Given that an integral and established political-military institution existed for over two decades, and that Germany and the *Reichswehr* had a special and close working relationship with the Red Army from 1922-1933, it may be assumed that

Hitler, the military planners, and legal staffs of the *Wehrmacht* in the High Command of the armed forces and the army were well informed about the scope and history of the commissar system well before the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Clearly, *Reichswehr* officers maintained a steady stream of communication from Soviet Russia back to Berlin from 1922-1933 on everything from the state of the economy, morale of the armed forces, infantry preparedness, and technological innovations in the fields of tank and airplane development.[253] Some of the generals who later served either as members of Hitler's cabinet, such as Werner von Blomberg, or on the Staff of the Army, such as Erich von Manstein, Walter Model, and Wilhelm Keitel, had even taken active roles on military trips throughout the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[254]

However, up until the reintroduction of single command under the reforms of Marshal Timoshenko in 1940, there is a paucity of documentation on the commissar system in German archival sources, and very few documents have surfaced which describe the fundamental roles of political commissars in the Red Army, and their perceived power by the German General Staff.

Two limited exceptions involve the work of the Psychology Laboratory of the Reich War Ministry (*Psychologisches Laboratorium des Reichskriegsministeriums*) in 1935. During this time, the Psychology Laboratory explored the use of propaganda as a possible tool in turning the local population of the Soviet Union against its Bolshevik rulers in the event Germany ever were to go to war with the USSR. The first exception is a memorandum from 10 May 1935 signed by the section head of Troop Office Section 3 – Foreign Armies (*T 3, Fremde Heere, Attachéwesen),*

Colonel Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel.[255] The memorandum, prepared by Lieutenant Colonel (*Oberstleutnant*) in the General Staff (*i.G.*) Mierzinsky, stated that the majority of Red Army political commissars "belonged to the Jewish race," and that local populations of the USSR would turn against the Bolshevik system if enough propaganda focused on the removal of the "Jewish-Communist rulers," the return of land to local control, as well as a promise not to annex any part of Russian territory.[256]

The second exception also dealt with the Psychology Laboratory of the Reich War Ministry. As Jürgen Förster notes, the Psychology Laboratory prepared a draft of a leaflet for propaganda purposes in November 1935 which:

> [...] defamed the 'gentlemen commissars and party functionaries' as 'mostly filthy Jews'. In it the Red Army men were invited to fight against the 'accursed Jewish commissars'.[257]

It is unclear what statistics, if any, the Psychology Laboratory of the Reich War Ministry used in the construction of its reports, but it is clear that the demographic basis for the association between Jews and Red Army political commissars was unfounded, and simply inaccurate. According to Alec Nove and J. A. Newth, only 8.6% of political commissars in the Red Army were Jewish in the pre-war period, a figure far from a majority.[258]

It was not until the Soviet proclamation of the end of dual command in the Red Army in August 1940 that it was clear what Hitler, the General Staff, and legal planners at *OKH* and *OKW* knew about the commissar system. This is because the day after the Red Army announcement that unitary command was reinstated, the official Nazi Party newspaper, Völkischer Beobachter, carried two articles on the change in command structure, which also detailed the brief history of the commissar system and some of the roles and responsibilities carried out by political officers in the Red Army in the years since the Bolshevik Revolution.[259]

The first headline on the end of the commissar system in the 15 August 1940 North German edition of the Völkischer Beobachter stated: "The Political Commissars of the Red Army Abolished;" the subscript stated: "The commanding officers now [have] full power [as] commanders." The article, with a dateline of 14 August 1940 in Moscow, described "a new important order" which had been issued. Quoting from the Red Army newspaper, Red Star, the article noted that the institution of political commissars in all formations of the army and fleets had been abolished by the new proclamation. Without naming Timoshenko and his reforms as the driving force for change in the command structure, the article described how the present commissar system had been in operation since 1937, and that the tasks of the "deputy of the commander for political work" would no longer belong to commissars on an equal standing with military commanders.[260]

A second article on the end of the commissar system appeared below the first in the 15 August 1940 edition of the Völkischer Beobachter. Noting that the change in the commissar system was the lead story the day before in Moscow, the article

quoted extensively from the Red Star piece. This second article stated that the task of political commissars was to "fight against enemy espionage," and that with the reconstruction of the command structure, political commissars would no longer have equal authority as military commanders, and would go back to providing political instruction to troops.[261]

With the coverage of the end of the commissar system in the Völkischer Beobachter it is now obvious that Hitler, the German General staff, and the legal planners at *OKH* and *OKW* were fully aware that political commissars in the Red Army lacked the power they once had under dual command. Therefore, Hitler and those responsible for the drafting of the Commissar Order created the 6 June 1941 directive on the basis of a deliberate and outright lie about the legal authority of political officers in the Red Army. This is most likely due to the fact that the authority to countermand an order signed by a military commander certainly made a more compelling case that political commissars wielded tremendous power in the Red Army than simply stating that political officers were responsible for increasing political literacy, recruiting members for the Communist Party, and monitoring the morale levels of troops, as their job description stated after 14 August 1940, a full two months before Hitler even ordered plans drawn up for an invasion of the Soviet Union.

In the next chapter, I will examine the factors, individuals, and chronology of events that resulted in the issuing of the Commissar Order on the first Saturday of June 1941.

[1] Quoted from Anlage 30, 29 June 1941 in Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (Freiburg, Germany, hereafter cited as BAMA), RH 26-295/17, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 27.7.1940-12.12.1941, Bd. 1.: 19.3.41-14.10.41. For others refer to BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 3 July 1941, and 26 June 1941 entry in BAMA RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 125. ID, 22.6.41-15.12.41.

[2] For the original copy of the Commissar Order, refer to BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 41-44. A microfilm copy is located at National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 238, T-1119, Roll 15, Frame Number(s) (hereafter cited as FN) 1073-1078 (NOKW Document 1076). A partial translation of the Commissar Order and cover letters by General Warlimont and General von Brauchitsch appear in the Trials of War Criminals Before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10 (hereafter cited as IMT-TWC), (October 1946-April 1949), Volume 10, "The High Command Case" (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 1054-1059.

[3] NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 44, FN 243 contains the first recorded killing of a Red Army political commissar by any of the formations of AOK 17. This occurred five days after the start of the German invasion on 27.6.41 by the 1st Mountain [1.Gebirgs] Division near Jaworow. One commissar was shot. (Morgenmeldung der Truppe). Other examples are as follows: 29.6.41 [100. le. I.D.] One Commissar sent to the rear near Rudki-Romanowka in BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen); 7.7.41 [100. le. I.D.] One Commissar either captured in Husyatyn, BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941; 14.7.41 [24. I.D.] One politruk (political worker at company level and below) captured near Stara Sieniawa, BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic 22.6. -30.9.1941.

[4] John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941 (3rd edition) (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 552-560. After a series of debacles during the Soviet-Finnish War (the so-called "Winter War") from November 1939-March 1940, Stalin ordered Marshal Timoshenko to downgrade the power of political commissars in the Red Army. This resulted in a shift from dual command, in which commissars had the authority to countermand an order by a commander if he felt it was not in the interests of the Party, the State, or the People, to unitary command (single command), in which the commander had complete authority over operational decisions.

[5] Dual command was reinstated on 16 July 1941. The original, in KPSS o voor. Sil. Sov. Soyuza, pp. 358-361 as cited in Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 603. The Ic records of the 94th Infantry Division (NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1172, FN 817-819) contain a full German translation of the original Soviet order from 16 July 1941. More specific duties for political commissars in the Red Army were added four days later. The full text of Directive Number 42, "On the Duties of military Commissars and political workers in the Red Army (20 July 1941)," appears in Velikaya Otechestvennaya (The Great Patriotic War), (Main Political Organs of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945. Documents and Materials) (Moscow: Terra, 1996), pp. 48-51. Translation of this text for use in my dissertation was provided by Dr. Roger Cooke, University of Vermont.

[6] Dimitri Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1981), p. 74. The Hyperion Press edition is a reprint of the 1944 Princeton University Press edition of the same title, which was based on Fedotoff White's thesis at Columbia University.

[7] Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961), Document #759, "The Soviet Decision to Appoint Commissars to Commands, 19 March 1917," p. 865.

[8] In The Soviet High Command: A Military Political History, 1918-1941 (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 41 and p. 678N, John Erickson notes that the Bol'shaya Sov. Entsiklopediya (The Large Soviet Encyclopedia (1st Edition), Vol. 12, 1928, Column 323 f refers to the position of commissar in the French Revolutionary Wars, Decree of the Convention, 15 December 1792. In addition, the same reference describes commissars introduced into the Russian Imperial Army in Manchuria on 14 December 1900. These served as the precedent for Leon Trotsky to take on the title "War Commissar" for himself.

[9] Political commissar and military commissar are used interchangeably throughout this section, and reflect the usage of the document, speaker, or author.
[10] Browder and Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II, p. 865.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Browder and Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II, Document #873, "The Establishment and Jurisdiction of Military Commissars of the Provisional Government, 15 July 1917," pp. 986-987. The 19 March 1917 order of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet was limited in its distribution. A more widespread order appeared with the signatures of Provisional Government Minister-President Alexander Kerensky and Minister of War Major General Yakubovich on 15 July 1917. In addition, in Growth of the Red Army, p. 42 Fedotoff White notes a residue of suspicion among commanders at the Front toward political commissars. Although there were no detailed surveys, Fedotoff White argues that military commanders saw the commissars as German spies in the period prior to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.
[16] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 41 and to N 64 on p. 42. Erickson presents evidence that, initially, not all political commissars were even members of the Communist Party. Fedotoff White also describes political commissars "recruited from heterogeneous elements." Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 73.
[17] Browder and Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II, Document #873, "The Establishment and Jurisdiction of Military Commissars of the Provisional Government, 15 July 1917," p. 987.
[18] Mark von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 16-23.
[19] Browder and Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II, Document #874, "Rabochaia Gazeta on the New Measures for the Army, 30 July 1917, p. 1," p. 989.
[20] Browder and Kerensky, (eds.), The Russian Provisional Government, 1917, Vol. II, Document #875, "Excerpts from the Protocols of the Conference of Government and Military Leaders at Stavka at Mogilev, 16 July 1917," p. 992.
[21] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 22-24, and Dale R. Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 3-5.
[22] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 41.
[23] Tony Cliff, Trotsky, The Sword of the Revolution, 1917-1923 (London: Bookmarks, 1990), p. 65 cites Y. Akhapkin, First Decrees of Soviet Power (London), 1970, p. 86 for the 18 January 1918 decree signed by Lenin on the formal establishment of the Red Army. The full text is found in Appendix I, "The Scheme for a Socialist Army" in Erich Wollenberg (translated from the German by Claud W. Sykes), The Red Army (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), pp. 249-261. The section on "Regulations for War Commissars" is found on pp. 255-258.
[24] Tony Cliff, Trotsky, The Sword of the Revolution, 1917-1923, p. 65.
[25] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 41.
[26] Wollenberg, Red Army, pp. 255-258. The "Scheme for a Socialist Army" prescribed broad-based duties for military commissars as well as regimental commissars.
[27] Timothy Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 10 and p. 302N.
[28] Roger Reese refers to the same organization as PUR in The Soviet Military Experience, and John Erickson uses PURKKA throughout most of The Soviet High Command.
[29] Cliff, Trotsky, The Sword of the Revolution, p. 59 and Cliff, Trotsky: Towards October, 1879-1917 (London: Bookmarks, 1979), pp. 168-172. Trotsky became Commissar for War and President of the Supreme War Council on 4 March 1918.
[30] Leon Trotsky, How the Revolution Armed (five volumes) (London: Indexreach, 1979-1981), Vol. 1, p. 557 as cited in Tony Cliff, Trotsky, The Sword of the Revolution, 1917-1923, p. 78. Here Trotsky is quoting directly from the 15 January 1918 "Scheme for a Socialist Army" signed by Lenin. The full context is found in Wollenberg, Red Army, p. 255.
[31] Trotsky, How the Revolution Armed, pp. 557-558.

[32] von Hagen quotes period sources cited by V.G. Kolychev, Partiino-politicheskaia robota v Krasnoi Amrii v gody grazhdanskoi voiny (Moscow: 1978) in Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 98-99.
[33] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 26-32, and Roger Reese, The Soviet Military Experience (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 20-24.
[34] Trotsky, How the Revolution Armed, p. 558.
[35] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 34.
[36] Ibid., p. 75.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Karl von Clausewitz, On War (New York: Viking, 1982). Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) served in the Napoleonic Wars, and was, for twelve years, the director of the War College in Berlin. His three-volume posthumously published work, On War (1833) provided the source of much of Trotsky's inspiration.
[39] Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, p. 63.
[40] Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, p. 40, and von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 40.
[41] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities, p. 41. Here Colton quotes from Trotsky's first volume, book 1 of Kak vooruzhalas' p. 128.
[42] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, pp. 57-59. Herspring cites A.G. Kavtaradze, Voennye spetsialisty na sluzhbe Respubliki Sovetov, 1917-1920 (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), pp. 207-209 for the data in the text.
[43] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, pp. 57-58.
[44] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 21.
[45] Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, p. 75.
[46] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities, p. 41. Colton quotes political apparatus chief Konstantin K. Iurenev in the spring of 1918. Colton also quotes from Trotsky's first volume, book 1 of Kak vooruzhalas' p. 30. Further discussion on this topic is found in Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 21, Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 42, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 86.
[47] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities, p. 41.
[48] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 20.
[49] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 61-62, and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 47. Smirnov and his supporters favored local soviets, with decentralized authority, local control of fighting units, and the use of partisan or guerrilla tactics to the imperial methods of top-down command structure. Smirnov and his followers also became known as the "Military Opposition" for their stand at the Eighth Party Congress.
[50] Examples cited by Smirnov included two regulations issued by the Councils of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) in December 1918, which limited the authority of political commissars at the front to intervene in operational matters. The full text of the these regulations is found in "Postanovlenie Sovnarkoma RSFSR o komanduiushchem armiiami fronta," 15 December 1918, in Partiino-politicheskia rabota v Krasnoi Armii (aprel' 1918-fevral' 1919): Dokumenty (Moscow, 1961), (hereafter cited as PPR I), pp. 40-41; and "O komanduiushchem armieie, vkhodiaschchei v sostav armii fronta," Izvestiia Narkomvoen, 14 December 1918, as cited in von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 59.
[51] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 57-64 contains some of the divergent views expressed at the Eighth Party Congress.
[52] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, p.25.
[53] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 47 and Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, p. 117.
[54] Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, p. 117. In response to a breakthrough by Kolchak's White troops along the Eastern Front, Trotsky departed for the front. However, he had written out his views in a report titled "Our Policy in Creating the Army" which Sokolnikov read to the delegates.
[55] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, p. 58.
[56] Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, p. 118.
[57] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, p. 59.
[58] Ibid., p. 25.

[59] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 42 and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 21.
[60] Roman Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1967), p. 41. Kolkowicz cites the KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza: sbornik dokumentov, 1917-1958, (The Communist Party-Soviet Union on the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union: A Collection of Documents, 1917-1958) (Moscow: Gospolitzdat, 1958), p. 63 as the source for the changes granted by the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919 relating to civilian control over commissars. According to Kolkowicz, "the system of military commissars was to be centralized under a member of the Central Committee, who would perform the function as a member of the Revvoensovet Respubliki (Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic)."
[61] Thomas M. Nichols, The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security, 1917-1992 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 35-36.
[62] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities, p. 42 and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 27.
[63] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 47-49.
[64] Also referred to as unitary or one-man command (*edinonachalie*). Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, p. 14, and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 89.
[65] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 42.
[66] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities, p. 42. Colton cites a 1919 reference by N. Podvoiskii and M. Pavlovich in Revoliutsionnaia voina as the source of the theory that commissars would eventually be replaced as more commanders received Bolshevik officer training.
[67] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 82.
[68] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 80.
[69] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relationships, pp. 59-60.
[70] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 99-103, Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relationships, p. 60, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 78-84. von Hagen cites period memoir literature to substantiate the trend of commissars taking on more traditional roles of the military specialist.
[71] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 86.
[72] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, p. 211.
[73] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, p. 60.
[74] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, p. 14, and Table 1, "The Structure of military party organs," in ibid., pp. 12-13.
[75] During the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, official German military war diaries used the term "politruk(s)" to express the same grade of political instructor. BAMA, RW 4-578, "Chefsachen Barbarossa," pp. 128-129 contains further details. I will use the term from the German documents for the sake of consistency.
[76] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 98-100.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Trotsky quotes the White officer's report from "Krasnaia armiia v osveshchenii belogvardeitsa," in Volume 2, Part 1 of Kak vooruzhalas' revoliutsiia (How the Revolution Armed), p.192 as cited in von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 113.
[79] Ibid., pp. 113-114. von Hagen quotes from the 1924 Russian translation of Bertaud Serrigny's Reflexions sur l'art de guerre (Paris: Charles-La Vauzelle, 1921).
[80] Greens is the term used to describe detachments of men who, attempting to evade service in the military, fled to the mountains and forests of central Russia, the northern Caucasus, and the Crimea, where they fought both the Reds and Whites in pitched battles. The response of the Defense Council to uprisings of deserters and Greens is found in von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 76-77.
[81] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 36.
[82] Joachim Hoffmann in Horst Boog, et al., Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union, Vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 57.
[83] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 82-86.
[84] Ibid., p. 84.
[85] Ibid., p. 87.
[86] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 372.

[87] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, p. 62.
[88] Ibid. Herspring quotes from Trotsky, kak vooruzhalas' revolyutsiya, Vol. 2, book 1, p. 77.
[89] Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 117-131, and Cliff, Trotsky: The Sword of the Revolution, pp. 161-169.
[90] Ibid.
[91] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 131-132.
[92] Ibid., p. 132.
[93] Ibid., and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 87-91.
[94] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 133-134.
[95] Ibid., pp. 29N and 134.
[96] Wollenberg, The Red Army, p. 184.
[97] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 115-118. Trotsky did not envision a standing professional army for the future of the Soviet State once the Civil War and the war with Poland resulted in victory. Such a position produced waves of opposition. Unwilling to admit that militias would not be as strong organizationally as a professional army, Trotsky vehemently maintained a position that with universal military training, paramilitary activities, and cooperation by local soviets, a militia-based military would be a formidable force to external and internal threats.
[98] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 134.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 118.
[102] Prior to the Tenth Party Congress, a variety of special interest groups organized presentations and speeches in support of their particular point of view. These were intended to rally support, and more often than not, the configuration and role of the Red Army in peacetime were at the center of the program. For more, refer to von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 134.
[103] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 126-157.
[104] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 140.
[105] Herspring, Russian Civilian Military Relations, p. 32.
[106] Ibid., p 63.
[107] Ibid., pp. 63-64.
[108] Ibid., pp. 32-33, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 230-231. An in-depth analysis of the permanent army versus the militia debate, can be found in Francesco Benvenuti, The Bolsheviks and the Red Army, 1918-1922 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 168-175.
[109] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 119-121. As Erickson notes on p. 120: "The Frunze-Gusev theses were not presented on the formal agenda of the Congress. Frunze was evidently persuaded to drop his program as a result of a private talk with Lenin, himself prompted by certain reservations about the new 'proletarian theories.'"
[110] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, pp. 37-39. Gusev wrote the first fifteen theses and Frunze the last six, but it is Frunze for whom the theses were named, as the last six were viewed as the most substantive. It was also Frunze who wrote the article for Armiia i Revoliutsiia. However, Nichols identifies twenty-two theses.
[111] Herspring, Russian Civil-Military Relations, pp. 63-64.
[112] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 160.
[113] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 38.
[114] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 161.
[115] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 38.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., p. 39. Trotsky's piece first appeared in the November-December issue of Voennaia nauka i revoliutsiia, and was later reprinted in his book How the Revolution Armed.
[118] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[119] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 158.
[120] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 39, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 176.
[121] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 39. Frunze's seventh thesis stated that the Civil War had been won, in large part, because of maneuverability of the troops, and his eleventh thesis emphasized the active

character of tactics. Further discussion is found in Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 169-170.
[122] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 158-159.
[123] Nichols, The Scared Cause, p. 39.
[124] Ibid., pp. 40-41, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 161.
[125] Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 39, and Timothy Colton and Thane Gustafson, (eds.), Soldiers and the Soviet State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 18-19.
[126] Walter Jacobs, Frunze the Soviet Clausewitz, 1883-1925 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 74 as quoted in Nichols, The Sacred Cause, p. 40.
[127] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 55.
[128] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 138-139.
[129] Ibid., pp. 139-141, and von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 183-185.
[130] Carol Anne Hale, German-Soviet military Relations in the Era of Rapallo, unpublished MA thesis, McGill University, 1989.
[131] Sally W. Stoecker quotes Dyakov and Bushuyeva's Fashistskii mech kovalsia v SSSR: Krasnaia Armiia I Reikhsver. Tainoe sotrudnichestvo, 1922-1933 (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1992), p. 13 in her volume, Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), p. 78.
[132] Stoecker, Forging Stalin's Army, pp. 78-79.
[133] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 155. According to the terms of the 11 August 1922 Red Army-Reichswehr Agreement, the German military asked for and received access to "facilities in order to gain experience in tactics, training, and technical matters, to develop the theory and practice of forbidden weapons, to train higher personnel in the use of such weapons [...]." Based on the concept of a professional, full-time army, the Red Army received training by their German counterparts. Part of the expanded role of the Red Army came in the form of instructions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party following the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923, which were directly connected to the mutual assistance pact with the Reichswehr. Additional material on the Soviet military's response to cooperation with the Reichswehr is found in Alexander M. Nekrich, (edited and translated by Gregory L. Freeze), Pariahs, Partners, Predators: German-Soviet Relations, 1922-1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 14-25. A detailed analysis of the chemical weapons, tank, and air force cooperative ventures is found in Stoecker, Forging Stalin's Army, pp. 77-134.
[134] Stoecker, Forging Stalin's Army, p. 142, and Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, note 31, pp. 45-46; Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 199-201, and von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 201-203.
[135] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, note 36, p. 47; von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 185 and 201-202.
[136] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 165.
[137] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 183-184.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 47.
[141] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 199-200. Erickson maintains that Frunze was the victim of "medical murder" initiated by Stalin in a bid to wrestle control of the army for himself.
[142] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 56 and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 200-204.
[143] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 213.
[144] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 56 and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 170-172. For example, Frunze did away with the Supreme Military Council, the Council of Defenses, the All-Russian Supreme Staff, among others, and replaced them with a consolidated High Command.
[145] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 200.
[146] Ibid., pp. 214-215.
[147] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 38, and von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 206-210.
[148] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 215.
[149] Ibid., p. 215.

[150] Ibid., pp. 213-214.
[151] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 209.
[152] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 212-214. By most accounts, this took place by the end of 1924, and as early as June.
[153] Ibid., pp. 217-218.
[154] Roger Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996), p. 106.
[155] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 218 and Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, pp. 49-51. Kolkowicz argues that in spite of the fact that they no longer could countermand an order, the power and influence of political commissars actually increased under unitary command, and that military commanders saw their power erode. He attributes this, in part, to the concessions granted to political officers in the Red Army so that they would cooperate with the transition to single command.
[156] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 212. In a 1924 survey of all political workers in the Red Army, the respondents stated that fifty percent of the reports they wrote were false, "that hoodwinking was commonplace, and that they and their colleagues took a formal bureaucratic approach" to their work."
[157] Ibid., pp. 218-220, and p. 224.
[158] The math was used in the visual aid materials distributed by the MPA.
[159] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, pp. 271-272.
[160] Ibid., p. 273.
[161] Ibid., pp. 224-225, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 220-222.
[162] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 241.
[163] Ibid., pp. 241-242.
[164] Ibid., pp. 242-243. The United State Political Administration, also known as the *OGPU*, or Soviet Political Police, were later (1934) absorbed into the Soviet Secret Police (*NKVD*). For this reason, I will not treat the *OGPU* as a separate entity for this study.
[165] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletariat Dictatorship, pp. 228-230.
[166] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 233. Fedotoff White quotes from the volume Ustroistvo vooruzhennykh sil SSSR, (Second edition, Moscow, 1926) by N.P. Vishniakov and F.I. Arkhipov.
[167] von Hagen, Soldiers of the Proletariat Revolution, p. 229.
[168] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 236.
[169] Ibid., p. 233.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 234, and Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 107. While there were some differences in opinion between commanders and political workers in the Red Army, they did not appear to have a negative influence on how most commanders viewed the Communist Party. During the 1920s and 1930s, there was a marked increase in party membership. as Roger Reese notes: "Some officers joined out of belief in the Party and the revolution, others as an opportunistic move to further their careers. The higher the military rank, the higher the frequency of membership in the Party proved to be. Party membership did not necessarily come before promotion, but because a commissar also had to sign promotion orders, the potential to use party membership as a carrot or stick existed."
[172] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 237.
[173] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 106.
[174] Ibid., pp. 106-107.
[175] Ibid, and von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 326.
[176] von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship, p. 326.
[177] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 240
[178] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, pp. 52-53. Kolkowicz cites the Central Committee's resolution of 25 February 1929, "O kommandnom I politicheskom sostave RKKA" ("On the Commanding and Political Composition of the Red Army"), in KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh, pp. 312-315 detailing the commissar's role in the Red Army of unitary command.
[179] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 314.
[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid., p. 315.
[182] Ibid., pp. 315-316. There were also Internal Service Regulations of 1928 that preceded the Field Regulations of 1929, which dealt in even greater detail with the delineation of political-military work. One example stated that while commanders had authority over operational matters, commissars were "on equal footing with the commander" in the care and supervision of training and the supervision of the economic well-being of the troops."
[183] Ibid., pp. 262-263 and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 325-405. According to a book by S. Ivanovich quoted by Fedotoff White, the demographic makeup of the Red Army in 1926 virtually mirrored that of the Czar's forces in 1913. While Fedotoff White stresses that sources like Ivanovich were often unreliable, the perception by upper level commanders that the social origins of the recruits were overwhelming those of the peasant classes resulted in targeted campaigns to industrialize the peasantry using the Red Army.
[184] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 54.
[185] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 352.
[186] Ibid., pp. 242-243.
[187] Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 54, Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 325-404, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 358-359. Some scholars point more to the threat of fascism in parts of Europe (Germany, Italy, and Spain) as well as anti-Soviet attitudes in the governments of Poland, great Britain, and France as the primary reasons for the increase in the number of soldiers in the standing army.
[188] Timothy Colton, Commissars, Commanders and Civilian Authority, p. 136.
[189] Ibid., p. 137.
[190] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 385-386 and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 85.
[191] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 85. The so-called "Red Folder Theory" involving Nazi collaboration and the role of Heydrich, the SD can be found in Vladimir G. Trenl (editor) and Bruce Adams (co-editor and translator), High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 258-275
[192] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 85.
[193] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authorities,. p. 138.
[194] . Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 85. The Red Army purges, or "Great Purge" is also know as the "*Ezhovshchina*" after the *NKVD* chief who orchestrated the program of terror resulting in thousands of arrests and investigations.
[195] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 504-509 contains estimates and assessments of the overall losses in the Red Army purges.
[196] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 85.
[197] Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority, p. 142.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Roger Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 134, with commentary, pp. 132-134. Table 5.1, "Army Officers Removed from the Rolls, 1937-1939."
[200] Ibid., pp. 76-77.
[201] Roger Reese cites J. Arch Getty, The Origins of the Great Purge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, (ed.), Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) in Note 22, p. 218 of Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers as sources that examine the differences between party purges (*Chistki*) and repressive purges of terror.
[202] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, pp. 86-87. There were 179,00 officers in the military at the end of 1938 versus 162,000 through 1937. Among political officers, there was also an increase in the overall number. MPA officers numbered 31,000 in 1937, lost 5,000 to the "Great Purge," but still managed to reach 34,000 personnel in 1939.
[203] Ibid., p. 88. Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 141-143 addresses the role of military procuracy.
[204] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 394-395. Lev Mekhlis, as head of the MPA, had reintroduced the term "*voennyi komissar*" (military commissar) as early as 10 May 1937, but it had not been approved by the Commissariat of Defense until 15 August 1937. Along with it came the concept of dual command. However, I use the terms "political commissar" and "military commissar" interchangeably.

[205] Ibid., p. 395.
[206] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 144-145.
[207] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 395.
[208] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 145.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid., pp. 144-145, and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 89.
[211] Reese, The Soviet Military experience, pp. 90-91.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid, p. 90 and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 389-392.
[214] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 392-393.
[215] Ibid., p. 394.
[216] Ibid, pp. 394-397.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., p. 397.
[221] Ibid. Only in 1940 were requirements for admission to military-political schools raised to an 8th to 10th grade level.
[222] Ibid., pp. 397-398.
[223] Ibid., p. 399. There were only 6,389 political workers in the Red Army during the Civil War.
[224] Ibid., p. 398.
[225] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 163.
[226] Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 95. By the end of 1940, over 1000 women were part of the Soviet military.
[227] Article 4 of Document TC-25, Exhibit GB-145, Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), Vol. 7, pp. 847-854 (cited hereafter as NCA), Volume 8, pp. 375-376. John Kolasky, Partners in Tyranny: The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, August 23, 1939 (Toronto: Mackenzie Institute, 1990), pp. 119-120, and John Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 530-532 address this topic in more detail. Gabriel Gorodetsky, Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) addresses the debate on what Stalin knew about Hitler's and Nazi Germany's intentions for future hostilities with the Soviet Union.
[228] Document Hess-16, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal: 14 November 1945-1 October 1946 (Nuremberg: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), (hereafter cited as IMT-TMWC), Vol. 40, pp. 293-298, and Kolasky, Partners in Tyranny, pp. 121-122 deal with the secret protocols of the non-aggression treaty.
[229] Reese, Stalin's reluctant Soldiers, p. 163, and Bernd Bonwetsch, "Stalin, the Army, and the 'Great Patriotic War,'" in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, (eds.), Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 185-186. Roger Reese cites Donald C. Watt, Too Serious a Business: European Armed Forces and the Approach of the Second World War (New York, Norton, 1975), pp. 93, 94, and 102 as sources to show that Stalin incorrectly believed Germany had eight million men ready to deploy against the USSR, more than double the actual figure at the time. He also notes that France and England did the same thing.
[230] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 169-170
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid., p. 170, and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 492-499 and 532-539.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 170-171, and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 537-541.
[236] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 547.
[237] NCA, Vol. 6, pp. 981-982 as cited in ibid., p. 548.
[238] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 547-553.
[239] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, p. 172.
[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid., pp. 171-172, and Erickson, The Soviet High Command, and Colonel-General G.F. Krivosheev (ed.), Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century (London: Greenhill, 1997), pp. 60-80. This high rate includes 18,000 frostbite victims. The full casualty count appears to be 126,875 dead and 264,908 wounded.
[245] Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 172-173.
[246] Ibid., pp. 173-174.
[247] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 554.
[248] Ibid., p. 557 and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, p. 98, and Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, p. 402 and note 238, p. 453. As noted by Fedotoff White, a 13 August 1940 Philadelphia Inquirer article noted the reintroduction of unitary command under the direction of Marshal Timoshenko from the day before.
[249] Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 555.
[250] Gorodetsky, Grand Delusion, pp. 48-52, and pp. 86-88 for commentary on Stalin's belief that Germany would eventually turn against the USSR. However, this is different from the concept put forth by some of Hitler's surviving generals, like Rheinhard Gehlen and modern scholars like Aleksandr Nekrich that Stalin was planning to eventually attack Nazi Germany, and therefore, Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union was indeed a justifiable preemptive act. Further sources include: Aleksandr Nekrich, (Gregory L. Freeze, ed. and translator), Pariahs, Partners, Predators: German-Soviet Relations, 1922-1941. Timoshenko's task of addressing the poorly trained armed forces is found in Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers, pp. 172-175, and Reese, The Soviet Military Experience, pp. 99-100.
[251] Fedotoff White, Growth of the Red Army, pp. 402-404. The military soviets at the corps level and on down, which had been re-instituted as part of dual command in the wake of the "Great Purge" in 1937, managed to remain part of the political infrastructure.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Manfred Zeidler, "Reichswehr und Rote Armee 1920-1933," in Deutschland und das bolschewistische Rußland von Brest-Litowsk bis 1941 (Abhandlungen des Göttinger Arbeitskreises, Band 8) (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1991), pp. 42-43.
[254] Ibid., pp. 43-44.
[255] After serving as the section head of *T* 3, Stülpnagel became First Quartermaster in September 1938. Less than two years later, he led the II Army Corps in France. After almost eight months as the Chairman of the German Armistice Commission, he became the commanding general of the 17th Army in February 1941, a capacity he served in until October 1941. For more on Stülpnagel's career see Heinrich Bücheler, Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel. Soldat - Philosoph - Verschwörer. Biographie (Berlin, Frankfurt/M.: Ullstein, 1989).
[256] BAMA, RH 2/1443, T.A. Nr. 308/35 T 3 Va, Berlin 10 May 1935, "Fragen des Offizier- und Unteroffizierkorps in der Roten Armee", typescript, signed by Stülpnagel. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference.
[257] Jürgen Förster, in Germany and the Second World War, (Vol. IV), pp. 512-513. Förster cited a draft of a leaflet from the Psychologisches Laboratorium des Reichskriegsministeriums [Psychology Labratory of the Reich War Ministry] No. 241/35, 2 November 1935, Völkerpsychologische Untersuchung 5: Die nationale Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung der UdSSR und die Möglichkeit für eine propagandistische Bearbeitung [Ethnopsychological study 5; The national composition of the population of the USSR and possibilities of applying propaganda], reprint, p. 7, BAMA, RH 2/v.981, in ibid., p. 513.
[258] Alec Nove and J. A. Newth, "The Jewish Population: Demographic Trends and Occupational Patterns," in Lionel Kochan (ed.), The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University press, 1978), pp. 132-167. The reference to Red Army political commissars is on p. 165. I am grateful to Dieter Pohl for this reference.
[259] Völkischer Beobachter Microfilm Reel #29 – 5.5.40-30.9.40, Völkischer Beobachter, Norddeutsche Ausgabe, 15 August 1940, Nr. 228, p. 4. I used the Völkischer Beobachter microfilm collection at the

McLennan-Redpath Library at McGill University. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for the suggestion to search through these sources.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Ibid.

Chapter 3: The Genesis of the Commissar Order – A View from the Top Down

At 11:00 in the morning on Sunday, 30 March 1941, over two hundred-fifty commanders and high-ranking officials from all of the German military service branches gathered in the New *Reich* Chancellery. Sitting according to rank, they listened for almost three hours to a speech by Adolf Hitler about the rationale for a coming military campaign with the Soviet Union. According to Hitler, the pending conflict would be "a clash of two ideologies [...] and a war of extermination."[1] To prosecute this campaign against both an armed enemy and an ideology, Hitler targeted Red Army political commissars, communist party officials, and communist intelligentsia as criminals. As punishment for their criminality, they were to be exterminated. General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the German Army from 1938-1942, summarized the main points of Hitler's 30 March 1941 speech in his diary. According to Halder, Hitler called for the "extermination (*Vernichtung*) of Bolshevik Commissars" and declared that: "Commissars and GPU[2] men were criminals and must be treated as such" (*Kommissare und GPU-Leute sind Verbrecher und müssen als solche behandelt werden*).[3]

Within ten weeks, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (*OKW* - Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) and the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (*OKH* - Army High Command) turned Hitler's oral instructions to his military commanders into a series of typed orders. The "Directives for the Treatment of Political Commissars" (*Richtlinien für die Behandlung politischer Kommissare*) officially ordered the

battlefield executions of Red Army political functionaries by German troops.[4] Coupled with earlier directives on the limited jurisdiction of courts martial i.e. military courts that determined punishments for members of the German armed forces subject to military law, legal discipline and authority in the field, agreements on cooperation with the *SS* and *SS* security forces, as well as orders permitting harsh measures against civilian enemy populations and prisoners of war, the Commissar Order was part of a larger corpus of pre-invasion directives in which National Socialist ideology was translated into military, political, racial, and economic policy for Operation *Barbarossa*, the code-name for the German invasion of the USSR.

This subjection of military operations to National Socialist ideology, culminating in the Commissar Order of 6 June 1941, will be the focus of the following chapter. Utilizing a top-down, synchronous approach, I will trace the genesis of the *Kommissarbefehl* by examining the roots of Hitler's policies toward the Soviet Union. These roots are gnarled, and deeply embedded in the soil of the National Socialist worldview of Communism, Jews, and Bolshevik leadership in the Soviet Union. The first part of the chapter, therefore, will focus on the elements of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*, which most influenced and shaped the legal and operational directives for the attack on the USSR.

In addition, while the concept of the Commissar Order and many of the other pre-invasion directives originated with Hitler, the actual planning and/or implementation of these orders along and behind the front came through several different agencies and individuals within the Nazi hierarchy and German military. *OKW*, *OKH*, *SS*, *SD*, and the Order Police,[5] their leaders and legal affairs experts, all

took part in forging the structure of the political and military order of battle through the first half of 1941. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will examine the roles played by these agencies and individuals in the policy-making process, and the orders and cooperative agreements that resulted from their power and influence. By examining the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement (the Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area) of 28 April 1941, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941, the "guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia," as well the Commissar Order in detail, I will establish a chronology of pre-invasion directives and agreements, and begin to unravel the complex layers of negotiations and drafts of orders that characterized the inter-agency competition and cooperation prior to the outbreak of war between Germany and the USSR.

Hitler's *Weltanschauung*: Perspectives on Communism, Bolshevik Leadership, the Soviet Union, and Jews

In order to investigate the ideological framework and legal foundations for a war of annihilation, it is essential to first address Hitler's view of Communism, the Soviet Union, and the Jews he believed were the evil force behind both.[6] Although the word "Jew" never appeared in the Commissar Order, the perception by Hitler and his military planners of a seamless alliance and association between Jews and Communism in general, and communist intellectual leaders and political commissars in particular, as leading the opposition to German strategic and ideological objectives, merits careful consideration and study.

The inextricable link between Jews and Soviet Bolshevism was a central theme in Hitler's ideological and racial rhetoric from the earliest days of his political

career. In the pages of Mein Kampf, Hitler outlined what he perceived as a secret plot by Jews in Bolshevik Russia and throughout the world to control foreign and domestic affairs in Europe. Routinely utilizing the imperative voice for emphasis, Hitler imbued his criticism of Jewish Bolshevism with a call for vigilance, and cited recent history to add substance to his claims:

> We must never forget that the regents of present day Russia are common, bloodstained criminals; that here is the scum of humanity, which [...] butchered and rooted out millions of its leading intellects with savage bloodthirstiness [...] Nor must we forget that these rulers belong to a nation which combines a rare mixture of bestial horror with an inconceivable gift of lying, and today more than ever before believes itself called upon to impose bloody oppression on the whole world. We must not forget that the international Jew, who today rules Russia absolutely, sees in Germany, not an ally, but a State marked for the same destiny [...] He [the Jew] pursues his course, the course of sneaking in among the nations and of gouging them internally, and he fights with his weapons, with lies and slanders, poison and destruction, intensifying the struggle to the point of bloodily exterminating his hated opponents. In Russian Bolshevism we must see Jewry's twentieth-

> century effort to take world dominion unto itself [...] The struggle against Jewish bolshevization of the world requires a clear attitude towards Soviet Russia. You cannot drive out the Devil with Beelzebub.[7]

According to Hitler, Jews and communist leaders comprised a criminal order. As murderers and liars, they were in a league of their own, having exported their subversive beliefs to blatantly target Germany for revolutionary upheaval. Drawing on stereotypes of Jews as slanderous media moguls and evil money mongers, Hitler sought to attribute the defeat and vilification of Germany in the First World War to the universal evil empire of Judeo-Bolshevism:

> Hence the Jew today is the great agitator for the complete destruction of Germany. Wherever in the world we read about attacks on Germany, Jews are their fabricators; indeed, just as both before and during the War, the Jewish stock exchange and Marxist press deliberately added fuel to the hate for Germany, until State after State abandoned neutrality and entered their service of the World War coalition against their true national interests. The Jewish train of thought is, moreover, clear. The bolshevization of Germany, i.e., the extermination of the national folkish intelligentsia and the exploitation of German labor power in

> the yoke of world finance, [...] a further extension of this Jewish tendency to conquer the world. [8]

However, Hitler went beyond simply trying to unmask the deceptive tendencies and the seemingly insatiable social, political, and economic lust for world dominion of Jews and communists. Hitler postulated that he was given a divine appointment to prepare for and fight through what he saw as the coming confrontation between Jewish Bolshevism and National Socialism. In spite of his deep distrust and loathing of Christianity and organized religion, Hitler pledged himself to accept the mantle as the defender of the faith and the racially pure in the ongoing struggle against communist-influenced European Jews. In the concluding paragraphs of chapter II, "Years of Study and Suffering," Hitler promised:

> If, with the help of the Marxian creed, the Jew conquers the nations of this world, his crown will become the funeral wreath of humanity, and once again this planet, empty of mankind, will move through the ether as it did thousands of years ago.
>
> Eternal nature inexorably revenges the transgressions of her laws.

> Therefore, I believe today that I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator: By warding off the Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work.[9]

With such beliefs as the foundation of his *Weltanschauung*, Hitler made it clear that when he came to power he would work diligently to eliminate this perceived Jewish Bolshevik threat to German economic, military, political, and geographic security. In chapter XIV of *Mein Kampf* on the subject of "Eastern Policy," Hitler stated:

> We National Socialists, however, must go further; the right to soil and territory can become a duty if decline seems to be in store for a great nation unless it extends its territory. Even more especially if what is involved is not some little Negro people or other, but the German mother of all life, which has given its cultural picture to the contemporary world. Germany will be either a world power or will not be at all [...] With this, we National Socialists consciously draw a line through the foreign policy trend of our pre-War period. We take up at the halting place of six hundred years ago. We terminate the endless German drive to the south and west of Europe, and direct our gaze towards the land of

the east [...] and proceed to the territorial policy of the future. [10]

Continuing, Hitler traced the genesis of this looming confrontation to the direction of the Soviet Union (Russia), further re-enforcing his drive to secure *Lebensraum* (Living Space) [11] in the territories beyond the eastern borders of the *Reich*:

> But if we talk about new soil and territory in Europe today, we can think primarily only of Russia and its vassal border states.
>
> Fate itself seems to seek to give us a tip at this point. In the surrender of Russia to Bolshevism, the Russian people was robbed of that intelligentsia which produced and guaranteed its State stability [...] For centuries Russia drew nourishment from the Germanic nucleus of its superior strata of leaders. Today it is uprooted and obliterated almost without a trace. The Jew has replaced it. Impossible as it is for Russians alone to shake off the yoke of the Jews through their own strength, it is equally impossible in the long run for the Jews to maintain the mighty empire. Jewry itself is not an organizing element, but a ferment of

> decomposition. The Persian Empire, once so powerful is now ripe for collapse; and the end of Jewish dominion in Russia will also be the end of the Russian State itself. [12]

Throwing conventional wisdom aside, Hitler sought to settle what he perceived to be long-standing grievances with Jews as well as communists. The threat, as he saw it, came not in the form of weapons, or specific individuals as much as in ideas perpetrated by a cabal of Marxist Jews. According to Hitler, the Jew was saturated with communist ideology, and used any means necessary to disseminate his cancerous doctrine. This presented Germany with a grave ideological danger. Jews have always employed the corrupting influence of Marxism as an implement of terror to deceive and eventually destroy, and Hitler believed they would do so again:

> Slowly the fear of the Marxist weapon of Jewry sinks into the brains and souls of decent people like a nightmare. One begins to tremble before the terrible enemy, and thus has become his final victim [...] The Jew, by gaining the political power, casts off the few cloaks which he still wears [...] The most terrible example of this kind is offered by Russia where he [the Jew] starved about thirty million people with a truly diabolic ferocity, under inhuman tortures, in order to secure to a crowd of Jewish scribblers

and stock exchange robbers the rulership over a great people.[13]

Drawing from the example of the Bolshevik Revolution, where a disproportionate number of Jews (who did not even consider themselves Jews) held positions of leadership, Hitler and the Nazi party propagated a myth that Jews, and Jewish led Bolsheviks, conspired to eradicate Germany and the German people.[14]

This theme of a Jewish conspiracy, especially with regard to Russian Bolshevism, also continued to run through much of Hitler's wartime rhetoric. In the record of secret conversations at his headquarters in East Prussia and Ukraine, Hitler spoke freely, and offered his acumen of how he, and National Socialism, were working to destroy the imagined pestilence created by Jews and Communists in the Soviet Union. During a discussion in which he attributed the fall of Rome to the influence of the Jews, Hitler concluded that: "Rome was Bolshevized, and Bolshevism produced exactly the same results in Rome as later in Russia [...] By exterminating this pest [the Jew – explanation mine], we shall do humanity a service of which our soldiers can have no idea."[15] Viewing history through the ideological lens of National Socialism not only distorted the facts, but also created a twisted sense of reality.

In addition, Hitler placed blame squarely on the heads of Jews for initiating both world wars. He believed he was fulfilling his appointed position to eradicate the Jews of Europe, especially those of the Soviet Union, much in the same way potential plagues and diseases were combated by the great minds of science:

> From the rostrum of the *Reichstag* I prophesied to Jewry that, in the event of war's proving inevitable, the Jew would disappear from Europe.[16]
>
> That race of criminals had on its conscience the two million dead of the First World War, and now already hundreds of thousands more [...] The discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions that have taken place in the world. The battle in which we are engaged today is of the same sort as the battle waged during the last century, by Pasteur and Koch. How many diseases have their origin in the Jewish virus! [...] We shall regain our health only by eliminating the Jew. Everything has a cause, nothing comes by chance.[17]

The apparent seamless flow of ideology from Hitler's earliest political commentaries through the war years, and a certain sense of inevitability may suggest an "intentionalist" line of reasoning.[18] However, the path to a war of annihilation in the East was not delineated so precisely. [19] Hitler's ideological ideas clearly formed the foundation and rationale for the subsequent attack against the Soviet Union, but there was also a distinct bureaucratic process that contributed to the development and implementation of policy toward Jews and communist functionaries. Translating ideology into action required agencies and operatives that extended far beyond the

close circle of Hitler and his immediate subordinates. Hitler's acid words of hatred and bigotry, and charges of betrayal, while virulent, did not compose a comprehensive plan that even came close to the program of death and terror that followed. [20]

In the following section, I will examine the chronological progression of the bureaucratic process with all its ideological underpinnings that helped produce one agreement (The Heydrich-Wagner agreement) and two orders (The *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order) prior to the start of "Operation *Barbarossa*."

The Anatomy of *SS* and *Wehrmacht* Cooperation: Pre-Invasion Chronology and the Heydrich -Wagner Agreement (the Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area) of 28 April 1941

At exactly 0315 on the morning of 22 June 1941 thousands of German guns and artillery pieces opened fire on established border fortifications, roads, communication junctions, and areas of high Soviet troop concentrations.[21] With *Luftwaffe* bombers streaking overhead and the barrage shifting to the rear, the men and combat engineers of the *Wehrmacht* swept across the border regions of Poland into the territory of the Soviet Union behind columns of armor. "Operation *Barbarossa*" had begun.[22]

Following in the wake of the German army were *Einsatzgruppen*, operational units of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, under the overall direction of the *Reichsführer-SS*, Heinrich Himmler. Charged by Hitler with "special tasks" to

prosecute the war against enemies of the *Reich*, these security forces were deployed in the USSR as a direct result of a negotiated agreement between the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS*. The 28 April 1941 agreement on the "Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area,"[23] issued by the *Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres* (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, was more than the culmination of over two months of army-*SS* discussions during the winter and early spring of 1941. Rather, it reflected attempts by Hitler, the military leadership, and the *SS* to correct jurisdictional and deployment matters related to clashes with military commanders over murders and massacres involving the *Einsatzgruppen* in the aftermath of the German *Blitzkrieg* attack on Poland in September 1939.

In order to understand the relationship between the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in the months leading up to the 22 June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, it is essential to examine their respective roles for the attack on Poland.[24] Prior to the Polish campaign, Hitler had met with military commanders at the Berghof, his retreat in the Bavarian Alps. At this conference, on 22 August 1939, Hitler discussed several of his political and military objectives for the coming attack, which he expressed in two speeches to the assembled commanders and Nazi Party officials. Appearing to subsume ideology to military expediency, Hitler announced the news during the morning speech that he had authorized negotiations with the Soviet Union on a non-aggression pact designed to preserve and secure his eastern flank.[25] The non-aggression pact between German and the USSR was signed just eight days prior to the invasion of Poland by German Foreign Minister Joachim von

Ribbentrop and his opposite in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Vyacheslav M. Molotov.[26]

During the morning speech, which began at 10:00 A.M., Hitler had put forth his position that since both he and Germany were at the peak of their respective powers in regard to their common enemies, it was time to engage in armed conflict with Poland. Focusing on several different rationales to support his decision to move against Poland, Hitler stressed that the coming invasion was driven by a matter of timing. England and France were, in the estimation of Hitler, ripe for defeat, and unable militarily, economically, and politically to respond to an armed attack on Poland. If Germany were to wait, she would give ground to the western allies in their quest to rise up and match the might of the German nation.[27]

According to Hitler, the attack on Poland was also a matter of leadership. Hitler envisioned himself as an indispensable leader, and the only one in Germany capable of prosecuting the war successfully. As a result, he argued that if an attack against Poland resulted in a conflict with France and England, then so be it. His only fear was that "at the last minute some *Schweinehund* will make a proposal for mediation." Thus, he determined that "[...] conflict better now" then wait two to three years when the balance of power could easily shift.[28] He also informed those in attendance that the subsequent Polish military campaign needed to be waged with "the greatest brutality and without mercy."[29]

During the second speech at the Berghof, Hitler exhorted his commanders to follow what he identified as a proven German formula for military success: "Struggle for life or death. Germany has won every war as long as she was united." According

to the *Führer*, military leadership needed to display an "iron, unflinching attitude" with "great confidence, [...] faith in victory, and [...] manly bearing" since the "destruction of Poland [is] in the foreground."[30]

In addition, Hitler also stated that:

> The aim [of the Polish invasion –explanation mine] is elimination of living forces [...] I shall give a propagandistic cause for starting the war – never mind whether it be plausible or not. The victor shall not be asked, later on, whether we told the truth or not. In starting and making a war, not the Right is what matters, but Victory. Have no pity. Brutal attitude. 80 million people shall get what is their right. Their existence has to be secured. The strongest has the Right. Greatest severity.[31]

According to Chief of the General Staff Halder and General Fedor von Bock, commander of Army Group North, who both were among the invited guests, Hitler wanted to unleash an extremely harsh form of warfare in Poland.[32] Field Marshall von Bock noted that Hitler "did not wish to burden the army with the necessary liquidation of the Polish upper class, especially the clergy," and was, therefore, assigning that job to the *SS*.[33]

This assignment for the *SS* was the culmination of months of negotiations involving representatives of the *Gestapo*, the Army High Command (*OKH*), and the *Abwehr*, and was intended to prepare the way for units of the *SS* security forces to operate in close proximity to the *Wehrmacht* in Poland.[34] Legal and police experts from Heydrich's office, including Franz Six and Dr. Werner Best,[35] had worked to carefully select personnel to man the ranks of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the units that would do the bulk of the work in carrying out the will of the *Führer* behind the front lines.[36]

At the same time, the office of the Quartermaster General (General Eugen Müller), detailed security measures to be implemented by the *Wehrmacht* during the invasion of Poland. However, the "Special Regulations for Case White," issued on 24 July 1939, were fairly ambiguous when it came to describing the authority of the *Einsatzgruppen.*[37] Specific security measures in the army area of operations addressed the treatment of hostages, irregulars, and "compulsory measures, especially for the police force."[38] Soldiers and members of the *Einsatzgruppen* were to pay careful heed to rounding up "persons fit for military service in enemy countries,"[39] while at the same time preserving the ability of local regions to carry out "essential industrial or supply enterprises."[40]

The "Special Regulations for Case White" concluded with the provision that "orders for the supply and deployment of all German police units, including *Sipo Einsatzkommandos*, would be issued separately."[41] One of these separate orders, "Guidelines for the Foreign Operations of the *Sipo* and *SD*" of 31 July 1939, stated: "By agreement with Army High Command [...] the task of the Security Police

Einsatzkommandos is combating all elements in foreign territory and behind the fighting troops that are hostile to the *Reich* and German people."[42]

In addition, the commanders of the Security Police were ordered to keep close ties with their *Wehrmacht* counterparts in the field, as well as the Chiefs of Civil Administration (*Chefs der Zivilverwaltung – CdZs*), and the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*) at the local level. Furthermore, each *Einsatzgruppe* was to provide a liaison officer (*Verbindungsoffizier*) in order to guarantee "frictionless communications" with *Wehrmacht* and police officials.[43] The specific guidelines for such communications were not defined in this order, but the Security Police were granted authority to request assistance from the Army and Order Police in fulfilling their "tasks," as well as the flexibility of providing tactical and logistical assistance to any other German military, or police formations that might be in the vicinity.[44]

However, the particular tasks for the *Einsatzgruppen* in combating the "enemies of the *Reich*" apparently were not given in detail through the chain of command outside the *SS*. The program for mass arrests, deportations to concentration camps, and executions of those deemed grave threats to the *Reich* was code-named "Operation Tannenberg." As Richard Breitman notes in Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew, this program may well have been passed on by Heydrich and Best to the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos* at a meeting on 18 August 1939, a full two weeks before the *Blitzkrieg* of Poland.[45]

While the details of the orders for the *Einsatzgruppen* appear not to have survived the war, the testimony of those with first-hand knowledge of the operations

corroborated the nature of close cooperation intended between forces of the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police for the invasion of Poland. As Alexander Rossino notes in his book, Hitler Strikes Poland: *Blitzkrieg*, Ideology, and Atrocity, sources in the *RSHA* as well as the *SD* spoke of the "special tasks" designated for the *Einsatzgruppen*: "After the war, Werner Best pointed to cooperation between the military Counterintelligence Office and the Gestapo and Security Police as being particularly important to the overall success of Operation Tannenberg."[46]

Rossino also quotes Walter Huppenkothen, the *SS* liaison officer of *Einsatzgruppe I* to Fourteenth Army headquarters for the duration of the invasion of Poland, as a confirmation of Best's recollections. In a separate postwar investigation, Huppenkothen testified, "in order to carry out their security tasks, the units (*Einsatzgruppen*) were supplied (*ausgerüstet*) with lists of names (*Fahndungsmaterial*) compiled by a collaborative effort between the *Sipo* and the Counterintelligence Office of Armed Forces High Command (*Amt Ausland Abwehr im OKW*)."[47] These names were included in a file kept in the Security Police Headquarters in Berlin as part of an ongoing "Catalog of State Enemies" (*A-Kartei*), which targeted Polish Christians and Jews from among the Intelligentsia, the clergy, the Communist Party, and other political leaders and activists for arrest and/or execution once German forces overran Poland.[48]

Additional documentary evidence confirmed that the security forces and counterintelligence officials of the army had an especially close working relationship prior to the invasion of Poland. In a document dated 26 August 1939, *Abwehr*

officials received ten ledgers filled with names from the *Gestapo*, as well as ten additional lists compiled by *Abwehr* operatives in the field.[49] These names were then to be used in the roundup of "enemies of the German *Reich* and German people" by the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, or even the army.[50]

However, all *Wehrmacht* commanders in the field may not have been fully informed about the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen*, or they simply chose to refuse authorization for "special tasks" designated to the security forces for the campaign in Poland. Once the invasion began, some army commanders intervened to stop executions, lodged protests, and initiated military court martial proceedings against members of the *Einsatzgruppen* for what they perceived to be violations of the military discipline and excessive use of force against Jews and other civilians.[51] In spite of several high profile protests,[52] most interventions failed to stem the tide of terror by the *Einsatzgruppen* behind the lines in Poland because the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, did not see the need to raise objections.[53] The *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police provided a security service for the *Wehrmacht*, and this freed army units for greater flexibility in military operations. Perhaps most important, though, was the explicit desire of the *Führer* to implement a war without mercy with forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police at the vanguard of the attack.

As a result, the Polish campaign provided a foundation from which future negotiations between the *Wehrmacht* and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police could proceed. With a history of alliance and intelligence sharing through the Army counterintelligence officers (*Ic*) at the division level and above, the infrastructure of

cooperation was already in place. However, as the courts martial proceedings and protests indicated, there were clearly issues about maintaining the honor of the Army, subordination, assignment of particular units, supply access, tasks, and jurisdiction that needed to be resolved before the army and *SS* would be operating together again in combat and behind the front lines in future campaigns.

Furthermore, additional legal, military, and operational objectives for the war against the Soviet Union also needed to be in place before negotiations between the Army and the security forces of the *Reichsführer-SS* could even be considered. Such conditions emerged only as the war in the West seemed to achieve success.

Following a string of military victories that began in the East with Poland on 1 September 1939, and continued in the West through Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France through June 1940, Hitler turned his attention to the last remaining major powers in Europe: England and the Soviet Union. However, the British proved a more stubborn foe than he imagined in 1940, and he was eventually forced to delay plans to invade the British Isles.[54]

Despite stiff British resistance, Hitler pressed on with his racial, social, political, and economic blueprint for the rest of Europe. Ignoring the conditions of the Non-Aggression Pact during the summer of 1940, Hitler secretly ordered a draft drawn up for an invasion of the Soviet Union. Five months later, he instructed the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (*OKH*), headed by Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch, and the Chief of the General Staff, General Franz Halder, to make haste in formulating the preparations for the attack. Halder noted in his diary on 5 December 1940 that "the decision over European hegemony comes down to the

struggle against Russia."[55] Within two weeks, Hitler ordered the first draft of a general directive associated with the planned invasion of the Soviet Union (Directive Number 21, "Operation Barbarossa," 18 December 1940).[56]

Directive Number 21 consisted of an introduction followed by five numbered sections. Overarching political statements were secondary in a document devoid of National Socialist rhetoric. Primary attention was instead focused on general intent and operational objectives as exemplified by the following goals:

> [...] The German *Wehrmacht* must be prepared to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign (Operation *Barbarossa*) even before the conclusion of the war against England. For this purpose, the Army will have to employ all available units, with the reservation that the occupied territories must be secured against surprises."[57]

The emphasis on a swift victory, as occurred in Poland and parts of Western Europe, was in keeping with military strategy at the time. Utilizing a combined assault of air and land forces, Hitler intended to destroy Soviet resistance and still allocate the bulk of his navy in a campaign against England. Sections I and II of the original version of this directive detailed the goals for the general intent, and outlined the probable allied support expected of Rumania and Finland.[58]

Section III framed the expected conduct of operations. Emphasis was placed on securing objectives in the northern sector, such as Leningrad, before turning attention to the capital, Moscow. According to Directive 21, "Only the surprising rapid collapse of Russian resistance could justify a simultaneous pursuit of both objectives."[59] The thrust of the attack south of the Pripet Marshes would be from Lublin to Kiev in order to destroy all Russian forces west of the Dnepr in Ukraine. Once this goal was accomplished, German troops were to advance further east and capture strategic industries in the Donets Basin. All these attacks would employ armor and the generous support of the *Luftwaffe* "to paralyze and eliminate the effectiveness of the Russian air force."[60] The Navy would play a reduced role, focusing on protecting the German coast, and providing patrols to keep the Soviet navy bottled up. Questions about allied support and the role of neutral Sweden in allowing troop transports were also raised in this section.[61]

Section IV of the original draft of Directive Number 21 left open the possibility that Russia might alter its position towards Germany before the planned attack. It also stressed the importance of maintaining a veil of secrecy over the intended operations lest "the gravest political and military disadvantages" result.[62] Finally, Section V ordered the Commanders-in-Chief to submit their specific plans for the attack, along with timetables, through the existing command structure.[63]

The original version of Directive 21 contained neither any mention of the Jewish-Bolshevik threat, nor any encouragement for soldiers of the German Army to eliminate Jews and communists. Furthermore, Directive Number 21 offered no indication of the agreement that would be forged between the armed forces of the

Wehrmacht and the police and security forces of the *Reichsführer-SS*, Heinrich Himmler.

Yet, the lack of clarity in defining roles and target groups for various agencies of the invading force was completely in keeping with Hitler's use of the military directive in cooperation with the *OKW* to date. Hitler viewed military directives as general guidelines to be honed over a relatively long period of time. In the introduction to Blitzkrieg to Defeat: Hitler's War Directives, 1939-1945, Hugh Trevor-Roper explained the difference between a *Weisung* (Directive) and a *Befehl* (Order). Quoting Dr. Walther Hubatsch,[64] he noted that while both a *Weisung* and a *Befehl* provided binding instructions, a directive offered subordinate authorities the opportunity to design the method of execution. A *Befehl*, on the other hand, was immediate, and was intended to be followed without further amendments.[65] These distinctions played a significant role in the attachments and changes made by Hitler and the staff at *OKW* in the months preceding the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Taking the general principles and objectives as outlined in Hitler's Directive Number 21, the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, Wehrmachtführungsstab, Abteilung Landesverteidigung*,[66] set about drafting a more specific document detailing both strategic goals and guidelines for the troops. Upon completion, the chief of *Wehrmacht* Operations Staff, General Alfred Jodl, presented a version to Hitler. On 3 March 1941, Hitler sent a copy of these "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" back to Jodl with instructions for revisions to be included in the final version. The tenor of the directive had dramatically changed:

> The coming military campaign is more than a battle of weapons; it is a clash between two ideologies. In order to end this war, it is not enough to defeat the enemy armed forces, given the vastness of the territory. The entire region must be divided into states, each with its own government, with whom we can then conclude peace [. . .] Any revolution of large size creates facts, which can no longer be erased. The socialist idea in today's Russia is no longer imaginable [. . .] The Jewish-Bolshevist Intelligentsia, the previous "oppressors" of the people, must be eliminated [*muss beiseitigt werden* – emphasis mine]. Furthermore, we must under all circumstances avoid permitting a nationalist Russia to appear in place of Bolshevist Russia, since history shows that the final end will become anti-German. Our task is to set up as soon as possible, using a minimum military force, socialist state structures which will be dependent on us. These tasks are so difficult that they cannot be entrusted to the army.[67]

Such language elevated the preparation for a military invasion into a formulation for ideological warfare.[68] A critical development in this document was the initial transformation of National Socialist rhetoric into policy. The "Jewish-Bolshevist Intelligentsia" identified in the pages of Mein Kampf as bent on world

domination was targeted for elimination in order to achieve Hitler's vision for a defeated Soviet Union. Nevertheless, such broad and sweeping categories of intended victims and euphemistic terms for killing left much room for interpretation.[69]

However, the special tasks envisioned by Hitler were not clarified at this point. An agreement between the *Wehrmacht* and *SS* dealing with responsibilities for obtaining military and security objectives had yet to be secured. The specific roles of both the *Wehrmacht* and Himmler's security forces in combating the perceived "Jewish-Bolshevist" threat were, therefore, still very much under consideration by Hitler and the legal and military planners of "Operation *Barbarossa*."[70]

Hitler's instructions to Jodl on 3 March 1941 briefly began to outline Army areas of jurisdiction, occupation government, and established grounds for cooperation with the police and security forces under the control of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. In detailing how Directive 21 must be rewritten, Jodl noted on 3 March 1941 the following main points made by Hitler:

> 1. The Army requires an operational area. It must, however, be no deeper than is needed. In the rear areas no military administration is to be set up. Rather, in its place, Reich Commissars shall be appointed to administer specific ethnographic regions of significant size. It is the responsibility of the Reich Commissars to build a new state political structure as quickly as possible. There shall be *Wehrmacht* Commanders

working beside the Reich Commissars; they will follow the Commander-in-Chief of the Army for purely military questions connected to operations; for everything else, they will be subordinate to *OKW*. In these staffs there shall be organizations dealing with all things pertaining to the *Wehrmacht* (war economy, signals, military security, etc.) The bulk of the police forces will be assigned/appointed to the Reich Commissars.

2. Border closing can only be extended to the area of operations. Only if it becomes necessary to insert organizations of the *Reichsführer-SS* next to the Secret Field Police, permission of the *Reichsführer-SS* must be obtained. The necessity to immediately eliminate [*unschädlich zu machen*] all Bolshevik leaders and Commissars speaks for itself. Military courts must have nothing to do with these issues; they must concern themselves only with internal military matters of the armed forces.[71]

The 3 March 1941 draft revision of Directive 21 left little room for doubt that commissars and Jewish-Bolshevik leaders were intended as the detritus of Hitler's *Weltanschauungskrieg*. Once again, the language of the draft linked Jews and Soviet

communists, and extended the association to commissars in point number two.[72] This document thus contained both the language and intent to "liquidate" (read murder) **all** Bolshevik leaders and commissars (emphasis mine). Overall, the key element in the pacification and subsequent occupation of the Soviet Union focused on the destruction of all resistance that could possibly imperil the National Socialist concept of *Lebensraum* and the German occupation policy as expressed by both Hitler and Himmler.[73]

By Wednesday, 5 March 1941, the legal teams at *OKH* and *OKW* had received the draft revisions for strategic goals and guidelines for the troops from Jodl.[74] Within a week, they had rewritten the "Guidelines," and passed them on to *OKW*. Keitel signed off on the final draft version of the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" by Thursday, 13 March 1941.[75]

These "Guidelines," carefully outlined in just over seven pages, closely mirrored the draft suggestions Hitler had presented to Jodl with some important exceptions: Jews, Bolshevism, and Red Army political commissars were not even mentioned in the final form. The theme of decapitating the Soviet leadership through the "elimination of Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia and Commissars" temporarily disappeared as political and strategic objectives from the official lexicon of pre-invasion orders. Instead, these tasks were subsumed in the 13 March 1941 *OKW* document within the assignments, opportunities for mutual agreements between the Army and *SS*, and expectations for close cooperation between military, police, and civilian governments in a conquered Soviet Union.[76]

It is possible that the absence of these objectives and tasks coincided with the transfer of drafting responsibilities from Hitler to the legal teams of *OKH* and *OKW*. Since military commanders appeared to be more concerned with strategic and operational objectives, creating a document devoid of ideological rhetoric would make the "Guidelines" more palatable for those in the field, and might, therefore, serve to avoid the "unprecedented viciousness in occupied Poland"[77] carried out by some members of the *Einsatzgruppen* in military operational zones. [78]

Accordingly, Section I of the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" addressed the issues pertaining to zones of operation and *Wehrmacht* authority over non-military governing officials. Once occupied territory had been secured, it was to be turned over to German civil authorities (*Reich* Commissars), and divided into separate states (North – Baltic, Center – White Russia, and South – Ukraine). Emphasis was placed on keeping the depth of combat zones of operation to a minimum, and hastening the transfer from military to civilian authority.[79]

Since the coming campaign in the Soviet Union was to be driven by ideological principles,[80] it is highly probable that Hitler believed civilian authority, working in conjunction with his loyal security forces, would be more likely to enforce his ideological and racial designs for the East than the German armed forces. In addition, since an invasion of this size, extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, would significantly extend the Army to begin with, having civilian authority in positions of responsibility for administration would free up ground forces to

concentrate on penetrating enemy positions rather than manning deeper operational zones in the rear.[81]

Furthermore, an important role was developing for the forces of Heinrich Himmler's *SS* and police that had not been specified in the 3 March 1941 Draft. Section I, item 2 (b) of the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" clearly stated that:

> In the area of operations, the *Reichsführer-SS* is, on behalf of the *Führer*, entrusted with **special tasks** [emphasis mine] for the preparation of the political administration, tasks which result from the struggle which has to be carried out between two opposing political systems. Within the realm of these tasks, the *Reichsführer-SS* shall act independently and under his own responsibility. The executive authority/power [*vollziehende* Gewalt] invested in the Commander-in-Chief of the Army [*OKH*] and in agencies determined by him shall not be affected by this. It is the responsibility of the *Reichsführer-SS* that through the execution of his tasks military operations shall not be disturbed. Details shall be arranged directly through the *OKH* with the *Reichsführer-SS*.[82]

While the details of Army-*SS* cooperation were to be arranged directly through von Brauchitsch and *OKH*, Himmler's security forces would have to work closely with the *Wehrmacht* Quartermaster branch for supply and field accommodations. Section II (Personnel, Supply and Communication Traffic), item 8 of the 13 March 1941 "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" states:

> As soon as the operations begin, the German-Soviet Russian frontier and at a later stage the border of the rear of the area of operations will be closed by the *Ob. d. H* [Commander-in-Chief of the Army – explanation mine] for any and all non-military traffic with the exception of the police organizations to be deployed by the *Reichsführer-SS* on the *Führer's* orders [*nach Weisung des Führers*]. Billeting and feeding of these organizations will be taken care of by the *OKH – Gen. Qu.* [Quartermaster-General branch of *OKH* – explanation mine] who may for this purpose request from the *Reichsführer-SS* the assignment of liaison officers.[83]

In addition, economic administration of the occupied territories was to be coordinated through the offices of *Reichsmarschall* (*Reich* Marshal) Hermann

Göring.[84] This also had an immediate impact on jurisdictional matters concerning the deployment of police and security forces in the areas under civilian administration. As Section I, item 5 noted:

> The majority of the police forces shall be under the jurisdiction of the Commissars of the *Reich*. Requests for the employment of police forces in the area of operations on the part of the *OKH* are to be made as early as possible to the *OKW*/Armed Forces Operational Staff/Section Defense.[85]

While Himmler's security forces were to act independently within the zones of military operation, they had to do so without prejudice to the superseding plenary powers of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. This scenario reflected the dual nature of the coming invasion of the Soviet Union: On one hand, "Operation *Barbarossa*" was a military campaign to secure operational objectives, and crush Red Army resistance wherever it appeared. On the other hand, it was an ideological campaign to eradicate the Communist system and all of its manifestations. For the legal departments working on the draft of the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21," reconciling the differences in the two campaigns, and creating a harmonious environment between the military and political objectives

and leaders was contingent upon successful negotiations already underway involving the Army and Himmler's *SS*.[86]

These negotiations between the Army and Himmler's *SS* about areas of responsibility and jurisdiction for the special tasks in securing the aforementioned goals had begun before the draft revision guidelines for Directive Number 21 were even returned. On 4 February 1941, *SS* representatives of the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (*RSHA* - Reich Security Main Office)[87] met with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch about the deployment of security police units in areas under military occupation. This meeting appeared to set the framework for further negotiations between the Army and the *RSHA*[88]

Within five weeks, it was clear that negotiations between the *Wehrmacht* and the security forces had achieved both significant progress and significant attention. Hitler took a direct interest in the outcome of the negotiations, and charged General Warlimont, chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff/National Defense Branch of *OKW* with securing orders to deploy *Einsatzkommandos,* company size units of the *Einsatzgruppen*[89] of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, behind the most advanced troops.[90]

Walter Schellenberg, chief of the counterespionage department (*Amt IV E*) in the *RSHA*, also indicated the central role played by Hitler in the placement of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police with the *Wehrmacht* in his memoirs. In recalling his assignment by Heydrich to take up negotiations on behalf of the *RSHA* with Quartermaster General Wagner, Schellenberg stated:

> The *Führer* is well aware of the magnitude and the weight of this decision and it's because of that that he does not want to leave the smallest elements of our strength idle. In fact, not only has he allowed, he has insisted that all fighting units of the security and Civil Police are to be used. These units will be assigned to the commander of the army. They'll be used chiefly in support areas, but also in the front lines as well. The *Führer* wants this because he wants the Security Police and the security Service (*SD*) employed on protecting us against sabotage and against espionage, and also for guarding important personalities and archives – in fact on general security in the rear areas.[91]

As a result, *SS* representatives of the *RSHA* and members of the legal teams at *OKW* arranged for liaison officers from the *SS* to be assigned to the armies, at a rank not above that of the *Ic*, in order to ensure that *Wehrmacht* intelligence officers were simultaneously informed of all orders from the *Reichsführer-SS* to the *Einsatzkommandos*.[92] In addition, in order to keep the political and military objectives for the *Barbarossa* campaign separate, executions by *Einsatzkommandos* were to be carried out, whenever possible, away from the immediate area of the troops.[93]

However, in spite of the top-down Hitler directive to forge a joint *SS-Wehrmacht* operational relationship for the coming invasion, and the framework

provided by the *OKW* "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21," reaching a formalized agreement of cooperation was still not a *pro forma* process. Salient questions for both the army and *SS* remained. What would the full scope of the "special tasks" for the *Einsatzgruppen* entail, and what would be the responsibilities of the *Einsatzkommandos*, Order Police, Security Police, etc. in carrying out these tasks? How would the conduct of the Army and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police be regulated? What measure of cooperation would be required of the *Wehrmacht* for Himmler's forces to fulfill their mission as designated by the *Führer*? These unresolved issues, therefore, served as some of the focal points for a series of meetings at the highest organizational levels throughout March and April of 1941.

On the day the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" were released, Thursday, 13 March 1941, *RSHA* chief Heydrich and General Eduard Wagner, the Quartermaster-General and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Army met to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in the forward and rear zones of military operations. According to a brief entry in Halder's diary for 13 March 1941, Heydrich and Wagner had a discussion about "police questions and border customs."[94]

The next day, Friday, 14 March 1941, Himmler received a report by *SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Polizei* (Major General of the *SS* and Police) Arthur Mülverstedt on the deployment of armed *SS* police divisions for the coming invasion. A second meeting on Saturday, 15 March 1941 brought together Himmler, his chief of staff, *SS-Oberstgruppenführer* (Colonel General) Karl Wolff, Heydrich, and Kurt Daluege, head of the *Ordnungspolizei* (German Order Police). For three

hours over lunch they discussed details of deployment, and inter-agency cooperation for *Waffen-SS* divisions, Order Police units, and the security forces of the *Einsatzgruppen*.[95]

Over the next ten days, SS planners and their *Wehrmacht* counterparts worked on their own versions of an overall agreement that was intended to fill in the details from the 13 March 1941 "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21."[96] By 26 March 1941 *Oberkommando des Heeres/Generalstab des Heeres/Generalquartiermeister* (Wagner)[97] produced a draft order, which contained the contents of the agreement in principle for cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the police and security forces of Himmler's SS for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union.[98]

Composed of four numbered sections, the 26 March 1941 draft order granted pre-invasion authorization to the *Sicherheitspolizei* and the *Sicherheitsdienst* to "secure" objects and persons in the rear area of an army, once the *Barbarossa* campaign was under way. Under the terms of the cooperative agreement in the draft order, security forces could also "[...] investigate and combat anti-German activities in army rear areas in so far as they did not occur within the enemy's armed forces."[99]

Furthermore, as part of their responsibilities behind the front lines, the security forces were granted authority to carry out "executive measures" against the civilian population ("*in eigener Verantwortung gegenüber der Zivilbevölkerung Exekutivmassnahmen zu treffen*"). While "executive measures" (*Exekutivmassnahmen*) and "executive authority" (*vollziehende Gewalt*) have certainly come to be known as euphemisms for murder in the post-war period, in the

months before the invasion of the Soviet Union, such terms associated with the work of the security forces of the *SS* may have been less clearly defined for the leadership of the Army. Conversely, those in authority in the Army may simply have chosen to turn a blind eye to what it knew to be a potentially disagreeable and untidy series of tasks granted to the *SS*. As Hans-Adolf Jacobsen states:

> It was obvious from this [the 26 March 1941 draft order-explanation mine] that the Quartermaster General had made substantial concessions to the *Sicherheitspolizei* and the *Sicherheitsdienst* in regard to the L of C and army rear areas. Perhaps he was convinced that nothing would stop the political leadership from carrying out its planned 'liquidation' of certain groups of Bolshevik leaders – as experience in Poland had amply demonstrated – and that for this reason he gave the *SS Einsatzgruppen* a 'free hand' in order to save *OKH* from being burdened with terrorist measures. He also may have believed that the activities of the *Sonderkommandos* could be kept under control at least in the operational zone.[100]

Nonetheless, the 26 March 1941 draft order was not immediately issued in final form until just over a month later. This gave time for both the *SS* and *Wehrmacht* to take advantage of some of the opaque and imprecise language of the

agreement to hone and define their respective roles behind the scenes. As an example, on 26 March 1941, the same day the draft order was put out by the office of the Quartermaster General, Heydrich, one of the chief architects of the cooperative venture between the *RSHA* and the Army, met with *Reich* Marshal Göring to discuss the *Barbarossa* campaign. Afterward, Heydrich listed the points Göring stressed during the meeting in a memorandum. One area of focus for the coming invasion was to be the so-called "Jewish Question." According to point # 10 of his 26 March 1941 memorandum, Heydrich stated that:

> Regarding the solution to the Jewish question, I gave the *Reich* Marshal [i.e., Göring – explanation mine] a brief report and submitted my proposal to him, which he approved after making a change with respect to Rosenberg's responsibilities and he ordered its resubmission.[101]

In point # 11, Heydrich noted further suggestions from Göring for the invasion of the Soviet Union:

> The *Reich* Marshal told me that we should prepare a brief, 3- to 4-page manual for military operation in Russia that the troops could be given, instructing them on the threat of the *GPU* apparatus, the political commissars, Jews, etc., so

> they basically know who [sic] to stand up against the wall.[102]

Such a statement by Göring made the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* the agents of annihilation, a seemingly contradictory role than what had been stated in the 26 March 1941 draft order containing the contents of the agreement in principle for cooperation between the *Wehrmacht* and the police and security forces of Himmler's *SS* for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union. However, since Göring was not directly involved in *Wehrmacht-SS* negotiations, and had merely been kept informed of the developments, as the Section I, item 5 of the 13 March 1941 "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" revealed, he could have used the term "troops" (*Truppe*) to mean both soldiers in the Army and personnel of the security forces. Such an explanation would help elucidate what Göring reiterated to Heydrich in point # 12 of the 26 March 1941 memo:

> [...] Under no circumstances was the *Wehrmacht* to receive **executive authority** [emphasis mine] like that of the military administration. Instead, behind the advancing troops the *Reich* Marshal himself would be given complete overall authority through the edict (which the *Führer* had already approved), especially because of the appropriation

of the necessary industries. Of course he would let the *Reichsführer-SS* act largely on his own in this matter.[103]

In his continued competition with Himmler for power and influence within the inner circle of the Nazi hierarchy, Göring simply placed himself and his economic administrative hierarchy as the central focal points for the planned occupation of the Soviet Union. However, even the egoistic and condescending sentiments of the *Reichsmarschall* reflected the basic development of policy to date. "Executive authority" was in the hands of the security forces of the *SS*, and the bulk of the police forces in turn came under the jurisdiction of the *Reich* Commissars who were part of the infrastructure of Göring's economic empire.

Nevertheless, according to the directions handed down by Göring, Heydrich and his staff would need to continue to refine and develop policies toward Communist functionaries, Red Army political commissars, and Soviet Jews. While Göring was aware that legal teams from both *OKW* and *OKH* were at work on writing out orders and guidelines which addressed dismantling the political infrastructure of the Soviet government and Red Army, the inclusion of Jews as targets for execution hinted at the what some of the "special tasks" might be for the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in the rear army areas. Göring's instructions to Heydrich also demonstrated that the development of operational and occupation policy included a fusion of opinions and agendas from multiple agencies within the National Socialist system.

As a result, it was not just the offices of the *RSHA* under Heydrich and Göring's economic occupation administration which added to the 26 March 1941

draft order. The office of the Quartermaster General also further specified the terms of Army and *SS* cooperation. On 3 April 1941, Quartermaster General Wagner of *OKH* issued a directive on "Special instructions on supplies, part c." Since the *Wehrmacht* was to be responsible for supply of both its own units as well as those of the *SS*, the Quartermaster General needed to specify the terms and conditions of how supply lines would be maintained once the invasion of the Soviet Union began. Yet, the instructions set forth in the 3 April 1941 directive went beyond the deployment of units for supply and transport of fuel, ammunition, and foodstuffs, the establishment of depots for their distribution, and the definitions of areas of operation and their military sovereignty.[104] The 3 April 1941 directive from Quartermaster General Wagner also prescribed treatment for civilians engaged in any form of resistance to the invading German forces. According to the "Special instructions on supplies, part c":

> Active or passive resistance of the civilian population must be nipped in the bud by implementing most severe measures. Determined and ruthless punishment of anti-German elements will always be an effective preventive measure.[105]

While the specific roles for implementing "determined and ruthless punishment of anti-German elements" were not articulated in the "Special instructions on supplies, part c," the 3 April 1941 directive from the Quartermaster

General of the Army officially introduced the concept of severe, preventive measures to deter resistance in the lexicon of pre-invasion orders.

The "Special instructions on supplies, part c" went on to state that in the Rear Army Area (*Rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet*), each Commander-in-Chief was given three divisions for mop-up operations, as "security of major communications, and the use of local resources to unburden the troop supply system are of utmost importance to conduct of operations."[106] Each division would also be deployed together with a motorized battalion of Order Police,[107] and *Waffen-SS* and other police units in the area would be available to assist with security should the need arise. However, in accordance with the 26 March 1941 draft order, the police and *Waffen-SS* would be under the authority of the *SS* **except for military operations.** [108]

Over the course of the next three weeks, *SS* and *Wehrmacht* officials appeared to work out the details for the deployment of *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police for the coming invasion.[109] Once these particulars were agreed to, the final version of the 26 March 1941 draft order were issued. As a result, on 28 April 1941, von Brauchitsch signed "The Regulation on Commitment of the Security Police and *SD* units of the Army," also known as the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, officially formalizing a working agreement between the Army and the *SS*.[110]

Like the 26 March 1941 draft order, the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement contained four numbered sections. Based on the premise that certain police and security measures would be necessary to assist the Army for the *Barbarossa* campaign, the 28 April 1941 *OKH* directive defined the scope of *SS* (*SD*) and

Security Police missions, their collaboration with the *Wehrmacht* and other security forces, as well as the delineation of authority behind the front lines.[111]

Section 1 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement clearly stated that the missions of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would take place in the rear army areas:

> 1.) a) Objects (material archives, card indices of state organizations or organizations hostile to the state, units, groups, etc.) and especially important persons (leading emigrants, saboteurs, terrorists, etc.) singled out before the beginning of operations are to be secured in the rear area of an army, after the beginning of operations.[112]

By regulating the activities of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in the rear army areas, the full authority of Army commanders in both front line and rear areas was reinforced. Sanctity of operational objectives, therefore, appeared to triumph over ideological endeavors. If, in the view of any Army commander, the actions of Himmler's security personnel stood to interfere with a military operation, then the commander could order the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police to cease their activity. As section 1 (a) also noted:

> The Commander-in-Chief of the Army can exclude the utilization of the *Sonderkommandos* in those parts of the

Army area where such utilization would cause disturbances to the operations.[113]

Section 1(b) covered the missions of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in the rear areas of army groups. These missions, like those in the rear army areas, included the rooting out enemies of the state and the *Reich* which were not part of the regular armed forces of the enemy. However, the *SS* security forces were required to keep the commanders of the rear army areas informed "about the political situation."[114]

"The political situation" certainly could have covered a wide variety of topics. On one side of the spectrum, it could have simply meant keeping the military commander informed about the tenor of the local political environment, and monitoring how receptive the local population was to the German troops in the rear army areas and rear army group areas. On the other end of the spectrum, it could have meant keeping the commander updated on exactly how well the security forces carried out their missions to uncover "leading emigrants, saboteurs, and terrorists, etc." While we know in historical hindsight that the latter tasks involved the murderous treatment of Jews and other "enemies of the state," at the time of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement such missions by the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police had not yet been articulated to all military commanders.[115]

The last portion of Section 1(b) referred to a 1937 agreement for co-operation between the Secret State Police (*Geheime Staatspolizei*) and the counter-intelligence branch of the *Wehrmacht*:

> Principles for cooperation between the Secret State Police (*Gestapo*) and the counter-intelligence offices of the armed forces set up jointly on 1 January 1937, are valid, when relevant, for the collaboration with the counter-intelligence officers and or counter-intelligence offices.[116]

This agreement was based on what became known as the "the Ten Commandments"[117] of *Abwehr-Gestapo* cooperation. Originally concluded, in part, to deflate tensions between the *Reichswehr* and the *SS*, "the Ten Commandments" outlined a ten-point program of separate responsibilities for the military intelligence branch of the German Army (*Abwehr*) and the *Gestapo*. According to George Browder, the term "the Ten Commandments," became "a label generically applied to this and subsequent charters of cooperation."[118]

Section 2 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement addressed the independence of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in receiving operational orders. While the special detachments of the Security Police (*SD*) "are subordinate to the armies as far as marching orders, rations, and quarters are concerned [...]," they will carry out their missions upon their own authority." Only "should the occasion arise" (*gegebenenfalls*), was their activity to be restricted by orders from an army, as noted in section 1a). Furthermore, all "matters of discipline and judicial authority" would be handled by the Chief of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.[119]

In addition, a representative (*Beauftragter*) of the Chief of the Security Police and Security Service was to be employed in each army area to centrally direct

detachments of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. The representative was also required to promptly inform the Commander-in-Chief of the Army about instructions given to him by the Chief of the Security Police and Security Service. However, in order to avoid a conflict of operational objectives, it was reiterated that "the military commander has the right to issue directives to the representative [of the Chief of *SP* and *SD* – explanation mine] which are necessary to avoid interference with operations; they [the directives - – explanation mine] have precedence over all other directives."[120]

As was the case in Poland, the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement directed the *SS* representatives to work closely in conjunction with their *Wehrmacht Ic* counterparts. However, it fell to the Army *Ic* officer to "coordinate the missions of the *Sonderkommandos* with those of the military intelligence, the Secret Field Police (*GFP – Geheime Feldpolizei*) and with the necessities of operations."[121] As a result, the infrastructure for a seamless flow of communications between the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police and the *Wehrmacht* was, theoretically, in place prior to the invasion of the USSR.

Nonetheless, perhaps in order to diminish the potential for questions of excesses and conflict with the *Wehrmacht*, the last part of Section 2 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement stressed the overriding authority of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police with regard to the civilian population as long as military operations would not be impacted:

> The *Sonderkommandos* are authorized (*sind berechtigt*), in the realm of their mission and upon their own responsibility to take **executive measures** [*Exekutivmaßnahmen* - emphasis mine] concerning the civilian population. They [the *Sonderkommandos* – explanation mine] are hereby required to closely cooperate with military intelligence [*Abwehr*]. Measures which could have an effect on the operations [of the Wehrmacht – explanation mine] require the approval of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.[122]

Section 3 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement reiterated similar principles of cooperation within the realm of the army group rear areas (as they related to Section 1b).). However, specific modes of communication were detailed for the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. If no other methods of communication were available, the security services could use their own radio sets and special codes for transmitting orders. Yet, all wavelength frequencies would be regulated by the Army through the Chief of the Army Signal Communications.[123]

As in the previous section, the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were empowered to exercise "executive authority" with regard to the civilian population. However, as was the case in all of the previous sections, the commander of the army group rear area was granted authority to issue orders which would take precedence over those for the security personnel of the *SS*. In this case, it was in the event of a state of emergency.[124]

The fourth and final section of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement delineated responsibilities for the Secret Field Police (*Geheime Feldpolizei*) in conjunction with Himmler's security forces. Investigation of police intelligence matters and protection were in the exclusive domain of the Secret Field Police, and not part of the mission for the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. Conversely, the Secret Field Police were not to engage in activities which were in the realm of the *Einsatzkommandos* and *Sonderkommandos*.[125]

As a result, the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement established the legal grounds for conducting a dual-purpose campaign by coalescing operational and ideological objectives. As long as the missions of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police did not interfere with the strategic and tactical operations of the Army, the security forces were on their own authority to take "executive measures" against civilians and "enemies." Since these terms and target groups remained ill-defined at the time, tangible operational objectives, therefore, could, in theory, serve to insulate the Army from the "special tasks" given to the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.

The inclusion of the provision in Section 1(a) that "the Commander-in-Chief of the Army can exclude the utilization of the *Sonderkommandos* in those parts of the Army area where such utilization would cause disturbances to the operations"[126] was also more a necessary measure to keep non-army elements from obstructing operations. Moreover, this provision was also in the interest of the security forces since, without the Army conquering the territories, they would not have access to the targeted groups for execution.

Furthermore, in order to clarify how the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement impacted the *Wehrmacht*, a conference took place at the *Panzer* training school in Wünsdorf, a Berlin suburb, over the weekend of 16-19 May 1941.[127] Dr. Erich Lattmann, Chief of the Group III (*Amt III*) of the Quartermaster General[128] explained the nuances of the agreement he helped draft. Lattmann presented the assembled audience a series of briefings on the intended use of executive power in the upcoming invasion. Those in attendance included *Ic* and *Ib* officers at division level and above, *Ia* officers of security divisions, and senior quartermasters at army and *Panzer* group levels. *Ic* officers at the division, corps, and army level had already met in April for a series of briefings on the logistics of reporting during the course of the coming invasion. Lattmann also went over such topics as the use of translators in POW interrogations, as well as other logistical elements on how and when to file reports.[129]

During the course of the three-day weekend conference, Lattmann described jurisdictional areas of operations. He emphasized that the *Wehrmacht* would be the leading force against the Soviet military, and would also handle issues of troop safety and security. This point had been re-enforced just over two weeks previous on Wednesday, 30 April 1941 when Quartermaster General Wagner issued instructions for the commanders of the rear army areas regarding security. According to the directive, one group of Secret Field Police (*GFP - Geheime Feldpolizei*) would be attached to each Security Division (*Sicherungs-Division*). These units would be subordinated to the *Ic* officer, and would be deployed behind the front to focus on "counterintelligence, police issues and security policy required for the safety of the fighting forces." This included preventing "high treason, espionage, and sabotage."

Although the Order Police battalions had similar tasks, the work of the *GFP* was centered on the troops, and not the local population.[130]

As a result, Lattmann noted, the forces of Himmler's *SS* and police units would then be free to exercise their "special tasks." Lattmann reminded those gathered that since the maintenance of security was at the forefront of operational planning, there should, in theory, be no conflicts with the *SS*. During the coming campaign there would be limited operations by the *Sonderkommandos* in the forward areas, and the army commander had full authority to direct *SS* and police units in the rear areas.[131]

Yet, the General Staff officers of the *Wehrmacht* were not the only ones being schooled on the nuances of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement. Himmler also refined and amplified the responsibilities of his security forces for "the execution of political tasks" in the *Barbarossa* campaign. On 21 May 1941 he issued a directive on the "Assignment of Higher *SS* and Police Leaders in the Army Group Rear Area."[132] In a five point plan, Himmler reiterated the independence of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police operating behind the front lines through the appointment of a *Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer* (*HSSPF* - Higher *SS* and Police Leader) to each Army Group Rear Area. These appointments were in keeping with the provisions of Section 2 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement for a representative (*Beauftragter*) of the Chief of the Security Police and Security Service to be employed in each army area to centrally direct detachments of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.[133]

The independent authority of the Higher *SS* and Police Leaders was primarily noted in the subject heading of the order: "Special Mission of the *Führer*."

Emphasizing that Hitler had granted him "special tasks," Himmler intoned that the unique missions given the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were in keeping with the wishes of the *Wehrmacht* as well. Twice in the brief introduction to the 21 May 1941 order, Himmler mentioned that this directive was drafted "in agreement with" (*im Einvernehmen mit*) and issued "with the assent of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army" (*mit Zustimung des Oberbefehlshabers des Heeres*). Such language was not necessarily a form of one-upmanship in a battle of prestige, power, control, and authority with the *Wehrmacht* leadership for the coming military and ideological war with the Soviet Union, but served as a reminder to Himmler's own men that much was expected of them.

The high degree of expectations and accountability was echoed in the first two points of the 21 May 1941 order. Although the language and division of responsibilities appeared similar to the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement of 28 April 1941, Himmler stressed that while the *HSSPF* and his staff in each rearward area were subordinated to the military commander for marching orders, rations, and quarters, communications, etc., they were accountable to him alone for the assignment of their tasks. The only provisions, as in the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, came with the stipulation that *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police activities not interfere with the "operations and missions of the Army," and that "the Higher *SS* and Police Leader is to inform the commander of the Rear Army Area from time to time concerning the missions assigned to him by me." [134]

Point 3 of the 21 May 1941 order for "Special Mission of the *Führer*" further delineated the tasks of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. Using the Heydrich-Wagner

Agreement as a basis, Himmler stated that, with the exception of the nine motorized police battalions subordinated to the security divisions (three in each rear army group), the Order Police would be explicitly committed to fulfilling his missions. Yet, in another attempt to accommodate the army, Himmler permitted his police forces to be used for military missions by the commander of the rear army group if the Higher *SS* and Police Leader of the region granted permission.[135]

In addition, Himmler authorized the use of *Waffen-SS* troops to carry out his special tasks behind the front in Point 4. The inclusion of these armed units of the *SS* appeared for the first time in the 21 May 1941 Himmler directive on the "Special Mission of the *Führer*."[136]

Finally, Himmler granted the commander of the rear army group the power to utilize any and "all *SS* and Police troops in case of an urgent combat commitment in his own competency of command."[137] Such language merely echoed the provisions for the Army commander of the rear army group in section 3 of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement.[138]

Overall, the dual nature of the attack on the Soviet Union underscored the need for Nazi leadership to import an ideological and racial war to the field of battle, and the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement epitomized this politicizing of military policy. The 28 April 1941 agreement facilitated, in principle, the predication that there were legal grounds for separate, but equally important, operational objectives for the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police and the *Wehrmacht* within the same zones, along and behind, the front lines of combat.

The Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, therefore, made it technically possible for the security forces of the *Reichsführer-SS* to carry out their "special tasks" while the servicemen of the army secured strategic and tactical objectives on the battlefield. Any such clear theoretical distinctions, however, dissolved with the release of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, the "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia," and the Commissar Order in May and June of 1941. The following sections will examine the genesis and development of these directives prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union.

The 13 May 1941 *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order

Once the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement between the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police and the *Wehrmacht* was in place, all other matters relating to jurisdiction and the treatment of civilians, captured Red Army political commissars, and other POWs could be addressed by the legal and military leadership. Clearly established lines of demarcation for various agencies in the coming invasion made planning and drafting directives for more specific responsibilities that much easier. However, as was the case with the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, residual issues between the Army and the *SS* left over from the Polish campaign had to be resolved first. In the case of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941,[139] the issues were further complicated by Hitler's keen personal interest in seeing the directive through.

In the preparations for "Case White," the attack on Poland, the office of the Quartermaster General issued a series of special regulations.[140] Chief among them were orders relating to the maintenance of security during combat. In accordance with these regulations, *Wehrmacht* troops were granted the authority to not only take

hostages but to execute them if irregulars (*Freischärler*) in any way attacked members of the German armed forces. In the event that armed civilians were captured, military courts would have authority to conduct court martial proceedings. In addition, Polish and Jewish men, from seventeen to forty-five, could be summarily arrested and held as prisoners of war as security measure against attacks by irregulars.[141]

Legal authority to act against irregulars and enemy civilians who attacked the troops had already been established by both the terms of international law at the Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land in The Hague on 18 October 1907 (Hague IV),[142] and German national statute law from 17 August 1938.[143] According to Articles I and II of the Annex to Hague IV "lawful belligerency" included the following:

> Article 1: The laws, rights, and duties of war apply not only to armies, but also to militia and volunteer corps fulfilling the following conditions:
>
> 1. To be commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates.
> 2. To have a fixed distinctive emblem recognizable at a distance.
> 3. To carry arms openly: and
> 4. To conduct their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.

> In the countries where militia or volunteer corps constitute the army, or form part of it, they are included under the denomination 'army'.
>
> Article 2: The inhabitants of a territory which has not been occupied, who, on the approach of the enemy, spontaneously take up arms to resist the invading troops without having had time to organize themselves in accordance with Article 1, shall be regarded as belligerents if they carry arms openly and if they respect the laws and customs of war.[144]

Nevertheless, the terms of the 1907 Hague Convention did not establish a definition for unlawful belligerency/irregular warfare (*Freischärlerei*). Rather, the delegates at The Hague stated that: "It has not been possible at present to concert Regulations covering all the circumstances which arise in practice," and that certain "unforeseen cases" should not be left "to the arbitrary judgment of military commanders." Further, the delegates argued, only when a better code of conduct could be achieved, "the usages established among civilized peoples," as well as "the laws of humanity, and the dictates of the public conscience" would have to suffice.[145]

However, § 3 of the *Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung* (*KSSVO* – wartime special penal ordinance) of 17 August 1938 did define irregular warfare (*Freischärlerei*). § 3 of the *KSSVO* stated that anyone not recognizable as a member of the enemy armed forces who was discovered in possession of a weapon or any

other item intended for use against German military forces was a *Freischärler*, unless the terms of Articles I and II of the Annex to Hague IV could be proved.[146]

In addition, German military and judicial interpretations of § 3 of the wartime special penal ordinance from 17 August 1938 adhered strictly to the letter of the law. German jurists Hanns Dombrowski, Alfons Waltzog, and Erich Schwinge, among others, concluded that virtually all resistance to invading forces was illegal, and that punishment required immediate and harsh penalties in order to deter further forms of *Freischärlerei*.[147] That these jurists repeatedly ruled in full support of swift and severe treatment of irregulars reflected judicial theory cemented in the experiences and perceptions of German troops in Belgium and France from 1914-1918. For example, in a reply to the Belgian diplomatic note of 8 August 1914 on mobilization and uniforms, the German Chief of the Great General Staff, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke (the Younger,) issued a "warning" that:

> [From] now on every non-uniformed person, if he is not designated as being justified in participating in fighting by clearly recognizable insignia, is to be treated as someone standing outside international law, if he takes part in the fighting, interferes with German communications with the rear, cuts telegraph lines, causes explosions, in short participates in any way in the act of war without permission. He will be treated as a *franc-tireur* and immediately shot according to martial law.[148]

Therefore, the German response to irregular warfare in the summer of 1941 had been conditioned for almost three decades by previous military campaigns and a steadfast belief at the General Staff level that civilians had absolutely no place participating on the fields of battle.

However, Hitler wanted to ensure that German troops engaged in an ideological war of annihilation in the *Barbarossa* campaign would not in any way be hampered in their responses to potential threats posed by civilians and irregulars. [149] Therefore, he sought to neuter the authority of military courts. When he returned the 3 March 1941 draft of the "Guidelines for Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21," Hitler stated :

> Border closing can only be extended to the area of operations. Only if it becomes necessary to insert organizations of the *Reichsführer-SS* next to the Secret Field Police, permission of the *Reichsführer-SS* must be obtained. The necessity to immediately liquidate all Bolshevik leaders and Commissars speaks for itself. **Military courts must have nothing to do with these issues; they must concern themselves only with internal military matters of the armed forces** [emphasis mine].[150]

In an ideal situation, Hitler intended to divorce the military tribunals from all issues relating to the implementation of ideological and racial objectives during the attack and occupation of the Soviet Union. However, by the time the "Guidelines for Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" was issued with Keitel's signature on 13 March 1941, the subject of military jurisdiction had been temporarily diffused. According to Section I, item 6: "orders will be issued separately for the conduct of the troops towards the local population and the tasks of the military courts."[151]

As a result, the legal teams at *OKH* and *OKW* set out to explore ways to strip the military courts of the authority they previously had in all other campaigns since 1939. They were greatly assisted in their efforts by a plan set forth by Hitler himself. In a speech to military commanders in the Great Hall of the New *Reich* Chancellery on 30 March 1941,[152] Hitler provided the foundations for both the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.[153]

With regard to the question of military court jurisdiction and the conduct of *Wehrmacht* personnel, Hitler made it abundantly clear: Troops must, out of necessity, be allowed to fight back against what he called "criminal elements" with the same means with which they are attacked. If a hostile local population attacked German forces, the troops could retaliate with "severe measures" without worries of being shackled by punitive military courts. While Hitler conceded that commanders would have to restrain the troops to a certain degree, they needed to direct the fight and give orders that expressed the common sentiments of their soldiers involved in a war of annihilation. In doing so, they could employ summary execution without fear of a court martial.[154]

Following Hitler's exit at the conclusion of the speech, all in attendance were invited to a midday meal. For the high level military officers and strategic planners of *OKW* and *OKH*, the ideological rhetoric expressed by Hitler was nothing new. His passionate belief in the coming clash between National Socialism and the Bolshevist system, as well as the near-apocalyptic nature of the war were concepts previously articulated by Hitler. Even his plans for eliminating the authority of the military courts were not groundbreaking.[155]

However, the 30 March pronouncements to the high-ranking generals and their staffs represented a bold and calculated maneuver on Hitler's part. He had never before expressed his objectives and vision for the coming invasion to such a large forum of military commanders in the field.[156] In doing so, Hitler demonstrated that his world view alone would penetrate the deepest layers of military policy in the East. *Barbarossa* would not just be about capturing territory and resources. It would involve the active participation of *Wehrmacht* officers and soldiers at all levels in prosecuting a war beyond conventional limits against an enemy Hitler viewed as inherently evil. That he targeted Red Army political commissars and communist intelligentsia in his speech, and advocated a far lesser role for the military courts signified a shift in the position of the Army that was not lost on the assembled leaders. In spite of how his generals and their staffs may have initially responded, Hitler appeared to recognize that his oral instructions for the *Barbarossa* campaign went beyond what he had ever initiated for combat activities. Thus, at the conclusion of his lengthy and pointed speech, Hitler stated: "I do not expect my Generals to understand me; but I shall expect them to obey my orders."[157]

This expectation of obedience carried over to the preparations for the drafting of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. Dr. Rudolf Lehmann, Director of the Legal Department at *OKW*, received a telephone call from the office of Field Marshal Keitel within days of Hitler's Chancellery speech. In post-war testimony, Lehmann stated:

> [...] The Führer had ordered that in the case *Barbarossa*, the courts martial were not to be taken along. The *Führer* had also ordered that in the case of offenses by soldiers against indigenous personnel, the obligation to prosecute such offenders was to be rescinded.[158]

Thus, Lehmann was instructed by one of Keitel's aides-de-camp to draft an order for the forthcoming campaign in the Soviet Union that would nullify the traditional military court system. Soldiers of the German Army would, therefore, not be tried for offenses committed against the local population, and armed civilians captured would also not be put before a court martial.[159] This was the official beginning of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order in written form.

Lehmann spent the first three weeks of April 1941 working through two drafts of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. By 28 April 1941, he had completed a third draft that circulated among Keitel, Jodl, Warlimont and Mueller before going to Hitler for feedback. According to Lehmann's 28 April 1941 draft, military jurisdiction within the legal system, including the presence of judge advocate

generals, was to be severely curtailed, and soldiers would have virtually no restraints on their behavior toward irregulars[160] and the civilian population.[161] As Lehmann noted in his 15 May 1948 direct examination testimony in the "High Command Case," "I [made] a draft, which suggested that the jurists should be completely and utterly eliminated from the armed forces administration of justice."[162]

The draft consisted of four main sections. It was addressed to Hitler and the Supreme Commanders of the Armed Forces, and established the new rules for combat in the East. The first section granted soldiers freedom to "ruthlessly liquidate [*schonungslos zu erledigen*] [...]irregulars [...] either in combat or in flight."[163] Similar language accompanied the legal boundaries for treatment of civilians:

> I. 2. Other attacks by enemy civilians against the armed forces, their members, and their auxiliaries will be dealt with by the troops on the spot, with the same energy and with every means at their disposal, until the attacker is annihilated [*bis zur Vernichtung des Angreifers abzuwehren*].[164]

Section II defined how military jurisdiction (*Wehrmachtgerichtsbarkeit*) and its enforcement agencies would respond to punishable acts by the civilian population. According to Lehmann, military jurisdiction during the *Barbarossa* campaign was to "serve primarily the enforcement of discipline."[165]

However, the Lehmann 28 April 1941 draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order contained a handwritten notation of "no" in the left margin of Section II/1. as well as two asterisks. The asterisk for Section II/1. contained the following note of explanation by Lehmann:

> In the previous directives as approved by the Führer, it was assumed in addition that it was possible to bring the culprit (*Täter*) before a court immediately, and that the guilt of the culprit was so obvious that he could be sentenced immediately. All other offenses committed by indigenous civilians were to be transferred to the nearest office of the *Reichsführer-SS*.
>
> Contrary to the previous assumption, no sufficient number of offices of the *Reichsführer-SS* will be available. The only alternative left is, therefore, to have civilians whose guilt cannot be proved immediately tried by the courts nevertheless, or have them shot by the troops. If they are handed over to the courts, the courts must decide concerning guilt or impossibility to prove guilt, and acquit the defendant in the latter case. I am stressing this particularly.[166]

In addition, Section II/2 stated that court martial prosecution would only be for offenses committed by enemy civilians if it was indispensable for "political reasons." Yet, this too was followed by an asterisk. According to Lehmann:

> This sentence, too, was not contained in the previous directive, but it seems necessary. Example: a Bolshevik shoots a pro-German Ukrainian. The sentence can only be dispensed with if the troop commanders undertake the responsibility for dealing with such cases without court procedure and conforming to the intentions of the political leadership.[167]

In section III, Lehmann turned his attention to crimes committed by the *Wehrmacht* against the local population. If such crimes were committed, "prosecution is not mandatory." The rationale for such a clear departure from standard military operating procedures was found in Section III/ 2.:

> When judging such acts, it must be considered that the collapse of 1918, the subsequent period of suffering endured by the German people, and the struggle against National Socialism, which caused a great number of

> casualties among the members of the movement, were mainly brought about by Bolshevik influence, and that no German has forgotten all of this.[168]

This ideological rhetoric was accompanied by conditional application of courts martial in the unlikely event charges would ever be filed. Only when it "[...] is called for in the interest of discipline, or for the security of the troops" would criminal proceedings be brought up. To clarify, Lehmann identified "serious violations caused by utter lack of sexual restraint or based on a criminal tendency and further, offenses resulting in the senseless destruction of billets, stores, or other captured goods to the disadvantage of our forces." The section concluded by noting that the institution of investigation proceedings required the signature of the convening officer in each separate case.[169]

Section IV dealt with the dissemination of the order to subordinate officers and their units. Military commanders were to personally ensure that the instructions and principles in Section I were communicated "in good time and with the utmost emphasis." Also on the list of those to be kept informed were the legal advisers. However, since the phrase "only those sentences are confirmed which are in line with the political instructions of leadership"[170] was included in the draft of the directive makes perfectly clear the intention of the order: Legal challenges, courts martial, and attention to criminal behavior by the troops must all but be ignored by officers and jurists alike, except when the maintenance of discipline dictated otherwise.

The 28 April 1941 draft for the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order represented a warrant for intemperate behavior on the part of the troops. By creating policy based on lies and untruth, with a wanton disregard for established principles of the laws of warfare, the language of this draft order, as put forward by Lehmann, revealed the extent that ideology shaped the construction of pre-invasion directives. Using standard National Socialist propaganda in Section II/2 that the loss of the First World War was caused by Bolshevik influence, and that hard-line Communists were responsible for the sufferings endured by the German people, was a feeble attempt to justify harsh and extreme measures.

Yet, Lehmann was not alone in designing legal means to "leave the courts at home." Lieutenant-General Eugen Müller, on special assignment to the Commander-in-chief of the *Wehrmacht*, drafted his own version of orders dealing with jurisdiction and Red Army political commissars after conversations with Lehmann and Halder.[171] The 6 May 1941 drafts of the "Treatment of enemy inhabitants and punishable offenses by members of the armed forces against enemy inhabitants in the zone of Operation *Barbarossa*" and "Directives concerning treatment of political functionaries, etc., for the coordinated execution of the mission already given on 31 March 1941" were included as two enclosures in a letter from *OKH* to Warlimont.[172] As Warlimont pointed out in both his direct examination during the "High Command Case" and in his memoirs, the date of 31 March 1941 should have been noted as the 30th of March, the day Hitler provided the outline for the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order.[173]

However, the date in March when Hitler gave his speech was not the significant development here. Rather, the drafting of orders covering military jurisdiction and Red Army political commissars, which emanated from *OKH* with cooperation from the legal bureau of *OKW*, and without input from Himmler, Heydrich and their minions, illustrated a changing role in *Wehrmacht* operational planning and preparation.

The Müller draft of the first enclosure, "Treatment of enemy inhabitants," contained a preface and four sections, and was just over four pages long in the original. The preface served as an ideological justification in a similar form to Lehmann's 28 April 1941 draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. Safety and security for the troops were of utmost concern in a vast area of combat operations, and the soldiers were reminded that "because of the specific character of the Eastern enemy," this fight will "require a particularly comprehensive and effective security of the combat troops."[174]

Before this special "comprehensive and effective security" was outlined, though, Müller reminded the commanders of the Army Groups and the Army Commands that:

> Of course mobility and combat with the enemy armed forces remain the primary mission of the troops; this requires greatest concentration and fullest commitment of all forces. The troops must not let themselves be diverted from this primary mission.[175]

This primary task was then overshadowed by the specter of a different kind of enemy:

> [...] in addition to the usual enemies, which the troops have to face, they are opposed by the bearer of Jewish-Bolshevik ideology who is an especially dangerous and seditious element among the civilian population. There is no doubt he will employ his weapon of undermining the morale insidiously wherever he can and ambushing the German armed forces who are fighting and pacifying the country. The troops, therefore, have the right and the duty to protect themselves completely and effectively from these demoralizing forces.[176]

At the conclusion of the preface, Müller, like Lehmann, made it clear that he was issuing the following orders according to the directives given him from above. In this case, both Hitler and Brauchitsch promulgated the orders for the treatment of enemy inhabitants and the treatment of political functionaries. That Halder also recorded a conference with Müller and the Judge Advocate General in his war diary for 6 May 1941 showed that he, too, was well aware of the contents of the orders, and their implications.[177]

Section I of Müller's draft on the "Treatment of enemy inhabitants" of the Soviet Union had as a common theme that swift, extreme, and ruthless use of force was to be employed against enemy civilians and their communities, which either take up, or appear to take up, arms against the *Wehrmacht*. As in Lehmann's draft, it was up to the German soldiers themselves to judge intent, and to act against them. The language of the draft provided very few boundaries in defining the targets for the wrath of the occupying troops:

> Local inhabitants who take part, or intend to take part, in attacks, or who, by their appearance, indicate an immediate threat to the troops, or who, by any action whatsoever, revolt against the German Armed Forces, are to be considered irregulars, and shot in combat or in flight.[178]

Only if the "criminal elements" within the community cannot be immediately "eliminated (*erledigt werden*) were they to be brought to an officer, who would exercise his authority to decide whether they were to be shot.[179]

Officers of the rank of battalion commander or higher were given the power in this draft document to also determine collective "violent measures" against entire towns from which attacks against the *Wehrmacht* occurred if the individual(s) perpetrator(s) could not be found. Müller, likewise, reminded all officers that: "it is

the law of self-preservation and the duty of all commanding officers to use an iron fist without delay against cowardly acts [...]"[180]

In addition, Müller noted at the end of Section I that "special regulations about the treatment of political functionaries, etc. will follow."[181] By including this statement, Müller directly linked the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order with what would become the Commissar Order, as drafted in Enclosure No. 2. If they had been completely different matters, Müller would have had no occasion to make such a statement.

Yet, this concept of separate regulations but ultimately equal form of treatment was a significant development in the design for combat in the East. Prosecuting a war against an armed combatant as well as against a racial and ideological infrastructure required a new type of vocabulary and a new set of legal definitions. Both Lehmann and Müller attempted to accomplish these objectives by creating legal justifications for the use of extreme measures against civilians and political functionaries.

Müller continued his legal groundwork in Section II with the "Relaxation of mandatory prosecution of punishable offenses by army personnel against enemy inhabitants." Like Lehmann's draft, Müller's draft suspended or discouraged prosecution of *Wehrmacht* troops for crimes against the enemy civilian population unless it was necessary to maintain discipline:

> Punishable offenses committed by army personnel under provocation because of atrocities [*Greueltaten*] or the undermining of morale by the bearers of the Jewish-Bolshevist system, are not to be prosecuted [...] [182]

Unlike the Lehmann draft, Müller linked Jews and Bolsheviks together as part of a conspiratorial system. While previous military history is replete with examples of measures of reprisals and even measures of deterrence within the context of developing an occupation policy,[183] using pseudo-racial and political designations as justification was part and parcel of an emerging National Socialist concept of statecraft that demonized the enemy. By describing a malignant, radical, evil system bent on world domination with Jews, Red Army political commissars, communist officials and even civilian inhabitants as the leading exponents, Hitler and his military planners engaged in a practice that marginalized the enemy, and made their destruction to justifiable acts in the name of security and self-preservation.

However, Müller attempted to temper the potential tendency to act without constraint by including the reminder that "under all circumstances, it remains the task of all superiors to prevent arbitrary excesses by individual members of the army and to prevent the troops getting out of hand."[184] Further admonition for each soldier to keep his behavior in check, and subject to the orders of his superiors was followed by the statement that:

> In those cases in which the motive for the provocation is not shown until the main trial before a court martial in the field [...] only those sentences are confirmed which correspond completely with the above outlined military and political points of view.[185]

If that message wasn't already clear, Müller used Section III to remind commanders in the field to make full use of the expanded rules for criminal procedures based on 1938 and 1939 decrees. The emphasis here was on "immediate application of punishment subsequent to the crime."[186] Unlike the Lehmann draft, Müller didn't spell out some of the possible exceptions, and focused instead on the seamless preservation of the political and military rationale for the invasion and occupation.

Lastly, Section IV underlined the need for secrecy in the transmission of the proposed decree by stating: "With the removal of the camouflage, this decree loses its special secret classification."[187]

At the behest of Hitler, Lehmann fused Mueller's 6 May 1941 draft on the "Treatment of enemy inhabitants and punishable offenses by members of the armed forces against enemy inhabitants in the zone of Operation *Barbarossa*" with his own 28 April 1941 version, and came up with a final draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. Accompanied by a cover letter, Lehmann forwarded the latest version on to Jodl and Warlimont. In the cover letter addressed to Warlimont, and dated 9 May

1941, Lehmann noted that his discussions with Müller also included *Luftwaffe* General Jeschonnek, and the chiefs of all the other legal departments.[188]

Lehmann used the first two paragraphs of the cover letter to document the history of the drafts, and in doing so, detailed the divergent opinions about the extent of *Wehrmacht* jurisdiction over non-combatants. He noted that Halder alone pushed to keep military courts in operation over civilians, especially in those instances when the troops were limited in their time to conduct investigations, as well as for all the minor cases when execution was apparently not justified.[189] Yet, Lehmann, Jeschonnek and the other legal chiefs disagreed, as did Warlimont by the notations between paragraphs.[190]

What emerged then was a desire to temporarily suspend military court jurisdiction, and to give the authority to officers in the field to determine the guilt or innocence of individual Soviet citizens, as well as entire communities. While this clearly placed a great deal of responsibility on the officer corps, Lehmann, his legal affairs colleagues, and Jeschonnek viewed it as a military necessity in the hostile environment of the Soviet Union.[191]

Section II of the Lehmann cover letter contained that which was new to the draft, in addition to the material he borrowed from Müller. The new material centered around a preamble, "inserted [...] to make the subject a little more palatable."[192] Even Lehmann and Warlimont recognized the harshness of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, but continued to press ahead without demurring.[193]

Lastly in his cover letter, Lehmann passed along an urgent request from all the branches of the armed forces "that this directive be issued to them not later than 14

May 1941."[194] While no explanation was provided, it was plausible that the desire for expediency could be due to the fact that since this order was so revolutionary in scope, the commanders would need time to work out the legal implications. The roles and responsibilities of the German soldier would be altered for the rest of the war in the East as a result of this directive and the Commissar Order, which would follow. It was, therefore, not inconceivable to see that those conducting the ideological and physical war on the ground would need time to make adjustments.

Aside from Section II/2, the language in this draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was not charged with Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theories, and sweeping indictments of Jews and Communists. In fact, the word "Jew" did not appear even once in this draft. Clearly, Lehmann made it "more palatable" in its rationale. However, the ultimate punishment for offenses, both real and imagined, was still the same: death by firing squad, and the possibilities for a broad range of interpretations over the guilt of local inhabitants was still striking in scope.

Four days later, on 13 May 1941, Keitel issued the final version, the "Decree for the Exercise of Military Jurisdiction in the *Barbarossa* Area and Special Measures to be taken by the Troops," at the behest of Hitler. Mirroring the final draft version, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order gave legal authority to the German commanders to take whatever measures they deemed necessary to control the civilian population, including executions of individuals, as well as collective measures against communities. This part of the order conformed to received standards of international law.[195]

Accompanied by letters of transmittal, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, just over three pages in the original,[196] maintained the more "palatable" language Lehmann had recently added, by emphasizing supposedly pro-active measures to preserve military discipline and the enforcement of security.

As a result, very little in the entire *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order changed from its draft form. Section I /4 left in place the provision that: "Where such measures have been neglected or were not at first possible; persons [elements] suspected of criminal action will be brought at once to an officer. This officer will decide whether they are to be shot."[197] Instead of pursuing the option of giving them over to the *Sonderkommandos*, as Warlimont suggested in his handwritten notes in the 9 May 1941 draft, the *Wehrmacht* could play the dual role of invader as well as enforcer in the absence of the military courts.[198] Section II/2 even retained the ideological nemesis of the "Bolshevist influence." Such language alluded to the Jewish-Bolshevik connections that were the foundation of Hitler's and the Nazi party's *Weltanschauung*.

The only change in Section I from the draft to the decree issued by Keitel occurred in I/6. Here the final version allowed for the reintroduction of military jurisdiction in territories which had been relatively peaceful toward the German occupying troops. In the various drafts circulated beforehand, there were no such provisions.

That the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was essentially the same as before reflected the wish of the *Führer* to maintain a strong ideological presence for the Army in the Eastern campaign. Once the legal departments eliminated the military

courts from the field, as Hitler's speech to the generals at the end of March had demanded, there was no need to further tinker with the final product. Hitler could easily have ordered that the security forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would be solely responsible for the treatment of the civilian population. While Himmler's security forces were given a large degree of authority with regard to non-combatants in the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement of 28 April 1941, it was the *Wehrmacht* which carried the burden of enforcement in the "area of operations, army rear area, and area of political administration." going into the invasion of the Soviet Union.[199]

The *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was given a wide distribution in written form.[200] Although classified as "*Chefsache! Nur durch Offizier!* (Most Secret- the highest degree of secrecy in the armed forces- By the Hand of Officer Only), it was not passed along solely by word of mouth. In fact, by authorizing the removal of military courts and the arbitrary treatment of civilians for any act, or seemingly intended act, against the *Wehrmacht*, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order prepared the legal grounds for the battlefield execution of Red Army political commissars and political functionaries. Hitler stated such intentions in his 30 March 1941 speech, but, given the apparent wan support for such measures, there needed to be legal authorization to convince commanders to implement the order. Removing authority from the courts provided part of the foundation for doing so.

As Hans-Adolf Jacobsen notes:

> This decree was directly linked both with the political thinking of the National Socialist leadership, as well as

with the *Kommissarbefehl* which was published a few weeks later. It was, moreover, yet another expression of the radical development of the German conduct of war.[201]

Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia and the Commissar Order

The leadership of the armed forces further honed the regulations for how the Army would relate to the local inhabitants once the invasion of the USSR began. Within a week after the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was distributed, Field Marshal Keitel, in conjunction with *OKH*, issued "Special Instructions No. 1 to Directive 21 - Operation *Barbarossa*," with enclosures. These 19 May 1941 instructions by Keitel made reference to the 18 December 1940 and 13 March 1941 directives issued on the *Barbarossa* campaign.[202] Divided into twelve main sections and containing five enclosures, this series of orders and regulations addressed such broad themes as geographic jurisdiction, occupation and administrative details, as well as the behavior of troops and their relations with the native population. [203]

Section VIII of the 19 May 1941 "Special Instructions No. 1 to Directive 21 - Operation *Barbarossa*," contained enclosure No. 3 on "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia." Composed of ten points divided into four sections, enclosure No. 3 was distributed to each division and their subordinated regiments scheduled to take part in the coming invasion.[204]

Section I of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" established the ideological rationale for the coming campaign with the Soviet Union by identifying the enemy:

1. Bolshevism is the deadly enemy of the National Socialist Nation. It is this undermining ideology and its supporters at which Germany's struggle is aimed.[205]

The designated enemy was not just the opponent of the fighting man, but the German nation as a whole. Elevating the conflict beyond the boundaries of the battlefield served to further advance the subjection of military operations to National Socialist ideology. The *Wehrmacht* soldier, therefore, was not alone in a national campaign to combat a malevolent idea. The universality of the struggle became another tool of making the planned destruction of the Bolshevist system more palatable and justifiable for those who would be asked to carry out the orders on the ground.

Section I/2 of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" provided commanders and their troops with a target list of specific enemies against whom they could act with deadly force:

2. This struggle demands ruthless and energetic measures [*rücksichtsloses und energisches Durchgreifen*] against Bolshevist agitators, irregulars [*Freischäler* - guerillas appears in the Nürnberg English translation – explanation

mine], saboteurs, Jews, and the complete elimination [*restlose Beiseitigung*] of all active or passive resistance.[206]

As noted earlier, legal authority to act against irregulars and enemy civilians who attacked the troops had already been established by both the terms of international law at the Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land in The Hague on 18 October 1907 (Hague IV),[207] and German national statute law from 17 August 1938.[208]

However, "ruthless and energetic measures" were not further defined in the 19 May 1941 "Special Instructions No. 1 to Directive 21 - Operation *Barbarossa*," especially as they related to Jews and "Bolshevist agitators." Similar language had been used in the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order to address German military responses to "other attacks by enemy civilians against the armed forces, their members, and their auxiliaries."[209]

Whereas Red Army political commissars were absent from the list of the top four enemies of the state as presented in "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia," the legal teams of *OKW* and *OKH* were concurrently drafting the Commissar Order, and may well have wanted to leave political officers of the Red Army as part of a category all their own. However, since political commissars were charged with agitation in order to gather recruits for the Red Army, and distribute propaganda to members of the armed forces, the term "agitators" may also have been a reference to political officers of the Soviet armed forces.[210]

Nevertheless, Section II of the 19 May 1941 "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" focused on soldiers of the Red Army. In II/3, the *OKW* guidelines required the "strictest reserve and utmost vigilance toward all members of the Red Army – including the prisoners – [...]"[211] While such an admonition was expected in any armed combat situation, the *OKW* reasoning was based on stereotypes:

> [. . .] treacherous fighting methods are to be expected. The Asiatic soldiers of the Red Army especially are obscure, unpredictable, insidious and callous.[212]

An unsigned cover sheet, which accompanied the text of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia," went even further in its description of the Nazi-defined racial composition of the political and military leadership of the Soviet Union:

> The peoples of the Soviet Union are partly Asiatic and are under Bolshevist-Jewish leadership [*Führung*]. Correspondingly, their military leadership is insidious [*heimtückisch*] and sadistic.[213]

Echoing the charges by Hitler on 30 March 1941 that the Red Army, in general and political commissars in particular, would employ tactics contrary to established international rules of warfare,[214] this section re-enforced the perception that the coming invasion was a different type of battle, and further illustrated the intersection of military objectives with ideological and racial undertones.[215]

This synthesis of political ideology and military operational admonitions continued with Section III of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia." In III/5, German soldiers were warned that they would be facing a population that was not uniform in its ethnic and racial composition:

> The USSR is a state structure which is comprised of a multitude of Slav, Caucasian, and Asiatic peoples and which is kept together by the power of the Bolshevist rulers. Jewry is strongly represented in the USSR.[216]

While the Army faced a wide spectrum of racial and ethnic groups, Section III/6 stated that "a large part [*ein grosser Teil*] of the Russian population, especially the rural population, impoverished by the Bolshevist system, is at heart opposed to Bolshevism."[217] Thus, according to the *OKW* "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia," upon liberation by the *Wehrmacht* in the coming invasion of the Soviet Union those groups opposed to the Communist system would seek means of expressing their gratitude, especially in a religious form. As a result, soldiers of the

Wehrmacht were instructed not to disturb nor prevent religious services of Thanksgiving.[218]

Section III/7 and III/8 completed the admonition to soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* to beware in all their dealings with the local population. Section III/7 of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" maintained that since "many Russians understand the German language without being able to speak it," soldiers should use "greatest caution [...] when talking with the population and in behavior toward women."[219] In addition, Section III/8 served notice that since it was believed that "the enemy intelligence service will be especially active in the enemy territory [...], any kind of thoughtless boasting, and blind confidence" would result in "the most serious consequences."[220]

Finally, Section IV of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" addressed how soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* should relate to captured goods and foodstuffs. Military booty (*militärische Beute*) or anything of economic value had to be "preserved and seized." Soldiers were reminded that "any kind of prodigality [waste – *Vergeudung*] and extravagance is damaging to the troops," and that "looting will be punished by the severest penalties in accordance with military criminal law." Caution was also urged in Section IV/9 concerning how German troops should approach the consumption of captured foodstuffs and any contact with local inhabitants, and, lastly, Section IV/10 directed troops that *Reich* Credit Bank notes and coins would be the legal tender in addition to others under German occupation of the Soviet Union.[221]

As a result, "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" reflected the perception by *OKW* and *OKH* that "ruthless and energetic measures" would be necessary to thwart the ideological power of the political, racial, and military enemies in the Soviet Union. These "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia" also served as a departure from much of the corpus of pre-invasion directives and instructions. For the first time since the 3 March 1941 draft revisions of "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" were returned by Hitler to Jodl, the word Jew appeared in a final draft version in connection with Communist leadership with the understanding that that form of leadership was to be completely eliminated by the Army, and not just the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.

However, such language of destruction, which gave sweeping authority to troops in the field in relation to the civilian population through the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order and "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia," may not have sat well with some of the commanders of the Army Groups and Army Commands. Field Marshal von Bock, the commander of Army Group North, was one who expressed his displeasure with the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order to *OKH* Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. According to his war diary of 4 June 1941, von Bock stated:

> The Armed Forces High Command has issued an order governing the conduct of the field forces toward the Russian civilian population. It is so worded that it virtually gives every soldier the right to shoot at from in front or

> behind any Russian he takes to be – or claims that he takes to be a – a guerrilla fighter. The order rules out any constraint towards punishment of any offenses in this regard, even "if a military crime or offense is involved." [222]

Perhaps to accommodate those critics, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, issued a supplementary decree to the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order on 24 May 1941. Known as the "Maintenance of Discipline Decree," the document entitled "Treatment of Enemy Civilians and Criminal Acts Committed by Members of the *Wehrmacht* against Enemy Civilians" (*Behandlung feindlicher Zivilpersonen und Straftaten Wehrmachtangehöriger gegen feindliche Zivilpersonen*) limited somewhat the actions of the *Wehrmacht* against civilian personnel. [223] As von Bock noted in his diary:

> Brauchitsch issued a supplement to this order which was undoubtedly intended to weaken it but which only partly succeeded. A telegram arrived at the same time with instructions to halt the order already in the hands of the Army until specific regulations arrived. I gave Greiffenberg, who was at the *OKH* just then, the task of determining from Halder whether the announced regulations contained any significant changes to the order. If this was not the case, Greiffenberg was to report to the

> Commander-in-Chief of the Army that in this form the order was unacceptable and was not compatible with discipline.[224]

Field Marshal von Brauchitsch attempted to put the focus for the coming invasion back on military, rather than ideological, objectives. The Maintenance of Discipline Decree, Supplement I, of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order stressed that:

> Movement and combat against the enemy's armed forces are the real tasks of the troops. It demands the fullest concentration and the highest effort of all forces. These tasks must not be jeopardized in any place.[225]

As a result, *Wehrmacht* troops were not to be used in "special search and mopping-up operations" when they could possibly act harshly and in unrestrained ways against the local population. Furthermore, in serious cases of rebellion only would the full extent of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order concerning the criminal actions by the civilian population apply. All other criminal acts of a minor nature were to be punished (on the direction of an officer – preferably a post commander) using "provisional measures," including, but not limited to, temporary detention with reduced rations, roping [to a tree], and assignment to labor."[226]

In addition, Supplement I of the Maintenance of Discipline Decree requested that the commanders-in-chief of the Army Groups obtain permission from Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, before reinstating

military jurisdiction in "the pacified areas." Commanders were thus accountable for discipline, and for maintaining pressure from above for its enforcement. However, "special instructions" would follow on "the treatment to be given political dignitaries."[227]

Under the section on "Supplements to II" of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, the Maintenance of Discipline Decree stated that it remained the task of all superiors to:

> [...] prevent arbitrary excesses by individual members of the army and to prevent in time the troops becoming unmanageable. It must not result that the individual soldier commits any act he thinks proper toward the indigenous population; he must rather feel that in every case he is bound by the orders of his officers [...] Timely action by every officer, especially every company commander, etc., must help to maintain discipline, the basis of our success.[228]

The commander-in-chief of the Army Group Rear Area South, General Karl von Roques, took this last section of the 24 May 1941 Brauchitsch decree and put even greater emphasis on the enforcement of discipline. In a cover letter to the Maintenance of Discipline Decree from 5 June 1941, von Roques stated that:

> In this case [the "Maintenance of Discipline Decree" – explanation mine] it has to be emphasized to the troop commanders that they must bear an increased responsibility with regard to the discipline of the troops. Where officers prove incapable of carrying out this task, and where the first indications of the troops getting unmanageable appear, I expect immediate strict measures by the direct superiors.[229]

However, the Maintenance of Discipline Decree in no way rescinded, or even tempered the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. As Gerald Reitlinger points out, "[...] while the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was re-issued repeatedly by Keitel, Brauchitsch's annexe [the Maintenance of Discipline Decree – explanation mine], for what it was worth, was not issued again."[230]

In order to address the potential confusion that the Maintenance of Discipline Decree may have caused as a supplement to the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, and to clarify the underlying political objectives for the coming invasion, Quartermaster General Wagner briefed army command and army group commanders on 4 June 1941. During this Friday briefing, Wagner described the plan to divide the occupied territory of the Soviet Union into a series of individual states. His comments closely followed the first draft of a general directive associated with the planned invasion of the Soviet Union (Directive Number 21, "Operation Barbarossa") of 18 December 1940.[231]

Wagner noted, however, that executive power in the area of operations would be subdivided into four sections: The highest level was that of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army; below him was the *Reichsführer-SS*, whose forces could, if "military requirements permitted," serve alongside the military; the third tier was that of the *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring and his economic empire; lastly, the fourth level was reserved for political administration under Rosenberg.[232]

However, Wagner recognized that there might be possible areas of conflict. Specifically, he encouraged commanders to not be concerned with the "political executive" and activities of the *Einsatzkommandos*. He noted that their main objective was to secure and protect roads and supply lines.[233] As one of the principal players in drafting the cooperative agreement between the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police and the Army, and an expert on the details of delineation and subordination of command, it appeared that Wagner was less than forthright in his comments about the role of the special commandos.

In addition, other levels of the military infrastructure received briefings prior to the invasion about the roles and responsibilities of the Army and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police in regard to the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, and the Maintenance of Discipline Decree. During a two-day conference from 5-6 June 1941, which followed on the heels of Wagner's meetings with Army Command and Army Group commanders, the head of the department for war administration of the Quartermaster General, Major Hans-Georg Schmidt von Altenstadt, met with *Ic* officers in Berlin. Since the Third General Staff Officers (*Ic*) would be instrumental in coordinating and reporting on the implementation of the

Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, and the Maintenance of Discipline Decree, it was imperative that they be clear on all aspects of these orders. According to Schmidt von Altenstadt, the mission of the Army was to "fight the enemy into the ground," while the *SS* was to engage in the "political police struggle against the enemy." In order to accomplish these separate tasks, both the Army and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would need a high degree of cooperation.[234]

Also addressing the *Ic* officers during the two-day conference was *SS Standartenführer* (Colonel) Nockemann. He explained in more detail how the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would operate during the invasion. Jürgen Förster describes the objectives of the security forces based on the comments of Nockemann:

> The political security of the occupied territories demanded the creation of 'the basis for the final liquidation of Bolshevism.' For that purpose it was necessary in the rearward army area to roundup not only the enemy's political material but also the 'politically dangerous individuals (Jews, émigrés, terrorists, etc.)' and in the rearward land-force area to track down all 'anti-state and anti-*Reich* efforts.' According to the order he [Nockemann – explanation mine] had received, 'extreme hardness and harshness are to be applied.' The forces employed for this

would be 2,500 men: 500 for each army group, of whom 80 would operate in the forward area of each army.[235]

Furthermore, additional briefings for *Ic* officers took place in Allenstein (Olsztyn) and Warsaw on 10 and 11 June 1941 respectively. Speaking on behalf of *OKH* was Generalleutnant Eugen Müller, the Head of Section III (Judicial Affairs) in Army High Command and General z.b.V. (on special assignment to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army). Müller, like Wagner and Schmidt von Altenstadt before him, sought to explain how the Army and *SS* would function under the terms of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, as well as the Maintenance of Discipline Decree. According to notes taken by *Ic* officers during these briefings, Müller called for "a return to the ancient usages of war [...] One of the two adversaries must remain dead on the ground; exponents of the enemy attitude must not be conserved but finished off."[236]

Müller went on to state that the category of "irregular" as described in the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order included "in an extended sense also agitators, distributors of leaflets, [and] saboteurs," as well as all of those who would not follow German instructions. In his mind, punishment for irregulars should, in accordance with the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction decree, be immediate execution.[237]

However, so as not to get too far out of hand with an expanding definition of irregulars, Müller stated that the troops should not "needlessly put on a hair-trigger or act under the influence of bloodlust." Echoing the basic premise of the Maintenance of Discipline Decree, Müller declared that "the principal task of the troops, as well as

of the security divisions in the rearward land-force area, is military action, not the liquidation of guerillas." While strong action was required in a time of warfare, officers needed to take heed that "measures were taken "after a clash, and only on the orders of an officer."[238]

As a result of the campaign of clarification and explanation launched by the military leadership in the wake of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, and the Maintenance of Discipline Decree, the roles and responsibilities of the Army and the security forces appeared to be much clearer for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union. However, there were additional areas which had yet to be thoroughly addressed, including the treatment of prisoners of war. In the following section, I will examine the treatment of Red Army political commissars in the context of the treatment of POWs.

The Commissar Order – 6 June 1941

Once an agreement authorizing the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police to attend to their "special tasks" behind the front lines had been secured, and the jurisdiction of military courts had been greatly limited, legal affairs experts could address the last major issue which Hitler had presented in his 30 March 1941 speech to commanders at the New *Reich* Chancellery as part of his ideological agenda for the coming campaign in the Soviet Union: the elimination of Red Army political commissars and communist functionaries.[239] The Commissar Order was just one point of an overall policy involving Soviet prisoners of war under development by the legal staffs of *OKW* and *OKH* during the spring of 1941. However, Hitler had made it a central component of POW policy based on the contents of his 30 March 1941 discourse.

As stated above, Hitler and his military planners had begun, in the late winter of 1940/1941, to orchestrate a plan to destroy the communist system on the field of battle as well as in the bureaucratic administration of the Soviet Union. During the course of his 2-½ hour speech on 30 March 1941, Hitler presented a rubric for carrying out these military and ideological objectives. While no transcript of the speech appears to exist, several individuals, as noted above, did record the overall tenor of what he expressed. They mentioned the following main points relating to the planned war with the Soviet Union, political commissars, and POWs:

1) The coming war with the Soviet Union was to be "a clash of two ideologies [...] and a war of extermination." Hitler warned that if this fact ever got lost, Germany would again have to do battle with the Communist enemy in 30 years. [240]

2) In order to prosecute this war of annihilation, Bolshevist commissars and Communist Intelligentsia were to be exterminated. According to Hitler, political commissars and members of the Communist Party were criminals. Hitler cited the behavior of communist leaders in the Baltic states, Finland, Bessarabia, and their absolute refusal to recognize the Hague Rules of Land Warfare, as well as the tenets of the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of POWs as sufficient evidence to order them shot to death.[241] In Hitler's opinion, Red Army political commissars would not treat German *SS* and security forces as POWs,[242] and insisted that "[Red Army] political commissars should not be regarded as soldiers, or treated as prisoners of war: commissars were the backbone of Communist ideology, Stalin's safeguard against his own people and against his own troops; they had unlimited power over life and death. Eliminating them would spare German lives in battle and in the rearward

areas."[243] Jodl testified that Hitler challenged those in attendance with the words: "If you do not believe what I am telling you, then read the reports from counterintelligence which we have received regarding the behavior of the Russian commissars in the occupied Baltic states. Then you will get a picture of what can be expected from these commissars."[244]

3) Russian POWs would not be allowed to enter the *Reich*. They represented a danger to the German labor force not simply because of their ideology, but because of a risk of sabotage.[245]

As a result, Hitler's call for the "extermination (*Vernichtung*) of Red Army political commissars, communist functionaries, and the communist intelligentsia echoed a foundational principle of his *Weltanschauung* that all sources of political and ideological resistance needed to be eliminated in order for Germany to subdue the Eastern hordes of Soviet Russia. A preemptive strike against these Communist ideologues was, therefore, in line with his previously stated political objectives for an attack against the Soviet Union.[246] Clearly, combat in the East was to be vastly different from that in the West. Both Communism and the Red Army would have to be destroyed immediately in order to preserve the Thousand-Year *Reich*: "[...] Harshness today means leniency in the future."[247]

In order to put Hitler's words into action, work was begun almost immediately on a draft of the Commissar Order by the legal teams of *OKH* and *OKW*. As noted above, *Generalleutnant* (Major-General) Eugen Müller, the Head of Section III (Judicial Affairs) in Army High Command and General z.b.V., drafted his own version of orders dealing with jurisdiction and Red Army political commissars after

conversations with Lehmann and Halder.[248] The 6 May 1941 drafts on the "Treatment of enemy inhabitants and punishable offenses by members of the armed forces against enemy inhabitants in the zone of Operation *Barbarossa*" and "Directives concerning treatment of political functionaries, etc., for the coordinated execution of the mission already given on 31[*sic*] March 1941" were included as two enclosures in a letter from *OKH* to Warlimont.[249]

In the second enclosure, "Directives concerning treatment of political functionaries, etc., for the coordinated execution of the mission already given on 31 [*sic*] March 1941," Müller provided the first written draft of the Commissar Order. As the title of the draft clearly suggested, Müller, in consultation with Halder, Lehmann, and his own legal adviser, Dr. Erich Lattmann, followed the outline of Hitler's speech to his generals in Berlin just over five weeks previous. Composed of three sections, the draft was sent by Müller on 6 May 1941 to Warlimont, who initialed it on 8 May 1941. The draft was then signed by Lehmann on 9 May 1941 with proposed changes for the last section.[250]

Section I of the 6 May 1941 draft order served as an ideological justification for the battlefield execution of all Red Army political commissars and Communist Party officials. Playing on the theme of troop safety, Müller stated at the onset of the draft that: "political functionaries and leaders [commissars] [...] constitute an increased danger to the security of the troops and to the pacification of the conquered country [...]."[251]

This language, however, was intended to have a catalytic effect on the *Wehrmacht*. By adding that: "[...] their [the political functionaries' and leaders']

hitherto insidious and undermining agitation has clearly and distinctly proven that they reject any European culture, civilization, constitution and order [...] they therefore must be removed,"[252] Müller indicated that the "removal" of political functionaries and their leaders was akin to a crusade.

However, the draft provided no indication of what type of behavior was so "insidious" on the part of political functionaries and their leaders that it would justify their battlefield execution by soldiers of the German Army. It may have been, as Keitel suggested in post-war testimony, that partisan activity in Yugoslavia, and a fear of potential partisan activity in the USSR, prompted the initiation of such pre-emptive harsh measures.[253] It also may have been that since virtually every commander who was to receive the Commissar Order prior to the start of Operation *Barbarossa* was in attendance when Hitler outlined his objectives for the coming invasion, Müller, Lehmann, and Halder may have felt it unnecessary to belabor the rationale already expressed in the 30 March 1941 speech. Or, it simply could have been that the crime of existence within the infrastructure of a Communist system appeared to those writing the order to be enough to merit the death sentence.

Nonetheless, the second paragraph of Müller's draft detailed the initial screening process for handling Red Army political commissars and Communist Party functionaries. The prisoner in question was to be brought before an officer, who was then to hold a consultation with two other soldiers at the rank of non-commissioned officer or higher. Together, they then had to determine if the prisoner was a political functionary of the Communist Party, or a leader (Red Army political commissar).

According to the draft: "If the political character is sufficiently proved, the officer must immediately order the shooting and have it carried out at once."[254]

No mention was made in the 6 May 1941 draft order of what evidence constituted sufficient grounds to prove whether the POW was indeed a Red Army political commissar other than the word of the two additional German officers. In addition, if the two soldiers consulted objected to the execution, there were no parameters in the draft order to keep the officer from finding two other soldiers at the rank of non-commissioned officer or higher who would agree to the shooting.

The third paragraph established the connection between Red Army political commissars and Communist Party functionaries. The draft order declared that: "the political leaders [commissars] attached to the troops belong to the political functionaries." This association followed Hitler's alleged rationale from the 30 March 1941 speech which stated that political commissars serving with the Red Army really weren't soldiers at all, but representatives of Communist Party organs. As such, they would not legally have to be treated as prisoners of war, and could, therefore, be shot. As Müller noted in the 6 May 1941 draft order, there was also a particular emphasis on timing in the discovery and separation of political commissars:

> Their immediate discovery and their segregation from the prisoners is of special importance, for, above all, as prisoners in the homeland, they are able to continue their propaganda. If possible, they must be liquidated in prisoner

collecting points, at the latest in the prisoner transit camps.[255]

The 6 May 1941 draft order presupposed that political commissars would continue to agitate and spread Communist Party propaganda once they were captured. Only through the death of political commissars would their ideas stop carrying the weight of power and influence among other POWs. Commissars were easy to recognize, as the third paragraph of Section I in the 6 May 1941 draft order stated:

> They [political commissars] can be identified by a red star with interwoven gold hammer and sickle worn on their sleeves (for details see, "The Armed Forces of the USSR in War," Army High Command, General Staff of the Army, Quartermaster IV, Section Foreign Armies East (II), No. 100/41, Secret, of 15 January 1941, enclosure 9 d).[256]

However, according to the same paragraph, "*they* [political commissars] *are not to be recognized as soldiers* [emphasis in the original]. The regulations valid for prisoners of war do not apply to them."[257] Ironically, the aforementioned reference was detailed in a report on "The Armed Forces of the USSR," but Red Army political commissars were not to be treated as members of those same armed forces. Since Hitler declared that all commissars were criminals, and without protection under

international laws of warfare, political functionaries and commissars would therefore be considered outside the law.

The fourth paragraph of the 6 May 1941 draft order similarly targeted "Commissars in the administration and the [Communist] Party as well as other political personages *of importance* [emphasis in the original] encountered by the troops."[258] The inclusion of non-combatants on the list of those segregated for the purpose of immediate execution reflected the ideological undertones of the draft order. Ideas and political concepts were just as potentially dangerous as a weapon in the hands of an enemy soldier. The only apparent restrictions in the 6 May 1941 draft order appeared to be "technical chiefs of business and technical firms," who "are only to be seized if in individual cases they resist the German Armed Forces."[259]

The sixth paragraph of Section I in the 6 May 1941 draft order ended with a reminder that "the evacuation to the rear of seized political functionaries and commissars is prohibited."[260] This restriction reinforced the message for German Army soldiers to execute all Red Army political commissars and Communist Party functionaries before they had opportunities to spread their propaganda and incite resistance against their captors.

The seventh paragraph of the 6 May 1941 draft of the Commissar Order instituted a reporting system to document the treatment of those targeted for execution:

A brief report (report slip) on the incident is to be submitted:

a. By units subordinate to a division, to the division (*Ic*).

b. By units directly subordinate to a corps headquarters, army command or army group command or Panzer group to the corps headquarters, etc., (*Ic*). [261]

This meant that all regiments would have to report to the division Third General Staff Officer (*Ic*) (Intelligence) on how many political commissars were shot. Division *Ic* officers would then be required to file their reports through the same Intelligence channels to the corps level and above.[262]

The final paragraph of Section I of the 6 May 1941 draft order contained a disclaimer on jurisdiction for the *Barbarossa* campaign parallel to the one in the draft of the first enclosure of the same day. In this case, however, the discipline of the troops was not the main focus. Rather, it was, above all, the sanctity of the progress of operations that must prevail. Accordingly: "*troops must, therefore, refrain from organized search and mopping up operations*" [emphasis in the original].[263] Since German military tactics allowed for the use of front-line troops in mop-up operations,[264] these tasks would, therefore, be given to another group, such as the security divisions in the rear areas, or forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.

Section II of the 6 May 1941 draft order addressed the handling of political commissars and Communist Party functionaries in the rear areas of the Army Group:

> Functionaries and commissars seized in the rear area of the army group because of their previous political activity, are to be turned over to the *Einsatzgruppen* or *Einsatzkommandos* of the Security police (*SD*) [...][265]

The only exception was for "political leaders attached to the troops."[266] The draft order does not make clear which part of the military infrastructure would be responsible for these commissars, but the tenor of the 6 May 1941 draft order is such that execution was expected to follow. Section II reflected the fruit of the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement (28 April 1941)[267] of ten days previous, and implied that the killing of political commissars was officially no longer solely the responsibility of the Army.

Lastly, Section III of the 6 May 1941 draft of the Commissar Order reiterated the elimination of courts martial and summary courts martial for the first two sections in language similar to the draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. However, the paragraph was crossed out, and linked by a hand-drawn arrow to "Proposed Version for No. III."[268] Warlimont (W) initialed the document on 6 May 1941, and sent it on to Lehmann. It was Dr. Lehmann who then wrote out the proposal for Section III the next day (9 May 1941) that: "The courts martial and the summary courts martial of regimental commanders etc., must not be charged with the execution of the measures indicated in I and II."[269]

Over the next three days while the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order was finalized and printed, Warlimont drafted a top-secret memorandum for his immediate superior Jodl on the Commissar Order. As Warlimont noted in his memoirs, this "was not a draft of an order, but merely intended to summarize a problem and where possible influence the views of senior officers."[270]

The 12 May 1941 Warlimont memorandum summarized Müller's 6 May 1941 *OKH* draft of the Commissar Order. Using a point by-point format, Warlimont went through each paragraph in Section I of the 6 May 1941 draft order and repeated or restated each item.

However, in Section II of the 12 May 1941 memorandum, Warlimont broached the subject of a disagreement that was brewing within the ranks of the Nazi hierarchy for the future Eastern occupied territories. According to Warlimont, Rosenberg objected to the execution of all Red Army political commissars, Party functionaries, and civilian Communist Party commissars in the 6 May 1941 draft. Instead, Rosenberg argued, only the highest ranking functionaries "shall be liquidated, since state, communal, and economic functionaries are indispensable for the administration of the occupied territory."[271] Rosenberg did not want to lose what he saw as valuable resources that would be needed to help run the bureaucratic infrastructure of the areas captured by the *Wehrmacht*.[272]

Faced with the argument for economic and administrative necessity put forth by Rosenberg, versus the military security rationale of Müller, Lattmann, Lehmann, Jeschonnek, and Halder, Warlimont sought a decision from Hitler himself via Jodl. However, Warlimont also made his own series of proposals in Section III of the 12

May 1941 memorandum. Comprised of three parts, Warlimont's suggestions appeared to traverse both arguments. With a nod toward the *OKH*, Warlimont proposed in Part 1 that active opposition to *Wehrmacht* troops by communist functionaries should be handled as in the draft of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, in which they would be immediately "liquidated as *franc-tireurs*."[273]

Yet, with a tilt toward the Rosenberg camp, Warlimont proposed in Part 2 of the 12 May 1941 memorandum that "Functionaries not guilty of hostile acts will remain undisturbed for the time being." Warlimont noted that "it can hardly be expected that troops should be able to distinguish the various ranks in the individual sectors." He then suggested that further examination of those functionaries still alive should take place only after the troops passed through. This screening process, according to Warlimont's theory, would be able to determine who remained in place, and who was sent off to the *Sonderkommandos* to be liquidated.[274]

The last part of Warlimont's proposal in Section III of the 12 May 1941 Memorandum referred directly to the 6 May 1941 *OKH* draft: all functionaries with the troops were not to be considered POWs, and were to be executed, at the latest, in the POW transit camps (*Durchgangslagern*), and "under no circumstances will they be evacuated to the rear."[275]

Jodl received the memorandum, and clearly took the initiative to seek solutions, including writing and initialing marginal notes on the document. According to his notes, Jodl stated:

> We must count on retaliatory measures against [downed] German airmen. It is therefore best to label the entire action as retaliation.[276]

As Jürgen Förster states about Jodl and the issue of reprisals:

> It was realized both at *OKH* and *OKW* that the systematic annihilation of the Red Army's political cadres was an infringement of international law. In his search for a justification, Jodl suggested that 'the whole action' be presented 'as retaliation' in advance, but that the shooting of captured commissars should not be made dependent on any alleged precondition. With this in mind he drafted a preamble designed to dispel any human or legal scruples among the officer corps; the argument that commissars threatened the safety of the fighting forces figured only in third place.[277]

In his testimony on the afternoon of 3 June 1946 during the Nürnberg Trials, Jodl provided a further explanation. Co-Defense Counsel for the German High Command and Armed Forces, Dr. Franz Exner, asked Jodl to clarify what he meant when he wrote about retaliation. Jodl responded:

> It is correct that, because of his ideological opposition to Bolshevism, the *Führer* counted on the possible authorization of [the] commissar decree as a certainty. He was confirmed in this belief, and gave his reasons by saying: "I have carried on the war against Communism for 20 years. I know Communism but you do not know it." I must add that we as well were, of course, to a certain extent under the influence of what had been written in the literature of the entire world about Bolshevism since 1917. We also had some experiences, for example the Räte Republic in Munich. Despite that, I was of the opinion that first of all we should wait to see whether the commissars would actually act as the *Führer* expected them to act; and if his suspicions were confirmed, we could then make use of the reprisals. That is what I meant by my notation in the margin.[278]

Jodl implied that his use of the word "*Vergeltung*" (retaliation/reprisal/retaliatory measure) was simply another way of mitigating the coming Commissar Order. Earlier in his defense testimony on 3 June 1946, Jodl stated that:

> The intention of the *Führer* which was set forth in this draft[279] was rejected unanimously by all the soldiers. Very heated discussion took place about this also with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army [...] Now in this case, by my notation I wanted to indicate to Field Marshall Keitel a new way by which one might still circumvent this order which had been demanded.[280]

While Warlimont originally sought to get clarification on the extent of the Commissar Order, and appealed to Hitler, via Jodl, for guidance in drafting the final version, Jodl appeared to have avoided the issue by seeking to soften what he knew to be an inevitable component of the *Barbarossa* campaign. Nevertheless, according to Warlimont, the memorandum went up to Hitler, who made changes himself in the text.[281]

Over the next three weeks, the legal staffs at *OKH* and *OKW* took the changes ordered by Hitler, and worked to create a final draft of the Commissar Order. On Friday, 6 June 1941, *OKW* issued the "Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars" (*Richtlinien für die Behandlung politischer Kommissare*) along with the 13 May 1941 Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order. [282]

In a cover letter forwarding the Commissar Order to *OKH*, Warlimont stated that distribution of the enclosed guidelines in written form would be limited to commanders-in-chief of Armies or Air Commands, and that commanding officers

would then have to give oral instructions regarding the treatment of commissars to their own junior commanders.[283]

The Commissar Order was 2 ½ pages long, with a distribution list of twenty-one recipients listed on the fourth page.[284] A preamble with two numbered sub-sections preceded three main points. Unlike Müller's draft order of 6 May 1941 which did not contain an introduction, the preamble, in the final draft of the Commissar Order, outlined ideological, legal, and pragmatic justifications for the guidelines to follow.

Like the rationale expressed in the introduction to the "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia" (19 May 1941), and based, in part, on Hitler's own words from his 30 March 1941 speech to commanders, the preamble to the Commissar Order presupposed that the coming invasion of the Soviet Union would not just be a series of battles against a specific nation, but against an ideology which was bent on operating outside the boundaries of conventional warfare. According to the preamble of the Commissar Order:

> In the fight/struggle against Bolshevism, one *cannot* [emphasis in the original] assume that the enemy's conduct will be based on principles of humanity or of international law.[285]

The preamble to the Commissar Order, therefore, used Nazi ideology and its worldview of Bolshevism to establish a legal justification for targeting all types of political commissars. As the preamble stated:

> In particular hate-inspired, cruel and inhuman treatment of prisoners can be expected on the part of *all grades of political commissars* [emphasis in the original], who are the real core [*eigentlichen Trägern*] of the resistance.[286]

Using language similar to Jodl's comments on the rights of reprisal which he expressed to Warlimont during the drafting phase of the order,[287] the preamble to the Commissar Order effectively demonized all levels of political commissars based upon the expectation of what they *might* do to German POWs, and laid the ground for a pre-emptive strategic approach designed to free German troops from the constraints of international law. Ensuring the safety and security of the troops in the fulfillment of their operational goals to quickly subdue the Soviet Union, therefore, became the basis for pragmatic justification of the Commissar Order. As Point 1 of the preamble to the Commissar Order stated:

> The attention of all units must be drawn to the following:
> 3. It is wrong and endangers both our own security and the rapid pacification of conquered territory to show

consideration to these elements during the struggle or to act in accordance with international rules of war.[288]

Such pragmatism, though, was tinged with Nazi racial ideology. Point 2 of the preamble to the Commissar Order described the allegedly sub-human methods of warfare used by political commissars, and prescribed the consequences for those agents of destruction who fell into the hands of the invading German forces:

> 4. Political commissars have initiated barbaric, Asiatic methods of warfare. They must be dealt with *immediately* [emphasis in the original] and with maximum/utmost severity. As a matter of principle they will be shot at once whether *captured during operations or otherwise showing resistance* [emphasis in the original].[289]

The term "Asiatic" (*asiatische*), applied here to the methods of warfare (*Kampfmethoden*) used by political commissars, was not a new addition to the lexicon of pre-invasion directives. An unsigned cover sheet, which accompanied the text of "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia," stated that:

> The peoples of the Soviet Union are partly **Asiatic** [emphasis mine] and are under Bolshevist-Jewish

leadership [*Führung*]. Correspondingly, their military leadership is insidious [*heimtückisch*] and sadistic.[290]

The legal teams applied a similar usage in Section II/3 of the 19 May 1941 "The Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia:"

> [. . .] treacherous fighting methods are to be expected. The **Asiatic** [emphasis mine] soldiers of the Red Army especially are obscure, unpredictable, insidious and callous.[291]

Linking the methods of warfare employed by political commissars, the racial composition of the Soviet people, and soldiers to the term "Asiatic," may well have been ploys by the legal staffs of *OKW* and *OKH* to create stereotypical, racist images of foreign, less than human, creatures. Certainly, "barbaric" and "Asiatic" were terms in common usage in the ongoing Nazi racial propaganda campaigns,[292] and repeating them as part of the preamble to the Commissar Order served to further strip political commissars of their humanness, thereby perhaps making it less objectionable to execute them "as a matter of principle, [...] at once whether captured during operations or otherwise showing resistance."[293]

The preamble concluded with the words: "For the rest, the following regulations *(Bestimmungen)* apply:", thereby serving to segue into the main body of the Commissar Order.[294]

Section I of the Commissar Order, identified as "Theater of Operations," contains five sub-sections. Section I/1 established the fate of political commissars. Those commissars who opposed the *Wehrmacht* in any way were to be dealt with in accordance to the terms of the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941 and the 19 May 1941 "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia."[295] In short, this meant the execution of all Red Army political commissars.

Since the fate of political commissars was sealed, Section I/2 established guidelines for the treatment of political commissars before they faced execution. Repeating a reference from the Müller 6 May 1941 draft of the Commissar Order, Section I/2 provided soldiers in the field with a means to physically identify political commissars among captured enemy personnel. Section I/2 declared:

> Political commissars *serving with enemy forces* [emphasis in the original] are recognizable by their special insignia - a red star with interwoven gold hammer and sickle worn on their sleeves [for details see, "The Armed Forces of the USSR in War," Army High Command, General Staff of the Army, Quartermaster IV, Section Foreign Armies East (II), No. 100/41, Secret, of 15 January 1941, enclosure 9 d] [explanation in the original][296]

However, a subtle, but noteworthy legal distinction was made by stating that political commissars were "*serving with enemy forces*." In this way, political commissars were not considered members of the Red Army, and could, in theory, be treated by German troops without regard to the Geneva Convention concerning prisoners of war. "*Serving with enemy forces*" also implied that political commissars were part of a separate command structure that was political, and not military, in nature. Again, this distinction reinforced Nazi ideology that political organs played a significant role in the direction of political operational objectives, and necessitated special and separate treatment.

Furthermore, once political commissars were identified, Section I/2 prescribed procedures for segregating them:

> They [political commissars] are to be segregated from the prisoners of war *immediately* [emphasis in the original], i.e. while still on the battlefield.[297]

Justification for a prompt separation was based on the rationale put forth in the preamble to the Commissar Order:

> This is necessary in order to deprive them [political commissars] of any possibility of influencing the captured soldiers. These commissars *are not to be recognized as*

> *soldiers* [emphasis in the original]. The protection granted to prisoners of war in accordance with International Law will not apply to them.[298]

Moreover, in accordance with Hitler's desire as expressed in his 30 March 1941 speech, "after having been segregated, they [political commissars] are to be eliminated [*zu erledigen*]."[299] While the Commissar Order did not state so explicitly, the implication here was that the troops of the regular German Army would handle the executions of captured political commissars separated on the battlefield.

In Section I/3, however, a distinction was drawn between those commissars who opposed German troops, and those who did not. This appeared to be a contradiction to the preamble of the Commissar Order which labeled "*all grades of commissars*" as the true source of anti-German resistance. According to Section I/3:

> *Political Commissars who are not guilty of any hostile act or are not suspected of such* [emphasis in the original] will remain unmolested for the time being. Only in the course of a deeper penetration into the country will it be possible to decide whether officials who remained at their positions can be left where they are, or should be handed over to the *Sonderkommandos*. The latter should preferably scrutinize these cases themselves.[300]

Section I/3 blurred the lines between "leaders" and "political functionaries" first articulated in the Müller 6 May 1941 draft order. The creation of this loophole was clearly a concession to Alfred Rosenberg and his desire to allow the Soviet political infrastructure to temporarily remain in place in order to assist with the transition to Nazi rule in the Eastern Occupied Territories.

However, in these cases, the Army would not be playing the role of executioner. Rather, the *Einsatzkommandos* would be responsible for assessing the political situation, and then, theoretically, carrying out the tasks of executing political commissars and Communist Party functionaries.[301]

The last paragraph of Section I/3 provided a rubric for determining the guilt or innocence of those political commissars and functionaries who were not guilty of any hostile act against the German forces. Accordingly:

> As a matter of principle, when deliberating the question of "guilty or not guilty," the personal impression received of the commissar's outlook and attitude [*Gesinnung und Haltung*] should be considered of greater importance than the facts of the case which may not be decisive.[302]

It was, therefore, left solely to the discretion of the military personnel involved in separating the prisoners of war to determine whether the political commissar or Communist Party functionary would be shot. All relevant facts in determining guilt or innocence were secondary to the "outlook and attitude" of the

captured commissar. These subjective criteria, however, created opportunities for indiscriminate application of the Commissar Order, as well as the opposite, namely, opportunities for circumventing or ignoring it.

Section I/4 of the Commissar Order, subdivided into two parts, repeated Müller's 6 May 1941 draft order with regard to the transmission of reports. *Ic* officers were required to file brief incident reports about the treatment of Red Army political commissars. As Section I/4 stated:

> In cases 1.) and 2.) a brief report (on a report form) is to be submitted/reported on the incident [*Vorfall*]:
>
> c) By troops subordinated to a Division to the Intelligence Section (*Ic*) of the Division.
>
> d) By troops directly subordinated to a Corps Command, an Army High Command, or the Command of an Army Group or Armored Group to the Intelligence Section (*Ic*) of the Corps Command and higher.[303]

As was the case with the 28 April 1941 Heydrich-Wagner Agreement in dealing with forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, the Intelligence Section (*Ic*) was the channel through which these incident reports would pass. Furthermore, having been briefed in May and June 1941 by representatives of the legal staffs at *OKW* and *OKH* on reporting methods for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union,

the third general staff -- (*Ic*) officers would not find such requirements beyond the realm of their prescribed duties.

The final part of Section I of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order contained a passage similar to clauses embedded in virtually all of the pre-invasion directives which related to the sanctity and priority given to operational objectives:

> All of the above mentioned measures must not delay the progress of operations. Combat troops [*Kampftruppen*], therefore, shall not take part in systematic rounding-up and mopping-up actions.[304]

If combat troops [*Kampftruppen*] would not be involved in carrying out mop-up operations, then rear area formations and/or forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would handle such tasks. To address these options, Section II of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order stipulated how commissars, captured behind the front lines during mopping-up operations, would be handled. According to Section II:

> Commissars seized in the Rear Army Area on account of suspicious behavior [*zweifelhaften Verhaltens*] are to be handed over to the *Einsatzgruppe* or the *Einsatzkommandos* of the *SS* (*SD*) respectively.[305]

While "suspicious behavior" was not defined in the context of the written text of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order and provided much latitude for interpretation, what was clear was that the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police would be co-executors of a directive to segregate and "wipe out" all vestiges of political organs of the Communist Party in the Red Army uncovered in either the forward or Rear Army Areas. As was the case in Section I/3, the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were granted legal grounds for direct involvement in the implementation of the Commissar Order, a position that would not have been possible without the cooperative terms negotiated in the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement of 28 April 1941.

In addition, Section III of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order made a direct connection to another pre-invasion directive, the 19 May 1941 *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order. The final section of the Commissar Order stated:

> III. Restrictions with Regard to Courts Martial and Summary Courts.
> The courts martial and summary courts of regimental and other commanders must not be entrusted with the carrying out of the measures under [Sections] I and II.[306]

The military courts and all aspects of potential judicial oversight on the battlefield were to be, therefore, "left at home" in accordance with Hitler's pronouncement in his 30 March 1941 speech. Troops of the *Wehrmacht* and members of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were only constrained, in theory, by the principal

of operational priority as outlined in Section I/5 and in the 24 May 1941 Maintenance of Discipline Decree. Unlike the 6 May 1941 draft of the Commissar Order by Müller, troops would not require the authorization of a regimental commander or higher in order to "wipe out" political commissars captured at the front or in the rear army areas. Battlefield executions could take place immediately at the hands of the Army, or if discovered later, commissars could be shot by the security forces of the *SS*.

However, such far-reaching authority on the field of battle did not sit well with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. As a result, when forwarding the Commissar Order and the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order to subordinated units of the Army two days later, von Brauchitsch added two supplements to address some of the vagaries he perceived in the 6 June 1941 directive. In much the same way that von Brauchitsch intended the 24 May 1941 Maintenance of Discipline Decree to refocus the attention of *Wehrmacht* commanders on the operational battlefield tasks at hand, so too did the 8 June 1941 supplements to the Commissar Order:

> To Section I, Number 1:
>
> The action [*das Vorgehen*] taken against a political commissar must be based on the fact that the person in question has shown by a special, recognizable act or attitude that he opposes or will in the future oppose the *Wehrmacht*.[307]

Nonetheless, this first supplement of 8 June 1941 did not mitigate the Commissar Order in the least. In fact, it may have caused more confusion. What the "special, recognizable" acts were, simply were not delineated. Judging attitude, or even future attitudes was a purely subjective art, which could result in seemingly unrestricted application of the 6 June 1941 order, as well as open opportunities up for circumvention.

Furthermore, Supplement II of the 8 June 1941 addition to the Commissar Order stipulated where executions of political commissars were to occur, and under whose authority the executions were to be carried out. As the supplement to Section I, Number 2 of the 8 June 1941 von Brauchitsch directive stated:

> Political commissars attached to the troops should be segregated and dealt with by order of an officer, inconspicuously and outside the proper battle zone.[308]

Thus, the second supplement returned to the language of the 6 May 1941 Müller draft of the Commissar Order by requiring the involvement of an officer for any executions of commissars, and directing that these executions take place beyond the realm of operations. The language in the 8 June 1941 supplements was intended to preserve discipline, and keep troops from having *carte blanche* authority to shoot

anyone they even merely suspected of being a commissar. However, it also provided latitude to ignore the Commissar Order.

The actual implementation of the Commissar Order on the battlefield by front-line divisions subordinated to the 17th German Army Command will be the focus of the next chapter.

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[1] Generaloberst Halder, Kriegstagebuch in three volumes, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (ed.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-1964), Vol. 2, pp. 336-337. Hitler made these statements in the expectation of an attack against the USSR beginning in April, which was delayed by the suddenly necessary Balkans campaign; had he known this, Hitler most likely would not have informed so many military leaders so early of a secret campaign decision that was to go into effect almost three months later.

[2] GPU were Communist Party officials.

[3] Ibid., p. 337.

[4] An original copy of the Commissar Order (Kommissarbefehl) is located BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 41-44. A microfilm copy is located at National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 238, Microfilm Publication T-1119 (cited hereafter as a letter followed by a number, i.e. T-1119), Roll 15, (hereafter cited as R), Frame Number(s) (hereafter cited as FN) 1073-1078, (NOKW Document 1076). A partial translation of the Commissar Order and cover letters by General Warlimont and General von Brauchitsch appear in the Trials of War Criminals Before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10 (hereafter cited as IMT-TWC), (October 1946-April 1949), Volume 10, "The High Command Case" (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 1054-1059.

[5] **SS (Schutzstaffel)**: Literally, protection squad. Formed in 1923 as an elite bodyguard for Hitler, it was expanded in 1929 under Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. After Hitler came into power in 1933, the SS grew in numbers and absolute power. Some of the overall growth came in taking over the general police apparatus, expanding and operating the system of concentration and death camps, and forming armed fighting units between 1939 and 1945. Based on the evidence of terror and murder perpetrated by members of the SS, the International Military Tribunal, held in Nürnberg after World War II, declared that the SS was a criminal organization (exempting the Waffen-SS, the armed services branch of the SS). **SD (Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführer-SS)**: The security and intelligence branch of the Nazi Party. Reinhard Heydrich, appointed by Himmler in 1931, headed the organization designed to safeguard the interests of the Nazi Party. By 1936, Heydrich was in charge of both the Gestapo and the SD, and in 1939, the two organizations came under the aegis of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA – Reich Main Security Office). SD officers headed the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units), which followed the Wehrmacht into the Soviet Union. Upon the death of Heydrich in 1942, Himmler took over the responsibilities of the SD before appointing Ernst Kaltenbrunner in January 1943 to lead the RSHA. Like the SS, the SD was declared a criminal organization at the Nürnberg war crimes trials. **Order Police** (Ordnungspolizei or Orpo): The

uniformed, regular police forces of the Third Reich under the direction of Kurt Daluege. Units of Orpo were initially subordinated to three of the four Einsatzgruppen for the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Other Orpo units were later assigned to the three Höher-SS- und Polizeiführer (Higher SS and Police Leaders) in the USSR to assist in security enforcement behind the front lines. Orpo units also took part in the racial and political murders in occupied Poland.

[6] As Eberhard Jäckel noted in Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power, translated by Herbert Arnold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 13, Weltanschauung was such an important concept in National Socialist ideology, that Hitler included it as the title of two chapters in Mein Kampf. Additional material on Hitler's world view is found in the rest of chapter 1, pp. 13-26.

[7] Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), pp. 959-961.

[8] Ibid., p. 906. The rest of chapter 13 as well as chapters 10 and 15 in the second volume contain other references to alleged influences of Jews, and chapter 14 describes the alleged influence of Jewish Bolshevism with regard to "Eastern policy."

[9] Ibid., p. 84.

[10] Ibid., p. 950 and pp. 963-964, for example, and Eberhard Jäckel (translated by Herbert Arnold), Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), pp. 52-61.

[11] Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, the Nazi State, and the Course of Expansion (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 111-131 and pp. 204-223, provides background of the pre-Nazi and early Nazi geopolitical views on Lebensraum as does Ian Kershaw, Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 248-249; Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), Chapter three, "Germany's Turn to the East," pp. 66-91, Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution (Hanover, NH.: University Press of New England, 1991), pp. 66-82, 85-89, 92-130, 135-144, 151-162, and 214-227, as well as Görtz Aly, translated from the German by Belinda Cooper and Allison Brown, 'Final Solution:' Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews (London: Arnold, 1999) provide more developed and chronological descriptions of the later role of Himmler in resettlement policy.

[12] Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 951-952. Hitler made no reference to Jews and only scant reference to Bolshevism and the Soviet Union when he outlined plans and rationale for Lebensraum, autarchy, and military conquests at a conference at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin on 5 November 1937. Minutes from the conference were taken down by Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant, Colonel Friedrich Hossbach, and the notes of this meeting have come to be known as the Hossbach Memorandum/Protocol (Hossbach Niederscrift). In attendance with Hossbach were the Foreign Minister, Ernst von Neurath, the Minister of War, Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, as well as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (Colonel General Baron Werner von Fritsch), Navy (Grand Admiral Dr. Erich Raeder), and Air Force (Colonel General Hermann Göring). The full text of the Hossbach Memorandum appears in International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal: 14 November 1945-1 October 1946 (Nuremberg: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), Vol. 25, Document 386-PS, pp. 402-413, (hereafter cited as IMT-TMWC).

[13] Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 447, 450-451. Further examples of the alleged Jewish-Marxist connection are found on pp. 440-451.

[14] Ibid. Editorial commentary is found on pp. 450-451 referring to the pamphlet of Dietrich Eckart, Der Bolshewismus von Moses bis Lenin – Zweigespräch zwischen Adolf Hitler und mir, published posthumously in Munich in 1924, and analyzed by Ernst Nolte in Historische Zeitscrift, June 1961, "Eine frühe Quelle zu Hitlers Antisemitismus," pp. 584-606.

[15] Hugh R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), translated from the German by Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens, Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944 (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), pp. 78-79.

[16] Max Domarus, Hitler, Reden und Proklamationen, 1932-1945, 4 volumes (Wiesbaden: R. Lowit, 1973), Volume II, p. 1058. In the speech given on the sixth anniversary of his rise to power, and discussing the situation in Czechoslovakia, Hitler stated: "If international financial Jewry from within and outside of Europe were to succeed in once more hurling the nations into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

[17] Trevor Roper, Hitler's Table Talk, p. 332.
[18] Detailed discussions on the "functionalist" and "intentionalist" debate are found in Christopher Browning, "Beyond "Intentionalism" and "Functionalism": The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered," in The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 86-121, Richard J. Evans, In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), and Charles S. Maier, The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
[19] Adaptation to political and military situations was another concept used by Hitler and the Nazi hierarchy to influence and shape policy. Justice Robert H. Jackson, in the opening statements of the American prosecution at Nürnberg, described cautious experiments in aggression by Hitler as examples of adaptation to a given crisis or situation. He cited the German reoccupation of the Rhineland on 7 March 1936 to support his arguments. The specific reference is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 2, pp. 131-132. In this case, Great Britain and France were seemingly distracted by Italian military actions in the Abyssinian conflict, and Hitler, who had decided to invade the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland the previous month, seized upon the opportunity to achieve a rearmament and border protection goal he had sought since he came into power.
[20] Further commentary on the timing of the development of an ideological war in the East is found in Browning, The Path to Genocide, pp. 23-27.
[21] BAMA RH 20-17/23, Anlage 2 zum KTB Nr. 1, 'Barbarossa,' Operationsakten von 4.5-31.8.41. This reflects the opening of the attack in the area of the Seventeenth German Army Command (AOK 17), which was part of Army Group South.
[22] Details of the first days of action in the area of Army Group South, are found in BAMA RH 20-17/38, Ia, Anlage 4 z. KTB Nr. 1, Ia Meldungen an H.Gr. Süd., Bd. 22: Dgl., 22.6.41-15.7.41.
[23] Hereafter cited as the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement after the two principal negotiators. The full German text of Generaloberst von Brauchitsch, „zur Regelung des Einsatzes der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD im Verband des Heeres vom 28.4.1941," is found in BAMA RH 22/155, as cited in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "Kommissarbefehl und Massenexekutionen sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener," Anatomie des NS-Staates, Vol. 2 (Olten and Freiburg i. Breisgau: Walter-Verlag, 1965), p. 190. A microfilm copy of the original is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, Roll 27, FN 0035-0038. An official English translation of the Brauchitsch Directive of 28 April 1941 "Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area," can be found in the IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW 2080, pp. 1239-1242.
[24] The role of the Einsatzgruppen and the SS was different in Poland than in previous territorial expansion actions in Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938. It was also significantly different than later invasions in the western theater of operations against Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France in 1940. This was largely due to the ideological nature of Hitler's war aims for Poland. In his opening statements to the International Military Tribunal in Nürnberg on 21 November 1945, Justice Robert H. Jackson quoted Adolf Hitler from his 22 August 1939 conference at the Berghof: "The main objective in Poland is the destruction of the enemy and not the reaching of a certain geographical line." The full text of Justice Jackson's remarks are found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 2, pp. 138-139. Furthermore, a 23 May 1939 Reich Chancellery conference outlined plans for the destruction of Poland that went beyond mere acquisition of territory, industry, and natural resources. The full German text of "Indoctrination on the Political Situation and Future Aims," Document L-79, is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 37, pp. 546-556, and Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), Vol. 7, pp. 847-854 (cited hereafter as NCA) contains the English translation. Helmut Krausnick, Hitlers Einsatzgruppen: Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, 1938-1942 (Frankfort: Fischer Verlag, 1998), pp. 13-88 provides a detailed examination of the differences in the Polish campaign, and those territorial acquisitions prior to 1939 and the campaigns in the West in 1940, especially involving the Einsatzgruppen. This portion was originally the first part of Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges: Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, 1938-1942 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlag, 1981). Additional material is found in Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945 (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), pp. 25-30.

[25] Document 798-PS, NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 581-586. During the Nürnberg Trials, Göring's counsel, Dr. Stahmer, objected to the inclusion of the two Berghof speeches by Hitler from 22 August 1939. He contended the speeches contained factual errors, were unsigned, and therefore could not be authenticated. However, the Tribunal, in its judgment, cited the OKW documents in question containing the words of the two speeches, as authentic. For the ruling, see IMT-TMWC, Vol. 1, pp. 200-202. For a summary of both the 10:00 A.M. speech and the 12:00 P.M. speech, see the entries in Halder's diary for 22.8.39, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 1, pp. 22-26.

[26] NCA, Vol. 8, pp. 375-376, the "Announcement Relating to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty," Document TC-25. Gerhard Weinberg argues that Hitler had no intention of honoring the pact. A further discussion on this topic is found in Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany, Hitler and World War II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 156.

[27] NCA, Document 798-PS, Vol. 3, pp. 581-586.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Notes from the diary of Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris, quoted in Winfried Baumgart, "Zur Ansprache Hitlers vor dem Führern der Wehrmacht am 22. August 1939," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 19, (July 1971), No. 2, p. 303 as quoted in Alexander Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology and Atrocity (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), p. 9.

[30] The full German text is found in Document 1014-PS, "Second Speech by the Fuehrer on 22 Aug. 1939," IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, pp. 523-524, and NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 665-666 for the English translation. This quote is from NCA, Vol. 3, p. 665.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Christian Hartmann and Sergie Slutsch state that Halder had notified his colleagues on the General Staff in April 1939 that "paramilitary [Nazi] Party formations" would be deployed alongside the Wehrmacht during the invasion of Poland. Christian Hartmann and Sergie Slutsch, "Franz Halder und die Kriegsvorbereitungen im Frühjahr 1939. Eine Ansprache des Generalstabschef des Heeres," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 45, No. 3 (July 1997), p. 493. I am grateful to Alex Rossino for the reference.

[33] Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 10. For further comments by von Bock, see Klaus Gebert (ed.), (translated from the German by David Johnson), Generalfeldmarshall Fedor von Bock: The War Diary, 1939-1945 (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 1996), pp. 34-35. The original diary notes, including appendices, are located in the Bundesarchiv-Miltärarchiv in Freiburg, Germany.

[34] The Gestapo, (Geheime Staatspolizei – Secret State Police) was an instrument of the Führer's authority, and was under the auspices of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. The Abwehr (Amt/Ausland Abwehr) was the foreign and counterintelligence department of the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) under Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris. After Carnaris was arrested for his role in the 20 July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler, the Abwehr ceased to be a factor in the counterintelligence community of the Third Reich. Additional discussion on the negotiations is found in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, pp. 10-17.

[35] Six was the head of Zentralstelle II P in the newly created SD office. Best, a lawyer and SS-Brigadeführer (Brigadier General) served as Heydrich's deputy in both the Hauptamt Sicherheitspolizei (HA-Sipo - Security Police Headquarters) and the Gestapo. The departments for which Best was responsible were HA-Sipo Amt V: Verwaltung und Recht; Gestapo Abteilung I: Organisation, Personalien, Verwaltung und Recht; and Gestapo Abteilung III: Abwehrangelegenheiten. Additional material on the positions of responsibility occupied by Best is found in ZStL, VI 415 AR 1310/65 E16 (GStA. beim Kammergericht Berlin – 1 Js 12/65 (RSHA) Anklageschrift in der Strafsache gegen Dr. Werner Best wegen Mordes vom 10.2.1972, pp. 265ff, and Ulrich Herbert, Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903-1989 (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Verlag, 1996), p. 580, note 171 as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 11.

[36] ZStL, 211 AR-Z 13/63 Strafverfahren gegen Lothar Beutel, Helmut Bischoff, Dr. Walter Hammer, Erich Preckel und andere Angehörige der Einsatzgruppe IV wegen Mordes. (NS-Gewaltverbrechen in Polen 1939), p. 21, „SS Aktenvermerk, Berlin, 4 July 1940," as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 11. Additional commentary is found in the introduction to Peter Klein (ed.), Die Einsatzgruppen in den besetzten Sowjetunion 1941/42: Die Tätigkeits- und Lageberichte des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (Berlin: Hentrich, 1997), pp. 14-15, and notes 19 and 20 on p. 25.

[37] NARA, RG 242, T-78, R 351, FN 6310580-81, "Fall Weiss – Sonderbestimmungen zu den Anordnungen für die Versorgung, OKH/6. Abt., Gen.St.d.H., 24 July 1939" as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 14. A partial English translation of NOKW Document 118 "Covering Letter from High Command of the Army, 24 July 1939, enclosing Special Regulations Concerning Supply in 'Case White,'" also appears in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 690-693.

[38] Ibid. According to the regulations in paragraph 4. a), hostages could be taken if necessary and shot if the local population carried out hostile actions. 4. b) stated that captured irregulars were to be kept in special custody until a decision was made about their treatment in communication with the Army High Command. 4. c) granted police forces, including Einsatzgruppen, latitude in dealing with "the restitution of peace and order and [...] the security of the troops."

[39] These are defined under paragraph 5. a): "Persons fit for military service of Polish and Jewish nationality between 17 and 45 are to be interned immediately and to be treated as prisoners of war (but separated from these)." IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 693.

[40] Ibid.

[41] NARA, RG 242, T-78, R 351, FN 6310580-81, "Fall Weiss – Sonderbestimmungen zu den Anordnungen für die Versorgung, OKH/6. Abt., Gen.St.d.H., 24 July 1939" as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 14.

[42] ZStL, VI 415AR 1310/65 E16, 10 February 1972, p. 393, "Richtlinien für den auswärtigen Einsatz der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD," 31 July 1939, as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 15. Additional chronology for this agreement is found in Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, p. 36. Yet, as Peter Hoffmann points out in an article on General von Stülpnagel currently in preparation, Krausnick assumes Heydrich, Chief of the Security Police and SD, had come to "a formal agreement with Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres)" after "talks between Heydrich and Colonel Wagner (6. Abteilung/OKH) already in July [1939]." As cited above, this agreement permitted operations of the Einsatzgruppen in Poland in conjunction with the Wehrmacht. However, Hoffmann notes that Wagner was not in position to negotiate with Heydrich in July 1939. Citing Eduard Wagner, Der Generalquartiermeister. Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des Generalquartiermeisters des Heeres General der Artillerie Eduard Wagner (edited by Elisabeth Wagner) (Munich and Vienna: Günter Olzog Verlag, 1963), pp. 88, 248, 251 and OKH Gen.St.d.H.-Zentr.Abt.: Kriegs-Stellenbesetzung. Stand: 15.11.39, BAMA, Hoffmann states that Wagner, who had headed 6. Abteilung (Quartermaster) in OKH/Gen.St.d.H from 1 July 1935, had assumed command of No. 10 Artillery Regiment in Regensburg by 12 June 1939, and did not return to OKH until 9 August 1939 to take on his mobilization position as Chief of the General Staff of the Quartermaster-General (then General Eugen Müller). I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference.

[43] The bulk of this communication came through the Third General Staff Officer (Ic, 3. Generalstabsoffizier: The Third General Staff Officer – Counterintelligence). At the Army High Command level (OKH), the intelligence branch was manned by the Fourth Senior General Staff Officer (Oberquartiermeister IV – O Qu IV). At the Army Group (Heeresgruppenkommando), Army Command (Armeeoberkommando), Corps (Korps), and Division (Division) levels prior to 1944, the 3rd General Staff Officer handled all field intelligence and counterintelligence. Assisted by at least one junior officer (O 3- Ordannanzoffizier and perhaps an O 5/O 6) as a third assistant adjutant and a 5th /6th assistant adjutant respectively, the Ic usually held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel at the Army Group level, while his assistant was a rank below him. At the Division level, most Ics held the rank of Major. Additional information on the structure of the General Staff is found in "Organization of the Field Forces," in U.S. War Department Handbook on German Military Forces (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 80, and the "Table of Organization of the Staff of Army Headquarters (AOK), IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, chart in between pp. 260-261, as well as David Kahn, Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II (New York: Collier Books, 1978), pp. 403-404.

[44] ZStL, VI 415AR 1310/65 E16, 10 February 1972, p. 393, "Richtlinien für der auswärtigen Einsatz der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD," 31 July 1939, as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 15. Further instructions regarding liaison officers are found in NARA, RG 242, T-311, R 236, FN 1054, "Sonderstimmungen zu der Anordnung für die Versorgung, 6. Abt., OKH, Gen.St.d.H., 21 August 1939, as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, pp. 19-20.

[45] Richard Breitman, Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), pp. 32-33, especially notes 23, 27, and 28 on p. 254 contain additional commentary on determining the evidentiary paper trail. Rossino quotes a letter from Heydrich to Ordnungspolizei chief Daluege (2 July 1940) about the tasks given in "Operation Tannenberg." Heydrich stated that Hitler had given him an "extraordinary radical order for the liquidation of circles of the various Polish leadership, [killings] that ran into the thousands." Further details are located in ZStL, Der Generalstaatsanwalt bei dem Kammergericht – 1 Js 12/65 (RSHA) – Ermittlungsvermerk, 1 December 1968, "Schreiben des Chefs der Sipo und des SD an SS-Obergruppenführer General Kurt Daluege," 2 July 1940, Verfahren gegen Dr. Werner Best u.a. ASA 179, p. 128 as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 19. Richard Breitman, Architect of Genocide, pp. 66-84, contains more material on the scope of "Operation Tannenberg."

[46] Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 19. Rossino summarizes statements made by Dr. Werner Best in ZStL, VI 45 AR 1310/65 E 16, pp. 380-381, Testimony of Werner Best, 10 June 1969.

[47] ZStL, 8 AR-Z 52/60 (StA. Würzburg – 1 Js 2469/60 –Verfahren gegen Dr. Alfred Hasselberg wegen Mordes), Vol. 1, p. 175, Testimony of Walter Huppenkothen, 11 August 1960 as quoted in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 22.

[48] Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 19. For further evidence of such target lists, see Helmut Groscurth, Tagebuch eines Abwehroffiziers 1938-1940: Mit weiteren Dokumenten zur Militäropposition gegen Hitler, Helmut Krausnick and Harold Deutsch (eds.), assited by Hildegard von Kotze (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970), pp. 201-202 as cited in Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, p. 63.

[49] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 47, FN 7559979, Vermerk OKW/Abwehr 26 August 1939 as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 19.

[50] NARA, RG 242, T-314, R 870, FN 61-63, Bekämpfung aller Volks- und Staatsgefährdenden Bestrebungen im Operationgebiet des AOK 8, 28 August 1939 as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, pp. 22 and 33. The order also outlined cooperation between the Einsatzgruppen and the army police forces. The Military Police (Feldgendarmerie) and Secret Field Police (GFP - Geheime Feldpolizei) could "seek out and combat all activities in the operational area that present a danger to the Volk (people) and the State." Additional information on the responsibilities of the GFP is found in U.S. Army Military Counterintelligence Subdivision (G-2) and British M.I. 14(d) April 1945 study of the German Police, reproduced as The German Police (Bayside, NY: Axis Europa, Inc., 1997), pp. 63-64.

[51] Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, pp. 53-54, 63-106, and Klaus Gebert (ed.), Generalfeldmarshall Fedor von Bock: Zwischen Pflicht und Verweigerung - Das Kriegstagebuch (Munich: Hebig, 1995), p. 47 and in English, Gebert, von Bock: The War Diary, p. 51 for von Bock's response to those responsible for killing Jews. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference. Additional citations on courts martial proceedings and protests by Wehrmacht commanders are found in Jürgen Förster, "Complicity of Entanglement?" in David Cesarani (ed.), The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.271, Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide, pp. 71-72, and Alexander Rossino, "Destructive Impulses: German Soldiers and the Conquest of Poland," in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, V11 N3, Winter 1997, pp. 351-365.

[52] Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, pp. 53-54. Colonel Wagner, upon hearing of the summary executions by SS-Obergruppenführer (General) Udo von Woyrsch's Einsatzgruppe on 22 September 1939, successfully got von Worysch and his troops removed from the 14th Army Rear Area. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference. See also chapters 3 and 4 in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland. In addition, Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris confronted General Keitel on 12 September 1939 about besmirching the honor of the Army in connection with the wide-spread execution of the Polish aristocracy and clergy by members of the SS. However, Keitel tried to deflect the responsibility back to Hitler. The full file notice from OKW Amt Ausl/Abw is reprinted in Helmuth Groscurth, Tagebücher eines Abwehroffiziers, pp. 357-359.

[53] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 1, p. 79 and Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, pp. 65. 69. Heydrich went so far to tell his subordinated commanders that he had "fixed" the problems with Wagner over Einsatzgruppen activities in and behind the army zones of operation in order to ease tensions between the Wehrmacht and the SS (SD) and Security Police. Reaching an agreement meant that Einsatzgruppen commanders would be subordinated to army

commands for troop movements, rations, supplies, etc., but they would still receive all operational orders directly from Himmler or Heydrich. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference.

[54] Hugh R. Trevor-Roper (ed.), Blitzkrieg to Defeat: Hitler's War Directives, 1939-1945 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), Directive Number 18, 12 November 1940, p. 43, and Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtsführungsstab), 1940-1945 (hereafter KTB OKW), in three volumes, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (ed.) (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 170 for 12 November 1940 and p. 205 for 5 December 1940. Further commentary is found in Jürgen Förster, "Hitler's Decision in Favour of War against the Soviet Union," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, pp. 13-25 and Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims, pp. 157-164.

[55] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 212.

[56] BAMA, RH 19 I/67 contains the draft plan with all the amendments. The original draft was signed by Hitler and initialed by Generals Keitel, Jodl, and Warlimont. The full finalized text is found in "Weisung Nr. 21 - Fall Barbarossa, 18 Dezember 1940," IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, pp. 47-52. It also appears as Anlage 2, Aufmarschanweisung OKH von 31.1.1941 "Barbarossa," in Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 463-469, and is mentioned in KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 237 (18 December 1940). A partial English translation from Nürnberg, Document 446-PS, can be found in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 407-409 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 958-960.

[57] BAMA RH19, I/67.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., and IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, p.52

[64] Walther Hubatsch, (ed.), Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung, 1939-1945 (Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe, 1962).

[65] Trevor-Roper, Blitzkrieg to Defeat, pp. xxi-xxii. Both terms, however were used in the Nürnberg trials, and are used interchangeably within this chapter.

[66] OKW/WFSt/Abt. L – High Command of the Armed Forces/Armed Forces Operations Staff/National Defense Branch headed by Major General Walter Warlimont.

[67] KTB OKW, Vol. 1, 3 March 1941, p. 341.

[68] Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden, p. 28 contains an earlier reference to the coming ideological war. Streit quotes economic expert and Infantry General Georg Thomas as saying Hermann Göring told him on 26 February 1941 that Bolshevik leaders would quickly be liquidated upon the occupation of the Soviet Union.

[69] Karin Doerr, "Ideological Language of Exclusion, Domination, and Annihilation," in Robert Michael and Karin Doerr, Nazi-Deutsch/Nazi German: An English Lexicon of the Language of the Third Reich (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 27-46 contains more on the Nazi use and misuse of language.

[70] Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Martin Brozat, Hans Buchheim, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick (eds.), (translated from the German by Richard Barry, Marian Jackson, and Dorothy Long), The Anatomy of the SS State (New York: Walker and Company, 1968), pp. 512-513. In addition, Quartermaster General Wagner reported to Halder two days later (5 March 1941) about the draft of a directive by OKW dealing with the administration and occupation of the Soviet Union and a "special task of the Reichsführer-SS" for the coming campaign. Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 303.

[71] KTB OKW, Vol. 1, 3 March 1941, p. 341. See also Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, pp. 115-117, and Richard Breitman, Official Secrets, p. 36.

[72] While the term used in the original document is "Kommissare" (commissars), a word that certainly could include civilian officials of the Communist Party, its wide scope does not preclude the inclusion of Red Army political commissars. As an example, the war diaries and activity reports filed by Ia and Ic officers during the Barbarossa campaign more often than not used the term "Kommissare" to mean Red Army political commissars.

[73] Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present, "Germany's Turn to the East," pp. 66-91, Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide, pp. 66-82, 85-89, 92-130, 135-144, 151-162, and 214-227, as well as Görtz Aly, Final Solution all provide a more developed and chronological description.
[74] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 303.
[75] The German text appears in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 447-PS, Richtlinien auf Sondergebieten zur Weisung Nr. 21 (Fall Barbarossa), pp. 53-58. The English text appears in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 409-413. Another English translation is also appears in Walter Warlimont, (translated by R.H. Barry), Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945 (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1964), pp. 152-156.
[76] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, pp. 53-58 and NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 409-413.
[77] Geoffrey Megargee, "A Blind Eye and Dirty Hands: The Wehrmacht's Crimes in the East, 1941-1945," p. 6. Paper presented at the conference "Germany and the East," Canadian Centre for Austrian and Central European Studies, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 20 September 2002.
[78] Helmut Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeiterlass Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 25 (1977), pp. 686-688, and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Martin Brozat, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 512-513contain more on the development of the 13 March 1941 draft of "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21."
[79] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, pp. 53-54 and NCA, Vol. 3, p. 410.
[80] Ibid. "[...] the struggle which has to be carried out between two opposing political systems."
[81] Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeiterlass Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 25 (1977), pp. 688-689.
[82] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, p. 54, and NCA, Vol. 3, p. 410.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Hermann Göring, Reichsmarschall (Reich Marshal), Head of the Luftwaffe, and the heir-apparent to Hitler for much of the war, also was in charge of the Four-Year Plan and served as Chairman of the Reich Council for National Defense. After failing to dominate the skies in the Battle of Britain with the Luftwaffe, Göring looked to the attack on the Soviet Union as a chance to re-establish his power and influence within the Nazi hierarchy.
[85] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, p. 56, and NCA, Vol. 3, p. 410.
[86] Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeiterlass Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 25 (1977), pp. 687-688.
[87] The RSHA was the central umbrella SS security enforcement organization headed by SS-Obergruppenführer (General) Reinhard Heydrich. The RSHA was formed by a decree of Heinrich Himmler on 27 September 1939 (going into effect on 1 October 1939) as a consolidated security organization. Headed by Reinhard Heydrich, the RSHA brought together the Gestapo (Secret State Police), the Kripo (Criminal Police), and the Sicherheitsdienst (SD, or Security Service of the Nazi party) in one office under the jurisdiction of both the SS and the Interior Ministry. The RSHA centralized police and security efforts for the state and the party, and combated perceived criminal activity and enemies within Germany and later in the occupied territories of Europe. Additional material on the establishment of the RSHA and the role of the police in Nazi Germany can be found in Hans Buchheim, "The SS: Instrument of Domination" in Hans Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 127-254, and George C. Browder, Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1990).
[88] NARA, RG 238, T-1139 R52, FN 1100-1101, as noted in Breitman, Architect of Genocide, pp 148 and 283 N. Also NARA, RG 238, M-946, R 1, FN 109 and 113 (10 February 1941) as cited in Breitman, Official Secrets, pp 35-36, and 255 N. An indication that negotiations were already underway is found in the entry and editorial commentary for Monday, 10 March 1941 in Peter Witte, Michael Wildt, Martina Voigt, Dieter Pohl, Peter Klein, Christian Gerlach, Christoph Dieckmann, and Andrej Angrick, (eds.) Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/1942 (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1999), p. 129. Himmler noted as a subject for a meeting with Heydrich: "Cooperation [between] Security Police and Army" ("Zusammenarbeit S Pol. u. Heer"). This meeting was intended as a briefing on the progress of the negotiations that had begun the previous month.
[89] Einsatzgruppen (operational groups) were comprised of members of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst - Security Service) of the SS as well as policemen for the invasion of the Soviet Union. Broken into four

major units of battalion size for "Operation Barbarossa," they played a key role in the initial phase of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Studies on the activities of the Einsatzgruppen include the following: Krausnick and Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, and Shmuel Spector, (eds.), The Einsatzgruppen Reports (New York: Holocaust Library, 1989), Ronald Headland, Messages of Murder: A Study of the reports of the Security Police and Security Service, 1941-1943 (Rutherford, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1992), Ralf Ogorreck, Die Einsatzgruppen und die Genesis der Endlösung (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), and Klein, (ed.) Die Einsatzgruppen in den besetzten Sowjetunion.

[90] Walter Schellenberg, The Schellenberg Memoirs, edited and translated by Louis Hagen (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956), p. 209.

[91] Ibid.

[92] The 3rd general staff officer was to keep the general staff apprised of all intelligence and activities of the enemy. This would, therefore, supposedly include actions of the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos. According to Document NOKW-1878 presented as Prosecution Exhibit 42, in "The High Command Case" before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10, IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 254-256, "Extracts from The Handbook for German General Staff Service in Wartime, Part II, Operations Section b. The Third General Staff Officer (Ic) [...] (24) Ic is the aide of Ia (the First General Staff Officer) in determining the enemy situation. Enemy information having come in via the front and secret intelligence service form, in addition to their own mission, the most important basis for an evaluation of the situation and the decision [. . .] (25) Close cooperation with the Ia is of importance. Ic must attempt on his own part to secure early and completely all details of the situation and the intentions of the command. Enemy information received by the higher commander, the chief of staff, or the Ia by telephone, on trips to the front etc., must be immediately reported to the Ic; he is also to be advised of important considerations and discussions."

[93] Additional material is available in the discussion notes of Rittmeister Schach von Wittenau, 6-7 March 1941, Russian State Military Archive, Moscow, 1303-1-41, p. 41 as given in Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.), Verbrechen der Wehrmacht (Ausstellungskatalog) (Hamburg: Hamburg Institut für Sozialforschung, 2001), p. 57. A microfilm copy is available in Militärarchiv, Potsdam (hereafter cited as MAP), WF-03/9121 [fol.121]. See also, Andrej Angrick, "The Escalation of German-Rumanian Anti-Jewish Policy after the Attack on the Soviet Union" in Yad Vashem Studies, Volume XXVI (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998), pp. 203-237. I am grateful to Andrej Angrick for this reference.

[94] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 311.

[95] Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/1942, pp. 131-132. Additional commentary on the content of the meetings chaired by Himmler is found in Breitman, Official Secrets, p. 36. The role of the Waffen-SS is described in Yehoshua Büchler, "Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS: Himmler's Personal Murder Brigades in 1941," in Michael Marrus (ed.) The Nazi Holocaust: Vol. 3. The "Final Solution": The Implementation of Mass Murder, Part 2 (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1989), pp. 456-470. Primary sources on the German Police radio traffic decodes are located in the Public Record Office (hereafter cited as PRO), London, HW 16/32, HW 16/45 for the period July through December 1941. PRO HW/46 covers the beginning of 1942.

[96] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 320. During this time, Hitler kept the ideological nature of the pending attack on the Soviet Union at the forefront of his political agenda. On 17 March 1941, Hitler spoke to a gathering of General Staff officers, including Halder, Wagner and Colonel Adolf Heusinger, the Senior Staff Officer and Chief of Operations Section in the General Staff of the Army. At this meeting he stated that "the intelligentsia that Stalin put in place must be annihilated." However, neither Adolf Heusinger in Befehl im Widerstreit (Tübingen und Stuttgart: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag Hermann Leins, 1950) nor Georg Meyer in Adolf Heusinger. Dienst eines deutschen Soldaten 1915 bis 1964 (Hamburg, Berlin, Bonn: Verlag E.S.Mittler & Sohn, 2001), mentions the 17 March 1941 meeting. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for these references.

[97] Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 514-515. Army High Command/General Staff of the Army/Quartermaster General – Wagner. Jacobsen states that Wagner pressed Heydrich the day before the draft order was completed (25 March 1941) "with all the force of his command for 'absolute authority of command' to be vested in the C-in-C Army in areas of operations."

[98] Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, pp. 158-160.
[99] Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et. al., The Anatomy of the SS State, p. 514.
[100] Ibid.
[101] The full text of the Heydrich memo is located in Russian State Military Archive, Moscow, 500-3-795, (26 March 1941). Points 10-12 of the Heydrich memo are given in Götz Aly, Final Solution, p.172. In addition, Breitman suggests other sources than this memo to support the emerging plans to annihilate the Jews of the Soviet Union in association with "Operation Barbarossa." Breitman, Official Secrets, p. 35 and p. 255n. Additional material on the timing of the decision to murder the Jews of Europe is found in Peter Longerich, The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution (Charleston, SC: Tempus Books, 2001).
[102] Aly, Final Solution, p. 172.
[103] Ibid.
[104] A diagram on the structure of the Eastern Occupied Territories based on this directive is in Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 1192. Immediately behind the combat area were three rear areas. The first, the Army Rear Area (Armeegebiet) was under the authority of the Army Commander-in-Chief. The second, the Rear Army Area (Heeresgebiet) was under the authority of the Commander of the Rear Army Area, and contained the communications zone. Both area commanders followed the orders of the Army Group. The last zone was the Political Area under the civilian authority of the Reich Commissar while military jurisdiction fell to the Wehrmacht commander assigned to the occupied territory. Further details are found in Jürgen Förster, "The pacification of the Conquered Territories" and "Securing Living Space," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, pp. 485-486, and pp. 1189-1225.
[105] BAMA RH 22/12 and V.N. Nemyaty, et al., (eds.), History Teaches a Lesson, pp. 20-21 for the English translation.
[106] Ibid., p. 20.
[107] By way of example, on 16 May 1941, Motorized Police Battalion 311 was subordinated to Security Division 444 and Reserve Motorized Police Battalion 82 was subordinated to Security Division 454. Both of these divisions were originally assigned to the Seventeenth German Army Command for the start of "Operation Barbarossa." Assignment details are located in NARA, T-312, R 674, FN 8308097 (AOK 17) and the Ia record of the 454th Security Division from 16 May 1941 in NARA, T-315, R 2215, FN 512.
[108] Jürgen Förster, "The pacification of the Conquered Territories," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, pp. 485-486.
[109] Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/1942, pp. 146 and 150. For example, on Wednesday, 8 April 1941, Daluege spent nearly two hours speaking about "Operation Barbarossa" with Himmler in Berlin. Eight days later, Daluege was joined by Wolff, Heydrich, Wagner, and SS-Gruppenführer (Lieutenant General) Hans Jüttner (Chief of Staff and deputy to the Chief of the Führungshauptamt-SS - Operational Headquarters of the SS) in a meeting over lunch with Himmler in Graz, Austria. The meeting may well have served as a forum to secure details of cooperation between the SS and the Wehrmacht, as well as to clarify the language in the final version of the 26 March 1941 draft order.
[110] BAMA RW 4/v 575, Regelung des Einsatzes der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD im Verbande des Heeres. A full English translation of the "Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area," is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW 2080, pp. 1239-1242. Both the original German and an English translation also appear together in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 32-43.
[111] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 35.
[112] Ibid. Notably absent from the target list of "especially important persons" were Jews, communist officials and Red Army political commissars. While the terms "saboteurs, terrorists, etc." could certainly be used interchangeably with virtually any group or individual whom the SS designated as an enemy of the Nazi State, including Jews, communists, and Red Army political commissars, at the time the directive was issued by OKH it would be pure supposition to assume the that the target list would expand once the invasion began. However, in the context of a similar cooperative agreement for the campaign in the Balkans, Halder and Wagner added the words "Communists, Jews" to the target list in Section 1(a) when expanding the scope of the SS (SD) and Security Police activities. The full text of

the 2 April 1941 OKH directive for "Regulation of the employment of the Security Police and the SD in Operations "Marita" and "Funfundzwanzig" is located in BAMA RH 31-I/v. 23 as cited in Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, pp. 492-493.

[113] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 35.

[114] Ibid.

[115] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 8308179 as an example of the different ways the SS (SD) and Security Police kept the military commanders informed of "the political situation." In this daily operational report for the Seventeenth German Army Command (Beilage Nr. 1 zum KTB Nr. 1, AOK 17, Ia, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic/A.O.), both seemingly mundane, but necessary information, was passed along by the security forces operating in the rear, as well as issues alluding to the harsh treatment of "enemies of the state." The report for 10 October 1941 recorded the departure of Sturmbahnnführer (Major) Günther Hermann of the SD (commander of Sonderkommando 4b) and the introduction of his successor, Sturmbahnnführer (Major) Fritz Brauner [sic]. It also noted that Standartenführer (Colonel) Dr. Erhard Kröger, leader of the Einsatzkommando 6, discussed prospective questions about the deployment of security forces against "partisans, saboteurs, etc." while also expressing gratitude to the recalled Sturmbahnnführer (Major) Hermann and his assistant.

[116] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 35.

[117] The Ten Commandments are also referred to as the Carnaris-Best Agreement. Additional details are available in Heinz Höhne (translated from the German by Richard Barry), The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS (London: Penguin Classic, 2000), pp. 229-230.

[118] According to Browder, the areas of responsibility for the Abwehr were as follows: 1) Military espionage and counterespionage. 2) Control and observation of military installations. 3) Defense of the Reichswehr and related concerns. 4) All cases involving national defense. 5) Regulation of Gestapo executive police support in such work. The Gestapo had authority over the following: 1) Combating political crime. 2) Controlling the border police and their intelligence service. 3) Doing countersabotage police work and related intelligence within the borders of the Reich and in support of the Abwehr. 4) Handling cases of industrial sabotage and espionage and related intelligence. 5) Monitoring communications in cooperation with the Abwehr and Göring's Investigation Office. The text of the original "Ten Commandments" is located in NARA, RG T-175, R 403, FN 2926106-2926116, as cited in George Browder, Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD, p. 180 and notes on p. 298. Other subsequent agreements such as "Grundsätze für die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Geheimer Staatspolizei und den Abwehrdiensten der Wehrmacht" (Principles of Cooperation between the Secret State Police (Gestapo) and the Counterintelligence Services of the Wehrmacht) are located in BAMA RH 19 III/388, 271 as cited in Ernst Klink, "The Military Concept of the War against the Soviet Union," in Horst Boog, et al., Germany and the Second World War, pp. 301-302.

[119] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 36. This section echoed the language of Section II, paragraphs 2(b) and 8 of the 13 March 1941 "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21."

[120] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 36.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., FN 37. The interception and decoding of these subsequent radio transmissions as they related to the Nazi Holocaust in the Soviet Union is the subject of Richard Breitman's Official Secrets.

[124] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 37.

[125] Ibid.

[126] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 35.

[127] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2215, FN 379. The original is found in BAMA RH 26-454/6. A brief summary is found in Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 494.

[128] The legal group with the General for Special Missions attached to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Lattmann helped draft the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement, and subsequent orders prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union. He later served as a judge at the Reich Military Court. IMT-TWC, Vol. 10. pp. 1134-1135 contains further biographical information on Dr. Lattmann.

[129] NARA RG 242, T-312, Roll 661, FN 8293830 for the topics and course offerings during meetings with Third General Staff officers at the divisional, corps, and army level in Berlin 1-22 April 1941.
[130] BAMA RH 22/271 as cited in Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 493.
[131] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 32-38. See also BAMA RW 4/v 575.
[132] BA MA RH 22/111, Sonderauftrag des Führers, 21 May 1941 for the original German text. The official English translation from Nürnberg is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, NOKW Document 2079, pp. 1242-1244. A copy of both the original German and an English translation appear in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 23-31.
[133] The Section 2 reference from the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 27, FN 36.
[134] BAMA RH 22/111, Sonderauftrag des Führers, 21 May 1941 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, NOKW Document 2079, p. 1243.
[135] Ibid., p. 1244.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] As was the case with the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21" from 13 March 1941 and the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement of 28 April 1941, the absence of such targets as Jews, communists, and Red Army political commissars in the printed text leaves much latitude for action as well as inaction. Only in such internal documents like the 26 March Heydrich memorandum on Göring's instructions, or the "Discussion notes of Rittmeister Schach von Wittenau, 6-7 March 1941," did such target groups appear to get identified in the pre-invasion corpus of directives.
[139] BA MA RW 4/v. 577, pp. 72-74 contains the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order, (German text), "Erlass über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtbarkeit im Gebiet "Barbarossa" und über besondere Massnahmen der Truppe vom 13.5.41." It is reproduced with accompanying letters of transmittal in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 34, Document C-50, pp. 249-255. A partial English translation with Dr. Lehmann's cover letter is located in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW-209, pp. 1121-1123. A complete English translation without the cover letter is located in IMT-TWC, Vol. 11, pp. 521-523. A partial English translation also appears in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document C-50 (Jurisdiction Order with transmittal letters), pp. 1113-1118. A full translation in English appears in NCA, Vol. 6, Document C-50, pp. 871-875. Copies of both the original German and English translations of the drafts and Barbarossa Jurisdiction order also appear in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 3, FN 233-259.
[140] NARA, RG 242, T-78, R 351, FN 6310574-6310581, Fall Weis – Sonderbestimmungen zu der Anordnungen für die Versorgung, OKH/6. Abt., Gen.St.d.H., 24 July 1939, as cited in Rossino, Hitler Strikes Poland, p. 13.
[141] Ibid., FN 6310576-6310577.
[142] The first Hague Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land was ratified by signatory nations, including Germany, on 29 July 1899 with a lengthy annex that specified the laws. The second Hague Convention (Hague IV) was ratified on 18 October 1907, and contained a new provision that there would not be a limitation on the life of the laws.
[143] § 3 of the Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung (KSSVO – Wartime special penal ordinance) from 17 August 1938 dealt with "lawful belligerency." William Harry Wilely, in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation "Onward to New Deeds: The German Field Army and War Crimes during the Second World War," York University, North York, Ontario, May 1996, p. 120. cites the "Verordnung über das Sonderstrafrecht im Kriege und bei besonderem Einsatz (Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung)," dated 17 August 1938 in Heeresdruckvorschrift (H.Dv.) 3, Handbuch des Militärrechts, (ed.) Reichswehrministerium as found in NARA, T-283, R 4. German troops also operated under the larger terms of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War from 27 July 1929.
[144] TWC, Vol. 11, p. 529.
[145] Preamble to Hague IV (Annex) as cited in Wilely, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Onward to New Deeds: The German Field Army and War Crimes during the Second World War," pp. 120-121.
[146] Wilely, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Onward to New Deeds: The German Field Army and War Crimes during the Second World War," p. 120.

[147] Ibid., pp. 122-123. Richard Cavell Fattig also notes the comments of Wehrmacht jurists in his unpublished dissertation, "Reprisal: The German Army and the Execution of Hostages during the Second World War," University of California, San Diego, 1980, pp. 21-22.
[148] 12 August 1914 "Warning" issued by Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke (the Younger), John Horne and Alan Kramer, German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 95.
[149] Jürgen Förster, "Complicity of Entanglement?" in David Cesarani (ed.), The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.271, Richard Breitman, The Architect of Genocide, p. 71, and Alexander Rossino, "Destructive Impulses: German Soldiers and the Conquest of Poland," in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, V11 N3, Winter 1997, pp. 351-365.
[150] KTB OKW, Vol. 1, 3 March 1941, p. 341, Helmut Krausnick and Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, pp. 115-117, and Richard Breitman, Official Secrets, p. 36.
[151] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, p. 54.
[152] Warlimont, Inside Hitler's headquarters, p. 160. Warlimont identifies Commanders-in-Chief of the three Services, senior Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe, and Kriegsmarine commanders selected for the coming invasion along with their senior staff officers as the majority of those in attendance, seated in long rows according to rank and seniority. Warlimont also adds that Hitler had employed a similar method when "appealing" to his commanders at various intervals from 22 August 1939 to 23 November 1939.
[153] Halder summarized Hitler's main points in over three pages of his diary. Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 335-338. Supplementary information and other specific objectives can be found in the memoirs of Warlimont and Keitel, as well as the testimonies of several defendants at the Nürnberg Trials of War Criminals under Control Council Law Number 10. For Warlimont's comments on 30 March 1941, see Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, pp. 160-163. For Keitel's views, see Walter Gorlitz (ed.) (translated by David Irving), The Memoirs of Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command, 1938-1945, (New York: Cooper Square, 2000), pp. 134-137. For those at Nürnberg, see IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1043 for testimony by Field Marshall von Leeb, and pp. 1065-1066 for testimony by Warlimont.
[154] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 336-337.
[155] For example, the text of the 3 March 1941 draft revisions of the "Guidelines in Special Matters Concerning Directive Number 21," KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 341.
[156] At his trial in Nürnberg, Keitel stated that: "[...] during the first half of March (1941) a meeting of generals was called, [...] a briefing of the generals at Hitler's headquarters." He noted that the purpose was to inform the generals of the coming invasion, "although an order had not yet been given." However, this was a relatively small gathering, and senior staff members were not present from all branches of the service. The full description for Keitel's defense on 4 April 1946 is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 10, p.525.
[157] Keitel, Memoirs, pp. 134-137.
[158] Quotation taken from the official translation of Lehmann's statement. IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1137. In response to a question by the defense counsel, Lehmann also noted that "during the next year, he [Hitler] was going to leave the courts at home" (p.1138). This phrase became the title of Reitlinger's chapter on the Commissar and Jurisdiction Orders. Reitlinger, House Built on Sand chapter 2, pp. 66-97.
[159] The prosecution case outline against defendant Lehmann is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 358-359.
[160] The official translation in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW-209, p. 1122 uses the term "guerrillas" for the German "Freischärler."
[161] BAMA RW 4/v. 577, pp. 38-39 and NARA RG 238, T-1119, R 3, FN 236, 250-251.
[162] IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1138. Further testimony on all three drafts is found in the "Extracts from Affidavit of Dr. Erich Lattmann" (15 May 1948), pp. 1134-1137, and Lehmann's direct examination, pp. 1137-1154.
[163] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 3, FN 236 and 250.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid., FN 237 and 252.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid., FN 237-238, 252-253.
[171] BAMA RW 4/v 577 for the original cover letter with two enclosures.
[172] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, pp. 401-402 (cover letter); pp. 403-406 (Treatment of enemy inhabitants - enclosure #1). Partial English translations are found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 877-PS (cover letter), pp. 1059-1060; Document 877-PS (Treatment of enemy inhabitants – enclosure #1), pp. 1124-1126; and Document 1471-PS (Treatment of Political Functionaries - enclosure #2), pp. 1060-1062.
[173] IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1066, and Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, pp. 608-609, note 41.
[174] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, p. 403.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., p. 404.
[177] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 399-400 notes: "Müller with Judge Advocate General: a) Order to the troops along the lines of the Führer's last speech to the generals [30.3.1941]. Troops must be aware that the eastern campaign is an ideological battle. b) Questions about courts martial in the rear army group areas. c) Relaxation of the death sentence against members of the armed forces during operations." Förster argues that "Müller received his instructions not from the commander-in-chief of the army but from the chief of the general staff (Halder)." The complete text is available in Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and World War Two, Vol. 4, p. 499.
[178] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, p. 404. The official partial English translation of this document uses the term "guerrilla" for the German "Freischärler.".
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid. As draconian as the preceding measures may appear to be, they did conform to an international consensus of what the laws of war permitted and did not permit. One of the most respected commentaries on the rules of land warfare is found in Lassa Oppenheim, International Law. A Treatise. Vol. II. Disputes, War and Neutrality, Fifth Edition. Edited by Hersch Lauterpacht (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1935), especially pp. 447-448. I am grateful to Peter Hoffmann for this reference.
[181] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, p. 405.
[182] Ibid., p. 405, and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 877-PS, p. 1125.
[183] Richard Cavell Fattig, unpublished dissertation, "Reprisal: The German Army and the Execution of Hostages During the Second World War," p. x, and Horne and Kramer, German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial.
[184] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, p. 405, and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 877-PS, p. 1125-1126. The language here foreshadows the Maintenance of Discipline Order of 24 May 1941, which was used by Brauchitsch and several other defendants at Nürnberg as an example of how the German generals supposedly mitigated the Commissar Order. Field Marshal Brauchitsch's statements are found in IMT–TMWC, Vol. 20, p. 582.
[185] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, p. 405.
[186] Ibid., pp. 405-406.
[187] Ibid., p. 406.
[188] For the cover letter and the full text of the 9 May 1941 draft, see BAMA RW 4/v 577, pp. 38-40. A partial English translation is provided in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document NOKW-209, pp. 1126-1131.
[189] According to Michael Burleigh, "Halder insisted on including collective reprisals against places where it was impossible to establish quickly the identity of an individual sharpshooter or saboteur. This reflected a long Prussian tradition of extreme measures against suspected enemy irregulars [...]" Michael Burleigh, The Third Reich: A New History (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 519.
[190] Although it appears Warlimont would have preferred to turn over more cases to the SS. BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document NOKW-209, Section I.4, p. 1130.
[191] In the cover letter, Lehmann adds that Jeschonnek supported harsher treatment, believing that "the troops would probably release quite a lot of people who would, in fact, deserve different treatment. However, he feels that the risk must be taken just the same." BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document NOKW-209, p. 1128.

[192] Ibid.
[193] Warlimont contends that in a confidential conversation with his friend, Quartermaster General Wagner, he was dissuaded from pushing for a withdrawal of the army version of the Jurisdiction Order. Wagner told him that in its absence, "Hitler would send the SD right into the forward areas so that it could be used to carry out his wishes." The rest of Warlimont's statements are found in Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, p. 165. Further testimony by Warlimont and his responses to cross-examination is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1071-1073. Another take on Lehmann's views is available from the partial translation of the affidavit of Dr. Erich Lattmann given in defense of Lehmann 15 May 1948 during the "High Command Case," IMT- TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1134-1137. Lehmann's own defense at Nürnberg is found in IMT- TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1137-1152.
[194] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document NOKW-209, p. 1129.
[195] Oppenheim, International Law, pp. 447-448.
[196] BAMA 4/v 577, pp. 72-74 for the original. It is reproduced with accompanying letters of transmittal in
IMT-TMWC, Vol. 34, Document C-50, pp. 249-255. A partial English translation appears in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document C-50 (Jurisdiction Order with transmittal letters), pp. 1113-1118. A full translation in English appears in NCA, Vol. 6, Document C-50, pp. 871-875.
[197] BAMA 4/v 577 and NCA, Vol. 6, Document C-50, pp. 873.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] BAMA 4/v 577; IMT-TMWC, Vol. 34, Document C-50, pp. 249-252; and NCA, Vol. 6, Document C-50, pp. 871-872. The Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order was sent to no less than 340 commands as noted in the accompanying letters of transmittal with distribution lists.
[201] Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et. al., The Anatomy of the SS State, p. 518.
[202] The 18 December 1940 reference is located in BAMA RH19 I/67. It contains the draft plan with all the amendments. The original draft was signed by Hitler and initialed by Generals Keitel, Jodl, and Warlimont. The full finalized text, OKW, "Weisung Nr. 21 - Fall Barbarossa, 18 Dezember 1940," is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, pp. 47-52. It also appears as Anlage 2, Aufmarschanweisung OKH von 31.1.1941 "Barbarossa," in Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 463-469, and is mentioned in KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 237 (18 December 1940). A partial English translation from Nürnberg, Document 446-PS, can be found in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 407-409 and TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 958-960. For the 13 March reference, the German text appears in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 447-PS, Richtlinien auf Sondergebieten zur Weisung Nr. 21 (Fall Barbarossa), pp. 53-58. The English text appears in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 409-413.
[203] A partial English translation of the "Special Instructions for Case Barbarossa" is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW-3485, pp. 990-994.
[204] A copy of the "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" (Enclosure No. 3) distributed by the 17th German Army Command to its subordinated units before the invasion to the divisional and regimental levels can be found in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, Roll 23, FN 511-60, Document NOKW 1692. Copies of these "Guidelines" also appear in the war diaries of the subordinated divisions of AOK 17. Examples can be found in the enclosures to the Ia war diary of the 97th Light Infantry Division, BAMA RH 26-97/4, as well as the enclosures to the Ia war diary of the 100th Light Infantry Division, NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459, and the 454th Security Division, NARA, T-315, R 2215, FN 000711-0007113. An English translation of Enclosure No. 3, "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia" is part of Document NOKW-3485 in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 994-995.
[205] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 994-995.
[206] Ibid.
[207] The first Hague Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land was ratified by signatory nations, including Germany, on 29 July 1899 with a lengthy annex that specified the laws. The second Hague Convention (Hague IV) was ratified on 18 October 1907, and contained a new provision that there would not be a limitation on the life of the laws.

[208] § 3 of the Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung (KSSVO – Wartime special penal ordinance) from 17 August 1938 dealt with "lawful belligerency." William Harry Wilely, in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation "Onward to New Deeds: The German Field Army and War Crimes during the Second World War," York University, North York, Ontario, May 1996, p. 120, cites the "Verordnung über das Sonderstrafrecht im Kriege und bei besonderem Einsatz (Kriegssonderstrafrechtsverordnung)," dated 17 August 1938 in Heeresdruckvorschrift (H.Dv.) 3, Handbuch des Militärrechts, (ed.) Reichswehrministerium as found in NARA, T-283, R 4. German troops also operated under the larger terms of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War from 27 July 1929.
[209] "Ruthlessly liquidate [schonungslos zu erledigen] [...]irregulars [...]either in combat or in flight," and "Other attacks by enemy civilians against the armed forces, their members, and their auxiliaries will be dealt with by the troops on the spot, with the same energy and with every means at their disposal, until the attacker is annihilated [bis zur Vernichtung des Angreifers abzuwehren]." NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 3, FN 236 and 250.
[210] Tony Cliff, Trotsky, The Sword of the Revolution, 1917-1923 (London: Bookmarks, 1990), p. 65 cites Y. Akhapkin, First Decrees of Soviet Power (London), 1970, p. 86 for the 18 January 1918 decree signed by Lenin on the formal establishment of the Red Army. The full text is found in Appendix I, "The Scheme for a Socialist Army" in Erich Wollenberg (translated from the German by Claud W. Sykes), The Red Army (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), pp. 249-261. The section on "Regulations for War Commissars" is found in pp. 255-258.
[211] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 994.
[212] Ibid.
[213] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 23, FN 53, Document NOKW 1692.
[214] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 335-338.
[215] The language of the unsigned cover sheet is also similar in tone to Müller's draft of the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order. By way of comparison, refer to IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, pp. 403-404.
[216] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 994-995.
[217] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 994-995. While Jews in the Soviet Union certainly lived in rural areas, the vast majority were urban dwellers, and therefore, this fact might suggest that they were to be regarded as disqualified from being included in the group opposed to the Bolshevist system. More on the specific demographic breakdown of Soviet Jewry is found in Mordechai Altshuler, Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust: A Social and Demographic Profile (Jerusalem: The Centre for Research for East European Jewry, 1998).
[218] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 995.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Klaus Gebert (ed.), Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock: The War Diary, 1939-1945, pp. 217-218, and as quoted in Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, p. 519. Additional commentary on those who opposed the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order is found in Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and World War Two, Vol. 4, pp. 506-507.
Klaus Gebert (ed.), Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock: The War Diary, 1939-1945, pp. 217-218, and as quoted in Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, p. 519. Additional commentary on those who opposed the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order is found in Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and World War Two, Vol. 4, pp. 506-507.

[223] The "Maintenance of Discipline Order" is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 39, FN 0677-0678, and appears as part of Document NOKW-3357. An English translation is found in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 39, FN 0687-0688 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1118-1121.
[224] Klaus Gebert (ed.), Generalfeldmarschall Fedor von Bock: The War Diary, 1939-1945, pp. 217-218, and as quoted in Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, p. 519.
[225] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 39, FN 0687-0688.
[226] Ibid., FN 678 and 688.
[227] Ibid. The special instructions were delineated thirteen days later in the form of the Commissar Order.
[228] Ibid. Field Marshal von Brauchitsch appended to this last section a paragraph written by General Müller, but which had previously been rejected for inclusion in an earlier draft of the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order. Jacobsen, "The Kommissarbefehl and the Mass Execution of Soviet Russian Prisoners of War," in Buchheim, et al., The Anatomy of the SS State, pp. 516-519.
[229] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 39, FN 0675-0676. This also appears as part of Document NOKW-3357. An English translation is found in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 39, FN 0685-0686.
[230] Reitlinger, The House Built on Sand, p. 83.
[231] BAMA RH19 I/67 contains the draft plan with all the amendments. The original draft was signed by Hitler and initialed by Generals Keitel, Jodl, and Warlimont. The full finalized text of OKW, "Weisung Nr. 21 - Fall Barbarossa, 18 Dezember 1940," is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, pp. 47-52. It also appears as Anlage 2, Aufmarschanweisung OKH von 31.1.1941 "Barbarossa," in Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 463-469, and is mentioned in KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 237 (18 December 1940). A partial English translation from Nürnberg, Document 446-PS, can be found in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 407-409 and TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 958-960.
[232] BAMA, RH 20-17/23, Anlage 2 zum KTB # 1, "BARBAROSSA", Operationsakten von 4.5.-31.8.41, and also in NARA, T-312, R 669, FN 8303680-8303681.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 495.
[235] Ibid.
[236] BAMA, RH 21-3/v. 423 (records of the Ic/AO III of Army Group North, 10 June 1941), and BAMA, RH 21-3/v.423 (records of the Ic of Armored Group 3) as cited in ibid., p. 505.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, pp. 336-337.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Keitel, Memoirs, p. 135.
[242] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 337.
[243]Keitel, Memoirs, p. 135.
[244] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, p. 411.
[245] Keitel, Memoirs, p. 136.
[246] The forerunners of these objectives can be found in Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf. Details are found in chapters 10,13, and 15 in the second volume for other alleged influences of Jews, and chapter 14 for the alleged influence of Jewish Bolshevism with regard to "Eastern policy."
[247] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, p. 337.
[248] BAMA RW 4/v 577 for the original cover letter with two enclosures.
[249] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 877-PS, pp. 401-402 (cover letter); pp. 403-406 (Treatment of enemy inhabitants - enclosure #1). Partial English translations are found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 877-PS (cover letter), pp. 1059-1060; Document 877-PS (Treatment of enemy inhabitants – enclosure #1), pp. 1124-1126; and Document 1471-PS (Treatment of Political Functionaries - enclosure #2), pp. 1060-1062.
[250] Ibid.
[251] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document 1471-PS, p. 1061.
[252] Ibid.

[253] On 19 October 1945, Keitel gave the court at Nürnberg a statement "Concerning German Armed Forces During the War and in Occupied Territory." In the second to last paragraph of his five page statement, Keitel offered another explanation for the harshness of the orders issued prior to the invasion (these would include the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order and the Commissar Order). Keitel stated emphatically: "The reason for issuing such strict orders even before [emphasis in the original] the Russian campaign was the behavior of the population in Yugoslavia which at the time was led and nourished by Bolshevist elements of Moscow [political commissars and Russian agents]. It was not the armed German forces who started illegal methods of war, atrocities, and murders or provoked them; their shield was clean from the beginning in defense and self-protection." Keitel concluded by asking the prosecution to corroborate his statement: "Please question General Jodl to this effect [emphasis in the original]; he gathered all reports and made daily reports to the Führer." NCA, Vol. 8, Translation of Statement V, p. 682.
[254] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document 1471-PS, p. 1061.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] An overview of the organization of the staff of Army Group Headquarters, Army Headquarters, and Corps headquarters is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 251-263. An explanation of the 3rd general staff officer (Ic) is found in ibid., pp. 254-259. Commentary on German Army Intelligence can be found in David Kahn, Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II (New York: Collier Books, 1978), especially chapter 22 on the third general staff officer, pp. 399-417.
[263] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document 1471-PS, p. 1061.
[264] A general overview on tactics is found in "Chapter IV: Tactics" in U.S. War Department Handbook on German Military Forces, Sections I-VI, pp. 209-242. A more specific view is offered by Matthew Gajkowski, German Squad Tactics in WWII (Pisgah, Ohio: Nafzinger, 1995).
[265] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, document 1471-PS, p. 1062.
[266] Ibid.
[267] BAMA RW 4/v. 575. The English translation from "the High Command Case" at Nürnberg is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW-2080, pp. 1239-1242.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, p. 167. The full text of the memorandum can be found in BAMA RW 4/v 577. It is also reproduced in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 884-PS, pp. 406-408. The official English translation from Nürnberg is located in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 884-PS, pp. 1062-1064, as well as NCA, Supplement A, Document 884-PS, pp. 352-353.
[271] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 884-PS, p. 1063.
[272] An unsigned memorandum from 2 April 1941 found in Alfred Rosenberg's files, and submitted as Document 1017-PS at the Nürnberg Trials, made the case for a central political office, subordinate to the Führer, which would handle political, economic, and administrative affairs in the soon-to-be-acquired eastern occupied territories. This was followed by a memorandum authored by Rosenberg on 7 April 1941, which offered suggestions as to how the central office could administer these territories in keeping with Hitler's racial and economic vision for the East. Hitler apparently was so impressed with the proposal, he appointed Rosenberg to be his agent "for the Central Treatment of Matters Relating to the Eastern European Territories" on the occasion of his 53rd birthday (20 April 1941). The next day, Dr. Hans Heinrich Lammers, legal counsel and Reich Minister without Portfolio and Chief of the Reich Chancellery, sent a secret letter to Keitel informing him of this new appointment, and instructing him to cooperate with Rosenberg to carry out "the task imposed on him." Keitel in turn responded to the letter on 25 April 1941, acknowledged Rosenberg's appointment, and notified Lammers that he had appointed Jodl, Head of the Armed Forces Operational Staff, as his permanent deputy in this matter, and that Warlimont was to serve as Jodl's deputy. The same information was then forwarded to Rosenberg. IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 1017-PS, pp. 547-554 contains the 2

April 1941 unsigned memorandum; IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 1019-PS, pp. 555-560 contains the 7 April 1941 memorandum; the 21 April 1941 letter from Lammers to Keitel can be found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 865-PS, p 385. The full text of the document appears on pp. 384-385. Lammers' testimony on this matter is located in IMT-TWC, Vol. 12, "The Ministries Case," pp. 1322-1326.

[273] BAMA RW 4/v 577. The German in the original is once again "Freischärler." "Franc-tireurs" appears in the official English translation in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 884-PS, p. 1064, but as "partisan" in NCA, Supplement A, Document 884-PS, p. 353.

[274] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document 884-PS, p. 1064.

[275] Ibid.

[276] BAMA RW 4/v 577 and IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 884-PS, p. 407. The margin notes are not recorded in either of the English translations, but are discussed in Jodl's 3 June 1946 testimony at Nürnberg. The 3 June 1946 testimony is located in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, pp. 284-310.

[277] Förster "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 509.

[278] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, p. 309.

[279] Jodl calls the Warlimont Memorandum of 12 May 1941 a "draft" here in the English translation (IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, p. 308), and the next day clarifies it by referring to it as a "summarized draft" (IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, p. 314).

[280] IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, p. 308.

[281] Warlimont's statements during redirect examination at Nürnberg can be found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1076.

[282] An original copy of the Commissar Order (Kommissarbefehl) is located in BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 41-44. A microfilm copy is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 15, FN 1073-1078, (NOKW Document 1076). A partial translation of the Commissar Order and cover letters by General Warlimont and Field Marshal von Brauchitsch appear in the IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, "The High Command Case," pp. 1054-1059.

[283] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 15, FN 1074.

[284] BAMA, RW 4/578, pp. 41-44. There were, however, 30 copies of the Commissar Order. The remaining 9 copies were kept in reserve (Vorrat).

[285] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 41.

[286] Ibid.

[287] Förster "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al., (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 509.

[288] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 41.

[289] Ibid.

[290] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 23, FN 53, Document NOKW 1692.

[291] BAMA RH 26-97/4 and NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1214, FN 398-399, and 459 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 994.

[292] For more on the Nazi use of racial and ethnic stereotypes and slurs, refer to the war-time work of Abraham A. Roback, The Dictionary of International Slurs, first published by Sci-Art Books in Cambridge, MA in 1944. The most recent edition is The Dictionary of International Slurs (Waukesha, WI: Maedicta, 1979). I am grateful to Dr. Wolfgang Mieder for this reference.

[293] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 41.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Ibid.

[296] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 42.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid., p. 43.

[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid.
[307] NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 15, FN 1073, 1075.
[308] Ibid.

Chapter 4: The View from the Field: *AOK* 17 and the Implementation of the Commissar Order, 22 June 1941-31 January 1942

As the infantry divisions of the Seventeenth Army Command (*Armee Oberkommando* 17, *AOK* 17) fought eastward in the largest land invasion to date, the Third General Staff Officer (intelligence officer - *Ic*) for each division recorded intelligence assessments at least three times daily.[1] Writing in an official war diary (*Kriegstagebuch*) with attachments (*Anlagen*), and in activity reports (*Tätigkeitsberichte Ic*), the *Ic* for each division and his staff documented the enemy situation report, the numbers of prisoners, their ranks, including political commissars if any, and materials captured in battle, as well as such topics as enemy fighting strength, morale, weather conditions, and where the command post was located. Attachments to the daily war diary entries often included summaries, or transcripts, of POW testimonies, and directives from army group, army command, corps, or divisional headquarters pertaining to intelligence matters.[2]

Since the *Ic* officers were responsible for documenting the number of political commissars among POWs, it is within the reams of these reports that essential information about the implementation of the Commissar Order by the forces of *AOK* 17 is located. From the pages of the war diaries with their attachments, as well as the activity reports filed through the chain of command in the Seventeenth Army from 22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942, four composite portraits, or montages, of Red Army political commissars emerge:

1. **The Official Montage** – The Red Army political commissar as defined by German Army directives. This montage is centered on the text of the *Kommissarbefehl* as well as subsequent decrees related to Soviet political officers. It reflects the official military and ideological views of Hitler, the Army High Command (*OKH*), and the High Command of the Armed Forces (*OKW*), and is laced with propaganda and stereotypes associated with the office of political officer in the Soviet Army.

2. **The Battlefield Montage** – Closely linked to the Official Montage, the Red Army political commissar as compiled from combat experience, intelligence reports, and prisoner interrogations from the field of battle. The veracity of the reports is less important than the image they generate of the Red Army political commissar, which, more often than not, reinforce the portraits of political officers engendered from above. Within this montage we see political commissars as agitators, enforcers of discipline and Communist Party doctrine, the fount of real power in the officer corps, morale builders, agents of the Soviet regime, fear mongers, subversive partisan leaders, irregulars, and saboteurs.

3. **The Statistical Montage** – Pre-invasion directives offered only limited guidelines for the methods of reporting on the treatment of Red Army political commissars. This montage focuses on the different formats used by intelligence staffs of the 17th Army over the first seven months of the German invasion to document the number of political officers captured, executed, shot in battle, or wounded. A more comprehensive quantitative analysis of the degree to which the formations of 17th

Army carried out the Commissar Order will follow this chapter in the "Summary" of my dissertation.

4. **The Soviet Montage** – The Red Army commissar as seen through translated documents captured by the *Wehrmacht*. This composite often parallels both the Official Montage and the Battlefield Montage, and provides an insiders' guide to the political machinery and infrastructure of the Red Army.

In the following section, I will closely examine the evolution of these composite portraits over a seven month period as documented in the pages of the war diaries and activity reports of *AOK* 17.

The Official Montage – Ideological Fundamentalism

This composite portrait is constructed from the top down. It is comprised of a collection of directives and official pronouncements emanating, in principle, from Hitler and his military and legal teams at *OKH* and *OKW* through the army group, army command and corps levels to the divisions in the field of battle. These directives and pronouncements appear in the files of both the 1st and 3rd General Staff officers. Nevertheless, the central focus for this montage is the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order (*Kommissarbefehl*) itself.

As noted earlier in the chapter on the genesis of the Commissar Order, the language of the *Kommissarbefehl* confirmed the alleged inherent transgressive nature of political officers in the Red Army in at least two areas:

1. The anticipated organization of military and ideological resistance to German soldiers.

2. The anticipated treatment of German Prisoners of War.

In addressing the former, the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order stated that Red Army political commissars "are the true supporters of resistance [...]" and "the originators of Asiatic barbaric methods of fighting." In addition, the *Kommissarbefehl* identified political commissars as "a threat to our own safety and to the rapid pacification of the conquered territories."[3]

As for the latter, the *Kommissarbefehl* presupposed that Red Army political commissars would be the initiators of ill-treatment against German POWs, and that this treatment would be "hate-filled, cruel, and inhuman" (*haßerfüllte, grausame und unmenschliche Behandlung).*[4]

The commanding officer of the 454th Security Division, Major-General (*Generalleutnant*) Rudolf Krantz, repeated these similar themes with additional details in a meeting two days before the invasion. The *Ic* staff of the division took down the following abbreviated notes:

> They [the political commissars] are the true supporters of the political system in Russia, and consequently, are to be treated as such. Differentiate between political commissars among the troops and those in the civilian population. To

> begin with, they are not to be looked at as soldiers, and not to be treated as soldiers. Identifiable with a Red Star and a golden hammer and sickle. Immediately to be separated at the time of capture. To be shot outside the battle zone on the orders of an officer. Each company has a political commissar. Political commissars not with the troops are to be left unmolested; hostile actions require the same procedure as with irregulars.[5]

Additional orders in the corpus of pre-invasion directives for *AOK* 17 which described Red Army political commissars and Communist Party organs also echoed the original language and spirit of the Commissar Order. A four-page directive on the "Handling of Propaganda in Operation *Barbarossa*" clearly stated that:

> The enemies of Germany are not the people of the Soviet Union, rather exclusively the Jewish-Bolshevist Soviet regime with its functionaries and the Communist Party, which works toward world revolution.[6]

Since Red Army political commissars served as functionaries of the Party, they fell into the category of these ring-leaders of resistance against the Germans.[7]

However, once the invasion of the Soviet Union got underway on 22 June 1941, the depiction of Red Army political commissars in the *Ic* and *Ia* war diaries and *Ic* activity reports of *AOK* 17 began to change and expand. Not only were political commissars the power behind all Soviet military and ideological resistance, and the initiators of harsh and barbaric treatment against German POWs, but they were also allegedly conducting warfare beyond conventional limits. Just eight days after the start of the invasion, the staff of the 97th Infantry Division instructed troops to be aware of "political commissars of the USSR wearing civilian clothes, and carrying machinegun pistols"[8] while operating behind the front lines. [9]

While such a statement describing the unlawful behavior of commissars was not in the 6 June 1941 *Kommissarbefehl*, it certainly fit within the borders of the broader theme of "barbaric methods of fighting," as well as the initial portrait of Red Army political commissars as described by Adolf Hitler in his 30 March 1941 speech at the New *Reich* Chancellery.[10] Moreover, within a week of the 30 June 1941 97th Infantry Division warning, Major General (*Generalleutnant*) Eugen Müller, Head of the Army High Command Judicial Branch (*OKH, Gruppe III - Rechtswesen*), issued a directive on "Russian Soldiers in Civilian Clothes," which addressed the subject of Red Army political commissars donning civilian clothes behind the front lines.[11]

The 7 July 1941 *OKH* directive stated that it was an established fact "that members of the Red Army (officers, soldiers, and also commissars)" cut off and separated from their units, were obtaining civilian clothes, and attempting to go undercover and unnoticed in the streets of large towns in areas where military operations were still taking place. Major General Eugen Müller reminded the troops

through the directive that officers in civilian clothes and commissars were to be immediately separated from the others upon capture.[12] While the 7 July 1941 *OKH* directive did not specify what would happen to those officers and commissars separated from the rest, the terms of the Commissar Order made it quite clear that execution would have to follow.[13]

As German troops advanced along all fronts, the logistical and tactical problems associated with Soviet soldiers, officers, and commissars, cut off from their units and engaged in operations in roaming bands behind the front lines, became more acute. On 25 July 1941 Major General Eugen Müller of *OKH* issued a directive which addressed these issues. The directive, "Concerning the Treatment of Enemy Civilians and Russian Prisoners of War in the Army Group Rear Areas," strengthened the 13 May 1941 "*Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order[14] with regard to the treatment of irregulars and partisans, whose leaders Müller had already identified as commissars and officers in civilian clothes.

The intelligence section of *AOK* 17 passed along the *OKH* directive on 30 July 1941 under the name of its commanding general, Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel ("Treatment of Enemy Civilians - Partisans, Juvenile Bands – and of Russian Prisoners of War"), and even included an additional section urging: "collective measures not to be taken indiscriminately!"[15]

However, the 30 July 1941 *AOK* 17 directive prescribed immediate reprisals whenever there was a cause, and called for "increased alertness" on the part of the German soldiers against partisan units and other roaming bands behind the front lines. While the term "commissar" was not used in the text of the 30 July 1941 directive,

the association made by Major General Eugen Müller in the 7 July 1941 *OKH* directive left little room for doubt that Red Army political commissars were now directly coadunated to the leadership and contravening work of partisans, and as such, were targeted for immediate execution on the orders of an officer if they were found guilty.[16]

This association indicated a significant shift in the German perception of the Soviet political officer. Since the wearing of civilian clothes precluded any identification of Red Army political commissars for troops in the field by outward insignia, as noted in the 6 June 1941 *Kommissarbefehl*, and was a clear violation of Article 1 of the Annex to the Hague IV Convention, soldiers of *AOK* 17 would have to rely on identifying commissars based on the perceived roles and responsibilities of those captured in battle or behind the front lines. Such an assessment could only come through the discovery of documents, POW interrogation, or denunciations, and appeared to be subjective at best. However, since the prescribed punishment (execution) was the same for leaders of partisan bands and *Freischärler* under the terms of the 13 May 1941 *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order as it was for political officers under the terms of the *Kommissarbefehl*,[17] only the categories of potential victims, and not the end result, changed.

Furthermore, the 17th Army made additional connections between Red Army political commissars and organized military operations behind the front lines conducted by both partisans and irregulars (*Freischärler*). According to a directive on the "Treatment of Civilian Combatants," which the intelligence section of *AOK* 17 passed down to its subordinated divisions on 24 August 1941, the increased number

of armed civilians captured in battle (around the Ukrainian town of Krjukoff, for example) was directly linked to the "inconsiderate and thoughtless" leadership of commissars. The 24 August 1941 intelligence circular received by the 24th Infantry Division concluded that even if Ukrainian civilians were forced into battle through the fear of Red Army political commissars, they must know that the German Army will put them to death upon capture in accordance with international rules of conduct in war.[18]

The *AOK* 17 intelligence directive of 24 August 1941 focused attention on the issue of irregulars (*Freischärler/franc-tireur* – free shooters[19]). Once the German attack was under way, and Stalin had called for nation-wide partisan warfare on 3 July 1941 and a policy of scorched-earth withdrawal on 7 July 1941,[20] the German military appeared to have additional justification to carry out the punitive measures for *Freischärler* prescribed first under the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order of 13 May 1941 and then the supplemental *OKH* directive of 25 July 1941 "Concerning the Treatment of Enemy Civilians and Russian Prisoners of War in the Army Group Rear Areas."[21]

Additional directives from above further defined and codified categories of combatants, including Red Army civilian and political commissars. On 7 September 1941, the intelligence section of the 17th German Army Command passed on an order from *AOK* 17 Chief of the General Staff, Colonel Vincenz Müller, on the "Supervision of Civilian Traffic,"[22] which addressed rules for contact with local Ukrainian citizens. Based on information gleaned through POW testimony and captured Soviet documents, the *Ic* section of *AOK* 17 described how the "Soviet-

Russian leadership" exploited the previous lenient German treatment of the civilian population, infiltrated the front lines, and sent "partisans, saboteurs, and spies" into rear areas to conduct operations. In order to conduct a "lasting fight" against "suspicious elements" (*verdächtige Elemente*), every German officer and enlisted man was called upon to "energetically cooperate." Taking a lax approach towards suspicious civilians, the *Ic* directive reminded troops, would only result in subversive Soviet actions taken against German troops and supplies.[23]

Furthermore, the 7 September 1941 *Ic AOK* 17 directive identified four groups of "suspicious" persons:

> 1. Strangers to the town/village of both sexes (especially young people, school girls, etc. and so-called ethnic Germans).
>
> 2. NKVD [Soviet Secret Police – explanation mine] militia men in disguise (partisans). [They] often use vehicles customary to the area. Search [these] persons and vehicles thoroughly for the existence of explosives and incendiary materials (gasoline flasks) just as the propaganda material [has said]. They are to be treated as irregulars.

3. Fugitive military and civilian political commissars (dressed in tattered clothes customary to the area [making them] difficult to recognize).

4. Jews of both sexes and all ages.[24]

The 7 September 1941 directive went on to describe "unwanted persons" (Ukrainian political agents of the Bandera Group), and the details of how to protect the forward lines, areas of combat, and bridge traffic over the Dnepr River from infiltration by civilians.[25] However, virtually all of the aforementioned categories of "suspicious persons" could only be identified with the assistance of the local population, incriminating documentation, or the testimony of captured partisans and irregulars. By including both civilian and military political commissars in the list of "suspicious persons," the intelligence section of the Seventeenth Army Command fortified the perception that commissars lurked behind the front lines in disguise, conducting acts of sabotage in flagrant violation of the international rules of warfare.[26]

Yet, the 7 September 1941 *Ic* directive was not completely clear on how troops should treat some of the categories of "suspicious persons" such as strangers in a town, or Jews. Over the next three days, the 9th Infantry Division reported repeated queries about clarification on dealing with all of the categories of "suspicious persons," and as a result, the *Ic* section of the division issued a follow-up directive on 11 September 1941.[27]

Keeping the best interests and safety of the troops in mind, the 11 September 1941 directive stated that: "all captured Russian soldiers in uniform or civilian clothing be sent away as POWs" (emphasis in the original – explanation mine). However, if soldiers disguised as civilians were found to have weapons, they were to be "treated as irregulars;" these included soldiers in uniform who sought to conceal their weapons. Any soldier or civilian caught engaging in acts of sabotage, or spying would also face execution as an irregular.[28]

Additional categories followed in the 11 September 1941 directive detailing the handing over of some of suspicious persons to the security services of the *SD*, regulations for those civilians in the Ukrainian self-defense units permitted to carry weapons, and orders to destroy radios found among Jews and Russians in the local population, as well as the confiscation of all radio transmitters. Yet, no further clarification on the treatment of military and civilian political commissars appeared to be necessary.[29]

Nonetheless, the Official Montage of the Red Army political commissar is not composed of directives alone. The composite portrait as directed from above is also made up of official pronouncements based on pre-invasion stereotypes of political officers in the Soviet Army. The *Ic* staff of *AOK* 17 and its subordinated units recorded these declarations in the form of propaganda leaflets and loudspeaker van broadcasts to Soviet troops across the front lines in the attachments and attachments to the war diaries and activity reports. Taken together, they depict the position of political commissar as a pejoration, a rigid, uncaring and evil enemy not only of the German armed forces, but most important, the rank and file soldiers and officers of

the Red Army. The attacks on the commissar system were part of a larger German propaganda campaign intended to have a catalytic effect on Soviet troops to throw down their arms and desert their positions opposite the *Wehrmacht* in Ukraine.

During the first week of September 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division documented the distribution of a propaganda leaflet to the Ukrainian troops dug in east of Uman as part of the Kiev pocket. It simply stated: "Soldiers of the Red Army. Ukrainians! You will not be shot. The commissars are lying to you.[30] Two weeks later, German propaganda units issued a more extensive appeal, which the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division also recorded:

> Soldiers of the Red Army – Ukrainians!
> What are you still fighting for? In spite of your resistance
> the German soldiers are in full advance. The entire Ukraine
> up to the Dnepr River is in German hands and liberated
> from Bolshevism.
> The lying commissar – leads you to unnecessary
> bloodshed.
> Fight against your commissars, send them to the devil [to
> hell with your commissars] and return to your wives and
> your mothers who are expecting you.
> If you join us, you won't be mistreated, you won't be shot.
> The commissars are lying to you (if you think such things)!
> The way to us is the way home and the way to freedom.

> Your officers, your Russians, and your remaining soldiers of all peoples must come over too, and in doing so bring this senseless bloodletting to an end.
> Liberate yourselves from the terror of your commissars! They are chasing you to ruin so bring yourselves to security. At Uman they drove ten thousands of your brothers to death while they themselves fled on aircraft to safety. So they will treat you the same way, if you continue to listen to them. Throw your weapons into the Dnepr River and cross over to us![31]

Both of the aforementioned propaganda pieces addressed the alleged nature of the political commissar first articulated by Hitler in his 30 March 1941 diatribe in Berlin; commissars were inherent liars, with the implication that behind every order and promise they made there lay another chain of servitude.

In addition, the latter propaganda piece noted the association of commissars with acts of terror. Applying inverse reasoning, German propaganda argued that the leadership of commissars was responsible for the battlefield deaths of 10,000 Red Army soldiers in and around Uman, with more deaths surely to follow, thus highlighting the tone of inevitability often associated with wartime misinformation. The decisions of commanders, orders from Soviet High Command, and even the tactics and strategy of the German forces were totally absent as in any way contributing to the deaths of these Soviet troops. Further, the text of the propaganda

leaflets depicted commissars as cowards, the antithesis of all that good soldiers were supposed to be.

With each charge against commissars in the propaganda leaflets came a call for a response on the part of the Red Army soldiers that was always linked to a promise for safety, security, freedom, and deliverance. The 21 September 1941 propaganda leaflet urged Soviet troops to fight not against the German armed forces, but rather the evil acts of the commissars: "Send your commissars to the devil," "liberate yourselves," "fight against your commissars," and finally, "throw your weapons into the Dnepr River and cross over to us!"[32] These were phrases with which the propaganda unit intended to wear down the morale of the enemy in order to facilitate massive unrest and uprisings from within the ranks of the Red Army.

Further, German propaganda intended to induce desertion also played on a combination of racial and ideological stereotypes, especially with regard to Jews and the position of political commissar. Military propagandists injected Nazi racial and political ideology into the theater of operations as a means of justifying and rationalizing why Red Army soldiers should desert. Drawing on the National Socialist belief espoused by Hitler that communism was an extension of a Judeo-Bolshevist conspiracy, military propaganda found in commissars the perfidious nature of Jews. Commissars, while a proxy for the entire communist system in the rhetoric of Nazi broadsheets and leaflets, represented the symbiosis between Nazi anti-Bolshevism and Nazi antisemitism. Desertion would therefore be the logical response to the evil and tyrannical leadership of Red Army political commissars.

This representation is best illustrated in the form of a series of propaganda leaflets and passes (*Passierschein*), which Soviet political officers collected as forces of the 17th Army advanced on Red Army positions near Proskurov (Khmelnitskiy). German propaganda units often printed passes designed to "guarantee" Red Army soldiers safe passage through the front lines on their way to surrender. The passes were included in broadsheets filled with inflammatory language against the Soviet regime, the commissar system, and Jews. These passes and propaganda leaflets were then dropped by plane to be picked up by enemy soldiers. One such leaflet called on the Red Army soldiers to "end the senseless bloodbath brought on by the Jews and commissars."[33] Another, echoing the theme of Jewish-induced bloodbaths, provided an alleged quotation from Joseph Stalin, and stated:

> Stalin says:
> "The Jews are an especially useful element of the Soviet population.
> This is why during the time of the Bolsheviks Jews were seen as gang members, and took and destroyed more than twenty-five million good Russian people in concentration camps." Red Army Soldier, Watch out for the Jews![34]

Yet another called on Soviet military commanders and soldiers to turn against those representing the political organs and those deemed racially inferior in their midst, and "smash the Jew politruk and Kike!" It continued:

Officers.

Red Army Soldiers.

Right now is the time you were afraid of.

Right now you are in a huge trap of the war.

Right now the summer advance of the troops turns into a horrible mass grave.

Right now is the end!

Your situation is hopeless.

Your death will not bring a benefit.

Therefore, officers and Red Army soldiers –

Move – desert – come over to us!

Drop your arms and use the opportunity of salvation [the pass – explanation mine]

Your life will be granted![35]

Soviet political officers also collected leaflets from *AOK* 17 which employed both visual imagery and text to incite dissent and desertion. One example, depicted below, used racial and ideological rhetoric in combination with an image of a stereotypical Jew in the uniform of a Red Army political commissar[36] to cast suspicion on the office of political officers. The propaganda broadsheet stated: "One of you – the Jew Rappaport [indistinguishable]. Bloody Concentration Camps. Twenty-six years of Jewish yoke over Russia Red Army Soldier, Watch out for the Jews!"

Один из многих

Сергей Разгонов



[illegible]

26 лет еврейского ига над Россией

Кровопийцы

Следователи-евреи

37

Moreover, the nexus of Jews with political organs of the Communist Party and the representatives of the Party in the military, Red Army political commissars, also appeared in the war diaries and activity reports of *AOK* 17. Prior to the invasion, directives from *OKH* identified the Soviet government as the "Jewish-Bolshevist regime"[38] and the "Jewish-Communist regime."[39] After the invasion had begun more specific charges and connections surfaced. For example, the *Ic* section of the 101st Light Infantry Division received the following propaganda pamphlet during the summer of 1941: In addition to providing a free pass through the German lines for up to one hundred men at the same time, the propaganda piece railed against the power of Jews and political organs to control the fate of the Red Army soldiers:

> Soldiers and commanders of the Red Army: Our fight is not against Russia, but rather against the Bolshevik system [...] against hunger and war. We want nothing different than what the best Russians want: A fatherland without the Communist Party and the Secret State Police, without concentration camps, without terror, and with free citizens [...] We know that you cannot carry this through against the power of the Jews, against those in political power, against the treacherous/deceitful [*hinterlistig*] system of informers. He among you who wants a free fatherland, come to us.

> Those in positions of authority want you to risk your own lives [bones]. The commissars lie to you that the Germans torture [*quälen*] and shoot their prisoners. They must repeat these combined lies because they quite clearly know that you cannot fight for the love of Politruks and the Communist Party. The Germans are decent people [*anständige Leute*], and they treat their prisoners well [...]
>
> Choose for yourself: Death for the bloodsucking commissars [*Blutsaugerkommissare*], or a happy and carefree life with your family, who is expecting you back.[40]

The *Ic* section of the Seventeenth Army Command also put forth a directive in the name of Stülpnagel which connected the work of partisans with the leadership and influence of Jews and "communist elements." The 24 August 1941 directive issued over Stülpnagel's signature stated that:

> [...] Partisans and saboteurs find themselves under the influence of communist elements which have stayed behind. Above all, these are Jews and soldiers in civilian clothes.[41]

Furthermore, German propaganda sought to exploit old schisms between the Soviet officer corps and the political organs attached to the Red Army as part of the pre-war commissar system. A 2 October 1941 leaflet from the *Ic* files of the 100th Light Infantry Division called attention to this issue:

> Commanders of the Red Army!
> You are the true military specialists!
> Remember, how you are mistrusted!
> You are supervised in military matters by Politruks and commissars, these spies and illiterates.
> [...] You work under pressure 18 hours a day, during which time the Politruks and commissars do nothing, and just watch you. Commanders, come over to the German Army, and be liberated from the Jewish-Bolshevik power!
> If you come over to us you will be treated as POW officers according to international laws, and you will be treated well.
>
> Commanders! Pass these leaflets on to your comrades! Red Army troops! Pass these leaflets on to your commanders![42]

Moreover, German propagandists played on the National Socialist theme that Jews and communists reaped material and personal gain from the suffering of the

average soldier and citizen. A propaganda leaflet from the files of the 295th Infantry Division in early October 1941 stated:

> Don't believe the [lies of] the Bolshevik agitators!
>
> Politruks and commissars fatten themselves up in the rear areas [...] and you are spilling your blood all over Ukraine.
>
> What for?
>
> The black monster Stalin?
>
> Jewish agitators?
>
> [...] the monstrous terror of the NKVD?
>
> Enough with it! The sun rises on a new life for you![43]

German military authorities did not simply disseminate propaganda for the sake of repeating ideological and racial rhetoric; they intended to get results. In a 9 August 1941 directive on how to protect against sabotage from Soviet forces, the 24th Infantry Division received the following *AOK* 17 assessment:

> The [propaganda] pamphlets with passes have proved their worth in the first weeks of use.[44] Recently POW testimony has brought forth that commissars have gunned down

> Bolshevik soldiers who have been in possession of the pamphlets with passes. Word has spread about this, and Bolshevik troops are fearful. They therefore read the pamphlets and destroy them quickly. [...]
>
> The translation of the latest pamphlet is:
>
> 'Strike the Jewish-commissar[45] - his big mouth - his big swagger, with a brick!'[46]

The *AOK* 17 instructions for its subordinated divisions continued:

> [...] Pummel the Soviet soldiers in the coming weeks with the password [for safe passage through the German lines – explanation mine] in pamphlets, loud speakers, radio broadcasts, etc. [...][47]

Thus, the top-down portrait of Red Army political commissars was, in reality, a complex montage composed of a series of different perspectives. These viewpoints ranged from Hitler's own depiction of commissars in his 30 March 1941 speech and the wording of the actual *Kommissarbefehl* to the ideological fundamentalism of the political officers as seen in the propaganda pamphlets and broadcasts.

However, this composite portrait had plenty of overlapping areas; directives declaring the role of commissars sometimes blurred distinctions between political officers and partisans, or irregulars. These portraits often appeared in sharp contrast to the rigid imagery of commissars in propaganda leaflets, which created black and white distinctions in a world characterized by the distorted reality of the "fog of war" on the battlefield.

As a result, it is necessary to investigate just what the divisions and their corps were learning about Red Army political commissars through first-hand combat experience, POW testimony, captured documents, and denunciations. The following section will examine these issues in more detail.

The Battlefield Montage – The commissar as enforcer and combatant

It was one thing prior to the invasion for *OKH* and *OKW* to define commissars through directives, by their alleged criminality, to indicate how to identify them by their uniforms, and to prescribe punishment for those captured. It was quite another to put the orders into practice, and to separate commissars in the chaos of battle for execution. Troops in divisions attached to the Seventeenth Army Command in the field had to learn from experience and statements by POWs exactly how the commissar system in the Red Army was structured and operated. These overall experiences contributed to the development of a battlefield montage of Red Army political commissars from the bottom-up, and helped shape and influence German military policy over the first seven months of the *Barbarossa* campaign.

One of the initial concerns of German intelligence staffs once the invasion began was to learn from POW testimony just what it was that Red Army political commissars were telling the rank and file troops. On the second day of "Operation *Barbarossa*," the *Ic* staff of the 1st Mountain Division asked captured Soviet troops what commissars told them would happen if the Germans captured them in battle. Would they be shot? The POWs from Construction Regiment 233, employed around the area of Sapalov, stated that "the political commissars spread the rumor that there will be POW exchanges, but that when the Red Army POWs return, it will be the Soviets who shoot them for allowing themselves to be captured by the enemy."[48] Another report filed by the *Ic* staff of LII Army Corps on 25 June 1941 noted that if any of the Soviet troops got caught behind enemy lines, they should fight the Germans every step of the way since "commissars have said that if one is a prisoner of the Germans, the Germans will hack their hands off."[49]

However, it did not take long for the intelligence staffs of the Seventeenth Army Command to hear that commissars were telling their troops that the Germans were shooting POWs. In an intermediate report from the intelligence staff of the IV Army Corps to the *Ic* of *AOK* 17 two days after the start of the German invasion, POWs held in a camp in Cieszanow reported that they had three options when facing the *Wehrmacht*:

1. Flee to the rear. Experience being shot by political commissars.

2. Desert to the Germans. Experience being shot by the Germans.

3. Get captured by the Germans. Experience being shot by the Soviets after the Russians conquer Germany.[50]

In addition, following their capture on 26 June 1941 in a mop-up operation in the woods east of Oleszyce, six POWs told translators on the *Ic* staff of the 125th Infantry Division that "political commissars have made it known that the Germans are shooting all prisoners."[51] POW testimony to the *Ic* staff of the 24th Infantry Division on 8 July 1941 noted the success of German propaganda leaflets, but added that political commissars are saying that "with capture will come execution."[52]

Nonetheless, as was the case with the intermediate IV Army Corps report on 24 June 1941, POWs also testified that political commissars were shooting any Red Army soldier or officer who fled in the face of the German onslaught. The commissar-as-enforcer image reverberated in POW testimony across the wide swath of the invasion front in Ukraine during the first six months of the German attack. The 97th Light Infantry Division *Ic* staff noted on 3 July 1941 that POWs were repeatedly stating that "commissars and officers are acting in a brutal manner towards the troops,"[53] and that more Soviet troops would cross over to the Germans if they knew they wouldn't be shot (as the commissars all claimed).[54] According to a 19 July 1941 intelligence report detailing the fighting qualities of the Soviet forces by the *Ic* staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division:

> Commissars are shooting those unwilling to fight, including officers. [...] A report of a captured commissar to his superior states that 'In spite of a very serious shortage in rations, they [the troops] fundamentally suffer very little.' Since 4 July 1941 there have been 130 deserters in his regiment, 23 of whom have been recaptured and shot [by the commissar].[55]

In addition, commissars acted in such a brutal fashion in one regiment, that the troops were forced to expel him in order to save their own lives.[56] Soviet POWs also reported to their German captors in the 1st Mountain Division on 27 July 1941 that political commissars were burning Nazi propaganda materials, and that these political officers had absolute power and control, including the authority to shoot Red Army officers who did not display the courage to stand against the tide of the German attack.[57] Other POWs, brought in by the reconnaissance platoons of the 100th Light Infantry Division, testified on 30 July 1941 that "many soldiers would gladly flee [to the Germans] if it were not for the commissars preventing them from doing so."[58]

Yet, Red Army political commissars also appeared to exert power and influence over soldiers and officers in German captivity. In a "Compilation of Testimonies from High-Ranking Russian Officers of the 6th and 12th Russian Armies," the *Ic staff* of 17th Army in late July 1941 reported to the Chief of the

General Staff (*OKH*) that Russian captured officers still feared the influence of Bolshevik ideology:

> From the beginning of the war, Russian commanders were more or less in the hands of the political commissars. [...] Political commissars also influence *NKVD* people. The Russian officers estimate that 1% of all POWs are *NKVD*.[59]

In an extract from a 28 July 1941 joint intelligence report by *AOK* 17 and *AOK* 11, a Russian Lieutenant-Colonel who deserted stated that, in addition to political commissars and politruks, the *NKVD* had representatives in each regiment. This Lieutenant-Colonel also noted that it was commissars who gave the Russian soldier the spirit and will to fight, and that it was the political organs of the Communist Party (commissars, politruks, and *NKVD* men) which kept the regular soldiers in a state of fear of capture by describing the terrible horrors that would occur in German captivity.[60]

However, such fears sometimes resulted in desertion. An evening report of 3 August 1941 from the Hungarian Rapid-Deployment Corps under General F. Szombathelyi, a 24,000-strong force subordinated to the Seventeenth Army Command, further highlighted the impact of political commissars' scare tactics and threats on Soviet commanders and troops: "The terror of political commissars is

great. Many officers are deserting [as a result]."[61] A 6 August 1941 *Ic* report of the 9th Infantry Division described an incident in which the Russian battalion commander did not even get the chance to desert; he was shot by the battalion politruk instead.[62]

A 16 August 1941 report for the 17th Army based on translated Russian documents concluded that while Red Army soldiers wanted to desert to the Germans, the power and fear of political commissars hindered those who wanted to flee from doing so.[63] The *Ic* staff of the 297th Infantry Division received similar responses from POWs in their custody on 15 September 1941. When asked "how is it possible to get others to desert?" the POWs replied that "the Dnepr River is a huge hindrance to overcome, and for others there is a great fear of their commissars. Today commissars shot deserters into their graves for all to see."[64] Two days later, the same *Ic* staff noted "[...] rations are inadequate, and [there is] tremendous pressure exerted by commissars, with many threats of shooting."[65]

Yet, this same terror was also the driving force of resistance to the invading Germans. An intelligence report from the 17th Army on 9 August 1941 noted that "fanatical elements of the enemy are resisting in the wooded areas around Kopenkowata. These are seemingly under the command of commissars [...]"[66]

The awe, dread, and fear of commissars among Soviet troops continued to appear in POW testimony. A September 1941 report by the *Ic* staff of the 9th Infantry Division based on statements made by captured Red Army soldiers noted that:

> The political commissar is the all-powerful one [*der Allgewaltige*]. He alone settles differences of opinions, and officers cannot speak against this. Officers also take a risk speaking with one another since they are not certain whether the other will immediately denounce him [to the commissar].[67]

The fear of commissars was so great for a detachment of forty men from a Siberian unit arrayed against the 9th German Infantry Division on 21 September that they hid from their political officer in a rape field[68] before deserting.[69] If caught, those forty men would have been executed, as POW testimony the next day confirmed: "Those who run away will be shot by commissars."[70]

Red Army political officers and their subordinates continued to execute their own men even as the Soviets began to slow the massive German offensive in September 1941. The *Ic* staff of the 295th Infantry Division reported on 24 September 1941 that several POWs in their custody had seen politruks of the 977th Infantry Regiment of the 270th Soviet Infantry Division shoot twenty-eight soldiers for a refusal to carry out orders (*Befehlsverweigerung*).[71] While such executions were justified according to Soviet military law, their impact produced a further sense of fear and dread of political commissars among the enlisted ranks of the Red Army.

For some Red Army troops, however, it even resulted in the killing of their own commissars. The intelligence staff of the 295th Infantry Division also noted on

24 September 1941 that "several commissars have already been shot [by the enlisted men] during the night."[72] This was in response to the immense pressure and prodding of commissars to force troops into battle under extremely adverse conditions in the remains of the Kiev pocket. *Ic* officers of the 100th Light Infantry Division in a 25 September 1941 combat assessment report of the fighting qualities of the enemy reached a similar conclusion about the role of commissars and the armed struggle against the Germans in the encirclement. The intelligence staff of the 100th L.I.D. noted on the fourth page of the report that "the power of commissars remains strong," especially with regard to effecting resistance.[73]

A report by the *Ic* staff of the 297th Infantry Division reached a comparable conclusion on the perceived power and fervor of Red Army political commissars. According to the captured soldiers, "commissars are showing tremendous enthusiasm, and many of them (Caucasians and Armenians) are wounded closest to the front in combat situations." Nevertheless, the 297th *Ic* staff report on 28 September 1941 noted that morale among troops, especially native Ukrainians, was dreadful, and that it was the commissars who forced them into battle.[74]

Battlefield executions by political commissars continued to take place for other offenses than refusing to carry out an order. According to statements made by POWs captured during the fighting around Krasnograd on 30 September 1941, regimental commissars shot all Red Army soldiers caught reading German propaganda leaflets, and that "such facts are widespread knowledge."[75] POWs declared in a 3 October report to the *Ic* staff of the 297th Infantry Division that they were deathly afraid to desert because of the fear of getting shot by their political

commissars.[76] A 4 October 1941 report by the Intelligence staff of the 9th Infantry Division noted that sixteen POWs in Soviet Infantry Regiment 36 all wanted to desert after obtaining propaganda leaflets dropped by German fliers. As they were sneaking across the front lines to desert, a politruk from the regiment (a Russian serving with Caucasian officers) opened fire on them, shooting ten.[77]

POWs continued to state that political officers in the Red Army were the enforcers of discipline, and greatly to be feared. A captured Russian captain in the air corps who deserted to the Germans told the intelligence staff of *AOK* 17 on 1 October 1941 that political commissars had unlimited power over the commander, the mail, etc., and that the commander was without recourse.[78] The *Ic* staff of the 257th Infantry Division noted in a 7 October 1941 evening report that POWs from Soviet Infantry Regiments 973 and 975 reported that political officers in the Red Army were threatening their troops with machine gun fire if they displayed any form of cowardice, and that on several occasions these "hardcore communists" had wounded several of their own men in this way.[79] POWs told their captors in the 97th Light Infantry Division on 8 October 1941 that "the energetic intervention of commissars was the only thing that keeps the troops going."[80] POW statements on 13 October 1941 from those in the custody of the 257th Infantry Division declared that many in their units had a desire to desert, but that "commissars are still hindering them."[81] Similar reports by some of the 400 POWs taken captive near Poltawka on 14 October 1941 also appeared in the *Ic* files of the same division, and stated "commissars are always driving the troops forward."[82]

Furthermore, in the course of the *Barbarossa* campaign, the intelligence staff of German infantry divisions filed summary reports detailing the number of casualties taken by the division, as well as the number of casualties inflicted upon the enemy over a given period of time. Also included in these summary accounts were statistics on POWs and booty taken in battle, and notes on the morale of the enemy. On 14 October 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 298th Infantry Division wrote a four page summary of the previous month's activities in Ukraine. POW testimony overwhelming*ly* stated that regular Red Army troops had a tremendous fear of the political officers attached to their units, especially in regard to being found in possession of German propaganda papers. These same commissars were the ones fighting to the very end, even when officers were fleeing, and were spreading reports that any Red Army soldier captured in combat or deserting to the Germans would be "*misshandelt*" (*mistreated)* and then shot while in captivity.[83]

Less than two weeks later, the *Ic* staff of the 298th Infantry Division passed along suggestions for gaining more Red Army deserters based on battlefield experiences and POW interrogations to the intelligence staff of the LII Army Corps. Recognizing the importance of propaganda leaflets with free "passes" through the German lines as essential to convincing the enemy to desert, the 25 October 1941 report addressed the primary obstacle to getting more Soviet troops to come across to the Germans: *Kommissarfurcht* (fear of commissars):

> The effect of the propaganda is decisively limited by the great fear of commissars (*N.K.V.D.*) and informers. One can say: Revolt against commissars appears to the Russian [soldier] to be a hopeless action, contrary to the forces of nature. At the beginning [of the campaign] the mass of propaganda, which actively opposed this fear, was extremely necessary and successful.[84]

The report went on to offer suggestions on how to assuage the fear of commissars among Red Army soldiers through further use of propaganda leaflets. One such suggestion for a broadsheet included the following:

> [...] '[You] who seek to be liberated from the pressure/stress of the fear of commissars [*Kommissarfurcht*], establish yourselves now as enemies of the [communist] System. Fear of your neighbor as a [possible] traitor is, therefore, unfounded. Commissars, Jews, and *N.K.V.D.* must together be wiped out by the oppressed Red Army soldiers. The Russian people have a choice of conscience – continued obedience to your oppressors, or salvation for your hometown, your family, and your life through the annihilation of your torturers.'[85]

Other German intelligence staffs addressed similar problems in dealing with the fear of Red Army political commissars. The 100th Light Infantry Division *Ic* wrote to the intelligence staff of the LV Army Corps on 16 October 1941 suggesting that German patrols, rather than aircraft, distribute propaganda leaflets for Red Army troops to read. Based on the experience of the front line troops and the testimony of those who recently deserted, the *Ic* staff of the 100th Light I.D. maintained that it was easier to keep the broadsheets away from commissars if they were not just dumped over a large area, but concentrated in places where enlisted men might gather them without the knowledge of their political officers.[86]

However, the fear of the seemingly omnipresent Red Army political commissar continued unabated. On 13 November 1941 POWs captured by the 97th Light Infantry Division reported that during the previous weeks they often would fire their weapons as if an attack were taking place just to keep their commissars content that they were displaying a fighting spirit.[87] Those in the 15th Russian Rifle Division did this out of a deep-seated fear that their officers and commissars would shoot them as they had often threatened to do. The Red Army soldiers maintained in POW testimony that they were poorly trained, and would rather take their chances deserting to the Germans than getting shot by their commissars or commanders for not being able to properly engage the enemy.[88]

The perception that the position of Red Army political officer was to be feared among Soviet troops as well as commanders also emanated from the politruks and

commissars themselves. Although the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order directed that Red Army commissars, and later politruks[89], be executed on the field of battle, occasionally the divisional *Ic* staffs of the units subordinated to *AOK 17* interrogated political officers before shooting them or turning them over to the *SD*. In mid-November 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 94th Infantry Division took down the testimony of N.W. Terletzkij, an "older politruk worker in the 7th Battalion of the 38th Soviet Army." Terletzkij responded to the question, "how is the relationship of officers to the political commissars?" by stating:

> The political commissar is the all-powerful one [*der Allgewaltige*]. He has the right to register complaints with higher authorities. During this time officers have to keep their mouths shut. If the officer raises a protest, he is immediately threatened with shooting [by the commissar].[90]

The intelligence staff of the 94th Infantry Division also interrogated a captured political officer. However, the 33-year old Regimental Commissar of the 667th Regiment in the 218th Soviet Infantry Division, Alexej Wassiliwitsch Baranikow, spoke more of the command structure of the division than the power of political commissars. He did remark, though, on the *N.K.V.D.*'s use of young children, old men, and invalids to serve as advance scouts to gather intelligence on German

military strength (the number of heavy weapons, the number of German soldiers, the types of equipment, and the number of tanks, etc.).[91]

Nonetheless, the relationship between commissars and the regular Red Army soldiers remained greatly strained. Captured Soviet troops reported to the *Ic* staff of the 257th Infantry Division on the 23rd and 24th of November 1941 that they had such a poor fighting spirit just before an attack because they greatly feared getting shot by their own political commissars.[92] Less than a week later, POWs told the same intelligence staff of the 257th Infantry Division that the soldiers were at their lowest morale, and that "only the commissars have the spirit to fight."[93]

Additionally, the Operational Staff (*Ia*) of the 94th Infantry Division reported on 29 November 1941 to IV Army Corps (*Ia*) in Kaganowitscha that Soviet soldiers entered battle reluctantly "under the influence of alcohol and the prodding of fanatic commissars."[94] POWs reported to the intelligence staff (*Ic*) of the same division on 11 December 1941 that commissars were "a driving force."[95] A 16 December 1941 intelligence report of the 101st Light Infantry Division stated that the relationships between commissars and officers and commissars and enlisted men are "bad." Soviet troops captured in the middle of December 1941 testified that:

> Commissars and officers are prodding the people [troops] forward into battle. Supplies are inadequate (175 grams of dried bread per day), however, [the rations] for commissars and officers are separate and better prepared. The morale

among the enlisted men is depressed. They no longer believe in the victory, which the commissars speak about [...].[96]

Furthermore, German reports and summary accounts filed up the chain of command from division to army corps also reinforced the image of Red Army political commissars as enforcers of discipline and instigators of fear-mongering tactics. An 18 December 1941 summary report by the Operational Staff (*Ia*) of the 295th Infantry Division to XXXXIV Army Corps on the experiences of fighting on the Eastern Front concluded that Red Army political commissars, through "draconian strife and terror," were shooting their own troops for being in possession of German propaganda leaflets. These same commissars also allegedly passed along stories of execution by German troops of those who have come into German captivity.[97]

An 18 January 1942 intelligence report on German POWs among the Soviets from the 97th Light Infantry Division noted that German troops captured in battle were first interrogated by regimental authorities before being passed up the chain of command. A German prisoner was asked why he was fighting against Russian workers and farmers. His response: He had made an oath to Hitler. At this point, Soviet eyewitnesses noted, the German prisoner was struck in the face by a commissar.[98] This treatment at the hands of Red Army political commissars was allegedly not uncommon, and served to further establish the image of the political officer as the fundamental ideologue among the Soviet forces.

Portrait: Commissar as Combatant

The *Ic* war diaries and activity reports of the 17th Army, however, also contain descriptions of Red Army political commissars as active combatants, and not just enforcers of discipline and ideology. While these depictions may appear to challenge the pre-war portrait of the commissar as a representative of the cancerous Bolshevik system who is not directly involved with the military side of operations,[99] the commissar as combatant actually augments the image of the political officer who presides over a vast matrix of resistance cells, and ferments discord and fear throughout the ranks of the Soviet troops already in captivity.

Within a week of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the first reports about the commissar as combatant reached the attention of the *Ic* at the corps level. During the evening of 29 June 1941, the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division reported to the *Ic* of LII Army Corps that, according to statements by recently captured Soviet troops, commissars were serving simultaneously as political officers and commanders on the field of battle.[100] The next morning, the *Ic* staff of LII Army Corps passed along that same information up the chain of command to *AOK* 17, and added that the morale of Soviet officers was also very poor.[101]

However, intelligence sources in the 97th Light Infantry Division also suspected Red Army political commissars leading Soviet troops into battle may have been responsible for atrocities committed against wounded Germans. On 11 July 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 97th Light I.D. reported the following incident involving contact with the enemy two days previous:

The 97th Reconnaissance Battalion [*Aufklärungsabteilung*] had as its mission on 9 July 1941 the task of reaching Czarny-Ostrow. When the 1st squad had reinforced a platoon of the 2nd squad at Czarny-Ostrow around 16:25, it received an order to break away and turn toward Ploskirow. As a result of a cloudburst, all routes were sodden. The bicycle riders quickly requisitioned small wooded horse-drawn carts [*Panjefahrzeuge*]. The platoon of the 2nd squad then provided the rear guard for the continued march. Suddenly the platoon was attacked from the west by about 60 Russians, and several troops were separated even though the unit closed ranks. The surprise heavy concentration of machine gun fire and mortar shells destroyed the platoon of the 2nd squad. There was one dead and nine wounded. The first squad, which in the meantime had engaged another enemy troop, crossed over to counterattack in Czarny-Ostrow. While en route they were shot at from houses by civilians. The platoon leader of the platoon of the 2nd squad wanted to rescue his wounded men after ousting the Russians. He found all of them dead with severe stab wounds and heavy blows to the head and body. Another eight men were missing in action. There persists the

> possibility that this action [against the wounded German soldiers] was carried out either by soldiers dressed in civilian attire or by commissars. Reprisals against the town and the civilian population[102] were not carried out yesterday [...].[103]

While reports from German troops on the combat actions of commissars were relatively few, Soviet POWs continued to describe the combat exploits of political officers to the intelligence staffs of the divisions subordinated to *AOK* 17. The 97th Light Infantry Division *Ic* reported early on the morning of 14 July 1941 that Politruks were among those leading separated, individual combat groups in, and around, the western edge of the Stalin Line. Their reported task was the targeting of German tanks for destruction.[104] In the early evening of 16 July 1941, XXXXIX Army Corps passed along information overheard on a tapped phone line to the intelligence staff of *AOK* 17 that a Red Army political commissar had been charged with blowing up the railroad station and sugar factory in the Ukrainian city of Bar, and then to flee to the east. However, the city had been in the hands of the 1st German Mountain Division since 11:30 in the morning, and it was not known whether the bombings had actually taken place.[105]

On 26 July 1941 the 295th Infantry Division *Ic* interrogated an *Oberpolitruk* (a rank similar to that of captain) named Lachowitsch. In a two-page testimony, *Oberpolitruk* Lachowitsch described to his translators details of Soviet concrete

machine gun nests in an area along the Kitja Gorod-Sewastianowka line. While these pill boxes were mainly manned by new recruits, *Oberpolitruk* Lachowitsch was apparently as well-informed about their location, fire power, personnel, and combat-readiness as any commander would be.[106]

Red Army political commissars were also reportedly involved prior to 28 July 1941 in providing supplies to an increasingly anti-German local population.[107] Just over a week later in the early morning hours of 5 August 1941, the Hungarian Rapid-Deployment force signaled to the *Ic* staff of *AOK* 17 that political commissars were asking locals to destroy all factories and machines before they fell into German hands. According to the testimony of a Soviet officer, these same commissars encouraged commanders to execute German and Hungarian prisoners.[108]

However, as the German attack extended into the late summer, and large numbers of Soviet troops had been bypassed and then flushed out of pockets, the portrait of Red Army political commissars as combatants in the war diaries and activity reports of the *Ic* staffs increasingly included descriptions of commissars as partisan and resistance leaders behind the German lines. A commander of a Soviet signals battalion (*Nachrichten-Abteilung*) told the intelligence staff of the 97th Light Infantry Division on 7 August 1941 that the reason there were so few commissars and officers among the POWs was because they were putting on civilian clothes, and escaping to join the resistance.[109] The 1st General Staff Officer (*Ia*) of the 97th Infantry Division, Colonel Prinner, noted on the same day in his afternoon report that POW statements made to intelligence officers in the 4th Mountain Division verified the obvious: "commissars are organizing resistance and counter attacks," and that to

address this situation in their sector, the commander of the 97th Light I.D. would like to use howitzers to fire into a section of the woods east of Kopienkowka.[110]

Enough of these types of reports from the 97th Light I.D. and other divisions, which centered on the connection between commissars and resistance to German forces, were coming to the attention of the intelligence staff of XXXXIX Army Corps[111], that the *Ic* of the Corps issued a statement late in the afternoon of 7 August 1941. This announcement notified subordinated divisions that commissars were giving instructions in partisan warfare behind the front lines, and that Red Army political commissars were advising Soviet troops to use all means necessary to escape POW camps (if captured). The escapees could then join up with commissar-led groups fighting the Germans from well behind the German front lines.[112]

Over the next several days, other reports by the *Ic* of the 97th Light Infantry Division, the 1st Mountain Division, and XXXXIX Army Corps appeared to validate this image of the political commissar as the chief resistance leader. In a short period of time on 8 August 1941, troops of the 97th Light Infantry Division had combed a wooded area west of Podwysokoje, and captured 3,565 prisoners. However, there were difficulties reported with Soviet troops separated behind the lines, who were still putting up resistance. These soldiers were led by officers and commissars in wooded areas, and were proving to be hard to root out since they feared being shot on capture. Some enemy troops were also trying to sneak into the woods through a nearby corn field in order to link up with these units. One of the hidden Soviet troops shot and killed a German sentry at a battalion post, making it necessary for a divisional order to clear out the woods for absolute security.[113]

The *Ic* staff of the XXXXIX Army Corps reported to *AOK* 17 on an incident during the night of 10-11 August 1941 involving commissars behind the front lines. During a Sunday night-early Monday morning raid on a town by a hill near Trojanka:

> The townspeople were compelled to surrender civilian clothes and supplies to armed Russian soldiers under the leadership of commissars. A woman who refused to give in to the demand was gunned down.[114]

The *Ic* of the 1st Mountain Division also reported on this incident to XXXXIX Army Corps on 12 August 1941 that "commissars and armed soldiers are forcing locals to turn over food and civilian clothes." The morning report of the 1st Mountain Division identified commissars as the ones that shot and killed the woman who refused to give in to the demands of the armed Soviet soldiers.[115]

Red Army political commissars acting as resistance leaders and active combatants continued to appear in the pages of *Ic* war diaries and activity reports late in August and into the fall of 1941 as well. In statements given to the intelligence staff of the 1st Mountain Division on 22 August 1941, Soviet POWs previously operating as a sabotage unit behind the German lines, spoke of a partisan group made up entirely of officers and commissars, which had not yet been caught.[116] Whether such a group ever existed or not was not the issue. That such a unit was a possibility

given what the Germans knew of the behavior of commissars only served to enhance the image of the commissar as resistor in combat.

Moreover, an attached file of the 9th Infantry Division midday report on 24 August 1941 recorded the testimony of local inhabitants, who stated that four commissars were leading a group of 500-600 men in forested areas behind the German front lines northwest of Wygrajew. Operational orders for the day noted that the areas described by the civilians would be "mopped out that afternoon (*"Wald wird nachmittags gesäubert"*).[117] POW statements made to the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division on 25 August 1941 on the fighting qualities of the Red Army included the statement that it was "only the commissars who were still keeping the troops together" in the armed struggle against the *Wehrmacht*.[118]

Red Army political commissars also actively planned attacks on German targets. According to a conversation overheard on a tapped phone line by translators attached to the *Ic* staff of the 97th Light Infantry Division, a high ranking commissar was actively organizing an attack on German bridgehead positions for sometime after 1 September 1941. The attack was to take place before dawn in order to utilize the darkness to their advantage. The *Ic* staff of the 97th Light I.D. subsequently notified German troops assigned to protect Dnepr River bridgeheads in this area.[119]

However, Red Army political commissars were also reportedly shooting not just the enemy and those unwilling to fight. A *Ic* staff report from the 125th Infantry Division on 9 September 1941 based on POW testimony stated that "the severely wounded, who can no longer be moved, are being shot by commissars."[120]

Nevertheless, Soviet political officers and commanders continued to act in tandem in a manner that stirred the soldiers under their command to stiffen their resolve against the German invaders. Captured Soviet combat troops told the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division on 10 September 1941 that it was "the rigorous meddling of commissars and commanders" that was responsible for the most difficult resistance.[121] German troops in Infantry Regiment 517 of the 295th Infantry Division even observed that during combat operations near Kunowka on 15 September 1941, the commissars and officers waved their pistols frantically to drive their troops forward in battle.[122]

As units of the 17th Army closed the final escape routes for trapped Soviet troops encircled south and east of Kiev on 21 September 1941, intelligence officers of the 125th Infantry Division reported that: "[...] the pocket [*Kessel*] is at its end. [The experience of the last few days shows that] officers and commissars have acted with enraged resistance [...]."[123] POWs gave statements to the 9th Infantry Division *Ic* staff the following day that a political commissar and a general were leading Soviet troops as part of a division near the train station in Malaja in attempts to break out.[124] Acting in conjunction with commanders, commissars also employed their ideological fundamentalism to insist that Soviet troops fight to the last man. This was clearly the case for soldiers of the 125th Infantry Division engaged in combat with Soviet troops on 24 September 1941.[125]

In addition, combat experience and rumors of what awaited captured Soviet troops clearly influenced political commissars to remove their identifying patches. The 9th Infantry Division in late September 1941 encountered scores of POWs who

had taken off all their patches which identified rank and position. The POWs stated that officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men had all done so. Accordingly, Red Army political commissars had removed "the star on their sleeve." While the leadership and morale among the Soviet troops opposing the Germans was reportedly poor, the commissars were still acting as enforcers, and shooting any and all who attempted to run away or desert.[126]

Further examples of the relationships between commanders and political officers on the battlefield in combat situations continued to come through POW testimony after the closure of the Kiev pocket. Statements by captured Soviet infantrymen on 27 September 1941 to the *Ic* of the 295th Infantry Division indicated that a politruk communicated to his officers his belief (based on intelligence) that the Germans would throw cavalry and armor at the Russian defenses over the course of a pending attack.[127]

However, more often than not, the relationship between commissar and commander was strained.[128] A captured Soviet Major General (Kulikow) stated on 1 October 1941 to the *Ic* staff of *AOK* 17 that he felt pressure under the commissar system:

> [Major General Kulikow was] dependent upon it [the commissar system]. He [The commissar] read his orders, and on many occasions ripped them up. [The commissar system was] an establishment that was unpleasant, but one that was there. The commissar of his division (*Ober-Btl.*-

Komm.) was a Ukrainian named Tschetschelninskij, about forty-years old, who had been a member of the Communist Party since 1920.[129]

The same day, a captured Russian Air Force Captain of the military engineers, Wasimir Ogrisko, also gave his impressions on the relationship of officers to political commissars to the intelligence staff of *AOK* 17:

> [The Captain gives a resigned answer]: How the relationship is, you can imagine; if you think about it, for every military leader [commander] there is a political commissar as controller. This political apparatus is widely organized so that one never knows who is aligned with him [the commander]. In the army every third soldier is a member in the service of the *Komsomol*, the [Communist] Party, or the *NKVD*. In the officer corps, the relationship is 1:1. The commissar has the power over the commander (countermanding orders, control over the mail); the commander is left with nothing against the commissar. The chains of command are fully separated for the commissar and commander.[130]

These descriptions strengthened the perception that the true source of all Soviet political and military power lay with commissars and politruks. This perception was one of the reasons why *Ic* war diaries and activity reports from the subordinated divisions of *AOK* 17 continued to contain references to the role and presence of Soviet political officers in combat situations. On 3 October 1941, for example, the 100th Light Infantry Division *Ic* staff reported that most of the politruks in a company of Soviet Infantry Regiment 93 had been killed.[131] On 13 October 1941 the 295th Infantry Division also noted that, according to POW testimony, "in every company there is a politruk."[132] In a late evening report on 15 October 1941 to LII Army Corps by the 9th Infantry Division, the intelligence staff stated that a commissar, who fell in battle, was leading partisans in raids, and taking boys and men from the ages of 15-53 into service against the Germans from Solotuchovka to Charkov.[133] POW testimony taken by the *Ic* staff of the 298th Infantry Division, and detailed in the midday report on 26 October 1941, stated that "the morale of the [Soviet] troops is bad, but commissars and officers (who are mostly from Georgia) are geared for battle."[134]

Even civilians testified on the combat actions of Red Army political commissars. On 25 October 1941, the 100th Light Infantry Division *Ic* noted in an evening report to LV Army Corps that while there has been no recent contact with the enemy (*Zur Zeit keine Feindberührung*), a civilian from Novo Bavaria knew of a tunnel in the direction of Charkov Charkowski – Sobor Kuriaza in which armed commissars of the *NKVD* had been moving while dressed in German uniforms.[135] The 125th Infantry Division *Ic* also reported on the same date that civilians in their area

repeatedly stated that there was a group of some 500 partisans roaming behind the lines with "many officers and commissars among them."[136] A 9th Infantry Division *Ic* report less than two weeks later cited the testimony of several inhabitants from Ssloboda Petrovskaja who described "countless commissars" massing among 800 partisans near Ssloboda Spevakovka. These partisans would cross the Donez River by night in order to secure provisions.[137]

Yet, the majority of testimony about the actions of political officers in combat situations still came from POWs. A 14 November 1941 report by the intelligence staff of the 9th Infantry Division based on POW statements noted that the politruk from the company of the captured troops directed his squad from an armored reconnaissance car.[138] An evening report from the *Ic* staff of the 257th Infantry Division on 30 November 1941 stated that while both enlisted men and officers had lost the will to fight, only commissars had the drive to continue fighting. The report also noted that politruks were being sent as reinforcements to companies.[139]

However, even in portraits of combat, the commissar was often associated with political agitation and ideological training. After noting the death of a politruk in battle, the intelligence staff of the 257th Infantry Division stated that Soviet troops had "two hours of political instruction a day" in order to fortify them against the continued German attacks.[140] The intelligence staff of the 97th Light Infantry Division, which monitored nightly Soviet broadcasts, reported on 15 December 1941 on the political instructions given to Red Army troops entrenched opposite German units by a politruk.[141] An 18 December 1941 summary report by the Operational Staff (*Ia*) of the 295th Infantry Division to XXXXIV Army Corps on the experiences of

fighting on the Eastern Front noted that commissars worked diligently to both fortify ideological resolve and police the troops to enforce discipline.[142]

Other intelligence reports noted lengthy periods of political instruction given to Red Army troops in the middle of lulls during winter combat. A 94th Infantry Division *Ic* report from 21 January 1942 based on statements given by POWs described both the increased presence and fear of *NKVD* troops behind the Soviet lines, and the consequences for interrupting daily speeches given by politruks on ideological issues.[143]

However, not all depictions of Red Army political commissars and politruks in the *Ic* war diaries and activity reports of the subordinated divisions of the 17th Army showed Soviet political officers as ideological stalwarts and active participants in the armed conflict against the *Wehrmacht*. Occasionally, a paradoxical portrait of Soviet political officers appeared. A morning report by the *Ic* of the IV Army Corps to *AOK* 17 on 9 July 1941 stated that some political commissars and officers had torn their ranks and identifying patches off their uniforms and deserted the troops, heading in the direction of Kiev. Such actions by those in authority unnerved newly-arrived Red Army recruits, and left them demoralized.[144] On 8 September 1941 the intelligence staff of the 295th Infantry Division reported on a case involving the cowardly actions of a regimental commissar:

> First, on the ride into a town the officers and soldiers found out about their task from the political commissar (who was somewhere in the rank of a lieutenant). [However] under

> hostile fire before the town, the regiment commander, Major Besuoszenko, and the regimental staff under the political commissar fled.[145]

Two days later, POWs told the *Ic* staff of the 297th Infantry Division that commissars and officers were seldom seen in the front lines. These captured Soviet troops stated that political officers and commanders used the excuse for their absence that they needed to be closer to the supply and command center.[146] The 125th Infantry Division *Ic* reported on 20 September 1941 that commissars were not staying to fight in the Kiev pocket, but rather leaving their troops, and departing on air transports back to the Soviet lines.[147] A similar report on the disappearance of Soviet political officers appeared in the *Ic* files of the 9th Infantry Division two months later. A 27 November 1941 late evening report to the intelligence staff of LII Army Corps noted that both commanders and politruks fled in the face of the most recent German attack.[148]

Above all, however, the descriptions in the *AOK* 17 *Ic* war diaries and activity reports of Red Army political officers as combatants highlighted for the German military the "Official Portrait" of the Red Army political commissar as a meddling agitator, fear monger, usurper, and enforcer of Soviet ideological standards and discipline. In spite of several isolated paradoxical portraits of the commissar as coward, the overwhelming impression in the pages of the war diaries and activity reports is that Soviet political officers were just as notorious as Hitler, the High

Command of the Armed Forces (*OKW*), and the High Command of the Army (*OKH*) said they were.

Yet, neither the "Official Montage" nor the "Battlefield Montage" document how the divisions of the Seventeenth Army Command implemented the Commissar Order in combat situations over a seven month period from 22 June 1941 to 31 January 1942. In the following section, I will examine how the front-line formations of *AOK* 17 reported on the completion of their task to separate, and then execute, Red Army political commissars among POWs.

The Statistical Montage – Soviet Political Officers by Numbers

Before the start of the German invasion, *Ic* officers had regulated standard operating procedures for how to organize and maintain an official divisional war diary.[149] They also had received at least three separate briefings on how to file reports and what type of content to include in the reports for "Operation *Barbarossa*."[150] Moreover, the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order required *Ic* officers to file brief incident reports about the treatment of Red Army political commissars brought into captivity. As Section I/4 of the Commissar Order stated:

> [...] a brief report (on a report form) is to be submitted/reported on the incident [*Vorfall*]:
>
> e) By troops subordinated to a division to the ***i***ntelligence ***s***ection (*Ic*) of the division.
>
> f) By troops directly subordinated to a ***c***orps command, an army high command, or the command of an

army group or armored group to the intelligence section (*Ic*) of the corps command and higher.[151]

Although the Commissar Order did not specify what needed to be included in the "brief report," during the first two months of the *Barbarossa* campaign intelligence staff reports of the subordinated divisions of the Seventeenth Army Command usually contained the number of commissars captured, the date, and their fate as part of the overall number of prisoners taken into German captivity for that day or reporting period. The location of the capture or place of shooting was often secondary or not included at all.[152] The first commissars reported captured and shot by the subordinated divisions of the Seventeenth Army Command serve as good examples of this type of reporting. After five days of fighting, the 1st Mountain Division sent a morning report to the *Ic* staff of XXXXIX Army Corps, which contained the following information:

6. About 50 POWs [brought in].

[...] 8. A political commissar in uniform among the troops [was] shot.[153]

An evening report by the *Ic* staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division two days later noted that over the course of the first week of action, "one political commissar [was] captured, and brought to the rear on 29.6.[41]." While soldiers of the 1st

Mountain Division shot the first commissar, the *Ic* staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division chose to send the second commissar to the rear where he faced certain execution at the hands of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police. Both options, however, were in keeping with the terms of the Commissar Order. According to the 6 June 1941 order, once political commissars were identified, they had to be separated. As Section I/2 of the Commissar Order stated:

> They [political commissars] are to be segregated from the prisoners of war *immediately* [emphasis in the original], i.e. while still on the battlefield.[154]

Moreover, in accordance with the desire of Hitler as expressed in his 30 March 1941 speech, "after having been segregated, they [political commissars] are to be finished off [*zu erledigen*]."[155] The only exception to immediate execution was for those commissars that did not offer resistance. According to Section I/3 of the Commissar Order:

> *Political Commissars who are not guilty of any hostile act or are not suspected of such* [emphasis in the original] will remain unmolested for the time being. Only in the course of a deeper penetration into the country will it be possible to decide whether officials who remained at their positions can be left where they are, or should be handed over to the

Sonderkommandos. The latter should preferably scrutinize these cases themselves.[156]

Numerous other examples reflect this model of reporting. A 14 July 1941 *Ic* report by the 24th Infantry Division noted that of the thirteen prisoners captured in two bunkers during combat operations northeast of Stara Sieniawa, there were two officers and one politruk.[157] The 101st Light Infantry Division *Ic* staff reported on 16 July 1941 that for the day in the area around Gulewskaja Sloboda, they had "captured 110 prisoners, with 1 commissar among them."[158] The 24th Infantry Division *Ic* staff passed along the following information on 1 August 1941 to the intelligence staff of the XXXXIX Army Corps:

POWs: 1 officer, 435 enlisted personnel.

Through POW testimony 2 political commissars discovered.

Shooting followed.[159]

This form of reporting continued throughout the entire period of time the Commissar Order was in effect. On 3 September 1941, a *Ic* staff morning report from the 100th Light Infantry Division to the intelligence staff of LII Army Corps noted the following:

1. Enemy counter-attacks against hill # 117 and the northwest portion of the beach at Karpowka. Enemy threw phosphorus bombs.

2. Prisoners: 180. (1 commissar shot).

3. Booty: 6 light machine guns, 41 machine guns, 1 grenade launcher, rifles, and automatic rifles.[160]

Other examples include a report on 23 September 1941 by the *Ic* staff of the 239th Infantry Division that troops in the division had captured "4 commissars through a mopping up operation,"[161] and 1 commissar captured and interrogated by the *Ic* staff of the 97th Light Infantry Division near Bitschkowsky on 8 December 1941.[162]

Corps intelligence staffs also filed daily or summary reports based on the total number of commissars reported by their subordinated divisions. A 9 July 1941 *Ic* evening report by the intelligence staff of IV Army Corps, which included four divisions, to *AOK* 17 stated that "until now 4 political commissars have been registered as prisoners, and treated according to instructions"[163] A morning report on 17 July 1941 by the intelligence staff of LII Army Corps, which three subordinated divisions, stated that the majority of the prisoners brought in the previous day had served only three to five weeks in the Red Army, and that among these 121 POWs was one commissar.[164] A *Ic* staff morning report of LII Army Corps on 7 August 1941 to *AOK* 17 referred to 4 commissars shot, but did not clarify from which of the

subordinated three divisions (100th Light I.D., 101st Light I.D., and the 257th I.D.) these reports originated.[165]

By the middle of August 1941, however, the *Ic* officers at the division level began using a standardized reporting method in the communications with the army corps. Every two weeks the division *Ic* staff reported the number of Red Army political commissars and politruks "treated according to orders." This method did not usually identify the infantry regiment which captured the political officer, nor did the report provide the location of the capture and subsequent execution. Since most regimental reports did not survive, either in divisional or separate regimental records, that information might only be available if the division had reported on the incident separately over the previous two-week reporting period. For example, on the morning of 23 August 1941, XXXXIX Army Corps intelligence staff sent a report to the *Ic* staff of *AOK* 17 that in the previous two weeks "3 military commissars were treated according to orders [*befehlsgemäß behandelt*]."[166] Of the three divisions subordinated to XXXXIX Army Corps, only the 24th Infantry Division reported any political officers shot during this same period. On 20 August 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 24th I.D. noted that among the POWs captured in combat, "3 politruks [were] shot" in an area near Belaserje.[167]

There were also times when intelligence staffs at the army corps level had absolutely no commissars to report to the 17th Army Command. An evening report by the *Ic* staff of LII Army Corps to *AOK* 17 on 30 August 1941, stated that "for the reporting period on political commissars: none to report" (*Fehlanzeige*).[168] The same was true at times for divisional intelligence staffs when reporting to the army corps

Ic. On the evening of 28 September 1941, the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division reported to the *Ic* staff of LV Army Corps that for the "reporting period on the treatment of political commissars (for 14 – 27 September): none to report" (*Fehlanzeige*).[169] The 100th Light I.D. also had no commissars to report for the entire month of October 1941:

> Evening report, 15 October 1941 to LV Army Corps *Ic*:
>
> Reporting period on the treatment of political commissars (during the time from 1-15 October 1941): none to report (*Fehlanzeige*) [...]
>
> Morning report, 31 October 1941 to the XI Army Corps *Ic*:
>
> Reporting period on the treatment of political commissars (during the time from 15-31 October 1941): none to report (*Fehlanzeige*) [...][170]

Some divisions did not follow the two week reporting format at all, especially if there had been relatively few commissars brought in among POWs. The 57th Infantry Division, for example, reported over an eight week period on 31 October 1941 that:

> In the time period from 1 September – 31 October 1941

> 3 political Russian commissars were captured by the division, and were, in accordance with similar decrees, treated as irregulars.[171]

Moreover, some divisional intelligence staffs added categories for reporting to the *Ic* staff of the Army Corps. In an evening report called in to XI Army Corps on 14 September 1941, the *Ic* staff of the 257th Infantry Division noted the following:

For the reporting period from 31 August – 13 September 1941:

> How many political commissars were treated as irregulars [*Freischärler*]? (1)
>
> How many [political commissars] were handed over to the *SD*? (3)[172]

Some divisional intelligence staffs took the time to interrogate captured political officers before taking them out to be shot or passing them on to the *SD*. The wording of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order neither forbade nor prescribed the practice of interrogation; it was only the end result (execution) that mattered. As early in the invasion as 7 July 1941 the intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division reported that a commissar captured in combat near Husyatyn was taken out and shot after he had been questioned. From the interrogation, the intelligence officers learned that the Red Army was ordered to pull back to the old border with

Poland in order to set up a better defense.[173] Of two commissars captured after a firefight on 28 September 1941, and registered by the *Ic* staff of the 295th Infantry Division as POWs, one was sent all the way back to the prison compound of the 17th Army Command for further questioning.[174]

The Statistical Montage of Red Army political commissars in the war diaries and activity reports of the subordinated units of 17th Army Command is not restricted simply to the number of political officers reported captured. The daily intelligence entries also recorded information and statistics about commissars and politruks killed in battle. These post-action assessment reports, which documented casualties for both the enemy and the German troops, provide another dimension to our understanding of the role political officers played in the Red Army.

As noted in the Battlefield Montage, commissars took an active role in combat operations, often taking over for commanders. As a result, commissars were killed in action, and German intelligence officers across the invasion front made ample note any time it was discovered that political officers had fallen in battle. In a morning report to *AOK* 17 (*Ic*) on 7 August 1941, the intelligence staff of XXXXIX Army Corps noted that the 4th Mountain Division had encountered four Soviet tanks attempting to flee to the rear the previous afternoon. According to the report, these tanks were manned by "commissars and 2 women." Troops of the 4th Mountain Division then completely destroyed all four tanks and their crews, and listed the commissars as killed in battle.[175] On 30 August 1941, the 94th Infantry Division (*Ic*) reported to the intelligence staff of IV Army Corps that in a skirmish 2 kilometers south of Prochorowka "8 Russians were shot, among them 4 (probable)

commissars."[176] Three days later, the same divisional intelligence staff noted that a commissar had hidden himself in the town of Schelepuchi, but that the troops of the 94th I.D, had discovered him, and shot him in an exchange of fire.[177] The *Ic* for the 94th Infantry Division also noted on 4 September 1941 that:

> During a mop-up operation in the woods southwest of Worobijewka and at Kumeiki a commissar and 3 enlisted men fell [in battle]. 26 Russian soldiers in civilian clothes were also taken captive.[178]

The 94th Infantry Division (*Ic*) sent notification to IV Army Corps (*Ic*) on 22 September 1941 that a Red Army political commissar had fallen in battle against a platoon of one of its regiments involved in anti-partisan warfare. The 1st General Staff Officer (*Ia*), provided the following details:

> A combat patrol [*Stoßtrupp*] of the 3./274 had the task of searching the southwest periphery of the swamp[179] and heading south along the railway embankment. There they encountered a group of 13 armed partisans and a woman pushing their way through the swamp [...] The combat patrol immediately opened fire, whereby 5 Russians were shot, among them 3 Jews and a Jewish commissar.[180]

Other divisions reported dead commissars as well. The 257th (*Ic*) noted on 14 October 1941 in an evening report that among the 200 Russian dead counted on the battlefield, there was one commissar.[181] The intelligence staff of the 9th Infantry Division reported to LII Army Corps (*Ic*) on 15 October 1941 that there had been 1 commissar in a group of 8 partisans killed when some 60-70 partisans clashed with German troops in Solotuchowka.[182] Even though the 257th Infantry Division (*Ic*) had no commissars to report as captured during the prescribed reporting period (through 30 November 1941), the intelligence staff did count "several commissars" among the dead in a skirmish around Bogoroditschnoje on 1 December 1941. An evening report from the same intelligence staff later in the day stated that a politruk had been shot during combat operations.[183] Three days later, the 94th Infantry Division (*Ic*) noted that 1 commissar was found among "many dead Russians on the battlefield."[184] The 101st Light Infantry Division (*Ic*) described a firefight during a mopping-up operation in which a house, containing one battalion commander, one other high-ranking officer, a commissar, and about sixty men engaged the Germans in an attempt to break out. The house caught fire, and when some ten men tried to escape the burning house, they were shot. The dead included the Red Army political commissar.[185]

The intelligence staffs of the subordinated forces also took the time to document commissars wounded in combat. On 13 September 1941 the 257th Infantry Division (*Ic*) reported to XI Army Corps that 1 political commissar had been shot near Nikolajewka.[186] However, the report of XI Army Corps (*Ic*) to *AOK* 17 (*Ic*) that same day pointed out that the commissar executed by the troops of the 257th Infantry

Division had been wounded in battle.[187] A report by the intelligence staff of the 297th Infantry Division on 13 September 1941 also made note of a wounded commissar, who had taken shrapnel from a grenade during fighting two days before.[188]

The *Ic* war diaries and activity reports did not always have precise numbers of commissars captured, shot and/or wounded. There were times when the intelligence staffs simply used words such as "many," "some," or other indefinite terms to note the presence of political officers among Red Army troops. The 9th Infantry Division (*Ic*) reported on 22 September 1941 to the intelligence staff of LII Army Corps that, according to POW testimony, "many commissars are in the area to the south of Kopyly."[189] The 125th Infantry Division (*Ic*) included a notation in an activity report from 23 September 1941 that "the opposition, under the direction of many officers and commissars, is moving along the northwestern part of Saroshje and Nowosseliza-Sarogo."[190] In addition, a 97th Light Infantry Division assessment of the enemy from 5 November 1941 stated that the Red Army troops opposite their positions appeared to be "very combat ready, with numerous officers and many commissars."[191] Just over two weeks later, the 257th Infantry Division (*Ic*) stated that the troops opposite their bunkers, although comprised of many replacement soldiers, had "many commissars and young communists" among them.[192]

Furthermore, the Statistical Montage contains lists and numbers of Soviet political officers obtained through POW interrogations. These lists proved invaluable to the *AOK* 17 intelligence staffs when it came to both assessing the degree of potential resistance to be faced by German units at any given time, and identifying what they believed were sources of opposition from within the ranks of POWs. In

both cases, the perception on the field of battle was that the greater the number of commissars and politruks, the more difficult the fight would be. Therefore, *Ic* officers paid careful attention to the composition of the Soviet command structure, and actively sought to root out political officers among POWs by cross-referencing identity papers with known lists of politruks and commissars, and seeking denunciations from Red Army soldiers. As a result, the war diaries and activity reports for the intelligence staffs of the subordinated formations of the 17th Army include statistical and biographical references to Red Army political officers. Examples, such as the following, abound.

On 4 September 1941 the 100th Light Infantry Division (*Ic*) sent a morning report to LII Army Corps intelligence staff which stated that in the 7th Company of Infantry Regiment 807 of the 304th Soviet Infantry Division there were "2 politruks."[193] Two days later, the intelligence staff of the same German division had determined that a man named "Balakireff" was the high-ranking Battalion Commissar (*Bataillon Oberkommissar*) for the 300th Soviet Infantry Division.[194] POW testimony given to the same division (*Ic*) on 15 September 1941 maintained that the commissar of an opposing division was an old battalion commissar, and that each battalion had five officers and one commissar within the ranks.[195] Less than two weeks later, POWs told the intelligence staff of the 9th Infantry Division that there was a commissar in every regiment, and a politruk in every company.[196] The same day, the *Ic* staff of the 297th Infantry Division took testimony that in each regiment there was "1 commissar, 11 Politruks, with only a few officers."[197]

Nevertheless, the Statistical Montage generally reinforced existing stereotypes of Red Army political officers among divisional, corps, and army command intelligence staffs. While there were several formats for reporting on the implementation of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order, the content of these reports did nothing to alter the perception that commissars and politruks were at the core of all opposition to German troops on the battlefield and in POW camps. That *Ic* staffs took the time to note how many political officers were killed or wounded in battle, what their names were, how many of them there were, and to what units they were attached went beyond merely reporting on how many were taken captive, executed or passed on to the *SD*. The same intelligence officers who recorded the testimony of captured Soviet troops, which detailed the immense political and operational authority of commissars, also noted how many were "treated according to orders," or how many perished in combat. An evaluation of the perceived function of political officers among Red Army troops could not, therefore, be compartmentalized and marginalized when recording the numbers captured, killed, or wounded.

The Soviet Montage – An Insiders' Perspective

Over the course of seven months of fighting across a wide swath of Ukrainian territory, the forces of 17th Army Command captured scores of Red Army documents. It fell to the *Ic* staff at each operational level to assess and pass along the chain of command that which might be useful in giving the *Wehrmacht* any edge possible in fulfilling the military, political, and territorial objectives set forth in Hitler's "Barbarossa" Directive Number 21 from 18 December 1940.[198] Among the thousands of pages of Soviet documents which came into German hands, hundreds dealt with

political organs of the Red Army. What follows is an analysis of a number of these documents which offer an unfiltered look into the infrastructure of the political machinery of the Soviet armed forces.

Well before the start of the *Barbarossa* campaign in June 1941, the leadership of the German military had extensive knowledge of the Red Army and its political organs. For over a decade starting in 1922, the German Army (*Reichswehr*) and the Red Army had cooperated and observed one another as a result of diplomatic and military agreements forged in the wake of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution.[199] Even after Hitler came to power in January 1933, and the special agreements between Germany and the Soviet Union initially ended, German intelligence officers continued to keep close tabs on their Soviet counterparts.[200] By the time the Soviet military leadership rescinded the authority of Red Army political commissars to countermand orders of commanders if they did not appear in keeping with the best interests of the Communist Party in August 1940, Hitler, the German General Staff, and intelligence officers (*Ic*) of the *Wehrmacht* had a thorough understanding of the commissar system in the Soviet Union.[201]

Once the invasion began, the third general staff officers of the front-line formations of 17th Army catalogued and analyzed captured materials related to the commissar system. Just a day before he and Stalin reinstituted the concept of dual command in the Red Army, Chief of the Red Army's Main Political Directorate, Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis, sent a five-page directive on 15 July 1941 to all Soviet political officers, which *AOK* 17 (*Ic*) intercepted on 9 August 1941. The order consisted of fifteen main points. It outlined the authority of commissars and politruks to increase

awareness of German tactics and propaganda. It was also a forceful command to political officers to take action and to correct "the heretofore slothful approach" to the political work among the troops. In the preamble, Mekhlis noted:

> Many workers of the political organs, such as the deputy of the commander for the political education, prefer to sit in staff headquarters, seldom visit the troops, [and] fight poorly against the appearance of disorganization, rashness, panic, [and] undiscipline [...][202]

The Chief of the Red Army's Main Political Directorate went on to state that "Communist [Party] and *Komsomol* members served as horrible role models in battle," and that such behavior would not be tolerated.[203]

At first, this statement by Mekhlis appears contrary to the initial German intelligence thesis that Red Army political commissars were fanatical fighters and zealots for the cause of upholding the standards of the Communist Party in the face of invading fascist hordes. Yet, German intelligence staffs of the front-line divisions of *AOK* 17 had also recorded several incidents in which POWs testified to the cowardice of commissars and politruks in battle.[204] These reports did not, however, reflect the majority of German intelligence assessments about the role of Red Army political commissars in the first weeks of the invasion.

By making such a sweeping indictment of political officers, Mekhlis appeared to judge the reality of the state of the front in mid-July 1941 by the idealistic expectations of what he hoped would have happened had Soviet political officers done their jobs, and rallied the Red Army to stand and fight against German troops. Affecting any other tone would seem to be too soft, even if he were addressing only a minority of commissars who demonstrated cowardice rather than courage. If Mekhlis had lost faith in the position of political commissar, he would not have provided such detailed orders to political officers in the rest of the 15 July 1941 document, instructions which he believed were central to stopping the German invasion. Furthermore, Mekhlis and Stalin would never have reinstated dual command on the following day if they perceived that commissars, as a whole, were not politically competent and combat-ready.

In the rest of the 15 July 1941 document, Mekhlis outlined a plan for political officers and Party members to follow, which was central to the defense of the Soviet Union. It called on political organs of the Red Army to actively engage in intelligence gathering, to clearly communicate the official Party line that Germany was bent on destroying the Soviet peoples, and to constantly remind the troops that no weakness among defenders would be tolerated. According to Mekhlis, political organs in the Red Army were to:

> Know the true objectives of the enemy - Hitler and his hordes intend to destroy and enslave the peoples of the Soviet Union.

> Communicate this intent to the troops with all means possible - the Germans will kill and commit atrocities against the friendly civilian population.
>
> Daily keep personnel informed about the location of the front lines; daily keep personnel informed about issues of military discipline (Paragraph 7 of the Red Army Military Manual).
>
> Deserters, those who flee in the face of the enemy, etc. will be punished with execution.
>
> Pursue all methods of propaganda available to keep the troops in line as well as to use against the fascist invaders.[205]

The day following Mekhlis' instructions (16 July 1941), he and Stalin reinstituted the concept of dual command in the Red Army, and the political commissar again took on a central role in the command structure of the Red Army with the right to countermand orders of commanders. Although the documentary evidence did not make it into some of the records of the intelligence staffs of *AOK* 17 until 8 September 1941, POW testimony made it clear by the end of July 1941 that commissars had renewed power and authority.[206]

On 16 August 1941 Mekhlis issued another directive to political commissars and commanders, which the 9th German Infantry Division (*Ic*) intercepted, and

included as an attachment to the official intelligence staff war diary. Mekhlis again had harsh words for commissars who failed to carry out their tasks at the front. However, on this occasion, he included commanders as well. Borrowing from a practice started during the Civil War and Russo-Polish War, political officers and commanders could be executed for failure to carry out orders. In this case, Mekhlis faulted commissars and commanders for doing little to counter the German advance. For their alleged cowardice, those leaders were executed. However, there is no indication in the 16 August 1941 directive that Mekhlis accused all commissars and politruks of cowardice; only a select few.[207]

The Mekhlis directive of 16 August 1941 also clearly stated that any commander or commissar who ripped his identifying rank off in order to slip to the rear undetected would be executed as soon as he was discovered. He also reminded commissars and commanders that they needed to fight to the very end, to never give in, and to unleash "severe casualties against the fascist dogs." Only when the enemy within was defeated could the Red Army rise to stop the German invaders.[208]

However, Soviet political and military leaders did not always have harsh words for the political officers of the Red Army. An intercepted Soviet communiqué of 2 October 1941 took the time to praise and thank commanders and commissars for their great success against "the German hordes" in a recent battle involving the Soviet 6th Army pulling out of the Kiev pocket.[209]

Further collections of captured Soviet documents echoed the disciplinary role played by Red Army political commissars. The 9th Infantry Division (*Ic*) reported on two Soviet orders to commissars in October 1941 on how to maintain discipline and

keep order in the face of retreats and military setbacks. The intelligence staff of the 9th Infantry Division then passed these on to *AOK* 17 (*Ic*).[210] The first, and most detailed, was an order by the chief political officer of the 38th Soviet Army, dated 4 October 1941. It noted the importance of maintaining strict military discipline, and a desire that all "Red Army troops, commanders, and political workers be willing to give their lives for the Soviet earth."[211]

The 4 October 1941 document from the files of *AOK* 17 (*Ic*) prescribed several general tasks for Red Army political commissars to carry out. Some of the tasks were as follows: to oversee the preparedness for the issuing of orders, making it crystal clear that every soldier, commander, and political worker knew that orders for commanders have the weight of law; to use all means necessary in the work of the Party to clarify that in order to achieve freedom and not continue in slavery to "German princes," this war is a fight to the end, to "our last drop of blood for our dear fatherland;" and that those who weaken in the face of adversity, desert, act cowardly, etc. are to be considered criminals, and treated as such.[212]

The 4 October 1941 order also contained specific functions for the political officers to carry out on a daily basis. These included providing political assessments on the willingness to fight, and political lectures, explanations, communications, etc.; the timely delivery of newspapers and reading material; information sessions on noted heroic actions of Soviet soldiers, commanders, and political workers in battle, which could then be used as examples for all to follow; and information on food/supplies, showers, change of clothes, etc.[213]

Additional captured Soviet documents shed further light on the functions of Red Army commissars and politruks that went beyond the maintenance of discipline. The intelligence staff of the 17th Army obtained a copy of orders for the political section of the 156th Soviet Infantry Division on 19 November 1941. The *Ic* staff then summarized these functions, and distributed them to subordinated divisions. According to this translated Soviet document, the political division was to take care of the oversight of the army postal service through stringent controls and propaganda work with army postal workers, and the censorship of all personal correspondence. They also had the responsibility to oversee the auditing of the exact expenditure of ammunition, as well as the care of the "rapid intellectual and military integration" of replacement personnel into the units.[214]

Furthermore, the political department of the Red Army had the tasks of overseeing the granting of furloughs, the combating of alcohol abuse, and the regularly scheduled distribution among the troops of "political and soldierly people" who could act as role models. Political officers also had charge of reducing the possibilities for punishment (repressive measures) against the troops through a pre-emptive policy of instruction (based on an order of Stalin), and were responsible that the combat dead not be left on the field of battle, but rather sent to the rear. Commissars and politruks had additional responsibilities for the coordination of the guarding of staff headquarters, and selection and instruction of suitable people for reconnaissance patrols or reconnaissance groups. According to regulations, one commissar had to be attached to each reconnaissance group, and the commissar was

then responsible to provide political instruction personally to the commander and the political functionaries of that reconnaissance unit.[215]

In addition, all reports by political officers had to follow a prescribed format as follows:

> Submission of a daily situation report to the division commissar, the corps or army command commissar.
>
> a. Status of the front.
>
> b. Character and results of engagement [with the enemy].
>
> c. Cases of particular bravery and courage, and circumspection from officers and enlisted personnel.
>
> d. Casualty report (our own and those of the enemy).
>
> e. The political-morale of the troops.
>
> f. Fresh insights from soldiers in the Party or *Komsomol*.[216]

Furthermore, the Red Army Field Service Regulation Manual of 1942 prescribed similar responsibilities for political officers. The 210-page manual described the general cooperation between operational headquarters and political sections as follows:

12. The Political Section of the army formation works out and brings into effect all political measures required for the most efficient performance of combat duties, strengthening the political morale of the troops and their fighting power. All the activities of the political section should be conducted in close cooperation with the staff of the formation and the heads of the army branches and services. [...] 14. The Political Section is under obligation:

a. To inform headquarters of the state of political morale among the troops, population, and enemy forces.

b. To assist the staff in working out and carrying into effect measures for the direction of the troops.

15. Mutual exchange of information should be arranged in such a way that headquarters officers and political personnel are not unduly diverted from the execution of their tasks.[217]

Additionally, the Red Army Field Service Regulations of 1942 stipulated that all orders regarding combat for Soviet forces needed to be "signed by the chief of staff, the military commissar at H.Q. [Headquarters], and the chief of the branch concerned." Orders dealing with forces in the rear areas followed a similar pattern of

dual command, and required the signature of "the commander, the commissar, and the chief of staff."[218]

The Red Army Field Service Regulations of 1942 reflected the bureaucratic infrastructure and hierarchy for political officers in the Soviet military. Like most of the political documents captured by the formations of the 17th Army, these regulations offered limited insights about the position of the Red Army political officer, but not the person. Only rarely did captured documents depict the human side of commissars and politruks. However, on occasion there were hints in the collection of captured German documents that commissars and politruks actually functioned as human beings. One such example comes in the form of a captured personal diary kept by a political commissar of the 25th Soviet Rifle Regiment. The diary contained a report by the commissar to the deputy commander of the 44th Soviet Mountain Rifle Division, and addressed the fierce fighting around the Husyatyn on 7 July 1941. The intelligence staff of the 100th Light Infantry Division translated and passed along to LII Army Corps (Ic) the following selection from the commissar's report:

> [I would like to] inform you that the state of the troops is still good, and the morale is fundamentally sound. On 7 July 1941 at 4:00 A.M. the battle with the enemy began. Although the enemy possessed superior strength and had armored reconnaissance vehicles and tanks at his disposal, the troops fought with incomparable tenacity, going on the offensive three-four times, inflicting heavy casualties on

> the enemy, and besieging [him] in the first four hours. When the enemy received new reinforcements, and had brought his motorized vehicles into action, the regiment continued its resistance, and met the enemy attacks with concentrated fire, which caused extraordinarily high casualties. However, the enemy continued to receive reinforcements of infantry and motorized units. In spite of our resistance, we had to withdraw, but we left him [the enemy] with not even a single tank at his disposal.
>
> The battle lasted seven hours. Afterwards, the men of the regiment removed 270 dead and wounded. However, since we are presently [marching] on the go, [...] I cannot provide specific data. Our supplies are very bad; there is no bread to be had; it has been days since we've had other food, and it remains to be seen where we will get our next meals. The troops are fatigued on this latest march. We have only enough ammunition and equipment for a short time [...][219]

In contrast, the German intelligence report for the same battle on 7 July 1941 reads as follows in an evening report by the 100th Light Infantry Division (*Ic*): "Fighting around Husyatyn. [The] enemy has taken to hiding in houses."[220]

Another example of a brief depiction of the human side of political commissars is found in the records of 94th Infantry Division (*Ic*). The intelligence staff appended a black and white photograph of a captured regimental commissar (Regt. 667) of the Soviet 218th Rifle Division. The close-cropped blond hair and sharp lines on the face of thirty-three-year old Alexej Wassiliwitsch Baranikow appeared at the top sheet of the summary of his interrogation on 27 November 1941 in the divisional war diary (*Ic*). This seems to be the only picture of a captured commissar in the records of 17th Army Command.[221]

The Occupied Press – A Portrait of Cowardice

There were other German sources which presented portraits of the Red Army political commissar which were more in keeping with the Official Montage and Battlefield Montage. These were largely press sources released in the Russian and Ukrainian languages with the approval of the local German occupation commander. Filled with pro-German propaganda, the newspaper accounts often ran stories which undermined the Soviet system, and were disparaging to Jews. Frequently there were ideological lessons embedded in the stories, which sometimes appeared as serials. The following two examples from the 8 February 1942 Sumy Messenger[222] illustrate the negative role of the political officer as seen by the everyday Red Army soldiers:

> The Commissar
>
> Sometime in early September last year the division got together for one of our so-called "political classes." The

topic of this class, as probably of the ten previous ones, was of great importance: we had to learn about the role of the commissars in the army. I can remember us sitting in the shade of the small garden in one of the Poltava villages. The political instructor had not yet arrived, so we had a chance to discuss whatever we wanted, and even discussed some "forbidden topics." As if to remind us of the proximity of the front, the sound of weapons firing occasionally interrupted our conversation. Mostly, it was disturbing letters from home that were on everyone's mind. Rarely did any of us receive good news from our families. The law, which promised assistance to the families of Red Army soldiers, was no good. It existed only on paper. In reality, our families never got any help. "The help was denied" said almost every letter from home. Thoughts about parents, wives, and children left without any means for existence filled all our minds, and made our lives unbearable.

That day, Lieutenant Petrenko received a letter from home. His oldest daughter wrote: "Daddy, while you are fighting out there, we are starving to death. There are six of us without you, what do we do?" As Petrenko was reading the letter over and over again, the pressing pain in his chest

increased and his eyes filled with tears. "What is all this fighting for?" Deep inside he knew the answer to his own question: "for being deceived and fooled around with."

- Shush! The commissar is coming!

The commissar, a Jew called Babis, appeared from among the trees. He was a cunning, sleazy type of a Jew, always pretending to be courageous and claiming readiness to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Motherland. Having come up to us, he asked if everyone was present.

- Everyone except for the detachment.

- Do you know what we are supposed to discuss today?

- How could we possibly not know? It's the hundredth time we are discussing it.

- Very well. And yet, none of you still knows what my role in this war is. Take you, soldier Shutenko. Just out of curiosity, what do you think it is?

The dark-haired youth jumped up, as if the ground was burning his feet.

- Your role … what do I think your role is … Well, you walk around, explain everything to us and get money for doing it.

The commissar pointed at Petrenko. Now, Petrenko, what can you add?

- Comrade Commissar, your role is the last thing on my mind now. I've got …

- What?

- I've got a wife and children with nothing to eat, and no one to take care of them. My thoughts are at home.

- There is a war going on. A WAR!!!!!! There should be no other thoughts, just thoughts about the war. You are politically degraded, Petrenko. Away with all your thoughts, you have to give your LIFE for the Motherland, screamed the commissar, furiously tapping his foot on the ground.

A few days later our division had to fight. The commissar was with us. Trembling like a frightened rabbit, he hid himself in the remote corner of the trench. Several hours after the fighting had started, some of our soldiers were wounded. One of them was Petrenko. He was lying right there, by the commissar, and drops of red blood covered his forehead. A bomb exploded somewhere nearby, and the startled commissar hopped out of the trench.

- Comrade Commissar, I beg you, do not let me die – please bind the wound, pleaded Petrenko. But the Jew had better things to do. He jumped over the wounded, and the poor soldier watched him escape into the small forest nearby.

- Damn Jew! Petrenko put the rest of his strength together to yell damnation at the fleeing commissar, and breathless, fell back on the ground.

- Russki, hierher! The sounds of the voice, Petrenko had never heard before, made him open his eyes and lift up his head. A young German soldier with a broad smiling face was bending over him. He was opening up a medical aid package.[223]

The second story in the 8 February 1942 edition of the Sumy Messenger echoed the theme of the cowardly commissar:

A Frightened Rabbit

The commissar was lifting up the spirits of the soldiers: "Truth is on our side, we have to win." This phrase was so overused, that it sounded nothing short of hilarious. Barely had the passionate warrior pronounced it than the ground

shook with the sound of firing rifles, and a second later, a bomb explosion. The exhausted soldiers, sleeping while the commissar was speaking, opened their eyes with fright. But, there was no boss around. Not anymore. The commissar was gone. Again, everything turned into a big confusion. Planes covered the sky, and one could hear:

- Tanks! Tanks!

- We are surrounded! Get into the vehicles!

And no one understood what had happened. There was no one to explain, no one to lead. As the panic expanded, people lost control. They ran into the forest; threw themselves into the swamp. After all, your legs are always there to help you. One could not help but remember one of those vulgar songs which went something like: "I love you so-so much for long legs, long legs …"

Yet there he was, our "boss" and "hero" – the commissar himself. He was standing speechless – he had just managed to get his butt over to this side of the river. The soldiers stared at his trembling body: And where did all the boldness go now? Immediately one of the scouts was right by the commissar's side.

- So, asked the commissar, what resources are at the enemy's disposal?

- Not much, just one mortar and a couple of snipers. You saw yourself, didn't you. We have more, but we ran away!

The commissar was enraged. His eyes turned red with blood. He spit out:

- Traitor! It did not happen. It just couldn't, just couldn't.

Well, it did happen, just as it always does. Always the commissars talk about "the struggle till the last breath," but they run away like frightened rabbits, leaving the soldiers one-to-one with their destiny. And now, when the Bolsheviks, surrounded in Leningrad, tried their best to break through, the German Headquarters answers with a resolution: "No possible way!"[224]

The images of the Red Army commissar depicted above in the February 1942 German-controlled newspaper accounts are just part of the complex and diverse montage of political officers in the Soviet military that were available to German intelligence officers in the subordinated formations of 17th Army in the first seven months of the *Barbarossa* campaign. Whether the images originated from the highest levels of the German command structure, the most dejected Red Army POW in an interrogation, or from the heart of the Soviet political organs in the Soviet military, it

was evident that the political officer was a central figure in the life of the Red Army. The ability to co-sign and countermand orders coupled with unchallenged authority for administrative and ideological oversight made the position of commissar a formidable one. As long as dual command was in effect, the power and extended influence of the political commissar was not diminished in the eyes of both the Soviet and German military authorities.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, I will examine the zenith and nadir of the implementation of the Commissar Order by the front-line subordinated formations of 17th Army.

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[1] This study focuses primarily on the reports filed by the Third General Staff Officer (Ic, 3. Generalstabsoffizier), although I have also included material from the First General Staff Officer (Ia, 1.Generalstabsoffizier). While other officers also filed multiple reports on a daily basis, the Third General Staff officer was responsible for POW interrogations, compiling POW lists, and was charged with documenting the handling of Red Army political commissars in the field of battle. As noted in the chapter on pre-invasion directives, the 3rd General Staff officer was to keep the General Staff apprised of all intelligence and activities of the enemy. According to Document NOKW-1878 presented as Prosecution Exhibit 42, in "The High Command Case" before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10, IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 254-256, "Extracts from The Handbook for German General Staff Service in Wartime, Part II, Operations Section b. The Third General Staff Officer (Ic) [...] (24) Ic is the aide of Ia (the First General Staff Officer) in determining the enemy situation. Enemy information having come in via the front and secret intelligence service form, in addition to their own mission, the most important basis for an evaluation of the situation and the decision [. . .] (25) Close cooperation with the Ia is of importance. Ic must attempt on his own part to secure early and completely all details of the situation and the intentions of the command. Enemy information received by the higher commander, the chief of staff, or the Ia by telephone, on trips to the front etc., must be immediately reported to the Ic; he is also to be advised of important considerations and discussions." At the Army High Command level (OKH), the intelligence branch was manned by the Fourth Senior General Staff Officer (Oberquartiermeister IV – O Qu IV). At the Army Group (Heeresgruppenkommando), Army Command (Armeeoberkommando), Corps (Korps), and Division (Division) levels prior to 1944, the 3rd General Staff Officer handled all field intelligence and counterintelligence. Assisted by at least one junior officer (O 3- Ordannanzoffizier and perhaps an O 5/O 6) as a third assistant adjutant and a 5th /6th assistant adjutant respectively, the Ic usually held the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel at the army group level, while his assistant was a rank below him. At the division level, most Ics held the rank of major. Additional discussion on the structure of the General Staff appears in "Organization of the Field Forces," in U.S. War Department Handbook on German Military Forces (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 80, and the "Table of Organization of the Staff of Army Headquarters (AOK), Trials of War Criminals Before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10 (hereafter cited as IMT-TWC), (October 1946-April 1949), Volume 10, "The High Command Case" (Washington, DC: United States

Government Printing Office, 1951), chart between pp. 260-261. Further commentary is provided by David Kahn, Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II (New York: Collier Books, 1978), pp. 403-404.

[2] Prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union (13-14 June 1941) an instructional meeting took place in Reichshof (Rzeszów) for Ic officers of AOK 17. Among other things, the Third General Staff officers were briefed on the formatting and times for filing intelligence reports during the Barbarossa campaign. Division orders and reports, for example, were to be filed at 4:14 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., with events of the day summaries of POW and booty counts reported at 9:30 p.m. each evening. Additional material on the mid-June 1941 conference and further details on the separation of officers and Red Army political commissars among POWs is located in Ic records of the 262nd Infantry Division in National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 242, Microfilm Publication T-315, (cited hereafter as a letter followed by a number, i.e. T-315), Roll 1830, (hereafter cited as R), Frame Number(s) (hereafter cited as FN) 451-458. In addition, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (hereafter cited as BAMA), RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941, BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941, and BAMA, RH 26-24/73, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic 1.10.41-1.7.42 provide good illustrations of the format and content of the war diary, the attachments to the war diary, and the activity report at the division level (24th Infantry Division).

[3] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 42. An original copy of the Commissar Order (Kommissarbefehl) is located in BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 41-44. A microfilm copy is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 15, FN 1073-1078, (NOKW Document 1076). A partial translation of the Commissar Order and cover letters by General Warlimont and General von Brauchitsch appear in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 1054-1059.

[4] Ibid.

[5] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2215, FN 684, Anlage 41, „Kommandeur-Besprechung."

[6] BAMA RH 20-17/276, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic/A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Grundsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941.

[7] While the Commissar Order called for the immediate battlefield execution of Red Army political functionaries, the "Orders for the Supply of Operation Barbarossa," paragraph "H," called on German troops to strip political commissars of all important documents after they had been separated from other POWs. NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1039, FN 209, "Besondere Anordnungen für die Versorgung Fall Barbarossa" as noted in the Ic records of the 68th Infantry Division.

[8] BAMA, RH-26-97/9, Division order from the 97th Light Infantry Division, Ia, 30 June 1941.

[9] In addition, on 7 July 1941 the Commander of the 17th Army, General Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, strictly forbade Ukrainian nationalists from employing "commissars of any kind and previous Bolshevik leaders" in the establishment of self-government behind the front lines. The implication was clear that commissars were present in zones of operations, and that both Germans and Ukrainians needed to exercise careful scrutiny in the selection of members of the defense teams and governing council. The full text of the Stülpnagel order ("Anordnung für die militärischen Stellen über die Einrichtung eines ukrainischen Selbstschutzes und einer unteren Selbstverwaltung im Operationsgebiet") is found in NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 8308426-27. The instructions on items which were forbidden are found in FN 8308427, and include unauthorized possession of firearms, and the hiding of members of the Red Army.

[10] Generaloberst Halder, Kriegstagebuch in three volumes, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (ed.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-1964), Vol. 2, pp. 336-337 contains abbreviated notes from Hitler's three-hour speech to some two hundred-fifty military commanders and top-ranking officials. It was during this speech that Hitler initiated the formation of the Commissar Order. Supplementary information and other specific objectives can be found in the memoirs of Warlimont and Keitel, as well as the testimonies of several defendants at the Nürnberg Trials of War Criminals under Control Council Law Number 10. For Warlimont's comments on 30 March 1941, see Walter Warlimont, Im Hauptquartier der deutschen Wehrmacht 1939-1945: Grundlagen, Formen, Gestalten (Frankfurt a.M. and Bonn: Bernard and Graefe Verlag, 1962), pp. 160-163. For Keitel's views, see Walter Görlitz (ed.) (translated by David Irving), The Memoirs of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High

Command, 1938-1945, (New York: Cooper Square, 2000), pp. 134-137. For those at Nürnberg, see IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1043 for testimony by Field Marshall von Leeb, and pp. 1065-1066 for testimony by Warlimont.

[11] BAMA, RH 20-17/276, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O., Anlage. Erlassene Befehle, Grundsätzlicher Schriftverkehr vom 16.3.-12.12.1941.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Less than two weeks later, the Ic staff of 17th Army reinforced the image of commissars engaged in armed resistance contrary to the established rules of warfare. On 19 July 1941, the Ic staff wrote a draft response in the name of the Commander of the 17th Army, General Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, to a report from AOK 4 concerning the conduct of German troops toward the civilian population, which OKH had forwarded to all army commands the day before (BAMA RH 20-17/276, 18 July 1941, on „Partisanen-Abteilungen der Sowjets," from OKH Lieutenant-General Eugen Müller, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr vom 16.3.-12.12.1941, and NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 8308411). In this draft, the Ic staff stated that German troops must exercise good behavior, and serve as liberators to the local population from the oppressive yoke of Bolshevism. Such exemplary behavior on the part of German troops would create an environment of safety behind the front lines, and would lead to economic and security benefits. However, tucked within parentheses at the end of the second section, the Ic staff warned the subordinated formations that "sabotage troops and partisans are under the command of commissars and officers wearing civilian clothes." The full text of the draft is found in BAMA RH 20-17/276, 19 July 1941, Anlage 1, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941, and NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 8308416-17. However, there is no evidence either in the records of Army Group South or the subordinated divisions of AOK 17 that the draft ever made it into final form. That the Ic section connected commissars in civilian attire to the leadership of partisan and irregular formations is the essential element.

[14] BAMA RW 4/v. 577, pp. 72-74, Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order (German text: "Erlass über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet "Barbarossa" und über besondere Massnahmen der Truppe vom 13.5.41)."

[15] The Müller directive of 25 July 1945 is located in BAMA, RH 26-454/6, Anlageband Nr. 1, zum Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1 (15.5.-31.12.41) der Sich.-Division 454 Führungsabteilung Anlagen Nr. 1-150. A copy of the 30 July 1941 AOK 17 directive is in BAMA, RH 20-17/276, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941, and NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 8308400-403. It also appears as part of NOKW Document 1593, NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 23, FN 61-85. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Hoffmann for the background of these documents. In addition, prior to the invasion, the commanding officer of the 454th Security Division, Brigadier General Rudolf Krantz, had added that only officers were authorized to decide issues involving "executive measures," and that only officers from battalion commanders on up could make decisions on "collective measures." The full text of the "Kommandeur-Besprechung vom 20.6.41" is located in NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2215, FN 684.

[16] Ibid. In addition, the 30 July 1941 directive also stated that any civilian found in possession of firearms or explosives was to be shot. Those deemed "suspicious persons" either by their attitude or actions were to be turned over to the Einsatzkommandos of the SS (SD) and Security Police, and officers of the rank of battalion commander and above were authorized to take "collective coercive measures in the event of passive resistance on the part of the population or in cases of sabotage such as blocking of roads, shootings, sudden attacks, provided the perpetrators cannot be determined immediately and eliminated according to orders." The directive also called for the handing over of Jews and communists to be shot in reprisal if the perpetrators were not found.

[17] The death sentence for Red Army political commissars continued without abatement until the spring of 1942. However, on 23 September 1941 Lieutenant-General Eugen Müller formally asked General Warlimont to reduce or even rescind the Commissar Order since it was clear that the Red Army political officers knew of the order, were fighting to the bitter end, and therefore causing intense resistance among the troops. The reply was a definite negative. The full text of the request is found in BAMA, RW/4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 152-153. A 25 November 1941 reminder to carry out the death sentence if commissars were discovered after the POW sorting process ("defeated commissars subject to special treatment.") is found in BAMA, RH 20-17/276,

Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941.

[18] BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.

[19] As noted in Chapter 2, the term Freischärler (franc-tireurs or free shooters) sprang from use during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 when German troops encountered French civilian irregular soldiers or guerrillas. The concept of the free shooter was further enhanced by irregular activity against the invading Germans during the First World War. At times, the German perception of guerrilla warfare, whether accurate or not, served as a convenient excuse for sweeping reprisals against civilian populations at various intervals in Belgium and France between 1914-1918. John Horne and Alan Kramer explore the concepts, myths, military, and cultural assumptions associated with irregulars and irregular warfare and the German military in the First World War in German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

[20] As noted in IMT-TWC, Vol. X, p. 185. Additional calls by Stalin and Soviet officials four days later for the citizens of the USSR in the path of the invading German forces to conduct a scorched earth campaign added to the concept of "Total War." In response, German military authorities issued a directive, passed on by the Ic staff of AOK 17 on 11 July 1941, to treat any civilian caught carrying out Stalin's orders as an irregular. NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310393.

[21] BAMA, RH 26-454/6, Anlageband Nr. 1, zum Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1 (15.5.-31.12.41) der Sich.-Division 454 Führungsabteilung Anlagen Nr. 1-150.

[22] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 296-297, "Überwachung des Zivilverkehrs," in the files of 9th Infantry Division and BAMA, RH 24-52/224 in the files of 52nd Army Corps.

[23] Ibid., FN 296.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., FN 297.

[26] For example, the intelligence section of AOK 17 issued a warning on 7 October 1941 for soldiers to be aware of demolition charges (Sprengladungen) in Russian homes which included a reference to a recently discovered booby-trapped chaise lounge in the living room of a fugitive commissar. NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310658.

[27] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 280-81.

[28] Ibid. Concurrently, other divisions addressed similar issues when handling officers and commissars as POWs. On 10 September 1941, the Ic staff of 100th Light Infantry Division added a notation that officers and commissars, when captured, should be checked thoroughly for incriminating and important papers. These papers then should be quickly submitted to the Ic staff. BAMA, RH 26-100/39, Tätigkeitsbericht. Ic (mit Anlagen), 7.9.1941-19.9.1941.

[29] Ibid. In addition, on 17 September 1941, Commander-in-Chief of the OKH, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, issued a directive on the question of the treatment of Russian groups captured behind the front lines, including those in uniform and those in civilian clothes. The directive stated that Russian combat troops under a responsible officer sent behind the lines on a combat mission and not killed in battle have the right to POW status when captured. However, those Russian soldiers and groups who emerge from hiding in the aftermath of battle, and then gather together and take up arms, either on their own, or in an organized fashion, are to be behandelt/treated as irregulars when captured. Individual German commanders will have to decide on their own which way to proceed based on the tactical situation. Finally, all soldiers, troop formations and groups dressed in civilian clothes and engaged in a people's war (blowing up bridges, attacking individual vehicles, quarters, etc.) are to be considered partisans. This order, as passed down through AOK 6, is located in NARA, RG 238, T-1119, R 16, FN 1058.

[30] BAMA, RH 26-100/38, Blatt 79, 100.le.Inf. Div., Tätigkeitsbericht Abt. Ic, 19.8.41-6.9.41, Rußland.

[31] Ibid., Blatt 80.

[32] Ibid.

[33] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter referred to as USHMM), Khmelnitskiy Oblast Archive Records, 1996.A.0150, Reel 4. I am grateful to Vadim Altskan, historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for the translation of all the Khmelnitskiy Oblast Archive material.

[34] USHMM, Khmelnitskiy Oblast Archive Records, 1996.A.0150, Reel 4.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Interview with Vadim Altskan, historian, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 5 May 2000.

[37] Ibid. I am grateful to Brian and Naomi Benoit for the inclusion of this image.
[38] BAMA, RH 20-17/276, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941, (18 June 1941).
[39] Ibid. (18 June 1941).
[40] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1264, FN 1050, 1052-1053, Flugblattübersetzung Nr. 41.
[41] BAMA RH 20-17/276, 19 July 1941, Anlage 1, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Gründsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941.
[42] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.10.1941.
[43] BAMA, RH 26-295/17.
[44] The records of the Ic staffs in the divisions subordinated to Seventeenth Army Command occasionally noted the success of propaganda leaflets. A similar assessment by the intelligence staff of 257th Infantry Division during the first week of December 1941 concluded that "the German propaganda leaflets have been extraordinarily well-received [...]," and that the POWs have stated they would gladly receive the [propaganda] leaflets more than the assurances of the commissars. The full text is located in 257th I.D. divisional and corps records, BAMA, RH 26-257/37, Bd.2: 20.5.41. Korps- und Divisionbefehle, Meldungen.
[45] The term here in Russian is "Jewish politruka," a phrase translated by the Germans as "Jewish commissar."
[46] BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[47] Ibid.
[48] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 350.
[49] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, pp. 204-205. This was a report by LII Army Corps on 25 June 1941.
[50] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, pp. 204-205, p. 217. The Ic report of IV Army Corp went on to note that just four days before the German invasion, commissars and officers had discussed the fact that the USSR would not attack Germany, but "rather would wait until Germany and England had torn each other to pieces before setting upon and attacking like an animal laying in wait."
[51] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41.
[52] BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[53] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 3 July 1941.
[54] Ibid., 18 July 1941.
[55] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941, p. 5 of a 7 page report on 19 July 1941.
[56] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 23 July 1941.
[57] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 495 in a 27 July 1941 report of the 1st Mountain Division.
[58] BAMA, RH 26-100/37, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 15.7.1941-18.8.1941, Morgenmeldung, p. 39.
[59] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN, 8310267-268, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O., Anlage Lagerberichte, Gefangenenvernehmungen, Nachr.-Blätter vom 30.4.-31.8.41.
[60] Ibid., FN 8310345-46.
[61] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-A.O.
[62] BAMA, RH 26-9/81. The report went on to say that the Soviet troops in the battalion then shot the politruk for killing the battalion commander.
[63] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310255, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O., Anlage Lagerberichte, Gefangenenvernehmungen, Nachr.-Blätter vom 30.4.-31.8.41.
[64] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 127.
[65] Ibid., FN 125.
[66] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 674, FN 830843.
[67] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 286.
[68] Rape plants are in the mustard family. Their seeds can be crushed to make oil, and their leaves can be used for animal fodder.
[69] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 394. The 40 men were part of 220 deserters who crossed over to the Germans on 21 September 1941. They were mostly older men, who had no urge to fight. Of the

180 other deserters, most left their lines due to their lack of desire to engage in combat, and their powerful hunger.
[70] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 310, report from Ic staff based on POW statements from 22 September 1941.
[71] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 152.
[72] Ibid., Anlage 149.
[73] BAMA, RH 26-100/39, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 7.9.1941-19.9.1941.
[74] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 118.
[75] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 168, Nachrichtenblatt 34 in the Ic files of 295th Infantry Division.
[76] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 235.
[77] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 360.
[78] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310682, the testimony of Captain Wasimir Ogrisko, Anlage 3 zu AOK 17, Ic/AO, Nachr.Bl. Nr. 57/41 vom 1.10.41.
[79] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[80] NARA, RG 242, T-315. R 1173, FN 1172. These same POWs also reported that "supplies were poor and unregulated. Bread rations were 500 grams a day, but on most days there was absolutely nothing to eat."
[81] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[82] Ibid.
[83] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1987, FN 737-741 for 14 October 1941, and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1989, FN 392 for 17 October 1941 298th I.D. Ic report based on POW testimony, which noted "Commissars are staying behind even when the officers are fleeing. Great exhaustion for war among the enlisted men."
[84] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1989, FN 961-962.
[85] Ibid.
[86] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941 – 10.11.1941, morning report to LV Army Corps, Ic.
[87] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.
[88] Ibid. Ic report on 14 November 1941.
[89] BAMA, RW 4/578, OKW/WFSt LIV, Chefsachen "Barbarossa," pp. 128-129. On 16 August 1941 OKH wrote a letter to the Legal Affairs Section of OKW requesting clarification on how to treat politruks, the political representatives at the company level and below. Two days later, OKW responded that Politruks were to be considered the same as political commissars, and should be "behandelt/treated" as such.
[90] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1130. When commissars or politruks were interrogated before execution or transfer to the custody of the SD, and the interrogations were transcribed or summarized, we often learn snippets of information about their background, which in turn influenced the conclusions drawn by the intelligence staff. In this case, Terletzkij was a journalist for the Kiev-based publication "Wisti" before the war. The Ic staff of 94th Infantry Division used this notation to conclude in the mid-November 1941 report that "T[erletzkij] was appointed, like many other writers and artists, to become a political commissar."
[91] Ibid., FN 1163. The 27 November 1941 report also included a photograph of the captured political commissar.
[92] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung. A Ic report on 25 November 1941 also noted a Soviet policy to burn everything of use to the Germans as Soviet troops retreated.
[93] Ibid., 30 November 1941 Ic-Abendmeldung.
[94] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1172, FN 990.
[95] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1110.
[96] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1265, FN 106.
[97] BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 9.3.41-13.12.1941, B.2.: 25.10.41-13.12.41, Anlage 398.
[98] BAMA, RH 26-97/101, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 21.12.1941-19.1.42.

[99] BAMA, RW 4/578.
[100] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-14.7.41, p. 31.
[101] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2:2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 150.
[102] Within two weeks, the army corps of the 17th Army Command began reporting that the majority of the local population was turned against them. This, in stark contrast to many of the initial greetings of German troops across Ukraine as liberators from the oppressive yoke of Stalin's communism. An example of the distrust displayed by the local population, due in part to German reprisals as discussed here, can be found in BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, 23 July 1941. 97th Light Infantry Division also noted in a Ic report on 2 December 1941 that the local population was hostile to the Germans based on a speech by Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, which detailed German atrocities against POWs and violations of The Hague Convention (hard labor and the shooting of POWs). The reference is found in BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 2 December 1941. However, some German reports continued to state that the western-most part of Ukraine remained friendly to Germans. For the section of "Verhalten der Zivilbevoelkerung," refer to BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 9.3.41-13.12.1941, B.2.: 25.10.41-13.12.41, Anlage 398.
[103] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 11 July 1941.
[104] Ibid., 14 July 1941.
[105] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2:2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 28.
[106] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, (Anlage 71).
[107] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, 23 July 1941 for the anti-German attitude, and BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 28 July 1941 for the charge of supplying the local population.
[108] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-A.O.
[109] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 7 August 1941.
[110] BAMA, RH 26-97/12, Kriegstagebuch Ia, 11,7.41-11.8.41. The order for that afternoon actually included 10 rounds of fire from howitzer guns to be shot into the woods.
[111] XXXXIXth Army Corps included the following subordinated divisions in early August 1941: 1st Mountain Division, 4th Mountain Division, 97th Light Infantry Division, 125th Infantry Division, 295th Infantry Division, with 94th Infantry Division in reserve. The records at the National Archives also indicate that 24th Infantry Division was also attached to XXXXIX Army Corps at this time. A fairly comprehensive list of subordinated formations appears in Georg Tessin, Verbände und Truppen: der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945, Vol. 4: Die Landstreitkräfte 15-30 (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1976), pp. 50-55. Another source for unit location is Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, VA: Number 47. Records of German Field Commands: Armies (Part V) (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Service – General Services Administration, 1965), pp. 109-158.
[112] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, 7 August 1941.
[113] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 9 August 1941.
[114] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Morgenmeldung des XXXXIX. A.K.(4:50 A.M.), 12 August 1941.
[115] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 899.
[116] Ibid., FN 857.
[117] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 393.
[118] BAMA, RH 26-100/37, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 15.7.1941-18.8.1941.
[119] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 1 September 1941.
[120] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41, p. 39.
[121] BAMA, RH 26-100/38, 100.le.Inf. Div., Tätigkeitsbericht Abt. Ic, 19.8.41-6.9.41, Rußland, p. 5.
[122] BAMA, RH 26-295/16, p. 85. At this point in the invasion, 295th I.D., 97th Light I.D., and 100th Light I.D. held a line which extended over 20 miles. Throughout the month, these divisions withstood

Soviet attacks and counterattacks from three rifle divisions, four cavalry divisions, and four tank brigades.

[123] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41, p. 47.

[124] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 395.

[125] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsberichte zum KTB Nr. 2 der 125. Inf.Div./Ia, Ic Iia/b, 22.6.41-15.12.41.

[126] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 310, 22 September 1941.

[127] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 160.

[128] Clearly, there were exceptions in which the commander and commissar worked quite well together. The intelligence staff of 125th Infantry Division made note of this on 4 October 1941 by stating: "conspicuous is the established strong composition between officers and commissars. BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41, p. 51.

[129] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310679, Anlage 2. The same testimony appeared four days later in the files of 9th Infantry Division, NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 355.

[130] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310682, Anlage 3. 100th Light Infantry Division reported on the same testimony three days later. The full text is found in BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.11.1941.

[131] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.11.1941.

[132] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 228. In addition, 125th Infantry Division Ic reported on 18 October 1941 that in each company there are four officers and one commissar. It is entirely possible that since the orders from above were to treat politruks the same as commissars, that the intelligence officers in 125th I.D. chose to call all political officers "commissars" regardless of their rank. BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41. The Ic staff of 9th Infantry Division noted on 5 December 1941 that "each company has a politruk with assorted weapons." NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 440-441.

[133] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 411. The midday report from the same day noted that the Germans had encountered a partisan group of 60-70 men strong. Of these, eight partisans and one commissar were killed in battle. Ten of those taken prisoner were then shot.

[134] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41. However, the report went on to say that the "officers and commissars are often drunk at night." A 97th Light Infantry Ic report from 5 November 1941 stated something similar about the willingness of commanders and political officers to fight; numerous officers and many commissars were among the combat-ready. BAMA, RH 26-97/100,
Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 5 November 1941.

[135] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.11.1941, p. 117. Whether or not this was in fact true does not come out in further entries of the activity reports. The evening report from this date also notes a Ic report on the same testimony from 57th Infantry Division.

[136] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41.

[137] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 424.

[138] Ibid., FN 428.

[139] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.

[140] Ibid.

[141] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941, 15 December 1941.

[142] BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 9.3.41-13.12.1941, B.2.: 25.10.41-13.12.41, Anlage 398. The report also noted that NKVD troops patrolled behind the Soviet lines to guard against deserters and enemy agents, and that spying among the troops (by commissars, Party faithful, etc.) was one of the main reasons for mistrust and poor morale.

[143] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1174, FN 380-381.

[144] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 68.

[145] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, 8 September 1941.

[146] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R-1973, FN 138

[147] BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41.

[148] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 434.
[149] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941 is an excellent example of how a divisional war diary was to be organized.
[150] At a series of meetings in Warsaw and Allenstein on 10 and 11 June 1941, Lieutenant-General Eugen Müller, on special assignment to the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, briefed Ic officers on a range of issues from the relationship of the Army with the SS to the Commissar Order. These briefing followed meetings for Ic and Ia officers the previous two months, which covered reporting on various facets of the coming invasion, including how and when to file reports. NARA RG 242, T-312, Roll 661, FN 8293830 includes the topics and course offerings during meetings with Third General Staff officers at the divisional, corps, and army level in Berlin 1-22 April 1941, and BA-MA RH 22/271 as cited in Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al. (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 493 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 11, p. 530 include materials from the May and June 1941 Ic briefings.
[151] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 42.
[152] The war diaries of the First General Staff Officer (Ia) sometimes contained lists of POWs and commissars as well. A good example is found in BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41.
[153] N ARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 43, 27 June 1941.
[154] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 42.
[155] Ibid., "Wiped out/liquidated.."
[156] Ibid.
[157] BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[158] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1221, FN 326.
[159] BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[160] BAMA,RH 26-100/38, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 19.9.1941-6.9.1941.
[161] BAMA, RH 26-239/24.
[162] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le. Inf. Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.
[163] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 65. At the time, 24th, 94th, 97th Light, 125th, and 295th Infantry Divisions made up the IV Army Corps, and 24th Infantry Division had just reported three commissars "treated as such" that morning.
[164] Ibid., pp. 25-26.
[165] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlagen vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO and BAMA, RH 24-52/220, Anlage 2a-Ic, LII. A.K., Ia/Ic zum Tätigkeitsbericht Gen. Kd. LII. A.K. Abt. Ic, II. Teil, 22.6.1941-21.7.1941, and 21.7.1941-21.8.1941.
[166] Ibid.
[167] BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.
[168] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlagen vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO.
[169] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.11.1941.
[170] Ibid..
[171] BAMA, RH 26-57/57. The other decrees were most likely the Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order, and perhaps the "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia."
[172] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[173] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6. 1941-14.7.1941., pp. 131-132. A more complete picture, including the name of the commissar („Sprodow, Filaret Jwanowitsch from Siberia") appears in BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 80.
[174] BAMA, RH 26-295/16, p. 103, and BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 161 from 28 September 1941.
[175] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlagen vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO.
[176] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1018.
[177] Ibid., FN 1021.
[178] Ibid., FN 1023.

[179] Often German sources refer to areas in this part of Ukraine with the word Sumpf (swamp). However, these areas were not swamps, but parts of primeval forests composed mainly of deciduous trees. The low areas had bogs, and the higher ground pine trees.
[180] Ibid., FN 1258. FN 1261-1278 contains more complete description of anti-partisan operations.
[181] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[182] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 410. The report goes on to note that 10 of the POWs were then taken out and shot.
[183] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[184] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1172, FN 1006 for the (Ic) account and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173. FN 1103 for the (Ia) account.
[185] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1265, FN 550.
[186] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.
[187] BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlagen vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldungen der Korps, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO.
[188] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 240.
[189] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 395.
[190] BAMA, RH 26-125/57, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41.
[191] BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le. Inf. Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.
[192] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Band 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung, 23 November 1941.
[193] BAMA, RH 26-100/38, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 19.8.1941-6.9.1941.
[194] Ibid., pp. 64-65.
[195] Ibid., p. 38.
[196] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 334, 28 September 1941.
[197] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 120, 28 September 1941.
[198] BAMA, RH-19 I/67 contains the draft plan with all the amendments. The original draft was signed by Hitler and initialed by Generals Keitel, Jodl, and Warlimont. For the full finalized text, see OKW, "Weisung Nr. 21 - Fall Barbarossa, 18 Dezember 1940," IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, pp. 47-52. It also appears as Anlage 2, Aufmarschanweisung OKH von 31.1.1941 "Barbarossa," in Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 463-469, and is mentioned in KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 237 (18 December 1940). A partial English translation from Nürnberg, Document 446-PS, can be found in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 407-409 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 958-960.
[199] John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941 (3rd edition) (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 155. Part of the expanded role of the Red Army came in the form of instructions from the Central Committee of the Communist Party following the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923, which was directly connected to the mutual assistance pact with the Reichswehr. For more on the Soviet military's response to cooperation with the Reichswehr, see Alexander M. Nekrich, (edited and translated by Gregory L. Freeze), Pariahs, Partners, Predators: German-Soviet Relations, 1922-1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 14-25. For a detailed analysis of the chemical weapons, tank, and air force cooperative ventures, see Sally Stoecker, Forging Stalin's Army: Marshal Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) , pp. 77-134.
[200] Just over three months after Hitler ordered secret preparations for the German invasion of the Soviet Union, intelligence officers of AOK 17 monitored a speech by Soviet Marshal Timoshenko on the 23rd anniversary of the Red Army. The 25 March 1941 document celebrated the work of commanders and "political officers" alike. The full text of the 25 March 1941 document is located in NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310296-300. The text of the Molotov –Ribbentropp Pact ("Announcement Relating to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty") is found in Document TC-25, NCA, Vol. 8, pp. 375-376.
[201] Völkischer Beobachter Microfilm Reel Number 29 (5.5.40-30.9.40), Norddeutsche Ausgabe, Nr. 228, Friday, 15 August 1940, p. 4. This collection of microfilm is located in the McLennan-Redpath

Library at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Hoffmann for his suggestion to search for this source.
[202] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310296-300, Anlage 1.
[203] Ibid.
[204] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 68; BAMA, RH 26-295/17, 8 September 1941; BAMA, RH 26-295/17, 8 September 1941; NARA, RG 242, T-315, R-1973, FN 138; BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41, as examples.
[205] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310296-300.
[206] Dual command was reinstated on 16 July 1941. For the original, see KPSS o voor. Sil. Sov. Soyuza, pp. 358-361 as cited in Erickson, The Soviet High Command, p. 603. A German translation of the original Soviet order from 16 July 1941 appears in the Ic records of the 94th Infantry Division. NARA, RG 242, T-315, Roll 1172, FN 817-819. More specific duties for political commissars in the Red Army were added four days later. The full text of Directive Number 42, "On the Duties of military Commissars and political workers in the Red Army (20 July 1941)," is found in Velikaya Otechestvennaya (The Great Patriotic War), (Main Political Organs of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945. Documents and Materials) (Moscow: Terra, 1996), pp. 48-51. Translation of this text for use in my dissertation was provided by Dr. Roger Cooke, University of Vermont. The text of the 20 July 1941 order is also reproduced in the appendix.
[207] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 271-273.
[208] Ibid.
[209] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, (Anlage 171).
[210] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 366-367 for 4 October 1941, and FN 423-424 for 20 October 1941.
[211] NARA, RG 242, T-312, R 676, FN 8310631, (AOK 17).
[212] Ibid., FN 8310632.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid., FN 8310520-521.
[215] Ibid., FN 8310521-522.
[216] Ibid., FN 8310521.
[217] NARA, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, Army Intelligence Document File (entry 85, NM-3), RPL924348, (Box 9196, 270/14/23/6), pp. 3-4. Manual 19a/21, Field Service Regulations of the Red Army, Edition published by the People's Commissariat for Defence, 1943, restricted. Unrevised impression, September 1944. The following cover letter accompanied the document after it had fallen into German hands:
„Oberkommando des Heeres
Generalstab des Heeres
Abt. Frd. Heere Ost (IIe)
No. 4360/44

HQ., 1.8.1944
The „Russian Field Service Regulations 1936" which have been used up until now, should be superceded by manual 19a/21, the new „Field Service Regulations for the Red Army, 1943 edition," restricted, (published by the People's Commissariat for Defence).
The Field Service Regulations, 1943 edition, lay down the latest Soviet principles of command and tactics. They form a valuable basis for appreciating their intentions, employment of forces and execution of operations by the Red Army.
In the translation various expressions have been altered to accord with German military usage, without thereby changing the character of the Russian regulations.

(signed) Gehlen"
The translation from Russian into English was done under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Canada. I am grateful to Dr. Peter Hoffmann for helping me to locate this document at NARA.
[218] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[219] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941, p. 132.
[220] Ibid., p. 52.
[221] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1163 and 1211.
[222] Sumy is a city in the southeastern part of Ukraine, and was already occupied by the Germans as the 17th Army Command advanced in the winter of 1942.
[223] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, uncatalogued collection from the Sumy Archives, 8 February 1942, Sumy Messenger, p. 2. Translation into English provided by Marina Zaloznaya, Middlebury College. I am grateful to Vladim Altskan, USHMM, for these references.
[224] Ibid., p. 3.

Chapter 5: Findings

Hitler's rationale for executing Red Army political commissars was disingenuous and reductive. By creating a justification for murder in his 30 March 1941 speech to his leading generals and legal staff, he crafted a false choice between loyalty to him and the regime, and loyalty to the customs of war.[1] By lumping Red Army political commissars, Jews, and later partisans into an interchangeable mass in order to support his claims, Hitler knowingly distorted the facts about the power of political officers under the commissar system. Once combat operations began on 22 June 1941, German troops put his thesis to the test that Red Army political commissars were ruthless defenders of communist ideology. Thus, Hitler employed a curtain of misinformation to separate fact from fiction, and, in doing so, created an atmosphere in which obedience to both the letter and spirit of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order was expected.

While the genesis and development of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order are clearly delineated, as seen in Chapter Two of this dissertation, and the evidentiary paper trail from the conception to the birth of the 6 June 1941 order is available for historians to scrutinize as a result of documents and testimony submitted at postwar trials, especially those in Nuremberg from November 1945 to February 1948, a comprehensive analysis of implementation by front-line divisions of the Seventeenth Army is much more difficult to achieve. As Theo Schulte stated in The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia: "Recent research has made much of the

involvement of the Army High Command (*OKH*) in the initial drafting of these directives, but any attempts to verify the degree to which the *Kommissarbefehl* was actually implemented remains problematical."[2]

In the section that follows, I will examine the "problematical" issues and obstacles associated with obtaining a comprehensive portrait of the implementation of the Commissar Order. These include the conditions that fostered an environment of compliance to carry out the Commissar Order among Hitler's leading generals responsible for the planning and oversight of the *Barbarossa* campaign, as well as those conditions that provided loopholes for non-compliance for both the military leadership and the formations on the battlefield. Yet, since these "problematical" issues and obstacles are not completely insurmountable, they will not get in the way of a qualitative and limited quantitative analysis in the last sections of the chapter on the degree to which the Commissar Order was carried out by the forces of 17th Army between 22 June 1941 and 31 January 1942.

A "Conspiracy of Silence"? - German Generals and the Commissar Order

Conceivably Hitler's expectation of obedience expressed in a speech on 30 March 1941 for front-line formations to implement both the letter and spirit of the *Kommissarbefehl* also created an atmosphere of silence, and a reluctance to express whatever reservations any of the field officers may have had at the time to what clearly amounted to orders of a criminal nature. In their memoirs, both General Walter Warlimont, chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff/National Defense Branch of *OKW* and Field Marshal Keitel addressed this acquiescence. Warlimont

went so far as to call it "a conspiracy of silence" on the part of the generals in attendance.[3] He quoted the diary entry of General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, as stating "nothing new" (*Nichts Neues*) to re-enforce the view that the generals made no statements that would question Hitler's orders targeting commissars and communist leaders during the afternoon session of 30 March 1941.[4] Yet, Warlimont also listed other possible explanations why the generals may have remained collectively silent on this matter:

> The real reasons however for this lack of reaction on the part of most senior officers of the Army were probably that the majority of them had not followed Hitler's diatribe in detail, that others had not grasped the full meaning of his proposals and that others thought it better first to look into these questions more deeply or to follow normal military practice and await the reaction of their superiors.[5]

Notably, Warlimont did not offer these, or similar, defenses on other occasions when Hitler spoke at length on military, political, or racial policy issues. It was as if military field commanders, in this one instance, dealing with the foundational principles of what would become the Commissar Order, had no capacity to understand Hitler's harangues, or perhaps wanted to follow protocol and express their reservations through the military infrastructure. Such excuses were not the

grounds of a conspiracy, but rather appeared to be a glaring example of impuissance on the part of the generals, including Warlimont himself.

Warlimont further stated that: "Even the late Field Marshall von Bock, who later emerged as an opponent of the Commissar Order and whose observations in his diary are usually particularly outspoken, makes no special comment on the meeting or the restricted conference that followed."[6] Following this line of reasoning, if von Bock, a high ranking officer with connections to some of those plotting a coup, didn't react at the time to Hitler's initiation of a criminal order, how is it possible that other commanders could be expected to respond? However, Warlimont was greatly mistaken; von Bock did respond in his diary to Hitler's speech of 30 March 1941, and even noted that the *Führer* identified commissars as the sticking point of insurmountable opposition "between us and Bolshevism."[7]

Warlimont also offered another series of explanations to set the political, military, and economic background for the introduction of the Commissar Order. This form of *ex post facto* rationalization was broad and sweeping:

> This was a particularly agitated period – the Balkan campaign was in progress, Crete had just been captured, negotiations with France had just been started, events were on the move in North Africa and the Middle East, Hess had flown to England and the *Bismarck* had been sunk; there seems little doubt therefore that all these upheavals

contributed to Hitler's intentions being forgotten in a conspiracy of silence.[8]

However, the majority of the aforementioned events took place well after Hitler's 30 March 1941 speech, and was of little or no consequence at the end of March.[9] Warlimont seemed to be attributing the muted response of the generals in attendance to the draft and review period coming the month before the official introduction of the Commissar Order on 6 June 1941, and not the days immediately following 30 March.[10]

Keitel, for his part, exhibited no concern for the silence of the generals, but was adamant that the *SS* should not even be anywhere near the front-line troops, as evidenced in his first reaction to Hitler's speech. By his own account, Keitel focused on the joint nature of the coming operations, and made it clear that he opposed Himmler's newly developing role in "the maintenance of peace and order behind the front lines."[11] Concerned that abuses of power would follow in the wake of the invading troops, Keitel detailed his objections about Himmler and his minions. Yet, according to Keitel, his protests to Hitler about the *SS* and security forces' presence went unheeded. While he offered details of Hitler's speech not found in the Halder diary account or Warlimont's memoirs,[12] Keitel provided scant insight into the thinking of both himself and his staff regarding their responses to Hitler's lengthy diatribe. In his memoirs, Keitel stated:

> It was not for some days that I was able to discuss our opinions of Hitler's speech with [Commander-in-Chief of the Army Field Marshal Walter von] Brauchitsch. He was quite frank: deep down inside themselves, his generals wanted no part of this kind of war. He asked whether any written orders were likely to follow along those lines. I assured him that without clear directions from Hitler I would certainly neither prepare nor ask for such orders in writing; I not only considered written orders to that effect superfluous, but indeed highly dangerous. I said that I for one would be doing all I could to avoid having them. **In any case, everybody heard with his own ears what he had said; that would suffice** [emphasis mine]. I was firmly opposed to putting anything down on paper on so questionable a matter.[13]

For Keitel, there appeared to be little room to negotiate the extent of the Commissar Order with Hitler, but on the subject of Himmler, whom he considered a megalomaniac,[14] there were strenuous protests. Whereas Brauchitsch confessed his generals' apparent distaste for "this kind of war," the concern of both men was whether or not the order would appear in writing. Keitel and Brauchitsch, along with all of the generals involved, were acutely aware of the legal authority possessed by Hitler; three years earlier, Hitler had decreed: "Command authority over the entire

armed forces is from now on exercised by me personally."[15] While it was certainly true that when it came to ordering the commission of crimes, German military manuals stated that criminal orders must not be obeyed, and that Keitel, Halder, and General Alfred Jodl, chief of *Wehrmacht* Operations Staff, and others had openly expressed reservations and objections to Hitler about a myriad of other subjects,[16] yet at this stage in the development of the Commissar Order, they chose not to respond.

In the following two paragraphs of his memoir, Keitel provided even less acumen into how the order came out in written form, and his own reaction to it. He appeared to resign himself to the fact that he could not sufficiently explain the presence of his signature on both the Commissar Order and the *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order when confronted with them at the first Nürnberg Trial:

> Both these orders were accepted as prime exhibits against me at the Nuremberg trial, especially as they had been issued six weeks before our attack and there was thus never any possibility of justifying them in retrospect by circumstances obtaining during the Russian campaign. As their sole author – Hitler – was dead, I alone was called to answer for them by that Tribunal.[17]

In a search for explanations of the relative lack of responses from the generals to Hitler's speech, several other factors present themselves. Keitel and Brauchitsch

appeared to have reached the conclusion that in this new type of warfare, the forces of the *Reichsführer-SS* would take charge of carrying out the "special tasks" to annihilate Red Army political commissars and communist leaders.[18]

Another view, made popular during several war crimes trials, was that senior officers simply disregarded the order. As Field Marshall Wilhelm von Leeb, commander of Army Group North from March 1941 to January 1942, stated during direct examination by defense counsel Dr. Hans Laternser:

> [...] I knew that all commanders with whom I talked were against this order. Therefore I hoped that it would not be carried out in its full measure [...] At the time, as far as it was possible at all, we tacitly sabotaged the order and everything depended on our doing it tacitly.[19]

Hitler's Army Adjutant, Major Gerhard Engel, also recorded such an attitude. In a conversation with Infantry General Hans von Salmuth and Major Henning von Tresckow, Engel noted that:

> They saw it [the Commissar Order – explanation mine] as a source of misfortune and feared severe retaliations on the troops. We were fully in agreement on this view. Salmuth and Tresckow spoke confidentially to me that, whatever

> ways and means would be devised to orally influence, above all the division commanders, not to carry out this order, would be done. Tresckow made a typical remark, that "if any international laws are to be broken, it will be the Russians themselves, and not we!"[20]

Some commanders later maintained that the full impact of Hitler's intent had been mitigated by Keitel's 13 May 1941 *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order as well as Brauchitsch's 24 May 1941 "Maintenance of Discipline Order," and that no major objections would be necessary.[21]

For others, the lack of open dissent could have been attributed to a shared belief in a common enemy. It would be more than specious to conclude that Hitler was not alone in his thinking that an attack on Soviet Russia, and all the details that accompanied it, was justified. As Jürgen Förster pointed out:

> Hitler's formula of the "poison of disintegration" must have evoked among his listeners memories of the disintegration of the eastern army in 1918-19, which in 1936 the official military historians of the general staff had attributed to Bolshevik agitation. [In this document,] the Jews had been highlighted as the "principal exponents of the Bolshevik propaganda." The establishment of soldiers' councils, the

> "favorite children of the Bolshevik-influenced revolution," had been a fatal mistake, which had facilitated the "elimination of leadership and the disintegration of the fighting forces." Against the backdrop of this constructed explanation of the causes of the collapse of Imperial Germany, Hitler's linkage of the internal enemy then and the external enemy now, the Soviet Union – in other words, "Jewish Bolshevism" – fell on fertile ground.[22]

While such views are difficult to measure, they provide another plausible explanation for the silence of the generals.[23] Nonetheless, since most of the leading generals and legal planners did not raise objections to the *Kommissarbefehl*, it would appear to be much more difficult for those officers leading divisions on the field of battle to do anything but comply with the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order. However, in order to evaluate the degree of compliance by front-line formations of the 17th Army, we need to first examine how many Red Army political officers would be expected among total prisoners of war captured by the Germans. This topic will be the focus of the following section.

Number of Captured Red Army Political Officers Expected and Why?

As part of the three-pronged attack on the Soviet Union from the Baltic to the area of the Black Sea which began in the pre-dawn hours of 22 June 1941, the formations of Army Group South cut deeply into the heart of Ukraine by the end of July. Despite several pockets of intense resistance, the 16th, 17th, and 11th Armies all

secured major logistical and strategic objectives in keeping with Hitler's plan (Directive Number 21, "Operation Barbarossa," 18 December 1940) for the defeat and subjugation of the USSR.[24] With the vast amounts of land also came an overwhelming number of prisoners of war. In Army Group South alone, over 650,000 Soviet POWs were processed through *Wehrmacht* transit camps (*Durchgangslager*) south of Kiev in early August 1941.[25] By the middle of the winter of 1942, the *Wehrmacht* had captured over three million Red Army soldiers. The 17th Army and its subordinated divisions had brought in close to 250,000 of these POWs.[26]

Yet, how many of these quarter million or so prisoners captured by the front lines divisions of 17th Army were Red Army political commissars and politruks? Trying to calculate that number is complex.

In order to determine how many commissars and politruks may have been among the POWs taken in by the formations of *AOK* 17, we need to first establish the total number of political workers and Red Army soldiers for a given period of time. Soviet sources do not offer a clear picture. Dimitri Fedotoff White notes that there were 34,000 political workers in the Red Army at the time of the German attack on Poland in 1939.[27] Roger Reese states that there were a total of 5.4 million men in the Red Army at the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.[28] If the number of political officers in the Red Army in 1941 stayed close to the 1939 levels, there would be approximately 1 political officer to every 160 men. However, since there appear to be no Soviet sources which identify how many commissars and politruks served in the Red Army in the summer of 1941, we must examine other possibilities.

German documents and testimony offer a more consistent picture. At his trial in Nuremberg in the winter of 1948, Army Group North Commander, Field Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb stated that there was one political commissar for every 80 Red Army soldiers, or the equivalent of 1 per company. He used this figure to suggest then that troops under his command had not carried out the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order since the proportion of commissars to POWs would be much greater than those actually recorded as shot.[29]

While the prosecution assailed Leeb's premise, it never examined where Leeb got his statistic of one political commissar for every 80 Red Army soldiers. In the records of the 454th Security Division, subordinated to 17th Army into July 1941, intelligence officers (*Ic*) used the same proportional formula as von Leeb for political officers to enlisted men. In a summary account of briefings conducted during a pre-invasion meeting, the intelligence staff of the 454th Security Division recorded the following:

> They [political commissars – explanation mine] are the true supporters of the political system in Russia, and consequently, are to be treated as such. Differentiate between political commissars among the troops and those in the civilian population. To begin, they are not to be looked at as soldiers, and not to be treated as soldiers. Identifiable with a Red Star and a golden hammer and sickle. Immediately to be separated at the time of capture.

> To be shot outside the battle zone on the orders of an officer. **Each company has a political commissar** [emphasis mine]. Political commissars not with the troops are to be left unmolested; hostile actions require the same procedure as with irregulars.[30]

As the attack on the Soviet Union progressed, however, it became clear that the pre-invasion intelligence may not have been entirely accurate in its nomenclature. In the Red Army command structure, political commissars were attached to the level of regiment and above, and politruks were the political representatives at the company level. As an attachment to a 28 September 1941 activity report of the 9th Infantry Division noted: "There is 1 commissar in each regiment, and 1 politruk in every company."[31] A 13 October 1941 activity report of the 295th Infantry Division (*Ic*) also noted some of the same information: "In every company there is a politruk."[32] Yet, since politruks and commissars were to be treated equally under the terms of the Commissar Order based on an 18 August 1941 *OKH* decision, the proportion of overall political officers should not have been impacted.[33]

Using von Leeb's and German military intelligence estimates of one commissar/politruk for every 80 Red Army soldiers, the lowest possible number of commissars/politruks to be expected among the 250,000 (minimum) POWs taken in by the front-line formations of the 17th Army by February 1942 would be 3,125. In order to get as accurate a view as possible of how many Red Army political

commissars and politruks were reported captured by the formations subordinated to the 17th Army, we will next examine the reporting process itself.

The Reporting of Captured Red Army Political Officers

The German 17th Army, under the command of General Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel (through the first part of October 1941) and General Hermann Hoth (through the rest of the period of this study), had no less than two and no more than four army corps as subordinated formations during the first seven months of the German invasion of the USSR. Each of these army corps had at least one subordinated division, but never more than seven for any given period.[34] As noted in the section of this study on the "Statistical Montage of Red Army political commissars," before the start of the German invasion, *Ic* officers had regulated standard operating procedures for how to organize and maintain an official divisional war diary.[35] They also had received at least three separate briefings on how to file reports and what type of content to include in the reports for "Operation *Barbarossa*."[36] Through July 1941, intelligence officers listed the number of Red Army political commissars and politruks with the total number POWs brought in if there were any political officers discovered in the sorting process at the point of capture.

However, in August 1941, intelligence officers at division level across the invasion front began reporting on the capture of Red Army political commissars and politruks in a separate line of the daily activity reports and war diaries similar to the following example from the 28 September 1941 evening report of the 100th Light Infantry Division to LV Army Corps (*Ic*):

> Reporting period on the treatment of political commissars (during the time from 14-27 September 1941): none to report (*Fehlanzeige*) [...][37]

When intelligence officers at the divisional level did file reports on the treatment of Red Army political commissars, they usually did not include references to geographic locations where the commissars and/or politruks were captured, executed, or handed over to the *SD*. That information, if missing, is only available when the *Ic* accounts involving the political officers are cross-referenced with the orders of the day from the files of the 1st General Staff Officer (*Ia*). From the *Ia* orders of the day we learn of operational objectives by regiment, and, under the best of circumstances, we can pinpoint the town or region where a political officer was captured.[38]

Upon receiving the reports from the front-line divisions, the intelligence staff at the corps level was to pass the summaries on the capture of commissars and politruks from the subordinated divisions up the chain of command to 17th Army. There, the reports on captured commissars and politruks would be combined with those from all of the subordinated formations and sent along to the Army Group South intelligence staff (*Ic*). Although the divisional summary accounts were considered integral parts of the activity reports and war diaries, and some (*Ic*) officers had even included numbered attachments (*Anlagen*) which followed a prescribed system of numbering, or a system developed by the divisional recorder in charge of the war diary, they were not always directed up the chain of command, as evidenced

by the paucity of summary accounts of captured political officers available in the files of *AOK* 17 (*Ic*).[39]

However, that some of the summaries on the capture of Red Army political commissars and politruks in the *Barbarossa* campaign were evaluated at the highest command levels is evident in the war diary entries (1 August and 21 September 1941) of General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the German Army. As noted in Chapter Two of this dissertation, Halder wrote that front-line divisions were not carrying out the Commissar Order, and that Red Army political commissars were mostly discovered in the POW camps. Data from both the front line formations and rear areas were necessary for Halder to reach that conclusion.[40]

In order to assess how Halder's conclusions about front-line formations compare with reports from 17th Army, we will need to examine the number and percentage of Red Army political officers documented as captured in the divisional war diaries and activity reports. From these, we get the foundational documentation to begin to examine the degree to which the front-line formations of *AOK* 17 implemented the Commissar Order on the battlefield.

Numbers and Percentages of Red Army Political Officers Reported as Captured

In the first three months of the invasion, reports by divisions subordinated to *AOK* 17 on the capture of political officers rose steadily from two in June 1941 to just over a dozen in August 1941. However, given the total number of political officers anticipated to be among prisoners of war, one would expect the numbers of captured commissars and politruks to be much higher. For example, the combined forces of 17th Army and Field Marshal Ewald von Kleist's 1st *Panzers* brought in over 90,000

POWs by the end of the first week in August as a result of an encirclement near the Ukrainian city of Uman. Uman was situated on part of what the Germans called *Durchgangstraße* IV (Transit Road IV), a strategic route that began in the former Polish cities of L'viv and Tarnopol and continued through southern Ukrainian cities and towns such as Letichev, Vinnitsa, Gaisin, Uman, Kirovgrad, Krivoy-Rog, Dnipropetrovs'k and on to Stalino, Taranrog, and finally Rostov-on-the-Don at the gateway to the Caucasus.[41]

A report of 9 August 1941 signed by the Commander of 17th Army, General Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, documented the cooperation of *AOK* 17 with von Kleist's formations which resulted in the encirclement of the 6th and 12th Soviet Armies around Uman. Stülpnagel closed the report with his gratefulness: "All commanders and troops must look back with pride on their performance. To them belong my warmest thanks and my fullest recognition."[42] During the course of this encirclement, the formations of 17th Army alone captured 62,000 out of the 90,000 men taken in. However, using the German sources' ratio of one political officer to every 80 Red Army troops, we would expect 775 commissars and politruks to be among those POWs, and not the 12 commissars and 5 politruks registered as POWs by the end of the month.

As the chart below in Table 1 illustrates, the highest number reported in any single month period from June 1941-January 1942, thirty political officers, were reported captured by 17th Army's subordinated divisions during September 1941. These commissars and politruks were all captured in the geographic regions southwest of Kiev, and their relatively high numbers reflect the fact that the German

advance had slowed to a series of mopping-up operations. *Ic* officers had more time to interrogate POWs and find incriminating evidence and documents than they did when the advance was rapidly heading eastward. As a result, the number of political officers reported captured for the month of September was more than double the next highest monthly totals. However, these monthly totals of Red Army political officers reported as captured by the formations of *AOK* 17 were still extremely low if related to the number of political officers who must have been attached to the numbers of POWs captured.

Nevertheless, the number of political officers reported as taken prisoner by the forces of the German 17th Army dropped precipitously over the next four months. This drop in the number of commissars and politruks reported captured was not due to a rapid advancement across Ukraine when formations of *AOK* 17 had little time to flush out encircled Soviet troops, but had more to do with weather conditions, which slowed the invasion, the changing nature of Soviet resistance from more conventional warfare to partisan warfare, and the eventual suspension of the Commissar Order in May 1942.[43]

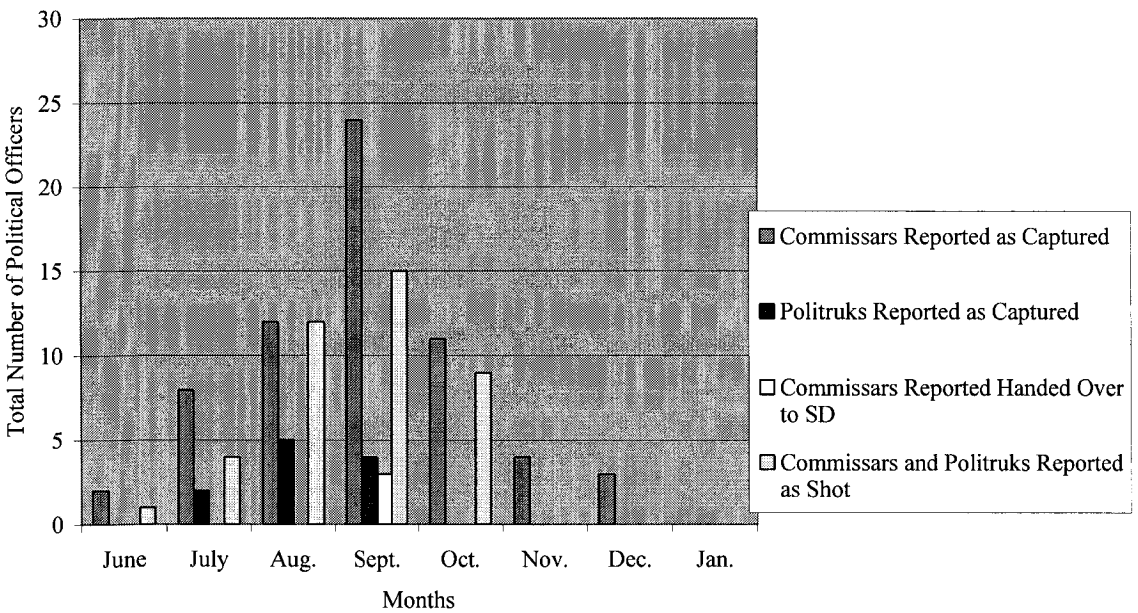
The following chart in Table 1 represents the number of Red Army political commissars and politruks reported captured, shot, or handed over to the *SD* by the front-line divisions of 17th Army from 22 June 1941 to 31 January 1942.[44] This chart does not include those arrested and treated as irregulars,[45] or "suspicious persons."[46] As noted above, the forces of the 17th Army captured at least 250,000 Soviet prisoners by the start of February 1942. Using the German sources' ratio of 1 Red Army political officers to every 80 Soviet troops the capture of that number would

have resulted in 3,125 captured commissars and politruks. However, as the chart in Table 1 illustrates, the number of captured political officers does not match the expected total.

Number and Percentage of Red Army Political Officers Reported as Captured, Executed, and Turned over to the *SD* and Security Police

Table Number 1

Commissars and Politruks Reported Captured, Shot, or Handed Over to SD, 22 June 1941 - 31 January 1942



While the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order prescribed execution for all political commissars in the Red Army, just 53% (41) of the 78 total Red Army political commissars and politruks captured by forces of 17th Army over a seven month period were reported as shot in the pages of the divisional and corps war diaries and activity reports. In every month from June through October 1941, however, at least half of the

commissars and politruks reported captured were executed by front-line divisions of 17th Army, including 71% (12 of 17) in August and 81% (9 of 11) in October 1941. As the chart in Table 1 also indicates above, there were no recorded executions of captured Soviet political officers by front-line formations of *AOK* 17 for November and December 1941, and no political officers reported in the custody of the German 17th Army at all in January 1942. Whether the commissars and politruks who were reported as captured but not reported as shot, were immediately shot by front-line formations, sent to the rear to face execution at the hands of the a security division, a unit on a rest period, or the *SD*, is just not possible to know.

What is known is that only 3 of the 78 (4%) commissars reported captured by the front-line formations of the 17th Army were recorded as turned over to the *SD*. The 257th Infantry division, subordinated to the 17th Army since the start of the invasion, had yet to report on the capture or shooting of any Red Army political officers by the beginning of September 1941. However, on 12 September 1941 they recorded sending three commissars to the *SD* near Kremenchug.[47] On 7 August 1941 at 7:20 a.m., the 97th Light Infantry Division (*Ic*) sent a question to 17th Army (*Ic*) about what promises could be given commissars captured in battle. The response from *AOK* 17 (*Ic*), directed to the First General Staff Officer of the 97th Light I.D. was swift and clear: "Assure them that for our part they will not be shot, and then give them over to the *SD*."[48] Yet, there is no record in the war diaries or activity reports that the intelligence staff of the 97th Light I.D. followed up by sending any commissars or politruks to the *SD*.

In addition, over half (58% - 14 of 24) of all divisions subordinated to 17th Army reported on the capture of political officers in the Red Army, and/or their execution at least once during the time they were under *AOK* 17. Yet, with the exception of the 295th I.D., which reported the capture of 16 political officers from 22 June 1941 through 31 January 1942, and which was subordinated to *AOK* 17 for all but several weeks of the first seven months of the *Barbarossa* campaign, none of the other front-line divisions reported more than 10 political officers captured during the duration covered by this study. The following table (Table 2) shows a breakdown of reporting on captured commissars and politruks by the divisions subordinated to *AOK* 17 during the first seven months of the *Barbarossa* campaign.[49]

Table Number 2

Political Officers Reported Captured by Divisions of *AOK* 17

Months: June 1941 – January 1942

	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	
Divisions									**Totals**
1st Mountain	**1**	0	**4**	x	x	x	x	x	**5**
4th Mountain	x	0	0	x	x	x	x	x	**0**

	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	
Divisions									**Totals**
9th	x	x	x	**4**	**1**	0	R	0	**5**
24th	0	**4**	**5**	**1**	R	x	x	x	**10**
57th	x	x	x	R	**3**	x	x	x	**3**
68th	0	x	x	0	0	x	x	0	**0**
71st	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**0**
76th	x	x	x	**1**	0	0	0	0	**1**
94th	x	0	R	**3**	R	**1**	0	0	**4**
97th Light	x	0	**1**	**2**	0	0	**1**	0	**4**
100th Light	**1**	**1**	0	**4**	0	x	x	x	**6**
101st Light	0	**1**	0	0	0	x	x	0	**1**
111th	x	x	x	x	x	R	0	0	**0**
125th	x	0	0	0	0	R	x	x	**0**
239th	x	x	x	**4**	0	x	x	x	**4**
257th	0	0	0	**4**	**5**	0	0	0	**9**
262nd	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**0**
295th	0	**3**	0	**6**	**2**	**3**	**2**	0	**16**
296th	0	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	**0**
297th	x	x	x	**1**	0	x	x	x	**1**
298th	x	x	x	R	x	0	0	0	**0**

	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	
Divisions									**Totals**
444th Security	0	R	x	x	x	x	x	x	**0**
454th Security	0	R	x	x	x	x	x	x	**0**
Slov. + Hung. (units)x		R	**1**	x	x	x	x	x	**1**
Total #	**2**	**9**	**11**	**30**	**11**	**4**	**3**	**0**	**70**

Key: R = Division was subordinated to *AOK* 17, but in reserve.

x = Division was not part of *AOK* 17 at this time.

0 = No commissar or politruk reported captured for this time.

Number in bold, i.e. **5** = Number of commissars and/or politruks reported as captured for this time.

The total of 70 commissars and politruks reported captured by divisions subordinated to *AOK* 17 over the first seven months of the *Barbarossa* campaign in Table 2 appears to contradict the total of 78 political officers in Table 1. However, the figures for Table 1 also include commissars and politruks reported as captured by army corps formations in *AOK* 17 which did not appear in the records of their subordinated divisions. The divisional records on the capture of these commissars may have been lost, illegible, or perhaps not even documented.[50]

As the operational victories increased for the forces of *AOK* 17 in the summer and early fall of 1941, so too did the percentage of divisions reporting on political

officers captured. Table 3 below indicates the percentage of divisions which reported the capture of at least one commissar and/or politruk from 22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942. Not surprisingly, the highest degree of participation among divisions in the implementation of the Commissar Order came in September 1941 (77%) when formations of *AOK* 17 were clearing the encircled Soviet forces below Kiev.

Table Number 3

Percentage of *AOK* 17 Subordinated Front-Line Divisions Reporting on the Capture of Political Officers, 22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942

June: 2 of 13 divisions = 15% participation

July: 4 of 13 divisions = 31% participation

August: 4 of 10 divisions = 40% participation

September: 10 of 13 divisions = 77% participation

October: 4 of 12 divisions = 33% participation

November: 2 of 7 divisions = 29% participation

December: 2 of 7 divisions = 29% participation

January: 0 of 10 divisions = 0% participation

With close to 250,000 Red Army prisoners captured over a seven month period, it appears paradoxical that there were so few political officers reported among them, as documented in the above mentioned tables.[51] These statistics on the capture

of Red Army political officers by the formations of *AOK* 17, however, are in keeping with the reports received and noted by Halder in August and September 1941.[52] This lack of reporting on the capture of political commissars and politruks by front-line formations of the 17th Army can be attributed to endemic and systemic problems with POW policy in general and the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order in particular, as well as a number of unintentional logistical situations that arose from battlefield conditions.

Factors Causing Smaller Numbers of Captured Red Army Political Officers than Expected to be Reported

The language of the Commissar Order itself and subsequent directives related to prisoners of war were some of the first factors which contributed to the smaller numbers than expected of captured Red Army political commissars. Systemic loopholes in the phraseology of the 6 June 1941 directive had the potential to limit recorded incidents of compliance by front-line formations of 17th Army even before the invasion began, and presented some of the "problematical" issues hinted at by Schulte in obtaining a comprehensive account of the implementation of the Commissar Order on the battlefield.

As noted earlier, the last portion of Section I of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order contained a passage similar to clauses embedded in virtually all of the pre-invasion directives which related to the sanctity and priority given to operational objectives. This clause was a key reason why so many commissars were not being discovered until they filtered back to POW gathering stations or camps:

> All of the above mentioned measures must not delay the progress of operations. Combat troops [*Kampftruppen*], therefore, shall not take part in systematic rounding-up and mopping-up actions.[53]

Since the German military leadership deemed that the rapid deployment of soldiers and weapons was absolutely necessary for operational success, front-line combat troops were not supposed to be involved in carrying out mop-up operations. It would thus be left to rear area formations and/or forces of the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police to handle such tasks. In order to address this situation, Section II of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order stipulated how commissars, captured behind the front lines during these mop-up operations, would be treated. According to Section II:

> Commissars seized in the Rear Army Area on account of suspicious behavior [*zweifehlhaften Verhaltens*] are to be handed over to the *Einsatzgruppe* or the *Einsatzkommandos* of the *SS* (*SD*) respectively.[54]

If front-line troops did not find commissars immediately among any POWs taken into custody on a particular day, they could simply move on with the knowledge and confidence that they were obeying both the letter and the spirit of the 6 June 1941 order. As Krausnick also noted, Soviet political officers soon learned that they were targeted for immediate execution if captured, and many did all they could,

including ripping their identifying insignia off and destroying incriminating documentation, in order to avoid detection.[55] Therefore, German combat troops would not record the captures and/or executions of any Red Army political commissars in the divisional war diaries and daily activity reports if none were known to have been captured, and if none were executed. It is not surprising then that political officers mostly turned up only when there was time to sort through the massive numbers of POWs in the days and weeks that followed.

The last paragraph of Section I/3 of the Commissar Order also had the potential to limit compliance with both the spirit and the letter of the 6 June 1941 directive. If commissars who had not been actively involved in combat situations were captured by German troops, then the German troops had the authority to determine the guilt or innocence of the commissar in question:

> As a matter of principle, when deliberating the question of "guilty or not guilty," the personal impression received of the commissar's outlook and attitude [*Gesinnung und Haltung*] should be considered of greater importance than the facts of the case which may not be decisive.[56]

It was, therefore, left solely to the discretion of the soldiers involved in separating the prisoners of war to determine whether the political commissar or Communist Party functionary would be shot. All relevant facts in determining guilt or innocence were secondary to the "outlook and attitude" of the captured commissar.

These subjective criteria, however, created opportunities for indiscriminate application of the Commissar Order, as well as the opposite, namely, opportunities for circumventing or ignoring it.

Directives related to Soviet prisoners of war assumed that Red Army political commissars would escape the initial dragnet and screening process at the point of capture, and would have to be filtered out for execution as they trickled back through the POW infrastructure. Reinhard Heydrich, in charge of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (*RSHA* – Reich Security Main Office), which provided the bulk of the leadership and personnel to the mobile killing formations (*Einsatzgruppen*) operating behind the Army in the USSR, issued "Directives for the Chiefs of Security Police and Secret Service Teams Assigned to POW Camps" 6 days after the invasion started on 28 June 1941.[57] This set of directives, founded on the pre-invasion cooperative agreement struck between the agencies of the German Army and the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police (the Heydrich-Wagner Agreement of 28 April 1941),[58] addressed "the political screening of prisoners and the segregation and further treatment of undesirable elements among them [...]"[59] in army-controlled POW camps.

According to the 28 June 1941 directives, the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police had to identify the following categories of prisoners:

> 11. All outstanding functionaries of the State and of the party, especially
>
> 12. Professional revolutionists,

13. Functionaries of the Comintern,

14. All leading Party functionaries of the Russian Secret Police [*KPdSU*] and their associated organizations in the Central, district, and county Committees,

15. All the People's Commissars and their assistants,

16. **All former political commissars in the Red Army** [emphasis mine],

17. All leading personalities of the Central and Middle offices among the State authorities,

18. The leading economic personalities,

19. All Jews,

20. All persons who are established as being instigators or fanatical communists.[60]

Once the aforementioned prisoners were discovered in the camps, the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were ordered to execute them. However, according to Heydrich:

> Executions will not be carried out in the camps or immediate vicinity. Should the camps in the General Government be situated in the immediate vicinity of the border, then the prisoners for special treatment are to be taken care of in former Soviet Russian provinces.[61]

The *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police were also ordered to keep records of those whom they executed including the "serial number, family and surname, date and place of birth, military rank, profession, last residence, reason for special treatment, and day and place of special treatment."[62]

Yet, such records, where they do exist, are fragmentary at best. Historians Christian Streit and Alfred Streim are among those who have engaged in an examination of the issue of Soviet POWs turned over to the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police for "special treatment." The two of them have come up with a figure anywhere from 138,000 to close to 600,000 of the estimated 3.3 million total Soviet POWs handed over by the German Army to the security forces of the *SS*.[63] However, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, it may be next to impossible to determine just how many Soviet POWs the *Wehrmacht* gave over to the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police.[64] Even sources from the former Soviet Union did not offer much assistance in clarifying this issue as the Soviets kept track of casualties and losses by rank only, and not by position (i.e. political commissar).[65]

Heydrich and the High Command of the Army further honed the policy involving the screening of POW camps through supplementary directives in July, September, and October 1941 permitting the *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police to have greater access to POW camps under control of the German Army.[66] While there are historians who view the 28 June, 8 September, 17 July, and 28 October 1941 directives as examples of an expandable definition of the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order, this was only true for access to POW camps involving *SS* (*SD*) and Security Police, and the directives did not apply to front-line combat formations.[67]

Logistical situations on the battlefield also contributed to the lack of reporting of captured Red Army political officers. As noted earlier, when political commissars learned that they were the targets of a policy of execution if captured, they often ripped off identifying insignia, and destroyed incriminating documents before going into German captivity. Yet, the lack of reporting on the capture of these political officers was also a by-product of the operational successes of *AOK* 17. Eastward progress through Ukraine had been fairly rapid for Stülpnagel's forces until the end of August 1941, and the speed of the advance coupled with the massive number of prisoners certainly hindered *Ic* officers from determining, with a high degree of accuracy, just how many POWs were actually political officers. The military situation changed, however, in September 1941, and a spike in reporting on captured political officers resulted. Following the encirclement of Uman, the three northern-most armies of Army Group South closed a much larger trap around Kiev, and by the middle of September 1941 the divisions of *AOK* 17 were involved in rounding up the encircled Soviet troops, an activity they were not originally intended to perform.[68]

Inconsistent reporting standards were also factors in the lack of reporting on the capture of Red Army political officers, especially in the first two months of the *Barbarossa* campaign when advancement into the heart of Ukraine was swift. In the early reports from divisional *Ic* staff on the total number of POWs, there were no breakdowns by position. At times there were breakdowns by rank or nationality, but not political status. For example, on the second day of the invasion, the 101st Light Infantry Division reported that all of the POWs from Rifle Regiment 206 were "without exception Ukrainians."[69] On the same day, IV Army Corps noted that "until

now, the POW count is 17 officers and 1,050 non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel."[70] A week later, XXXXIX Army Corps noted in a *Ic* report to *AOK* 17 that the total POW count for the subordinated divisions of the corps was as follows: "23 Officers, 4,300 non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel, and 424 civilian prisoners."[71]

By 30 June 1941, 17th Army as a whole had taken in "approximately 12,000 POWs, 113 artillery pieces, and destroyed 269 tanks."[72] Those numbers had jumped precipitously by 8 July 1941 to 62,000 POWs, over 100 armored light tanks, more than 450 artillery pieces, and countless other booty.[73] Sorting through such a volume of POWs made it nearly impossible to determine who was and who was not a commissar before the division had moved on to the next operational objective. And if POW testimony was to be believed, Red Army political commissars were fleeing in the first weeks of the war while their troops took the brunt of the German assault.

Lines of communications to report back on the capture of political officers were also unreliable during the course of the *Barbarossa* campaign. Six days into the invasion, the 97th Light Infantry Division and the 295th Infantry Division were unable to communicate with 17th Army because Soviet forces had cut the lines. No reports of any kind, on commissars, POWs, enemy positions, etc, were able to go through until the lines were reconnected. While the records for the two divisions survived, and contained copies of what they would have reported, these were not isolated incidents, and army corps summary reports on captured commissars and politruks were primarily based on what information had come through working intelligence channels.[74]

Yet, it was not just the enemy that disrupted communications back to headquarters. Since the Commissar Order was passed along to the troops by word of mouth,[75] it seems that some formations needed to be reminded that the order was indeed in effect for the *Barbarossa* campaign. In the absence of a standard written order issued through normal bureaucratic channels, opportunities for omissions and misinterpretations increased. That IV Army Corps (*Ic*) needed to remind the intelligence staff of the 24th Infantry Division in writing exactly what had been passed on orally, including the identifying markings for the uniform of Red Army political commissars, illustrated how priorities during the first weeks of the invasion were sometimes directed in other areas.[76] While some historians may suggest that such a reminder is evidence that some divisions worked to sabotage the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order,[77] as soon as the *Ic* staff of the 24th Infantry Division received the reminder, the division reported on the capture and subsequent shooting of commissars for three straight months.[78]

The lack of reporting on the capture of Red Army political officers also took place due to the false information given by commissars and politruks alike. On 17 July 1941 17th Army (*Ic*) considered the situation of lying political officers widespread enough that it issued a notice for all intelligence staffs to be wary of POW testimony, and prescribed shooting as the punishment for those engaged in such deceptive tactics.[79] While it is difficult to ascertain the degree of compliance for this directive, the percentage of Soviet political officers reported as shot among captured POWs in the records of the front-line formations of *AOK* 17 did rise from 33% (3 of 9) in July to 71% (12 of 17) in August, decline to 50% in September (15 of 30), but

rose again to 81% in October 1941 (9 of 11). As the chart in Table 1 indicates, there were no Red Army political officers reported as executed in November 1941 through January 1942.

In addition, testimony at postwar trials[80] and scholarly research[81] have all indicated that Red Army political commissars and politruks were also executed in the rear areas. What was taking place in the rear clearly was evidence of what was not taking place at the front. Yet, unlike the records for *Korück* 582, the records for *Korück* 550 to the rear of 17th Army are incomplete for the time frame of this study. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to examine the differences in the reporting on the capture and executions of Red Army political officers between the front-line and rear area formations.[82]

Conclusions Concerning the Ability or Inability of Troops to Carry Out the Commissar Order

The implementation of the Commissar Order by the 17th Army over a seven months' span was certainly mixed. There were systemic problems involving the opaqueness of the language of the directive itself, the format of reporting, communications difficulties, and misinformation given by POWs, etc. Still, over half (58%) of the divisions subordinated to *AOK* 17 during this time period reported at least once on the capture and execution of a Red Army political officer.

However, the entire 17th Army recorded the capture of only 78 Red Army political officers out of 250,000 (minimum) POWs. Given the pre-invasion intelligence reports of 1 political officer to every 80 men in the Red Army, a ratio which was corroborated by Soviet POW testimony once the attack was under way,

the formations of 17th Army brought in over forty times fewer political commissars and politruks than would have been expected.

While there were problems related to the lack of reporting of captured commissars and politruks as described above, the vast discrepancy in these numbers is largely due to the difference in priorities between those in authority in Berlin and those fighting on the battlefields of central and southern Ukraine from June 1941 through January 1942.

For Hitler in Berlin, the Commissar Order was an opportunity to codify National Socialist ideology into military law. His priority was the total eradication of the "Bolshevist system," of which Red Army political commissars and politruks were the chief representatives. The genesis of the Commissar Order, therefore, rests squarely with Adolf Hitler, and the responsibility for its development lies at the feet of his legal and military staff.

At the grassroots level across Ukraine, however, the implementation of the Commissar Order was subsumed in the daily realities of front-line warfare. Reporting on the capture of only 2% of expected Red Army political commissars and politruks among POWs, the formations of 17th Army concerned themselves more with operational and logistical priorities rather than ideologically driven directives. Even when granted ample opportunities to indulge in criminal behavior with the full protection of the German legal system to combat an enemy both real and imagined with virtually no restraints on their collective behavior through the 13 May 1941 *Barbarossa* Jurisdiction Order, the 19 May 1941 "Guidelines for the Conduct of Troops in Russia," and the 6 June 1941 Commissar Order, the front-line formations

of the German 17th Army did not report more political officers captured and/or executed.

However, one of the most pressing priorities for front-line formations was a concern that the Commissar Order itself was causing increased resistance among the political officers of Red Army units opposing the German advance. The matter of fanatical resistance on the part of Soviet political officers in the Red Army was so great that German commanders across the invasion front made known their concerns to *OKH*, and requested in September 1941 that the Commissar Order be rescinded, at the very height of encirclement operations against Soviet forces.[83] Although Hitler responded with a resounding "NO" in the early fall of 1941, the concern did not abate, and it was one of the chief reasons for the suspension of the Commissar Order on 6 May 1942.

Since the Commissar Order was designed primarily to be carried out by front-line formations, the sparse degree of implementation in comparison to the total number POWs taken in indicated that compliance with the 6 June 1941 directive by formations of the 17th Army was tempered with an eye to pragmatic matters of battlefield operations and the overall security of the troops, and not the ideological demands of Hitler and his minions.

[1] Horst Boog, Jürgen Förster, Joachim Hoffmann, Ernst Klink, Rolf-Dieter Müller, and Gerd Ueberschär (eds.), translated from the German by Dean McMurray, Ewald Osers, and Louise Willmot, Germany and the Second World War: The Attack on the Soviet Union (Vol. IV) (New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 1234. The original German edition appeared in 1983.
[2] Theo Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia (Oxford: Berg, 1989), p. 215.
[3] Walter Warlimont, (translated by R.H. Barry), Inside Hitler's Headquarters, 1939-1945 (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1964), p. 163.
[4] Ibid., p. 162 and Generaloberst Halder, Kriegstagebuch in three volumes, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, (ed.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-1964), Vol. 2, p. 338. In his seminal study on the Commissar Order though, Helmut Krausnick postulates that the generals who stayed for the meal following Hitler's speech expressed their objections about the coming Commissar Order primarily in the area of the maintaining troop discipline without the presence of courts martial, but did not find fault with the policy toward commissars and communist leaders. See Helmut Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und 'Gerichtsbarkeitserlass Barbarossa' in neuer Sicht," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 25 (1977), pp. 712-713. In addition, General Alfred Jodl related to his defense counsel at Nürnberg that the relative cooperation with Hitler's plans could be attributed to the fact that German generals were not trained for revolution. Other than 1848 when Prussian generals were said to have struck the ground with their sabers, there was little revolutionary spirit among commanders. Jodl's testimony in this matter from 3 June 1946 is found in International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal: 14 November 1945-1 October 1946 (Nuremberg: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), Vol. 15, pp. 299-301, (hereafter cited as IMT-TMWC).
[5] Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters, p. 162.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Fedor von Bock, Zwischen Pflicht und Verweigerung. Das Kriegstagebuch (Munich, Berlin: Herbig, 1995), p. 181. On 30 March 1941: "Der unüberwindliche Gegensatz zwischen uns und dem Bolschewismus [...] (Scharfes Zufassen. Kommissare.)" I am grateful to Dr. Peter Hoffmann for this reference. For some of Field Marshall Fedor von Bock's other responses to the Commissar Order, see Peter Hoffmann, The History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945, (translated by Richard Barry) (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), pp. 267-268.
[8] Warlimont, Inside Hitler's Headquarters p. 163.
[9] While the Germans issued an ultimatum to Yugoslavia on 19 March, they did not invade until 6 April. However, the conference at which Hitler gave his speech was postponed twice to deal with the situation in Yugoslavia. See Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, (hereafter cited as BAMA), RH 19 I//67a. Yet, Hess didn't fly to England until 10 May, Operation Merkur, the invasion of Crete, took place 20-31 May, and the Bismarck was not sunk until 27 May 1941. For other dates, refer to John Keegan (ed.), The Times Atlas of the Second World War (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).
[10] To support this interpretation, in the next full paragraph down on p. 163, Warlimont states: "The conspiracy of silence lasted more than five weeks and seemed to be fulfilling its object when a memorandum from OKH dated 6 May set things going again."
[11] Walter Görlitz (ed.) (translated by David Irving), The Memoirs of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command, 1938-1945, (New York: Cooper Square, 2000), pp. 134-136.
[12] Ibid, p.136.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] "Decree Concerning Leadership of the Armed Forces, 4 February 1938," 1938 Reichsgesetzblatt, Part I, p. 111 as quoted in Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), (cited hereafter as NCA), Vol. 4, Document PS-1915, pp. 552-553. Keitel's testimony about the establishment of OKW is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 10, pp. 471-479.
[16] Jodl's testimony of 3 June 1946 is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 15, pp. 297-299.
[17] Keitel, Memoirs, p. 137.
[18] Ibid.
[19] International Military Tribunal, Trials of War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunal Under Control Council No. 10: October 1946-April 1949 (hereafter cited as IMT-TWC) (Nürnberg: United States Government Printing Office, 1951), Vol. 10, p. 1096.

[20] Hildegard von Kotze (ed.), Heeresadjutant bei Hitler, 1938-1943. Aufzeichnungen des Majors Engel (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1974), pp. 102-103.
[21] Responses to 13 May 1941 "Erlass über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichstbarkeitserlaß im Gebiet "Barbarossa" und über besondere Massnahmen der Truppe," (BAMA RW 4 v.577) are located in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 20, pp. 581-582, and to 24 May 1941 "Maintenance of Discipline Order," (BAMA RW 4 v. 577) in IMT-TWC, Vol. 11, pp. 520-521.
[22] Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al. (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, p. 498. For another approach, refer to William Harry Wiley, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Onward to New Deeds!" The German Field Army and War Crimes During the Second World War, York University, 1996. Wiley argues that German commanders were not necessarily driven by ideology in their compliance with Hitler's racial and ideological war against the USSR, but rather that the Russo-German juridical tradition and the belief in the sanctity of "military necessity" were greater influences.
[23] Using an inverse argument, an affidavit from 30 November 1945 by Major General of Police, and former Chief of the Command Staff of the Reichsführer-SS, Ernst Rode, suggests that draconian treatment of commissars [and later anti-partisan activities] could have been avoided had field marshals spoken up. Rode concludes his statement with: "I am of the firm conviction [festen Ueberzeugung] that an energetic and unified protest by all field marshals would have resulted in a change in these missions and methods. If they [the field marshals] would ever maintain that they would have been replaced by even more ruthless commanders-in-chief, this, in my own view, would be a foolish and cowardly excuse." The full text is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 32, Document PS-3716, pp. 482-483. The conclusion comes on p. 483. However, Field Marshall von Leeb indirectly challenges this assertion by stating: "[...] and if I had resigned at the time then I would have saved myself in the cheapest manner possible, but at the same time I would have given up the struggle against Hitler. For the rest, such an application to resign would probably not have made the slightest impression on Hitler." The rest of the text is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p.1096.
[24] BAMA, RH 19 I/67 contains the draft plan with all the amendments. The original draft was signed by Hitler and initialed by Generals Keitel, Jodl, and Warlimont. The full finalized text is found in "Weisung Nr. 21 - Fall Barbarossa, 18 Dezember 1940," IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 446-PS, pp. 47-52. It also appears as Anlage 2, Aufmarschanweisung OKH von 31.1.1941 "Barbarossa," in Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 2, pp. 463-469, and is mentioned in KTB OKW, Vol. 1, p. 237 (18 December 1940). A partial English translation from Nürnberg, Document 446-PS, can be found in NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 407-409 and IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, pp. 958-960.
[25] Karel C. Berkhoff, "The 'Russian' Prisoners of War in Nazi-Ruled Ukraine as Victims of Genocidal Massacre," in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2001, p. 3. This article is part of a more extensive examination in a larger study by the same author. Karel C. Berkhoff, Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2004).
[26] Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.), Verbrechen der Wehrmacht (Ausstellungskatalog) (Hamburg: Hamburg Institut für Sozialforschung, 2001), pp. 188, 209. POW totals for 17th Army are located in BAMA, RH 26-257/37, Bd. 2: 20.5.41-12.12.41. Korps-und Divisionbefehle, Meldungen; BAMA, RH 26-97/ 18, 97.le.Inf.Div., Korps-u. Armeebefehle, Ia, 12.8.-18.9.41.; BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsberichte zum KTB Nr. 2, Ia; BAMA, RH 26-24/15.
[27] Dimitri Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1981), p. 399. The Hyperion Press edition is a reprint of the 1944 Princeton University Press edition of the same title, which was based on Fedotoff White's thesis at Columbia University.
[28] Roger Reese, Stalin's Reluctant Soldiers (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996), p. 163.
[29] IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, p. 1100.
[30] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2215, FN 684, Anlage 41, „Kommandeur-Besprechung."
[31] NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 2316, FN 334.
[32] BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 228. In addition, the 125th Infantry Division Ic reported on 18 October 1941 that in each company there are four officers and one commissar. It is entirely possible that since the orders from above were to treat politruks the same as commissars, that the intelligence officers in the 125th I.D. chose to call all political officers "commissars" regardless of their rank. BAMA, RH 26-125/27, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.41-15.12.41. The Ic staff of the 9th

Infantry Division noted on 5 December 1941 that "each company has a politruk with assorted weapons." NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 440-441.

[33] BAMA, RW 4/578, pp. 128-129. The OKH decision also described the position of politruk as one at the company level of command.

[34] Refer to Appendix II for a list of AOK 17's subordinated formations from 22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942.

[35] BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941 is an excellent example of how a divisional war diary was to be organized.

[36] At a series of meetings in Warsaw and Allenstein on 10 and 11 June 1941, General Eugen Müller, on special assignment to the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, briefed Ic officers on a range of issues from the relationship of the Army with the SS to the Commissar Order. These briefing followed meetings for Ic and Ia officers the previous two months, which covered reporting on various facets of the coming invasion, including how and when to file reports. NARA RG 242, T-312, Roll 661, FN 8293830 includes the topics and course offerings during meetings with Third General Staff officers at the divisional, corps, and army level in Berlin 1-22 April 1941, and BAMA RH 22/271 as cited in Jürgen Förster, "Operation Barbarossa as a War of Conquest and Annihilation," in Horst Boog, et al. (eds.), Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4, p. 493 and TWC, Vol. 11, p. 530 include materials from the May and June 1941 Ic briefings. Intelligence officers in the divisions of 17th Army also met in Reichshof (Rzeszów) on 13 and 14 June 1941. There information on the treatment of POWs was given. On 16 June 1941 times for reporting on POWs were established. For example, 4:14 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Ic officers reported on what was taking place with the formations, and at 9:30 p.m. they were to provide summary accounts on POWs and materials captured during the day. The records of the 262nd Infantry Division in NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1830, FN 451-458 contain the summaries.

[37] BAMA, RH 26-100/40, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 20.9.1941-10.11.1941.

[38] When taken together, the map in Appendix III of where and when political officers were captured by front-line troops of the divisions of 17th Army over a seven month period from 22 June 1941 to 31 January 1942 mirrors both the military progress of *AOK* 17 and the shifting foci of German POW policy.

[39] Some divisions did not report to the corps above them on the capture of commissars and politruks for weeks at a time. The 57th I.D., for example, waited a full eight weeks before reporting in (BAMA, RH 26-57/57). If other divisions had no political officers to report as captured (Fehlanzeige), the corps (Ic) often did not even send a notification up the chain of command to 17th Army. BAMA RH 20-17/276, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic/A.O. Anlage, Erlassene Befehle, Grundsätzlicher Schriftverkehr von 16.3.-12.12.1941, and BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41.

[40] Halder, Kriegstagebuch, Vol. III, p. 134 (1 August 1941), and p. 243 (21 September 1941).

[41] This route served as a mid-point for the route taken by 17th Army from June 1941 into 1942. Andrej Angrick, "Forced labor along the "Straße der SS," in Forced and Slave Labor in Nazi-Dominated Europe (Symposium Presentations) (Washington, DC: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2004), pp. 83-92. The citation is from p. 83.

[42] BAMA, RH 26-257/37, Bd.2: 20.5.41. Korps-und Divisionbefehle, Meldungen, 9 August 1941.

[43] The first formal requests to rescind the Commissar Order once the invasion of the USSR had begun came at the end of the Kiev encirclement on 23 September 1941. The full text of the request and the emphatic "No" answer is found in BAMA, RW-4 v. 578, Chefsachen Barbarossa, pp. 152-153.

[44] For the collection of documents from which these statistics are based, and a breakdown by division and location (where available), see Appendix IV, "Source List of Commissars and Politruks Reported Captured, Shot, or Handed Over to the SD, 22 June 1941- 31 January 1942." I am grateful to Sarah Bernheim for her assistance with the inclusion of this chart.

[45] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941 Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung. On 12 September 1941 the Ic staff of the 257th I.D. reported a commissar shot as an irregular near Maximowka.

[46] Ibid. For the reporting period 1-14 October 1941, the Ic staff of the 257th I.D. reported 4 commissars shot as suspicious persons.

[47] BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic, 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41.

[48] BAMA, RH 26-97/12, Kriegstagebuch Ia, 11.7.41-11.8.41.
[49] The 4th Mountain Division, 68th Infantry Division, 71st Infantry Division, 111th Infantry Division, 125th Infantry Division, 262nd Infantry Division, 296th Infantry Division, and the 298th Infantry Division either had no recorded commissars listed as captured, or were not legible on microfilm. There are no separate records of the 1st and 2nd Slovakian formations that composed the Slovakian Motorized Brigade (attached to the 17th in July 1941). The totals for September 1941 for the 257th I.D. include the 3 political commissars they handed over to the SD as they were recorded as captured first.
[50] For example, on 9 July 1941 IV Army Corps reported that "4 commissars registered to date and treated according to orders." Three of the commissars came from 24th I.D. on that same date. However, the other commissar could have come from 71st I.D. whose records are lost at NARA. IV Army Corps also had 24th I.D., 262nd I.D., 295th I.D. subordinated to it in June, and 24th I.D., 94th I.D., 97th Light I.D., 125th I.D., and 295th I.D. subordinated to it in July 1941.
[51] For another view, refer to Horst Rohde, „Politischer Einfluß und indoctrination in höheren Stäben und in der Truppe - untersucht am Beispiel des Kommissarbefehl," in Hans Poeppel, (ed.) Die Soldaten der Wehrmacht (Munich: Herbig Verlag, 1998), pp. 124-158.
[52] Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und „Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß" in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, p. 735 , N 266.
[53] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 43.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Krausnick, "Kommissarbefehl und „Gerichtsbarkeitserlaß" in neuer Sicht," in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, p. 736.
[56] Ibid.
[57] NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 123-125.
[58] Regelung des Einsatzes der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD im Verbande des Heeres - hereafter cited as the Heydrich-Wagner agreement. The full text of the Heydrich-Wagner agreement in German is found in BAMA, RW 4/v 575. A full English translation of the "Commitment of the Security Police and the Security Service in the Operational Area," is found in IMT-TWC, Vol. 10, Document NOKW 2080, pp. 1239-1242. Both the original German and an English translation also appear together in National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA), Record Group (hereafter cited as RG) 238, Microfilm Publication T-1119 (cited hereafter as a letter followed by a number, i.e. T-1119), Roll 27, (hereafter cited as R), Frame Number(s) (hereafter cited as FN) 32-43.
[59] NCA, Vol. 3, p. 123.
[60] Ibid., p. 124.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., pp. 124-125.
[63] Alfred Streim, Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im "Fall Barbarossa". Eine Dokumentation (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller Juristischer Verlag, 1981) and Christian Streit, Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941-1945 (Düsseldorf: Dietz Verlag, 1997 revised from the 1978 edition). In the 1991 edition of Keine Kameraden, Streit stated that the 138,000 POWs was the minimum number turned over to the SD. Streit, Keine Kameraden, p. 105.
[64] Berkhoff, "The 'Russian' Prisoners of War in Nazi-Ruled Ukraine as Victims of Genocidal Massacre," in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2001, pp. 1-32.
[65] As noted in the Introduction to this study, Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century, edited by Colonel-General G.F. Krivosheev London: Greenhill Books, 1997), concluded that there were only 4,559,000 Soviet POWs in German captivity during the war, and not the over 5.5 million, which German historians often quote. The reason for the discrepancy, as presented in Soviet Casualties, is that the German sources counted "not only servicemen but also personnel from special formations coming under various civilian departments (railway, sea-going and river fleets, defence construction, civil aviation, communications, healthcare, etc.) [...] Partisans, resistance fighters, members of incomplete people's militia formations, the local air defence, fighter battalions and the militia (police) were not servicemen either. However, citizens in all the above categories who were on territory taken by the Nazis were counted by the German Command as prisoners of war and sent to POW camps." Ibid., p. 236.
[66] NCA, Vol. 3, Document 502-PS, pp. 422-425 for the English of the 17 July 1941 directives. The full German text is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 26, Document 502-PS, pp. 111-115. The 8 September 1941

circular is found in NCA, Vol. 4, Document 1519-PS, pp. 58-65. The 29 October 1941 directives issued in agreement with the Supreme Commander of the Army permitting the SS (SD) and Security Police to purge all POW camps in the Rear Army Areas of Jews and political commissars are found in the original German in IMT-TMWC, Vol., 39, pp. 265-269.

[67] Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia, pp. 216-217 for a discussion of Förster and Streit. However, there were those who did lodge protests against German POW policy. Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris, for example, sent a letter to Field Marshal Keitel, Commander-in-Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) in which he stated that current policy was against German strategic interests. The full text is found in the original German in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 36, Document EC-338, pp. 317-320, and in English translation in NCA, Vol. 7, pp. 411-414. Alfred Rosenberg, top civilian administrator for the Eastern Occupied Territories, also objected to German POW policy on 28 February 1942. The full text in the original German is found in IMT-TMWC, Vol. 25, Document 081-PS, pp. 151-161, and in English translation NCA, Vol. 3, pp. 126-130.

[68] BAMA, RW 4/578, p. 43 (Section II of the 6 June 1941 Commissar order) contains the reference: "All of the above mentioned measured must not delay the progress of operations. Combat troops [*Kampftruppe*], therefore, shall not take part in systematic rounding-up and mopping-up actions."

[69] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 232.

[70] Ibid., p. 230.

[71] BAMA, RH 20-17/32, Meldungen der unterstellten Verbände an AOK 17, Bd. 16: Dgl., 22.6.41-8.7.41.

[72] BAMA, RH 20-17/15, Die Offensiv-Operationen der 17. Armee im Osten bis zum Djepr 1941 (Lemberg, Tarnopol-Unan [sic] von Oberst i.G. a.D. Hermann Teske, 2.12.1947.

[73] Ibid.

[74] BAMA, RH 20-17/32, Meldungen der unterstellten Verbände an AOK 17, Bd. 16: Dgl., 22.6.41-8.7.41.

[75] BAMA, RH 20-17/23 and NARA, 242, T-312, R 669, FN 8303765, Aktennotiz über Besprechung mit kommandierenden Generalen am 18.6.41.

[76] BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.

[77] Ernst Nolte, Die Faschismus in seiner Epoche: Die Action française. Der italienische Faschismus. Der Nationalsozialismus (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1979), p. 437.

[78] BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 65; BAMA, RH 26-24/71, Anlage KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941; and RH 26-24/72, Anlage KTB Ic, 22.6.-30.9.1941.

[79] BAMA, RH 20-17/32 – Meldungen der unterstellten Verbände an AOK 1, Bd. 16: Dgl., 22.6.41-8.7.41.

[80] IMT-TWC, Vol. 11, p. 26, for example.

[81] Schulte, The German Army and Nazi Policies in Occupied Russia.

[82] Gert Lübbers and Klaus Jochen Arnold have been working on studies of other Rear Army Areas. Their work is forthcoming.

[83] BAMA, RW-4 v. 578, pp. 152-153. This argument eventually prevailed and led to the suspension of the order.

NOKW-1076
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Geheime Kommandosache

2047/139

Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
[illegible]
Nr.[illegible]/41 g.K.Chefs.

F.H.Qu., den 6.6.1941

Chef-Sache!
Nur durch Offizier!

Im Anschluß zum Führererlaß vom 13.5. über die Ausübung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet [illegible] übersende ich [illegible] Abt. L (IV/Qu) Nr.44718/41 g. K.Chefs. Abschrift anliegend " Richtlinien für die Behandlung politischer Kommissare " übersandt.

Es wird gebeten, die Verteilung nur bis zu den Oberbefehlshabern der Armeen bezw. Luftflotten-[illegible] vorzunehmen und die weitere Bekanntgabe an die [illegible] unter und Kommandeure mündlich erfolgen zu [illegible].

Der Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht
i.A.
gez. Warlimont.

Anlage zu OKW/WFSt/Abt.L IV/Qu
Nr.44822/41 g.K.Chefs.

2047/140

Richtlinien für die Behandlung
politischer Kommissare.

Im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus ist mit einem Verhalten des Feindes nach den Grundsätzen der Menschlichkeit oder des Völkerrechts nicht zu rechnen. Insbesondere ist von den politischen Kommissaren aller Art als den eigentlichen Trägern des Widerstandes eine haßerfüllte, grausame und unmenschliche Behandlung unserer Gefangenen zu erwarten.

Die Truppe muß sich bewußt sein:

1.) In diesem Kampfe ist Schonung und völkerrechtliche Rücksichtnahme diesen Elementen gegenüber falsch. Sie sind eine Gefahr für die eigene Sicherheit und die schnelle Befriedung der eroberten Gebiete.

2.) Die Urheber barbarisch asiatischer Kampfmethoden sind die politischen Kommissare. Gegen diese muß daher sofort und ohne Weiteres mit aller Schärfe vorgegangen werden.

Sie sind daher, wenn im Kampf oder Widerstand ergriffen, grundsätzlich sofort mit der Waffe zu erledigen.

Im übrigen gelten folgende Bestimmungen:

I. Operationsgebiet.

1.) Politische Kommissare, die sich gegen unsere Truppe wenden, sind entsprechend den " Erlaß über Ausübung der Gerichtsbarkeit im Gebiet Barbarossa " zu behandeln. Dies gilt für Kommissare jeder Art und Stellung, auch wenn sie nur des Widerstandes, der Sabotage oder der Anstiftung hierzu verdächtig sind.

Auf die " Richtlinien über das Verhalten der Truppe in Rußland " wird verwiesen.

G Mis/15/24

2.) Politische Kommissare als Organe der feindlichen Truppe sind kenntlich an besonderem Abzeichen - roter Stern mit goldenem eingewebten Hammer und Sichel auf den Ärmeln - (Einzelheiten siehe " Die Kriegswehrmacht der UdSSR." OKH/GenStdH O Qu IV Abt. Fremde Heere Ost,(II) Nr.100/41 g. vom 15.1.1941 unter Anlage 9 d). Sie sind aus den Kriegsgefangenen sofort,d.h. noch auf dem Gefechtsfelde, abzusondern. Dies ist notwendig, um ihnen jede Einflußmöglichkeit auf die gefangenen Soldaten zu nehmen. Diese Kommissare werden nicht als Soldaten anerkannt; der für Kriegsgefangene völkerrechtlich geltende Schutz findet auf sie keine Anwendung. Sie sind nach durchgeführter Absonderung zu erledigen.

3.) Politische Kommissare, die sich keiner feindlichen Handlung schuldig machen oder einer solchen verdächtig sind,werden zunächst unbehelligt bleiben. Erst bei der weiteren Durchdringung des Landes wird es möglich sein, zu entscheiden, ob verbliebene Funktionäre an Ort und Stelle belassen werden können oder an die Sonderkommandos abzugeben sind. Es ist anzustreben, daß diese selbst die Überprüfung vornehmen.

Bei der Beurteilung der Frage, ob " schuldig oder nicht schuldig ", hat grundsätzlich der persönliche Eindruck von der Gesinnung und Haltung des Kommissars höher zu gelten, als der vielleicht nicht zu beweisende Tatbestand.

4.) In den Fällen 1.) und 2.) ist eine kurze Meldung (Meldezettel) über den Vorfall zu richten:

a) von den einer Division unterstellten Truppen an die Division (Ic),

b) von den Truppen, die einem Korps-, Armee- oder Heeresgruppenkommando oder einer Panzergruppe unmittelbar unterstellt sind, an das Korps- usw. Kommando (Ic).

G.Mis 1X/ 30

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5.) Alle oben genannten Maßnahmen dürfen die Durchführung der Operationen nicht aufhalten. Planmäßige Such- und Säuberungsaktionen durch die Kampftruppe haben daher zu unterbleiben.

II. Im rückwärtigen Heeresgebiet.

Kommissare, die im rückwärtigen Heeresgebiet wegen zweifelhaften Verhaltens ergriffen werden, sind an die Einsatzgruppe bezw. Einsatzkommandos der Sicherheitspolizei (SD) abzugeben.

III. Beschränkung der Kriegs- und Standgerichte.

Die Kriegsgerichte und die Standgerichte der Regiments- usw. Kommandeure dürfen mit der Durchführung der Maßnahmen nach I und II nicht betraut werden.



NOKW-1016

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GEHEIME KOMMANDOSACHE!

Verteiler:

Abschnittsstab Schlesien	1. Ausfertigung
Heeresgruppe B	2. Ausfertigung
Abschnittsstab Ostpreußen	3. Ausfertigung
AOK 18	4. Ausfertigung
Unterabschnitt Ostpreußen I	5. Ausfertigung
Festungsstab Blaurock	6. Ausfertigung
AOK 4	7. Ausfertigung
Abschnittsstab Staufen	8. Ausfertigung
Arbeitsstab Gotzmann	9. Ausfertigung
AOK 11	10. Ausfertigung
AOK 2	11. Ausfertigung
Oberbaugruppe Süd	12. Ausfertigung
Festungsstab 49	13. Ausfertigung
Festungsstab Waggoner	14. Ausfertigung
Panzergruppe 4	15. Ausfertigung
AOK Norwegen	16. Ausfertigung
OKH/Adj. Ob d H	17. Ausfertigung
OKH/Adj. Chef GenStdH	18. Ausfertigung
OKH/Abt. Fremde Heere Ost	19. Ausfertigung
OKH/Op. Abt. (ohne OKW.-Erlaß)	20. Ausfertigung
OKH/GenQu. (ohne OKW.-Erlaß)	21. Ausfertigung
V o r r a t	22. - 30. Ausfertigung.

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Commander-in-chief of the Army
File No: General attached for
special duty to C.i.C.
No 91/41 Top Secret
For general officers only

Headquarters, Army High Command,
8 June 1941.
2047/138

Rubber Stamp:
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To be delivered through
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6

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Pencil Note: WB - 1518 (1)

Rubber Stamp:
General Staff of the Army
Section: Foreign Armies, East
8 June 1941
No 69/41 Top Secret

Subject: Treatment of political Commissars.

The following decree issued by the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces on 6 June 1941 - WFSt (Armed Forces Operational Staff) Department L (IVQu) (Deputy Chief of General Staff "Intelligence Section") No 44822/41 Top Secret, for General officers only - is announced herewith :

Additional Clauses:

To I Number 1 :

Action taken against a political commissar must be based on the fact that the person in question has shown by a special, recognisable act or attitude that he opposes or will in future oppose the Wehrmacht.

To I Number 2 :

Political Commissars attached to the troops should be segregated and dealt with by order of an officer, inconspicuously and outside the proper battle zone.

signed: V o H B r a u c h i t s c h

Certified true copy:
Signature: [illegible]
Captain.

Rubber Stamp:
[illegible] HIGH COMMAND
Group: Administration of Justice.
C M/1/27

- 1 -

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NOKW-1076
CONTINUED

Rubber Stamp: Top Secret

Rubber Stamp: 2047/139

High Command of the Armed Forces
WFSt. (Armed Forces Operational Staff) Department L (IV Q)
("Intelligence")
No 44822/41 Top Secret for general officers only

Fuehrer Headquarters, 6 June 1941

Rubber Stamp:
For General officers only
To be delivered by officer only!

In addition to the Fuehrer's decree of 13 May regarding Military jurisdiction in the "Barbarossa" zone (Supreme Command of the Armed Forces/ Armed Forces Operational Staff/ Department L (IV Q) (Intelligence) No 44718/41, (Top Secret, for General Officers only), the enclosed "directives for the treatment of political commissars" are being transmitted herewith:

You are requested to limit the distribution to Commanders in Chief of Armies or of Air Commands, respectively, and to inform the Junior commanders by word of mouth.

The Chief of the Supreme Command
of the Armed Forces
By Order.

Signed: Warlimont.

Pencil Note: WB 1518 (2)
G MISC/ 1 / 28.

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NOKW-1076
CONTINUED

Enclosure to Supreme Command of the Armed Forces/Department L IV Q (Intelligence) No 44822/41 Top Secret For General Officers only.

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Pencil Note WB 1518 (3)

Directives for the treatment of political commissars.

When fighting Bolshevism one can not count on the enemy acting in accordance with the principles of humanity or International Law. In particular it must be expected that the treatment of our prisoners by the political commissars of all types who are the true pillars of resistance, will be cruel, inhuman and dictated by hate.

The troops must realize:

1.) That in this fight it is wrong to treat such elements with clemency and consideration in accordance with International Law. They are a menace to our own safety and to the rapid pacification of the conquered territories.

2.) That the originators of the asiatic barbaric methods of fighting are the political commissars. They must be dealt with promptly and with the utmost severity.

Therefore, if taken while fighting or offering resistance they must, on principle, be shot immediately.

For the rest, the following instructions will apply:

I. Theatre of Operations.

1) Political commissars who oppose our troops will be dealt with in accordance with the "decree concerning jurisdiction in the "Barbarossa" area". This applies to commissars of any type and position, even if they are only suspected of resistance, sabotage or instigation thereto.

Reference is made to "Directives on the behaviour of troops in Russia."

Pencil Note: G MISC/ 1 / 29

(Page 2 of original)

2) Political commissars in their capacity of officials attached to the enemy troops are recognisable by their special insignia - red star with an inwoven golden hammer and sickle on the sleeves - (for details see "The Armed Forces of the USSR" OKH/ GenStdH (Army High Command/General Staff of the Army)

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TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NOK-1076
CONTINUED

(Page 2 of original, cont'd)

O Qu IV (Department "Intelligence") Section Foreign Armies-East (II) No 100/41, secret, of 15 January 1941 enclosure 9 d). They are to be segregated at once, i.e. while still on the battlefield, from the prisoners of war. This is necessary in order to deprive them of any possibility of influencing the captured soldiers. These commissars will not be recognized as soldiers; the protection granted to prisoners of war in accordance with International Law will not apply to them. After having been segregated they are to be dealt with.

3) Political commissars who are not guilty of any hostile act or are not suspected of such will remain unmolested for the time being. Only in the course of a deeper penetration into the country will it be possible to decide whether officials who remained in their positions can be left where they are, or should be handed over to the "Sonderkommandos". The latter should preferably scrutinize these cases themselves.

As a matter of principle, when deliberating the question of "guilty or not guilty", the personal impression received of the commissar's outlook and attitude should be considered of greater importance than the facts of the case which may not be decisive.

4) In cases 1) and 2) a brief report (report form) on the incident is to be submitted:
   a) to the Division (Ic) (Field Intelligence Officer) by troops subordinated to a Division.
   b) to the Corps Command or other respective Commands, as follows (Ic) by troops directly subordinated to a Corps Command, an Army High Command or the Command of an Army Group, or Armoured Group.

Pencil Note: G HISC/ 1/30

(Page 3 of original) Rubber Stamp: 2047/142

5) None of the above mentioned measures must delay the progress of operations. Combat troops should therefore refrain from systematic rounding-up and mopping-up measures.

II. In the Rear Area:

Commissars arrested in the rear area on account of doubtful behaviour are to be handed over to the "Einsatzgruppe" or the "Einsatzkommandos" of the SS Security Service (SD) respectively.

III. Restriction with regard to Court Martials and Summary Courts.

The Court Martials and Summary Courts of regimental and other commanders must not be entrusted with the carrying out of the measures as under I and II.

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10

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2047/143

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TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT NOKW-1076
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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

I, Julia KERR, Civ. No. 030 099, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages and that the above is a true and correct translation of original document No. NOKW-1076.

Julia KERR
Civ. No. 030 099

Appendix II
Subordinated Formations – Seventeenth German Army
5 June 1941 – 2 January 1942

5 June 1941

1st Mountain Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
24th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
68th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
71st Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
100th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
262nd Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
296th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
444th Security Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
454th Security Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)

1 July 1941

1st Mountain Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
4th Mountain Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
24th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
94th Infantry division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
100th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
125th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
[444th Security Division] – Reserve
[454th Security Division] – Reserve
Slovakian Motorized Brigade (LII Army Corps)

7 August 1941

1st Mountain Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
4th Mountain Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
24th Infantry division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
94th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
100th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
125th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)

257th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
Hungarian Fast Corps

3 September 1941

[9th Infantry Division] – Reserve
24th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
[57th Infantry Division] – Reserve
68th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
76th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
94th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
100th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
125th Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
239th Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
[295th Infantry Division] – Reserve
297th Infantry Division (XXXXIX Army Corps)
[298th Infantry Division] – Reserve

2 October 1941

9th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
[24th Infantry Division] – Reserve
57th Infantry Division (LV Army Corps)
68th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
76th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
[94th Infantry Division] – Reserve
97th Light Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
100th Light Infantry Division (LV Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
125th Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
239th Infantry Division (XI Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
297th Infantry Division (LV Army Corps)

4 November 1941

9th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
76th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
94th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
[111th Infantry Division] – Reserve

[125th Infantry Division] – Reserve
257th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
298th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)

4 December 1941

[9th Infantry Division] - Reserve
76th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
94th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
111th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
298th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)

2 January 1942

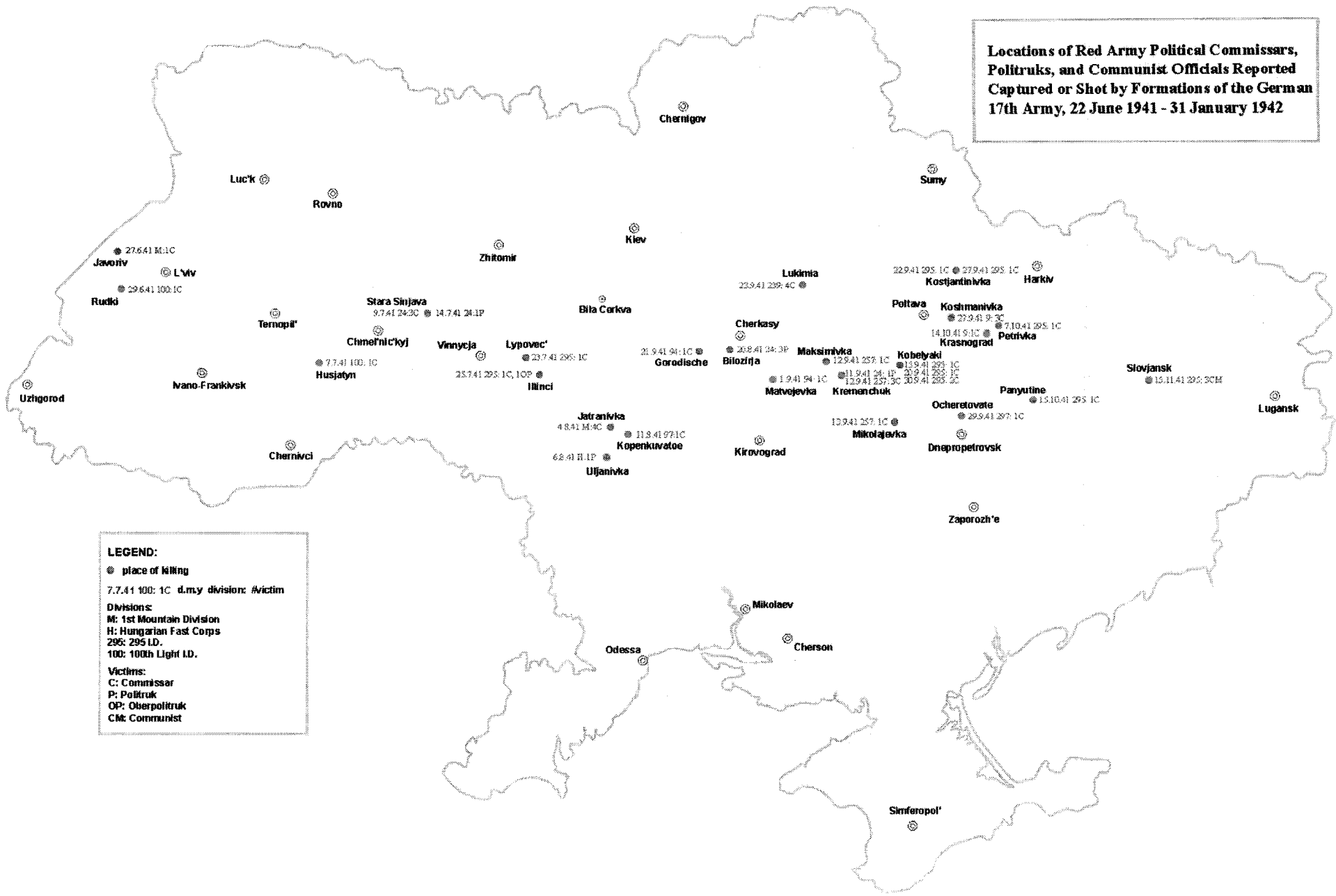
9th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
68th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
76th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
94th Infantry Division (IV Army Corps)
97th Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
101st Light Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
111th Infantry Division (LII Army Corps)
257th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
295th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)
298th Infantry Division (XXXXIV Army Corps)

Sources

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Tessin, Georg, Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im zweiten Weltkrieg, 1939-1945, Vol. 4, Die Landstreitkräfte 15-30, (Osnabrück: Biblo Verlag, 1976).

Appendix III
Map Identifying Locations of Commissar and Politruk Executions



Appendix IV

Source List of Red Army Political Commissars and Politruks Reported Captured, Shot, or Handed over to SD, 22 June 1941 – 31 January 1942

June 1941

27.6.41 **[1.Geb. Div.] 1 Commissar shot near Jaworow**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 243, Morgenmeldung der Truppe.

29.6.41 **[100.le.I.D.] 1 Commissar sent to the rear near Rudki-Romanowka**

BAMA, RH 26-100/36, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen), 22.6.1941-14.7.1941, Abendmeldung vom 9.7.41 an LII.A.K., p.57, [15684/23], and NARA, RG 242-T-315, R 1214, FN 634.

July 1941

7.7.41 **[100.le.I.D.] 1 Commissar shot in Husyatyn**

BAMA, RH 26-100/36, [15684/23],Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen) 22.6.1941-14.7.1941 – reported Tagebuch eines Kommissars 7.7.41, (p.132) and 12.7.41, Betr.: Beutepapiere (p.131). Cross-reference to BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Morgenmeldung des LII. A.K., Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 80. [14499/54].

9.7.41 **[IV. A.K.] 4 Commissars registered to date and handled according to orders**

BAMA, RH 20-17/277, Ic Abendmeldung des IV. A.K. 16.25 Uhr, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic-AO, Meldungen der Korps, Bd. 2: 2.4.41-20.7.41, p. 65. [14499/54].

9.7.41 **[24. I.D.] 3 Commissars handled as such**

BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic 22.6.-30.9.1941.

14.7.41 **[24. I.D.] 1 Politruk captured near Stara Sieniawa**

BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic 22.6.-30.9.1941, [22730/13].

16.7.41 **Commissar system changes - Dual command reinstated**

16.7.41 **[101.le.I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Gulewskaja Sloboda**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1221, FN 326.

23.7.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Lipowiec**

BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41, [17113/1], and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1949, FN 473.

25.7.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Iljnzy (Ssinarnaja)**

BAMA, RH 26-295/3 [17113/1] KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41, and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1949, FN 493.

[295. I.D.] 1 Oberpolitruk captured near Iljnzy

BAMA, RH 26-295/16, 26.7.41, (p.71) Ic. Not reported in Ia files.

August 1941

1.8.41 **[24. I.D.] 2 Commissars captured and shot near Tanskoje**

BAMA, RH 26-24/71, KTB Ic 22.6.-30.9.1941, [22730/13].

4.8.41 **[1.Geb. Div.] 4 Commissars shot near Jatrany**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 44, FN 1110, Morgenmeldung an XXXXIX A.K.

6.8.41 **[ung. Schnellkorps] 1 Politruk captured (no location given)** BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Morgenmeldung des ung. Schnellkorps, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O.

9.8.41 **[LII. A.K.] 4 Commissars shot (no location given)**

Morgenmeldung des LII. A.K., BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O. and BAMA, RH 24-52/220, Anlage 2a-Ic, LII. A.K., Ia/Ic zum Tätigkeitsbericht Gen. Kd. LII. A.K. Abt. Ic, II. Teil, 22.6.1941-21.7.1941 and 21.7.1941-21.8.1941.

11.8.41 **[97th Light I.D.] 1 commissar shot near Kopenkowata**

BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.

13.8.41 **[Gruppe von Schwedler] 1 Politruk handled in accordance with instructions.**

BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O., Abendmeldung.

20.8.41 [24. I.D.] 3 Politruks captured and shot near Belaserje (Tscherkassy).

BAMA, RH 26-24/71, [22730/13], KTB Ic 22.6.-30.9.1941,

23.8.41 [XXXXIX. A.K.] 3 military Commissars handled in accordance with instructions

BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O.

29.8.41 [Gruppe von Schwedler] 1 political commissar handled in accordance with instructions

BAMA, RH 20-17/278 Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O., Morgenmeldung Gruppe von Schwedler.

September 1941

1.9.41 [94. I.D.] 1 Commissar shot near Matwijewka

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1172, FN 418, Tagesmeldung.

2.9.41 [94. I.D.] 1 Commissar shot in Schelepuchi

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1021, Morgenmeldung.

3.9.41 [100.le.I.D.] 1 Commissar shot-northwest beach near Karpowka

BAMA, RH 26-100/38, [15684/25], Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen) 19.8.1941-6.9.1941, Morgenmeldung 3.9. an GenKdo.LII.A.K. (p.61), BAMA, RH 24-52/31, and BAMA, RH 26-100/38.

9.9.41 **[XI. A.K.] 1 Politruk shot (no location given)**

BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O.

11.9.41 **[24. I.D.] 1 Politruk captured**

BAMA, RH 26-24/72, Anlage zum KTB Ic 22.6.-30.9.1941, Anlage 20.

11.9.41 **[97th Light I.D.] 2 Commissars shot after small tank battle**

BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.

12.9.41 **[257. I.D.] 1 Commissars shot as Freischärler near Maximowka**

BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung, [21716/11].

12.9.41 **[257. I.D.] 3 Commissars sent to SD near Kremenchug**

BAMA, RH 26-257/36, [21716/11], Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung.

13.9.41 **[257. I.D.] 1 Commissar shot near Nikolajewka**

BAMA, RH 26-257/36, [21716/11], Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung, (this was a wounded commissar). BAMA, RH 20-17/278 Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O.

14.9.41 **[100.le.I.D.] 1 Commissar shot near Galeschtschina**

2 Commissars shot as Irregulars

BAMA, RH 26-100/39, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen) 7.9.1941-19.9.1941, Abendmeldung an LV. A.K., p.33, [15684/26].

14.9.41 **[LII. A.K.] Scheduled report - 6 commissars, including Politruks, killed**

BAMA, RH 24-52/220, Anlage 2a-Ic, LII. A.K., Ia/Ic zum Tätigkeitsbericht Gen. Kd. LII. A.K. Abt. Ic, II. Teil, 22.6.1941-21.7.1941 and 21.7.1941-21.8.1941.

15.9.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Communist Party Functionary registered as Commissar**

BAMA, RH 26-295/16, Zussamenfassung sonstiges ereignisse für die Zeit vom 1.-15.9.41, p.84.

20.9.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Kobyliaki**

BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41, [17113/1], and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1949, FN 672.

(Possibly the commissar was actually a Politruk – see Ic records, BAMA, RH 26-295/16, 20.9.41, p.88).

21.9.41 **[94. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Gorodischtsche**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1040 – Morgenmeldung, and BAMA, RH 26-94/14 (shows commissar captured 20.9.41).

22.9.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Konstantinograd**

BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41, [17113/1], BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 135, and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1949, FN 701.

23.9.41 **[76. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Markowa Gora**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1088, FN 1128.

23.9.41 **[239. I.D.] 4 Commissars captured near Lukumje**

BAMA, RH 26-239/24, Feindmeldung.

25.9.41 **[76. I.D.] 1 Commissar shot (could be same as 23 Sept.?)**

BAMA, RH 26-76/49, 76.I.D., Ic-Meldungen an LII.A.K.Ic Gruppe v.Schwedler für die Zeit vom 7.9. bis 4.10.41.

27.9.41 **[295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Konstantinograd**

BAMA, RH 26-295/3, KTB Ia Nr. 2, Bd 1.: 1.11.40-15.9.41, [17113/1], and NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1949, FN 738.

27.9.41 **[9.I.D.] 3 Commissars shot in Koschmanowka over two week period.**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 400, 15.oo Mittagsmeldung an LII.A.K. Ic and BAMA, RH 26-9/81.

28.9.41 **[9.I.D.] 1 Commissar shot near Nagornaja**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 401, 22.00 Meldung an LII.A.K.Ic and BAMA, RH 26-9/81.

29.9.41 **[297. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Otscheretowatyj**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1973, FN 237 – Abendmeldung.

29.9.41 **[LII. A.K.] 4 Commissars handled in accordance with instructions**

BAMA, RH 20-17/278, Ic Morgenmeldung des LII. A.K., Anlage vom 21.7.-30.9.41, Meldung der Korps, Tätigkeitsberichte Ic-A.O.

30.9.41 **[295. I.D.] 2 Commissars brought in**

BAMA, RH 26-295/17, Anlage 168.

October 1941

1.-14.10.41 [257. I.D.] 5 Commissars shot as Commissars

4 Commissars shot as suspicious persons

BAMA, RH 26-257/36, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht, Ic 21.5.1941-12.12.1941, Bd. 1: 20.5.41-12.12.41, Ic Tagesmeldung (14.10.41 Ic Mittagsmeldung – bimonthly report), [21716/11].

14.10.41 [9. I.D.] 1 Commissar shot over two weeks

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 410, 14.30 Uhr Mittagsmeldung an XXXXIV.A.K. Ic.

15.10.41 [295. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Plachtejewka (area near Pamjutino and Losowaja-West)

RH 26-295/16, 15.10.41, p.127, Ic - Does not appear in Ia files.

[9. I.D.] 1 Commissar killed in Solotuchowka with partisans

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 515, FN 411, Mittagsmeldung an LII.A.K. Ic.

31.10.41 [57. I.D.] 3 Commissars shot over 2 month period

BAMA, RH 26-57/57, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic (mit Anlagen).

November 1941

15.11.41 [295. I.D.] 3 suspicious communists captured near Sslawjansk and then shot

BAMA, RH 26-295/16, p.140 and p. 150, (reported in section on commissars).

28.11.41 **[94. I.D.] 1 Commissar captured near Kaganowitscha**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1173, FN 1097, Morgenmeldung.

December 1941

6.12.41 **[295. I.D.] 2 Commissars reported among total POWs in summary report**

BAMA, RH 26-295/18, Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 19.3.41-13.12.1941, Anlage 375a, [17113/6].

8.12.41 **[97th Light I.D.] 1 Commissar arrested/interrogated near Bitschkowzy.**

BAMA, RH 26-97/100, Tätigkeitsbericht Ic, 97. Le.Inf.Div., 28.6.1941-20.12.1941.

21.12.41 **[111. I.D.] 1 Commissar apparently killed in battle near Luganskoje-Nordost**

NARA, RG 242, T-315, R 1265, FN 550 – Ic Abendmeldung an Gruppe von Schwedler.

January 1942

None to report for any of the subordinated divisions

The accompanying map in Appendix III was created by Sardar Shokatayev.

Appendix V

Directives Number 42 (20 July 1941) and Number 206 (19 August 1941) of the Main Political Office of the Worker-Peasant Red Army

No. 42 (p. 48)

DIRECTIVE OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR DEFENSE OF THE USSR AND THE ASSISTANT PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR DEFENSE, HEAD OF THE MAIN POLITICAL OFFICE OF THE WORKER'S AND PEASANTS' RED ARMY, TO MILITARY COUNCILS OF FRONTS, ARMIES, ZONES, AND HEADS OF POLITICAL ORGANS, MILITARY COMMISSARS OF DIVISIONS AND REGIMENTS, ON THE DUTIES OF MILITARY COMMISSARS AND POLITICAL WORKERS IN THE RED ARMY

No. 090

20 July 1941

A serious danger hangs over our country. The enemy is approaching our most important political and economic centers, threatening Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. The fates of Soviet power, the question of the life or death of the peoples of the Soviet Union, whether the workers of our country are to be free and independent or fall into slavery and become Germanized are being decided on the battlefields with the Fascist German invaders.

Now more than ever, we need a will to win, mental firmness, iron discipline, organization, a merciless struggle with traitors and collaborators, with

faint-heartedness, cowards, those who spread panic, deserters, maximal selflessness, readiness to made any sacrifices in the name of victory over the enemy, the readiness of every member of every Red Army soldier, officer, and political worker to fight to the last drop of blood, not sparing his own life, for every acre of Soviet land.

"The war imposed on us," states the Directive of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 16 July 1941, "has radically altered the circumstances under which the Red Army functions." The war has expanded the amount of political work in our army and required political workers not to limit themselves to propaganda, but also to take on the responsibility for military work on the fronts.

On the other hand, the war has hindered the work of the regimental and divisional officer and requires that these officers receive full cooperation from the political workers, not just in political work, but also in military work.

All these new circumstances in political work, brought about by the transition from peace to war, require that the role and responsibility of political workers be increased, as happened during the Civil War against foreign military intervention."

Military commissars, leaders of political departments and all political workers must gain a profound understanding of the meaning of the reorganization that has occurred and the full extent of the responsibility that has been imposed on them by the party of Lenin and Stalin and the Soviet government.

Political workers must reorganize their work immediately and achieve a decisive breakthrough in the improvement of the military capabilities of each part and each section.

The people's commissariat for defense of the USSR requires the following of all military commissars and political workers:

1. To be the immediate representatives of the Party and the government, Bolshevik commissars of the Lenin–Stalin metal, militant Bolsheviks, the military bearers of the spirit of our party, its discipline, its firmness, self-sacrifice, courage, and unshakable will to win in the struggle with the enemies of the socialist Motherland. To preserve and increase the military tradition of Khalkhin-Gola, the commissar of the time of the Civil War and the war with the Finnish White Guards.

2. To be the eyes and ears of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government, the most vigilant and informed people in each sector. To know in detail the operational situation, to assist the commander in developing a military order, to exercise strict control over the execution of all orders of the higher command.

3. To notify the Supreme Command and the government in a timely manner about officers and political workers who are unworthy of their titles and who, by their behavior, bring discredit on the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

4. To be in close contact with Red Army soldiers, officers, and political workers, with Communists, Komsomol members, and unaffiliated. No event or development should be accidental or unexpected for a commissar. Deficiencies are to be not only criticized, but rectified immediately.

5. To inspire and encourage the personnel in a sector, to give them an unshakable faith in the power of Soviet arms, in the victory of the Red Army of Hitler's hordes. At the crucial moments in battle a military commissar is required to raise the military spirit by his example of personal courage and daring and achieve the unconditional execution by the sector of any military order.

6. To impose revolutionary order and discipline with an iron hand and ruthlessly punish those who spread panic, cowards, malingerers, deserters, and all who go AWOL. To remember that military commissars, along with the officers, full responsibilities for cases of treason and betrayal in the sector and for its retreating without orders to do so. To encourage and popularize the best soldiers and officers, to instill in the personnel daring, boldness, calm, initiative, energy, and a contempt for death for the sake of victory over the enemy. The great Lenin taught, "Contempt for death must be spread among the masses to assure victory."

7. To study the officers and political workers carefully, to work with the officers in selecting personnel, boldly promoting those who distinguish themselves in battle for the Motherland. Pay special attention to the selection and promotion of young officers.

8. To purge all sectors of unreliable people, keeping in mind that a considerable number of traitors are to be found among draftees from the western regions of the Ukraine and Belarus, as well as Moldava, Bukovina and the Baltic Republics. Working with the special sections, perform a careful check on those officers, political workers, and soldiers who escaped encirclement in the western regions of

the Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic Republics either singly or in groups, so that not a single spy can penetrate our sector.

9. To take firm control of the rear from top to bottom (headquarters, communications, provisions, transportation, and so forth), to penetrate every corner, so as to establish the optimal functioning of the rearguard in providing everything needed at the front in good time, always remembering that this is the weak place in the management of armies.

The position of divisional headquarters commissar was established by command of the People's Commissariat for Defense. Divisional headquarters commissars' duties include the selection of volunteer political workers with military knowledge and capable of keeping order in headquarters and in the rear with a firm hand. Take care that the headquarters are well guarded, allowing no unauthorized person access to the headquarters and permitting no civilians at the location of the headquarters.

10. To seek out those in the rear who have had military training, but are not being employed according to their designation and immediately transfer them to active sectors; to ensure that all forces that can be used on the front without hindering the functioning of the sector are sent into battle.

11. To lead the political organs and Party and Komsomal organizations on a daily basis. To ensure that they do not sit idly in chancelleries and make the transition from abstract propaganda to military affairs, exhibiting maximum flexibility and operational capability in reacting rapidly and correctly to all events in the life of the sectors and subsections.

12. To manage the work of the political and assistant political arms and company Party and Komsomol organizations; to know all party organs and Komsomol organs in his section; the dispose of Communist

polit-soldiers and Komsomol members correctly, so as to provide decisive sectors. To entice into the Party and Komsomol the best people, those who have distinguished themselves in battle. To ensure the rapid study of all directives, and immediately convey Party and Komsomol documents to those accepted into the Party and the Komsomol.

13. To form a military unit of polit-soldiers and unaffiliated Bolsheviks and rely on it in daily work, in the study and expansion of its military experience, in the elevation of the entire personnel for fulfilling an order for defeating the enemy.

14. To unite and coordinate the work of military tribunals, the military prosecutors, and the special sections. To ensure that all traitors, disorganizers, cowards, deserters, and those who spread panic receive immediately the ultimate punishment, without respect of persons.

15. To maintain close contact with the local Party and Soviet organizations, mobilizing all their forces to strengthen the rear and assist the front, to work among the population of the occupied regions, and to develop a guerilla movement behind enemy lines.To manage constantly the work among enemy soldiers and population, ensuring the dissolution and demoralization of his army and rearguard.

People's Commissar for Defense

STALIN

Assistant People's Commissar for defense

Head of Main Political Office

Army Commissar of first rank MEKHLIS

DIRECTIVE FROM THE MAIN POLITICAL OFFICE OF THE WORKER-PEASANT RED ARMY TO MILITARY COUNCILS AND HEADS OF POLITICAL OFFICES OF FRONTS ZONES, AND ARMIES ON THE MANDATORY SIGNING OF ORDERS BY THE COMMANDER AND THE COMMISSAR

No. 206

19 August 1941

Cases in which written orders and directives have been issued under the signatures of officers only have recently become more frequent.

I GIVE THE FOLLOWING ORDER:

To members of military councils, military commissars, and political organs, to take care to observe strictly the directive on military commissars of the Worker-Peasant Red Army, which requires that all orders affecting a regiment, division, office, or institution be signed by both the officer and the military commissar.

Director of the main political office of the Worker-Peasant Red Army,

Army Commissar of first rank, L. MEKHLIS

Source

Velikaya Otechestvennaya (The Great Patriotic War), Main Political Organs of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945. Documents and Materials, (Moscow: Terra, 1996), pp. 48-51. Translation provided by Roger Cooke, University of Vermont.

Abbreviations and Glossary

Abwehr	(Amt/Ausland Abwehr) The German Military Intelligence (literally "defense") department of the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) under Admiral Wilhelm Carnaris that included counter-intelligence and espionage.
AOK	Armeeoberkommando. Army Command (commander and command staff of a numbered army, usually part of an army group).
BAMA	Bundesarchiv-Militärchiv. The Federal Military Archive, Freiburg im Breisgau.
Einsatzgruppen	Mobile formations (operational groups/task forces) comprised of members of the SD of the SS as well as policemen (Security Police) for special tasks. Broken into four major formations of battalion size for "Operation Barbarossa," they played a key role in the initial phase of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union in the murder of over 1 million Jews from June 1941-May 1942.
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei. Secret State Police under the auspices of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler.
GFP	Geheime Feldpolizei. Secret Field Police.
HSSP	Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer. SS and Police Commander. For the occupation of the USSR, there was one in each of the three major geographic regions (Army Groups North, Center, South) under the auspices of Heinrich Himmler.
IMT-TMWC	International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal 14 November 1945-1 October 1946.
IMT-TWC	International Military Tribunal, Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg - Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10.
KTB	Kriegstagebuch. War diary.
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration.
NCA	Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression.
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres. The High Command of the German Army.
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. The Supreme Command of the German Armed Forces.
ORPO	Ordnungspolizei. The uniformed, regular police forces of the Third Reich under the direction of Kurt Daluege. Units of Orpo were initially subordinated to three of the four Einsatzgruppen for the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Other Orpo units were later assigned to the three Höherer-SS- und Polizeiführer (Higher SS and Police

	Leaders) in the USSR to assist in security enforcement behind the front lines. Orpo units also took part in racial and political murders in occupied Poland.
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London, England.
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt - Reich Security Main Office.
SD	Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführer-SS. The security and intelligence branch of the Nazi Party. Reinhard Heydrich, appointed by Himmler in 1931, headed the organization designed to safeguard the interests of the Nazi Party. By 1936, Heydrich was, under Himmler's overall authority, in charge of both the Gestapo and the SD, and in 1939, the two organizations came under the aegis of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA – Reich Security Main Office). SD officers – and, in the case of Nebe, Section or Office heads of RSHA - headed the Einsatzgruppen (mobile operational units), which followed the Wehrmacht into the Soviet Union. Upon the death of Heydrich in 1942, Himmler took over the responsibilities of the SD before appointing Ernst Kaltenbrunner in January 1943 to lead the RSHA. Like the SS, the SD was declared a criminal organization at the Nuremberg war crimes trials.
SS	Schutzstaffel. Literally, protection squad. Formed in 1923 as an elite bodyguard for Hitler, it was expanded in 1929 under Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. After Hitler came into power in 1933, the SS grew in numbers and absolute power. Some of the overall growth came in taking over the general police apparatus, expanding and operating the system of concentration and death camps, and forming armed fighting units between 1939 and 1945. Based on the evidence of terror and murder perpetrated by members of the SS, the International Military Tribunal, held in Nuremberg after World War II, declared that the SS was a criminal organization (exempting the Waffen-SS, the military branch of the SS).

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