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Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men?
Another Look at the Perpetrators

IN 1989, WHEN I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF ADDRESSING THE INITIAL CONFERENCE on Lessons and Legacies of the Holocaust, I spoke for the first time in public about my research into Reserve Police Battalion 101 and its role in the Final Solution in Poland. At that time I analyzed one crucial event in the history of the battalion, namely its initiation into mass murder at the Polish village of Jozefow. Subsequently, I completed my study and published it under the title *Ordinary Men*. In general the book has been quite well received, but it has not been without its critics. While these critics have accepted the narrative presentation in the book that reveals the mode of operation and degree of choice within the battalion, they have objected to my portrayal of the perpetrators, particularly their motives and mindset, and the conclusions that I draw—the crux of which is summed up in the title *Ordinary Men*. As the writer of one friendly but critical letter suggested: “Might not a preferable title . . . possibly have been *Ordinary Germans*?”

The argument of my critics for German singularity rests above all upon their assertion of a unique and particular German antisemitism. The letter writer just cited argued that “cultural conditioning” shaped “specifically German behavioral modes.” He went on to hypothesize that “even many decidedly non-Nazi Germans . . . were so accustomed to the thought that Jews are less human than Germans that they were capable of mass murder.” Non-Germans in the same situation as the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101, he implies, would have behaved quite differently.

Daniel Goldhagen, my severest critic, puts the matter more pointedly. The “Germans’ singular and deeply rooted, racist anti-

semitism” was not “a common social psychological phenomenon” that can be analyzed in terms of “mere” negative racial stereotypes, as I had so “tepidly” done. “The men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were not ordinary ‘men,’ but ordinary members of an extraordinary culture, the culture of Nazi Germany, which was possessed of a hallucinatory, lethal view of the Jews.” Thus ordinary Germans were “believers in the justice of the murder of the Jews.” In their “inflamed imaginations,” Goldhagen writes, Jewish “destruction was a redemptive act.”¹

The issue raised here is an important—indeed central—question that is posed to virtually anyone teaching the Holocaust. I would like to approach this issue along two lines of inquiry. First, what has the bulk of recent scholarship concluded about the nature, intensity, and alleged singularity of antisemitism within the German population at large? And second, what is known about *non*-German killing units that might, through comparison, shed light on the issue of “specifically German behavioral modes”? In this case, by virtue of recently accessible documents from the former Soviet archives, I shall be looking at rural police units in Belorussia and the Ukraine that were recruited and trained by the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*).

Let us turn to the first line of inquiry, namely the nature and intensity of antisemitism within German society under the Nazis. As late as 1975, Lucy Dawidowicz argued that

generations of anti-Semitism had prepared the Germans to accept Hitler as their redeemer. . . . Of the conglomerate social, economic, and political appeals that the NSDAP directed at the German people, its racial doctrine was the most attractive. . . . Out of the whole corpus of racial teachings, the anti-Jewish doctrine had the greatest dynamic potency. . . . The insecurities of post-World War I Germany and the anxieties they produced provided an emotional milieu in which irrationality and hysteria became routine and illusions became transformed into delusions. The delusional disorder assumed mass proportions. . . . In modern Germany the mass psychosis of anti-Semitism deranged a whole people.²

A large number of other scholars, however, have not shared this view.³ Three in particular—Ian Kershaw, Otto Dov Kulka, and David Bankier—have devoted a significant portion of their scholarly

lives to examining German popular attitudes toward National Socialism, antisemitism, and the Holocaust.⁴ Despite their differences of emphasis, tone, and interpretation, the degree of their consensus on the basic issues is impressive.

While Kulka and Bankier do not pick up the story until 1933, Kershaw argues that in the pre-*Machtergreifung* era, antisemitism was not a major factor in attracting support for Hitler and the Nazis. He cites Peter Merkl's study of the "old fighters," in which only about one-seventh of Merkl's sample considered antisemitism their most salient concern and even fewer were classified by Merkl as "strong ideological antisemites."⁵ Moreover, in the electoral breakthrough phase of 1929–33, and indeed up to 1939, Hitler rarely spoke in public about the Jewish question; this reticence stands in stark contrast to his speeches of the early 1920s, in which his obsession with and hatred of the Jews was vented openly and repeatedly.⁶ Kershaw concludes that "antisemitism cannot . . . be allocated a decisive role in bringing Hitler to power, though . . . it did not do anything to hinder his rapidly growing popularity."⁷

For the 1933–39 period, all three historians characterize the German popular response to antisemitism by two dichotomies. The first is a distinction between a minority of party activists, for whom antisemitism was an urgent priority, and the bulk of the German population, for whom it was not. Party activists clamored and pressed, often in violent and rowdy ways, for intensified persecution. The antisemitic measures of the regime, though often criticized as too mild by the radicals, served an integrating function within Hitler's movement; they helped to keep the momentum and enthusiasm of the party activists alive. And despite Hitler's pragmatic caution in public, most of these radicals correctly sensed he was with them in spirit.

The second dichotomy concerns the reaction of the general population to the antisemitic clamor of the movement and the antisemitic measures of the regime. The vast majority accepted the *legal* measures of the regime, which ended emancipation and drove Jews from public positions in 1933, socially ostracized the Jews in 1935, and finally completed the expropriation of their property in 1938–39. But the same majority was critical of the hooliganistic *violence* of party radicals aimed at the same German Jews whose legal persecution they approved. To the boycott of 1933, the vandalistic out-

breaks of 1935, and above all the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938, the German population reacted negatively. Bankier and Kulka emphasize the pragmatic concerns behind this negative response: destruction of property, foreign policy complications, damage to Germany's image, and general lawlessness offensive to societal notions of decorum. Kershaw thinks their discounting of virtually any moral dimension to be "a far too sweeping generalization."⁸ Nonetheless, all three agree that a gulf had opened up between the Jewish minority and the general population. The latter, while not mobilized around strident and violent antisemitism, was increasingly "apathetic," "passive," and "indifferent" to the fate of the former.⁹ Antisemitic measures—if carried out in an orderly and legal manner—were widely accepted, in part because such measures held out the hope of curbing the violence most Germans found so distasteful, but also in part because most Germans ultimately agreed with the goal of limiting and even ending the role of Jews in German society.

For the war years, the records upon which Kulka, Bankier, and Kershaw base their studies become sparser and more ambiguous and the differences in interpretation correspondingly greater. Kulka and Bankier deduce a more specific awareness of the Final Solution among the German people than does Kershaw.¹⁰ Kershaw and Bankier advocate a more critical and less literal reading of the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst* or SD) reports than does Kulka.¹¹ For Kershaw, a general "retreat into the private sphere" was the basis for widespread indifference toward Nazi Jewish policy. Kulka sees a greater internalization of Nazi antisemitism among the population at large, particularly concerning the acceptance of a solution to the Jewish question through some unspecified kind of "elimination," and he thus prefers the term "passive complicity" or "objective complicity" over "indifference."¹² Bankier emphasizes a sense of guilt and shame among Germans, widespread denial and repression, and a growing fear about the consequences of impending defeat and commensurate rejection of the regime's antisemitic propaganda.¹³ But these historiographical differences are matters of nuance, degree, and word choice. Fundamentally, the three scholars agree far more than they differ.

Above all, they accept that the fanatical antisemitism of the party "true believers" was not identical to the antisemitic attitudes of the population at large, and that the antisemitic priorities and genocidal

commitment of the regime were not shared by ordinary Germans. Kershaw concludes that while “the depersonalization of the Jew had been the real success story of Nazi propaganda and policy,” nonetheless “the ‘Jewish question’ was of no more than minimal interest to the vast majority of Germans during the war years. . . . Popular opinion, largely indifferent and infused with a latent anti-Jewish feeling . . . provided the climate within which spiralling Nazi aggression towards the Jews could take place unchallenged. But it did not provoke the radicalisation in the first place.”¹⁴ He sums up his position in the memorable phrase: “The road to Auschwitz was built by hatred, but paved with indifference.”¹⁵

Despite his subsequent critique of Kershaw, Kulka’s conclusions are strikingly similar. Surveying the Security Service reports, he states that “during the war period the unquestionably dominant feature was the almost total absence of any reference to the existence, persecution, and extermination of the Jews—a kind of national conspiracy of silence.” The few reactions that were noted are “characterized by a striking abysmal indifference to the fate of the Jews as human beings. It seems that here, the ‘Jewish Question’ and the entire process of its ‘solution’ in the Third Reich reached the point of almost total depersonalization.”¹⁶ “What is known is that the composite picture that the regime obtained from popular opinion reports pointed toward the general passivity of the population in the face of the persecution of the Jews.” While the Jewish question “might not have been high on the list of priorities for the population at large . . . there were sufficient numbers who chose to give the regime the freedom of action to push for a radical ‘Final Solution.’”¹⁷

Bankier notes the “deep-seated anti-Jewish feelings” in German society but likewise concludes that “on the whole the public did not assign antisemitism the same importance as the Nazis did. . . . The policy of deportations and mass murder succeeded because the public displayed moral insensibility to the Jews’ fate.” But he goes beyond moral insensibility and passivity to argue for a growing schism between the people and the regime. “From 1941 onwards, the failure of Nazi promises to materialize drove a wedge between the population and the regime. . . . Declining hopes of victory and spiralling presentiments of a bitter end issued in a move to distance themselves from propaganda in general and from the Jewish issue in particular.” Concludes Bankier: “Ordinary Germans knew how to distinguish

between an acceptable discrimination . . . and the unacceptable horror of genocide. . . . The more the news of mass murder filtered through, the less the public wanted to be involved in the final solution of the Jewish question.”¹⁸

The general conclusions of Kershaw, Kulka, and Bankier—based on years of research and a wide array of empirical evidence—stand in stark contrast to the Dawidowicz/Goldhagen image of the entire German population “deranged” by a delusional mass psychosis and a “hallucinatory, lethal view of the Jews.” If “ordinary Germans” shared the same “latent,” “traditional,” or even “deep-seated” antisemitism that was widespread in European society but not the “fanatical” or “radical” antisemitism of Hitler, the Nazi leadership, and the party “true believers,” then the behavior of the “ordinary Germans” of Reserve Police Battalion 101 cannot be explained by a singular German antisemitism that made them different from other “ordinary men.”

My characterization of the depersonalizing and dehumanizing antisemitism of the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101, which Goldhagen finds too “tepid,” places them in the mainstream of German society, as described by Kershaw, Kulka, and Bankier, but distinct from ideologically driven Nazi leadership. The implications of my study are that the existence of widespread negative racial stereotyping in a society—in no way unique to Germany—can provide fanatical regimes not only the freedom of action to pursue genocide (as both Kershaw and Kulka conclude) but also an ample supply of executioners.

In regard to the centrality of antisemitic motivation, moreover, it should be noted that German executioners were capable of killing millions of *non*-Jews targeted by the Nazi regime. Beginning in 1939, systematic and large-scale mass murder was initiated against the German handicapped and the Polish intelligentsia. Over three million Soviet prisoners of war perished from hunger, exposure, disease, and outright execution—two-thirds of them in the first nine months after the launching of Operation Barbarossa but before the death camps of Operation Reinhard had even opened. Tens of thousands of non-Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe fell victim to horrendous reprisal measures. And finally, the Nazi regime included Gypsies in their genocidal assault. Clearly something more than singular German antisemitism is needed to explain perpetrator behavior

when the regime could find executioners to murder millions of non-Jewish victims.

Let us now follow a second approach to this issue as well, by examining non-German units in the Ukraine and Belorussia that carried out killing actions quite similar to those performed by Reserve Police Battalion 101.¹⁹ Thus I will not be looking at those elements that carried out the initial murderous pogroms in the summer of 1941, often under German instigation, and were then frequently formed into full-time auxiliaries of the *Einsatzgruppen* for the large-scale systematic massacres that soon followed. The zealous followers of Jonas Klimaitis in Lithuania or Viktors Arajs in Latvia, who eagerly rushed to help the invading Germans kill communists and Jews, are not appropriate counterparts of Reserve Police Battalion 101 for the purposes of cross-cultural comparison.

Instead I would like to examine the rural police units in Belorussia and the Ukraine, which did not really take shape until 1942. They then participated in the “second wave” of killing on Soviet territory. Like the members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland, these policemen provided the essential workforce for the “mopping-up” killings of Jews in small towns and villages and for the “Jew hunts” that relentlessly tracked down escapees.

On July 16, 1941, Hitler made known his desire for accelerated pacification in the occupied Soviet territories. They were to be turned into a “Garden of Eden” from which Germany would never withdraw.²⁰ Nine days later, on July 25, Himmler gave orders for the formation of units to be designated as *Schutzmannschaften*. Kurt Daluge, head of the Order Police, issued guidelines on July 31 stipulating what form these *Schutzmannschaften* were to take. A card file of all recruited *Schutzmänner* was to be sent to the Security Police for political screening, though formation of the units was not to be held up in the meantime. The men were to wear a distinctive armband over old Russian army uniforms shorn of their insignia. For the most part, they were to be equipped with clubs, but in special circumstances they might be given rifles or pistols. Trainers and initial officers were to come from either the Security Police or Order Police. Future officers and noncommissioned officers would be carefully selected from among the new recruits.²¹ During his inspection tour of the Baltic in late July, Himmler spoke about the immediate

creation of police formations of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians to be used outside their home areas.²²

While Himmler concerned himself primarily with the formation of battalion-sized police formations, the behind-the-front security divisions and the local *Feldkommandanturen* and *Ortskommandanturen* of the military administration found themselves confronted with the need to create smaller units of local police as well, for what the Germans called *Einzeldienst*, or precinct service. As early as July 11, 1941, the chief of staff of the Rear Army Area Ukraine had approved the formation of Ukrainian police to maintain order and provide protection within the Ukrainian communities.²³ As one *Wehrmacht* officer subsequently explained: "The vast tasks of the German security forces in the rear army areas require an extensive recruitment of reliable portions of the population to provide help of all kinds."²⁴

German army officers of the military administration toured the outlying small towns and villages in their occupation zones and appointed mayors, who in turn helped recruit local police units.²⁵ One *Ortskommandantur* noted that the local population was very hesitant to provide manpower to the German-appointed mayors until after the fall of Kiev in mid-September.²⁶ As an enticement, each mayor was to offer ten rubles per day to each volunteer, as well as free rations to his wife and children. If sufficient volunteers were not forthcoming, the *Ortskommandantur* was to contact the nearest prisoner-of-war camp concerning the release of Ukrainian prisoners for police service.²⁷

The local police units lacked uniformity as well as uniforms. They were variously called "auxiliary police" (*Hilfspolizei*), "order service" (*Ordnungsdienst*), "citizens' guard" (*Bürgerwehr*), and "militia" (*Miliz*). The army freely conceded, indeed desired, that the personnel should be checked by the Security Service.²⁸ However, in most places there was no Security Police (Sipo) or Security Service (SD) available to train and supervise these units.²⁹ Training was therefore undertaken by the *Ortskommandanturen*,³⁰ the military police,³¹ or in much of the Ukraine by a special detachment of Order Police under a Lieutenant Hardt from Police Battalion 311.³²

Initially only a minority of these local police were armed, and only then for special assignments and with limited ammunition (10 rounds per man).³³ In Uman the *Ortskommandantur* provided weapons for only 20 of 139 Ukrainian police.³⁴ In Dnepropetrovsk, arms

were given to 100 of 400.³⁵ In Novi Saporoshje, 50 guns were provided for 126 police.³⁶ These local police were to be used for numerous tasks: guard duty, patrol, and price and market controls, as well as “guarding Jews” (*Judenüberwachung*) and “special tasks” (*Sonderaufgaben*). In the larger cities where the *Einsatzgruppen* were organizing large massacres, the Ukrainian police were involved. As one *Ortskommandant* reported in mid-October 1941: “At the moment a police action against the remaining Jews in Krivoy-Rog is in progress, during which the entire Ukrainian auxiliary police is being put to work. Krivoy-Rog shall become free of Jews.”³⁷ In contrast to the Baltic, however, such participation in *Einsatzgruppen* mass killings during 1941 seems to have been less widespread in the Ukraine.³⁸ Other employment of the Ukrainian police was apparently much more mundane. Their use as “errand boys” (*Laufbursche*) and private servants in the military was apparently so common that it had to be explicitly forbidden.³⁹

When large portions of the Ukraine were switched from military to civil administration in mid-November 1941, the army prepared to transfer its plethora of local Ukrainian police units to the Order Police. The Rear Army Area South insisted, however, that this transfer not take place until these units were militarily dispensable.⁴⁰ The transfer of the local Ukrainian police to the Order Police and their renaming as *Schutzmannschaften* generally occurred in December 1941 and January 1942.⁴¹ Kurt Daluege, head of the Order Police, reported a phenomenal increase in the *Schutzmannschaften* over the next year: from 30,000 in December 1941 to 300,000 in December 1942.⁴² The initial figure may well not have included numerous police still under army jurisdiction, but the growth of the *Schutzmannschaften* was still significant. What must be kept in mind, quite simply, is that the vast majority of the 300,000 *Schutzmänner* in December 1942 had been in German service for less than a year. They had not yet become policemen during, much less been personally involved in, the “first wave” of killing in 1941.

The Order Police were vastly outnumbered by the *Schutzmannschaften* they recruited, trained, and supervised. This was particularly the case for the German and Ukrainian police scattered throughout the occupied territories in precinct service. For instance, in the *Generalbezirk* (district) of Nikolayev in the Ukraine, 271 German *Schutzpolizei* (city police) supervised 700 Ukrainian police at

the urban precinct level as well as three *Schutzmannschaften* battalions totaling about fifteen hundred men. In the rural areas, 410 German gendarmes supervised 4,946 Ukrainian *Schutzmänner*. The overall ratio was more than ten to one. In the neighboring district of Kiev, the ratio was nearly twelve to one.⁴³ Approximately two-thirds of the German police, moreover, were not career police but middle-aged reservists conscripted after 1939.⁴⁴ As Lieutenant Deuerlein, the commander of the gendarmerie outside Brest-Litovsk, complained, 14 of his 22 German police were reserves who had had only four weeks of training with weapons and themselves were in need of basic weapons training. Such was the manpower with which he was to train and supervise his 287 *Schutzmänner*—surely a case of the one-eyed leading the blind.⁴⁵

Recruiting and training remained ongoing problems. The Order Police's calls for new recruits were issued in the press, over the radio, on placards, and through flyers.⁴⁶ In addition to the pay and family rations, there was one further inducement, which proved to be the most effective in attracting recruits: the immediate families of *Schutzmänner* were to be exempt from deportation to forced labor in Germany.⁴⁷ Lieutenant Deuerlein outside Brest-Litovsk reported: "Whenever the natives are supposed to be sent to Germany for labor, the rush for employment in the *Schutzmannschaft* is greater."⁴⁸ Nevertheless, he concluded, recruitment went very slowly, and those who did volunteer were "not always good human material."⁴⁹

Initially, squad leaders of *Schutzmannschaften* were to be instructed through a translator by a German trainer and would in turn instruct their own squads.⁵⁰ The results were apparently unsatisfactory, and special training schools for the *Schutzmannschaft* noncommissioned officers were created; failure to attend meant loss of rank.⁵¹ The inadequate training of the *Schutzmannschaften* nonetheless continued to be a major concern.⁵²

Indoctrination was also intensified as part of the training process. Initially the Order Police in Berlin ordered "political nurturing" (*politische Betreuung*) in the form of "politically enlightening instruction," but not an "ideological education" (*weltanschauliche Schulung*). The initial intent was to familiarize the *Schutzmänner* with Germany and its people.⁵³ Once the schools for noncommissioned officers were established, a regular course of indoctrination was included alongside the usual lessons in drill and weaponry. The

focus was primarily upon the identity of Jews and Bolsheviks and the salvation of the European peoples by Hitler and Germany from this “Asiatic” threat. The conclusion was brutal and blunt: “The Jew must be destroyed” (*Der Jude muss vernichtet werden*).⁵⁴

In summary, the precinct-level Ukrainian police were first organized by the military administration in 1941. They were vastly expanded under the Order Police in 1942, whom they outnumbered by at least a ten-to-one ratio. Attempts at training and indoctrination were intensified, but the German Order Police were never fully satisfied with the results. The local police joined for numerous reasons, including pay, food for their families, release from prisoner-of-war camps, and a family exemption from deportation to forced labor in Germany. Although the Germans had difficulty recruiting as many Ukrainian police as they wanted, nonetheless the Ukrainian police numbered in the tens of thousands and constituted a major manpower source for the “second wave” of the Final Solution that swept through the Ukraine in 1942.

There is a lack of documentation from the precinct level on the day-to-day participation of the Ukrainian auxiliary police in the mass murder of Jews. From neighboring Belorussia, however, several series of police reports exist, from which we can see that the local *Schutzmäänner* and their supervising German gendarmes performed precisely the same duties as Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland, with one exception: there were no deportations to death camps, only shooting actions. The first series of reports came from Lieutenant Deuerlein, gendarmerie commander in the countryside surrounding Brest-Litovsk. In October 1942 Deuerlein reported:

On the nineteenth and twentieth of September a Jewish action was carried out in Domatshevo and Tomatshovka through a *Sonderkommando* of the SD, in conjunction with a mounted squadron of gendarmes stationed in Domatshevo and the *Schutzmannschaft*. A total of 2,900 Jews were shot. . . . After the Jewish action in Domatshevo and Tomatshovka the Jews living in the region are now almost totally destroyed.⁵⁵

The next month he reported “participation in the action against the Jews in the city and region of Brest-Litovsk since October 15. So far some 20,000 Jews have been shot.” For his anticipated activities in the near future, he added: “Search for bunkers to be found in the

area around Brest-Litovsk. . . . Taking care of [*Erledigung*] the fleeing Jews still found in the region.”⁵⁶ One month later the “Jew hunt” was still in progress, as Deuerlein once again reported on his planned activities: “Search for the Jews even now hiding in bunkers in the forests.”⁵⁷

The gendarmerie outpost in Mir, also in Belorussia, likewise reported the results of its killing activities to headquarters in Baranoviche. Its commander noted that “560 Jews were shot in the Jewish action carried out in Mir” on August 13, 1942.⁵⁸ The gendarmerie commander in Baranoviche thereafter reported to Minsk:

I have been given general instructions by the *Gebietskommissar* in Baranoviche to clear the area, especially the lowlands, of Jews, so far as the forces at my disposal permit. As a result of the major actions that were carried out in the past months, large numbers of Jews fled and joined groups of bandits. To prevent further escapes, I have eliminated Jews who were still living in the towns of Polonka and Mir. Altogether, 719 Jews were shot. In the meantime, 320 Jews who had escaped from the major actions could be recaptured by the gendarmerie posts and executed after court-martial.⁵⁹

Around Mir the Jew hunt continued. On September 29, 1942, a “patrol of the Mir *Schutzmannschaft*” found in the forest six Jews who “had fled the previous Jew action.” They were shot “on the spot.”⁶⁰ Six weeks later a forester discovered a Jewish bunker. He led a patrol of three German gendarmes and sixty *Schutzmänner* to the site. Five Jews, including the former head of the *Judenrat* of Mir, were hauled from the bunker and shot. “The food”—including 100 kilograms of potatoes—“as well as the tattered clothing were given to the Mir *Schutzmannschaft*.”⁶¹

In short, the role of the precinct-level police recruited on Soviet territory in the Final Solution seems scarcely distinguishable from that of German reserve police in Poland. The precinct-level *Schutzmänner* were not the eager pogromists and collaborators of midsummer 1941, just as the German reserve police were not career SS and policemen but post-1939 conscripts. The role and behavior of the Ukrainian and Belorussian auxiliary police in carrying out the Final Solution do not, I think, lend support to the notion of “specifically German behavioral modes.”

I would like to make one other cross-cultural comparison, as yet insufficiently documented, that is even more suggestive. Reserve Po-

lice Battalion 101 was composed almost entirely of Germans from the Hamburg region, including some men from Bremen, Bremerhaven, and Wilhelmshaven, as well as a few Holsteiners from Rendsburg who felt like relative outsiders. In addition, however, the battalion included a contingent of policemen from Luxemburg, which had been annexed to the Third Reich in 1940. The presence of the Luxemburgers in Reserve Police Battalion 101 offers the historian the unusual opportunity for a “controlled experiment” to measure the impact of the same situational factors on men of differing cultural and ethnic background.

The problem is a scarcity of testimony. Unfortunately, the Luxemburgers of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were not among those interrogated in the 1960s, and only one witness described their participation in the battalion’s activities in any detail. According to this witness, the Luxemburgers belonged to Lieutenant Buchmann’s platoon in first company and were particularly active in the roundups before the first massacre at Jozefow. This was a period in late June and early July of 1942, when the trains were not running to Belzec, and Jews in the southern Lublin district were being concentrated in transit ghettos such as Piaski and Izbica. On the night before the initial massacre at Jozefow, Lieutenant Buchmann was the sole officer who said he could not order his men to shoot unarmed women and children and asked for a different assignment. He was put in charge of taking the work Jews to Lublin, and, according to the witness, the Luxemburgers under his command provided the guard. Hence they did not participate in the massacre.⁶²

Thereafter Lieutenant Buchmann continued to refuse participation in any Jewish action. However, those in his platoon were not exempted. Under the command of the first sergeant, who was a “110 percent Nazi” and a real “go-getter,”⁶³ the Luxemburgers in particular became quite involved. According to the witness, the company captain took considerable care in selecting personnel for assignments. “In general the elderly remained behind,” he noted. In contrast, “*the Luxemburgers were in fact present at every action. With these people it was a matter of career police officials from the state of Luxemburg, who were all young men in their twenties*” (emphasis mine). Despite their absence at Jozefow, it would appear that the Luxemburgers became the shock troops of first company simply because of their younger age and greater police experience and train-

ing—the absence of “specifically German behavioral modes” and singular German antisemitism notwithstanding.

This evidence requires qualification, however. The company captain in question was with the battalion in Poland for less than four months, and thus testimony about the captain and the Luxemburgers does not apply to the later period and may not hold true for the more voluntaristic Jew hunts. There is at least a highly suggestive argument from silence, however. While many witnesses could still remember the nonshooters in the battalion twenty years later (though it was not always in their interest to do so), the Luxemburgers attracted no comment whatsoever. One must ask: did the Luxemburgers stir no memories and cause no comment in the 1960s precisely because in 1942 they had behaved like most of their German comrades?

Let me conclude briefly. If the studies of Kershaw, Kulka, and Bankier are valid and most Germans did not share the fanatical antisemitism of Adolf Hitler and the hard-core Nazis, then an argument taking a singular German antisemitism to explain the murderous actions of low-level perpetrators does not hold up. If the Nazi regime could find executioners for millions of non-Jewish victims, the centrality of antisemitism as the crucial motive for the German perpetrators is also called into question. If tens of thousands of local policemen in Belorussia and the Ukraine—taken as needed by the Germans, who were desperate for help and offered a variety of inducements—basically performed the same duties and behaved in the same way as their German counterparts in Poland, then the argument of “specifically German behavioral modes” likewise fails. And finally, if Luxemburgers in Reserve Police Battalion 101 did not behave differently from their German comrades, then the immediate “situational” factors to which I gave considerable attention in the conclusion of my book—much to the displeasure of my critics—must be given even greater weight. The preponderance of evidence, I would still argue, suggests that in trying to understand the vast majority of the perpetrators, we are dealing not with “ordinary Germans” but with “ordinary men.”