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WOLFGANG CURILLA, *DER JUDENMORD IN POLEN UND DIE DEUTSCHE ORDNUNGSPOLIZEI 1939–1945* [HOLOCAUST IN POLAND AND THE GERMAN *ORDNUNGSPOLIZEI* 1939–1945], VERLAG FERDINAND SCHÖNINGH, PADERBORN – MÜNCHEN – WIEN – ZÜRICH 2011, ISBN: 9783506770431, 1035 PP.

In recent years, the reckoning with the German National Socialist past has once again become important in the academic and public debate on the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). For instance, this is seen in the intense debate on the ‘Nazi baggage’ (*NS-Belastung*) which was particularly visible in the early years of the Bonn Republic. More specifically, it manifests in the lack of full de-Nazification and the continuity in the careers of many war criminals and former Third Reich officers in the FRG’s state apparatus and economic sectors.¹ Academic research in this respect encompasses entire ministries, offices,² the large social and

¹ See e.g. P. Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*, München 2001; *Erfolgsgeschichte Bundesrepublik? Die Nachkriegsgesellschaft im langen Schatten des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. S.A. Glienke, V. Paulmann, J. Perels, Göttingen 2008; J. Perels, *Entsorgung der NS-Herrschaft? Konfliktlinien im Umgang mit dem Hitler-Regime*, Hannover 2004.

² See *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit. Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik*, ed. E. Conze, N. Frei, P. Hayes, M. Zimmermann, München 2010; C. Goschler, M. Wala, “Keine neue Gestapo.” *Das Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und die NS-Vergangenheit*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2015; also, the analysis commissioned by the German Federal Ministry

political organisations of the Third Reich, the *Wehrmacht*, individual agendas of the police state, as well as well-known public personalities. The sources for such research could be found in the history of German banks and syndicates, many of which actively supported Hitler's regime and profited from war and the racist extermination of the conquered nations of Central and Eastern Europe.³ The resulting conclusion is a clear realisation that a variety of institutions functioning within the National Socialist state did not 'remain clean' in the face of the regime's immense crimes. This is also true of the German police. Even in the first post-war years, there was a dominant belief in Germany that the Third Reich's Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*, *Orpo*) and the Criminal Police (*Kriminalpolizei*, *Kripo*), unlike the infamous Gestapo or the Security Police force (*Sicherheitspolizei*, *Sipo*), were not directly engaged in the policy of terror. However, the present state of research points to the fact that those police forces did indeed take part in repressing political opponents, racially 'alien' people, and other socially marginalised groups of the old Reich, and later also civilians in the occupied areas, including Poles and Jews.⁴ In the 1990s, when Christopher Browning's book about 'ordinary people' describing the crimes of Reserve Police Battalion 101 was published, and the discussions over the controversial monograph by Daniel J. Goldhagen became heated,⁵ the public finally learnt about the role of the *Ordnungspolizei* in the Holocaust.⁶ The participation of those forces in the 1939–1945 extermination

of Agriculture: A. Dornheim, 'Rasse, Raum und Autarkie. Sachverständigen Gutachten zur Rolle des Reichsministeriums für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft in der NS-Zeit', Berlin 2011, https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/_Ministerium/Geschichte/sachverstaendigenrat-zur-rolle-ns-zeit.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&cv=3, accessed July 28, 2020.

³ See e.g. *Die Deutsche Bank 1870–1995. 125 Jahre Deutsche Wirtschafts- und Finanzgeschichte*, ed. L. Gall, K. Schambach, N. von Ragenfeld-Feldman, H.E. Büschgen, H. James, G.D. Feldman, München 1995; F. Schwarz, *Die Deutsche Bank. Riese auf tönernen Füßen*, Frankfurt am Main–New York 2003; J. Bähr, *Die Dresdner Bank in der Wirtschaft des Dritten Reichs*, München 2006; D. Ziegler, *Die Dresdner Bank und die deutsche Juden*, München 2006; J. Bähr, *Der Flick-Konzern im Dritten Reich*, München 2008.

⁴ See W. Wichert, *Narodowy socjalizm w historiografii Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w latach 1986–2016*, Szczecin–Warsaw 2018, p. 444; F. Gańczak, 'Nowa fala niemieckich rozliczeń z nazistowską przeszłością', *Biuletyn Niemiecki*, 18 May 2011, no. 17, p. 6.

⁵ See D.J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York 1996; *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, ed. J.H. Schoeps, Hamburg 1996.

⁶ Ch.R. Browning, *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York 1992.

machinery in occupied Poland is described in the comprehensive publication *Der Judenmord in Polen und die deutsche Ordnungspolizei 1939–1945* [The Murder of the Jews in Poland and the German Order Police 1939–1945] by Wolfgang Curilla (born 1942), a German lawyer and SPD politician (a former senator for Hamburg). In 2006, he published a similar book describing with the utmost precision the *Ordnungspolizei's* crimes in Belarus and the Baltic countries.⁷ Both publications are considered pioneering, as no other historian has yet reviewed those issues so diligently, in a virtually case-by-case manner.

The 2011 publication, 1035 pages in length, comprises introduction, eight chapters, a list of literature and sources, as well as several thematic indexes (the latter will be analysed in a later part of this paper). The first chapter presents the foundations and practical procedures for the engagement of the *Ordnungspolizei* in the policy of extermination. These include the 1939 invasion of Poland, the establishment of the German occupation authorities, the legal discrimination of the Jewish community and, finally, the decision process that led to the launch of the Holocaust machine, beginning with the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942. In further chapters, Curilla focuses on the crimes of particular *Ordnungspolizei* units, including police battalions (*Polizeibataillone*), the public order police (*Schutzpolizei*, *Schupo*) in larger cities, and the Gendarmerie in the countryside, of the various occupied regions of Poland. Regarding the murders of the Jews committed by *Ordnungspolizei*, the author researches the annexed Polish territories (*Reichsgau Wartheland*, *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* and two *Regierungsbezirke* [regencies]: Kattowitz [Katowice], incorporated into *Oberschlesien* [Upper Silesia] province, and Zichenau [Ciechanów]), the Białystok District (*Bezirk Białystok*), as well as the Cracow, Radom, Warsaw and Lublin Districts in the General Governorate. One issue immediately draws attention: there is no mention of the *Ordnungspolizei* in the *Distrikt Galizien*, which was incorporated into the General Governorate on 1 August 1941. In this region, the Gendarmerie's active participation in the 'Final Solution of the Jewish question' has been well-documented.⁸ Based on such

⁷ W. Curilla, *Die deutsche Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust im Baltikum und in Weißrussland 1941–1944*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich 2006.

⁸ See further: D. Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, Berlin–Boston 1997 (2nd edition), p. 67ff.; Th. Sandkühler, "Endlösung" in Galizien. *Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen*

considerations, Curilla proves that the formation discussed largely contributed to the Holocaust in occupied Poland, and not only as supernumerary actors or mere assistants of the racial genocide. *Orpo* officers frequently initiated the massacres of the Jews, as was the case of the 309th Police Battalion, which massacred over 2000 Jews in Białystok on 27 June 1941. This was the first mass execution of its kind after the German attack on the USSR. Furthermore, the 61st Reserve Police Battalion voluntarily murdered many Jews in Warsaw. The local *Ordnungspolizei* command in Częstochowa, the city with the largest number of Jews in the *Distrikt* Radom, was responsible for organising the deportation of Jews, which resulted in loss of 40,000 lives. Ewald Sternagel, commander of the 41st Reserve Police Battalion, played an important role in the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which lasted from 19 April to mid-May 1943. Gendarmerie officers assigned to rural areas also actively persecuted, caught and killed Jews, including ghetto and transport escapees who were in hiding. Virtually all the manhunts and round-ups targeting the Jewish community were organised with the participation of the *Orpo*.

Curilla points out that police officers in the Chełmno death camp (Kulmhof an der Nehr) in the *Wartheland* took part in murder of 152,000 Jews by the use of exhaust fumes in the vans (mobile gas chambers). In the Sobibór camp in the General Governorate, the *Orpo* officers commanded the Ukrainian camp guards until September 1942. Their actions contributed to the extermination of over 61,000 Jewish prisoners during that period, including people from Western Europe. *Ordnungspolizei* functionaries took part in the mass executions of approximately 200,000 Jews and the deportations of another 1,180,000 or so Jews to death camps in Treblinka, Sobibór, Chełmno, Auschwitz and Bełżec. The Jews were immediately killed in gas chambers upon arrival. Police battalions separated and hermetically blocked the ghettos. They also guarded the ghettos. Due to the terrible sanitary and provision conditions (hunger, cold, diseases) in the Jewish districts, the *Orpo* police officers can be held co-responsible for the deaths of 153,000 Jews in the Warsaw, Łódź, Kielce and Otwock ghettos. The author calculated that they took part in the extermination of 1,723,277

von Berthold Beitz 1941–1944, Bonn 1996, p. 110ff.; and *Bericht des SS- und Polizeiführers Fritz Katzmann im Distrikt Galizien vom 30. Juni 1943: Massentötungen, Listen der entwendeten Vermögensstücke, Schilderung der Wohn- und Arbeitsverhältnisse*, Herder-Institut für historische Ostmitteleuropaforschung website, https://www.herder-institut.de/no_cache/digitale-angebote/dokumente-und-materialien/themenmodule/quelle/1672/details.html, accessed 28 July 2020.

Jews in occupied Poland. This number sums the victims of *SS-Sonderkommandos* Kulmhof (137,000) and Sobibór (47,450), 1,182,675 deported and killed upon arrival to death camps, 203,152 shot on the spot and 153,000 murdered or deceased in the previously mentioned four ghettos. Actually this number constitutes about 90% of all Holocaust victims that had been citizens of the pre-war Second Polish Republic. The *Schupo* and police battalion officers also escorted the trains transporting Jews from other occupied or German-allied countries to death camps in Poland. A total of over 628,000 Jews on those transports were murdered in gas chambers upon arrival. Curilla notes that the support and active participation of the *Ordnungspolizei* in the operation of concentration camps in German-occupied Poland contributed to the deaths of 2,028,946 Jews from the European area of German influence. This is approximately 72.5% of all Jewish victims of the Nazis' 'barbed wire universe'. According to the author, the *Ordnungspolizei* also bears significant responsibility for the deaths of over 300,000 Jews murdered outside the death factories. For comparison, over 3,125,000 Jews were killed in the occupied Soviet areas as a result of various direct and indirect activities by the *Orpo*.

The author based his considerations and detailed calculations on German and English source literature. Most importantly, he refers to sources from German and Austrian institutions (such as documents from the archives of the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* [Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes], and the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR* [Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security of the former GDR], numerous federal, regional and municipal archives, prosecutors' offices and national courts) that were produced by the justice systems of the FRG, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Austria, including around 170 previously unpublished court rulings, over 220 prosecutors' decisions and hundreds of witness statements. However, when discussing the scale of the crimes perpetrated by this force, it might be more illustrative and authoritative to provide the percentage regarding the engagement of the *Orpo* in particular executions. It would be more informative than the apodictic manner of using the absolute numbers of victims of the German genocide policy, especially since other elements of the Third Reich security apparatus were also engaged in those actions, such as the *Gestapo*,

the SS, the *Einsatzgruppen* and the *Schutzpolizei*. Although the author notes this problem, he does not critically assess the circumstances, anatomy and dynamics of each crime (for instance, as a case study). There is only a succinct remark in the introduction that the work is not a complete review (p. 16). Curilla only briefly discusses the *Ordnungspolizei* officers origin and motivation activities in the occupied Polish lands; there were approximately 30,000 men of this force in the area. The *Ordnungspolizei* force in occupied Poland consisted of 45 battalions, a number of mobile units, *Schutzpolizei* and Gendarmerie commands spread all over the country. Its functionaries came from various parts of Germany, Austria, the Sudetenland and Danzig. A part of the force was also composed of the local *Volksdeutschen*, among whom were some zealously antisemitic National Socialists. It is noteworthy that there was a relatively small group of police officers who refused to partake in the executions of unarmed civilians, including women and children. They were not sanctioned, but they often encountered resentment and reproach from their colleagues, and insults that they were cowards leaving their unit in need. In this way the author confirms the theses of Christopher Browning, who claimed that an innately pathological desire to kill was not a decisive factor in the situations analysed, but rather stemmed from environmental pressure and the pervasive insistence of one's brothers in arms. Only a handful voluntarily helped Jews. The vast majority of policemen followed their superiors' orders, justifying this approach by the obligation to obey orders, peer pressure or habit. Their attitudes were mainly shaped by anti-Jewish Nazi propaganda, indoctrination, wartime brutalisation, or even plain opportunism tied with career drive. Curilla stresses that after the second half of 1941 *Orpo* units were placed all over the occupied country, and operated continuously until early 1945. Their numbers were usually larger than of other Nazi security forces such as the *Wehrmacht*, the SS, the *Gestapo*, the *Sicherheitspolizei* or *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) units. In his assessment, those forces were an indispensable, if not decisive, instrument for executing particular stages of the Holocaust policy.

The eighth (last) chapter includes a seven-page table with a meticulously prepared list of crimes that Curilla documented. Those crimes were committed by particular *Ordnungspolizei* formations and the victim count is provided in accordance with the assumed territorial categories. He also mentions examples of some police officers being held criminally liable for their crimes after the war;

some *Orpo* functionaries were deported to Poland after 1945 to be tried there.⁹ Interestingly, trials ending in severe punishments also took place in Austria and the GDR. In Austria, however, life sentences were not handed down to former *Orpo* officers. In this regard, the trials in the Bonn Republic in the 1960s and 1970s compare rather poorly as the cases usually ended with very moderate penalties, acquittals or dismissals; however, even the justice system in the FRG sometimes sentenced *Ordnungspolizei* officers to life imprisonment.¹⁰ Curilla notes that the participation of the *Orpo* in deportations to death camps actually met with no penal repercussions. For a broader perspective of the settlement of the crimes committed by this force, a comparative analysis of the approach to this issue adopted by the justice systems of particular countries would be essential. However, the author has not made such an analysis, as he stopped at enumerating the particular cases of punishment or the acquittal of the perpetrators.

To conclude, this book by Wolfgang Curilla is more of a casuistic compendium, discussing individual cases of *Ordnungspolizei* engagement in crimes against Jews in occupied Poland. The publication cannot be considered as a monograph with its swift-paced narration, searching for the cause-and-effect relations or thoroughly analysing the social history of the Holocaust. At the beginnings of the majority of the chapters, the author usually provides a brief scholarly comment

⁹ Such was the case of Oskar Knoke, head of the *Ordnungspolizei* in the *Wartheland* (from mid-September 1939 until the end of June 1942), who was sentenced in Poznań to 8 years' imprisonment in February 1949. The SS-*Brigadeführer* and police lieutenant Walter Pelzhausen, commander of the Police Prison in Łódź-Radogoszcz from 1 July 1940 to 15 January 1945, was deported to Poland by the US after the war and sentenced to death by a court in Łódź, carried out on 1 March 1948. Max Daume, deputy commander of the 31st *Ordnungspolizei* Regiment in Warsaw from November 1939 to March 1940, who was responsible for the Wawer massacre of civilians (26–27 December 1939), was sentenced to death by the Polish Supreme National Tribunal in March 1947 (and executed in 1948). Furthermore, the Austrian rank-and-file policeman, Johann Kropfisch, who murdered many Jews in Tomaszów, was sentenced to death by the Voivodeship Court in Łódź in August 1951 and executed in February 1952. A similar course of action was assumed for the gendarme Alfons Himmel, who served in Lipsko, where he committed many crimes against Poles and Jews. In February 1949, Himmel was sentenced to death and executed. There were many similar cases in post-war Poland of death penalties, terms of imprisonment or life sentences passed on former officers or lower-rank functionaries of the *Ordnungspolizei* who had committed crimes against civilians. Curilla, however, does not quote any detailed statistics in this matter.

¹⁰ For instance, functionaries of the *Schutzpolizei* commando in Częstochowa were sentenced to life imprisonment: Wilhelm Unkelbach (proven seven cases of murder) and Adolf Kühnel (eight murders). However, Curilla does not specify how many of their victims were actually Jewish.

on the circumstances of the establishment and organisation of the particular *Orpo* formations. Then, he moves on to particular examples of murders and terror against the Jews, and the policy patterns as extrapolated from the trial and investigation records. One can say that Curilla is a chronicler focused mainly on describing the events and the participating characters. The encyclopaedic and schematic approach Curilla has assumed is shown by his abstaining at the very beginning from asking any of the particular research questions that could have been answered in the subsequent considerations. It should also be pointed out that – with just a few exceptions – Curilla does not base his findings on Polish historical research, nor any archival records written in Polish. A thorough reconstruction of the events, especially those in provincial areas and small towns, would need closely researched reference to the records of the Polish prosecution authorities, prepared by the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation or, at least, to their regional ‘Register of places and facts regarding Nazi crimes committed on Polish territories in 1939–1945’. Curilla probably does not have sufficient language skills to read such materials, as proven by the lack of diacritics in the spelling of Polish words, toponyms, etc. Even the documents he has used from the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and of several Polish state archives were in German. This problem could have been signalled in the introduction in order to avoid misunderstandings in the reception of his publication. The indisputable advantage of this fact-finding book is the abundance of proof regarding the engagement of the *Orpo* in crimes against Jews. For a professional historian, Curilla’s publication is certainly useful for researching local aspects of the Holocaust, thanks to the detailed list of *Orpo* units and geographical indexes of the execution sites. However, the list of court rulings and prosecution decisions given at the end of the book does not follow the geographical categorisation from the table of contents, something that largely obstructs the finding of particular crimes. Nevertheless, bearing in mind Curilla’s colossal empirical effort, as well as the work’s excellent essential and cognitive value, the publication of a Polish translation of this monograph should be considered. Unfortunately, no Polish historian has taken up the challenge of presenting so broadly the criminal activity of the *Ordnungspolizei* and its active participation in the Holocaust policy in the occupied Polish territories, prior to Curilla’s publication.