

Planning the Invasion of the Soviet Union

From the beginning of operational planning in the winter and spring of 1941, German military and police authorities intended to wage a war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. Driven by their racial and ideological worldview, they targeted representatives of the Communist state and Jews. Prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the military leadership issued a series of orders outlining the nature of the war on the eastern front.

Re: Regulation for deployment of the Security Police and SD in association with the Army, Army High Command (OKH), April 28, 1941¹

To implement special security police tasks *outside the ambit* of the military forces the deployment of special detachments of the Security Police (SD) in the area of operations is necessary.

With the agreement of the Chief of the Security Police and SD the deployment of the Security Police and SD in the area of operations will be regulated as follows:

1. *Tasks...*

(b) *In the Army Group Rear Areas*

To investigate and suppress anti-German and anti-state activities in so far as they are not carried out by enemy armed forces, as well as to inform the commander of the Army Group Rear Areas on the political situation

3. *Cooperation between the Einsatzgruppen or -kommandos of the Security Police and the SD and the Commander in the Army Group Rear Areas (re: 1b):*

Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos of the SP (SD) are deployed in the Army Group rear areas. They are subordinate to the representative of the Chief of the SP [Security Police] and the SD assigned to the headquarters of the Commander of the Army Group Rear Area, to whom they are subordinated with regard to deployment, accommodations, and supplies. They receive their functional instructions from the Chief of the SP and SD

The representatives and if need be the detachment commanders of the Einsatzkommandos assigned to the [Wehrmacht] security divisions are required to inform the military commanders in a timely manner of the instructions they have received. In exigent circumstances the commander of the Army Group Rear Area is authorized to issue restrictive instructions that take precedence over all other instructions.

The Einsatzgruppen or -kommandos are authorized as part of their mission to take executive measures against the civilian population on their own responsibility.

Signed von Brauchitsch

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¹ RG-242, NOKW-2080, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD, trans. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

RESOURCES ON THE GERMAN MILITARY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Planning the Invasion of the Soviet Union (continued)

Excerpt from “The Decree on Exercising Military Jurisdiction in the Area of Barbarossa and Special Measures by Troops” (Barbarossa Jurisdiction Order), May 13, 1941²

- I. Treatment of crimes committed by Enemy Civilians
 1. *Criminal acts committed by enemy civilians* are removed from the jurisdiction of the military courts and the summary courts-martial until further notice.
 2. *Guerrillas* are to be eliminated ruthlessly by the troops in combat or while escaping.
 3. *All other attacks by enemy civilians against the Armed Forces*, its personnel and its retinue also will be suppressed on the spot by the troops with the most rigorous methods until the assailants are annihilated.
 4. Where such measures were not taken or were not possible at first, *suspect elements will be brought before an officer immediately. This officer is to decide whether they are to be shot*
- II. Treatment of crimes committed against indigenous residents by members of the Wehrmacht and its retinue
 1. *Regarding actions committed by personnel of the Wehrmacht or its retinue against enemy civilians, there is no obligation to prosecute*, even where the deed is at the same time a military crime or misdemeanor

Excerpt from “Guidelines for the Behavior of the Troops in Russia,” June 4, 1941³

1. *Bolshevism is the deadly enemy of the National Socialist German people. Germany’s struggle is directed against this subversive ideology and its functionaries.*
2. This struggle requires ruthless and energetic action against Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs, and Jews, and the total elimination of all active or passive resistance.
3. The members of the Red Army—including prisoners—must be treated with the most extreme reserve and the greatest caution since one must reckon with devious methods of combat. The Asiatic soldiers of the Red Army in particular are inscrutable, unpredictable, devious, and brutish
4. When taking units prisoner *the leaders must be separated from the rank and file at once.*
5. In the Soviet Union the German soldier is not confronted with a unified population. The USSR is a state formation that combines a multiplicity of Slav, Caucasian, and Asiatic peoples held together by the violence of the Bolshevik rulers. Jewry is strongly represented in the USSR

² Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, “Kommissarbefehl und Massenexecutionen sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener,” in *Anatomie des SS Staates*, vol. 2, trans. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989), 181–184.

³ Jacobsen, 187–188.