

The Testimonies of SS *Einsatzgruppen* Perpetrators: Wartime and Postwar Justifications

Susan Samardjian

Abstract

Perpetrator motivations remain among the most critical and disputed components of Holocaust studies. In this paper, I analyse how SS *Einsatzgruppen* members justified committing mass murder, using accounts from three different periods: SS operational reports and wartime diaries from 1941 to 1943; transcripts from the 1947 *Einsatzgruppen* Trial in Nuremberg; and Claude Lanzmann's *Einsatzgruppen* interviews recorded in 1979 for the documentary film *Shoah*. This research shows that different justifications were made in different contexts.

Keywords: *Einsatzgruppen*, Nuremberg Trial, Claude Lanzmann, opportunism, indoctrination

Introduction

The scholarship pertaining to perpetrator motivations in the Third Reich, which analyses Nazi atrocities against civilians labelled as threats to Germany, remains one of the most critical and disputed areas of Holocaust studies. The crimes of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) *Einsatzgruppen*, units tasked with murdering civilians in occupied territories of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union), present a phenomenon where the state recruited ordinary civilians to become the Reich's instruments of terror. Analyses range from the notions of obedience and peer pressure raised by Browning to Goldhagen's assertion that Germans held unwavering devotion to 'the cult of the state' along with eliminationist antisemitism (Browning 1992, 171; Goldhagen 1996, 384). When attempting to dissect and understand the motivations of the *Einsatzgruppen* in voluntarily committing mass murder, the questions only deepen, resulting in a myriad of interpretations. I propose to utilise perpetrators' accounts to dissect these pertinent questions: What made *Einsatzgruppen* members feel justified in committing mass murder? How did their justifications change with denazification and the postwar shift in sociopolitical landscapes?

This paper examines perpetrator justifications in three parts. The first part analyses SS operational reports and wartime diaries from 1941 to 1943, including the letters sent by SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Kretschmer to his wife from Crimea. The second part dissects the 1947 *Einsatzgruppen* Trial at



the Nuremberg Trials, referencing testimonies from SS *Gruppenführer* Otto Ohlendorf and SS *Obersturmführer* Heinz Hermann Schubert as case studies. The third part uses the 1979 *Einsatzgruppen* interviews with Schubert and Kretschmer, recorded for Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film *Shoah* (Lanzmann 1985), to incorporate post-denazification perspectives from perpetrators. The immediately postwar narrative shift of the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial provides nuance to the *Shoah* interviews where perpetrators spoke candidly, unaware that Lanzmann was filming them. By highlighting differences in their testimonies and post-acquittal interviews, I demonstrate that perpetrators altered their justifications based on the sociopolitical climate. With this approach, the article offers a multi-lens analysis that provides insight into the evolving justifications of mass murder, aligning with the contributions of Langerbein (2003) and Kühl (2016). Highlighting temporal perspectives of both high-ranking and lower-level *Einsatzgruppen* members enriches scholarly understanding of moral responsibility in the context of genocide.

In addition to analysing the testimonies of well-known officers such as Ohlendorf, this paper aims to shed light on lower-ranking individuals, such as Schubert and Kretschmer. Exploring these heterogeneous perspectives of individuals who held varying leadership positions provides multiple explanatory pathways. Drawing from these testimonies, I challenge the dominant explanation of peer pressure, and argue that the *Einsatzgruppen* perpetrators' willingness to obey their orders stemmed from two factors: first, the perpetrators remained ideologically committed to the idea of a Jewish-Bolshevik security threat that the SS military training and indoctrination imposed. And second, opportunistic perpetrators found that they benefitted from participating in career opportunities created by the machinery of genocide. These factors demonstrate the importance of personal responsibility and belie the notion that *Einsatzgruppen* members lacked the autonomy to refuse orders.

Structural components of the SS and origins of the *Einsatzgruppen*

From 1937, *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, the right hand of Chancellor Adolf Hitler, worked to consolidate power in the police and SS. In September 1939, Himmler merged three Nazi security police branches into one agency called the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), which would operate under the leadership of Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Gestapo (secret state police) and Kripo (criminal police) (Langerbein 2003, 17). Heydrich initially incentivised enrolment in the SS by offering preferential treatment and higher salaries to individuals who underwent SS training and accepted National Socialism (Langerbein 2003, 19). By the beginning of the Second World War, the SS had over 250,000 members with 40 divisions.

In a three-week course headed by SS-*Gruppenführer* Bruno Streckenbach, the SS trained civilians for a war assignment initially portrayed as repressing resistance in occupied zones and protecting the rear of the *Wehrmacht*

[combined armed forces]. Aside from the high-ranking RSHA officers, Heydrich chose members of the *Einsatzgruppen* randomly, believing that the training process could mould any individual into a murderer (Zukier 1994, 439). Some Germans, such as *Einsatzgruppe A* leader Franz Stahlecker, willingly joined the group to propel their SS careers and reputations. At the same time, Hilberg and Höhne suggest that Heydrich drafted men as a form of punishment and assurance of loyalty (Hilberg 2003, 287; Höhne 1967, 274). Stahlecker and other leaders reinforced psychological bonding through ideas of inclusion and exclusion, particularly notions of the *Herrenrasse* [master race] and the *Untermensch* [subhuman] (Jensen and Szejnmann 2008, 171). In line with these concepts, a distinction was made between ‘pure’ Germans and ‘non-Aryans’ such as Jews, Slavs, and Roma peoples. As a part of SS training, the Reich used exclusionist and dehumanising propaganda tactics. The SS bolstered racial superiority through ‘brutalisation’ training aimed at desensitisation to committing violence, and through propaganda dissemination, stressing notions of honour, duty, and conquering the ‘weaker self’ (Klee et al. 1991, 81; Zapotoczny 2017, 287). The brutalisation and eventual desensitisation, combined with the dehumanisation of Jews and Slavs, created an imagined justification for extermination of such groups. The indoctrination also immensely contributed to the psychological distancing between the perpetrator (*Herrenrasse*) and the victim (*Untermensch*) through negative stereotyping and a duty to protect the Reich.

The foundational ideological narrative of the SS promoted loyalty and obedience to Hitler and the ongoing struggle to protect Germans from their perceived enemies. Ideas of loyalty were bolstered through avenues such as the SS Honour Code, called “The Path to Obedience”, in a pamphlet entitled “The Struggle is Ours” (Langerbein 2003, 19). These educational materials contained maps and photos displaying aspects of Germanic history and claims that Germans had suffered for 2,000 years before they discovered that obedience was the key to national unity and strength. The materials equated obedience with deep-rooted German ideas of honour, stating that every member of the SS must willingly obey every order from their superiors ‘even if it demands the greatest sacrifice’, as the needs of the Reich overrode those of the individual (“The New Germany Speaks Here”, 1946 [1936]). Himmler also introduced the concept of ‘avengers’, defined as the children of the victims who would eventually seek revenge against the Reich (Rhodes 2002, 125). *Einsatzgruppen* officials later used the latter idea to justify killing children for the sake of German national security.

Antisemitic propaganda targeted Jews both in Germany (regarded as ‘impure’ Germans) and abroad. The Nazis spread antisemitic propaganda in Eastern Europe in order to prove that the war of extermination in the East should necessarily differ to the military strategy for the West. For instance, a slideshow presented to SS recruits, called “SS in the Struggle against the

World Enemy, the Jew”, explained that Jews had threatened the ‘Nordic race’ for thousands of years and that it was in their blood to continue on that path (Langerbein 2003, 21). Because of this threat, the SS stipulated, killing the Jews was an act of self defence. Hitler regarded Bolshevism as the Jewish attempt to dominate the world, and consequently coupled the perceived threat of Soviet Bolsheviks with Jews in Eastern Europe (“*Mein Kampf*”, 1946 [1933]). Members of the *Einsatzgruppen* subscribed to this belief—Ohlendorf even justified in his defence at the Nuremberg Trials that the 90,000 Jews murdered under his watch posed a threat to the Reich (Wolfe 1980). It was as a result of this training and leadership that ordinary Germans believed that Jews were both biological enemies of the Reich and representatives of the threat of Bolshevik invasion.

Operation Barbarossa and the Final Solution

The *Einsatzgruppen* and Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the USSR, carried a threefold strategy: the destruction of Bolshevism, eliminating the ‘greater Russian Empire’, and the colonisation and economic exploitation of the territory for *Lebensraum* [additional land needed by Germany] (“Top Secret. Handwritten : 11 11161/44/ g. Memorandum”, 1946 [1942], 242). At the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, Himmler officially outlined the plan to murder civilians, at a meeting where no one opposed or questioned the strategy for the East. Heydrich appointed four high-level SS officers to lead the *Einsatzgruppen*: Stahlecker in *Einsatzgruppe A* in the Baltic States; SS-*Oberführer* Arthur Nebe in *Einsatzgruppe B* in Moscow through Belorussia; SS-*Brigadeführer* Otto (‘Doktor Doktor’) Rasch in *Einsatzgruppe C* in Ukraine; and Ohlendorf in *Einsatzgruppe D* in Bessarabia and southern Ukraine, directed at Crimea (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 414: “*Einsatzgruppen*”). He reminded them of their duty to eliminate saboteurs from the occupied zones and warned them of Soviet Jews who had “‘deliberately’ replaced their Jewish family names with Russian names. According to SS military education, ethnic inferiority increased as one continued East. Specific military directives pinpointed Ukrainians, Russians, and ‘Asiatics’ as second-class Whites suitable for ‘harsh treatment’ and whose sole purpose was enslavement for the German Reich (“To the Chief of the Supreme Command”, 1946 [1942]; “Top Secret. Handwritten: 11 11161/44/ g. Memorandum”, 1946 [1942], 242-3). Communist party commissars and functionaries, Jews in municipal government, and ‘radical elements’, including saboteurs and snipers, must be automatically executed (“*Einsatzbefehle und Anweisungen*”, 1941: “Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, Berlin, den 2.7.1941”). By extension, the latter directive set down the legal grounds to execute anyone who might be labelled a saboteur or other targeted designation.

Furthermore, each *Einsatzgruppe* and *Einsatzkommando* [subgroup of an *Einsatzgruppe*] had authorisation to take ‘executive measures’ against any

civilian in the USSR, based on individual judgement (“Regulation for deployment”, n.d. [1941]). As Kühl notes, several reports attempted to justify the murder of Jews by claiming that the victims had violated a specific law (Kühl 2016, 120). These violations primarily correlated with alleged partisan activity in occupied zones. With such instructions at hand, the *Wehrmacht* and the SS commenced the invasion that subjugated 40 million people. During this time, the *Einsatzgruppen* provided daily records of murders, in SS operational reports for the RSHA.

As Höhne describes, the *Einsatzgruppen* reported their mass atrocities using cold and professional language ‘as if recording production figures for refrigerators’, as many of the officers failed to recognise the severity of their crimes due to their prejudice (Höhne 1967, 330). Justifications for the murder of civilians in the USSR mirrored Heydrich’s statements prior to the invasion. The reports equated Jewish presence in occupied zones to partisan activity that threatened the *Wehrmacht*. In October 1941, *Einsatzkommando 4a* reported the murder of Jews in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, under the pretence that the civilians had attempted to sabotage and resist German occupation in the city. Consequently, according to the report, 3,145 Jews were killed (Arad et al. 1989, 174: “Operational Situation Report USSR No 106 (October 7, 1941)”). Similarly, a report from *Einsatzgruppe B* stated that the group had ‘liquidated’ Jewish civilians in the Belarussian town of Mogilev as punishment for ignoring orders from the occupying *Wehrmacht* forces. Nebe’s justification continued, noting that the Jews in the area had persisted in ‘anti-German activities’ that the group could no longer ‘tolerate’ (Arad et al. 1989, 234-235: “Operational Situation Report USSR No 133 (November 14, 1941)”). Another report, from *Einsatzkommando 6* of *Einsatzgruppe D*, stated that the unit had killed 1,107 Jews and 561 Ukrainian ‘juveniles’ because they could not afford to feed the civilians (Arad et al. 1989, 139: “Operational Situation Report USSR No 88 (September 19, 1941)”).

The hundreds of available reports shed light on two critical factors. First, they indicate that there was no uniform viewpoint on the extermination orders, and this allowed the *Einsatzgruppen* leaders to claim that unanticipated aspects of war, such as low food supply, had necessitated the murder of civilians. The RSHA appeared content for each *Einsatzkommando* to make its own justifications while the underlying goal, to eliminate those deemed a target, was being maintained. Second, the apparent distance between the perpetrator and the victim, evidenced by the complete lack of empathy in the reports, is a clear indication of the authors’ ideological conviction and fanaticism, deriving from SS military education.

In contrast, the letters composed by perpetrators to their families offer a personal perspective. While attempting to maintain what Schroer describes as a ‘celebration of ... emotional coldness’ in service to the SS, Kretschmer’s wartime letters to his family explicitly note the combination of fanatical zeal

and apathy among the *Einsatzgruppen* (“Letters from Karl Kretschmer”, [1942]; Schroer 2012, 35; Kühl 2016, 124). Kretschmer had initially attempted to join the *Luftwaffe* [air force] directly from the Hitler Youth organisation, but had failed his ideological training. Consequently, Heydrich had assigned him to *Einsatzkommando* 4a of *Einsatzgruppe* C as a form of punishment and a chance to redeem himself in the Nazi Party.¹ Kretschmer had committed himself so strongly to the party ideology through his leadership position in the *Einsatzkommando* that he had enthusiastically participated in the Crimean massacres of 1942, when an estimated 7,000 Jewish civilians were killed (Langerbein 2003, 122). The contemporary correspondence with his wife demonstrates that he was a devoted Nazi who candidly made records of his support for the genocide.

The first of Kretschmer’s letters outlines the psychological impact of witnessing the mass murders and his efforts to maintain a steel nerve. His initial letters exhibit a paradoxical combination of pride in the campaign against the Soviets and occasional mentions of the writer’s ‘stupid thoughts about what we are doing in this country’ which were preventing him from enjoying his posting (“Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family”, [September 1942]). Over time, Kretschmer’s letters increasingly reflect an indoctrinated and desensitised tone. He later writes that the sight of blood from the killings is an aspect that one can normalise by doing it more often, and that the SS view lack of self-control as a weakness (“Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family”, [November 1942]). As Schroer comments, ‘Only the best men had the strength to bear the sight of the bloody work in the East’ (Schroer 2012, 38). Kretschmer’s letters are so indifferent towards the murder of civilians that he even makes jokes, albeit dark, on one occasion writing that the *Einsatzgruppen* don’t want to eat black pudding (*Blutwurst*). His letters also mention that he had wanted to obtain an Astrakhan coat for his wife while in the USSR, but this would not be possible because ‘the Jews who sold them are no longer alive’ (“Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family”, 27 September 1942).

These letters provide insight into how members of the *Einsatzgruppen* viewed themselves and their actions. Revealing how perpetrators attempted to vindicate themselves by framing genocide as a necessary measure for survival, they offer an indication of the psychological processes of self-justification and denial. Kretschmer identified as a committed Nazi at war against an uncivilised enemy, even though he admits several times that he was struggling with the task. He believed that a ruthless and cold attitude towards civilians in the Soviet Union was the best approach, in line with his SS training. He expresses to his wife that he views many parts of the USSR as primitive, and notes that the Germans would have to spend decades creating order there after the war (“Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family”, 7 October 1942). Another element of Kretschmer’s correspondence is his comments regarding the importance for Germans to maintain ‘self-

control', both during the essential work of killing the enemy and during everyday life ("Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family", 27 September 1942; 19 October 1942; Schroer 2012, 38). The mental strain of seeing the victims appeared to magnify the need to maintain the image of composure in the eyes of one's comrades and superiors. This is a consistent theme in wartime and postwar recollections by Kretschmer and others. As noted by Browning and corroborated by Kretschmer's accounts, many in the *Einsatzgruppen* viewed failure to commit murder as a sign of weakness (Browning 1992, 183). The maintenance of self-control and composure during killings was seen as a positive quality. Consequently, members viewed evading or opting out of murder as an act of betrayal, not only of comrades but also of their families and homeland, since the SS framed the task as a German national security concern. Notably, Soviet interrogations of German deserters revealed that those who turned from their orders had no ideological or political commitment to National Socialism. With this in mind, scholars such as Bartov infer that deserters were oftentimes those who failed to integrate into their units and adapt to the brutal conditions of the war (Bartov 2003, 20). Thus, a central aspect of the loyalty of the *Einsatzgruppen* was a sense of ideological obligation to protect Germany from perceived potential threats.

Appearing committed and gaining a favorable impression from superiors played a significant role in Kretschmer's mindset. Within two years of failing to meet the SS standards of eligibility for ideological training, his attitude towards National Socialism had changed. In one of his letters, Kretschmer writes about his success at currying favour with Rasch, 'the boss' ("Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family", 15 October 1942). The letters reveal that Kretschmer's position as company commander awarded him quality time with the group leader—he played cards with Rasch every night. He further justifies endorsing the objectives of the *Einsatzgruppen* through the following statements directed at his children:

I have already told you about the shooting, and said that here too I didn't dare fall short on the job. More or less, they have said that now, at last, they have gotten a real man as administrative officer, after the previous one [Paul Blobel²] turned out to be a coward. That's how people are judged here. But you can trust your Papa. He thinks about you all the time and doesn't overshoot and go too far. ("Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family", 15 October 1942)

Once Heydrich appointed him commander of *Einsatzkommando* 4a, Kretschmer showed unwavering ideological devotion. His letters provide the clearest (and most incriminating) evidence of how the allure of furthering one's career in the SS took precedence over morality.

It is also important to note that relying on wartime documents and reports alone does not provide an accurate picture. Incorporating the postwar perspective provides necessary additional dimensions. Soon after the fall of

the Reich, with the Soviet Red Army's capture of Berlin in May 1945, the *Einsatzgruppen* made their defence in a similar excusatory manner at the Nuremberg Trials and Subsequent Proceedings. The 1947 *Einsatzgruppen* Trial revealed the perpetrators' indifference towards the genocide against Jews and their desire to shift responsibility to avoid punishment.

The *Einsatzgruppen* Trial

The United States of America vs. Otto Ohlendorf, et al. was the ninth case of the twelve brought during the postwar Nuremberg Trials against Nazi war crimes and crimes against humanity. Due to the complexity of the cases, each trial cannot be analysed in isolation, as in many testimonies perpetrators incriminated their former comrades to save themselves. To provide nuance, this analysis of the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial will incorporate testimonies of members from varying levels of command, but primarily from the perspective of SS *Gruppenführer* Ohlendorf and his adjutant, SS *Obersturmführer* Schubert, of *Einsatzgruppe* D. When confronted with overwhelming evidence pointing to their crimes in the USSR, the *Einsatzgruppen* defendants attempted to mitigate responsibility by pointing to notions of forced obedience and ideological devotion within the SS, and to ideas of self-defence, and even claimed innocence by stating that they had conducted the murders honourably.

The most infamous perpetrator testimonies at Nuremberg arguably are those of Ohlendorf, who took the stand in three separate trials. In addition to the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial, the former senior SS officer appeared before the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in 1946 and as a defendant in *The United States of America vs. Wilhelm von Leeb, et al.* in 1948, colloquially known as the Thirteen Generals' Trial (Rubenstein and Altman 2008, 34).

In his *Einsatzgruppen* Trial testimony, Ohlendorf asserted that Himmler had told the group leaders that personal accountability for their conduct in the USSR did not fall on them ("Twenty-Sixth Day", 2008, 317). He claimed that Himmler had further stated that the responsibility for the liquidation order fell on himself and on Hitler, and that he did not see resistance or disobedience as a realistic option. These assertions prompted the United States prosecutor James Heath to enquire if Ohlendorf would have murdered his sister if Hitler had ordered such a task. As the presiding judge, Michael Musmanno, states in his memoir, Ohlendorf knew that refusing the hypothetical order would completely invalidate his defence regarding obedience (Musmanno 1961, 99). Although the memoir cannot confirm Ohlendorf's thought process, it notes that he did affirm that he would have killed his sister under the pretence of military necessity.

Ohlendorf's claim about the so-called necessity behind the murders relied on Heydrich's initial order in 1941: to eliminate saboteurs behind enemy lines. The emotionless tone in which Ohlendorf dissected the *Einsatzgruppen*'s activities in his testimony is astonishing, considering the

nature of the discussion. Ohlendorf continued to maintain his ideologically abiding stance and claimed that Germany's safety would have been at risk if he had refused orders, and that the Jewish civilians had posed a threat. Whether he had valued or prioritised his seniority in the SS remains unclear from his testimony. Ohlendorf undoubtedly benefitted socially and politically from his position, despite refusing to acknowledge the role of these potential motivations in his decision-making process as a *Gruppenführer*.

Ohlendorf continuously attempted to rationalise his actions to the court, stating that he had ensured that civilians died in an orderly fashion and that he had not allowed the officers to engage in sadistic acts. He admitted that when the civilians had become aware of the execution plan, it had caused a level of 'emotional excitement and disobedience' resulting in disorganisation, which he had felt that his officers should not have to tolerate ("Twenty-Sixth Day", 2008, 331). As a result, he spoke of restoring order through violence in order to complete the executions in a humane and organised way. Ohlendorf had thus ordered his officers to beat the civilians before killing them, as, he claimed, this was the only way to ensure order. He evidently did not comprehend that torturing civilians was a crime in itself. When the Soviet prosecutor, Y. V. Pokrovsky, asked if it had been completely necessary to beat the civilians before executing them, Ohlendorf stated that it was the other *Einsatzkommandos* who had reported this activity to him. More specifically, in the case that Ohlendorf was absent for the executions, he had entrusted responsibility to his adjutant, Schubert.

The SS had recruited Schubert directly from the Hitler Youth in 1934 to the *Sicherheitsdienst* [Security Service, SD] and in 1941 assigned him to *Einsatzgruppe D* to assist Ohlendorf. The evidence presented by the prosecution points to Schubert's involvement in the 1941 Christmas massacre in Simferopol, where an estimated 14,300 civilians were killed (Musmanno 1961, 209). In his testimony, he claimed to simply 'look after the house' when Ohlendorf was not present and did not claim responsibility for initiating or enforcing orders (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 98: "Affidavit of Heinz Hermann Schubert, 4 February 1947").³ Schubert also stated that Ohlendorf held secret files, the contents of which he [Schubert] was unaware, regarding the execution of civilians (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 98: "Affidavit of Heinz Hermann Schubert, 4 February 1947").

Rather than explaining his justification initially, in his testimony Schubert claimed that he had only inspected rather than supervising or participating in any killings. This claim was based on the legal distinction between a perpetrator and accomplice, the latter bearing a considerably more lenient penalty (Kukielka and Walter 2013, 79). However, he conceded to having prior knowledge regarding a strict execution deadline given by superiors: *Einsatzgruppe D* would have to complete its murderous task by Christmas 1941. Given the explicit nature of the operational reports sent to RSHA on a

daily to weekly basis, it was unreasonable and futile for Schubert to claim ignorance. Schubert went on to defend his actions by stating that he had done nothing ‘unusual’ in Simferopol (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 502: “Simferopol”).

Central to Schubert’s defence were foundationally ideological standpoints that necessitated killing on account of self defence. He claimed that being a part of the generation who had witnessed German social, economic, and political disintegration following the First World War made him more inclined to the National Socialist appeal to defend his country. In a stroke of deep ideological devotion, Schubert then claimed that the objective of Operation Barbarossa was to ‘defend Western civilisation’. Schubert then argued that those who accused the *Einsatzgruppen* of war crimes had not witnessed the ‘joy of liberation’ from the locals when the *Einsatzgruppen* arrived (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 410: “Final Statements of the Defendants: Schubert”). In several instances, Schubert asserted that the objective of the *Einsatzgruppen* was to defend Germany and the West from Bolshevism. In his final statement, he claimed that the prosecution had no right to judge the officers because they could not relate to choosing between obedience and dishonour (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 410: “Final Statements of the Defendants: Schubert”).

As Musmanno notes, none of the perpetrators at the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial provided evidence of how civilians in the USSR had posed a threat to German national security (Musmanno 1961, 103). Furthermore, the perpetrators failed to justify how the Jewish and Roma communities in the USSR were seen to have connections to Bolshevism, or how civilians could have been considered saboteurs or partisans if they had not committed acts that aided the Soviet Red Army. Collectively, perpetrators who were defendants in the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial raised three broad justifications: first, that defence of German national security (self defence) and military necessity had demanded that the civilians be ‘eliminated’. Second, that National Socialist ideology had dictated that Germans were duty-bound to eliminate ideological opponents of the Reich and facilitate acquisition of living space for the greater German empire. Third, that the officers had not had the power to refuse superior orders and Hitler’s wishes (Bazyler and Tuerkheimer 2014, 176).

The basis of the self-defence argument was the idea that the ‘Jewish Question’ in Europe had originated with the Bolsheviks and communism in the East. The conviction that Bolshevism could conquer Western Europe had led the perpetrators to conclude that the only way to solve the ‘Jewish-Bolshevik Problem’ and protect German interests was through systematic elimination (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 463-4: “Opinion and Judgment”). But, if it had been the case that the goal of the *Einsatzgruppen* was to prevent the spread of Bolshevism, then civilians who were not members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) should have been safe from execution. On the contrary, the operational reports confirm

that the *Einsatzgruppen* murdered Jews in the USSR regardless of their connection to the CPSU.

The *Einsatzgruppen* perpetrators believed self defence to be a valid justification, since the Barbarossa Decree in German law stipulated the right of German troops to kill 'dangerous' civilians. These legal justifications established by the Reich served to shield the state's genocidal activities from incrimination by means of a legal strategy under German law.

The justification of mass murder on the basis of ideology was the most significant aspect of the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial. Ohlendorf's defence attorney demonstrated what Telford Taylor called 'legal acrobatics' in asserting that the war against the Soviet Union necessitated mass killings because it was a total war (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 465: "Self-Defense and Necessity"). The justification among the *Einsatzgruppen* drew heavily on the self-defence argument instilled by the regime's training program. Ohlendorf conveyed this ideological devotion brutally during the trial proceedings when he justified the murder of Jewish children by categorising them as a German national security threat.

The third broad defence, superior orders, was widely used, in two ways: first, that the superior officers of the SS were to blame for giving the order; and second, that the perpetrators had committed the murders under duress from their commanders and felt that they had had no choice but to obey. The tendency to direct the blame up the chain of command is widely evident in Schubert's testimonies. Schubert repeatedly complained that the trial had grouped him with high-ranking officers such as Ohlendorf, Rasch, and Bach-Zelewski. He claimed that he had simply been an adjutant and had held no legitimate weight in the SS and its decision-making process, as his duty had only been to obey orders (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 409: "Final Statements of the Defendants: Schubert").

However, the prosecution were able to refute the perpetrators' claims of operating under duress, providing evidence that many members had been able to opt out of the killings without adverse punishment. One officer had written that he had refused to participate in the executions, and subsequently the SS had assigned him to guard duty. Similarly, SS *Oberführer* Franz Six of *Einsatzgruppe* B had written in his diary that he had requested a transfer from the *Einsatzgruppen* and could do so without getting demoted. Aside from losing Heydrich's respect, Six noted, he and others had not suffered any consequences (Klee et al. 1991, 83). In an unorthodox attempt to prove that the perpetrators could refuse orders, the prosecutor asked *Standartenführer* Willy Seibert if he would have shot his parents if Hitler had deemed it necessary (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 472-3: "Superior Orders"). Seibert replied that it would be inhuman to demand such a task and that he would have refused, which implies that the *Einsatzgruppen* had indeed had

the ability to disobey superior orders, even under German military law at that time (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 473: “Superior Orders”).

Of the 24 defendants of the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial, the court sentenced 14 perpetrators to death, including Ohlendorf and Schubert. The US prosecution later commuted Schubert’s sentence to ten years in prison. After serving his sentence for five years, the US granted him early release in 1952. In 1968, documents against Kretschmer surfaced which resulted in a trial in Darmstadt, West Germany, where the court acquitted him for lack of evidence (Vice 2011, 61). Claude Lanzmann had been attempting to contact both Schubert and Kretschmer for interviews as part of the work on his documentary, *Shoah*, but it was not until 1979 that he located and approached them with a false identity and a hidden camera. Schubert agreed to meet with ‘Dr. Sorel’, while Kretschmer refused, resulting in Lanzmann visiting his home without notice (Vice 2011).

Claude Lanzmann’s *Einsatzgruppen* interviews

Lanzmann secured an interview with Schubert by claiming that his (fake) research institute was collecting oral histories of the Second World War. When he arrived at Schubert’s home, Schubert’s wife—the ‘imposing matron’, as Lanzmann commented—tried to prevent the interview, worrying that ‘Dr. Sorel’ was a government agent (Lanzmann 2012, 460). Schubert explained that discussing aspects of *Wehrmacht* activities could implicate him, since critical files for the defence during the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial had been inaccessible because ‘the plaque of honour of the *Wehrmacht* has to remain clean’ (Lanzmann 1979a, 13). Schubert’s description aligns with the ‘clean *Wehrmacht*’ myth that was mostly propagated at Nuremberg when the Tribunal categorised the SS, but not the *Wehrmacht*, as a criminal organisation. According to this myth, the US needed the Army High Command (OKH) to aid in Cold War strategies, and many linked this idea to the minimal postwar prosecution of *Wehrmacht* members. However, Schubert’s use of this myth throughout the interview was an attempt to diminish his role in the Holocaust by pointing to the responsibility of the *Wehrmacht*, rather than understanding the complicity of both groups. He later claimed that his conscience compelled him to tell ‘the truth’ about the connection of the *Wehrmacht* to the crimes of the *Einsatzgruppen*.

Schubert complained that the prosecution were too lenient towards Field Marshall General Eric von Manstein, and that Streckenbach never had a war crimes trial, while the ‘little people’ took the blame for superior orders (Lanzmann 1979a, 28). Schubert argued that Streckenbach knew a great deal more than the defendants in the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial, considering his responsibility for creating the special forces and the training facility in Pretsch.

Schubert, at first, claimed innocence by noting that a *Führer* Order, that is, a written decree signed by Hitler, had not officially existed and that he had

not attended the conference that had instigated the implementation of the Final Solution. He stated that Ohlendorf had explained the orders to him and had said, 'you are an aide and nothing else.... be glad you have nothing to do with this'. When Lanzmann asked for further detail, Schubert's wife prevented him from continuing down that path out of fear of incrimination. Schubert later noted that he must proceed with caution, as societal and political climates had categorised him as a neo-Nazi and a neo-fascist due to his past allegiances, whereas:

From the viewpoint of today I would have to refute many things that I believed in ... and believed in deeply ... because, with the growing distance, things look different than when I was standing in the middle of them.
(Lanzmann 1979a, 14)

However, his inclinations shone through when Lanzmann referenced Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, a title that visibly frustrated Schubert as he claimed it 'stirs' him up again (Lanzmann 1979a, 24; Hilberg 1961). His hostile reaction indicates denial that the Nazis committed genocidal violence against the Jews and Slavs.

Nearing the end of the interview, Lanzmann asked about the psychological strain of witnessing the murders. Schubert noted that it had been difficult but he had not had the power to disobey the order. Soon afterwards, the family became aware that recording was in progress, and the interview ended.

A few months later, in the summer of 1979, Lanzmann pursued another hidden-camera *Einsatzgruppen* interview, with Kretschmer. Since Kretschmer had not answered letters requesting an interview, Lanzmann located his home and arrived unannounced to discuss the wartime letters he wrote to his wife. Kretschmer refused to discuss the topic, noting the several legal proceedings previously pursued against him, but Lanzmann attempted to mitigate this by stating that their conversation was off the record. While his reluctance to share his thoughts persisted throughout the conversation, many of Kretschmer's comments reveal the impact of his SS ideological training. Lanzmann attempted to discuss the psychological strain of witnessing mass murder, in reference to Kretschmer's letters about cowardice in the *Einsatzgruppen*. Kretschmer refused to discuss such matters but instead said that he wondered why the victims did not revolt. He then denied that he was ever an antisemite, and claimed that he now realised that National Socialism had been 'crazy' (Lanzmann 1979b, 8).

Yet, hints of ideological devotion presented themselves when Kretschmer ranted about 'what's going on down there in the Middle East', when Lanzmann asked if he hated Jews. He stated that Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had bombarded the Germans with antisemitic remarks, which the SS had used to convince the German public that the Second World War was a 'Jewish War'. Kretschmer went on to claim that he no longer subscribed to that ideological outlook. When Lanzmann pointed out that Germany had also

been at war with the US, in addition to the USSR, Kretschmer claimed that the same narrative applied to the US:

K: ... yes, well ... who was involved in the American administration ... there were Jews all over it ... today, there are Jews inside there again ...

L: ... in the American administration?

K: ... yes ... not all of the Jews died. (Lanzmann 1979b, 10)

Kretschmer also justified the so-called Jewish War by noting that civilians in the occupied territories were saboteurs, and admitted that this vague definition had allowed the SS to widen its scope to include whomever they wished. However, in answer to Lanzmann's question, he failed to rationalise how children in the USSR had posed a threat to security, and instead claimed that he had never ordered the death of children.

Kretschmer further discussed ideas of obedience in the SS and claimed that refusing an order was impossible. He noted that postwar German society did not understand the extent to which citizens had been obligated to comply with Nazi orders, especially recruitment into the SS (Lanzmann 1979b, 8). As a result of that obligation, he believed, SS members had to exhibit an intense ideological devotion, to avoid the sort of consequences Kretschmer had experienced when Heydrich assigned him to the *Einsatzgruppen* as a punishment for failing his ideological education. Admittedly, Kretschmer noted, opting out of orders may not have resulted in a severe punishment, as postwar testimonies and evidence suggest, but, at the time, he had believed that he could not make that choice.

Lanzmann's conversation with Kretschmer concluded early, due to Kretschmer's unwillingness to share further details of his experience.

Rationalising genocide

Schubert's and Kretschmer's testimonies articulate the belief that the *Einsatzgruppen* aimed to protect occupied zones from partisans and that they had viewed Jews and Bolsheviks as threats to Germans. This demonstrates that it was not only the result of brutalisation or camaraderie but the success of the Reich in disseminating the concept of subhumans which allowed perpetrators to set aside guilt and morality by prioritising their duty to their country. Even though many recoiled at their crimes, such as Bach-Zelewski, who claimed to have suffered a nervous breakdown as a result, the perpetrators still obeyed orders and justified their obedience on the basis of their victims' supposed inhuman and barbaric biological traits (Bartov 2003, 27). Even if the *Einsatzgruppen* members were not all devoted to National Socialism, the ideological indoctrination and propaganda bombardment provided them with a rationalisation for their actions. As Bach-Zelewski stated in his testimony at the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial:

Today I believe that it [Himmler's demand for the extermination of 30 million Slavs] was the logical consequence of our ideology.... If, for years, for decades, a doctrine is preached to the effect that the Slav race is an

inferior race, that the Jews are not even human beings, then an explosion of that sort is inevitable. ("Twenty-Eighth Day", 2008 [1946])

For many *Einsatzgruppen* members, the decision to participate, necessitating a choice between justified collaboration and dishonourable refusal, appeared almost predetermined, due to the close connection between the task and the state ideology which linked genocide with security in the minds of the perpetrators.

It has been noted that the *Einsatzgruppen* members' strong belief in the ideological concept of self-defence had stemmed from witnessing the German defeat in the First World War (Bazyler and Tuerkheimer 2014, 179). As such, members had experienced the humiliating loss of territories, demilitarisation, and the economic impact of the reparations clause (Bazyler and Tuerkheimer 2014, 179). This is inadequate as a justification, however, as it fails to acknowledge that the economic consequences of the First World War were a widespread German experience, whereas only a small percentage of citizens subsequently became mass murderers.

In addition, despite claiming compulsion by peer pressure and superior orders, opportunism had incentivised the perpetrators to comply with Nazi initiatives, to further their careers and reputations as SS members. Many in the *Einsatzgruppen* had accepted the task of mass murder, believing that their participation and devotion could lead to more significant long-term career advancements, thus benefitting from the expansion of the Reich. The state's messaging captured the attention of German youth, particularly men under the age of 35, who benefitted immensely from employment opportunities with the establishment of the SS. The Nazi regime provided a pathway for opportunistic civilians through promises of respectable government positions with promotions. In addition to the university-trained individuals, men of lower socioeconomic status, who otherwise would not have been able to attain high status, were exposed to more opportunities (Ziegler 2014, 98). Consequently, National Socialism appeared to have resolved the national employment and economic stability crisis in Germany which motivated many ambitious German civilians to pursue career opportunities in the SS. In what Bergen defines as 'careerism', Germans adhered to National Socialism to advance in prestigious government and military departments (Bergen 2016, 136). Many consequently worked to distinguish themselves as devoted Nazis by using harsher tactics against the Reich's perceived enemies, hoping to draw positive attention to themselves and demonstrate merit for further progression (Bergen 2016, 136). Kretschmer's SS career provides a clear example of this narrative. After initially failing his ideological training, Kretschmer became a devoted Nazi once he had accepted his assignment in the *Einsatzgruppen*, and had close contact with superior officers. This elevation of social status, coupled with a sizable income and job security with social benefits, made membership of the *Einsatzgruppen* attractive and

worthwhile. Also appealing was the prestige of association with the SS, since civilians viewed SS members as authority figures and symbols of high status.

Employment with the SS allowed middle- and lower-class civilians to achieve upward progression in the government and military that had not been as easily accessible for the previous working-class generations (Ziegler 2014, 34). By replacing the traditional elite class system, the architects of the SS facilitated an 'Aryan' racial elite distinguished by purity of blood, ancestry, and biological traits, creating a new aristocracy measured by racial superiority. As a result, to ensure a politically reliable paramilitary group, Himmler and Heydrich reinforced the notion of the *Herrenrasse* and the perpetuation of loyal, pretentious elites whose privileges were bound to their genetic heritage. Thus, opportunistic behaviour from SS members, such as Kretschmer, emerged due to the increased social and financial reputation associated with the organisation and the chance for promotions as a reward for loyalty to the ideology.

These factors highlight the importance of personal responsibility and disprove the notion that *Einsatzgruppen* members lacked autonomy to refuse orders due to constraints such as peer pressure. Granted, comradeship played a role in the *Einsatzgruppen* members' decisions to follow orders. As the scholarship highlights, the perpetrators reinvented their image of themselves, in response to brutalisation training and the environment of the warfront, to fit in with the group and its objectives (Browning 1992, 185). They perceived the ability to maintain self-control while committing murder as a redeemable quality and one worthy of respect. Similarly, Arendt's concept of collective guilt is relevant here: 'where all are guilty, no one is' (Arendt 1969, 25). According to this theory, once the perpetrators had solidified their collective guilt bond, they felt justified in their actions. The *Einsatzgruppen* members mitigated complicity in their crimes by virtue of the group nature of involvement in the crimes. Knowing that they were not committing the crimes alone gave them validation.

It is crucial to highlight that perpetrators in the *Einsatzgruppen* committed murder because it appeared reasonable to them. The fact is that the perpetrators refused to deviate from their tasks because there was greater benefit in complying with the Reich rather than in losing a position in the SS. Opportunism played a role in the perpetrators' decision-making process, while the National Socialist ideology informed their actions, preserved their stance, and made it acceptable in their minds. Ultimately, the prestige and employment benefits associated with the SS were the driving factor, and the propaganda bombardment allowed the *Einsatzgruppen* members to feel justified in their decisions.

The cases of Schubert and Kretschmer illustrate how ideology and opportunism played a part in decisions to participate in the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen*. While state ideology compelled both perpetrators to remain in the task force and serve its purpose, Kretschmer openly boasted about the

advantages of his position. Kretschmer viewed Heydrich's assignment as a gift, as it not only granted him a good income but also gave him a prestigious position in the SS. On the other hand, Schubert's *Shoah* interview revealed that he had wanted increased involvement in administrative matters, but Ohlendorf had refused to include him in 'secret' communications. Consequently, Schubert had admittedly considered and attempted to progress from the rank of adjutant to a higher-ranking role.

In the postwar landscape, individuals such as Schubert and Kretschmer retained elements of Nazi ideology. They continued to express antisemitic notions, while failing to acknowledge the role of employment and status in attracting them to participate in state-organised genocide.

Conclusion

Einsatzgruppen members participated in the mass murder of civilians in the USSR, in part, because they adhered to the ideological self-defence narrative that labeled Jews and Slavs as national security threats, saboteurs, and *Untermenschen* and, in part, in order to obtain the privileges awarded to members of the SS for their continued obedience. Ideological training convinced ordinary Germans that the Slavic, Jewish, and Roma peoples in the Soviet Union threatened the safety of the Reich due to their inherent connection to Bolshevism, and that the *Einsatzgruppen* had a responsibility to protect the German-occupied zones and their families in Germany from these potential threats. The case studies of Schubert's and Kretschmer's testimonies show that while both men held blatantly antisemitic ideas, Kretschmer openly sought social status in his decision to join the *Einsatzgruppen*. Indeed, Heydrich's preferential treatment of SS members only solidified the perpetrators' decisions to obey in order to secure prestigious positions and upward progression in the SS.

Following the defeat of the Third Reich, defendants in the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial attempted to mitigate their crimes by attributing their actions to factors, such as, the need for self-defence and compulsion by orders from military superiors. The perpetrators on trial attempted to defer blame from themselves in the hope of avoiding a guilty verdict. Three decades after the trial, as evidenced in the footage recorded for Lanzmann's film, *Shoah*, the primary focus of perpetrators, such as, Schubert and Kretschmer, was to steer clear of the German authorities and the public eye, who continued to regard them as Nazis. Despite their desire to distance themselves from the postwar memory of the Reich, Schubert and Kretschmer clearly exhibited resentment over the Nazi defeat. They believed that international public opinion held a skewed perspective of National Socialism, and showed that they still felt that their actions were justified on the basis of Nazi ideology: in the *Shoah* interviews, Schubert adversely reacted to Hilberg's book, while Kretschmer complained about the Jewish presence in the US administration.

By considering multiple perspectives, using wartime documents, the Nuremberg Trial transcripts, and footage recorded during the making of *Shoah*, I conclude that the *Einsatzgruppen* members participated in the Holocaust willingly and because of their belief in the propaganda campaign bolstered by Himmler and Heydrich, which included the importance of maintaining composure and self-control. These testimonies reinforce the significance of the Jewish and Bolshevik villainisation that was incorporated in the SS military training, as well as the anticipated benefits associated with aiding in the expansion of the Reich. Further, the trial testimonies give rise to questions about the weight behind pressure from superior orders, and the practical implications of this unique opportunity for working-class German civilians to progress to become prestigious paramilitary officers. The Third Reich used career advancement opportunities to incentivise loyalty, leading ordinary civilians such as Kretschmer to justify mass murder as an ideological duty. Despite perpetrators' refusal to admit the integral importance of employment status during their postwar discourse, the wartime documents indicate that opportunities made available to the members through their association with the SS were a crucial factor that led them to take part in the murders in the USSR.

In each of the three time periods considered in this article, different justifications were expressed by the perpetrators. Some of those justifications were part of legal defence or evasion to avoid incrimination, others show thorough indoctrination in Nazi ideology, traces of which remained decades later.

Reference list

- Arad, Yitzhak, Shmuel Krakowski, Stella Schossberger, and Shmuel Spector. 1989. *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign Against the Jews in Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union, July 1941-January 1943*. New York, NY: Holocaust Library.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1969. "Reflections on Violence." *Journal of International Affairs* 23, no. 1: 1-35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24356590>
- Bartov, Omer. 2003. *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bazyler, Michael J., and Frank M. Tuerkheimer. 2014. *Forgotten Trials of the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bergen, Doris L. 2016. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Browning, Christopher R. 1992. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins.

- “Directions for the handling of the Jewish question.” 1946. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Red Series: Volume 3: 212-PS, 222-225. Office Of United States Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-III
- “Einsatzbefehle und Anweisungen des Chefs der Sipo und des SD an die Einsatzgruppen und -kommandos in der Sowjetunion.” 1941. R 70-SOWJETUNION-32. Kopien aus russischen Archiven, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde. <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/ILSEIYO5X6YIZILCDOFT2Z5ZX7PE7FMG>
- Goldhagen, Daniel J. 1996. *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Hilberg, Raul. 2003. *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3rd ed. First edition published 1961. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Höhne, Heinz. 1967. *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf: die Geschichte der SS*. Gütersloh: S. Mohn.
- Jensen, Olaf, and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann, eds. 2008. *Ordinary People as Murderers: Perpetrators in Comparative Perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Klee, Ernst, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds. 1991. *‘The Good Old Days’: The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*. Connecticut: Simon & Schuster Inc.
- Kühl, Stefan. 2016. *Ordinary Organisations: Why Normal Men Carried Out the Holocaust*, translated by Jessica Spengler. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Kukielka, Karolina and Tonio Walter. 2013. “Vergangenheitsbewältigung durch Strafrecht? Der Einsatzgruppen-Prozess von Ulm.” *Jahrbuch der Juristischen Zeitgeschichte* 14, no. 1: 61-88. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/jjzg-b-2013-140105/html>
- Langerbein, Helmut. 2003. *Hitler’s Death Squads: The Logic of Mass Murder*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Lanzmann, Claude. 1979a. “Heinz Schubert - Einsatzgruppen.” RG-60.5013, Claude Lanzmann Shoah Collection. The Shoah Foundation. Ahrensburg. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004055>
- . 1979b. “Karl Kretschmer- Einsatzgruppen.” RG-60.5018, Claude Lanzmann Shoah Collection. The Shoah Foundation. Karlsruhe. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004167>
- . 1985. *Shoah*. New York: New Yorker Films.
- . 2012. *The Patagonian Hare: A Memoir*. London: Atlantic Books.
- “Letters from Karl Kretschmer to His Family.” [1942]. RG-14.101M. Family Life During the Holocaust, Records of the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes. German Federal Archives, Ludwigsburg Branch. The letters are published in German on the website of Yad Vashem:

- <https://www.yadvashem.org/de/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/architecture-of-auschwitz-birkenau/kretschmer-letters.html>
- “*Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler, Munich, 1933, 39th Edition.” 1946. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Red Series: Volume 3: 404-PS, 386. Office Of United States Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-III
- Musmanno, Michael. 2015 [1961]. *The Eichmann Kommandos*. Philadelphia: Normanby Press.
- “Regulation for deployment of the Security Police and SD in association with the Army, Army High Command (OKH), April 28, 1941.” n.d. *Resources on the German Military and the Holocaust*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington. <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/context-sheet-3.pdf>
- Rhodes, Richard. 2002. *Masters of Death: The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rubenstein, Joshua, and Ilya Altman, eds. 2008. *The Unknown Black Book: The Holocaust in the German-Occupied Soviet Territories*, translated by Christopher Morris and Joshua Rubenstein. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Schroer, Timothy L. 2012. “Civilization, Barbarism, and the Ethos of Self-Control among the Perpetrators.” *German Studies Review* 35, no. 1: 33-54. www.jstor.org/stable/23269607
- Taylor, Telford. 1992. *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir*. 1st ed. Boston: Little Brown.
- “The New Germany Speaks Here. Book 11, Reichsfuehrer SS Heinrich Himmler. The Security Squadron as an Anti-Bolshevist Battle Organization. 1936. Central Publishing House of the NSDAP., Franz Eher, Succ. Munich. Obedience.” 1946. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Red Series: Volume 4: 1851-PS, 488-9. Office Of United States Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-IV
- “To the Chief of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces [OKW], 28 February 1942.” 1946. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Red Series: Volume 3: 212-PS, 128. Office Of United States Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-III
- “Top Secret. Handwritten : 11 11161/44/ g. Memorandum”. 1946 [1942]. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Red Series: Volume 3: 294-PS, 242-51. Office Of United States Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-III

- Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals*. 1946-49. Volume IV: The Einsatzgruppen Case, The RuSHA Case. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/lh/lmlp/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-IV/2011525364_NT_war-criminals_Vol-IV.pdf
- “Twenty-Sixth Day: Testimony of Otto Ohlendorf.” 2008. *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal (The Blue Set)*. Volume 4. New Haven: Lillian Goldman Law Library. <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/01-03-46.asp>
- “Twenty-Eighth Day: Monday, 7 January 1946.” 2008. *Nuremberg Trial Proceedings*. 2008. Volume 4. Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library. New Haven. <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/01-07-46.asp>
- Vice, Sue. 2011. “Claude Lanzmann’s Einsatzgruppen Interviews.” *Holocaust Studies* 17, no. 2-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2011.11087292>
- Wolfe, Robert. 1980. “Putative Threat to National Security as a Nuremberg Defense for Genocide.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450, no. 1 (July): 46-67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271628045000106>
- Zapotoczny, Walter S. 2017. *Beyond Duty: The Reasons Some Soldiers Commit Atrocities*. Gloucestershire: Fonthill Media Limited.
- Ziegler, Herbert F. 2014. *Nazi Germany’s New Aristocracy: The SS Leadership 1925-1939*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zukier, Henri. 1994. “The Twisted Road To Genocide: On The Psychological Development of Evil During the Holocaust.” *Social Research* 61, no. 2: 423-55. www.jstor.org/stable/40971039

Endnotes

¹ It has been suggested that Ohlendorf, too, was assigned to the *Einsatzgruppen* as a form of punishment, by Himmler (Wolfe 1980).

² Paul Blobel, the previous leader of *Einsatzkommando* 4a, had suffered a nervous breakdown after supervising the execution of 3,000 Jewish civilians. *Einsatzgruppe* members recalled that he had hallucinated that people his unit had tried to kill were still alive, and that he had threatened to shoot *Wehrmacht* soldiers and others in his unit. After hospitalisation, the SS relieved him from duty on account of alcoholism (Klee et al. 1991, 111).

³ On the other hand, the testimony of Karl Werner Braune stated the contrary regarding Schubert’s involvement. Braune stated that Schubert had spoken for Ohlendorf on one occasion and ensured that the *Einsatzkommandos* had killed civilians militarily and humanely, as dictated by the *Gruppenführer* (*Trials of War Criminals*, 1946-49, 325: “Extracts From the Testimony of Defendant Braune”).