

MODULE #6 HANDOUT: PERPETRATOR TESTIMONIES AND RATIONALIZATIONS

Perpetrator Testimonies

“I was ... present at the enormous mass killings the day before yesterday. For the first truckload my hand trembled slightly when shooting, but one gets used to it. By the time the tenth truck arrived I was already aiming steadily and fired surely at the many women, children, and infants. Bear in mind that I also have two babies at home, to whom these hordes would do the same, if not ten times worse.”

German police officer Walter M.

“Members of our police station were, with a few exceptions, quite happy to take part in shootings of Jews. They had a ball! ... They wanted money and gold. Let’s not kid ourselves; there was always something up for grabs during actions against Jews.”

German policeman, Cracow District, German-occupied Poland

“After I had carried out the first shooting and at the unloading point was allotted a mother with daughter as victims for the next shooting. I began a conversation with them and learned that they were Germans from Kassel, and I decided not to participate further in the executions. The entire business was now so repugnant to me that I returned to my platoon leader and told him that I was still sick and asked for my release.”

Georg K., German police reservist

“Sometimes some of the men refused to participate in the shootings. I myself refused a few times. None of my superiors took any action against me and the same applied to other people who refused to carry out orders. We were just assigned different duties. We were not threatened with any kind of punishment, certainly not where the executions were concerned.”

German police officer from Police Battalion 322

Common Rationalizations for Unethical Behavior

"I know that I shouldn't do this, but ...

- **Denial of responsibility:** "... my boss is making me, so it isn't really my fault."
- **Denial of injury:** "... who's really being hurt?"
- **Denial of victim:** "... this person deserves it."
- **Social weighing:** "... the other side is doing even worse stuff."
- **Appeal to higher authority:** "... I have a family to feed."
- **Metaphor of the ledger:** "... I give a lot of money to charity."