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Hitler's Death Squads:
**An Historiographical and
Bibliographical Analysis of the Role of
the *Einsatzgruppen***

Mark Semmens

2000

Hitler's Death Squads:
An Historiographical and Bibliographical Analysis of
the *Einsatzgruppen*.

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degree of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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Introduction

On 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler became German chancellor. Hitler and the Nazi party's (or *Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) arrival in power ushered in a brutally repressive period in Germany history, especially for Jews. The Nazis began with the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws which classified the population, according to a three tier system. "Aryans", who were ascribed full German citizenship and rights, were at the top. "Mischlinge", or persons of mixed descent who did not practice the Jewish faith, received limited rights and formed the middle tier. "Jews" formed the bottom tier and had three Jewish grandparents, or had two grandparents who practiced the Jewish faith. They formed the bottom tier. They were deprived of German citizenship on the basis that only persons of German blood could be citizens. Over the next four years, the state forced Jews out of various vocations and professions and a series of decrees in 1937 resulted in the forced "aryanisation" of many Jewish businesses. The *Kristallnacht* followed this in 1938 when thugs destroyed and looted Jewish synagogues and shops. German Jews were fined for the resulting damage which effectively stripped many of their remaining assets. By the end of 1940, Germany had conquered most of Europe and took advantage of this to forcibly move large numbers of Jews from both Germany and occupied countries to Poland. With a seemingly endless need for *Lebensraum*, Germany began its ill fated Operation *Barbarossa* in the summer of 1941. This is generally believed to have marked the beginning of the "Final Solution" or extermination phase.

The primitive part of the extermination phase is commonly accepted to have begun with special motorised units called *Einsatzgruppen*.. These units rounded up Jews, forced them to dig pits and then executed them with either single shots or automatic fire. Numbering approximately 3,000 personnel and divided into four units, they policed the Russian front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The *Einsatzgruppen* were ad hoc groups which brought together personnel from different security organisations and the Waffen SS. The psychological difficulties experienced by *Einsatzgruppen* personnel in killing women and children resulted in the use of gas vans. These gas vans are widely believed to be the precursor to the Polish extermination camps and their gas chambers. Thus, the *Einsatzgruppen* play a pivotal role in the Holocaust. The difficulties they experienced resulted in the setting up of the infamous camps in Poland.

According to accepted opinion, these camps (which operated from 1941 to the end of 1944) used production line technology to both lessen the psychological strain on camp personnel, and to speed up the extermination of Jews. While these camps were in remote areas, they were easily accessible by rail. Upon their arrival, a small number of

Jews went to work and the rest went to the gas chambers, which were often disguised as showers. These chambers used either carbon monoxide or hydrogen cyanide (Zyklon B) to execute their victims. The bodies were then removed by *Sonderkommandos* who would remove any gold dental features before loading the bodies into the crematorium. After cremation ashes were spread over marshes and farms. The advancing Russian army stopped this extermination phase in 1944 and the SS took steps to remove all trace of the programme.

The purpose of this thesis is not to provide a definitive version of the intent and activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* but rather to examine the literature and explore the manner in which their perceived role and activities change or continue over time. The *Einsatzgruppen* are part of the Holocaust debate, and changes in the way they are perceived offers the reader insight into the general state of this debate which is in a constant state of evolution with seemingly solid conclusions being replaced as new evidence and methodologies appear.

To undertake this study, it is necessary to trace the evolution in Holocaust literature. The two central questions which drives the Holocaust debate are: the perceived role of Hitler in the Holocaust and, more particularly the "Final Solution", and secondly if there is a special quality about German culture which explains their perpetration of the Holocaust. This review begins with the International Military Tribunal "Blue Set". These 42 volumes include the evidence and transcripts from the Nuremberg trial of the leading Nazis. These hearings argued Hitler was at the centre of the Holocaust and that the Nazi party had led the German people astray. These trials attempted to explain the *Einsatzgruppen's* function and activities and brought them to public attention for the first time. The first group of works following these trials were then published between 1951 and 1976. These works emphasised cataloguing the atrocities and showing the bureaucratic nature of the "Final Solution". They continued to place Hitler at the centre of the Holocaust and spent much time establishing the *Einsatzgruppen* officers as either "cool efficient killers" or as human flotsam and jetsam who viewed their task as a chance to improve their lives. These works were followed by another group of Holocaust literature between 1978 to 1997. The debate between intentionalists and functionalists, dominates this period, which for the first time questioned Hitler's role in the "Final Solution". There was also a strong argument over whether the *Einsatzgruppen's* original intention was to kill Jews or whether this inadvertently occurred later. Following on was an examination of the Reserve Police Battalions and their role in the "Final Solution." The two works involved questioned the motivation of Holocaust perpetrators, in many ways the essence of the Holocaust debate. The final group to be examined is the Revisionist historians. While this writer considers the anti-

Semitic philosophy of many Revisionists to be wrong and distasteful, to exclude them would have resulted in an incomplete and narrow review.

The works utilised for this analysis were selected according to three criteria: their popularity, academic impact and their discussion of a particular viewpoint to help round out the thesis. A work could be selected on any one of the criteria this proved especially important when reviewing Revisionist works. If one considers Paul Rassinier's works, the scholarly impact of his work has been slight, but his popularity, particularly in non-English speaking countries, makes his work influential. By the same token, some popular works were excluded on the basis that the viewpoint expressed had already been covered by another work.

Obviously, when examining such a difficult topic objectivity is critical. The Holocaust debate is ridden with bias, prejudice and emotion, particularly now that Revisionists bring their own axes to grind. This writer attempts to weave a steady course through the literature without moral judgement. That is not to say no judgements are made, but they are done on the basis of scholarly historical methodology, that includes, questioning and examining the reliability of sources, their own methodological approach and if additional evidences supplements stated arguments, and the validity of conclusions. By examining the literature in such a manner this thesis will provide an incisive literature review.

Chapter One

The International Military Tribunal

The International Military Tribunal and its findings published as the forty-two volume "Blue Series" contained the first significant historical account of the *Einsatzgruppen*. This set of court transcripts and prosecution documents has become the most consulted source for examining the *Einsatzgruppen*'s role in the Holocaust. To gain an understanding of the Tribunal's findings this chapter has primarily relied on this source. To understand how the Tribunal came into being, however, the present writer has consulted The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial 1945 - 46: A Documentary History by Michael Marrus.¹ This work offers a well written account of the difficulties encountered between the Western Allies and Russia in establishing the Tribunal and offers analysis and copies of important Nuremberg documents. The final work consulted is David Irving's Nuremberg: The Last Battle.² This work presents a strong case for the increasingly popular view that the Nuremberg defendants did not receive a fair trial.

The earliest indication from a leading Allied power that a Tribunal would deal with leading Nazis and organisations came from Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 8 September 1942. "Those who are guilty of the Nazis crimes," he stated to the House of Commons, "will have to stand before tribunals in every land where their atrocities have been committed in order that an indelible warning may be given to future ages."³ The other Allied powers which made up the "Big Three" supported this in the Moscow Declaration of 1 November 1943. It stated that those "whose offences have no particular geographical location ... will be punished by a joint decision of the governments of the Allies."⁴ While these public statements strongly indicated the Allies were on a judicial course for dealing with leading Nazis and organisations, at a series of meetings - codenamed Tolstoy - Churchill argued for executing major enemy leaders upon capture and identification.⁵ Stalin objected, insisting that there could be no executions without trial. What Stalin believed constituted a trial, however is a matter for debate. The Soviet pre-war show trials and those in their occupied sectors of

¹ Michael Marrus, *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945 - 46: A Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.)

² David Irving, *Nuremberg: The Last Battle* (London: Focal Point Publications, 1996.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24 - 5.

Germany after the war suggest a rather casual approach. Having then decided upon a judicial approach to convicting and punishing the Nazi elite, the Allies had to create a functional, international trial system.

The establishment of a charter was the first step towards this. The charter of the International Military Tribunal appeared on 8 August 1945, after more than a month's laborious negotiation between the four prosecuting powers of Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union. The charter contained sections that were obviously designed to convict the Nazi leaders and their organisations. An excellent example of this is Article Six, which contained three main crimes. The first was headed "crimes against the peace". These crimes were defined as "planning, preparation initiation, or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties ... or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing."⁶ This charge was easily proven by the German invasion of the European Low Countries, that obviously entailed detailed planning. The second was "war crimes", which were defined as violations of the laws and customs of war. "Such violations shall include ...murder or ill treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity."⁷ These charges obviously involved the anti-partisan methods used by German security forces in Russia and other occupied countries, even though these were also used by Allied forces during their occupation of Germany. The final crimes were "crimes against humanity". These included "murder, extermination, enslavement deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds."⁸ The four prosecuting powers clearly designed these charges to punish leading Nazis and organisations for their involvement in the Holocaust. The Allies divided the areas of prosecution in the following manner: the British took the task of prosecuting crimes against the peace; the Americans also prosecuted crimes against the peace as well as the case against Nazi organisations and general conspiracy; the French and the Soviets prepared the case for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the West and East respectively. The prosecuting powers signed the indictment against the twenty four leading Nazi and seven organisations on 6 October 1945.

⁶ International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 14 November 1945 - 1 October 1946* 42 vols Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 10.

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p. 116.

The charter also eliminated several legal defences in order to make conviction and punishment easier. Through Articles Seven and Eight, the Tribunal charter removed the legal defence of superior orders. Article Seven stated the official position of defendants -- for example their post in government -- would not free the individual from responsibility for their actions nor would it mitigate punishment. Article Eight stated that a defendant acting under the order of a superior would not be free of responsibility for the action but the Tribunal could lessen punishment if it thought it proper. The court eliminated this defence to avoid their time being wasted by placing every order at the feet of Hitler and Himmler, both now dead. This form of upward delegation could have prevented the Tribunal from finding many leading Nazis guilty.

The Tribunal also dismissed defence lawyers' pre-trial claims that the Tribunal was applying retroactive or ex post facto law and that the trials were therefore "based on new criminal law, a law drawn up only after activities complained of."⁹ The defence lawyers argued from the legal bedrock that in the absence of law there could be neither crime nor punishment (*nullum crimen sine lege, nulla poene sine lege*). The Tribunal threw out the claim, arguing that this was an appeal against the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, which was an offence against Article Three of the charter. David Irving shows that the Tribunal could have argued that aggressive war already had status in international law as illegal, because of the Kellogg-Briand pact of 1928, to which Germany was a signatory.¹⁰ This would mean that there was not, therefore, an absence of law in this matter so there could be punishment through the legal court of the Tribunal.

As well as punishing Nazis, protecting the prosecuting countries from damaging allegations also constituted a key feature of the Tribunal's charter. This was clearly demonstrated by the removal of the *tu quoque* (thou also) defence. The Tribunal judges argued that this defence was removed to prevent the trial being used as a propaganda platform by defeated Nazis. Its removal made it difficult to show *Einsatzgruppen* activities as anti-partisan rather than genocidal. If *tu quoque* had not been eliminated, defence lawyers could have pointed to the use of similar tactics by Allied forces, including the use of hostages, enforcement of curfews and execution of those found in possession of weapons. This would have placed prosecuting lawyers in a difficult legal and political position.

⁹ *New York Times* November 22, 1945.

¹⁰ David Irving, *Nuremburg: The Last Battle* p. 109.

To understand the function of the *Einsatzgruppen* it was necessary for the Tribunal to establish the organisation and function of the *Einsatzgruppen*. The testimony and affidavits of SS General Otto Ohlendorf, a former commander of Einsatzgruppe D, provided most of this information. The *Einsatzgruppen* were four ad hoc special action groups established before the invasion of Russia following an agreement between the Chiefs of the Central Security Department of the Reich (RSHA),¹¹ the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW),¹² and the High Command of the Army (OKH).¹³ According to document L-180 and Ohlendorf, the *Einsatzgruppen* were *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C and D.¹⁴ The *Einsatzgruppen* were made up of subgroups called *Einsatzkommandos* of which A, B and C had four while D had five. The commanding officers labelled the *Einsatzkommandos* according to a number and letter pattern such as 1a, 1b, 2 and 3. The *Einsatzkommandos* were made up of *Sonderkommando* units, also known as *Teilkommandos* or unit detachments. According to Ohlendorf approximately 2,600 to 2,900 men formed the *Einsatzgruppen*, with *Einsatzgruppe* D having 400 - 500 members and the other three having between 400 to eight hundred personnel each.¹⁵ Dr Gallic, who also appeared at Nuremberg, argued that the total number of *Einsatzgruppen* was between 1-1,200 personnel. As the exact numbers involved were not crucial to proving the charges, this matter was not pursued. With the approximate number of personnel and organisation of the *Einsatzgruppen* being established, the prosecution then proceeded to place them at the scene of the crimes.

The Russian prosecution team went to considerable pains to prove the movements of the *Einsatzgruppen* during the Russian campaign. The location of the *Einsatzgruppen* depended upon the Army Group to which they were assigned. *Einsatzgruppe* A went to the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia with Army Group North. *Einsatzgruppe* B operated in Bebrussia and Smolensk with the Army Group Central, while *Einsatzgruppe* C operated in the southern and central districts of the Ukraine with

¹¹ The proper German title for the RSHA was the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. The Central Security Department of the Reich, formed in 1939, combined the existing Security Police (Gestapo and Kripo) and the Security Service (SD). It was both a central office (Hauptamt) of the Reich ministry of the interior. (Definition taken from the *Anatomy of the SS State*, glossary by Brian Melland (London: William Collins, Sons and Company, 1968).

¹² The proper German title for the OKW was Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. The High Command of the Armed Forces. (Taken from *Anatomy of the SS State*, as above).

¹³ The proper German title for the OKH is Oberkommando des Heeres. The High Command of the Army. (Taken from the *Anatomy of the SS State*, as above).

¹⁴ International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, Vol. IV, pp. 316 - 317.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. IV, pp. 326 - 327.

Army group South. *Einsatzgruppe D* operated in the Southern Ukraine as well in the Crimea and Caucuses, with the Eleventh Army. Their movements were confirmed by the reports they sent back to Himmler. Various Nazi functionaries then received these reports. One such example is document R-102, entitled "Activity and Situation Report no.6 of the Task Forces of the Security Police and the SD in the USSR."¹⁶ In October 1941, according to this report, *Einsatzgruppe A* was in Krasnowardeisk, B was in Smolensk, C in Kiew (sic) and D was in Nikolajew (sic). The prosecution tracked the four *Einsatzgruppen* across the USSR using these reports. Proving the *Einsatzgruppen's* presence in the USSR was the first step towards proving them guilty of war and humanity crimes.

The prosecution then moved to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* had murdered Jews and other Soviet civilians. The prosecution turned to the affidavits and testimony of SS General Otto Ohlendorf to prove their case. Ohlendorf claimed to have attended executions twice and explained to the Tribunal the four conditions he had stipulated to *Einsatzgruppe D* when engaging in such actions. First, the area was cordoned off and the public excluded. Then the transports arrived and the liquidation commenced. Ohlendorf explained that this was to be done in a smooth manner to prevent unnecessary excitement among victims. The execution was performed in a military fashion; that is, a firing squad shot several people at once. The victims were generally shot in a standing or kneeling position with their corpses either falling or being thrown into a ditch. Finally, the property of the deceased was to be supervised to prevent looting. As well as engaging in such executions, Ohlendorf stated that in the spring of 1942, *Einsatzgruppe D* began using gas vans. He claimed that Himmler introduced the vans, which were mostly used to execute women and children, in order to lessen the mental strain on *Einsatzgruppen* personnel. He then added that the vans, which operated by piping exhaust fumes into the sealed interior of the trucks, were unpopular. Voiding by victims and complaints of headaches by the unloading crews meant only a few hundred were murdered in this manner. The prosecution also used a letter from SS Untersturmfuehrer to prove the use of such vans.¹⁷ This document, known as 501 PS, pointed to difficulties in using the vans in winter because of the slippery roads and the scarcity of spare parts. With the prosecution having established to the Tribunal's satisfaction that such executions occurred, it was then necessary to establish the motivation behind them.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 3. pp. 96 - 103.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 26. pp. 418 - 419.

The prosecution concentrated on proving the *Einsatzgruppen* guilty of genocide for if this was proved then the Tribunal could also find them guilty of crimes against humanity. The Russian prosecution, led by Roman A Rudenko, made extensive use of Otto Ohlendorf's affidavit, in which he stated: "The majority of those liquidated were Jews, but there were among them some communist functionaries too."¹⁸ In a second affidavit, Ohlendorf also gave evidence that the *Einsatzgruppen* had screened Eastern front prisoner of war camps and had executed Jews and Soviet commissars. The *Einsatzgruppen* reports, such as L-180, which spoke specifically about the numbers of and actions against commissars and Jews, as well as having columns headed "Jews" and "communists" in the surveys of executed persons, appeared to confirm these allegations.¹⁹ These reports also offered explained the need for such actions. *Einsatzgruppe C* reported having killed 3,145 Jews in Shitomir, claiming: "from experience they have to be regarded as bearers of Bolshevik propaganda and saboteurs."²⁰ This report also lists Jews executed for looting, sabotage, engaging in propaganda and in one case for displaying: "especially obstinate behaviour."²¹ Apart from the prosecution's view, there were other hypotheses offered on the *Einsatzgruppen*'s role.

Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, one of Hitler's senior field commanders and a reluctant witness at the International Military Tribunal trials, provided one of these. He claimed that the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* was to "prepare for the political administration and to politically screen the population."²² This claim cannot be discounted out of hand, as such a role would have necessitated the elimination of previous and potential future leaders. The Jews, with their heavy representation in the upper echelons of the Communist party and skilled trades and professions would have been seen as potential leaders. Hitler's Commissar order and the Night and Fog decree ordered the detainment and execution of commissars. These decrees gave wide ranging powers to security forces including the seizure of people "endangering German security." This increased latitude was used when charging or executing civilians and the *Einsatzgruppen* could have used such orders to justify their actions. As already noted, reasons were always offered not matter how spurious for the killing of Jews. One can surmise from this argument that the *Einsatzgruppen* were not executing Jews

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 31. p. 341.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 37. p. 992.

²⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 8. p. 103.

²¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 37. pp. 107 - 108.

²² *Ibid*, Vol. 20. p. 635.

purely on the basis of ethnicity. This perceived role of the *Einsatzgruppen* suited von Manstein's defence in his later trial. It gave the *Einsatzgruppen* a plausible reason to be in his area and explains the execution of civilians and other security actions. Von Manstein's claim was not the only other theory offered on the *Einsatzgruppen*'s role.

Both General Walter Schellenburg, the supreme head of the espionage service in the Third Reich, and General Walter von Brauchitsh, Commander - in - Chief of the German Army, argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* suppressed partisan forces and, as von Brauchitsh stated were used to "protect and secure supply lines."²³ Given the high level of partisan activity on the eastern front, which is shown by the extensive mention of partisan activity in the *Einsatzgruppen* reports, this explanation is plausible. If this explanation proved successful, the actions of the *Einsatzgruppen* could be explained by the German policy of controlling occupied countries by terror. Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel expressed this policy in the following statement:

" In view of the vast size of occupied areas in the East, the forces will be sufficient only if all resistance is punished... by the spreading of such terror by the armed forces as is alone enough to eradicate every inclination to resist among the population. Commandos must find the means of keeping order by applying suitable draconian measures."²⁴

The Tribunal however, showed little interest in examining the different roles and explanations for the *Einsatzgruppen*'s actions. It was interested only in establishing the unit's guilt on the charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and as part of the conspiracy charge. While it was obvious that the *Einsatzgruppen* should be charged with the first two crimes, a more detailed explanation of the third is necessary at this stage.

The charge of conspiracy aimed to prove that the Nazis had planned to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is well illustrated in this quote from the indictment: "The common plan or conspiracy contemplated and came to embrace as typical and systematic means, and the defendants determined upon and committed, Crimes against Humanity...including murder, extermination ... and persecution on political, racial or religious grounds."²⁵ The prosecution resolved to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* were the first stage of the "Final Solution." This is why they emphasised the use of gas vans by the *Einsatzgruppen*, even though only a few hundred

²³ *Ibid.*, (Schellenberg), Vol.20. pp. 382 - 383.
Ibid., (Brauchitsh), Vol 4. pp. 592 - 593.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 22. p. 478.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1. p. 29.

civilians were purportedly executed in this manner. The prosecution attempted to show that the gas vans were precursors to the extermination camps in Poland.

The Nuremberg prosecution made considerable use of statistics taken from *Einsatzgruppen* reports to prove that the units were involved in the attempted extermination of Russia's Jews. In his affidavit, Ohlendorf confirmed that Einsatzgruppe D had killed 90,000 civilians, most of them Jewish.²⁶ A report from *Einsatzgruppe A* confirmed that 135,000 Jews were killed in the Baltic States in 1941.²⁷ The Tribunal took these figures at face value and entered them in the record as "true."

One difficulty with the use of these and other reports is the possible unreliability of the figures. Ohlendorf based his statistics on *Einsatzkommando* reports sent to him. He admitted attending mass executions only twice and often other senior officers could not attend because of vast distances and poor roads. This meant that often no independent confirmation of the numbers killed had been performed. Under cross examination, Ohlendorf argued that many of the figures submitted by the other three *Einsatzgruppen* were probably exaggerated, which could be an indirect admission that his own figures were not strictly accurate either.²⁸

Now having examined the evidence that came out of the trial, it is necessary to examine claims that the "Blue Series" is flawed because of pressure applied to defendants and witnesses. David Irving's *Nuremberg: The Last Battle*²⁹ argues this increasingly popular view, claiming that the regime of solitary confinement, no exercise, meagre rations and the resulting physical and mental fatigue imposed on the defendants, constituted psychological warfare. In addition, the Nuremberg jailers denied the prisoners access to the International Red Cross or their Christmas parcels. This weakened the defendants and resulted in the suicide the German Labour Front's leader, Robert Ley. There seems little doubt that the defendants received harsh treatment while in custody and this prevented them defending themselves to the best of their ability. It is worth remembering, however, that these trials came at the end of six years of brutal war that Germany started. The conduct of the Allies should be seen in this light.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 31, p. 341.

²⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 22, pp. 402 - 403.

²⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 4, pp. 330 - 331.

²⁹ David Irving, *Nuremberg - The Last Battle* (London: Focal Point Publications, 1996.)

An article titled "American Atrocities in Germany" by Judge Edward L. Van Roden, offers further evidence that witnesses and defendants were ill treated at these trials.³⁰ The article dealt with the behaviour of American investigators at the U.S court held at Dachau, Germany. The investigators used methods such as; mock trials, beatings, solitary confinement and promises of acquittal to gain confessions. Of the 139 Germans examined by a physician, 137 had testicles smashed beyond repair.³¹ This article, although only one piece of evidence, shows the background against which war crimes trials were held and give further credence to Irving's claims.

In addition to psychological warfare, Irving claimed that defendants had to fight a prosecution service which engaged in dubious witness practices. He offers the example of Dr Robert Kempner, an ex-German Jew, who reputedly threatened to turn Dr Friedrich Gaus, Ribbentrop's legal adviser, over to the Russians. Irving notes: "In the files there is also a memorandum from Colonel Telford Taylor warning Kempner that he is not to promise inmates early release as an inducement during interrogation."³² He then points out that the treatment received by a witness depended upon whether they were viewed as hostile or friendly. Hostile witnesses were often housed in prison conditions while friendly witnesses received luxury accommodation and special rations.³³ Irving also presents the case of Field Marshall Milch, whose defence of Goering and Speer from the witness box resulted in his being placed in a punishment bunker at Dachau, which was then being run by the Americans. These cases present a picture of a prosecution service which indulged in dubious witness practices, and while one suspects Irving is presenting the worst of such cases, they are enough to make any historians cautious when using such sources.

Irving also argues that occupation authorities collaborated with the prosecution service by declaring key defence witnesses to be untraceable. One example is that of General Karl Koller, the last Chief of the Luftwaffe General Staff, called by Goering's lawyer. The Americans claimed they could not find him, despite interrogating him only shortly before in Britain. As this suggests, the prosecution and occupation authorities liaised closely to make it difficult for defence attorneys.

³⁰ Edward Van Roden, "American Atrocities in Germany", *The Progressive*, February 1949.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 22.

³² David Irving, *The Last Battle* p. 91.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 175.

Even if one were to exclude the illegal or morally dubious measures engaged in by the prosecution, Irving argues they still had a considerable advantage over defence lawyers. They had access to all archives and a large team of researchers, while the defence had only what the lawyers themselves could find with no access to captured archives and receipt only of incriminating files.³⁴ One example offered by Irving is Hans Frank's lawyer, who was at first refused access to his client's diary.³⁵ It had been voluntarily handed over to the Seventh Army and he was then allowed to use only those extracts chosen by the prosecution. The Tribunal's management of the trial added to these injustices. The prosecution was allowed an opening speech and a lengthy closing address, while the defence, in comparison, were permitted only a brief closing statement. As if these problems were not enough, defence lawyers suffered harassment at the hands of occupation authorities and the media. Streicher's attorney, Dr Marx, was subjected to press attacks and had his office ransacked. Professor Hermann Jahreiss, who acted as Jodl's lawyer made a formal appeal to the Tribunal for protection at the conclusion of the trial, which to their credit they granted.

Having examined the prosecution attempts to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* were engaged in genocide, this chapter will now examine their attempts to link various Nazi organisations with this security force. Under the indictment, seven organisations were charged with being criminal by reason of their aims and means. With the prosecution correctly believing that they had proven that the *Einsatzgruppen* had committed both war and humanity crimes, it became obvious that the prosecution case would be strengthened if they could prove that any of the seven organisations commanded the *Einsatzgruppen*..

The Army came under suspicion primarily because the *Einsatzgruppen* were attached to army groups and drew their supplies from them. In addition, army commanders could issue orders to the *Einsatzgruppen* when military circumstances warranted it. The final evidence used in an attempt to prove that the Army commanded the *Einsatzgruppen* were *Einsatzgruppen* reports which described their relationship as "very close almost cordial"³⁶ and "in some cases almost hearty."³⁷ The links were, however, insufficient to prove that the Army commanded the *Einsatzgruppen*..

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 100.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 100.

³⁶ International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 14 November 1945 - 1 October 1946* Vol. 22, pp. 492 - 493.

³⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 22. p. 364.

Prosecution witness SS General Otto Ohlendorf showed the issue of supply to be purely a matter of convenience.³⁸ The army already had a supply structure in place and the *Einsatzgruppen* took advantage of this, as it would have been impractical to set up a second supply line into Russia. Field Marshal von Manstein's testimony showed that army commanders only had control over the *Einsatzgruppen* during anti-partisan actions and not during their security or police tasks.³⁹ The *Einsatzgruppen* links to Reichsfuehrer Himmler also counted against the *Einsatzgruppen* being controlled by the army. Only Waffen SS units were generally believed to have been commanded by the army, the other SS branches were seen as subordinate to Himmler, himself.⁴⁰

The prosecution made several major attempts to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* constituted part of the SS. The two major links between the SS and the *Einsatzgruppen* were that firstly, the *Einsatzgruppen* reported to Himmler while, secondly, the high proportion of SS enlisted men in the actions groups. General Hauser dismissed the links to Himmler, arguing that: "These various branches of the organisation of Heinrich Himmler unfortunately wore the same uniform, although they had separate insignia. The only thing they had in common was their chief, Heinrich Himmler. The various branches were completely separate from each other, even before the war."⁴¹ SS members made up 34% of the *Einsatzgruppen's* enlisted men making them the largest single group. The Tribunal accepted that the *Einsatzgruppen's* anti-partisan role made combat trained soldiers from the SS a necessity.

The prosecution also targetted the Gestapo with their well deserved reputation for brutality, as having command of and links to the *Einsatzgruppen*.. That the *Einsatzgruppen* had Gestapo officers, so therefore linking the organisations , formed the main argument. This failed, however, because according to document L-180 which had been used extensively by the prosecution, Gestapo personnel made up only 9% of *Einsatzgruppen A*. In addition, Gestapo members on *Einsatzgruppen* service did not have the service included on their Gestapo record nor did they have contact with their home office. These two factors meant the Tribunal decided only a coincidental link existed between the two organisations.

³⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 4. p. 313 - 314.

³⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 21. p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 20. p. 365.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 20. p. 365.

The Tribunal eventually ruled that the *Sicherheitsdienst* or SD, which was the security service of the SS commanded the *Einsatzgruppen*. The testimony and affidavits of prosecution witness and former commander of Einsatzgruppe D, SS General Otto Ohlendorf were conclusive in proving this. In the affidavits, Ohlendorf argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* stayed in regular contact with the chief of Sipo and the SD, and he also referred to the *Einsatzgruppen* as operative detachments of the Security Police and the SD. Through cross examination the prosecution also established that the *Einsatzgruppen* wore the uniform of the SD with the SD insignia on the sleeve.⁴² These fragments of evidence proved enough for the Tribunal to believe that the SD commanded the *Einsatzgruppen*.

This chapter will now critically examine the documents offered as evidence concerning the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Russia. Most important of these documents are the affidavits of SS General Otto Ohlendorf. In the first of these affidavits, signed on November 5, 1945, Ohlendorf admitted killing "approximately 90,000 women and children" and admitted; "The majority of those liquidated were Jews but there were some communist functionaries too."⁴³ The two affidavits may have been gained under duress. It seems probable that Ohlendorf was beaten or at least threatened with being handed over to the Russians. Irving and van Royden offer evidence of "forced confessions" culture among Allied investigators and Ohlendorf's subsequent retraction at the later "*Einsatzgruppen* trial" offers further evidence of this. The use of these affidavits is fraught with difficulty and unless supported by other evidence, they should be used with caution.

Another reason for using Ohlendorf's affidavits and court testimony with care are strategic considerations. Ohlendorf's testimony seems designed to avoid a trial for himself. This is an important issue to consider when using affidavits or court testimony from the "Blue Series". Defendants and witnesses are giving testimony to either absolve themselves from blame, cast blame onto others, ingratiate themselves with the prosecution by admitting guilt, or, in rare cases to sell their lives as dearly as possible. In Ohlendorf's case his strategy of complete compliance proved ultimately unsuccessful, though it did gain him several additional years of life before he was finally executed.

The *Einsatzgruppen's* "Activity and Situation" reports are another major source of documentary evidence. These reports were not gained by third degree methods or

⁴² *Ibid*, Vol. 20. p. 203.

⁴³ International Military Tribunal, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* Vol. 5. p. 969.

merely used to gain the prosecutions favour. The only difficulty with these reports is that as they were intended for superiors, the figures are probably exaggerated. Yet they can still be considered acceptable pieces of evidence, as there is no evidence of duress or deliberate fabrication.

In conclusion then, the International Military Tribunal "Blue Series" is the first significant literary source on the *Einsatzgruppen*. In this judicial setting, the prosecution for Allied countries made significant discoveries concerning the function, organisation and links with other security organisations of the *Einsatzgruppen*. The legal measures adopted by the Charter of the Tribunal to ensure ease in proving leading Nazis and Nazi organisations guilty must be kept in mind when reading the transcripts and documents. Another important issue is the reliability of affidavit evidence which may be weakened by the possibility of torture or psychological pressure. The word of witnesses must be balanced against what they had to gain, in terms of freedom, their life or the chance to destroy a long time political rival. The I.M.T documents give valuable insights into the *Einsatzgruppen* and their function as a mobile preliminary law and order unit and as squads concerned with the killing of Jews and Soviet Commissars.

Chapter Two

Early Holocaust Literature 1954 - 1975

The first group of books analysing and documenting the Holocaust appeared in print, between 1954 and 1975. Works in this chapter are included on the basis of popularity, influence or an examination of a common viewpoint of the time. The works can be broadly divided into three categories. The first is the general Holocaust surveys. These works are The Destruction of the European Jews by Raul Hilberg,⁴⁴ The Final Solution by Gerald Reitlinger,⁴⁵ Lucy S Dawidowicz's The War Against the Jews, 1933 - 45,⁴⁶ Leon Poliakov's Harvest of Hate⁴⁷ and Nora Levin's plagiarised The Holocaust.⁴⁸ This category included the most influential works of the period, with Hilberg's work being viewed by many as the seminal Holocaust text. The second category is analyses of the SS. These are Heinz Hohne's The Order of the Death's Head,⁴⁹ The SS: Alibi of a Nation⁵⁰, by Gerald Reitlinger, and the compilation volume, Anatomy of the SS State.⁵¹ These works show that, during this period, the SS were seen as the main perpetrators of the Holocaust. The third category contains only Reginald Paget's Manstein: His Campaigns and His Trial.⁵² This work, written by Field Marshal von Manstein's English defence lawyer, RT Paget, is a defence of his client. It is included for its detailed and critical examination of the evidence offered about the *Einsatzgruppen* at the I.M.T and subsequent trials. This chapter uses these works to examine the areas of agreement and difference over the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Holocaust.

⁴⁴ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books Inc, 1961).

⁴⁵ Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939 - 1945* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell and Co, 1959).

⁴⁶ Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1975).

⁴⁷ Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, (New York; Syracuse University Press, 1954).

⁴⁸ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust : The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933 - 1945*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).

⁴⁹ Heinz Hohne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1969).

⁵⁰ Gerald Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922 - 1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

⁵¹ Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Anatomy of the SS State* London: William Collins, Son and Company Limited, 1968).

⁵² Reginald Paget, *Manstein: His Campaigns and Trial* (London: Collins, 1951).

The historians of this period divide clearly into three camps when examining the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Russia. The first group, represented by Levin, Poliakov, Krausnick and Hilberg, argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* were set up shortly before Operation *Barbarossa* as a Jew-killing squad. Poliakov described them as "special detachments assigned the job of exterminating the Jews in Russia,"⁵³ and Hilberg called them "the first mobile killing units."⁵⁴ These historians paint the *Einsatzgruppen's* activities as the first stage in the "Final Solution." Hilberg's labelling the *Einsatzgruppen* as the "*first* mobile killing squad" (italics added by present writer) demonstrates this. To sustain this hypothesis, this group argue that the additional security activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* are either strictly secondary or smokescreens to hide their real function. Typical of such a view is Hilberg's argument: "In the guise of anti-partisan activity, the unit killed thousands of Jews in the woodlands and in the swamps [of Russia]."⁵⁵

Reitlinger and Hohne argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* performed a number of security tasks, with the extermination of the Jews being one of them. "The *Einsatzgruppen* were formed" according to Reitlinger, "as much to watch the conduct of the military leaders in Russia, as to murder Jews, Gipsies [sic] and political commissars."⁵⁶ Unlike the first group, these two believe the *Einsatzgruppen* had an intelligence function, as well as working as an ideological hit squad. Reitlinger argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* murdered not only Jews, but others who were deemed a threat to the National Socialist doctrine.

Paget argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* had been set up and ordered to exterminate Russian Jews, but because of physical and psychological difficulties, this extermination policy gave way to one of security. His arguments were based on the activities of *Einsatzgruppe D*, which his client, Field Marshal von Manstein, had been accused of assisting. Paget argued that the *Einsatzgruppen*, which numbered approximately 3,000, was simply not big enough to carry out the task, but under pressure from their superiors, *Einsatzgruppen* officers falsified figures and declared areas *Judenfrei* that were not. He admitted that the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed Jews because they were hostages, partisan sympathesers or as potential partisans, but pointed out that the Allies had employed similiar tactics in occupied German as well as by United Nations forces

⁵³ Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate* p. 119.

⁵⁴ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* p. 177.

⁵⁵ *Ibid* p.. 243.

⁵⁶ Reitlinger, *The Final Solution* p. 186.

in Korea. His work is clearly designed to prove that measures such as executing hostages were standard operating procedure for any army occupying a hostile country.

While historians disputed the *Einsatzgruppen's* functions, none disputed that the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed Jews or their execution methods. Levin, Reitlinger, Hilberg, Dawidowicz and Poliakov discussed the techniques used with Hilberg offering the most in-depth analysis.⁵⁷ He argued that the standardising of the procedures enabled the Germans to work quickly and efficiently. First a shooting ditch, usually a ditch or shell crater, outside the town or village was chosen and supposedly closed off to non-*Einsatzgruppen* personnel. Batches of victims, usually men first, were taken either by truck or forced march from the collecting area to the killing zone. Upon reaching the area the victims handed over their clothing and goods before being shot. Hilberg then detailed the execution techniques used by the various *Einsatzgruppen*. Some forced their victims to lie down and shot them in the neck, while others required victims to lie down in the pit before killing them with crossed fire from above. Einsatzgruppe D used the more military style of having the victims stood at the edge of the ditch before killing them with massed fire. This detailing of standardised execution methods is used by the afore mentioned historians as proof that the high numbers mentioned in the *Einsatzgruppen* reports were indeed accurate. Hilberg also argues that these methods attempted to depersonalise and make more efficient the killing experience. He does not explicitly say so, but the obvious conclusion is that the extermination camps represented the zenith of this approach, and making the *Einsatzgruppen* the first part of the "Final Solution."

Several historians argue that the *Einsatzgruppen's* use of gas vans shows they represent the beginning of the "Final Solution." These vans reputedly piped their exhaust gases into a heretically sealed chamber at the rear of the vehicle. The gases resulted in death by carbon monoxide poisoning. Hilberg and Reitlinger argue that the employment of gas vans were an attempt to lessen the emotional strain of murdering women and children. Reitlinger states: "The gassing vans have a peculiar horror, but their part in the "Final Solution" in Russia has been overestimated."⁵⁸ Both Reitlinger and Hilberg attributed the gas van's lesser role to their being unsuitable for killing large numbers and the headaches and nausea they brought on in the *Einsatzgruppen* unloading crews. Krausnick assigned the reluctance to use gas vans to *Einsatzgruppen* member's sense of morality. Despite this limited role, the gas vans are, however, used to link the

⁵⁷ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* pp. 203 - 205.

⁵⁸ Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, p. 243.

Einsatzgruppen to the later extermination camps. Reitlinger argued that the next step involved applying the gassing technology to large permanent chambers and thus presents the *Einsatzgruppen* as an early feasibility study of Jewish extermination.

In order to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* had set out to exterminate Russia's Jews, Reitlinger, Poliakov, Levin and Hilberg made extensive use of *Einsatzgruppen* report statistics. Reitlinger is characteristic of this approach taking figures directly from operational reports to claim 45, 476 executions during SS Major General Nebe's reign as *Einsatzgruppe B* commander.⁵⁹ To his credit, however, Reitlinger does express some doubt over the figures claiming that: "Much juggling with the daily death bills in order to produce an impressive total."⁶⁰ He fails, though, to offer any further analysis of the issue. For example, he does not indicate, what the true figure might be, which leads one to suspect this is mere window dressing. Poliakov, Hilberg and Levin make great use of the figures with no qualifying remarks whatsoever. Their attitude to the figures seems to be driven by their hypothesis that the *Einsatzgruppen's* primary function of the was to exterminate Jews. This conviction is at least partially based on the International Military Tribunal's findings, which will be discussed shortly.

Paget expressed serious doubt over the figures given in the *Einsatzgruppen* reports.⁶¹ He argued that a combination of short winter days, poor roads, the small number of *Einsatzgruppen* personnel and partisan-induced travel difficulties make the reported figures impossible. To illustrate his point, he offered the case study of a reported 10,000 person massacre by *Einsatzgruppe D* at Simferopol in the Crimea.⁶² Without detailing how, Paget argued that he was able to establish through cross checks that the execution had taken place on a single day and had involved eight trucks and approximately one hundred *Einsatzgruppen* personnel. Paget argued that a truck could carry twenty to thirty victims plus their belongings so if all eight trucks were filled there would be two hundred and forty victims in a single trip. A round trip, including loading and unloading takes close to three hours, and taking into account the short winter days, no more than three hundred could have been killed. The present writer, using Paget's own figures and based on a six hour working day, found the figure of 480 could be obtained. This figure could be further raised if the *Einsatzgruppen* did not allow the victims to take their possessions with them. Despite the dubious maths,

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 200-201.

⁶¹ Paget, *Manstein*, p. 170.

⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 170 - 171.

Paget's point is well made. The *Einsatzgruppen* could not have killed 10,000 people in this action. If this argument is extended over other actions, then the *Einsatzgruppen's* Russian figures would have to be drastically reduced. Paget also used various witness statements to argue that, despite the *Einsatzgruppen's* assertion that the area was *Judenfrei*, there was still a visible and active Jewish community in Simferopol.

To counter Paget's argument, both Reitlinger and Hilberg turned to the auxiliary police to boost the number of perpetrators. Reitlinger argued:

"An impression is created by Ohlendorf's original Nuremberg evidence that the entire Jewish massacre program in Russia was carried out by less than 3,000 men - and a few women serving in the combined *Einsatzgruppen*. This is by no means the case. As the director of a vast, largely locally recruited murder organisation, the *Einsatzgruppen* took credit for all that this organisation achieved."⁶³

Hilberg offers further details on the ethnic composition of the auxiliaries. *Einsatzgruppe A* used Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian auxiliary units, while *Einsatzgruppen C* and *D* utilised Ukrainians and local ethnic Germans. Neither offered any firm figures on the numbers involved, although Reitlinger observed that *Einsatzgruppe A* commander, SS Brigadier General Stahlecker, apparently picked three hundred Lithuanian citizens to serve in his *Einsatzgruppe* in June of 1941 and seven months later wrote that eight Lithuanians served in his firing squad to every one German.⁶⁴ Reitlinger, however, fails to show how far these policemen boosted the numbers. This is a major fault in both Hilberg and Reitlinger's argument, as they fail to show how many policemen participated in such actions and if the figures could therefore be correct.

The apparent support given by the *Einsatzgruppen* to pogroms and the inclusion of such deaths in their reports are drawn attention to by Poliakov, Hilberg, Levin and Reitlinger. Of the four, Hilberg offered the most in depth and comprehensive argument. He maintained that all pogroms were either organised or inspired by the *Einsatzgruppen* and could not be restarted after events had settled down. In addition, the areas they occurred in, such as the Baltic States and other regions, were traditionally anti Semitic and Hilberg believed their success should not be overstated. Hilberg argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* instigated such actions because they wanted the population to take a part in the responsibility for the killing operations. As evidence, he used the following statement from Stahlecker's action report: "It was not less important,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶⁴ Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, p. 214.

for future purposes to establish as an unquestionable fact that the liberated population had resorted to the most severe measures against the Bolshevik and Jewish enemy, on its own initiative and without instructions from German authorities."⁶⁵ The idea was to give the Germans an element of blackmail to be used against the local population. Hilberg's argument however, suffers a major flaw. It seems possible and even likely that Stahlecker was merely claiming credit for what the local population would have done anyway. As Hilberg acknowledged, the areas in which pogroms were instigated were traditionally anti-Semitic. They had doubtless carried out pogroms before the Germans arrived and it seems strange to argue that they suddenly needed German assistance or instigation to carry them out. A more likely scenario is that the local population was merely taking advantage of anarchic conditions following the withdrawal of the Russian army to attack a well know scapegoat. Even if the Germans did instigate or organise the pogroms is it reasonable to include these figures in the *Einsatzgruppen* total? The *Einsatzgruppen* did not actually kill these particular victims, and their inclusion in *Einsatzgruppen* totals could be questioned.

The role of the German Army's role in *Einsatzgruppen* massacres is strongly asserted, as Hilberg and Reitlinger attempted to justify the numbers taken from *Einsatzgruppen* reports. Hilberg argued that army units occasionally assisted in the process. He used the case of Simferopol in the Crimea, where the Eleventh Army under Field Marshal von Manstein allegedly assisted with the slaughter of the city's Jews with army trucks, gasoline and personnel. The main evidence used was an affidavit from Sonderkommando 11b commander Werner Braune. This evidence may be tainted because many I.M.T. affidavits were gained under severe duress if not actual torture and so must be used cautiously. Paget counters Hilberg by claiming that the 10,000 Jews allegedly killed at Simferopol would have to have been killed in a day and by no more than 100 people. It must be mentioned that Field Marshal von Manstein was found not guilty on these charges, at his trial in 1949. The disturbing part of this historical debate is that Hilberg did not see fit to refute or even acknowledge Paget's argument. This was to be the beginning of a worrying trend by mainstream Holocaust historians.

As evidence of Eleventh Army's complicity in the Simferopol atrocity and of a general complicity amongst Army personnel, Hilberg points to an order distributed to the XXX corps of the Eleventh Army. Under a heading, "Participation by soldiers in actions against Jews and Communists" the order stated: "In the interest of security in the Rear Army Area it is therefore necessary to take drastic measures. Unfortunately, however,

⁶⁵ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 203.

military personnel have participated in one such action. Therefore I order for the future: only those soldiers may take part in such actions as have been ordered to do so."⁶⁶ Hilberg also quoted from a similar order from the commander of Army Group Rear Area South (Ukraine): "Every unauthorised shooting of local inhabitants, including Jews, by individual soldiers, as well as every participation in executive measures of the SS and Police, is disobedience and therefore to be punished by disciplinary means, or if necessary - by courts martial."⁶⁷ From these and similar orders, Hilberg argued there were a large number of soldiers who were happy to either watch or participate in the actions. Hilberg is incorrect to argue that the presence of these orders prove that there were large numbers of army personnel taking part in such actions. A very small number of actions could result in such orders. It is also noteworthy, Hilberg's evidence is taken from the Army Group South and Eleventh Army regions of Russia, and may not apply to the German army in Russia, as a whole.

Historians of this period argued that the replacement of the *Einsatzgruppen's* mass execution approach by the extermination camps was at least partially because of psychological problems experienced by *Einsatzgruppen* personnel. Paget argued the common line: "The extermination policy worked in the extermination camps where every individual could be given a particular job. It broke down in the field where the same body of men had to be entrusted with the whole operation from capture to murder. Human beings were just not wicked enough to go on doing the whole job."⁶⁸ Reitlinger, Hilberg and Poliakov also offer quotes from *Einsatzgruppen* reports to prove this *seelische Belastung* (moral strain). Poliakov argued: "Not to be underestimated is the extreme psychic tension induced by the great number of liquidations."⁶⁹ It seems obvious that if this strain was as great as the reports state and historians believe, then there should have been attempts by the *Einsatzgruppen* leadership to reduce it.

According to the historians of this period, the *Einsatzgruppen* used a variety of approaches to lessen this *seelische Belastung*. They developed execution methods to de-personalise the killing experience by increasing the physical difference between the killer and victim and decreasing the processing time. One example as favoured by SS Brigadier General Otto Ohlendorf, employed massed fire from a considerable distance

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 214-15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁶⁸ Paget, *Manstein*, p. 171.

⁶⁹ Poliakov, *The Harvest of Hate*, p. 131.

to avoid "personal responsibility."⁷⁰ Another technique was the sardine method. Hilberg describes the method: "The first batch had to lie down on the bottom of the grave. They were killed by cross fire from above. The next batch had to lie down on top of the corpses, heads facing the feet of the dead. After five or six layers, the grave was closed."⁷¹ Hilberg based his findings on affidavits from *Einsatzgruppen* personnel and a report from a German army Major General. There can be no doubt that these were the methods used for execution. There would be no reason for personnel to lie and these methods were used by other armies and security forces.

The *Einsatzgruppen*'s use of gas vans was used by historians of this period to make two points. Firstly, that they were an attempt to lessen the mental strain among *Einsatzgruppen*. Secondly, that the vans were the first step towards the Polish extermination camps and their use of Zyklon B. Hilberg argued: "The vans were delivered to the *Einsatzgruppen* for use against women and children."⁷² The hope was that by using this method to kill women and children the strain of the *Einsatzgruppen* would be lessened. Reitlinger argued that the main function of the vans was to reduce numbers in hospitals, orphanages and asylums. He was careful to state: "The gassing vans have a peculiar horror, but their part in the "Final Solution" in Russia, has been overestimated."⁷³ The failure of the vans was attributed to the small numbers that could be killed using such a method and the ordeal for *Einsatzgruppen* personnel of unloading the bodies. As evidence, a letter from a Doctor Becker to Ostufuhrer Rauff and the affidavits of Otto Ohlendorf and Paul Blobel, were used by Hilberg, Reitlinger, Poliakov and Dawidowicz. The use of affidavits from the I.M.T trial is fraught with difficulty. One can show that strong pressure, and possibly torture, was applied to witnesses at these trials and their words should not be taken lightly.

Another method allegedly used by the *Einsatzgruppen* to lessen strain was the heavy use of alcohol. Poliakov argued: "Alcohol was an important ingredient in the activity of the group. Heavy drinking preceded the executions and also followed them."⁷⁴ Hilberg also commented: "In several units the use of alcohol became routine."⁷⁵ While

⁷⁰ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 209.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 209.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 219.

⁷³ Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*, p. 243.

⁷⁴ Poliakov, *The Harvest of Hate*, p. 131.

⁷⁵ Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 218.

Poliakov offers no evidence for his view, Hilberg takes his evidence from a report by Major General Lahousen. Yet he fails to point out, whether the report showed the *Einsatzgruppe* in question, to be heavier drinkers than other German army units. Most, if not all, commanding officers of any army are forced to act to stop excessive drinking among their personnel at one time, and one such report does not prove that *Einsatzgruppen* members drank to lessen the strain of execution.

One method supposedly used by *Einsatzgruppen* officers to reduce the stress of execution was the use of justification and denial in *Einsatzgruppen* reports. Hilberg argued that denial was shown by the substitution of words like "kill" and "murder" for more neutral terms, such as "elimination", "special treatment" and "security police measures."⁷⁶ Hilberg argued that justification was offered for actions no matter how spurious they were. In the reports Jews were executed for such charges as "spreading rumours," "having the spirit of opposition" and to "prevent epidemics" from the overcrowded ghettos.⁷⁷ Hilberg asserted this justification was an essential part of the process and if an action could not be justified it would not be performed. As proof he offers an example where *Einsatzgruppe A* refused to execute insane people to enable the Army to use the institution as billets.⁷⁸ The *Einsatzgruppe* refused on the basis that the former inmates were not a security threat and so the Army were forced to perform the action. Hilberg argues, however, that reasons never ran out for the killing of Jews and they were always viewed as a security risk.

Dawidowicz, Poliakov and Levin all argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* were at least partially inoculated against the effects of psychological stress by intensive indoctrination. Dawidowicz claimed that those who joined the *Einsatzgruppen* were already committed to National Socialist doctrine. She offers no evidence for this although it must be pointed out that the *Einsatzgruppen* personnel came from the Gestapo, SD, Sipo or the SS and would have likely been indoctrinated at the various training schools. Poliakov describes the three week training course as consisting of drill and target training, as well as ideological indoctrination. The indoctrination included Heydrich himself speaking on the dangers of Judaism and showing that the end goal of the *Einsatzgruppen* was permanent security for Germany. With Operation *Barbarossa* seen as a battle between conflicting ideologies, it seems natural that indoctrination would have been intense and Poliakov's argument shows that this was

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

indeed the case. The fact that Heydrich, the chief of the SD and Police, took time out to speak to the *Einsatzgruppen* shows how strongly the Nazi leadership commitment indoctrination..

The three major sources of evidence offered by the historians of this period were taken from the 42 volume "Blue Series". The first to be examined is their use of the affidavits and court testimony of former leader of Einsatzgruppe D, SS Major-General Otto Ohlendorf. His position in the organisation and the extensive nature of his court testimony gives his testimony particular strength and he is widely used by all the historians of this period. Only Paget pointed out that Ohlendorf had been sentenced to death in 1947, and his use at Field Marshal von Manstein's trial should have been disallowed. None of the historians of this period mention that Ohlendorf's testimony at the I.M.T trial differed greatly to that which he offered at the later *Einsatzgruppen* trial. The failure to discuss or even acknowledge these changes is a methodological lapse by these historians. The differences between the testimonies should have been explained and this methodological failure can only be seen as an attempt to protect the source of information and to deliberately mislead the reader.

Another major source of evidence from the "Blue Series" used by the historians of this period, was the eyewitness account of Hermann Friedrich Graebe. Graebe, a building foreman, allegedly witnessed a massacre of Jews at Dubno airport in Poland on October 5, 1942. His account is quoted at length by Poliakov, Reitlinger and Levin. Graebe describes how the naked victims were taken into a pit in groups of twenty, before being ordered to lay down on top of already dead victims, where they were shot. He then states: "The pit was already two-thirds full. I estimated that it held a thousand people... Then I heard a series of shots. I looked into the pit and saw that their bodies still twitched or that their heads lay motionless on top of the other bodies before them. blood ran from their necks."⁷⁹ All three historians use this report to properly convey the horror of such actions and humanise the victims. They all fail, however, to show if the testimony was validated by use of documents for example an *Einsatzgruppen* report, or independent witnesses. Even if true, the one incident does not constitute a pattern unless linked to similar evidence and examples.

The third and final major source of evidence from the "Blue Series" are the *Einsatzgruppen* reports. Having already been dealt with, the report statistics will be ignored. The reports themselves are used extensively by all this period's historians. Hilberg believes anti-partisan actions are a euphemism for Jew-killing actions. It seems

⁷⁹ I.M.T, vol 31: pp. 696 - 697.

strange that he chose to believe the *Einsatzgruppen* statistics on killing Jews but refuses to believe they engaged in widespread anti partisan actions especially as the difficulties caused by Russian partisans are widely acknowledged and indeed shown by the assassination of SS Brigadier General Stahlecker, commander of *Einsatzgruppe A* in 1942. The major difficulty with using the *Einsatzgruppen* reports is that few if any, of the activities were checked by an impartial superior. In many cases, the *Einsatzgruppen* operated in small groups in isolated areas, and unsurprisingly wrote reports expressing what a good job they were doing and how hard they were working. These factors should have been examined by all the historians of this period, and their failure to do so raises serious methodological problems.

In order to prove that the *Einsatzgruppen* did attempt to exterminate the Jews of Russia, most historians focussed on the officers. This is where the emphasis on the role of the SS in the Holocaust, at this period can be seen. In their works on the SS, Hohne and Reitlinger presented the officers as freaks. Reitlinger described them: "Displeased intellectual is their best description. An architect who took to drink, an unfrocked parson, a fallen opera singer and an unemployed dentist."⁸⁰ Hohne more gently described them as: "a curious collection - highly qualified academics, ministerial officials, lawyers and even a Protestant priest and an opera singer."⁸¹ Hilberg, however, disagreed, asserting that rather than being social outcasts the *Einsatzgruppen* officers were calmly dispassionate intellectual killers. He argued: "These men were in no sense, hoodlums, delinquents, common criminals or sex maniacs ... they brought to their new task all the skills and training which as men of thought, they were capable of contributing. These men in short, became efficient killers."⁸² Both of the arguments are overstated, although when one considers the state of psychology at that time, it is easy to understand why historians grasped at such straws. Hilberg's reasoning is based on what he believes the qualities of men in the professions to be, and he offers no evidence for these beliefs. While the examples they give were *Einsatzgruppen* officers, there were many more who were ordinary family men. Like the reporting of the Nuremberg trials before them, Hohne and Reitlinger cast leading Nazis as evil and so the war time propaganda continued.

In order to better explain why officers joined the *Einsatzgruppen*, Reitlinger and Hohne examined the commanders one by one. They argued that SS Brigadier Generals Stahlecker and Rasch, Commandants of *Einsatzgruppen A* and C respectively, were

⁸⁰ Reitlinger, *SS: Alibi for a Nation*, p. 141.

⁸¹ Hohne, *The Order of the Deaths Head*, p. 357.

⁸² Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 189.

hoping to advance their SS careers by serving with the *Einsatzgruppen*. SS Major General Otto Ohlendorf, Commandant of Einsatzgruppe D, was attempting to avoid appearing a coward as he had twice refused postings to the eastern front. They disagreed over SS Major General Artur Nebe, Commandant of Einsatzgruppe B, reasons for volunteering. Reitlinger argued that Einsatzgruppe B was expected to police Moscow and Nebe left five months later, when that prospect disappeared. Hohne disagreed arguing that Nebe volunteered to appear keen to Himmler and so enhance his promotion chances. Reitlinger's argument has the greater currency because of Nebe's previous position as chief of *Kripo* (criminal police). This position, his previous experience as a police detective in the Weimar Republic and later with the Gestapo, meant he possessed experience in civilian policing which would have been useful for such a role. With this previous experience and his short five month tour as commander, Reitlinger's hypothesis seems more likely.

In complete contrast to Hohne and Reitlinger is Hilberg who argued that Ohlendorf's appointment was because Heydrich felt that Ohlendorf was too independent and wanted to teach him a lesson. In general, however, Hilberg argued that the officers of the *Einsatzgruppen* were driven by career ambitions but that there is no indication that any of them went out of their way to be assigned to the *Einsatzgruppen*. In short, Hilberg believes these men to be ordinary profession German men and argued that they became efficient killers. Hilberg offers no evidence for his assertion that the men did not seek deployment in the *Einsatzgruppen* and so it must be ignored.

In conclusion, this first period largely featured a continuation of the International Military Trial hypothesis that the *Einsatzgruppen* were the beginning of the Final Solution. Apart from Paget, all the historians agreed that at least one of the *Einsatzgruppen's* functions had been the extermination of Russia's Jews. It was also widely agreed that the *Einsatzgruppen* had been the first unsuccessful attempt at the "Final Solution." The failure of the *Einsatzgruppen* brought about by psychological difficulties supposedly resulted in the establishment of the extermination camps of Poland. The historians of this era, particularly Hilberg, shaped the Holocaust debate that was to follow. Their attempts to bring order to a wide-ranging and complex subject, while not always successful, gave a structure for the historians that followed to build on.

Chapter Three

Later Holocaust Literature 1978 - 1997

This chapter examines Holocaust literature from 1978 to 1997. Works in this period examined different issues than the earlier Holocaust works. Some issues had seemingly been decided by this time, for example the relationship between the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Army, while other issues like the functionalist versus intentionalist debate are raised for the first time.

During this period there was a growth in the number and importance of Holocaust works from Israeli universities. This was largely bought about by government and public support and funding of Holocaust history. One historian who benefited was Yehuda Bauer, the Head of Contemporary Jewry at Hebrew University, authors two such works. The Holocaust in Historical Perspective published in 1978, was a collection of four essays on various aspects of the Holocaust including an attack on Holocaust Revisionism.⁸³ His second, A History of the Holocaust, published in 1982, placed the Holocaust in European anti-Semitic history and concluded with nine reasons for its perpetration.⁸⁴ Almost all of which concerned either issues in German society or the German need for identity.

The strong support for Holocaust history in Israel resulted in many historians dividing their time between America and Israel. One example was Walter Laquer, who taught history at Tel Aviv University as well as chairing the International Research Council of the Center of Strategic and International Studies in Washington. His work The Terrible Secret, published in 1980, examined the dissemination of information about the Holocaust to both Jews and non-Jews and the reaction of each group to the information.⁸⁵ A second example was Saul Friedlander, who was a professor at both Tel Aviv and UCLA universities. Simply titled, Nazi Germany & the Jews: Volume 1, The Years of Persecution, 1933 - 1939 this 1997 work, examined the laws and other measures employed by the Nazis to limit contact between Germans and Jews.⁸⁶ Friedlander believed that such measures distanced Jews from the general German populace and eased the way for the subsequent attempted extermination of the Jews.

⁸³ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (London: Sheldon Press, 1978).

⁸⁴ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Franklin Watts Publishers, 1982).

⁸⁵ Walter Laquer, *The Terrible Secret* (London: Weidenfiedl and Nicolson, 1980).

⁸⁶ Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1, The Years of Persecution, 1933 - 39* (New York: Harper Collins 1997).

Another group of Holocaust historians came from American, mostly Ivy League universities. Two controversial historians from this source are Arno Mayer and Daniel Goldhagen. Mayer, a Jewish Yale scholar and former citizen of Luxembourg, had his work Why did the Heavens not Darken? published in 1988.⁸⁷ He argued that Jews were killed not solely because of their ethnicity but because of the Nazi belief that Bolshevism and the Jews were irrevocably linked. Mayer argued that the battle for Russia was seen as a war of ideologies between National Socialism and Russian Communism and the Jews were victims of this view. Daniel Goldhagen's controversial, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust argues that a climate of "eliminationist anti-Semitism" had lead ordinary Germans to kill Jews.⁸⁸ The final historian in this category, Raul Hilberg, based at the University of Vermont, released a revised and expanded The Destruction of the European Jews in 1985.⁸⁹ He later simplified and condensed this material again to release Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders in 1993.⁹⁰ In this latter work Hilberg divided those involved in the Holocaust into the three title categories.

England's contribution to the debate came from Martin Gilbert, the official Churchill biographer, who published The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy also released as Final Journey: The Fate of the Jews in Nazi Europe in 1986.⁹¹ This work consists mostly of eyewitness accounts of various atrocities with Gilbert's main contribution being to place the accounts in political and social context. Other works that will play a smaller part in this chapter include: The Holocaust by the Hebrew writer Leni Yahil, The Path to Genocide by the American, Christopher Browning and Hitler and the Jews by Phillippe Burin.⁹² These works are used to offer different viewpoints from the main texts and to clarify issues, where they offer a clearer way forward.

⁸⁷ Arno Mayer, *Why did the Heavens not Darken?* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

⁸⁸ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, Vintage Books, 1997).

⁸⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985).

⁹⁰ Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders* (London: Limetree Publishers, 1993).

⁹¹ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London: Guild Publishing, 1986).

⁹² Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust : The Fate of European Jewry, 1932 - 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Phillippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews ; The Genesis of the Holocaust* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994).

To understand the debate concerning the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Holocaust, it is first necessary to understand the functionalist versus intentionalist debate which dominates this period. The intentionalist viewpoint originated at the International Military Tribunal Trial at Nuremberg. Among the myriad charges faced by the Nazi leadership was that of conspiring to commit aggressive war. Historians continued this conspiracy to include both war crimes and crimes against humanity. Intentionalists argue that the Nazis, and Hitler in particular, desired and planned the total physical destruction of the Jews in Europe before the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. The central tenant of their argument is that the Nazis constantly and unwaveringly intended to physically destroy the European Jews and only political and tactical reasons delayed this action. Broadly speaking the intentionalists argue that the Nazis moved to the "Final Solution" in three major steps. First, they legally defined and economically isolated the Jews, thus removing them from the economic and legal life of the country. Second, the Nazis "ghettoised" the Jews, which physically removed them from the wider community. The third step was the "Final Solution", that is the physical destruction of the Jews.

Gilbert, Goldhagen, Friedlander and Yahil are four prominent proponents of the intentionalist position. The intentionalists believe Hitler was the main driving force behind the Holocaust and so they concentrate their analysis on him. To analyse Hitler they use his writings and public speeches. Typical of this approach is Goldhagen's use of a speech purportedly given by Hitler at a public meeting in 1920. He quotes: "We are animated with an inexorable resolve to seize the Evil (Jews) by the roots and to exterminate it root and branch. To attain our aim we should stop at nothing, even if we must join forces with the Devil."⁹³ Goldhagen argues that Hitler's use of the idiom for extermination shows he intended, even then, to eliminate the Jewish race. Yet Goldhagen's analysis of this speech is flawed. Political speeches are, by their nature used at a specific time and place for a specific purpose. At a public political meeting, rhetoric is often fiery and emotional as speakers attempt to sway the crowd, to join their political party or embrace their viewpoint. Hitler's use of such rhetoric shows his mastery of populist speech making and while the speech is violently anti-Semitic, it does not prove Hitler intended to exterminate the Jews. Hitler's speeches do have a role in studying the Holocaust but it is a more cautious one than Goldhagen subscribes to.

Hitler's Mein Kampf is the second major source of evidence used by intentionalists to prove Hitler's eliminationist intent.⁹⁴ Gilbert offers the following two quotes. First:

⁹³ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p.134.

⁹⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1926).

"There is no such thing as coming to an understanding with the Jews. It must be the hard and fast "Either-Or."⁹⁵ Gilbert uses this quote to show Hitler's belief that Jews must be eliminated to enable Germany to become great again. Gilbert then offers a quote from the second volume of Mein Kampf, which apparently points to the use of gas chambers in the "Final Solution." "At the beginning of the war (referring to World War I) or even during the war, if twelve or fifteen thousand of these Jews who were corrupting the nation had been forced to submit to poison gas, just as hundreds of our best German workers from every social stratum and from every trade and calling had to face it on the field, then the millions of sacrifices made at the front would not have been made in vain."⁹⁶ The difficulty with using Hitler's writings to show a direct path to the 'Final Solution' is that his language is almost always aggressive and does not therefore necessarily signal intent. One example of this language can be found in a memorandum he dictated in August 1936, concerning the Four Year Plan and proposed war with the Soviet Union. He stated: " A victory over Germany by Bolshevism would lead not to a new Versailles but to the final annihilation, indeed the extermination, of the German nation."⁹⁷ Despite his choice of words, it seems unlikely that Hitler seriously believed that the Soviet Union would execute the entire German population. He was clearly meaning the destruction of Germany's economic, political and military infrastructure and the end of Germany as a European power. A similar case can be made for his comments concerning the Jews. Hitler may have wanted nothing more than to annihilate the Jews as a political and economic force, which in his perverted world view held unreasonable sway over the world and more particularly Germany. The intentionalists, insist however, that such statements are clear signposts to the Final Solution.

Opposing the intentionalists in this period are the functionalists, represented by Bauer, Hilberg and Mayer. Bauer offers a succinct expression of the functionalist argument in The Holocaust in Historical Perspective: "Nazi policy towards the Jews developed in stages, but that does not mean that there was a clearly conceived plan nor that at any given turning point there were not other options open to the Nazis that were considered seriously."⁹⁸ This is the key difference between the two sides. The functionalists believe that the Nazis did not always intend the physical destruction of the Jews and

⁹⁵ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 27.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 28 - 29.

⁹⁷ Document 409, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918 - 1945. Series C, Volume V, March 5, 1936 - October 31, 1936* (Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1966), p. 855.

⁹⁸ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* p. 11.

arrived there only as other options disappeared, whereas the intentionalists argue that it was only tactical and political considerations that prevented the immediate implementation of the "Final Solution." As proof that the Nazis did not always intend to exterminate the Jews, most functionalists point to the "Madagascar Plan." Under this scheme, the Nazis allegedly planned to ship European Jews to the island of Madagascar, and so achieve a Jew-free Europe. Unlike the intentionalists, Hilberg argues that this plan was considered seriously: "A last minute project to ship the Jews to the african island of Madagascar had fallen through. The Jewish problem had to be solved in some other way....The European Jews were to be killed."⁹⁹

In addition to the failure of the Madagascar plan, functionalists point to Operation *Barbarossa* as the beginning of the Final Solution. Bauer argues: "the invasion of Russia would provide a formidable smoke-screen for mass murder of civilians, the non human, demonic Jews could be murdered. Annihilation was the practical solution."¹⁰⁰ According to Bauer, the ideological battle between National Socialism and Communism, which resulted in widespread state sanctioned atrocities including mass executions on both sides, made the implementation of the Final Solution easier. The functionalists also argue that the failure of Operation *Barbarossa* meant that the Nazis abandoned their follow up plan of expelling Jews to the far reaches of Russia. The continual movement of Jews to the East, however, resulted in a shortage of space for the new arrivals and one way to make space was to kill those who had arrived earlier. The Nazi regime was not opposed to killing large groups of people, as the T-4 programme for the destruction of handicapped people had shown. So, the 'Final Solution' was an ad hoc but recognised way of dealing with such difficulties.

Between these two positions is Phillippe Burrin, author of Hitler and the Jews. He describes his position as having aspects of both intentionalist and functionalist arguments: "Like the intentionalists I believe that Hitler harboured the intention of exterminating the Jews...[This]was conditional ...[and] carried out only in the event of a well defined situation. Like the functionalists I maintain that a combination of circumstances was essential to the fulfilment of this intention, for its translation into action: here the perception of the failure of the Russian campaign and of its strategic consequences played a decisive part."¹⁰¹ His approach still leaves Hitler at the centre of the Holocaust but does not present the gradual evolution of the Holocaust as either a

⁹⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jewry* p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* p. 194.

¹⁰¹ Phillippe Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews* pp. 23 - 24.

predetermined path or an ad hoc solution to a growing problem. His viewpoint, while interesting, is little more than a footnote in the Holocaust debate of this period, as intentionalists and functionalists battle it out.

While all historians of this period acknowledge the *Einsatzgruppen* had a variety of duties and functions, they disagree over the *Einsatzgruppen's* main task. The following quote from Goldhagen shows the variety of these duties: "The *Einsatzgruppen* officers were told of their duties, which consisted broadly of securing the conquered rear areas behind the ever advancing army. This job required that they identify and kill leading representatives of the communist regime, any one who might foment and organise resistance against the German occupation. They also learned of Hitler's decision to exterminate Soviet Jewry."¹⁰² Bauer, Goldhagen, Hilberg and Yahil argue that the mass executions of Jews were the beginnings of the "Final Solution." The attempted extermination of the Jews, these four argue, was the main task of the *Einsatzgruppen*. Typically, Goldhagen states: "The *Einsatzgruppen* were the equivalent of genocidal scouting parties, developing the methods of killing and generally speaking, working out the feasibility of the overall enterprise."¹⁰³

Hilberg agrees, stating: "The mobile killing operations in the occupied USSR were a prelude to a greater undertaking in the remainder of Axis Europe. A "Final Solution" was going to be launched in every region under German control."¹⁰⁴ All the intentionalists argue this hypothesis. The intentionalist approach believes none of the developments in the Holocaust were ad hoc. Both Hilberg and Goldhagen point to the *Einsatzgruppen's* small number of personnel (3,000) and their use of gas vans as evidence of their experimental nature. They imply that the gas vans and the later use of such execution methods in the extermination camps shows that the *Einsatzgruppen* were conducting a feasibility study.

The second school of thought represented by functionalist Mayer, is that the *Einsatzgruppen* were primarily anti-communist extermination squads. In Why did the Heavens not Darken?, Mayer uses an order from Heydrich dated 2 July 1941 as evidence that the *Einsatzgruppen* were ordered to concentrate on executing "all functionaries of the Comintern; the higher, middle and lower functionaries of the party, the central committees, provincial and territorial committees; peoples commissars, Jews

¹⁰² Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* p. 149.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁴ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* p. 157.

occupying party and state positions; other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, terrorists, agitators etc)." ¹⁰⁵ Mayer uses this order to argue that Jews were shot not because they were Jews but because "They [German soldiers and associated armies] considered the Jews the primary carriers of the Bolshevist system and ideology." ¹⁰⁶ The Jews were ,therefore, casualties of an ideological war between Bolshevism and National Socialism, in which they were identified with the Bolshevist cause. According to Mayer, the *Einsatzgruppen's* main aim was to destroy communism by exterminating its agents and organisers, and the killing of Jews was an attempt to do this.

Hilberg's *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders* argues that the function of the *Einsatzgruppen* was the destruction of the Jewish-Bolshevist intelligentsia, including leading Jews and communist officials. Hilberg argues this purely from the small size of the *Einsatzgruppen*. He believes that the squads were too big to shoot a few commissars and too small for the total annihilation of Soviet Jewry. The argument while challenging, is not backed up by any evidence. Hilberg has noticeably changed his position since his re-issue of *The Destruction of European Jewry*, and in *Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders* is now arguing a functionalist argument for the Holocaust.

Having shown the three schools of thought on the *Einsatzgruppen*, it is necessary to examine the evidence offered by each side. The "Final Solution" group argue that in late 1940 or early 1941 Hitler made the decision to exterminate the Jews of the USSR. Typically for an intentionalist, Goldhagen uses Hitler's speech of January 30, 1941 as evidence. In this speech, Hitler stated: " should the other world be plunged into war by Jewry, the whole of Jewry will have played out its role in Europe. They [the Jews] may also laugh about it even today, just as they laughed earlier about my prophesies. *The coming months and years will prove that I have been right.* (emphasis added by Goldhagen)." ¹⁰⁷ Goldhagen argues that the phrase in italics shows that Hitler had given the order and rather than speaking of some incident in the far off future had now decided to implement the physical extermination of the Jews. This may be an improper use of a source by Goldhagen as he fails to put the speech in historical context; that is, Hitler was attempting to buoy the German people's spirits before the invasion of the USSR. He is also offering only a small piece of the speech for examination which also makes it difficult to place it in context. The use of Hitler's speeches as evidence shows

¹⁰⁵ Arno Mayer, *Why did the heavens not Darken?* p. 255.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 147.

a deep seated hatred of Jews but does not offer real evidence of the Hitler issuing the "Final Solution" order.

One of the sources used heavily by all sides of the debate on the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* are the *Einsatzgruppen* situation reports which were sent back to Himmler and other leading Nazi officials. Historians such as Gilbert, Bauer, Hilberg and Yahil, who believe that the *Einsatzgruppen's* main purpose was the extermination of the Jews make extensive use of the report figures. This example is from Gilbert: "The Berlin 'Situation report' noted the killings of 1,726 Jews in Lvov, 128 in Brest-Litovsk and 941 in Bialystok."¹⁰⁸ There are two main difficulties with using the figures without qualification. Firstly, none of the figures were verified by a senior officer and could be the result of over reporting as is common in unsupervised situations. The second difficulty is that even if the figures were correct, this does not mean the purpose of the *Einsatzgruppen* was to wipe out Soviet Jews. The *Einsatzgruppen* could well have killed Jews because Jews were a group to make an example of, without risking the wrath of the generally anti-Semitic wider population.

Heydrich allegedly informed the *Einsatzgruppen* officers at Berlin or Pretzsch of Hitler's decision to exterminate the Jews. Goldhagen and other intentionalist scholars argue that this was in keeping with a general practice of transmitting explicit orders for the extermination of the Jews solely by oral means. When dealing with written orders these scholars argue that the orders were codified using terms such as "Final Solution" and "Special Treatment". This argument is used to account for the absence of any explicit written orders on the extermination of the Jews. This argument is based on unlikely premises. The I.M.T "Blue Series" shows that the Nazis left a veritable raft of documents on a number of topics and seemed to have placed great store in proper documentation. It seems unlikely that the Nazis would have failed to properly document such a large and important undertaking. Leaving that argument for a moment, Goldhagen offers a statement from Walter Blume of Sonderkommando 7a who was present at Heydrich's speech as evidence. Blume stated "There was no mistaking it that all Jews were supposed to be exterminated without regard to age or sex."¹⁰⁹ This statement is taken from an indictment for the I.M.T trial. As shown earlier, the post war trials of the Nazis are not necessarily an unbiased source of information with many *Einsatzgruppen* senior officials, already having been sentenced to death, keeping themselves alive by offering evidence against others. In such a

¹⁰⁸ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p.179.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 149.

situation, the statement could have been gained under duress and Goldhagen's incautious use of it is clearly poor work.

Burrin strongly disagrees with Goldhagen and others who believe that the *Einsatzgruppen* were sent into Russia with orders to exterminate all Soviet Jewry. He believes that this order was given either in late July or early August 1941. Burrin bases his argument on *Einsatzgruppen* activity reports. He points out that a rough estimate would show the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed fifty thousand Jews by mid August of 1941; that is, in nearly two months of activity. By the end of the year they claimed to have killed five hundred thousand Jews, in the remaining four months of the year. Burrin claims that this escalation must be due to the issue of an extermination order. He argues that the *Einsatzgruppen* were probably told at the beginning of the campaign to kill as many of the Jewish elite as possible and with the German army's progress being slowed the *Einsatzgruppen* was told to begin the extermination process.¹¹⁰

There are difficulties with this argument. One is that it is based on an unreliable source. As shown earlier in this chapter the situation reports need to be used with care. There may be other conceivable reasons why the figures climb so rapidly. One could be that as the *Einsatzgruppen* head further in Russia and are therefore spread more thinly, they exaggerate the numbers they execute because the vast distances involved lessen the chances of being caught doing so. They might also claim a greater percentage of those executed as Jews because of the same lack of supervision. These reasons are at least as likely as those offered by Burrin.

In defence of his hypothesis that the *Einsatzgruppen* were primarily concerned with exterminating communist officials, Mayer points to a situation report from Einsatzgruppe C which states: "Even if it were possible to shut out Jewry one hundred percent, the centre of political danger would not be eliminated ... the Bolshevik apparatus is by no means identical with the Jewish population." The statement then argues the risk of "replacing the main task of destroying the communist machine with the relatively easier one of eliminating the Jews."¹¹¹ This statement does not prove that the *Einsatzgruppen's* primary role was not the elimination of the Jews as this is only the view of one commander. Other commanders may have seen their role differently, but it does show that the role and intention of the *Einsatzgruppen* could well have been perceived differently amongst their own personnel.

¹¹⁰ Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews*, pp. 105 - 113.

¹¹¹ Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens not Darken?* p. 272.

The small size of the *Einsatzgruppen* is used by all sides to argue their case. Mayer argues that they were obviously formed to kill leading communists and other dissidents because they were too small to exterminate all Soviet Jewry. Historians such as Goldhagen, Yahil and Gilbert counter this, arguing that the *Einsatzgruppen* used auxiliary police to bolster their numbers thus making the figures given in the reports more likely. In The Destruction of the European Jews, Hilberg argues that the establishment of auxiliary police was swift in the Baltic areas with Einsatzgruppe A making extensive use of both Latvians and Lithuanians. *Einsatzgruppen* C and D made use of Ukrainian militia and D also made use of ethnic Germans in Southern Ukraine. Mayer argues that the *Einsatzgruppen* may not have planned to use auxiliary police from the outset but there is no debate that these forces were used to overcome the manpower shortage. The auxiliary police are argued to have assisted in the round up of Jews and occasional actions by themselves in the form of pogroms. Their exact level of support appears to have varied from province to province but no historians doubts they participated. This brings the chapter to the issue of pogroms.

Pogroms are dealt with in depth by Mayer and Hilberg, although Gilbert and Goldhagen also examine them. Hilberg argues that most pogroms occurred in the "buffer" regions and that they were the result of *Einsatzgruppen* influence, which he claims was shown by the fact that they all occurred shortly after their arrival. Gilbert claims that the *Einsatzgruppen* offered food, alcohol, cigarettes or small sums of money to those citizens who killed or delivered Jews to them. Mayer argues: "The *Einsatzgruppen* applauded and encouraged these murderous assaults, even if they instigated or master minded only a few of them."¹¹² Hilberg and Mayer then use the same source to prove contradictory arguments. SS Brigadier General Dr Stahlecker wrote to his superiors informing them that he had persuaded reticent "local anti-Semitic elements to start (their initial) pogroms against the Jews."¹¹³ Mayer argues that the *Einsatzgruppen* leader is claiming "excessive credit for what the Lithuanians were inclined and able to do on their own, especially since there was neither police nor army to restrain them."¹¹⁴ Mayer thus claims that the crime was one of omission rather than commission. He further claims that the buffer zone pogroms were a continuation of the Lithuanian and Latvian struggles against communism and Russia. The fact that many Jews were in high positions in the Communist party because the Russians offered protection from

¹¹² Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens not Darken?* p.258.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.259.

¹¹⁴ *ibid* p.259.

pogroms and other anti-Semitic abuse only offered further reasons for the general population to attack them. Mayer also directly attacks Hilberg's assertion that all pogroms were instigated by the *Einsatzgruppen* by offering the example of Lvov on the July 2 and 3 which allegedly resulted in the deaths of 7,000 Jews. He argues that action commandos of Einsatzgruppe C had not yet arrived and therefore could not have instigated the action. He takes evidence from an action report to claim that the specific commandos were still at least a day's travel away.

Even if Mayer is wrong on this example, as situation reports are not the most reliable of sources, his overall refutation of Hilberg's position is strong. In areas such as Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine with a long history of pogroms it seems likely that the mere absence of any security force would have been sufficient for them to resume such activities, with perhaps only a little prompting. The *Einsatzgruppen* would have had to do very little to encourage such activity and indeed it would seem much of it had occurred before they arrived and the *Einsatzgruppen* either did not strongly discourage it or lightly encouraged an action that was already occurring. The next area to deal with is the relationship between the army and the *Einsatzgruppen* and see what that shows as regards the *Einsatzgruppen's* role.

This debate has largely lost its sting as the historians of this period argue that the army leadership and general personnel knew that the *Einsatzgruppen* were engaged in large civilian executions. The two historians who have the most to say on the issue are Hilberg and Lacquer. Lacquer correctly claims that members of the *Einsatzgruppen* were reposted after they finished their tour, and human nature makes it likely that they spoke to others of their experiences. He also mentions the lax security around the execution sites with army personnel not only watching but also taking photos of *Einsatzgruppen* executions.¹¹⁵ Hilberg backs Lacquer, offering evidence in the form of a memorandum from the Chief of Staff of 11th Army, General Wohler, which stated: "The distribution of photographs and the spreading of reports about such events will be regarded as subversion of decency and discipline in the army and will be punished accordingly."¹¹⁶ Hilberg also points to a generally congenial attitude between the Army and the *Einsatzgruppen*. He quotes from *Einsatzgruppen* reports which state: "The armed forces surprisingly welcome hostility against Jews" and describes relations with the Army as "excellent" and "very close, yes even cordial." All of the historians offered in this chapter argue that the army not only knew but also in some cases took an

¹¹⁵ Walter Lacquer, *The Terrible Secret*, pp.19-20.

¹¹⁶ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 131.

active role in the killings. Mayer states that on June, 27 1941 at Bialystok , "a Wehrmacht unit and action commando of Einsatzgruppe B massacred about 2,000 Jews."¹¹⁷ A complete absence of footnotes by Mayer makes sourcing the statement impossible. Hilberg also argued that soldiers offered their help to the killing parties and joined in the executions. For evidence, Hilberg points to an order from the commander of Rear Army Group South. The order states that "Every unauthorised shooting of local inhabitants, including Jews by individual soldiers as well as every participation in executive measures of the SS and Police is disobedience and therefore to be punished by disciplinary means, or if necessary by courts martial." ¹¹⁸ Hilberg reasons that the presence of such an order means that there must have been actions to require it's issue. This is a fair argument and certainly the tone of the letter suggests that such actions have occurred rather than trying to prevent a foreseeable occurrence.

In conclusion, the debate over the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Holocaust matured greatly over this period. It has been driven by the intentionalist versus functionalist debate which has for the first time offered another viewpoint from the I.M.T hypothesis that the Holocaust was planned prior to 1939. The *Einsatzgruppen* debate has also seen the emergence of the American and Israeli professional university historians and so the amateur has slowly been marginalised. Of great concern has been the increasingly lax use of documentation from the I.M.T trials. Figures from *Einsatzgruppen* reports have been cited without placing them in context or seriously questioning their validity. Of even greater concern has been the quoting of secondary sources by historians rather than examining the original documents, as the need to examine primary documents and place them in historical context is essential if meaningful progress is to be made.

¹¹⁷ Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens not Darken?*, p. 265.

¹¹⁸ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 132.

Chapter Four

The Order Police Debate

This chapter investigates a recent addition to the *Einsatzgruppen* debate: the role played both inside and outside that organisation by the Order Police. The use of Order Police in the *Einsatzgruppen* forced a reexamination of commonly held perceptions on the motives of Holocaust perpetrators. Christopher Browning's seminal 1992 work, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, used the findings of psychological experiments to explain battalion members' participation or non participation in genocidal activities.¹¹⁹ This work was both used and attacked by Goldhagen in his best selling 1996 book, Hitler's Willing Executioners.¹²⁰ Goldhagen's extreme intentionalism clashed head on with Browning's moderate functionalism. Other scholars joined the fray and three books criticising Goldhagen's theme of German eliminationist anti-Semitism were quickly released. A collection of essays by leading Holocaust scholars, including Yehuda Bauer and Hans Mommsen, challengingly titled Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen, appeared in 1997.¹²¹ Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Bern collaborated to release A Nation on Trial in 1998.¹²² This work attacked what it termed Goldhagen's monocausal explanation for the Holocaust. The third work released, Unwilling Germans?: the Goldhagen Debate, was a collection of both pro and anti-Goldhagen articles from leading German newspapers and magazines.¹²³ Unwilling Germans? showed the response of the German press and the wider population to Goldhagen's work and the broader issue of the Holocaust. The final work consulted in this chapter is Christopher Browning's The Path to Genocide.¹²⁴ This collection of essays deals with many aspects of the "Final Solution" and proved useful for clarifying Browning's functionalist position.

¹¹⁹ Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

¹²⁰ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (New York: Random House, 1997).

¹²¹ Franklin Littell (ed), *Hyping the Holocaust: Scholars Answer Goldhagen*, (Pennsylvania: Merion Westfield Press, 1997).

¹²² Norman Finkelstein and Ruth Bern, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998).

¹²³ Robert Shandley, (ed) *Unwilling Germans: The Goldhagen Debate*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

¹²⁴ Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The Order Police comprised a substantial section of the special action groups. According to Browning, they contributed 500 personnel to the 3,000 strong *Einsatzgruppen*.¹²⁵ Goldhagen argues, however, that there is a large difference between the philosophies of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Order Police: "Their [Order Police] entire (even if often) perfunctory training and ethos were that of police men, if perhaps that of colonial policemen. The *Einsatzgruppen*, by contrast, were ideological warriors by stated vocation, whose understood reason for being was to exterminate the Jews. They also performed other duties but their prime directive was to kill enemies of the regime. Despite their divergent identities and orientation, police battalions and *Einsatzkommandos* - in their manner of operating and their treatment of Jews - look very much alike."¹²⁶ The Order Police, argues Browning, were a very different group to the highly Nazified *Einsatzgruppen*, and offered the Holocaust scholar a view of "ordinary men." Goldhagen argues, however, that the Order Police were not "ordinary men" but "ordinary Germans", a very different proposition. This begs the question, how did these supposedly not heavily Nazified people become involved in the genocidal activities? More importantly, why did they not say no? The reasons given by Browning and Goldhagen for these men's actions are very different.

Browning notes: "The Order Police resulted from the third attempt in interwar Germany to create a large police formation with military training and equipment."¹²⁷ They were set up to counter the revolutionary threat in 1919, but disbanded a year later by anxious Allies. In 1933, the Nazis once again set up a "police army" which was merged into the regular army in 1935. The Order Police grew rapidly between 1938 and 1939 as recruits joined to avoid more strenuous military service. This already low standard was to drop even further as the drafted reservists continually displaced career policemen between 1940 and 1941. By the end of 1941, this process was complete and the Order Police Battalions were purely reserve units.

The function of the Order Police, according to Browning was to "secure the rear areas." They were "an essential force of manpower in holding down German occupied Europe."¹²⁸ This function differs strongly with that of the *Einsatzgruppen* whom Goldhagen argues were set up to exterminate Jews. Goldhagen admits: "The majority of the time spent by the men of the police battalions was devoted to non-genocidal

¹²⁵ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 10.

⁸ Goldhagen *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 276.

¹²⁷ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 7 - 8.

activities. They undertook ordinary police duties. They guarded installations and buildings. They engaged in anti-partisan warfare."¹²⁹ From this description and the history of the Order Police, it is clear from these authors that this was not an elite military organisation. The sort of people used to guard installations and other lowly security work were rarely high calibre. The two historians also agree that the Order Police were involved in four types of genocidal activity: mass executions of Jews; the clearing of ghettos; the guarding of deportation trains and "Jew hunts."

The differences between Goldhagen and Browning's explanations can be at least partially explained by the intentionalist versus functionalist debate. Browning, who describes himself as a moderate functionalist, argues that external factors, for example peer pressure and authority figures, explain the men's actions. As he believes the Nazis did not always intend to physically exterminate the Jews, he must find such reasons to explain the men's actions. Goldhagen, however, believes that the German people have always wanted to exterminate Jews and were merely waiting for the opportunity. So he is attributing their actions to this collective unconscious anti-Semitism of Germans. To better understand these positions, the chapter will now examine the first case study offered by both historians.

An important case study used by both historians was the Jozenow massacre. The massacre was a straight forward affair.¹³⁰ Reserve Police Battalion 101 arrived at the village shortly before dawn where it was informed by the battalion commander Major Wilhelm Trapp, that it must round up the village's Jews, and, after removing the working age males, execute the remainder. Trapp then made the extraordinary offer that if any of the men did not feel they could perform the imminent task they could step out. Thereupon, twelve men took advantage of the offer and did so. The remaining men then brutally rounded up Jews, shooting those who were too old or frail to walk. Jews were then loaded onto trucks at the market square before being driven to the forest. Upon arrival, executioners paired themselves off with a victim. The group then went into the forest where the Jews were executed. For greater efficiency, executioners divided themselves into two groups so that as one was heading into the forest, the other was coming out. Despite such tactics, progress was slow and resulted in more battalion members being drafted to the shooting squads as the days wore on. By shooting all day without pause, the Battalion reportedly killed 1,700 Jews. The corpses were left unburied partially because of the rushed nature of the execution.

¹²⁹ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 186.

¹³⁰ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 55 - 70.
Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 211 - 222.

The rounding up of Jozenow's Jews was one area of contention between these historians. While Browning acknowledges that there is dissenting opinion over this matter, he appears to believe that battalion members mostly refrained from shooting babies or the elderly.¹³¹ He offers two emphatic testimonies by Order Police personnel denying that such actions took place. One stated: "I would like to say almost tacitly every one refrained from shooting infants and small children."¹³² Yet Goldhagen strongly argues the contrary, reporting a battalion member as saying: "I also know that this order was carried out, because as I walked through the Jewish district during the evacuation, I saw dead old people and infants."¹³³ Neither historian makes a strong case for their witness, so it is difficult to decide. This area of contention does, however, show Goldhagen's tendency to simply ignore evidence that does not fit easily into his argument, whereas Browning presented both sides and noted the difficulty before making his choice, thus leaving the reader better informed to make their own decision.

Another area of contention between Goldhagen and Browning is over the offer made by Major Trapp. Browning asserts that Trapp's offer was only to the older men, but gives no evidence for his view.¹³⁴ Goldhagen disagrees, citing a statement from battalion member Alois Weber and the fact that younger men were amongst those who stepped forward to show a more inclusive offer was made. Despite his strong position, Goldhagen admits that the exact wording is not important. "In some sense it does not matter which account is correct; even if Trapp's offer had been directed only to the older men, it soon became clear to others that it was not only the older men who had the option to avoid killing."¹³⁵ Approximately, ten to thirteen men took the opportunity to opt out.

Browning maintains that two factors prevented members of the battalion from stepping forward. First there was group pressure. As a tight-knit group among a hostile population, the individual had no support network if ostracised from the group and this fear of isolation acted as a powerful deterrent. Browning argues: "Since the battalion had to shoot even if individuals did not, refusing to shoot constituted refusing one's

¹³¹ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 59.

¹³² Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 59.

¹³³ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 215.

¹³⁴ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 57.

¹³⁵ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 214.

share of an unpleasant collective obligation."¹³⁶ Even worse, such a refusal could be seen as a moral reproach to one's comrades. Yet Browning does point out that most non-shooters claimed they were "too weak to kill" and so avoided this difficulty. Browning argues that these pressures and the group values of "toughness" meant that few men could openly refuse to shoot. His study of group dynamics using Milgram's electric shock experiments, while falling short of a complete replication of the situation, (as he admits), does offer solid premises and logical conclusions.

The second factor Browning believes prevented men from stepping forward was one of time. He maintains that a combination of a very early morning start and a lack of time to think and react to news of the action meant that many men did not fully realise what they were being offered.¹³⁷ It was only with the passing of time that many realised exactly what such an action entailed. This argument is both straight forward and sensible. As evidence, he points out that many of these men took opportunities later to withdraw from the executions in a less public fashion.

By contrast, Goldhagen argues that the men did not opt out when given this straight forward choice because they wanted to kill Jews. As proof he points to the open display of photographs from such actions and offers the following quote from one battalion member: "I would like to remark on these photographs. They were hanging on the walls and anyone as he pleased could order copies of them."¹³⁸ Goldhagen contends that battalion members in the photos often appear happy and proud of what they are doing. He offers the example of a photo of a battalion member cutting the beard off a Jew, and asserts that the attack is symbolic on two levels. Firstly, "It represented the absolute mastery of the photographed German over the Jew".¹³⁹ On the second level, the beard was an identifying symbol of Jewry and the photo was a way of recording this attack on the Jewish way of life. While such pictures prove the Germans were proud of intimidating Jews, they fail to show that the Germans were proud of murdering Jews. Such photos would have to show the killing of Jews to make Goldhagen's argument work.

The second group of dissenters offered by Browning are those who tried to make up for the initial missed opportunity by covert methods. He points to members of the First

¹³⁶ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 185.

¹³⁷ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 61.

¹³⁸ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 246.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 246.

Company approaching First Sergeant Kammer to successfully request alternative duties. Such duties mostly consisted of being a cordon guard rather than an executioner. Browning points out that these men knew Kammer well and so their being given alternative duties appears to be a deal performed out of friendship. He argues that other battalion members used methods well known to any work place supervisor, to avoid becoming an executioner. These included hiding from superiors, milling about to appear busy, and spending an inordinately long time searching, so one arrived too late to be part of the actual killing. Goldhagen attacks this "reluctant killer" hypothesis, arguing: "To accept the perpetrators self exoneration without corroborating evidence is to guarantee one will be lead down many false paths."¹⁴⁰ He says that the case Browning uses is corroborated only by one other battalion member. Browning's footnotes shows that he has merely used individual statements and he does not make a case for taking one statement over another. He instead relies on findings from Philip Zimbardo's prison experiment. He argues that this second group was part of a large middle group that did not seek opportunities to kill and in some cases refrained when no one was monitoring them. While accepting the legitimacy of Goldhagen's argument, it is difficult to see how evaders could met his criteria for acceptance. Those who engage in "slacking" behaviour do tend to keep it a secret either to themselves or among a close friend or two, as otherwise they would be punished. The behaviour itself seems to be misunderstood by Goldhagen.

The third group of dissenters offered by Browning is those who got themselves excused after killing one or more victims. This form of dissenting took two forms. In one form the men asked to be relieved, usually citing nerves as the reason. In another form, they were taken off the squad for continually shooting past their victims. Browning states: "Even twenty or twenty five years later those who quit shooting along the way overwhelmingly cited sheer physical revulsion against what they were doing but did not express any ethical or political principles behind this revulsion."¹⁴¹ Browning explains this by arguing that the men's level of education would have prevented such a response. Goldhagen disagrees with Browning's interpretation, stating: "The men were sickened by the exploded skulls, the flying blood and bone, the sight of so many freshly killed corpses of their own making... it is hard to believe that the reaction was born of anything but the shock and gruesomeness of the moment."¹⁴² Goldhagen points to the lack of mental breakdowns in the battalion and that only one man put in for a transfer as

¹⁴⁰ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 351.

¹⁴¹ Browning, *ordinary Men*, p. 74.

¹⁴² Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 221.

evidence that the men were not morally appalled by their actions. Goldhagen's case is strong and his evidence and the men's own words appear to convict them.

Another group of three policemen dissented on political or ethical grounds. One was an active communist party member, another a long time Social Democrat and the third believed he was known to be politically unreliable and a "grumbler." Browning examines at some length the testimony of Lieutenant Buchmann and another unnamed police man who offered their reasons for opting out. Both explained that they felt their economic independence made their choice easier as it was of no consequence if they did not have a successful police career. Buchmann, however, also had a "cosmopolitan outlook" and applied successfully for a transfer back to Hamburg. His early objection and application for transfer marks Buchmann as a serious objector.

Yet Goldhagen places little stock in Buchmann's career based explanation. He believes that Buchmann's use of such an explanation is an attempt to avoid incriminating other battalion members for their severe anti-Semitic attitudes. Goldhagen argues: "Simply put, he (Buchmann) viewed Jews differently."¹⁴³ That is, Buchmann viewed Jews as humans and realised that the Order Police were committing atrocities. Goldhagen's explanation explains almost nothing. He fails to examine properly the other reasons Buchmann offers, such as his having travelled and being older, to explain his outlook.

Following Jozenow, the battalion was involved in two other massacres. The one which offers the most insight into either author's view point is the Lomazy massacre. The first area to be examined is the rounding up process. Browning spends less than a paragraph on this part of the massacre, merely commenting that the round up was conducted as at Jozenow. That is, the infants, the old, the sick and the infirm were to be shot on the spot, although once again he argues that his order was not necessarily followed. Goldhagen devotes nearly two pages to the round up. He argues that the behaviour of the battalion when rounding up shows their willingness to kill Jews. Battalion members, he points out, could have refrained from shooting Jews during the round up and merely let the Hiwis (East European auxiliaries), execute them at the killing site. It is noteworthy, that Goldhagen does not directly counter Browning's argument over whether or not the order to kill those who could not move quickly enough was carried out. He offers a court judgement that argues they did so, but does not prove this is more plausible than Browning's argument.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 250.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 554.

Both authors point to significant changes in the killing procedure. Browning points out that most of the shooting was done by Hiwis, the killing process was depersonalised and the executioners were rapidly rotated, so avoiding the problem of seemingly endless shooting. He also points out that Trapp offered no direct choice. The changes made for this second execution, wer, both historians argue, an effort to reduce the psychological strain of killing. Goldhagen points out that the system resembled "more closely, the pattern of *Einsatzgruppen* killing."¹⁴⁵ Both authors also point to the role habituation played in such actions. As Browning put it: "Like much else, killing was something one could get used to."¹⁴⁶

By mid-November 1942, the towns and villages of the north Lublin district had been cleared of Jews. Now the battalion was assigned the task of mopping up the remaining Jews hiding in the forests and countryside. Typically, the operations took the form of a small patrol going out to liquidate an individual bunker which had been reported by nearby Poles. The patrol followed their Polish guides to the bunker where they threw grenades in the openings. They forced the surviving Jews to lie down and executed them with a shot to the neck. The Jew hunts occurred so frequently that they were described by one battalion member as "More or less our daily bread."¹⁴⁷

The police battalions were heavily involved in two major sessions of "Jew hunts". One, in the fall of 1942, the other in the spring of 1943. Both authors use the hunts, as the lack of supervision and degree of choice given to battalion members meant they offer keen insight into the perpetrators mind set. Browning argues that the frequency of such hunts resulted in battalion members becoming numbed and indifferent to their victims. Yet Browning and Goldhagen disagree over whether there were always enough volunteers for such missions. Browning takes a cautious approach and, using two different quotes asserts, that in larger actions, battalion officers and senior non-commissioned officers selected non volunteers to hunting parties if the number of volunteers was insufficient. Goldhagen argues: "The killers admit that it was the norm for men to volunteer for missions to find, ferret out and annihilate more Jews. The killers also tell us that, typically more men volunteered than was required to fill out a given mission."¹⁴⁸ Goldhagen takes this evidence from Judge Hoffman's judgement on

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁶ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁸ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 237.

the case against the Battalion. It is interesting to note that Goldhagen uses evidence from a source one step removed from the actual perpetrators while Browning uses statements from the men themselves. The analysis of Jew hunts contrasts Browning's cautious scholarly approach with Goldhagen's willingness always to believe the worst.

The final genocidal activity to be discussed is the ghetto clearing and the rounding up and guarding of Jews in deportation trains. These activities will be discussed together as they are similar activities with similar issues. Both historians select the round up of approximately 11,000 Jews at Miedzyrzec for deportation trains to Treblinka during August 1942 as a case study of such actions. The round up was particularly brutal with Browning arguing that 960 Jews were shot. These figures were offered by surviving Jews who collected and buried the dead. Browning's use of these figures is problematic as they have not been verified and eye witness accounts may be prone to error. Even allowing for over reporting, it is clear that security forces shot many Jews during this action and that ghetto clearing offered the chance for initiative. That is, the men could shot people or merely move them to the collecting area. Goldhagen states that the Order Police took every opportunity to be cruel, beating them with whips and "forcing them to sit, crouch or lie motionless for hours on end in the midsummer heat without water."¹⁴⁹ Goldhagen argues that such activities were the result of the culture of hatred that Germans had for Jews. Browning countered that the Miedzyrzec ghetto clearing was vicious because of a man-power shortage. He stated: "The greater the pressure on the German ghetto clearers in terms of man-power, the greater their ferocity and brutality to get the job done."¹⁵⁰ As proof, he pointed to the comparatively peaceful clearing of Parczew, where the ratio was far lower. This is yet another example of how Goldhagen's metaphysical approach clashes head on with Browning's search for reason.

Browning grounds his theory in both psychological and Holocaust literature. He dismissed the idea that there was careful selection of battalion members to ensure they would make efficient killers. He pointed out that the enlisted men were middle aged, mostly working class, Hamburgers and therefore unlikely to be efficient mass killers. The officers were even more unlikely. Lieutenant Buchmann and Major Trapp were obvious examples that showed their was no clear selection policy. Browning also dismissed the idea that disobedience to an order to massacre would have resulted in severe penalties. He correctly argued that no one has been able to document a single

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁰ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, p. 95.

case where this happened. Furthermore, it was difficult for a superior in the battalion to pressure non-shooters because of Major Trapp's obvious leniency in such matters.

One psychological experiment used extensively by Browning was Phillip Zimbardo's prison experiment. After gaining volunteers Zimbardo eliminated those who scored beyond the normal range on a raft of psychological test. He divided the remaining test group into guards and prisoners. Within six days, the routine of prison life resulted in escalating brutality and dehumanisation of prisoners and the premature end to the experiment. Browning argued that Zimbardo's findings of three groups within the guards was similar to Reserve Police Battalion 101. One group of guards was cruel and tough, a second group was tough but fair, while the third group of less than twenty percent emerged as guards who did not punish inmates and did small favours for them. Browning argued there was in the battalion a small nucleus of eager killers, a larger group who killed when assigned but did not seek opportunities to do so, and finally a small group of "refusers and evaders."

Another source that Browning, used extensively was Stanley Milgram's electric shock experiments. In these experiments, a "scientific authority" instructed volunteer subjects to inflict an escalating series of fake electrical shocks on an actor. Milgram found that peer pressure and authority figures could result in greater or lesser compliance according to the will of the group. Milgram also found that close proximity to killing or injury drove down compliance, so subjects were less likely to shock the actor if they had to push his or her hand onto a metal contact. Browning believes these findings explain why so few men objected to killing Jews and why many battalion members felt badly about the massacres but little responsibility for the transportation of victims to extermination camps. He is careful to point out that Milgram's experiment falls short of an exact replication of the Jozenow massacre and other genocidal activities. Two factors mentioned are the lack of indoctrination of experiment volunteers and the fact that volunteers were assured that the actor/victim would not suffer any permanent physical damage. Nevertheless, Browning shows that the basic findings of conformity and authority were borne out.

Goldhagen dismisses such arguments as "abstract, ahistorical explanations ... conceived in a social psychological laboratory."¹⁵¹ He argues that the Holocaust is a unique event in human history: "The zeal that characterised the Germans carrying out the retributive and exterminatory policy against European Jews, cannot be accounted for by

¹⁵¹ Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 391.

conventional means."¹⁵² This by definition places the event outside the explanations offered by Browning. Goldhagen states that a climate of "eliminationist anti-Semitism" had existed in Germany for hundreds of years and was the sole motivation for holocaust perpetrators no matter the difference in class, occupation or any other factor.

The evidence used by both authors is taken from the indictment and trial of Reserve Police Battalion 101 by the State Prosecutor in Hamburg, between 1962 and 1972. The use of this source shows important differences between Goldhagen and Browning. Browning uses the men's statements to back up his psychological theories. He illuminates areas of conflict between battalion members testimony and how he chooses between them. Goldhagen by contrast, simply ignores evidence that does not match his theory of German eliminationist anti-Semitism. He fails to point out areas of contention and on occasion, uses judges and prosecution comments to prove his case. The present writer questions the use of such comments, as Goldhagen is using a source one step removed from the battalion members. It seems pointless to do this, when Goldhagen has free access to first hand accounts.

Now having examined what the Order Police did it is useful to examine whether Browning's hypothesis that these are "ordinary men" are correct. Goldhagen describes the battalion members as follows: "Most had not military training, many were marginal physical fodder, and their ages and already established family and professional lives made them less pliable than the youngsters."¹⁵³ Browning's break down of Reserve Police Battalion 101 by age certainly gives credence to Goldhagen's argument. Of the seven reserve police lieutenants, their ages range from thirty three to forty eight, while among the thirty two non-commissioned officers the ages ranged from twenty seven to forty with the average being thirty three and a half. The wide age range of both the officers and N.C.Os and reasonably high average age certainly adds support for the "marginal physical fodder" argument. This is confirmed by the average age of the enlisted men, which was thirty nine. The enlisted men were the "muscle" of the organisation. In this case the muscle is far older than it would be in a fighting unit. The ages also make it more likely that the battalion members have established families and careers and are not relying on this military service for future earnings.

By "ordinary men" Browning is arguing that battalion members are not a heavily Nazified group. He therefore examines the level of Nazi party and SS membership in

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 186.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 183.

the battalion. He points out that five of the seven reserve lieutenants were Nazi party members, but none were SS members. Of the thirty two non-commissioned officers, however, twenty two were party members and seven were in the SS. Of the enlisted men, twenty five percent were Nazi party members. Browning argues that because of the enlisted men's socio-economic position it seems likely that many would have been communist party members or union members before 1933. The last statement is a troubling development as Browning offers no proof of this hypothesis merely tying it to socio-economic position. Furthermore, Browning used this position to claim that this class was anti-Nazi by origin but again offers not evidence. It would appear that Browning was worried by the high rate of Nazi battalion enlisted men and so attempted to explain it away. Goldhagen, argues the men of the battalion " were not particularly Nazified in any significant sense"¹⁵⁴, yet fails to offer evidence. This is negligent as he could merely consult the same sources as Browning.

The final step in Browning's argument that battalion members are "ordinary men" is to offer a breakdown of the men's occupations. Of the enlisted men, sixty three percent were working class with dock worker and truck driver being the most common occupations. Of those remaining, thirty three percent were lower middle class with three quarters of those in sales positions. There was no data for the non commissioned officers and three of the seven reserve lieutenants. Of the remaining four reserve lieutenants one was a salesman, another a forwarding agent, one owned a family lumber business and the fourth was a tea importer. Despite these figures, Goldhagen disputes Browning's interpretation that the battalion men were largely from the lower orders of society. He states: "Though by no means mirroring the occupational structure of Germany exactly, they still formed some representative cross section of the population."¹⁵⁵ This is a strange argument and Goldhagen fails to show how the battalion members perform this function.

These two books and their examination of those who perpetrated the Holocaust moved the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Holocaust debate in a new direction. From being largely an examination of bureaucracy , it became an examination of those who actively killed. This movement must be largely credited to Browning. His central hypothesis that "ordinary men" committed such atrocities prevented the Holocaust debate from becoming the German bashing event it has so often threatened to become. Goldhagen's attacks on Browning were largely ineffective, as he failed directly to engage Browning and offered a monocausal hypothesis for the perpetrators actions. Browning's work

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 182.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 548.

showed that the functionalist approach and its possible use of other disciplines offers greater insight into the human condition and more questions for Holocaust scholars to answer.

Chapter Five

The Revisionists

Holocaust Revisionist historians are the most controversial group in the Holocaust debate. Cast by orthodox historians as "holocaust deniers" their claims apparently have "no more credibility than the assertion that the earth is flat."¹⁵⁶ They are seen by orthodox historians as anti-Semitic cranks and eccentrics whose views are deservedly marginalised. This is only half correct, however, as one observer noted: "Holocaust Revisionist scholars as opposed to Revisionist propagandists, of which there have been many - have never denied that the Nazi regime was rabidly anti-Jewish, that it sought to drive the Jews out of Germany and then from all of German occupied Europe, or that it constructed a vast network of concentration camps for Jews and other 'enemies of the state.'" The same writer argued that Revisionists deny neither the internment of large numbers of Jews in concentration camps and ghettos, the execution of Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen* or what Allied troops found when they liberated camps at the end of World War II. What they do deny, however, is that there was a systematic attempt by the Nazis to exterminate the Jews, first using the *Einsatzgruppen* and then the death camps which purportedly killed six million Jews. This chapter will begin with an overview of the books to be examined and their relevance.

Paul Rassinier's Debunking the Genocide Myth is the first Revisionist work to be examined.¹⁵⁷ Rassinier, a former inmate of Buchenwald and Dora, has been called "the father of Revisionism" because of his pioneering work on the Holocaust. His impact was mostly restricted to the French speaking world as it was many years before they were translated into English. Debunking the Genocide Myth is a collection of four works written over a sixteen year period from 1948 to 1964. Rassinier had little to say on the *Einsatzgruppen*, restricting himself to attacking statistics from the *Einsatzgruppen* Reports and arguing that *Einsatzgruppen* commanders had witnessed under sentence of death making their testimony tainted.

The assault on the English speaking world, and Britain in particular, began with the publishing of Richard Harwood's, Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last in 1974.¹⁵⁸ The booklet claimed that the Allies had used coercion and torture at the

¹⁵⁶ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1993). Comments on rear cover.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Rassinier, *Debunking the Genocide Myth: A Study of Nazi Concentration Camps and the Alleged Extermination of European Jewry*, translated from the French by Adam Robbins (Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1978).

¹⁵⁸ Richard Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?*, (Surrey: Historical Review Press, 1974).

Nuremberg Trials and had faked certain atrocity photographs. Harwood argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* were purely an anti-partisan group and that the numbers they executed had been greatly distorted. The arguments used were taken from leading Revisionist works, with Harwood describing Rassinier's work as "The most important contribution to a truthful study of the extermination question."¹⁵⁹ Harwood's work is written in a journalistic fashion, with little in depth discussion of its findings and so its value is limited for this chapter.

Two Revisionist works which make up the "bible" of Revisionism are Arthur Butz's, 1976 work, The Hoax of the Twentieth Century¹⁶⁰ and Wilhelm Staeglich's Auschwitz: A Judge looks at the Evidence¹⁶¹. These works are included for their apparently high level of scholarship, logical argument and prominent position amongst Revisionist works. Hayward, who nonetheless found much to rebut, commented of Butz's The Hoax: "His book is without doubt the most carefully researched and argued single work of Holocaust Revisionism."¹⁶² Both Butz and Staeglich, argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* killed Jews as part of their anti partisan campaign in Russia but were not established to exterminate Jews. As many of the same arguments are used, this chapter will concentrate on Butz as his work is wider in scope.

David Irving's Hitler's War is included for its controversial view that Hitler may not have ordered the Holocaust. Irving argued: "It is conceivable that Hitler was unaware that his November 1941 order forbidding the liquidation of Jews was being violated on such a scale."¹⁶³ He also argued that there is no written order from Hitler calling for such a measure. While Irving was not at this time denying the extermination hypothesis, this work can be seen as the beginning of his conversion to Revisionism.

The final works to be included in this chapter are surveys of Revisionist texts. The first is The Fate of Jews in German Hands: An Historical Inquiry into the Development and Significance of Holocaust Revisionism.¹⁶⁴ This Masters thesis by Joel Hayward of

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 28.

¹⁶⁰ Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against Presumed Extermination of European Jews*, (New Port Beach: Institute of Historical Review, 1976).

¹⁶¹ Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence*, (Torrance: Institute of Historical Review, 1986).

¹⁶² J. Joel Hayward, *The Fate of Jews in German Hands: An Historical Inquiry into the Development and Significance of Holocaust Revisionism*, p. 78.

¹⁶³ David Irving, *Hitler's War*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).

¹⁶⁴ J. Joel Hayward, *The Fate of Jews in German Hands: An Historical Inquiry into the Development and*

Canterbury University, New Zealand, offers a detailed examination of all major Revisionist historians and their works. Its coverage of the development of Revisionism and the reaction to it by academia, governments and the public make this book invaluable. It is therefore used to gain an overview of revisionism even though the author has subsequently revisited many of its conclusions.

The final two surveys used in this chapter are Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory¹⁶⁵ by Deborah Lipstadt and The Holocaust Denial: Anti-Semitism and the New Right¹⁶⁶ by Gill Seidel. These two works represent the arguments of orthodox historians. Lipstadt highlights the anti-Semitic views of many Revisionist historians and links between Revisionists and various extreme right wing organisations. She restates the orthodox historians position on the *Einsatzgruppen* and offers rebuttal of the Revisionist view. Seidel's work offers a radical Jewish left wing view of the debate and offers insight into the development of anti-Semitism.

The relationship between orthodox and Revisionist historians is fraught with venom. Orthodox historians marginalise Revisionists as neo-Nazis and cranks. They do not believe that Revisionists represent the other side of a debate. Typical of this approach was Lipstadt's refusal to appear on talk shows to publicise her book and debate its contents with Revisionist historians, whom she had criticised. Arguing that "Holocaust denial is totally irrational" she said that her refusal to debate was a deliberate attempt to prevent the Revisionist viewpoint from being seen as legitimate. It is unusual for an academic to author a book of criticism and refuse to debate with those it attacks. It is interesting to note the use of labels like Holocaust deniers and neo-Nazi. These labels are very effective in ensuring that Revisionists remain on the fringes of the Holocaust debate, and prevent them from gaining acceptance from either the academic community or the wider public.

Many Revisionist authors have also been subject to various forms of censure. The most severe case was Wilhelm Staeglich. Staeglich was forced to resign from his position as a judge, had his book Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence included on the *Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Schriften* index of censored books, and in 1983

Significance of Holocaust Revisionism, (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, MA Thesis, 1993). p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

¹⁶⁶ Gill Seidel, *The Holocaust Denial: Antisemitism, Racism and the New Right*, (London: Beyond the Pale Collective, 1986).

had his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree officially withdrawn. Butz was subject to petitions signed by students and faculty calling for the Northwestern University administration to take disciplinary action against him. The academic authorities did not discipline but instead publicly denounced his book. In Germany it was placed on the index of censored books. Butz continues to work as an Associate Professor at the University and his continued employment is probably because of the strength of the American Constitution's commitment to free speech. These attacks on Revisionist authors and their works are understandable, but also perhaps regrettable as they seem to discourage free scholarship and thought.

Most orthodox historians agree that the *Einsatzgruppen* had dual functions. They were to secure the area behind the German army and to exterminate the Jews. Many argue that the primary function of the *Einsatzgruppen* was originally or eventually became the extermination of Russia's Jews. There is debate over whether Jew were killed because of their ethnicity or their perceived links with communism. Yet orthodox historians agree, as Harwood puts it: "That the murder of Soviet Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen* constituted Phase One in the plan to exterminate the Jews."¹⁶⁷ According to orthodox historians the *Einsatzgruppen* were the first crude and inefficient stage of the Holocaust. As Lipstadt argues: "Their (the *Einsatzgruppen*'s) brutal methods were eventually replaced by the more 'efficient' gas chambers."

The Revisionist view of the *Einsatzgruppen* will be represented by the apparently detailed and careful works of Staeglich and Butz and the magpie approach of Harwood. All three authors argue that the *Einsatzgruppen* were responsible for combating partisan activity. Staeglich states: "The operations of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Russia were a reaction to the insidious and illegal methods of warfare employed by a dastardly and vicious foe and can hardly be classed as genocide."¹⁶⁸ In order for this argument to work, the Revisionists attempt to establish the size of the partisan problem in Russia. Harwood argues: "The illegal partisan warfare in Russia had taken a higher toll of lives from the regular German army - an assertion confirmed by the Soviet Government, which boasted of 500,000 German troops killed by partisans." He also argues that the death in 1942 of Franz Stahlecker, the commander of Einsatzgruppe A, shows the extent of the problem. The difficulty is that none of these arguments prove the extent of the partisan problem work. Body counts from irregular warfare should be treated with caution, as they tend to be heavily exaggerated. The fact that Stahlecker was

¹⁶⁷ Richard Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz*, p. 76.

killed by partisans also does not prove a large partisan problem. If, for example, Stahlecker was the only person killed in the area for a whole year, that would hardly constitute much more than an annoyance. It is worrying that Revisionists fail to prove conclusively a large partisan menace in Russia.

Butz points out that most orthodox historians attribute a dual role to the *Einsatzgruppen* and he argues that the small size of the organisation would have made this impossible. He says: "Common sense alone should reject the notion that the *Einsatzgruppen*, which had a total strength of about 3,000 men, as a matter of general policy, spent their time and effort pursuing objectives unrelated to military considerations."¹⁶⁹ One difficulty with this argument is that many issues surrounding the Nazis' treatment of Jews defies "common sense." The use of scarce trains to move Jews east and the killing of skilled Jewish workers in Russia, when their trades were so desperately needed by the German army are two illogical examples. Butz argues that Jews were killed as part of the anti-partisan measures. He concedes that Jews were specially targeted as they were perceived as particularly dangerous.

Staeglich argues that the nature of partisan warfare blurred the line between combatant and civilian but also concedes that Jews were singled out for special attention by security units. He cites four speeches given by Himmler to military officers between 1943 to 1944. Typical of such quotes is the following: "Whenever I was forced to take steps against the partisans and Jewish commissars in some village - I'll say it for the information of this group only I made it a point to kill the women and children of these partisans and commissars. I would be a weakling and I would be committing a crime against our descendants if I allowed the hate filled sons of the sub-humans we have liquidated in this struggle of humanity against sub humanity to grow up....But we come more and more to the realisation that we are engaged in a primitive, elemental, organic racial struggle."¹⁷⁰ Staeglich adds: "From Himmler's remarks, one can deduce that the *Einsatzgruppen* did deal harshly with the Jews in guerilla infested areas, proceeding mercilessly even against women and children."¹⁷¹ Staeglich then tries to justify these harsh measures with the baseless conclusion: "The Jewish population nearly always made common cause with the guerillas."¹⁷² He offers no evidence of unique partisan

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹⁷⁰ Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz*, p. 73.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 76.

support among Jews and one could well surmise that the anti-Semitic nature of many such groups, especially Balkan nationalists, would have prevented any such eventuality.

None of the claims offered by the Revisionists deny that Jews were killed by the *Einsatzgruppen*. The killing of numbers of Jews, either large or small does not according to the Revisionists prove a policy of genocide. This is the true crux of the Revisionist argument. As Staeglich argues: "the occurrence of such actions (the killing of Jews) would not per se prove that Hitler or Himmler ordered the liquidation of Jews."¹⁷³ Without written orders or other documentation it is almost impossible to prove that there was a policy of genocide and not the random and wide spread killing of a despised group. Of course, orthodox historians argue that the extermination orders were only oral. This argument is the reason for David Irving's inclusion here.

Irving believes that Hitler was probably unaware of the extermination of Jews. He argued the functionalist line that the killings developed on an ad hoc basis. With the Jews being moved enmass to the East, middle level authorities were in a difficult position: "The Jews were brought by the trainload to ghettos already overcrowded and under provisioned. Partly in collusion with each other, partly independently, the Nazi agencies there simply liquidated the deportees as their trains arrived, on a scale increasingly more methodical and more regimented as the months passed."¹⁷⁴ Irving continues this strand of argument with the *Einsatzgruppen* arguing: "While Hitler's overall anti-Jewish policy was clearly and repeatedly enunciated, it is harder to establish a documentary link between him and the murderous activities of the SS "task forces" and their extermination camps in the East."¹⁷⁵ He reasons that Himmler was behind the extermination of the Jews and points to an apparent lack of documentary evidence concerning Hitler.

Before examining the Revisionist arguments concerning evidence from the Nuremberg Trials, this chapter will examine the Revisionists attitude to them. Butz attacks the International and Nuremberg Military Trials as being based on ex-post facto law, preconceived notions of guilt, and he argues investigators used third degree methods. The evidence at least partially supports his view. As argued earlier in this thesis the trials are clearly based on ex-post facto law. The Soviet Judge Iola Nikitchenko had presided over two Stalinist showtrials and had stated: "The fact that the Nazi leaders are

¹⁷³ Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁴ David Irving, *Hitler's War*, p.xiv.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 12.

criminals has already been established. The task of the tribunal is only to determine the measure of guilt of each particular person and mete out the necessary punishment - the sentences." Unfortunately two of Butz's other claims show his strong anti-Jewish bias. He claimed that David Marcus, an "arch Zionist" and head of the War Crimes Branch controlled the IMT trial by careful selection of various lawyers and other court staff and Telford Taylor was merely the "frontman." Neither of these claims had any real evidence, but help show the Revisionist excessively hostile attitude to the trials.

To prove their hypothesis that the *Einsatzgruppen* were not an extermination squad for Jews, the Revisionists must refute much documentary evidence. Butz begins by attacking the most frequently cited documents the Action and Situation Reports. He argues that these are not a reliable source because of the absence or placement of signatures. He offers document PS3159 as an example. This document has the commanding officers signature on it, but only on the covering page, stating the location of the different *Einsatzgruppen* units. Butz does not express his argument any further but seems to imply that the commander only read that page or that someone changed what came after the signed page. This argument is flawed as Butz fails to indicate whether this is unusual for an *Einsatzgruppen* report. He also points out that many of the reports are mimeographed and signatures are rare and points to document 180-L as an example. Signatures are indicated but the actual document merely has Doctor Stahlecker typed in two places. An examination of a random selection of unpublished German military documents, in the possession of Dr Joel Hayward showed that fifty percent of all documents viewed, including some from Field Marshals, were unsigned and these documents are universally accepted as authentic. So, unsigned military reports were not unusual and Butz is intentionally claiming suspicion where none exists.

Butz then offers another argument concerning the use of document 501PS. He believes the document to be possibly forged and uses three strands of argument in an attempt to prove this allegation. The first is that the Russians finding of the document was "fortuitous and secondly the use of the document in a show trial suggests that it could have been forged. He then points out that the letter is the only document signed by Becker and that furthermore Becker is supposedly dead. Butz appears to be insinuating here that the lack of another example of Becker's signature means there is no basis for comparison and it could be forged. While it is clear that the origins of the document are in doubt, Butz offers no evidence for believing it to be a forgery, only insinuations with no evidence.

Deborah Lipstadt argues that Butz's analysis of documents is flawed. She writes: "According to Butz the key to perpetrating the hoax was the forging of massive amounts of documents, an act committed with the complicity of Allied governments."¹⁷⁶ Hayward, also points out: "In response to any piece of evidence apparently contradicting his thesis, Butz if unable to explain or refute it, tends to accuse it of being fabricated."¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately Lipstadt weakens her argument by not quoting Butz directly. She then argues that if large numbers of documents were fabricated why did the Allied governments not go the whole way and produce an order from Hitler ordering the destruction of Jews? This argument contains a flaw. To produce such a forgery, that would be under such intense scrutiny would require a major effort and would ultimately be discovered. It makes more sense to forge a number of minor documents that are unlikely to be subjected to the same scrutiny which would be both more subtle and believable. The Revisionists not only attack the documents but go onto attack witnesses from the International Military Tribunal Trials.

The most important *Einsatzgruppen* witness at the International and subsequent Nuremberg Military Tribunal hearings was the former commander of *Einsatzgruppen* D, SS Lieutenant General Otto Ohlendorf. At the IMT trial, he claimed that his unit, which had operated in the Southern Ukraine and Crimea regions, had executed 90,000 Jews as part of a genocidal campaign. His affidavits and testimony from this first trial are cited by many orthodox historians. Yet Ohlendorf recanted much of his earlier testimony at his own trial, in front of the American Nuremberg Military Tribunal.¹⁷⁸ He reduced the numbers killed from 90,000 to 40,000 and claimed that this number represented not only Jews, but also gipsies, partisans and saboteurs. Ohlendorf also denied there had been a specific extermination order and argued Jews had ben executed as part of the anti-partisan campaign.¹⁷⁹ Butz argues that Ohlendorf offered testimony in the IMT trial in the hope of avoiding a trial himself. Butz states: "Ohlendorf, no doubt contrary to his expectations was put on trial as the principal defendant in case 9."¹⁸⁰ With Ohlendorf having offered what Butz claims is false testimony, the former *Einsatzgruppen* commander was put in the unenviable position of having to refute himself. The Revisionists, and Butz in particular, are correct to point out the inconsistencies in Ohlendorf's two testimonies and the reasons they offer are

¹⁷⁶ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 127.

¹⁷⁷ Joel Hayward, *The Fate of Jews in German Hands*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁸ NMT, Volume IV. (Case 9 "The Einsatzgruppen Case).

¹⁷⁹ Joel Hayward, *The Fate of Jews in German Hands*, p. 136.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur Butz, *The Hoax*, p. 203.

convincing. Orthodox historians, on the other hand, do not attempt to refute these findings or even point out that Ohlendorf testified twice.

Having refuted Ohlendorf's testimony, the Revisionists need to find a witness to more strongly build their case. Butz claims that the testimony of SS Lieutenant Colonel Haensch who was tried alongside Ohlendorf was reliable. Haensch was in command of a *Sonderkommando* in *Einsatzgruppe C* for seven weeks. He testified that his unit did not have a policy of executing Jews and that no one had given him an extermination order. He estimated that his *Sonderkommando* had killed sixty people during his posting. Butz believed that the fact that Haensch had not testified previously and his lower rank, gave him more freedom in testifying. The difficulty in using Haensch's testimony is his very short term of service, which could have resulted in an incomplete view of his group's activities. If they had, for example, been in a "Jew free" area then they may have concentrated on other duties during Haensch's term of service. This is at least as likely as the convoluted explanation given by Butz.

Lipstadt strongly challenges Butz over his arguments about Nazi defendant or witness testimony at the IMT or NMT trials. She argues "For Butz it was all quite simple: It was better to admit to the crime of the century and risk losing one's life than to protest against the monstrous fraud. However in pursuing this theory, Butz ignored a basic problem: If the end result promised to be the same - a death sentence - what purpose was served by falsely pleading guilty to such a vicious act?"¹⁸¹ This argument is, firstly a simplification of Butz's view, and secondly, makes no logical sense. Butz points out that by admitting their involvement in the Final Solution, defendants hoped to avoid the death sentence and witnesses hoped to avoid a trial. Lipstadt is taking it as read that all of the defendants knew they would be hung. This is may not be true. Some defendants were more clearly implicated than others and this is shown by the defence strategies chosen. Goering realised from very early on that he would be executed and chose an aggressive strategy to sell his life as dearly as possible. This is shown by his humiliation of Justice Jackson from the defence stand. Ohlendorf, by contrast, hoped to gain extra time and avoid a death sentence by turning prosecution witness. Lipstadt fails to grasp the true nature of the war crime trials and the defendants.

Another major source of evidence used by orthodox historians and attacked by Revisionists are *SS Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler's speeches. Himmler, the head of the Gestapo and *Waffen SS* and Minister of the Interior 1943 - 1945, was according to

¹⁸¹ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 130.

many orthodox historians: "supreme overseer of the Final Solution."¹⁸² This gives his statements considerable importance. In a speech given at Posen on October 4, 1943, Himmler is apparently discussed the extermination of the Jewish race and the difficulties in carrying out actions against them. Quotes used include: "I mean the evacuation of the Jews (*die Judenevakuierung*), the extermination (*Ausrottung*) of the Jewish race."¹⁸³ The written transcript of the speech (1919PS in the IMT volumes) is first attacked by Butz for its lack signature or any other endorsement. This is clearly a red herring. As has been shown earlier, the Nazis had a casual approach to signing documents. He then attacks the authenticity of the accompanying phonograph recording. Butz argues that SS General Berger who was present at the speech denies the speech was accurate, claiming: "I can say with certainty that he did not speak about the *Ausrottung* of the Jews because the reason for this meeting was to equalise and adjust these tremendous tensions between the *Waffen SS* and the Police."¹⁸⁴ Butz then attacks the authenticity of this recording arguing that no one has authenticated the voice as belonging to Himmler and the judge merely accepted it as such. He states: "The only "*prima facie*" evidence for the authenticity of the voice (at only one point in the speech) as far as I can see, was the Berger statement at one point that the voice "might be Heinrich Himmler's."¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately for Butz, however, a sound recording of the whole Posen speech has turned up and according to experts, it is indeed Himmler's voice on the records.

Staeglich joins the debate, arguing that other speeches by Himmler are quoted out of context by orthodox historians to give an impression of the extermination of Jews. He is particularly harsh on the historians Peterson and Smith and their treatment of Himmler's speeches, particularly from the period of 1943 to 1944.¹⁸⁶ Staeglich offers an excerpt from a speech given by Himmler to generals at Sonthofen on June 21, 1944. The excerpt reads: "The ghettos, no matter how sealed off they have been, were the centres of every kind of partisan and bandit activity. Likewise they were breeding grounds for the toxins of demoralisation behind the lines"¹⁸⁷ Staeglich argues that

¹⁸² Robert Wistrich, *Whos Who in Nazi Germany*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1982). p. 141.

¹⁸³ Arthur Butz, *The Hoax*, p. 193.

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Butz, *The Hoax*, p. 194.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 194.

¹⁸⁶ Bradley Smith and Agnes Petersen, *Heinrich Himmler - Geheimreden 1933 - 45 und andere Ansprachen*, Propylaen-Verlag, Berlin, 1974.

¹⁸⁷ Wilhelm Staeglich, *Auschwitz*, p. 75.

Himmler is referring to the Jews only in connection with the fight against partisans behind German lines. Later in the same speech, Himmler refers to the difficulties in clearing the Warsaw ghetto to show how dangerous Jews were. "We had five weeks of house to house fighting in Warsaw and we cleaned out 700 bunker - cellar fortifications sometimes one on top of the other." While calling a bunker or bomb shelter a "cellar fortifications" is using very provocative language indeed, this excerpt adds at least a little weight to the views that Himmler viewed the Jews as a serious security risk. Staeglich then argues that Himmler's view would have been transmitted to the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Jews would have come in for special attention from them. He then wrongly argues that Himmler was right to suspect Jews because: "It is also a fact that the Jewish population nearly always made a common cause with the guerillas."¹⁸⁸ Staeglich fails to offer any evidence for this conclusion and argues the anti-Semitic line that Jews and communism are irrevocably linked.

Lipstadt is brief and cutting when attacking the use of Himmler's speeches by Butz. She argues: "They (the alleged fabricators) even created false recordings of speeches by Nazi leaders and inserted them into the materials collected by the liberating forces."¹⁸⁹ This is a direct attack on Butz's argument that the Posen recording was inserted into Rosenberg's files. Thus, Lipstadt skate lightly over the arguments claiming they are part of Butz's conspiracy theory. In fact, Butz offers several good reasons for doubting the recording and transcript of the Posen speech. The refusal of Lipstadt to engage in proper historical debate is unfortunately the common response of many orthodox historians to Revisionist arguments. It must be pointed out, however, that Lipstadt's work has generally engaged the Revisionists and this is a rare example.

Both Lipstadt and Seidel argue that Revisionism is driven by anti-Semitism. Unfortunately this argument is not mere conjecture. Rassinier was particularly blatant in regarding Jews as part of an international conspiracy. He argued: "The aim (of international Jewry) is the gold of Fort Knox. If the plan should succeed - and all that is needed is for the American branch of International Zionism to it's hands on Wall Street."¹⁹⁰ Rassinier also offers the classic anti-Semitic argument that Jews do not work themselves but profit off the labour of others. He states: "The women of Israel would, to be sure, give birth in pain but their men would earn their bread by the sweat of others brows."¹⁹¹ Butz too has a disturbing tendency to describe every Jew as an

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁹ Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, p. 127.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Rassinier, *Debunking the Genocide Myth*, p. 308.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 309.

arch-Zionist and refers to the Holocaust as a "Zionist hoax." Staeglich has also referred to Jewish witnesses as "fairy tale tellers" and shown an anti-Jewish bias. In short, the Revisionist works examined for this chapter have all shown clear anti-Semitic biases.

In conclusion, the Revisionists argue that the *Einsatzgruppen* were primarily anti-partisan units and in the course of those duties, executed Jews. When arguing such a viewpoint they attempt with varying levels of success to dismiss various documents. Their arguments concerning the *Einsatzgruppen* reports and witness testimony at Nuremberg are not entirely without merit, while Butz's argument concerning Himmler's Posen speech has been overtaken by the finding of additional material. It is clear that, like it or not, the Revisionists actively publishing and the refusal by orthodox historians to debate them can only be to the detriment of scholarly debate.

Conclusion

The debate on the *Einsatzgruppen's* function has covered a great deal of ground since the conclusion of World War two and the subsequent Nuremberg Trials. Approaches including functionalism and the use of psychological experiments to gain insight into the perpetrators motivations could not have even been imagined in those early beginnings.

The path to the Holocaust debate is relatively short with much of the methodological and philosophical progress occurring only in the last twenty years. The International Military Tribunal was primarily interested in proving the *Einsatzgruppen* guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to do this, the Tribunal needed to and succeeded in establishing many organisational issues that concerned the *Einsatzgruppen*.. Issues including personnel numbers, the operational areas they operated in and their standard operating method. As for the function of the *Einsatzgruppen* the Tribunal was interested only in their Jew-killing activities and did little examination of their anti-partisan role. The prosecution presented the *Einsatzgruppen's* use of gas vans to show that they were the fore runner to the extermination camps. The Tribunal's findings published as the 42 volume "Blue Set" was the major source of primary documents and testimony on the *Einsatzgruppen* and became the bedrock on which Holocaust history has been built.

With the "Blue Set" having established most of the basic information on the *Einsatzgruppen* the historians that followed concerned themselves with the primary function of the units. The largest group defended the International Military Tribunal findings that the *Einsatzgruppen* were established primarily as a Jew killing squad. Another argued that the groups were set up to kill Jews but also had security functions, while the third believed the *Einsatzgruppen's* function was to establish a rough law and order until occupation authorities arrived. While some historians had thrown off the I.M.T's narrow view of the *Einsatzgruppen's* function, they continued the Tribunal's Hitler-and-SS-centric approach. At this time there was a widely held belief that the German people were "lead astray" by the Nazi party, and that "Nazis" were different from "ordinary Germans". This resulted in *Einsatzgruppen* officers being intensely analysed and being portrayed as "social misfits" and so the sort of people who would join Nazi organisations. The argument for the enlisted men was that a combination of intense indoctrination and the pressure of the "police state" resulted in their performing of executions.

The group which followed the initial Holocaust works pushed the arguments even further. The functionalist versus intentionalist debate almost completely dominated this period. The functionalists vigorously attacked the intentionalist and I.M.T view that Hitler and the Nazi party had always intended to exterminate the Jews and was merely waiting for an opportunity to do so. The functionalists argued that the Holocaust developed from a particular set of circumstances and a series of ad hoc solutions. This resulted in the *Einsatzgruppen* debate splitting into three groups. The intentionalists adjusted their argument to acknowledge that the *Einsatzgruppen* did have a variety of tasks but their primary function was to exterminate Jews. A second group argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* executed Jews not because of their ethnicity but because of their perceived links with Bolshevism, while a third argued that the function of the *Einsatzgruppen* was the destruction of the Jewish-Bolshevist intelligentsia.

Two worrying trends that developed during this period was the quoting of earlier works in place of "Blue Set" evidence. This was noticeable in the use of *Einsatzgruppen* statistics and affidavits. It led to some inaccuracies, which if continued could have resulted in considerable distortions. Selection of material in this manner is a concern and any self respecting historian should return to the primary sources, particularly when they are so readily accessible. The second worrying development was the use of *Einsatzgruppen* report statistics without the use of qualifiers. Many earlier historians argued that the figures were only approximate and expressed the view that they might be exaggerated. It appeared that as the "Blue Set" got older, historians viewed it as more reliable. Following all this concern about sources and primary documents, two historians changed the shape of Holocaust studies to answer the main question about the Holocaust: why did the perpetrators commit those acts?

The debate was between two well known Holocaust scholars. Both Christopher Browning and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen examined court records from the prosecution of Reserve Police Battalion 101 to offer contrasting hypotheses for the participation of the unit's personnel. Goldhagen argued that German culture, which had a strong basis of "eliminationist anti-Semitism" resulted in the men wishing to perform executions and other atrocities as they did not see Jews as "people". Browning, by contrast, argued that career prospects and group pressure explained a great deal about the men's actions. Browning used psychological findings, especially from Stanley Milgram's electrical shock experiments and Phillip Zimbardos prison experiment to show that the men divided into three groups. One group was a small nucleus of eager killers, the largest group was of those who killed only when they had to, and at the other end were the "refusers and evaders". The difference in explanation could be largely explained by

Browning moderate functionalist approach contrasted to Goldhagen's extreme intentionalism.

This thesis also dealt with a group that ran parallel to the main orthodox historical debates: the Revisionists. This was a difficult chapter for the present writer to present given his aversion to prejudice, and anti-Semitism in particular. It was clear however, that to not include them would have resulted in an incomplete review. The Revisionists argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* were involved in the execution of Soviet Commissars and anti-partisan tasks. They went on to argue that in the course of such duties they executed large numbers of Jews. They dismissed much of the 42 volume "Blue Set" documentary evidence as unreliable because of signature irregularities, which turned out to not be an issue after all. On the matter of duress and torture of witnesses and defendants at the Nuremberg hearings, however, the Revisionists forcefully claim that the evidence needed to be used with caution.

As for the role of Hitler in the Holocaust, David Irving suggested that it was possible that Hitler knew little or nothing of the "Final Solution." It is concerning to this writer that most orthodox historians refuse to debate with Revisionists. As well as being damaging to the free exchange of ideas, this high-risk, no-reward strategy allows the Revisionists to dominate the battlefield by virtue of being the only side on it.

The function of the *Einsatzgruppen* changed little after the first period of Holocaust literature. While at Nuremberg, there was only one declared function of the *Einsatzgruppen* and that was the execution of Jews and Soviet Commissars, but because of the nature of the trial the genocidal aspects of their activities was concentrated on. During the period following the hearings, two other hypotheses were offered for the *Einsatzgruppen's* function. Once groups claimed they were set up as an ideological hit squad, while Paget argued that the *Einsatzgruppen* were established to organise a preliminary stage of law and order behind the advancing German army. He argued that in this role they would have killed Jews but only in retaliation to partisan attacks or because they were suspected to be high ranking communist officials. In the next period of Holocaust literature, Mayer extended the idea to argue that Jews were not executed solely on the basis of their race but because of their perceived links with Bolshevism. Even the Revisionists take their lead from the post-hearing period, as they continue Paget's argument that the *Einsatzgruppen* were purely anti-partisan groups.

The nature of the literature on the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* has changed considerably over the course of this thesis. The debate has moved from the Hitler-and-SS-centric view common during the Nuremberg trials, to the functionalist versus intentionalist

debate which redefined the entire Holocaust debate. The functionalist view directly threatened the long held I.M.T hypothesis that the Holocaust was pre planned and offered new interpretations on seemingly settled subjects. From there the debate has moved to the previously neglected area of perpetrator motivation in the Holocaust. The emphasis of this area has expanded history to include the psychology and other social sciences in an attempt to find answers. It seems that the *Einsatzgruppen* will continue to be studied by historians, as ethnic conflicts throughout the world result in genocide, and a neverending search for answers to the dark side of man's nature.

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