

Hitler's Army?

An analysis of historical works that deal with the question
of the level of commitment within Germany's
Armed Forces during WWII to
the principles of National Socialism.

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Instruments of a Barbarous Policy

Historical assumptions are tenuous. As time passes new evidence often comes to light that prompts those examining the historical conclusions of the past to re-evaluate the accepted wisdom of previous ages and to consider the possibility that the original assumptions were based on something other than historical fact.

If the practice of coming to a conclusion about a particular historical issue could be performed solely in an academic vacuum, there would probably be few consequences from the many times when historians and academics get it wrong.

Sadly we know that this is not the case. Often times, those ^{who} ~~that~~ are not enamored of the study of history will claim that the discipline has no real practical application or relevance to present-day events.

The problem with this analysis is that it ignores the fact that those living in the present often form their opinions and attitudes on what are perceived by them to be the credible conclusions of those who have come before. In addition, those in power, not just in the political realm, but in other areas of society as well, often rely on the settled conclusions of the past to craft and develop new policies for the future. Sometimes this can have positive results. The politician who buys into the idea that Franklin Roosevelt's economic policies played a major role in solving the problems brought about by the Great Depression and uses similar methods to ameliorate the effects of a present day economic downturn is using the settled notions of the past to deal with a current problem. On the downside, the same politician can also make the mistake of falling back

on an accepted historical falsehood to deny a group of individuals their rights or to achieve some opportunistic end.

This is why it is so important for historians to do their homework. When historical conclusions are developed not to serve the cause of truth but to achieve some political, economic, or social end, people can suffer, and the mistaken assumptions of the past not only become gospel but have the potential to serve as the foundation for further oppression.

An excellent example of problems that can ensue from inaccurate historical conclusions is the work of the historian Ulrich B. Phillips in the 1930s on the alleged true nature of American slavery. His work *American Negro Slavery* was seen as being *so comprehensive in its scholarship, so exacting... that it succeeded in neutralizing almost every aspect of the anti-slavery tradition...It (the book) minimized the severity of American slavery and extolled its civilizing and Christianizing functions...The overall effect was a verification of the "plantation myth and a confirmation of the "Sambo" image of the slave.* (1) In short, allowing society to draw the wrong conclusions on historical questions can have devastating consequences.

why italics?

This paper will attempt to examine an historical investigation into one of these controversial issues, namely, how much of an effect did National Socialism have on elements of the German Army or as it was more formally known, the Wehrmacht, during WWII? Our main point of reference in this effort will be the 1992 book on the subject, *Hitler's Army* by Omar Bartov (2). In addition to Bartov's book, we will explore other works on the subject that both agree and disagree with Bartov's premise that the members of the Wehrmacht were by and large the devoted servants of National Socialism.

As was the case with Professor Phillips, the level of devotion of the main wing of Germany's Army to Hitler and the principles of National Socialism I are not merely an academic/historical questions. If, as many have claimed, the majority of both the leaders and the rank and file that made up The Wehrmacht were simply military professionals doing their jobs, then a large portion of the German Nation during the war can be seen in a different and perhaps more positive light from those individuals who were responsible for some of the most unspeakable crimes ever committed against humanity. In addition, If the Wermacht were soldiers first and Nazi's second (if at all), one could possibly conclude as some historians have about the Confederate Army during America's Civil War, that the soldiers of the Wehrmacht were individuals who were fighting only for their homeland and are conceivably worthy of respect on some level for their devotion to duty.

Conversely, if those who served in the Wermacht were truly devoted disciples of Herr Hitler, both in theory and in practice, one can make the case that the commitment of Germany's armed forces to National Socialism was for all intents and purposes, pervasive, national in scope and not limited to certain segments of society.

Bartov, through his research of the subject is convinced that the truth regarding the issue is much closer to the latter analysis rather than the former. His premise revolves around several basic factors, such as the destruction of the primary group (or in laymen's terms, the unit cohesion of the Werhmacht late in the war), the demodernization of the German Army, and the lack of the Wehrmacht's military success on the Eastern Front. These factors, in Bartov's opinion, were the driving forces that transformed the Wehrmacht from a reluctant participant in many of the atrocities that occurred early in the war to an unabashed supporter of Herr Hitler and everything that his twisted mind stood for. In short, in Bartov's mind, the Wehrmacht had truly become "Hitler's Army" by war's end. (3)

Bartov uses new evidence, previous research and sources such as letters from officers and enlisted men back to their loved ones in Germany to explain *how ordinary men can be made into... brutalized instruments of a barbarous policy and devoted believers in a murderous ideology.*

We will explore Bartov's methodology and historical analysis later; however, before we explore his findings any further, it is imperative that we examine other sources that shed light on the issue and in many cases take a position antithetical to that of Bartov and his views on the subject.

A Criminal Organization?

The debate on the Wehrmacht's level of commitment to Hitler and the level of its involvement in Nazi atrocities is not new. Many Germans have long clung to the notion that the aforementioned atrocities were not the work of the army but of Hitler's elite SS and fanatical death squads (F).

Credible historical evidence that portrays the Wehrmacht not as noble soldiers, but as the willing accomplices in the Third Reich's crimes against humanity has not always been well received. A 1995 exhibit "Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941-1944," postulated that the German Army was a criminal organization, and that the majority of its soldiers had engaged in criminal activity. The exhibition, which supported its thesis with hundreds of shocking photographs and numerous documents, provoked fierce debate in Germany in 1995 and was accompanied by bomb attacks, court cases, demonstrations, and street fights. (5)

The debate over the Wehrmacht's involvement in the atrocities of the Third Reich has not been restricted to art exhibits. As recent as 1997 a debate on in the Bundestag on the annual report of the Defense Commissioner included the remarks of one Deputy Breuer of the Christian Democratic Party who rejected the defamation of the Wehrmacht as a criminal organization, stating that "most Wehrmacht soldiers were shamelessly abused by Hitler. (6)

Also in 1997 during an Austrian television interview on his new book, *The Answer* former Austrian President Kurt Waldheim weighed in on the issue. Waldheim has long since been discredited, but he retains some credibility with certain groups and probably speaks for many on the issue of the Wehrmacht's complicity with Hitler.

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *You also write in your book in detail about your time in the German Wehrmacht. A Wehrmacht exhibition, to which much attention was paid, was recently shown in Vienna. Did you see it?*

[Waldheim] *No.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *Why not? Were you not interested in it?*

[Waldheim] *I had so many other things to do and I knew the Wehrmacht.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *For people born after the war, the exhibition was shocking because it shows how, in its operations in the east and in the Balkans, the Wehrmacht was involved in the destruction of the Jews directly and in the front line. You, however, present the Wehrmacht in a very friendly way as an organization with many anti-Nazis, almost as some kind of refuge for members of the opposition. Is that not a contradiction?*

[Waldheim] *The deportation of the Jews and their persecution is one of the greatest tragedies in world history. I am the first to deplore this deeply and to be shocked by it. But we did not know about it. I was not aware of the extent of these persecutions of the Jews, in general during my whole war service. Only after the war did I learn of the full extent of the holocaust.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *However, the Wehrmacht provided the logistics for the deportations and there were so-called commissioner's orders of the Supreme Wehrmacht Command, which were called "expiation orders" in the Balkans and were directly aimed at the destruction of Jews. You were an intelligence officer...*

[Waldheim] *I never saw any such orders.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *They did not pass across your desk?*

[Waldheim] *No. If such orders were given in Russia or elsewhere, I am shocked and deeply deplore them because I think that nothing is more terrible than to persecute people. If such orders existed, they were criminal.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *But then the Wehrmacht was waging a criminal war.*

[Waldheim] *No war is good. In our time, we can only do one thing: to help to see to it that such a war will not be repeated that there will be no war at all.*

[Hoffmann-Ostenhof] *Is there any difference between Hitler's war and other wars?*

[Waldheim] *I would say that every war is a terrible experience. (7)*

The comments of Waldheim regarding his experiences as a Wehrmacht officer in WWII and the outrage shown by certain segments of German society regarding the issue of the German Army's level of involvement in Nazi Terror, leave one to wonder what is behind these attitudes. One must ask the question, could Bartov be wrong in his assertions regarding "Hitler's Army"? Is there historical evidence to show that Waldheim and not Bartov is more on target regarding the true nature of the Wehrmacht during WWII.

One of the major types of sources that argue against Bartov's premise are the many personal memoirs by individuals who served in Hitler's army. Many of these personal accounts directly

assert that the Wehrmacht has been given a raw deal by those who have studied the war. A good example is the work *Wehrmacht Diary, The Story of Siegfried Knappe (1936-1999)* by Wolfgang Cooper (8). Cooper claims that Knappe's life offers an introspective and unique look at the inner workings of the German Armed Forces during WWII. (9). By telling the story of the aforementioned Knappe, a Wehrmacht officer, ^{Cooper?} sets out to provide an accurate view of what it must have been like to serve in the German Army during this time.

Cooper however, goes further. He also dedicates the book to Knappe and his fellow comrades *—men who have, at times, been portrayed in an unjust manner by the media and historical revisionist* (10). The liner notes also claim *that in the wake of “German bashing” in recent years by American and foreign media, the book ...offers a detailed look on how post war Germany and the men who served in the Wehrmacht should be viewed by historians as well as the general public.* (11)

It should be noted that *Wehrmacht Diary* does not seek to defend the Third Reich. The book notes in its prologue that the combined efforts of the Allied nations in overcoming the Axis powers remain one of the greatest victories for human rights and freedom since the beginning of man. The book also has no argument with the conclusion that of Herr Hitler and the Third Reich were guilty of unspeakable acts. Rather the book's purpose is to provide some insight into what life was like during the war for the average German soldier. Cooper notes that with the exception of the films *Das Boot* and the *Iron Cross*, this story has never been told, and Cooper's hope is that Knappe's story will add to this body of knowledge. (12)

Cooper offers any number of examples to show the “human” side of Knappe; the most illustrative describes an incident where the officer mistakenly wanders into a room and encounters an enlisted man slapping a Jewish prisoner. Cooper relates how Knappe ordered the

individual to stop and quotes him as saying “ I don’t care what he is or who he is. As long as you are under my command you will not mistreat anybody. No one who expects to call himself a German soldier will behave in such a way.”(13)

Cooper is concerned with ensuring that historians studying the events of the Second World War should take a fair and balanced approach to issues regarding the German Army. Through the personal experiences of his subject, Cooper hopes to confirm the idea that Knappe, like many members of the Wehrmacht, was a decent man, a loyal father and husband and a good and dutiful soldier. (14) Cooper has no quarrel with those who despise Hitler and the evil he brought about, but he is of the opinion that due to philosophical differences on moral and international political issues, there were major tensions between the regular German Army and the Nazi Party and that these differences played a role in the way the Wehrmacht conducted its business. (15)

Cooper ends his tribute to the misunderstood German soldier by providing an explanation not only for the Wehrmacht’s behavior during the war, but for the German nation at large. *Hitler’s National Socialist platform was made up of wildly different planks incoherently stolen from the left and the right; hatred of the old German Social Order, the promise to overturn the Versailles Treaty, anti-Bolshevism, a cry for racial purity, anti-Semitism. Most Germans believed in some of these causes but very few believed in them all of them. But they were all bound together into a single package by the party. This allowed postwar Germans to plead with sincerity, “ I believed in an anti-Bolshevist State and re-conquering territories that were lost after the First WWI. But I never agreed with government controlled trade unions or with killing all the Jews, so I was never really a Nazi. (16)*

For Cooper then, it is incorrect to view the Germans who fought the Second World War as solely as Nazis. His analysis urges one to focus on the fact that the war was fought by individuals, and that many of those who lived in and fought for the Third Reich were not in sympathy with Hitler, especially the members of the Heer. To his way of thinking, the Wehrmacht was simply the German Army, not as Bartov claimed, Hitler's Army. In addition to works that take the direct approach on the subject, there are others that have different historical goals but nonetheless offer evidence that the Wehrmacht was on a different philosophical wavelength than the leadership of the Third Reich.

One of the more intriguing works along these lines is the book, *The Illusion, Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Army*, by the German journalist and historian Jurgen Thorwold. (17) Thorwold's book outlines the efforts of senior level Wehrmacht officers to utilize Soviet soldiers who were disillusioned with Stalin's regime to fight on the German side. In the beginning the attempts to form these units were a well-kept secret for fear that Hitler who was categorically opposed to any form of participation of Soviet citizens in the war against Russia would become aware of their efforts. (18) In time, Hitler did find out about the existence of the units; however, he was forced to live with the situation due to the dire situation on the Eastern Front. (19)

Thorwold claims one General ^{Reinhard ?} Richard Gehlen, worked with the Wehrmacht leadership on the Eastern Front to form and equip a Russian liberation army to fight on the German side. (20) Many units in the army had already, on their own initiative, used Soviet deserters, prisoners and volunteers in support roles. The use of locals or Hiwi (short for Hilfswillge) to support the Wehrmacht as sentries, drivers and store keepers was one thing, but the use of these same kinds of individuals to perform in actual combat roles for the Reich was quite another. (21)

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These efforts eventually resulted in efforts to utilize the talents of a General Andrey Vlasov to recruit a Soviet force. Vlasov had been captured on the Volkhov front in June of 1942 and in time became the prime candidate to head up the "Russian Army of Liberation." Acting on Hitler's orders, Field Marshall Kiefl forbade the presentation of any kind of proposal on the subject of General Vlasov and the formation of Russian units to fight on the German side. Amazingly, however, these orders were ignored and in December of 1942, without authorization from Berlin, the Wehrmacht in direct contradiction of the aforementioned orders, the German leadership at the Eastern Front created the Russian National Committee with General Vlasov as chairman. (22)

Thorwold claims that these efforts and the mark they made on the events during the years between 1942 and 1945 were still largely unknown as late as the 1950s; however, his research claims that in the end, more than a million Red Army men served on the German side. (23)

As to the question of whether the Wehrmacht was truly Hitler's Army, Thorwold is much closer to Waldheim than Bartov.

He notes that there can be no doubt about the ambivalent relationship of the German Officer Corps toward Hitler. Professional German military men vacillated between dislike and appreciation, contempt and stunned admiration of the Nazi leader...the deeply rooted nationalistic attitudes of the German professional officers made the fascist, nationalist and military authoritarianism of Hitler far more acceptable to them than a socialist dictatorship. Though they had no love for the Nazi Party apparatus, for many of its leaders and for the SS in particular, they were nonetheless loyal Germans. (24)

The crucial point for our purposes is Thorwold's research on the efforts of high level German Officers to recruit Soviet Soldiers to fight on the German side is at odds with Bartov's analysis of the situation on the Eastern Front.

One of Bartov's main premises is that "Hitler's Army" considered the Russians as a subhuman race and that *the Wehrmacht and the SS were forced to take extreme measures to deal with the enemy's malicious nature.*" Bartov cites the correspondence of a Wehrmacht soldier, Karl Fuchs to demonstrate the attitude of their opposition on the Russian front. *They (the Russians) "fight like hired hands, not like soldiers, no matter if they are men women or children on the front lines. They're all no better than a bunch of scoundrels...(they) are a people which needs long and good schooling in order to become human (25)*

In any war, it is expected that one side will work to demonize the other in order to make it morally acceptable to kill their adversaries. Bartov asserts however, that the full embrace of Nazi principles by both the leadership as well as the rank and file of the Wehrmacht created a situation in which the average German soldier saw himself as not only fighting to defeat a subhuman enemy but also to save Western Civilization from the Bolshevik hordes. This deeply held belief gave added force to the idea that any act, no matter how heinous, was justified if it helped to prevent the subhuman Bolsheviks from sweeping across the Steppes and devouring civilization. (26)

If one accepts Bartov's contention that the Wehrmacht held the peoples of the Soviet Union and the Red Army in contempt, it is difficult to see how in this environment, any group of officers, much less a high level group, could ever propose that huge numbers of Soviet Soldiers be brought over to fight for the Third Reich.

On the other hand, If Thorwold's points regarding these issue are accurate, one could easily use them to argue against the idea that the Wehrmacht was driven solely by the principles of National Socialism. Along these lines, if the senior leadership of the Wehrmacht was inclined to recruit Red Army soldiers to fight on the German side despite clear guidance from Berlin to the contrary, then it is conceivable that for the German High Command on the Eastern Front, Hitler's racial policies and Nazi orthodoxy were subordinate to efforts to defeat the Red Army. Logically then, if the high command could ignore Hitler on such an important issue as the employment of Untermenschen as soldiers for the Reich, then perhaps, the Wehrmacht was not Hitler's Army after all.

Both of the aforementioned works seem to make the case that relations between the Hitler and the Wehrmacht were always problematic and that the value systems of the Army and the Nazi Party were vastly different. Cooper and Thorwold make some interesting points, however, they do not make any strong historical arguments that let the Wehrmacht off the hook regarding the issue.

Certainly it was no secret that the Third Reich often sought to recruit individuals from the nations they conquered to fight for the "New World Order." In addition, other scholarship makes it clear that the Wehrmacht was indeed involved in efforts to shore up the Army's desperate situation on the Eastern Front, and that the recruitment of disgruntled individuals and groups within the Soviet Union to fight against Stalin was a part of this effort.

Certainly, if one excepts Bartov's analysis of the Wehrmacht's attitude toward the peoples of the Soviet Union, it can be said that the high commands decision to ignore Hitler on this issue was an extreme departure from the stated policies. But as extreme as the high commands decision to go against Hitler was, Bartov analysis of the events of the Eastern Front shows that

the effort to create a “Russian National Committee” was truly an anomaly. In short, one example of the Wehrmacht’s “thumbing its nose” at Hitler is not enough to overcome even stronger evidence that by and large, like Hitler, the leadership of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern front, considered the Russian people as sub-human and nothing more than potential slaves. (27)

As for Cooper’s *Wehrmacht Diary*, a major point to consider is that Cooper is not an historian but the vice president of a post production graphics firm. One does not necessarily have to be a professional historian to write good history, but in this case Cooper’s lack of acumen in the historical realm is obvious. In addition, *Wehrmacht Diary* is not a really a diary at all but Cooper describing Knappe’s life. There is not one footnote to be found in the book. In the end all Cooper really has are his opinions regarding the issue and the opinions of Knappe as related not by Knappe himself, but through the eyes of the author. In order to truly make a case for Cooper’s positions, more evidence is needed. *Wehrmacht Diary* may or may not be propaganda, but it is certainly not good history. Personal memoirs, no matter how compelling, will never be a substitute for thorough historical research. In contrast, Bartov’s *Hitler’s Army* focuses not just on the memories of the past, but on established historical events, as well as credible sources and documentation. (28)

This begs the question, on what do those who defend the Wehrmacht base their views? Also, assuming that Bartov is correct, how did these opinions ever gain so much acceptance and credibility. There is not a great deal of gray area here. Bartov and others note the events of the post war era and America’s need to shore up West Germany during the Cold War as partial explanations. (29)

At war’s end, all that was left of Hitler’s Reich was a defeated and divided state with a criminal past. The United States, as the major power broker in the post-war world was heavily

involved in efforts to “rehabilitate” the German nation. After de-Nazification, relations warmed rapidly, and in time, post-war America began to develop a positive relationship with Germany. This was due in part to the U.S. Army’s respect for the Wehrmacht and America’s affinity for German organization and discipline. (30) In short, during the late 40s and throughout the 50s the United States and the free world had a myriad of reasons to avoid forcing Germany to confront its past. The 60s saw renewed attempts to focus on the crimes of Nazism, but by then the damage had been done and the myth of the dedicated honorable German soldier as a victim of the excesses of National Socialism was established and allowed to flourish. (31)

Hitler's Army?

The worth of Bartov's book is that it demonstrates how this collective memory has obscured the facts concerning the true nature of the Wehrmacht and its role in Nazi atrocities. Bartov makes the compelling point that these accepted historical misconceptions are so powerful that they override much of the outstanding scholarship on the subject. *The facts are there for everyone to behold, but they are kept apart from one's own experience and memory...this collective amnesia is so powerful that it infects even those scholars who have done so much to cure it. Thus... an historian who had written the most substantial study of Nazi indoctrination of the Wehrmacht concludes by doubting its effects on the troops and notes ... that he personally cannot recall having ever been exposed to political education during his own service in the Wehrmacht.* (32)

This is a recurring theme in this debate. On one side we have a host of individual accounts of individuals who served in Hitler's Army who, like Waldheim, cannot recall ever having been involved in any kind of atrocities. On the other side are historians like Bartov, who base their conclusions on factual events and the policies and actions that brought those events to fruition. Bartov, like those who seek to refute the complicity of the Wehrmacht in Nazi atrocities, uses letters and personal accounts to make his case. However, he also uses credible military reports and other sources to prove his point. In the end, it is hard not to agree with Bartov's assertion that Hitler's Wehrmacht considered the war against Jewish /Bolshevik barbarism as a war of racial survival to be waged at all costs. (33)

Other credible scholarship supports this premise. Bartov concludes that it was the oppressive conditions on the Eastern Front that brought out the true nature of the Wehrmacht. However, the effort to mold Hitler's Army had begun well before Operation BARBAROSSA. As early as 1934 all officers and men who had become part of the newly formed Wehrmacht were required to take the following oath. *I swear by God this sacred oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Fuhrer of the German Reich and people, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.* (34) On 5 November, Hitler announced to his service chiefs his "irrevocable decision to solve the problem of German living space no later than 1943-45." General Blomberg, the War Minister, and Fritsh, the Army Commander in Chief challenged his stand. As a result each was eventually removed. The Fuhrer's intentions regarding the German military were obvious, he intended to personally exercise command of the armed forces, and the Wehrmacht would by no means be immune from these efforts. (35)

Geoffrey P. Megaree' an applied research scholar at the Center for Holocaust Studies also notes in his book *Inside Hitler's High Command* that "to judge from the postwar memoir literature, the army's leaders found Hitler and his plans distasteful from the start, and they kept their distance as best they could...Eventually he (Hitler) dragged Germany into another world war, in spite of his moral misgivings and against their expert advice... On the whole this story seems entirely plausible, but it was one of the first to break down under scrutiny. In political terms the military's leaders demonstrated from the start that their goals and the goals of the Nazi Party coincided... When the Nazi^s appeared on the scene, the generals thought they had the perfect instrument. Through it all ...most army officers strove to demonstrate their loyalty, to prove themselves worthy of Hitler's respect and trust. The exceptions.. the July 20 coup attempt and other conspiracies were as notable for their small numbers as for their courage. Most of their comrades either opposed their efforts or stood by to await the outcome. The army did not

lose the political battle so much as it failed to offer one. (36) Thus the foundations for the atrocities that occurred on the Russian Front were laid long before the first German tanks struck out for Moscow.

Bartov does an excellent job of using his sources to demonstrate that the principles of Nazism were pervasive within the units fighting on the Eastern Front, but his research also seems to reinforce an even more critical point that explains a great deal about the average German soldier's behavior and attitudes on the Eastern Front, namely that organizations reflect the values of their leadership.

We have examined the memoirs of soldiers who served in the Wehrmacht. These accounts do not refute the charge that Germany was involved in the many horrible things that happened during the war and on the Eastern Front. However, they assert that while these things may have happened they (meaning the authors of the memoirs) were either not involved at all in these atrocities or at the very least, philosophically opposed to the actions they were ordered to carry out. In most of these recollections it is always someone else who is held responsible. (37)

By focusing more on historical records that show clearly the terrible things done in the name of National Socialism on the Eastern Front, Bartov (and others) turn this argument on its head. The atrocities were not committed by ghosts. Yes, the SS was involved, but so was the Wehrmacht. (38)

They were involved because, as Megaree has noted, the values they stood for and embraced, particularly on the Eastern Front, were those of Adolf Hitler and National Socialism. Webster defines values as *the social principles, goals, or standards held by an individual class, society etc. That which is desirable or worthy of esteem for its own sake; thing or quality having*

intrinsic worth. (39) The Wehrmacht was indeed Hitler's Army because its members were more than willing to embrace the values of the Führer and to fight and die to establish his policies. By remaining loyal to their Hitler, when there were, as Megaree has pointed out, any number of opportunities to work against him, the soldiers of the Third Reich left no doubt as to their attitudes toward the principles of National Socialism. By agreeing to play such a critical role in Hitler's efforts, every soldier, sailor and pilot became a vital part of his struggle to implement his "New World Order." Indeed, there may well have been any number of individuals who did not agree with everything Hitler stood for, and certainly not every member of the Heer or Luftwaffe held the Führer's views on racial purity. However, as in most things, what an individual thinks and what they do are two very different things. Bartov shows that the Wehrmacht could never have worked with and for Hitler unless it was willing to ultimately share on a practical level- his values and perspectives on race and politics.

We began this paper by noting the problems that can ensue from incorrect historical conclusions. During WWII, it is a fact that the armed forces of the Third Reich carried out unspeakable crimes against humanity in the name of their leader. If we have any respect for those who fought and died at the hands of the Nazis, we owe it to ourselves to make sure that the truth is told regarding these issues so that future generations can hopefully avoid making the same mistakes.

This cannot take place if the world continues to accept the myth that the German military fought the war, while only the extreme elements of Hitler's Third Reich implemented his Nazi philosophy.

So in conclusion, it can be stated that Hitler's policies, goals and hopes for the future would never have come to fruition without the benefit of military might and power. That power was

gladly supplied by the officers and men of the Wehrmacht. With this in mind, one can rightfully conclude that they were indeed, in every way, Hitler's Army.

This paper makes its case, but your selection of literature restricts how far you can go. Bartov picked out the apologists for the German army as his target, and you locate some memoirists and amateur historians who you think fit into this category. So you reinforced Bartov on the basis of different evidence.

But how significant and convincing is Bartov's study (based on records of 3 divisions) compared to other specialists. Here you could have made better use of Megargee and others (Cooper, Erickson, Ziemke) who have written about the war in the East.

You make choosing sides too easy for the reader and for yourself.

B+

Semester grade

B+

Notes

- (1) An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives, Slave Narratives and the New Debates about Slavery, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snintro04.html>)
- (2) Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army, Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* ,(New York: Oxford University Press ,1992)
- (3) Ibid, p. 5-11
- (4) *The New York Times*, 9 May 2000 (New Model For Soldiers In Germany)
- (5) *The Warsaw Rzeczpospolita*, 26 February 2001, (Mythical Historiography)
- (6) *The Frankfurt/Main Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 31 October 1997, (Bundestag Discusses Right Wing Extremism in Bundeswehr)
- (7) *The Vienna PROFIL*, 17 June 1996, (Former President Waldheim Interviewed on Book)
- (8) Wolfgang Cooper, *Wehrmacht Diary, The Story of Siegfried Knappe (1936-1999)*, (www.Xlibris.com : Xlibris Corporation, 1999)
- (9) Ibid. Backcover
- (10) Ibid. Dedication Page
- (11) Ibid. Backcover
- (12) Ibid. p. 16
- (13) Ibid. p. 70
- (14) Ibid. p. 17
- (15) Ibid. p. 102
- (16) Ibid p. 234
- (17) Jurgen Thorwald, *The Illusion, Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Army*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jonavich, 1975)
- (18) Lt. Gen Wladyslaw, Antonio Munoz, *Russian Volunteers in the German Wehrmacht in WWII* (<http://feldfrau.com/rvol.html>)
- (19) Ibid
- (20) Jurgen Thorwald, *The Illusion, Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Army*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jonavich, 1975) xi-xxii
- (21) Lt. Gen Wladyslaw, Antonio Munoz, *Russian Volunteers in the German Wehrmacht in WWII* (<http://feldfrau.com/rvol.html>)
- (22) Ibid
- (23) Jurgen Thorwald, *The Illusion, Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Army*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jonavich, 1975) xv
- (24) Ibid. p. 25
- (25) Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army, Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* ,(New York: Oxford University Press ,1992) 153-154
- (26) Ibid. p. 152-155
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid. p. 3-11
- (29) Ibid. p. 178, 186
- (30) *International Herald Tribune* ,March 28, 2000, (Germany's Special Relationship With U.S. Is Ending Badly)
- (31) *Warsaw Rzeczpospolita*, 26 February 2001 (Mythical Historiography)
- (32) Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army, Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* ,(New York: Oxford University Press ,1992) 185
- (33) Ibid.p. 153-160

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