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ONE DAY IN JOZEFOW

Initiation to mass murder

Christopher R. Browning

Peukert's essay expands the concept of the "Final Solution" to include the persecution and extermination of large numbers of non-Jews who were regarded by the Nazis as racially or biologically "inferior," as "lives unworthy of life." But the attempt to trace racism back to science and the welfare state could perhaps risk leaving us with a story of Auschwitz without the Jews. We must not lose sight of the unique position of anti-Semitism within the Nazi ideology of race or of the "special fate" of European Jewry in the years of the Third Reich. The Nazis constructed many racial "enemies," but they always attached an absolute priority to the "solution" of the "Jewish Problem."

Perhaps we too often visualize the "Final Solution" and the "Holocaust" in terms of the relentless, methodical, relatively anonymous, "industrialized" mass murder of millions of victims in the Nazi extermination camps. But large numbers of Jews were also murdered in bloody shootings, at close range, by men who had to look their victims, including women and children, directly in the face. How were the men who pulled the triggers able, psychologically and physically, to continue the killings after their uniforms were splattered with the blood and bone fragments of the people they had murdered? It is too easy to assume that only the fanatical anti-Semitism of Himmler's "Ideological Shock Troops" – the SS – could have motivated this kind of brutality. But as Christopher Browning shows in his chillingly concrete descrip-

This study is based entirely on the judicial records in the Staatsanwaltschaft Hamburg that resulted from two investigations of Reserve Police Battalion 101: 141 Js 1957/62 and 141 Js 128/65. German laws and regulations for the protection of privacy prohibit the revealing of names from such court records. Thus, with the exception of Major Trapp, who was tried, convicted, and executed in Poland after the war, I have chosen simply to refer to individuals generically by rank and unit rather than by pseudonyms.

ONE DAY IN JOZEFOW

tion of "One Day in Jozefow," by no means all of the mass shootings in occupied Poland and the Soviet Union were performed by the SS or the Gestapo. Otherwise quite "ordinary men" (in this instance, Hamburg police officers, some of them from working-class backgrounds) found themselves caught up in the "Final Solution" because the SS simply did not have enough manpower to murder the millions of Jews under German rule.

What made the men in this police unit hunt down and shoot thousands of Polish Jews? Certainly, it was not fear of punishment. Browning shows that some members of the unit were able to refuse from the outset to participate in the mass killings, or to stop killing once the mass murders had begun, without suffering serious consequences. Yet, these were the exceptions. The majority, who simply went ahead and did the "job" they had been given, appear to have been motivated by relatively mundane considerations. Some simply did not want to damage their future career prospects by showing that they were "unfit" for hard duty. Others, and these were probably the majority, submitted to a kind of perverse male peer group pressure which made refusing to murder defenseless Jews into an act of cowardice. Browning's article echoes important themes that have appeared in several of the earlier contributions to this volume; as both Alf Lüdtke and Adelheid von Saldern suggest, under Nazi rule, familiar values – such as pride in "quality work," "manliness" and "male comradeship" – might sanction barbarous behavior. And, as Bartov and also Mallmann and Paul argue, quite ordinary Germans made vital contributions to the construction of the Nazi system of terror and mass murder.

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In mid-March of 1942, some 75 to 80 per cent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while some 20 to 25 per cent had already perished. A mere eleven months later, in mid-February 1943, the situation was exactly the reverse. Some 75 to 80 per cent of all Holocaust victims were already dead, and a mere 20 to 25 per cent still clung to a precarious existence. At the core of the Holocaust was an intense eleven-month wave of mass murder. The center of gravity of this mass murder was Poland, where in March 1942, despite two and a half years of terrible hardship, deprivation, and persecution, every major Jewish community was still intact; eleven months later, only remnants of Polish Jewry survived in a few rump ghettos and labor camps.

In short, the German attack on the Polish ghettos was not a gradual or incremental program stretched over a long period of time, but a veritable *Blitzkrieg*, a massive offensive requiring the mobilization of large numbers of shock troops at the very period when the German war effort in Russia hung in the balance.

The first question I would like to pose, therefore, is what were the manpower sources the Germans tapped for their assault on Polish Jewry? Since the personnel of the death camps was quite minimal, the real question quite simply is who were the ghetto-clearers? On close examination one discovers that the Nazi regime diverted almost nothing in terms of real military resources for this offensive against the ghettos. The local German authorities in Poland, above all SS and Police Leader (SSPF) Odilo Globocnik, were given the task but not the men to carry it out. They had to improvise by creating *ad hoc* "private armies." Coordination and guidance of the ghetto-clearing was provided by the staffs of the SSPF and commander of the security police in each district in Poland. Security police and gendarmerie in the branch offices in each district provided local expertise.¹ But the bulk of the manpower had to be recruited from two sources. The first source was the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians recruited out of the prisoner of war camps and trained at the SS camp in Trawniki. A few hundred of these men, among them Ivan Demjanjuk, were then sent to the death camps of Operation Reinhard, where they outnumbered the German staff roughly 4 to 1. The majority, however, were organized into mobile units and became itinerant ghetto-clearers, traveling out from Trawniki to one ghetto after another and returning to their base camp between operations.²

The second major source of manpower for the ghetto-clearing operations was the numerous battalions of Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*) stationed in the General Government. In 1936, when Himmler gained centralized control over all German police, the Secret State Police (Gestapo) and Criminal Police (Kripo) were consolidated under the Security Police Main Office of Reinhard Heydrich. The German equivalent of the city police (*Schutzpolizei*) and county sheriffs (*Gendarmerie*) were consolidated under the Order Police Main Office of Kurt Daluege. The Order Police were far more numerous than the more notorious Security Police and encompassed not only the regular policemen distributed among various urban and rural police stations in

Germany, but also large battalion-size units, which were stationed in barracks and were given some military training. As with National Guard units in the United States, these battalions were organized regionally. As war approached in 1938-9, many young Germans volunteered for the Order Police in order to avoid being drafted into the regular army.

Beginning in September 1939, the Order Police battalions, each of approximately five hundred men, were rotated out from their home cities on tours of duty in the occupied territories. As the German empire expanded and the demand for occupation forces increased, the Order Police was vastly expanded by creating new reserve police battalions. The career police and prewar volunteers of the old battalions were distributed to become the noncommissioned officer cadres of these new reserve units, whose rank and file were now composed of civilian draftees considered too old by the Wehrmacht for frontline military service.

One such unit, Reserve Police Battalion 101 from Hamburg, was one of three police battalions stationed in the district of Lublin during the onslaught against the Polish ghettos. Because no fewer than 210 former members of this battalion were interrogated during more than a decade of judicial investigation and trials in the 1960s and early 1970s, we know a great deal about its composition. First let us examine the officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) cadres.

The battalion was commanded by Major Wilhelm Trapp, a 53-year-old career policeman who had risen through the ranks and was affectionately referred to by his men as "Papa Trapp." Though he had joined the Nazi Party in December 1932, he had never been taken into the SS or even given an SS-equivalent rank. He was clearly not considered SS material. His two captains, in contrast, were young men in their late twenties, both party members and SS officers. Even in their testimony 25 years later they made no attempt to conceal their contempt for their commander as both weak and unmilitary. Little is known about the first lieutenant who was Trapp's adjutant, for he died in the spring of 1943. In addition, however, the battalion had seven reserve lieutenants, that is men who were not career policemen but who, after they were drafted into the Order Police, had been selected to receive officer training because of their middle-class status, education, and success in civilian life. Their ages ranged

from 33 to 48; five were party members, but none belonged to the SS. Of the 32 NCOs on whom we have information, 22 were party members but only seven were in the SS. They ranged in age from 27 to 40 years old; their average was 33¹/₂.

The vast majority of the rank and file had been born and reared in Hamburg and its environs. The Hamburg element was so dominant and the ethos of the battalion so provincial that contingents from nearby Wilhelmshaven and Schleswig-Holstein were considered outsiders. Over 60 per cent were of working-class background, but few of them were skilled laborers. The majority of them held typical Hamburg working-class jobs; dock workers and truck drivers were more numerous, but there were also many warehouse and construction workers, machine operators, seamen and waiters. About 35 per cent were lower-middle class, virtually all of whom were white-collar workers. Three-quarters of them were in sales of some sort; the other one-quarter performed various office jobs, both in the government and private sectors. The number of independent artisans, such as tailors and watch makers, was small; and there were only three middle-class professionals – two druggists and one teacher. The average age of the men was 39; over half were between 37 and 42, the *Jahrgänge* most intensively drafted for police duty after September 1939.

The men in Reserve Police Battalion 101 were from the lower orders of German society. They had experienced neither social nor geographic mobility. Very few were economically independent. Except for apprenticeship or vocational training, virtually none had any education after leaving the *Volksschule* at age 14 or 15. About 25 per cent were Nazi Party members in 1942, most having joined in 1937 or later. Though not questioned about their pre-1933 political affiliation during their interrogations, presumably many had been Communists, Socialists, and labor union members before 1933. By virtue of their age, of course, all went through their formative period in the pre-Nazi era. These were men who had known political standards and moral norms other than those of the Nazis. Most came from Hamburg, one of the least Nazified cities in Germany, and the majority came from a social class that in its political culture had been anti-Nazi.

These men would not seem to have been a very promising group from which to recruit mass murderers of the Holocaust.

Yet this unit was to be extraordinarily active both in clearing ghettos and in massacring Jews outright during the *Blitzkrieg* against Polish Jewry. If these middle-aged reserve policemen became one major component of the murderers, the second question posed is how? Specifically, what happened when they were first assigned to kill Jews? What choices did they have, and how did they react?

Reserve Police Battalion 101 departed from Hamburg on June 20, 1942, and was initially stationed in the town of Bilgoraj, fifty miles south of Lublin. Around 11 July it received orders for its first major action, aimed against the approximately 1,800 Jews living in the village of Jozefow, about twenty miles slightly south and to the east of Bilgoraj. In the General Government a seventeen-day stoppage of Jewish transports due to a shortage of rolling stock had just ended, but the only such trains that had been resumed were several per week from the district of Krakau to Belzec. The railway line to Sobibor was down, and that camp had become practically inaccessible. In short the Final Solution in the Lublin district had been paralyzed, and Globocnik was obviously anxious to resume the killing. But Jozefow could not be a deportation action. Therefore the battalion was to select out the young male Jews in Jozefow and send them to a work camp in Lublin. The remaining Jews – about 1,500 women, children, and elderly – were simply to be shot on the spot.

On 12 July Major Trapp summoned his officers and explained the next day's assignment. One officer, a reserve lieutenant in 1st company and owner of a family lumber business in Hamburg, approached the major's adjutant, indicated his inability to take part in such an action in which unarmed women and children were to be shot, and asked for a different assignment. He was given the task of accompanying the work Jews to Lublin.³ The men were not as yet informed of their imminent assignment, though the 1st company captain at least confided to some of his men that the battalion had an "extremely interesting task" (*hochinteressante Aufgabe*) the next day.⁴

Around 2 a.m. the men climbed aboard waiting trucks, and the battalion drove for about an hour and a half over an unpaved road to Jozefow. Just as daylight was breaking, the men arrived at the village and assembled in a half-circle around Major Trapp, who proceeded to give a short speech. With

choking voice and tears in his eyes, he visibly fought to control himself as he informed his men that they had received orders to perform a very unpleasant task. These orders were not to his liking, either, but they came from above. It might perhaps make their task easier, he told the men, if they remembered that in Germany bombs were falling on the women and children. Two witnesses claimed that Trapp also mentioned that the Jews of this village had supported the partisans. Another witness recalled Trapp's mentioning that the Jews had instigated the boycott against Germany.⁵ Trapp then explained to the men that the Jews in the village of Jozefow would have to be rounded up, whereupon the young males were to be selected out for labor and the others shot.

Trapp then made an extraordinary offer to his battalion: if any of the older men among them did not feel up to the task that lay before him, he could step out. Trapp paused, and after some moments, one man stepped forward. The captain of 3rd company, enraged that one of his men had broken ranks, began to berate the man. The major told the captain to hold his tongue. Then ten or twelve other men stepped forward as well. They turned in their rifles and were told to await a further assignment from the major.⁶

Trapp then summoned the company commanders and gave them their respective assignments. Two platoons of 3rd company were to surround the village; the men were explicitly ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape. The remaining men were to round up the Jews and take them to the market place. Those too sick or frail to walk to the market place, as well as infants and anyone offering resistance or attempting to hide, were to be shot on the spot. Thereafter, a few men of 1st company were to accompany the work Jews selected at the market place, while the rest were to proceed to the forest to form the firing squads. The Jews were to be loaded onto battalion trucks by 2nd company and shuttled from the market place to the forest.

Having given the company commanders their respective assignments, Trapp spent the rest of the day in town, mostly in a school room converted into his headquarters but also at the homes of the Polish mayor and the local priest. Witnesses who saw him at various times during the day described him as bitterly complaining about the orders he had been given and "weeping like a child." He nevertheless affirmed that "orders

were orders" and had to be carried out.⁷ Not a single witness recalled seeing him at the shooting site, a fact that was not lost upon the men, who felt some anger about it.⁸ Trapp's driver remembers him saying later, "If this Jewish business is ever avenged on earth, then have mercy on us Germans." (*Wenn sich diese Judensache einmal auf Erden rächt, dann guade uns Deutschen.*)⁹

After the company commanders had relayed orders to the men, those assigned to the village broke up into small groups and began to comb the Jewish quarter. The air was soon filled with cries, and shots rang out. The market place filled rapidly with Jews, including mothers and infants. While the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were apparently willing to shoot those Jews too weak or sick to move, they still shied for the most part from shooting infants, despite their orders.¹⁰ No officer intervened, though subsequently one officer warned his men that in the future they would have to be more energetic.¹¹

As the roundup neared completion, the men of 1st company were withdrawn from the search and given a quick lesson in the gruesome task that awaited them by the battalion doctor and the company's first sergeant. The doctor traced the outline of a human figure on the ground and showed the men how to use a fixed bayonet placed between and just above the shoulder blades as a guide for aiming their carbines.¹² Several men now approached the 1st company captain and asked to be given a different assignment; he curtly refused.¹³ Several others who approached the first sergeant rather than the captain fared better. They were given guard duty along the route from the village to the forest.¹⁴

The first sergeant organized his men into two groups of about thirty-five men, which was roughly equivalent to the number of Jews who could be loaded into each truck. In turn each squad met an arriving truck at the unloading point on the edge of the forest. The individual squad members paired off face-to-face with the individual Jews they were to shoot, and marched their victims into the forest. The first sergeant remained in the forest to supervise the shooting. The Jews were forced to lie face down in a row. The policemen stepped up behind them, and on a signal from the first sergeant fired their carbines at point-blank range into the necks of their victims. The first sergeant then moved a few yards deeper into the forest to supervise the next execution. So-called "mercy shots" were given by a

noncommissioned officer, as many of the men, some out of excitement and some intentionally, shot past their victims.¹⁵ By mid-day alcohol had appeared from somewhere to "refresh" the shooters.¹⁶ Also around mid-day the first sergeant relieved the older men, after several had come to him and asked to be let out.¹⁷ The other men of 1st company, however, continued shooting throughout the day.

Meanwhile the Jews in the market place were being guarded by the men of 2nd company, who loaded the victims onto the trucks. When the first salvo was heard from the woods, a terrible cry swept the market place, as the collected Jews now knew their fate.¹⁸ Thereafter, however, a quiet - indeed "unbelievable" - composure settled over the Jews, which the German policemen found equally unnerving. By mid-morning the officers in the market place became increasingly agitated. At the present rate, the executions would never be completed by nightfall. The 3rd company was called in from its outposts around the village to take over close guard of the market place. The men of 2nd company were informed that they too must now go to the woods to join the shooters.¹⁹ At least one sergeant once again offered his men the opportunity to report if they did not feel up to it. No one took up his offer.²⁰ In another unit, one policeman confessed to his lieutenant that he was "very weak" and could not shoot. He was released.²¹

In the forest the 2nd company was divided into small groups of six to eight men rather than the larger squads of thirty-five as in 1st company. In the confusion of the small groups coming and going from the unloading point, several men managed to stay around the trucks looking busy and thus avoided shooting. One was noticed by his comrades, who swore at him for shirking, but he ignored them.²² Among those who began shooting, some could not last long. One man shot an old woman on his first round, after which his nerves were finished and he could not continue.²³ Another discovered to his dismay that his second victim was a German Jew - a mother from Kassel with her daughter. He too then asked out.²⁴ This encounter with a German Jew was not exceptional. Several other men also remembered Hamburg and Bremen Jews in Jozefow.²⁵ It was a grotesque irony that some of the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 had guarded the collection center in Hamburg, the confiscated freemason lodge house on the Moorweide next to the

university library, from which the Hamburg Jews had been deported the previous fall. A few had even guarded the deportation transports to Lodz, Riga, and Minsk. These Hamburg policemen had now followed other Jews deported from northern Germany, in order to shoot them in southern Poland.

A third policeman was in such an agitated state that on his first shot he aimed too high. He shot off the top of the head of his victim, splattering brains into the face of his sergeant. His request to be relieved was granted.²⁶ One policeman made it to the fourth round, when his nerve gave way. He shot past his victim, then turned and ran deep into the forest and vomited. After several hours he returned to the trucks and rode back to the market place.²⁷

As had happened with 1st company, bottles of vodka appeared at the unloading point and were passed around.²⁸ There was much demand, for among the 2nd company, shooting instructions had been less explicit and initially bayonets had not been fixed as an aiming guide. The result was that many of the men did not give neck shots but fired directly into the heads of their victims at point-black range. The victims' heads exploded, and in no time the policemen's uniforms were saturated with blood and splattered with brains and splinters of bone. When several officers noted that some of their men could no longer continue or had begun intentionally to fire past their victims, they excused them from the firing squads.²⁹

Though a fairly significant number of men in Reserve Police Battalion 101 either did not shoot at all or started but could not continue shooting, most persevered to the end and lost all count of how many Jews they had killed that day. The forest was so filled with bodies that it became difficult to find places to make the Jews lie down. When the action was finally over at dusk, and some 1,500 Jews lay dead, the men climbed into their trucks and returned to Bilgoraj. Extra rations of alcohol were provided, and the men talked little, ate almost nothing, but drank a great deal. That night one of them awoke from a nightmare firing his gun into the ceiling of the barracks.³⁰

Following the massacre of Jozefow, Reserve Police Battalion 101 was transferred to the northern part of the Lublin district. The various platoons of the battalion were stationed in different towns but brought together for company-size actions. Each company was engaged in at least one more shooting action, but

more often the Jews were driven from the ghettos onto trains bound for the extermination camp of Treblinka. Usually one police company worked in conjunction with a Trawniki unit for each action. The "dirty work" – driving the Jews out of their dwellings with whips, clubs, and guns; shooting on the spot the frail, sick, elderly, and infants who could not march to the train station; and packing the train cars to the bursting point so that only with the greatest of effort could the doors even be closed – was usually left to the so-called "Hiwis" (*Hilfswilligen* or "volunteers") from Trawniki.

Once a ghetto had been entirely cleared, it was the responsibility of the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 to keep the surrounding region "judenfrei." Through a network of Polish informers and frequent search patrols – casually referred to as *Judenjagden* or "Jew hunts" – the policemen remorselessly tracked down those Jews who had evaded the roundups and fled to the forests. Any Jew found in these circumstances was simply shot on the spot. By the end of the year there was scarcely a Jew alive in the northern Lublin district, and Reserve Police Battalion 101 increasingly turned its attention from murdering Jews to combatting partisans.

In looking at the half-year after Jozefow, one sees that this massacre drew an important dividing line. Those men who stayed with the assignment and shot all day found the subsequent actions much easier to perform. Most of the men were bitter about what they had been asked to do at Jozefow, and it became taboo even to speak of it. Even thirty years later they could not hide the horror of endlessly shooting Jews at point-blank range. In contrast, however, they spoke of surrounding ghettos and watching the Hiwis brutally drive the Jews onto the death trains with considerable detachment and a near-total absence of any sense of participation or responsibility. Such actions they routinely dismissed with a standard refrain: "I was *only* in the police cordon there." The shock treatment of Jozefow had created an effective and desensitized unit of ghetto-clearers and, when the occasion required, outright murderers. After Jozefow nothing else seemed so terrible. Heavy drinking also contributed to numbing the men's sensibilities. One non-drinking policeman noted that "most of the other men drank so much solely because of the many shootings of Jews, for such a life was quite intolerable sober" (*die meisten der anderen*

*Kameraden lediglich auf Grund der vielen Judenerschiessungen soviel getrunken haben, da ein derartiges Leben nüchtern gar nicht zu ertragen war).*³¹

Among those who either chose not to shoot at Jozefow or proved "too weak" to carry on and made no subsequent attempt to rectify this image of "weakness," a different trend developed. If they wished they were for the most part left alone and excluded from further killing actions, especially the frequent "Jew hunts." The consequences of their holding aloof from the mass murder were not grave. The reserve lieutenant of 1st company who had protested against being involved in the Jozefow shooting and had been allowed to accompany the work Jews to Lublin subsequently went to Major Trapp and declared that in the future he would not take part in any *Aktion* unless explicitly ordered. He made no attempt to hide his aversion to what the battalion was doing, and his attitude was known to almost everyone in the company.³² He also wrote to Hamburg and requested that he be recalled from the General Government because he did not agree with the "non-police" functions being performed by the battalion there. Major Trapp not only avoided any confrontation but protected him. Orders involving actions against the Jews were simply passed from battalion or company headquarters to his deputy. He was, in current terminology, "left out of the loop." In November 1942 he was recalled to Hamburg, made adjutant to the Police President of that city, and subsequently promoted.³³

The man who had first stepped out at Jozefow was sent on almost every partisan action but not on the "Jew hunts." He suspected that this pattern resulted from his earlier behavior in Jozefow.³⁴ Another man who had not joined the shooters at Jozefow was given excess tours of guard duty and other unpleasant assignments and was not promoted. But he was not assigned to the "Jew hunts" and firing squads, because the officers wanted only "men" with them and in their eyes he was "no man." Others who felt as he did received the same treatment, he said.³⁵ Such men could not, however, always protect themselves against officers out to get them. One man was assigned to a firing squad by a vengeful officer precisely because he had not yet been involved in a shooting.³⁶

The experience of Reserve Police Battalion 101 poses disturbing questions to those concerned with the lessons and legacies

of the Holocaust. Previous explanations for the behavior of the perpetrators, especially those at the lowest level who came face-to-face with the Jews they killed, seem inadequate. Above all the perpetrators themselves have constantly cited inescapable orders to account for their behavior. In Jozefow, however, the men had the opportunity both before and during the shooting to withdraw. The battalion in general was under orders to kill the Jews of Jozefow, but each individual man was not.

Special selection, indoctrination, and ideological motivation are equally unsatisfying as explanations. The men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were certainly not a group carefully selected for their suitability as mass murderers, nor were they given special training and indoctrination for the task that awaited them. They were mainly apolitical, and even the officers were only partly hard-core Nazi. Major Trapp in particular made no secret of his disagreement with the battalion's orders, and by Nazi standards he displayed shameful weakness in the way he carried them out. Among the men who did the killing there was much bitterness about what they had been asked to do and sufficient discomfort that no one wished to talk about it thereafter. They certainly did not take pride in achieving some historic mission.

While many murderous contributions to the "Final Solution" – especially those of the desk murderers – can be explained as routinized, depersonalized, segmented, and incremental, thus vitiating any sense of personal responsibility, that was clearly not the case in Jozefow, where the killers confronted the reality of their actions in the starkest way. Finally, the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were not from a generation that had been reared and educated solely under the Nazi regime and thus had no other political norms or standards by which to measure their behavior. They were older; many were married family men; and many came from a social and political background that would have exposed them to anti-Nazi sentiments before 1933.

What lessons, then, can one draw from the testimony given by the perpetrators of the massacre of the Jews in Jozefow? Nothing is more elusive in this testimony than the consciousness of the men that morning of 13 July 1942, and above all their attitude toward Jews at the time. Most simply denied that they had had any choice. Faced with the testimony of others, they did not contest that Trapp had made the offer but repeatedly

claimed that they had not heard that part of his speech or could not remember it. A few who admitted that they had been given the choice and yet failed to opt out were quite blunt. One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades.³⁷ Another – more aware of what truly required courage – said quite simply: "I was cowardly."³⁸ A few others also made the attempt to confront the question of choice but failed to find the words. It was a different time and place, as if they had been on another political planet, and the political vocabulary and values of the 1960s were helpless to explain the situation in which they had found themselves in 1942. As one man admitted, it was not until years later that he began to consider that what he had done had not been right. He had not given it a thought at the time.³⁹

Several men who chose not to take part were more specific about their motives. One said that he accepted the possible disadvantages of his course of action "because I was not a career policeman and also did not want to become one, but rather an independent skilled craftsman, and I had my business back home. . . . thus it was of no consequence that my police career would not prosper" (*denn ich war kein aktiven Polizist und wollte auch keiner werden, sondern selbstständiger Handwerksmeister und ich hatte zu Hause meinen Betrieb. . . . deshalb macht es mir nichts aus, dass meine Karriere keinen Aufstieg haben würde*).⁴⁰ The reserve lieutenant of 1st company placed a similar emphasis on the importance of economic independence when explaining why his situation was not analogous to that of the two SS captains on trial. "I was somewhat older then and moreover a reserve officer, so it was not particularly important to me to be promoted or otherwise to advance, because I had my prosperous business back home. The company chiefs . . . on the other hand were young men and career policemen, who wanted to become something. Through my business experience, especially because it extended abroad, I had gained a better overview of things." He alone then broached the most taboo subject of all. "Moreover through my earlier business activities I already knew many Jews." (*Ich war damals etwas älter und ausserdem Reserveoffizier, mir kam es insbesondere nicht darauf an, befördert zu werden oder sonstwie weiterzukommen, denn ich hatte ja zuhause mein gutgehendes Geschäft. Die Kompaniechefs . . . dagegen waren junge Leute vom aktiven Dienst, die noch etwas werden wollten. Ich hatte durch meine*

*kaufmännische Tätigkeit, die sich insbesondere auch auf das Ausland erstreckte, einen besseren Überblick über die Dinge. Ausserdem kannte ich schon durch meine geschäftliche Tätigkeit von frühen viele Juden).*⁴¹

Crushing conformity and blind, unthinking acceptance of the political norms of the time on the one hand, careerism on the other – these emerge as the factors that at least some of the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were able to discuss twenty-five years later. What remained virtually unexamined by the interrogators and unmentioned by the policemen was the role of antisemitism. Did they not speak of it because antisemitism had not been a motivating factor? Or were they unwilling and unable to confront this issue even after three decades, because it had been all too important, all too pervasive? One is tempted to wonder if the silence speaks louder than words, but in the end – as Claudia Koonz reminds us – the silence is still silence, and the question remains unanswered.

Was the incident at Jozefow typical? Certainly not. I know of no other case in which a commander so openly invited and sanctioned the nonparticipation of his men in a killing action. But in the end the most important fact is not that the experience of Reserve Police Battalion 101 was untypical, but rather that Trapp's extraordinary offer did not matter. Like any other unit, Reserve Police Battalion 101 killed the Jews they had been told to kill.

NOTES

Reprinted from Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies. The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 196-209.

1 For ghetto-clearing in the various districts of the General Government, the following are the most important judicial sources. For Lublin: Staatsanwaltschaft Hamburg 147 Js 24/72 (indictment of Georg Michalson) and StA Wiesbaden 8 Js 1145/60 (indictment of Lothar Hoffmann and Hermann Worthoff); for Warsaw, StA Hamburg 147 Js 16/69 (indictment of Ludwig Hahn); for Krakau, Landgericht Kiel 2 Ks 6/63 (judgment against Martin Fellenz); for Radom StA Hamburg 147 Js 38/65 (indictment of Hermann Weinrauch and Paul Fuchs); for Bialystok, StA Dortmund 45 Js 1/61 (indictment of Herbert Zimmermann and Wilhelm Altenloh), and *Documents Concerning the Destruction of Grodno*, ed. Serge Klarsfeld (Publications of the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation); for Gali-

zia, LG Münster 5 Ks 4/65 (judgment against Hans Krüger), and LG Stuttgart Ks 5/65 (judgment against Rudolf Röder).
 2 For the Trawniki units, see StA Hamburg 147 Js 43/69 (indictment of Karl Streibel).
 3 StA Hamburg 141 Js 1957/62 gegen H. and W. *et al.* (hereafter cited as HW), 820-1, 2437, 4414-15.
 4 HW, 2091.
 5 HW, 1952, 2039, 2655-6.
 6 HW, 1953-4, 2041-2, 3298, 4576-7, 4589.
 7 HW, 1852, 2182; StA Hamburg 141 Js 128/65 gegen G. *et al.* (hereafter cited as G), 363, 383.
 8 G, 645-52.
 9 HW, 1741-3.
 10 HW, 2618, 2717, 2742.
 11 HW, 1947.
 12 G, 504-14, 642, 647.
 13 HW, 2092.
 14 HW, 1648; G, 453.
 15 G, 647.
 16 G, 624, 659.
 17 HW, 2093, 2236.
 18 HW, 1686, 2659.
 19 HW, 2717-18.
 20 HW, 1640, 2505.
 21 HW, 1336, 3542.
 22 G, 168-9, 206-7.
 23 G, 230.
 24 HW, 2635.
 25 HW, 1540, 2534, 2951, 4579.
 26 G, 277.
 27 HW, 2483.
 28 HW, 2621, 2635, 2694.
 29 HW, 1640, 2149, 2505, 2540, 2692, 2720.
 30 HW, 2657.
 31 HW, 2239.
 32 HW, 2172, 2252, 3939; G, 582.
 33 HW, 822-4, 2438-41, 4415.
 34 HW, 4578.
 35 G, 169-70.
 36 G, 244.
 37 HW, 2535.
 38 HW, 4592.
 39 HW, 1640, 2505, 4344.
 40 G, 169-70.
 41 HW, 2439-40.