

# Prisoners of War and Forced Labour



Prisoners of War and Forced Labour:  
Histories of War and Occupation

Edited by

Marianne Neerland Soleim

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

---

P U B L I S H I N G

Prisoners of War and Forced Labour: Histories of War and Occupation,  
Edited by Marianne Neerland Soleim

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Marianne Neerland Soleim and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1720-1, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1720-2

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables .....	vii
Introduction .....	1
Prisoners of War and Forced Labour: Histories of War and Occupation Marianne Neerland Soleim	
Chapter One.....	19
Forgotten Genocide: The Fate of Soviet Prisoners of War Thomas Earl Porter	
Chapter Two.....	35
Prisoners of War at the IG Farben Works in Auschwitz Piotr Setkiewicz	
Chapter Three .....	46
Forced Labour in the “Third Reich” Styria as a Case Study Peter Ruggenthaler	
Chapter Four.....	89
The Ustaša Genocide against Serbs: 1941-1945 Michele Frucht Levy	
Chapter Five .....	105
The Vicissitudes of the Polish Prisoners-of-War in the Two Totalitarian Systems on the Years 1939-1945: Similarities and Differences Edmund Nowak	
Chapter Six .....	138
Rabbinic Nazi Camp Survivors and the Call for a Religious Protection of Human Prerogatives Isaac Herskowitz	

Chapter Seven.....	150
Comparative Perspective on Soviet Prisoners of War in Norway and Foreign Prisoners of War in the European North of Russia during the Second World War Marina Panikar	
Chapter Eight.....	157
German Penal Camps in Finland, 1941-1944 Lars Westerlund	
Chapter Nine.....	180
Escapes of Allied Prisoners of War and Forced Labourers from German Captivity Stephen Tyas	
Chapter Ten .....	205
Landscape of Evil—Archaeology and Nazi POW Camps in Norway: A New Approach Marek E. Jasinski and Lars F. Stenvik	
Chapter Eleven .....	224
Finnish Prisoners of War: Specifics of Custody and the Image of Enemy Dmitri Frolov	
Contributors.....	236
Index .....	240

## LIST OF FIGURE AND TABLES

- Fig. 3-1: Numbers of foreign civilian labourers in the “Südmark” (LAA Styria and LAA Carinthia)
- Fig. 3-2: Nutrition
- Fig. 3-3: Civilian Forced Labourers in Carinthia and Styria
- Fig. 5-1: Column of Polish Prisoners-of-War on the way to the german captivity
- Fig. 5-2: Group of Prisoners-of-War in Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf
- Fig. 5-3: Group of Polish Prisoners-of-War led to the Soviet Captivity
- Fig. 9-1: The number of escape attempts
- Fig. 9-2: The number of escapers involved in attempts in Table 9-1
- Table 9-3: Executions
- Fig 10-1: Falstad prison camp 1945, photo Oskar Johansen, Falstad Centre Archive
- Fig 10-2: Falstad school 1950s, Falstad Centre Archive
- Fig 10-3: The Falstad centre 2009
- Fig 10-4: Monument in the Falstad forest
- Fig 10-5: Survey after the Falstad Boat
- Fig 10-6: ROV Minerva
- Fig 10-7: Magnetic gradiometer survey
- Fig 10-8: Survey in the Falstad forest
- Fig 10-9: Survey in trial trenches
- Fig 10-10: Survey in trial trench





## INTRODUCTION

# PRISONERS OF WAR AND FORCED LABOUR: HISTORIES OF WAR AND OCCUPATION

MARIANNE NEERLAND SOLEIM

### **Overcoming the past**

Previous research on the Second World War was characterized by studies of the extermination of the Jews without other victims of the Nazi policy of extermination included. In the past twenty years there has been a greater focus on topics as prisoners of war and forced labourers in the “Third Reich” among scholars. This development of a wider perspective in research topics revealed a need for more primary research. Based on this view it was established a demand to expand the perspective by connecting Holocaust to the destiny of the prisoners of war. The usual definition of Holocaust seems to exclude the Einsatzgruppen and their mass execution in Soviet Union and Nazi policy towards Soviet prisoners of war – from the rest of the Genocide. Yet, there is legitimate to ask the question whether the prisoners of war were a part of the Holocaust. It has been emphasized that the killings of Soviet prisoners of war and the extermination of the Jews were two consequences of the Nazi racial policy closely related. Thomas Sandkühler recall the fact that 2 100 000 Soviet Jews died and this represented 70 % of the Jewish population in Soviet Union before the Second World War. In his book *The Path to Genocide* (1992), Christopher R. Browning, writes that the mass killing of two million Soviet prisoners of war in the first months of the war would have appeared as the largest Nazi war crime, if this regime had broken down as early as spring 1942.<sup>1</sup>

By placing the Nazi Genocide on the Jews in a more broadly context can the other victims, including both Soviet civilian population and prisoner of war, be given more attention and give new knowledge in up to now unknown aspect of the history of the Second World War.

International scholars have been preoccupied with explaining who was responsible of the Holocaust and calculating the number of Jewish victims. A problem with the research is that it does not contain analysis of both decision-makers, perpetrators, bystanders and victims. This would have given a more overall perspective in the analysis of mass executions of the victims of Nazi extermination policy. However, recent works pay more attention to the ways in which Nazism was actively built from below as well.

A primary objective of the present research agenda should be to obtain new facts and put focus on the fact that the Nazi racial policy also destroyed other groups of victims such as the Soviet prisoners of war and civil population both on the Balkans and in the Soviet Union. There is necessary to open up for a pluralistic view which opens up for several angles of approach. Including other nationalities in the study of the war history of one country will give the opportunity to achieve material to new comparative research and also give answers regarding attitudes towards both hostile and non-hostile nationalities on domestic territory during war.

The need for more knowledge and understanding is especially strong when the community is characterized by big social and political conflicts. This occurs when the community has to take choices with far-reaching consequences and when there is a need to process traumatic events in the past. This will require a community orientation based on an interpretation of historical conditions. How a state or a community shall deal with traumatic past and negative experiences has been a central problem after the large catastrophes in the first part of the 20.Century. In Germany has the term “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (overcoming the past) received an important meaning. This implies that past behaviour which is regarded as negative, have to be reconstructed and interpreted. On this basis it could be possible to draw the political and moral conclusions, so that the knowledge about traumatic experiences and the critical discourse on these topics can be debated in the general understanding of the community. Most European countries, both occupants, occupied countries, states with collaborating regimes and neutral states during the Second World War have been through a similar process.

The German historian Ulrich Herbert call attention to the fact that despite a clearly need for research on the destiny of numerous civilian forced labourers and prisoners of war in the German Reich, the topics were not part of the serious public debates and discussions in Western Germany. The most important work about National Socialism did not include these two topics. This was however not the case in DDR, were research dealt with crimes against the workers from Soviet Union and

Poland. According to Herbert the situation changed after 1985 when research enlarged both in depth and intensity in Germany and several European countries, partly as a result of the political debate regarding the question of economic compensation to the former forced labourers. This indicates that Herbert is not considering German historian Christian Streit's book *Keine Kameraden* (1978) as important to this field of research. Based on an opinion that this was the first major study on the topic Soviet prisoners of war, it seems unreasonable to leave out Streit's book in this context.

In the 1990s there was a breakthrough within research on the victims of the Nazi mass murder and the perpetrators. A number of scholars have published studies on these topics. Examples of studies are: *Europa und der Reichseinsatz. Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938-1945* (Ulrich Herbert 1991) "*Endlösung*". *Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Götz Aly 1995), *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944. Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens* (Dieter Pohl 1996), "*Endlösung*" in Galizien. *Der judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz 1941-1944* (Thomas Sandkühler 1996). Ulrich Herbert has also given a comprehensive survey of forced labour and prisoners of war with his book *Hitlers foreign workers. Enforced foreign labour in Germany under the third Reich*.<sup>2</sup> The book is the first major study of what in effect was slave labour on a massive scale, whose reverberations are still felt in debates about work compensation and the legacy of the Third Reich. Ulrich Herbert defines what he calls a methodological dimension. In the existing literature there are two competing approaches to the interpretation of foreign labour deployment. On the one hand, the employment of foreigners in the Third Reich is viewed as a continuation of "normal" migrations of labour in Europe and treated primarily as a problem in social engineering, while "excesses" are regarded as special cases due to the nature of the war. He writes that this is how Germans tend to remember foreigner deployment. On the other hand, the "program of slave labour" is described as an endless process of humiliation, harassment, maltreatment and crime. The difficulty lies in combining the two approaches so as to emphasize the contradictory nature of National Socialist policy regarding foreign workers and on the life of these workers in an exceptional situation that lasted for several years, but without blurring the contours.<sup>3</sup>

The book of Götz Aly concerns the extermination of the European Jews and it is an in-depth study of the process from 1933 until 1942 that led to the decision of the extermination on Jews in Europe. Dieter Pohl has

reconstructed the mass murder on the Jewish people in Eastern Galicia in his book. He shows how the German police in cooperation with civil service organized and accomplished the crimes. Thomas Sandkühler's book deals with the perpetrators behind Holocaust. His book shows especially how the German industries attitude to the "Jewish question" developed in the area of the Generalgouvernement Poland.

In his study of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, Christopher R. Browning has given a valuable contribution to the research with his book *Ordinary Men. Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (1992). The book is an analysis of the perpetrators motive and their possibilities to avoid following the orders on mass executions of the Jews. This book has given us more knowledge of the mass murder on the Eastern front. A work that is in clear opposite position to Browning's thesis that anti-Semitism did not function as a strong driving force to kill among the soldiers within the reserve police battalion, is Christian Gerlach's book *Kalkulierte Morde* (1999). Gerlach is establishing that the perpetrators principally carried out the killings in White Russia in a sadistically and cruel manner. He points out that prisoners of war and civilians were mistreated and killed in a terribly way in the Germans hunt for partisans in White Russia. Browning has also in the later years contributed to the new direction within the research on Nazi crimes. His book *The origins of the Final Solution. The evolution of Nazi Jewish policy 1939-1942* (2005) is a study of decision-making and shows how the Nazi leadership ended up with a policy of industrialized mass murder of Jews as it fought a war of territorial expansion against the threats supposedly posed by Polish nationalism and Soviet Bolshevism.

In 2001 the German historian Jan Erik Schulte published the book *Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung. Das Wirtschaftsimperium der SS*. This work is the first complete study of the economy of the SS and Oswald Pohl's leadership of the Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt der SS. Schulte gives an analysis of the SS and their role in Himmler's plans and the concentration camp system. He has particularly been concentrated on the years 1941 and 1942 with the development and plans of the population policy in the East, with ethnic cleansing and plans for special settlements.

The Nazis started, escalated and fought a brutal war until May 1945. Nazi policy promised the Germans a secure life and prosperity. In their attempt to achieve this they wrecked other nations and sentenced other people to death. Around 18 million prisoners became victims of the Nazi camp system in the years 1933-1945. Every one was a victim of a system where lawlessness was total. Between 10 and 11 million prisoners were murdered in several thousand prison camps and prisons. After the outbreak

of war the camps played a central role for the German war machine. Most of the prisoners came from occupied countries. Ruthless use of the prisoners labour resulted in catastrophic death tolls in the camps. These figures are difficult to grasp, but they indicate that the “greater German Reich” the Nazis set out to create rested on intention to violently remake “lands and peoples” into “spaces and races”.

German attitude toward Soviet prisoners of war and other captive populations after the desperate winter of 1941 on the Eastern front early victory was no longer taken for granted. As Soviet prisoners of war fell into German hands in extraordinary numbers, they were treated quite differently to their counterparts the previous year. They were starved to death or marched into the ground till they looked “more like skeletons of animals than humans”.<sup>4</sup> Within six months, over two million Soviet prisoners of war had starved to death in German captivity.<sup>5</sup> The hoards of Soviet prisoners were in short time reduced to a minority that had survived the terrible decimation of the first half year of the German war against Soviet Union. All the Russians working in the civilian sector and half of those working for the German army were sent back from Poland to Germany. Hundreds of thousands of Poles were also sent to the Reich. The slave workers were now a reservoir of labour that was needed for tasks important to the war economy.

To understand why precisely the Soviet prisoners of war and their destiny at the beginning of the war were more attached to the ideology of the Nazis is Hitler’s *Weltanschauung* decisive. With the German invasion of the Soviet Union the war changed; it became a *Vernichtungskrieg*—a war of annihilation.<sup>6</sup> The ideological war against the Soviet Union was connected to the political long-term aim of the Nazis and Wehrmacht became an active participant in fulfilling these. The German ideological representations of Soviet soldiers and prisoners were characterized by the racialist term *Untermensch*.<sup>7</sup> Nazi racial theory, the ideological basis for the criminal mistreatment of the Eastern European peoples, was openly expressed in such publications as the SS pamphlet “Der Untermensch” (1942).

The advance of German armies which encircled entire Soviet divisions was so dramatic that German soldiers, who without doubt shared the anti-Slavic and anti-Bolshevik prejudices of the German society, easily took part in the roles as racial superiors that the Nazis offered them. The surrender of huge numbers of Soviet troops – 3 350 000 prisoners of war were taken in six months of 1941<sup>8</sup> – points to widespread defeatism and disaffection in the Soviet forces, even if the Germans were impressed by the stubbornness with which other units resisted. The NKVD was

instructed to imprison or even to shoot as deserters any Soviet soldiers who escaped and fell into their hands. But those who remained in German hands were no better treated. The German armed forces alone are said to have executed an estimated 600 000 Soviet Prisoners of war during the war. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, issued guidelines for the troops to be “ruthless and energetic” in their attacks on Bolsheviks and Jews.<sup>9</sup> The tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers who surrendered in June and July 1941 never imagined the fate that awaited them in German captivity. But by the late summer terrible stories began to spread among the soldiers. This was a war of extermination they soon learned. It was a war of scorched earth, mass executions, deportations and easy public slaughter. The Soviet soldiers and civilians in German occupied zones were left over to take care for their own survival.

The German army, expecting a short war, had made no proper preparations for such overwhelming numbers of prisoners. If the organization was inadequate, the German attitude was also shaped by the Nazis’ *Untermensch* propaganda: they were dealing not with human beings like themselves but with a subhuman race. An OKW directive of 8 September 1941 on the treatment of prisoners of war declared that they had forfeited every claim to be treated as an honourable enemy, and that the most ruthless measures were justified in dealing with them.<sup>10</sup>

Three orders reveal Wehrmacht’s close integration to the Nazi policies of extermination. These orders are “Barbarossa-Erlaß”, “Kommissarbefehl” and Wehrmacht’s instructions of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1941 for the German troops in Soviet Union. The first order dissolved all legal protection for both civilians and prisoners of war. The order was to shot everybody showing sign of resistance and as a result of this order, murder were legalized in the war against Soviet Union. The other order resulted in summary executions of political commissars in occupied parts of Soviet Union. The third order was a call to the German soldiers to strike hard against every attempt on resistance. With this last order the Nazi racial policy was activated by especially declaring the Asian soldiers as criminals. Many regiments in Wehrmacht were given order to kill all Jews they encountered in occupied areas. Wehrmacht were also charged with clearing out partisans in the rear, which amounted to hunting down Jews and killing them in the field or handing them over to the Einsatzgruppen. As was the case in Serbia, were the Wehrmacht killed almost all adult male Jews in retaliation for ongoing partisan attacks in the summer and fall of 1941. Jews were regarded as the “mortal enemies” of the German army and the German people.

Wehrmacht proved their ideological loyalty by accomplishing these orders. Large numbers were shot outright on the battlefield, without any pretext, in order to relieve the army of the burden they represented. Hundreds of thousands prisoners of war were forced to march until they dropped and died from exhaustion or were herded into huge improvised camps and left without food, medical aid for the wounded, shelter or sanitation. According to a German report of 19 February 1942, almost three million out of the four million prisoners taken by that date had perished.<sup>11</sup> Wehrmacht's treatment of "Asiatic" and "Untermensch" Soviet prisoners of war, in contrast to the 1.2 million prisoners they managed to take care of in the West in 1940, was their singular contribution to the Nazi race war.

Under the Barbarossa decree and commissar order, partisan fighters were shot, collective reprisals towards whole communities were ordered and Soviet political officers – the commissars – were killed even after being captured as prisoners of war. Because of this attitude and policy regarding the commissars the Nazi camp Auschwitz became involved in the conflict. In July 1941 several hundred commissars from ordinary POW camps were sent to Auschwitz. From the moment of their arrival these prisoners were treated worse than the other inmates. During the summer of 1941 the war on the Eastern Front – the war without rules – came to the camp. The murder of the Soviet commissars was a small part of the function of Auschwitz. During this period the camp primarily remained a place to oppress and instill terror into the Polish prisoners. The summer of 1941 became both a crucial time in the development of the Auschwitz camp and a decisive moment in the war against Soviet Union and the Nazi policy towards the Soviet Jews.<sup>12</sup>

From the autumn of 1941 the mass killings of the Jews was escalated. Around 2.7 million Jews were murdered in 1942. About 200 000 of them in Auschwitz, 1.65 in the Operation Reinhard camps Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, and 850 000 shot by mobile killing squads in the East. Finally there were 28 Auschwitz sub-camps in operation close to several industrial installations. By 1944 a total of more than 40 000 inmates were working as slave labourers at the various industrial plants around Upper Silesia.

Regardless of what perspective is chosen, the field of research regarding forced labourers and prisoners of war has to be attached to the orders on the liquidation of different categories within the Soviet prisoners of war. War crimes as "Endlösung", "Sonderbehandlung" and the orders of liquidation could only be implemented with the help of German military forces. Yet, Peter Steinbach claims that German soldiers did not know the orders about liquidation of Soviet prisoners of war. According to

Steinbach the reason was that the orders were not written down, and a lot of the commandants have later explained that they did not pass on the orders.<sup>13</sup> It is important that this field of research includes studies on individual level and the lower levels of the Nazi administration system. Our knowledge of the living conditions and treatment of civil forced labourers, prisoners of war and concentration camp inmates in industrial firms, in addition to the cooperation between firm management and government offices has been expanded because of research done by the Society for Business History (Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte) on forced labourers at Daimler-Benz.

The Dutch scholar Karel C. Berkhoff writes in his book *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi rule* (2004) that the historiographical debate of European societies under Nazi and communist rules has concentrated on three issues: the overall goals and policies of the authorities, the extent of social cohesion among communities and families living under the regime and the mental outlook and response of individuals to these extreme conditions. Based on this first view argues Berkhoff that the Nazi regime in the “East” was driven by the Nazi conviction that Ukraine was, or should become, a clean slate for the German people. The German nationalism combined with anti-Bolshevism, anti-Semitism and a racist view of the “Russians” resulted in terror, murder, massacre and genocide. Main target of the Nazis in Ukraine was the Jews and Roma, almost all killed in genocide. Soviet prisoners of war were killed as “Russians” in genocidal massacre and the people of Kiev subjected to deliberate starvation. These killings are specially disturbing since there does not exist any evidence that Germans in Reichskommissariat Ukraine or other place in the “East”, lost their live because they refused to carry them out.<sup>14</sup>

An important book with a personal angle on the dramatic experiences of the Nazi-occupied Ukraine is *Victims, Victors: From Nazi Occupation to the Conquest of Germany as seen by a Red Army Soldier* (2007) written by Roman Kravchenko-Berezhnov. This book represents a very important contribution to the literature of World War II in several ways. Kravchenko’s use of both a diary and his memories gives us a unique picture of a teenagers experience with the cruelty of war. He describes to us the life in Kremenets during the German occupation but manages also to describe and give a comment on the war on the Eastern front. We also get valuable information on the treatment of Soviet Prisoners of War, the mobilization of the Forced workers from Ukraine to Germany and the partisan movement. The book is in addition to this a very good source to the history of the Red Army and its soldiers.



The killing and deportation of the Jews of Kremenets is a history of horror and human suffering. Kravchenko writes that he feels awful and ashamed when his Jewish friend Frida is taken away to the prison by the Germans in august 1942. He describes how she is standing on the truck, proudly with her head held high. This occurrence gives us a brief insight in the strong emotions connected to a meaningless loss of a good friend. Kravchenko gives us a very close description of frightful experiences according to the massacre of the Jews of Kremenets. Being an eye-witness to the Germans brutal conduct in Kremenets the diary represents so much more than an ordinary journal of wartime experiences.

Kravchenko's years as a sergeant in post-war Germany provides the reader a different picture on how the Red Army soldiers behaved when they got to Germany. He writes that he never came across or even heard of any orders in the red Army to sack cities and to rape. Nor did he see evidence of Soviet atrocities of the scale suggested by other writers. This simply does not match with his personal experiences as a soldier in the Red Army. This book reveals the human suffering during World War II on the Eastern front and it represents a necessary contribution to military history. This is a very important book for those who seek knowledge about and understanding of the Soviet struggle against the German occupiers.

## **Forgetting the past**

During 1941-1945 nearly 100 000 Soviet prisoners were transported to Norway. About 90 000 of these prisoners were soldiers of the Red Army and the rest (about 9000) were so-called "Ostarbeiter". The people in these two categories were Soviet citizens who were driven into forced labour for the Germans in Norway. Among the Soviet civilians there were about 1400 women and 400 children. There were several families among the Soviet civilians and 150 Soviet children were born in captivity in Norway. Also 4500 prisoners of war from Yugoslavia and 1600 prisoners from Poland were forced to Norway. Most of the Soviet soldiers were first sent to Stettin in Germany after they were taken prisoner and then packed together on cargo boats and sent to Norway.

The Germans treated the Polish and Soviet Prisoners of war better than the Yugoslavian Prisoners of war. The German enemy image of the Polish Prisoners of war was of a more moderate character than the opinion they had of the Yugoslavian and Soviet Prisoners of war. But there were a lot of examples of German mistreatment of Polish Prisoners of war in the custody of the Gestapo and shooting of prisoners who escaped from camps in Northern Norway. 15 year old polish POW Janusz Staniak was shot by

the Germans in May 1944 in Sørfold. He was one of eight Polish Prisoners of war who were shot after they had escaped from the prison camp. His father survived the shooting but he had to see his son's death throe beside him. By pretending he was dead the father was not shot and he survived his stay as prisoner in Norway. The eight victims were buried in the mountains in Northern Norway in 1944, but the graves were later moved to Narvik in 1953.<sup>15</sup> The shooting of the eight Polish Prisoners of war is a forgotten tragedy in Norwegian Occupation history.

There were also a lot of Polish workers in Organisation Todt in Norway. Unemployment in cities like Warszawa, Lodz and Krakow, poverty and distress was some of the reasons that a lot of young Poles accepted any work offer they could receive. German propaganda and newspapers full of advertisements from Organisation Todt contribute to a lot people voluntarily joined the organisation. Another reason to join the organisation voluntarily was to avoid arrest for active resistance work in the Polish Home Army, Armia Krajowa (AK). The plan for these workers was to escape from Norway or Finland to Sweden and later get to England to join the Polish Army in the country.

The Campaigns on Balkan and Soviet Union gave the Germans a lot of new workers to Wehrmacht's extensive building plans in Norway. Soviet Prisoners were mainly used in building of railroads, main road 50, runways and fortresses along the coastline. Commander-in-chief in Norway, Falkenhorst, demanded 145 000 prisoners of war to carry trough Hitler's plan of a railroad all the way to Kirkenes in Finnmark (Northern Norway). The building of the railroad was not finished before the war ended. Wehrmacht and Organisation Todt, a half military organization that carried out different building projects for warfare in Wehrmacht's duty, both cooperated and partly struggled about the allocation of Soviet prisoners of war in Norway.

The Germans established about 480 prison-camps with Soviet prisoners of war in Norway during 1941-1945. Most of the camps were established in Northern-Norway. Size of the camps varied from a few prisoners to several thousand in the same camp. Condition and treatment of prisoners varied in the different prison camps. Personal qualities with the commander of the camp became an important factor for the prisoners destiny. The prisoner of war-administration was first established one year after the arrival of Soviet prisoners to Norway. Because of the long distance between the administration and the camps, the prisoner of war-administration got little influence on the camp commanders decisions regarding the Soviet prisoners.

General Keitel put the main focus on a reliable safety of the whole Norwegian area. Norway belonged to the OKW-area and therefore Wehrmachtbefehlshaber were responsible for the organization of the Soviet prisoners in Norway. OKW in Germany appointed the number of Soviet prisoners who should be sent to Norway. They were also in charge of the transportation of prisoners of war. Wehrmachtbefehlshaber in Norway got the responsibility for the prisoners when they arrived to Norway and he received orders directly from OKW or OKH. OKW in Berlin, by the Kommandeur der Kriegsgefangene, gave the instructions of guarding the prisoners, the division of the prisoners in different labour battalions and the allocation of prisoners effort of work. The general staff of the Army and the "Generalquartiermeister" were responsible for food-supply and accommodation regarding the prisoners. Supplies of clothes to the prisoners were carried out by "Chef der Heeresrüstung und Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres".<sup>16</sup> The prisoners in Norway who belonged to Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine were in the same way as in the OKW-and OKH-area under the High Command in Berlin.

In spite of the fact that the Soviet prisoners of war represented the nationality with the largest casualties on Norwegian soil during the war, they have not been included in the national context of Norwegian history of occupation. One reason for this absence is the prisoners destiny after the repatriation to their homeland in 1945. A total number of 87 000 Soviet citizens were repatriated from Norway, and until the beginning of the 1990s there was almost no contact between Norwegians and former Soviet prisoners. After the repatriation a lot of western researchers asked questions about Stalin and his treatment of the returned former prisoners. Eyewitnesses could tell about shooting and bad treatment of the repatriated. Because of this there was established a myth about their destiny and a lot of researchers claimed that all prisoners were forced into working camps in northern Russia or killed. Russian researchers have recently presented a different picture. They claim that 58 % of the former prisoners of war were sent home and only 14 % to working battalions.<sup>17</sup> This material is based on primary sources in Russian archives, but still there is a lot of discussion about these numbers in Russia today.

The politics of memory is activities with the aim of a certain collective memory, and the motivations for this activity are often controlled by interests of different parts. The authorities are the main part of this politic and there are several fields of expression. Such fields are school, research and cultural celebrations. This politic activity has hardly included the Soviet prisoners of war in these fields. Several schoolbooks do not mention the Soviet prisoners and by cultural celebrations until the 1990s

there were mainly the Norwegian victims of the war that were remembered. On one hand the subject is something strange and forgotten in the Norwegian history of occupation, but on the other hand this is something familiar through all the local historical knowledge both orally and written. But this knowledge is not used in a broader perspective and the result is a limited memory. There is no space for a living memory about the Soviet prisoners of war on a national level in the Norwegian community. Graveyards of the war are places with a certain value of symbolic. The anonymity at military graveyards does not only remind us of the one soldier that died, But about the bloodbath from the war Establishment and maintenance of war monuments and memorials dedicated to soviet prisoners of war that died on Norwegian soil are dependent on local initiative. Absence of memorials or no interest in such gives us an evident signal on the communities will to remember the destiny of other nationalities in Norway during the Second World War.

## **The book**

This book's main goal is to make a contribution to the strengthening of studies on prisoners of war and forced labour. The book consists of papers from the Falstad symposium "Prisoners of War and Forced Labour – histories of War and Occupation". The symposium was held at the Falstad Centre on November 20-21, 2008. Topics of the symposium included Prisoners of war, which are a combatant who is imprisoned by an enemy power during or immediately after an armed conflict. Prisoners in concentration and extermination camps, people imprisoned of political or racial causes. Forced labour, which are civilians forced to migrate or forced to work for the Germans.

The contributions in the book represent a broadly perspective with researchers from USA, Poland, Austria, Israel, Russia, Finland, England and Norway. The introduction gives a brief overview of how different European countries are dealing with the topic of overcoming the past and the state of research in some of these countries.

Thomas Earl Porter describes in his paper the fate of Soviet prisoners of war as a forgotten genocide. The Soviet army lost at least 10 million men during World War II, with many simply being executed after their capture. 3.3 million men, or well over one-third of the sum total, would perish in captivity. This is the second largest group after the Jews. This paper will look at the horrific experiences of the Soviet soldiers upon their capture, as well as the eventual decision to first exploit them as labour resources before their murder. Over 5.7 million men were captured during

the war, precious few made it back home to Russia again. Once they were liberated by the Red Army, however, they were often arrested as spies and sentenced to ten years of hard labour, whereupon they were exiled to the mines and lumber camps of the Gulag.

Piotr Setkiewicz gives us a presentation of his book about the IG Farben works at Auschwitz 1941-1945. Throughout the Monowitz IG factory's existence Germans constituted a minority in the workforce. Apart from Poles, KL Auschwitz inmates and POWs, by February 1943 it also employed 3,628 foreign civilian workers. Today it is difficult to assess how effective the IG factory workforce was. Taking into account the very considerable ethnic differences and the fact that most of those employed had an unwilling if not hostile attitude towards their employers, one may even consider it remarkable that at least some of the planned building projects were eventually realised. On the one hand this is evidence that the factory managers were very efficient organisers, whereas on the other hand it also bears testimony as the harsh and ruthless a discipline they imposed on prisoners and civilian workers.

Peter Ruggenthaler analyzes the utilization of slave labour in the Danube and Alpine *Gaue* in Austria. Roughly one million foreign workers became cogs in the economic machinery of present-day Austria; roughly 580,000 were civilian forced labourers, more than 300,000 were prisoners of war, and 200,000 were inmates of concentration camps, above all of the one in Mauthausen; one in two did not survive the murderous regime there. It has to be borne in mind that the demarcation lines that separated these categories from one another were by no means clear: there were numerous prisoners of war who were yoked to the forced labor regime of concentration camps or managed the transition to the status of civilian workers, just as there were civilian workers who were punished for crimes they had committed by being sent to a work camp or a concentration camp. To these numbers must be added the 55,000 Hungarian Jews who were deported in 1944 as forced laborers to the eastern regions of Austria, where they worked on the construction of the so-called *Südostwall*, a line of defensive fortifications.

Michele Levy looks in her article on the *Ustasha* Genocide against Serbs: 1941-1945 While several thousand Serbs perished in Norway's prisoners of war camps, the Ustasha-run *Nezavisna Drzhava Hrvatska* (the NDH, Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet government that included in its territory not only Croatia, but most of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well) oversaw the deaths of perhaps four hundred thousand Serbs through massacre and a network of concentration camps that included the fourth largest in Europe, Jasenovac. But as the title of

Marco Rivelli's 1978 text, *Une Génocide Occulté*, makes clear, this genocide against Serbs has remained largely unknown. Of the principal external actors, post-war German attention focused on the Holocaust. Italy still resists confronting its less than pristine role in the Balkans, so that Rivelli's work, completed in 1978, found publication there only in 1999. The Vatican has not yet released its documents on the subject. Within Yugoslavia, Ustasha perpetrators tried to conceal their crimes as Tito came to power, and after executing those Chetniks and Ustashe he immediately discovered, Tito ordered all war memories buried for the sake of "brotherhood and unity." The West, meanwhile, bankrolled prominent Ustasha refugees reborn as anti-Communist agents, while the Balkans barely grazed the periphery of the American popular consciousness until Yugoslavia imploded.

Edmund Nowak looks at the fate of Polish prisoners of war in two totalitarian systems in years 1939-1945. He points out that in Polish historiography the fate of Polish captives in German and Soviet captivity during the Second World War is quite well elaborated. However there is a lack of a synthesis covering the problem area of both Prisoner-of-War systems. In June 1940 the German military authorities started to release Polish POWs – privates and officers. Around 250 000 – 300 000 Polish soldiers got the status of civilian laborers. They were forced to work in German industry and agriculture. In the middle of 1944 in POW camps in Germany there were still around 57 000 Polish POWs. Among them there were around 40 000 privates and non-commissioned officers and around 18 000 officers. We can estimate that around 10 000 Polish POWs died in Germany captivity.

In November 1939 three special camps for officers and so-called special category POWs were created in Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostaszków. There were around 15,000 regular army and army reserve officers. Against international conventions, laws and customs of war, those camps were subordinated to the political police, meaning NKWD. On 5 March 1940 the highest authority of the Soviet Union decided to liquidate the three camps. All POWs were murdered and buried together in the mass graves in the towns of Katyń, Charków and Miednoje (apart from 440 people). The case was disguised and Stalin consequently denied murder of Polish officers. It was in spring 1943 when Germans announced that they had found the mass graves of Polish officers in Katyń near Smoleńsk and they accused Soviets of murdering them. Soon, the case of Katyń became the pretext for the rupture of diplomatic relations with Polish government-in-exile by the Soviet government.

Isaac Hershkowitz analyzes the Rabbinic Nazi-Camps Survivors and the Call for a Religious Protection of Human Prerogatives. In the midst of World War II, numerous Jewish communities throughout Europe were liquidated in entity. Thousands of others were severely impaired, and the survivors were expelled from their homes and livelihoods. In this destructive atmosphere, rabbinic leading figures (especially Rabbi Yisachar Shlomo Teichtal of Slovakia and Rabbi Shimeon Efrati of Poland) had started the cultural, religious, and human rehabilitation of the scarred remainders. Several themes of stance had developed in post-holocaust rabbinic literature, such as eschatological outlooks, mystical havens and others. I wish to concentrate in a unique aspect of the rabbinic treatises, the concept of guarding human rights as a religious act of striving to an allegiance with the Lord. Moreover, in the light of the ancient principal of "Imitatio Dei", the Jewish and universal adherents are obligated to give space for other "images of God", and are responsible for the feasibility of the other's life and dignity.

Marina Panikar presents in her article a comparative perspective on Soviet prisoners of war in Norway and Foreign prisoners of war in The European North of Russia during the Second World War. Panikar emphasizes that it is necessary to study the history of the Soviet prisoners of war in the Third Reich and the foreign prisoners of war in the USSR because it enables one to overcome the totalitarian past of both states. The second reason is that the USSR and the Third Reich are these two countries with the biggest human losses in the Second World war the prisoners of war including. Both countries did pledge themselves to observe the Geneva Convention of 1929 «About the treatment with prisoners of war»: Germany did sign the Convention, and the government of the USSR did approve « The regulations about prisoners of war» on July, 1st, 1941, but it demanded to observe the carrying out of this Convention unilaterally. However this Convention wasn't used as the basis for observing the human rights of captured military men of the USSR and the Werhmaht.

Lars Westerlund gives a presentation of German penal camps in Finland, 1941-1944. Several penal camps for German soldiers operated in the territory of the German army AOK 20 in 1941-1944. Westerlund examine the use of these camps, but he also briefly touches upon the penal camps for German soldiers in Norway and for Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) on Finnish territory. The soldiers placed in field penal battalions and camps were gathered from prisons and other punitive facilities. They were, according to German law, condemned criminals, who were intended to be used for clearing mines, collecting the bodies of the fallen from the

field, and for building bunkers and other fortifications. The convicts of Strafgefangenlager Papenburg, Kommando Nord were known in Germany and Norway as the "marsh soldiers" (Moorsoldaten, myrsoldater), due to the fact that before being transferred north, many of them had been used for drainage work in the marsh areas of Emsland, in North-East Germany. Their prisoner cards were stamped with the words *Rückkehr nach Deutschland unerwünscht* (Return to Germany not desired).

Stephen Tyas looks at escapes of Allied prisoners of war and forced labourers from German captivity. The Germans set up a vast network on which they could call to contain and re-capture escapers. The German criminal police (Kripo) handled most re-capture efforts. Their first response was to send coded radio messages to likely police offices providing details of the escapers, how travelling, and possible arrival times. When civilians (Jews and forced labourers) escaped from concentration camps the German security police (Gestapo) swung into similar action. During the Second World War some decoded radio messages originating in German-occupied Europe were intercepted and decoded by British Intelligence. Several hundred such messages report escape attempts, many more escapes than is generally realised. Those escapers were French and Russian, Dutch and Poles, British and American. Jews escaped from camps in Poland and Germany. Not everyone was recaptured. Tyas explores these escapes against what is known, providing a backdrop to show "Fortress Europe" did leak. As the Second World War progressed more people escaped from German captivity. How the Germans devoted serious manpower to re-capture escapers, manpower that changed as the war progressed from military and police personnel to the Hitler Youth and senior citizens of the Volkssturm.

Marek Jasinski and Lars F. Stenvik gives a presentation of what they calls "landscape of evil". They emphasizes that Today, few physical traces of Nazi camps are still visible within the present Norwegian cultural landscape and both knowledge and awareness of these relics are scarce among the general public in Norway. The situation becomes even more urgent as the last generation of direct witnesses to the events of 1940-1945 dies out and as local oral traditions on the subject become weaker and weaker. At the end of the war, Nazi authorities and troops went to great lengths to destroy archives and other documentation that described their camps in Norway and to a large degree this succeeded. The first post-war Norwegian generations also attempted to erase the physical remains left behind by the hated regime from their landscapes. Therefore a large majority of Nazi camps in Norway have never been documented as physical structures. Nor are there clearly defined or effective strategies in



place to guide the management and preservation of these sites within the framework of the Norwegian Cultural Management System. Against this backdrop, it seems clear that archaeological survey methods and techniques will have a key role to play in research aimed at increasing our knowledge and understanding of this national heritage category, so that responsible and sustainable management decisions and strategies can be formed, both for present and future generations.

Dmitri Frolov analyzes Finnish and Soviet prisoners of war, Specifics of Custody in his article. The Soviet Union and Finland waged two wars against each other, the Winter War (1939-1940) and the Continuation War (1941-1944). The answer to the question of winners and losers of these wars admits several interpretations, especially since both countries have their own views on the matter. Researching the history of Soviet and Finnish prisoners of war, one can point out some specific features, for example, the division of the Soviet POWs in Finland due to their nationalities. In the mostly privilege position were so-called closely related to Finland – Ingrian Finns, Karelians and other Finno-Ugrian nationalities. Moreover, we can also mention the interchange of the POWs between Finland and Germany. First of all, Finland is the only country against which the USSR waged two wars in the 1940s. This means that the Soviet Union had experience with Finnish prisoners of war in UPVI camps. Moreover, the Soviet officials received numerous instructions and laws regarding relations between the USSR and the POWs already in 1939-1940. Most of the Soviet regulations that the USSR applied in dealing with German, Italian and Hungarian prisoners of war in Soviet custody in 1941-1945 were first tested on Finnish POWs during the Winter War. Secondly, during the Winter War the Soviet propaganda machine failed to create the “image of the enemy”. Initially, the Finns were not seen as fascists, but as unfortunate victims of the evil Helsinki government, or as “White Finns”

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Browning, Christopher R.: *The Path to Genocide*. Cambridge 1992: ix.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert, Ulrich: *Hitlers foreign workers. Enforced foreign labour in Germany under the third Reich*. Cambridge 1997.

Herbert, 1997: 383.

<sup>4</sup> Mazower, Mark: *Dark Continent*. London 1999: 171.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert, Ulrich: *Hitlers foreign workers. Enforced foreign labour in Germany under the third Reich*. Cambridge 1997: 141.

<sup>6</sup> Mazower, 1999: 171.

- <sup>7</sup> Andreyev, Catherine: *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement*. Cambridge 1987: 29-30.
- <sup>8</sup> Herbert, 1997: 141.
- <sup>9</sup> Overy, Richard: *Russia's War*. London 1997: 84.
- <sup>10</sup> BA/MA, RH/20/20/204, Anordnungen für die Behandlung sowjetischer Kr.Gef.in allen Kriegsgefangenenlagern, Anlage zu Tagebuch-Nr.3058/41 geheim v.8.9 1941.
- <sup>11</sup> Jackson, Robert H: *The Nürnberg Case*. New York 1971: 74.
- <sup>12</sup> Rees, Laurence: *Auschwitz. The Nazis and the "Final solution"*. London 2005: 72-77.
- <sup>13</sup> Steinbach, Peter: "Krieg, Verbrechen, Widerstand", i Karl Heinrich Pohl (Hg.) *Wehrmacht und Vernichtungspolitik*. Göttingen 1999: 20.
- <sup>14</sup> Berkhoff, Karel C.: *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi rule*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 2005.
- <sup>15</sup> Krigsminner Saltdal-Fauske-Sørfold-Hamarøy-Steigen. Red: F. Einset, K. Hagen og A. S. Ellefsen.
- <sup>16</sup> RA, DOBN, eske 0008. 4.9.1945.
- <sup>17</sup> Zemskov, V.N: "K voprosu o repatriacii sovetskikh graždan 1941-1955." ("Problem with repatriation of the Soviet Citizens 1944-1951"), i *Istoriya SSSR*, Nr.4/1990.

## Works cited

- Andreyev, Catherine: *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement*. Cambridge 1987.
- Berkhoff, Karel C.: *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi rule*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 2005.
- Browning, Christopher R.: *The Path to Genocide*. Cambridge 1992.
- Herbert, Ulrich: *Hitlers foreign workers. Enforced foreign labour in Germany under the third Reich*. Cambridge 1997.
- Jackson, Robert H: *The Nürnberg Case*. New York 1971.
- Mazower, Mark: *Dark Continent*. London 1999.
- Overy, Richard: *Russia's War*. London 1997.
- Rees, Laurence: *Auschwitz. The Nazis and the "Final solution"*. London 2005.
- Steinbach, Peter: "Krieg, Verbrechen, Widerstand", i Karl Heinrich Pohl (Hg.) *Wehrmacht und Vernichtungspolitik*. Göttingen 1999
- Zemskov, V.N: "K voprosu o repatriacii sovetskikh graždan 1941-1955." ("Problem with repatriation of the Soviet Citizens 1944-1951"), i *Istoriya SSSR*, Nr.4/1990

# CHAPTER ONE

## FORGOTTEN GENOCIDE: THE FATE OF SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR

### THOMAS EARL PORTER

The sheer enormity of Soviet losses at the hands of German forces during the Second World War staggers the mind. During the immediate post-war period, when Stalin did not want the West to know just how badly the Soviet Union had been mauled or the fact that far more Soviet soldiers had died than German ones (up to three times as many) the *total* number of Soviet dead was first listed at 7 million. Western estimates varied from 10 to 15 million and it was only during the Khrushchev era that the true scale of the disaster was revealed and the more accurate figure of 20 million dead was generally accepted.<sup>1</sup> Of these, only half were soldiers as at least 10 million civilians are thought to have died under German occupation; up to 2 million Russian civilians might have been worked to death as slave laborers in Nazi Germany.<sup>2</sup>

Red Army records are not particularly accurate but the total number of its dead in combat, hospital, or captivity was at least 8 million and possibly as high as 9 million. An exhaustive investigation by M. Ellman and S. Maksudov posits the total as 8,668,000.<sup>3</sup> Between 5 and 6 million were captured, with many simply being executed after their surrender. 3.3 million men, or well over one third of the total number of soldiers killed, would perish in Nazi captivity. Stalin said the death of one person is a tragedy, whereas the death of millions is but a statistic. The true horror of Hitler's policies are almost incomprehensible to our minds, but our duty as scholars is to attempt to do so; to understand the motives behind the Nazi phenomenon and the reason why so many participated in its implementation. Numbers matter, and more important, the identities and faces behind each and every one of these numbers matter.

Most accounts of the Holocaust, of course, focus upon its principal victims, the Jews. Approximately 5.8 million of them were murdered. In the popular mind, the figure of six million is stamped as the sum total of

the Nazi atrocity. This is literally only half the story, as millions more people perished in the camps, including Slavs, Gypsies, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses. It is imperative that we honor the memory of *all* the victims of Nazi persecution by exploring these "forgotten" genocides of the Holocaust. This paper will address the fate of Soviet prisoners of war, chronicling not only the horrors and atrocities they suffered in German captivity but also the lesser known experiences of the many repatriated soldiers who, upon liberation by their Red Army comrades in 1945, were shipped directly to the *GULag* (*Glavnoe upravleniie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei*, or Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps) for up to another decade of incarceration by their own government.

I should pause here to mention that not all the men captured who were executed by the Nazis or sent to the camps were in military service. While most scholars are familiar with the "commissar" order which called for all communists and Jews (of course, in the Nazi *Weltanschauung* this was assumed to be essentially the same thing) to be summarily shot after interrogation; even males not in uniform between the ages of 15 and 65 were also liable to be executed or sent to the camps as partisans. But many of the Red Army soldiers who did lay down their arms, perhaps hundreds of thousands, (according to Ward Churchill in his *A Little Matter of Genocide* perhaps even as many as a million men), were turned over to the *SS* and summarily executed or simply shot outright.<sup>4</sup> Jurgen Forster agrees that the documentary evidence proves that at least half a million prisoners were handed over to the *SS* in the period between June 1941 and May 1943; Christian Streit has asserted that all of these prisoners were simply shot, but Forster is not as certain. It must be kept in mind, however, that since the exhibition *The German Army and Genocide* in Hamburg in 1995 the role that the *Wehrmacht* played in the Holocaust has been extensively researched and documented by many scholars, including Forster who found that in one month the 707th Infantry division, deployed in Belarus, shot 10,431 captives (including soldiers, partisans, and civilians) out of a total of 10,940 while suffering only two dead themselves.<sup>5</sup> So it was not only the *SS* and *Waffen SS* that murdered captured Soviets, and we can safely assume that a very large percentage of prisoners were simply shot out of hand by regular troops.

Even if they were not summarily executed, the prisoners were forced to walk hundreds of miles to a *Dulag* (*Durchlager*), or transit camp, where they were kept in barbaric conditions before being transferred to their final destinations. It was the general policy of the *Wehrmacht* in the East (more on this distinction later) that prisoners were not to be conveyed in trucks or trains for fear of their contaminating them. One German officer noted how

these columns of soldiers, many of them wounded (and medical assistance was also proscribed by policy) "...make an idiotic impression like herds of animals." Of course, a large number of these men, wounded, left entirely without shelter, not given food or water on a regular basis, etc. simply fell by the wayside. They were then executed. The aforementioned German officer thought this unfortunate, as "...it was done on the road, even in towns...."<sup>6</sup>

One soldier, Nikolai Obrynba, who had been captured at Vitebsk, remembered the horrific details of the march:

It was the fourth day of our march toward Smolensk. We spent the nights in specially furnished pens, enclosed by barbed wire and guard towers with machine gunners, who illuminated us with flares through the entire night. The tail of the column, which stretched from hill to hill, disappeared into the horizon. Whenever we halted, thousands of those dying from hunger and cold remained or they collapsed as we marched along. Those still alive were finished off by soldiers wielding submachine guns. A guard would kick a fallen prisoner and, if he could not get up in time, fired his gun. I watched with horror as they reduced healthy people to a state of complete helplessness and death.<sup>7</sup>

Another prisoner, Leonid Volynsky, also remembered these arbitrary shootings: "an exhausted prisoner would be sat at the side of the road, an escort would approach on his horse and lash out with his whip. The prisoner would continue sitting, with his head down. Then the escort would take a carbine from his saddle or a pistol from his holster."

At his war crimes trial in Nuremburg, General Jodl attempted to explain away these atrocities by saying that the only prisoners shot were "...not those that could not, but those that did not want to walk."

Those that survived these death marches and reached the camps found hell on earth. "There were no barracks or permanent housing. The camps were simply open areas fenced off with barbed wire. The prisoners had to lie in the sun, then in mud, and in the fall - with temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees centigrade - faced the possibility of freezing to death."<sup>8</sup> The commandant of *Stalag* 318, Colonel Falkenberg noted how "these cursed *untermenschen* have been observed eating grass, flowers and raw potatoes. Once they can't find anything edible in the camp they turn to cannibalism." Alexander Werth, in his magisterial work *Russia at War*, quotes one Hungarian officer's description: "Behind wire there were tens of thousands of prisoners. Many were on the point of expiring. Few could stand on their feet. Their faces were dried up and their eyes sunk deep into

their sockets. Hundreds were dying every day, and those who had any strength left dumped them in a vast pit."<sup>9</sup>

Of course, that would indeed sometimes be only after their comrades had consumed their flesh. Cannibalism was fairly common in the camps. Goering joked about this, telling one diplomat that "in the camps for [Soviet] prisoners of war, after having eaten everything possible, including the soles of their boots, they have begun to eat each other, and what is more serious, have also eaten a German sentry."<sup>10</sup> In another camp a German witness stated that the prisoners "whined and groveled before us. They were human beings in whom there was no longer a trace of anything human." When a dead dog was thrown into the compound, "...the Russians would fall on the animal and tear it to pieces with their bare hands...the intestines they'd stuff in their pockets...." One guard, Xavier Dorsch, noted that at the camp he helped guard in Minsk, "the problem of feeding the prisoners being unsolvable, they have largely been without nourishment for six to eight days and are almost deranged in their need for sustenance." Another guard, Johannes Gutschmidt, noted in his diary that "there was nothing to eat, not even any water. Many died. Finally, they gave them dry macaroni and they fought over it." A prisoner named Viktor Yermolayev, confirms that the Germans "began throwing us packets of semolina, dehydrated semolina, they threw them to us...some caught them...and others couldn't. We fell on it like wolves!"

The best literary description of the conditions faced by the prisoners is contained in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's epic masterpiece *The Gulag Archipelago*. He wrote:

A multitude of bonfires; and around the bonfires, beings who had once been Russian officers but had now become beastlike creatures who gnawed the bones of dead horses, who baked patties from potato rinds, who smoked manure and were all swarming with lice. Not all these two-legged creatures had died as yet. Not all of them had lost the capacity for intelligible speech, and one could see in the crimson reflections of the bonfires how a belated understanding was dawning on those faces which were descending to the Neanderthal.<sup>11</sup>

As Alexander Dallin wrote in his groundbreaking *German Rule in Russia*, "German policy had caused, or at the very least had tolerated the degradation of the prisoners - and then held it up to its own people as something to be reviled, as something typical of a sub-human who could never be like Western man."

At least 2 million Soviet prisoners of war died in captivity during the first six months of the war. Daniel Goldhagen, in his *Hitler's Willing*