doubt, they would say that we intended to prejudice the outcome of the review.

This is why we have to write about an exhibition you can't see, an exhibition you will see again in Germany—and perhaps in New York. What we can do now is talk about what it means for a society to talk about war crimes—what it means in general, and what it means in Germany.

Chapter Three

The Wehrmacht, German Society, and the Knowledge of the Mass Extermination of the Jews

SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER

By early August 1941, some six weeks after the German attack on the USSR, the murder of the Jews in Soviet territory had expanded from the killing of men to that of entire communities. In the small town of Bjelaja Zerkow, south of Kiev, occupied by the 295th Infantry Division of Army Group South, the Wehrmacht area commander, Colonel Riedl, ordered the registration of all Jewish inhabitants and asked the SS *Sonderkommando* 4a, a subunit of *Einsatzgruppe* C, to murder them.

On August 8, a section of the *Sonderkommando*, led by SS *Obersturmführer* August Häfner, arrived in the town.[1] Between August 8 and August 19, a company of *Waffen* SS attached to the *Kommando* shot all of the 800 to 900 local Jews, with the exception of a group of children under the age of five. What followed has often been described;[2] when closely examined, however, it may lead to some new insights.

First, I shall dwell upon the events of Bjelaja Zerkow and, as a corollary, recall the widespread presence of members of the Wehrmacht at the sites of the massacres, as well as the participation of many of them in

the mass killing of the Jews in occupied Soviet territory. This will lead to a reassessment of the German people's knowledge and attitudes about these exterminations. Finally, the description of the horror, the agony of the children of Bjelaja Zerkow, confronts the historian with a peculiar challenge that transcends the concrete issues dealt with in the presentation; it will be evoked in the summation.

BJELAJA ZERKOW, AUGUST 19–22, 1941, AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THE WEHRMACHT IN THE EXTERMINATION OF THE JEWS

As mentioned, one group of Jewish children was not immediately killed. They were abandoned without food or water in a building at the outskirts of the town near the Wehrmacht barracks. On August 19, many of these children were taken away in three crowded trucks and shot at a nearby rifle range; ninety remained in the building guarded by a few Ukrainians.[3]

Soon, the screams of these remaining children became so unbearable that the soldiers called in two field chaplains, a Protestant and a Catholic, to take some "remedial action."[4] The chaplains found the children half naked, covered with flies, and lying in their own excrement. Some of the older ones were eating mortar off the walls; the infants were mostly comatose. The divisional chaplains were alerted and, after an inspection, they reported the matter to the first staff officer of the division, Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth.

Groscurth went to inspect the building. There he met *Oberscharführer* Jäger, the commander of the Waffen SS unit who had murdered all the other Jews of the town; Jäger informed him that the remaining children were to be "eliminated." Colonel Riedl, the *Feldkommandant,* confirmed the information and added that the matter was in the hands of the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*) and that the *Einsatzkommando* had received its orders from the highest authorities.

At this point, Groscurth took it upon himself to order the postponement of the killings by one day, notwithstanding Häfner's threat to lodge a complaint. Groscurth even positioned armed soldiers around a truck already filled with children and prevented it from leaving. All of this he communicated to the staff officer of Army Group South. The

matter was referred to the Sixth Army, probably because *Einsatzkommando* 4a operated in its area. On that same evening, the commander of the Sixth Army, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, personally decided that "the operation . . . had to be completed in a suitable way."[5]

The next morning, August 21, Groscurth was summoned to a meeting at local headquarters with Colonel Riedl, Captain Luley, a counterintelligence officer who had reported to von Reichenau on the course of the events, *Obersturmführer* Häfner, and the chief of *Einsatzkommando* 4a, the former architect SS *Standartenführer* Paul Blobel. Luley declared that, although he was a Protestant, he thought that the "chaplains should limit themselves to the welfare of the soldiers"; with the full support of the *Feldkommandant,* Luley accused the chaplains of "stirring up trouble."

According to Groscurth's report, Riedl then "attempted to draw the discussion into the ideological domain. . . . The elimination of the Jewish women and children," he explained, "was a matter of urgent necessity, whatever the form it took." Riedl complained that the division's initiative had delayed the execution by twenty-four hours. At that point, as Groscurth later described it, Blobel, who had been silent up until then, intervened: he supported Riedl's complaint and added "that it would be best if those troops who were nosing around carried out the executions themselves and the commanders who were stopping the measures took command of these troops. . . . I quietly rejected this view," Groscurth wrote, "without taking any position as I wished to avoid any personal acrimony." Finally, Groscurth mentioned Reichenau's attitude: "When we discussed what further measures should be taken, the *Standartenführer* declared that the Commander-in-Chief [Reichenau] recognized the necessity of eliminating the children and wished to be informed once this had been carried out."[6]

On August 22, the children were executed. On the following day, Captain Luley reported the completion of the task to Sixth Army headquarters and was recommended for a promotion.[7]

In terms of criminal behavior, the dividing line did not run between the SS and the army but, as the Bjelaja Zerkow case shows, within the Wehrmacht itself. In this particular instance, alongside the SS, the police battalions and the Ukrainian auxiliaries, there were many soldiers

and officers, including Field Marshal von Reichenau, Colonel Riedl, Captain Luley, and their kind; other soldiers and officers like Groscurth were shocked by what they witnessed. All in all, however, it was not the second group that characterized the behavior of the Wehrmacht. As we shall see, even Groscurth's position is troubling.

The first Germans with any authority to be confronted with the fate of the ninety Jewish children were the four chaplains. The field chaplains were compassionate, the divisional ones somewhat less so. In any case, after sending in their reports, the chaplains were not heard from again.

The killing of the Jewish adults and children was public. In a postwar court testimony, a cadet officer who had been stationed in Bjelaja Zerkow at the time of the events, after describing in gruesome detail the execution of a batch of approximately 150 to 160 Jewish adults, made the following comments: "The soldiers knew about these executions and I remember one of my men saying that he had been permitted to take part. . . . All the soldiers who were in Bjelaja Zerkow knew what was happening. Every evening, the entire time I was there, rifle fire could be heard, although there was no enemy in the vicinity."[8]

Similar things occurred all along the Eastern Front. Regular Wehrmacht soldiers were often ordered to assist the *Einsatzkommandos* in their task or they volunteered to do so. The eager participation of regular troops in the extermination campaign, for example, during the advance of the Sixth Army into formerly Soviet-occupied areas of Poland—particularly in Lvov and Tarnopol—and then into Soviet territory, is well established.[9] In some areas, divisional commanders took it upon themselves, without any prodding, to fill the role of the Sonderkommandos or of the police battalions when these units were not immediately available. Thus in the *Generalkommissariat* of Belorussia, the commander of Infantry Division 707 decided in the early days of October 1941 to act on his own. The division murdered rapidly and efficiently; its men shot 19,000 Jews, mainly in villages and small towns. In larger towns, the task was divided between Reserve Police Battalion 11 reinforced by Lithuanian auxiliaries and SD units from Minsk.[10]

Military commanders did not bother to explain the killings of women and children to their troops. Nor did Field Marshal von Reichenau in his notorious Order of the Day of October 10, 1941: "The soldier must have complete understanding for the necessity of the harsh but just atonement of Jewish subhumanity."[11] Hitler praised the Order of the Day and demanded its distribution to all front-line units in the East.[12] Within a few weeks, Reichenau's proclamation was imitated by the commander of the Eleventh Army, von Manstein, and the commander of the Seventeenth Army, Hoth.[13]

The number of Jews who fell victim to the participation of the Wehrmacht in murder operations is hard to evaluate and an estimate of the number of soldiers and officers who took part in the massacres is impossible. It is no less difficult to evaluate the reactions of Wehrmacht members who witnessed the killings but we know, from the most diverse sources, that vast numbers of soldiers and officers did attend and often photographed full-scale massacres. "Why these Jews were beaten to death," a lance corporal of the 562nd Baker's Company testified about the massacres in Kovno, "I did not find out. . . . The bystanders were almost exclusively German soldiers who were observing the cruel incidents out of curiosity . . ."[14]

A selection of soldiers' letters shows how widely Nazi anti-Semitic stereotypes and ideological statements about the Jews had been internalized.[15] Many of these soldiers were probably young enough to have been educated under the new regime and to have spent some time in the Hitler Youth, whose anti-Jewish brutality had been openly demonstrated during the prewar years.[16] The anti-Jewish violence of the Wehrmacht rank and file was already manifest during the Polish campaign, but it has often been overlooked by historians due to the well-known protests of General Johannes von Blaskowitz and some other high-ranking officers against SS atrocities.[17]

The traditional military elites were less rabidly anti-Semitic than the Nazi von Reichenau, but their attitude regarding the Jews was nonetheless hostile. After a conversation with General von Roques, the commander of Army Group North, Field Marshal Wilhelm von Leeb noted: "On July 8, 1941, Roques complained about the wholesale shooting of the Jews in Kovno (thousands) by local Lithuanian auxiliary police at the instigation of the German police. We have no control over these measures. All that remains is to keep one's distance. Roques correctly pointed out that the Jewish Question could hardly be solved in this manner. It would most reliably be solved by sterilizing all Jewish

males."[18] In his study of the Axis and the Holocaust, Jonathan Steinberg, after quoting the violently anti-Semitic remarks of a German counterintelligence officer in Lybia added: "In many years of intensive research in German army archives, I have found fewer than five examples of German officers expressing anything other then the opinions quoted above."[19]

Some of the soldiers and officers were repelled by what they had witnessed in Bjelaja Zerkow. The cadet officer who has already been quoted also declared in his postwar testimony: "It was not curiosity which drove me to watch this, but disbelief that something of this type could happen. My comrades were also horrified by the executions."[20] Such comments were not infrequent. Thus, on December 9, 1941, Rudolf-Christoph von Gersdorff, the intelligence officer at Army Group Center headquarters, noted in his diary that the facts regarding the murder of the Jews were known to their full extent; they were discussed everywhere and considered by the officers as violating the honor of the German army.[21]

Let us now turn to the central personality in the Bjelaja Zerkow events: Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth. A deeply religious Protestant, a conservative nationalist, he did not entirely reject some of the tenets of Nazism and yet became hostile to the regime and close to the opposition groups gathered around Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and General Ludwig Beck. He despised the SS and in his diary referred to Heydrich as a "criminal."[22] His decision to postpone the execution of the children in Bjelaja Zerkow by one day, notwithstanding Häfner's threat, and then to use soldiers to prevent an already loaded truck from leaving, is proof of courage.

Moreover, Groscurth did not hesitate to express his criticism of the killings in the conclusion of his report: "Measures," he wrote, "against women and children were undertaken which in no way differed from atrocities carried out by the enemy about which the troops are continually being informed. It is unavoidable that these events will be reported back home where they will be compared to the Lemberg atrocities." [This is probably an allusion to executions perpetrated by the NKVD.][23] For these comments, Groscurth was reprimanded by Reichenau a few days later. Yet his overall attitude is open to many questions.

After mentioning Reichenau's order to execute the children, Groscurth added, " 'We then settled the details of how the executions were

to be carried out. They are to take place during the evening of August 22. I did not involve myself in the details of the discussion."[24] The most troubling part of the report appears at the very end: "The execution could have been carried out without any sensation if the *Feldkommandantur* and the *Ortskommandantur* had taken the necessary steps to keep the troops away. . . . Following the execution of all the Jews in the town it became necessary to eliminate the Jewish children, particularly the infants. Both infants and children should have been eliminated immediately in order to avoid this inhuman agony."[25]

Groscurth was captured by the Russians at Stalingrad, together with the remaining soldiers and officers of the Sixth Army. He died in Soviet captivity shortly afterward, in April 1943.

SPREADING KNOWLEDGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Groscurth's attitude, examined according to the standards of the time, falls into an in-between category that was supposedly shared by the bulk of the German population in the Third Reich: "*Resistenz*." The term, coined as a historical concept in the 1970s, literally means immunity in a biological sense. It was used to define the attitude shared by a vast majority of Germans who, for various reasons, went along with Nazi policies and initiatives, but who, nonetheless, were at least partly immune to the ideology of the regime and even slightly defiant in some cases.[26]

Indeed, *Resistenz* found expression, as we know, in small everyday occurrences but also in more fundamental domains, as in the attitude of part of the Church to confessional schooling or the keeping of crucifixes in classrooms in Bavaria. An even more significant form of *Resistenz* was manifested in the growing anger of parts of the population about the murder of the mentally ill, leading to Bishop von Galen's public protest, which compelled Hitler to abandon the major euthanasia action in August 1941. Was any form of *Resistenz* also expressed in regard to attitudes about other, more extensive, criminal activities, such as the extermination of the Jews?

The answer to this last question has usually been that only during the final three years of its existence did Nazi Germany live in the shadow of "Auschwitz," and even then very few Germans were aware of the full scale of its horror; therefore, the majority remained blatantly passive.

Indeed, knowledge of "Auschwitz" was limited until late in the war, but information about the mass atrocities and wholesale extermination of Jews spread to the Reich soon after the beginning of the campaign against the Soviet Union.

Already in July 1941, for example, Swiss diplomatic and consular representatives in the Reich and in satellite countries were filing detailed reports about the mass murders perpetrated on the Eastern Front; their information all stemmed from German or satellite sources.[27] Senior and even mid-level officials in various German ministries had access to the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* and to their computations of the huge numbers of Jews they had murdered. Such information was mentioned in Foreign Ministry correspondence in October 1941 and not even ranked "top secret."[28]

Among the German population, even in small towns in the westernmost part of the Reich, rumors about the massacre of Jews in the East were rife before the end of 1941. Thus, on December 6, 1941, the SD reported comments voiced by the inhabitants of Minden, near Bielefeld, about the fate of the Jews from their own town, deported to the East a few days beforehand. "Until Warsaw," people were saying, "the deportation takes place in passenger trains. From there on, in cattle cars. . . . In Russia, the Jews were to be put to work in former Soviet factories, while older Jews, or those who were ill, were to be shot . . ."[29]

The information was first and foremost disseminated by soldiers on leave in the Reich, through letters and snapshots sent home as mementoes from the Eastern Front. It was also transmitted through many other channels. Margarete Sommer, in charge of relief work at the Berlin Archdiocese, was informed in early 1942 by Lithuanian Catholics and also, it seems, by no less an official of the Ministry of the Interior than Hans Globke, of the mass killings in the Baltic countries of Jews deported from the Reich.[30] After meeting with Sommer, Bishop Wilhelm Berning of Osnabrück noted on February 4, 1942, "For months no news has arrived from Litzmannstadt. All postcards are returned. . . . Transports from Berlin arrive in Kovno, but it is doubtful whether anybody is still alive. No exact news from Minsk and Riga. Many have been shot. The intention is to exterminate the Jews entirely (*Es besteht wohl der Plan die Juden ganz auszurotten*)."[31] *Schutzpolizei* Captain Salitter, who accompanied the December 11, 1941, transport of 1,007 Jews from Düsseldorf to Riga, was told that the Latvians wondered why the Germans "bothered to transport the Jews to Latvia and didn't annihilate them right there."[32] As for the mass extermination of Jews in Bukovina and Transnistria, it was openly discussed in Bucharest society.[33] As Groscurth had warned in his memorandum, "It is unavoidable that these events will be reported back home."

In summary, there was indeed Resistenz in many domains, but—and this is the crucial point—in the face of the awareness of Nazi crimes, it found expression mainly in various degrees of protest in regard to measures taken *against Germans*, as in the case of the euthanasia.

Personal expressions of sympathy towards individual Jews, such as the greeting of Jews wearing the yellow star, were not uncommon. Victor Klemperer also writes about recurring words of encouragement from his foremen or passersby as he and a few other elderly Jews shoveled snow in the streets of Dresden in February 1942.[34] Even the warning of Jews by individuals involved in the killing system is known.[35]

Such initiatives sometimes demanded courage. But the only popular protest regarding the fate of the Jews was initiated in the spring of 1943 by the "Aryan" wives of a group of Jewish men about to be deported from Berlin. The Jewish husbands were released. As for the proposal made in August 1943 by Archbishop Konrad von Preysing of Berlin to protest the extermination publicly, it was turned down by his fellow bishops on the instigation of the head of the German episcopate, Cardinal Adolf Bertram of Breslau; it was also ignored by Pope Pius XII.[36]

Preysing himself ultimately chose to remain silent and it was the lonely voice of the prior of St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin, Berhard Lichtenberg, that expressed the outrage of a segment of Christian society, in a sermon. Betrayed by two women parishioners, Lichtenberg paid for the protest with his life.[37] The discrepancy in attitudes regarding the victimization of Germans and that of "others" is even more striking when one turns to the actual oppositional groups. This is not the place to dwell on this issue but explicit anti-Semitism among leading members of the conservative civilian and military opposition to Hitler is well established.[38]

Until recently, the *prevalent* historiographical interpretation of Ger-

man attitudes toward the extermination of the Jews was based mainly on an argument well summed up by the Israeli historian David Bankier:

> The lack of committed opposition to the persecution of the Jews largely explains why so many deliberately sought refuge from the consciousness of genocide and tried to remain as ignorant as possible: because it salved their conscience. Knowledge generated guilt since it entailed responsibility, and many believed that they could preserve their dignity by avoiding the horrible truth. This deliberate escape into privacy and ignorance did not save the public from being aware of the Third Reich's criminality. Knowledge of the mass shootings and the gassing filtered through to it, increasing the concern about the consequences of the Nazis' criminal deeds.[39]

What Bankier states, in other words, is not that the Germans could not have known about the extermination, but that they did not want to know. The same argument has been presented by the German historian Hans Mommsen, albeit in slightly different terms. Mommsen suggests that knowledge of the "Final Solution," easily accessible to those willing to face it, was repressed at all levels of German society in order to avoid an untenable dissonance between faithfulness to the regime and the knowledge of its massive criminality.[40]

As is perhaps already clear, I am trying to argue that such psychosocial constructs are hardly convincing or necessary. The information about the massacres was abundant precisely because of the massive involvement or presence of hundreds of thousands of members of the Wehrmacht at the killing sites. And, as we have seen, the fate of the deported Jews was openly discussed by the population. The reactions to the information that reached the Reich during the summer and fall of 1941 seem to have ranged from explicit compassion for the Jews to fear of expressing comments, to various forms of rationalization or even outright support of anti-Jewish crimes and, most commonly, to indifference. I stress explicit compassion, even if it was limited, because the reactions of the population taken as a whole did include all nuances. Some examples of such compassion have already been mentioned; furthermore, in Minden, after commenting on the deportation of the town's Jews, some of the inhabitants quoted in the SD report did express their disapproval, declaring that Jews too were "God's children."[41] Yet it

is indifference to the fate of the Jews—by its very nature such indifference was not recorded by the diarists—that prevailed.

Consider the second clandestine leaflet distributed in early July 1942 by the "White Rose" resistance group, in which the murder of some 300,000 Jews in Poland was mentioned. The Munich students immediately added a disclaimer: Some people could argue that the Jews "deserved their fate," but then what about the murder of "the entire Polish aristocratic youth?"[42] In other words, these militant enemies of the regime were well aware that the mass killing of Jews would not impress all readers of the leaflet and that crimes committed against Polish Catholics had to be added, particularly in Bavaria. We cannot generalize on the basis of this example; we can only suggest that for many Germans the mass extermination of Jews was not of deep concern.

Knowledge about huge massacres is different from that of total annihilation but is the difference between the two as radical as many historians suggest it is? Is knowledge of "Auschwitz" really the decisive question? In terms of the protest against or the acceptance of mass criminality, we cannot, it seems to me, establish an insuperable divide between awareness of the murder of hundreds of thousands of victims, among them one's own neighbors, and that of the total extermination of an entire people. It should be added at this point that knowledge about the extermination centers was probably more precise than was thought until recently. Sybille Steinbacher has now shown that every summer hundreds of women visited their husbands who were camp guards in Auschwitz, and stayed for long periods of time. Moreover, among the Reich German population of Auschwitz there were complaints about the odor produced by the overloaded crematoria.[43]

In any case, the widespread indifference of the German population does not demand any unusual interpretation. The basic divergence in attitudes toward the members of the community and "others" suffices. Moreover, the constant spewing of anti-Jewish propaganda and the permanence of various forms of milder traditional anti-Semitism added, undoubtedly, to the scant interest in the fate of the Jews and to the absence of any significant countervailing forces.

A peculiar dimension has to be added. Furniture, rugs, clothes, household items, and even houses that belonged to deported Jews became available to deserving *Volksgenossen* (national comrades). Furthermore, personal belongings could be bought at dirt-cheap prices at

the *Judenmärkte* (Jew markets) of major cities, or were distributed by the *Winterhilfe* (winter aid), often without the original tags having been removed. Material benefits reinforced the advantages of silence in the face of mass murder.[44] Whether under these circumstances one can speak of the normality of everyday life under National Socialism is a moot question. Differently put, the everyday involvement of the population with the regime was far deeper than has long been assumed, due to the widespread knowledge and the passive acceptance of the crimes, as well as the crassest profit derived from them. A massive repression of knowledge, if it existed at all, took place after 1945, and probably much less so beforehand.

SUMMATION

This presentation raises a basic question of narration (and also of interpretation) that often challenges the historian of the Holocaust. Does the historian have to choose the killing of children as an example for a murder campaign that could be described in less horrendous terms? Does writing about the extermination of the Jews of Europe have to include a narration of the horror as such? Finally, do these descriptions impinge upon the historian's ability to remain objective in regard to the Nazi era in its more general terms?

The choice of the Bjelaja Zerkow case was not haphazard. The children's execution illustrates in several ways the nature of the Nazi murder system and the Wehrmacht's function within it. The children were not killed on the spot: The issue was passed on from one level of authority to the next, from the field chaplains at the very bottom of the hierarchy to the commander-in-chief of the Sixth Army at the very top. Then, Reichenau's decision was transmitted through regular army channels of command. In other words, we are facing a major characteristic of the regime: utter inhumanity within a perfectly functioning military administrative structure. Moreover, as we saw in Riedl's comments, the killing of the children was considered an ideological necessity.

The precise recording of the horror is necessary if we are to grasp some of the peculiar characteristics, motivations, and attitudes of various groups of perpetrators. All the killings were mass murder, but not all mass murders were the same. The killings perpetrated by the Latvians, the Lithuanians, the Romanians, the Ukrainians, the Poles, or the Croats were identical to those perpetrated by the Germans in terms of collective criminality. Yet each of these groups left an imprint of its own: The anthropology of mass murder may lead the historian to traits and trends that will have to be taken into account in understanding the deeper strata of this extraordinary collapse of Christian and Western civilization. Such an anthropology must often rely on minute details, and, at times, on the description of the most horrifying behavior. Thus, apart from any other considerations, recording the horror is an outright historical imperative. How this should be carried, however, can only be left to the historian's sensitivity and judgment, in each specific case.

The question remains whether stressing the criminality of the Nazi regime and dwelling upon its horrors, and particularly the Holocaust, hinder the historian's ability to remain detached and objective. In the early 1980s it was strongly argued—by Martin Broszat among others—that the emphasis put by historiography upon the political and criminal dimension of the Third Reich offered a false or incomplete picture of its overall social dynamics and everyday reality.

It seems possible, a priori, to consider the full criminal dimension of the Third Reich and, at the same time, to perceive, describe and analyze the domains of social activity that escaped the impact of Nazi ideology and criminality. For the historian, the main challenge is to find the "right balance" between the two, both in terms of interpretation and narration. There is no way of avoiding this challenge and no formula for resolving it. But deleting a precise rendition of the horror may lead to a skewing of the overall picture and also to a distortion of the history of a society that was more tainted by the criminal dimension of National Socialism than has been assumed for a long time.

The final sequence of the events at Bjelaja Zerkow was described by Häfner at his trial.

> I went out to the woods alone. The Wehrmacht had already dug a grave. The children were brought along in a tractor. The Ukrainians were standing around trembling. The children were taken down from the tractor. They were lined up along the top of the grave and shot so that they fell into it. The Ukrainians did not aim at any particular part of the body. . . .

> The wailing was indescribable . . . I particularly remember a small fair-haired girl who took me by the hand. She too was shot later. . . . [45]

Häfner, let us remember, was in charge of the killing.

In this fleeting last scene, in this total absence of any trace of humanness, it is possible that, beyond all theories, we may intuitively grasp, as minute symbol and terrifying reality, the peculiar evil of National Socialism and the quintessential core of the events that we call the Holocaust, the extermination of the Jews of Europe.

Chapter Four

The Wehrmacht in Serbia Revisited

CHRISTOPHER R. BROWNING

I would like to make clear at the onset that my focus on the Wehrmacht in Serbia is not meant to eclipse or obscure the fact that the vast majority of deaths in wartime Yugoslavia were inflicted in the course of civil wars within and conflicts between indigenous ethnic groups. German policy contributed greatly to the unleashing of these conflicts, but the Wehrmacht was not the direct instrument of these deaths. However, another look[1] at the role of the German military in occupied Serbia during the Second World War is useful in view of some of the criticisms that have been made of the recent exhibit on the crimes of the Wehrmacht. In addition to the issue of mistaken attribution of photos, criticism has been aimed at the lack of a wider context or historical background, the insufficient distinction between "war crimes" on the one hand and anti-partisan actions and executions permitted under international law on the other, and the commingling of Wehrmacht and SS crimes. Serbia is an important case study because of the predominant position held by the Wehrmacht vis-à-vis a relatively minor and subordinate SS presence in 1941. Moreover, as Serbia was a minor theater not at the center of Hitler's "war of destruction" and quest for *Lebensraum*, military commanders there had greater latitude to act according to their own inclinations, attitudes, and values. Both the