



НАРОДЫ И РЕГИОНЫ СССР В ГОДЫ ВЕЛИКОЙ ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННОЙ ВОЙНЫ
PEOPLES AND REGIONS OF THE USSR DURING THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

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Genocide of the Soviet People in German Occupation Policy: Civilizational Perspective on the "War of Extermination"

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Abstract: The authors examine the historical grounds for assessing the policy of Germany and its allies in the occupied territory of the USSR as a purposeful genocide of the Soviet people. The key research method involved correlating empirical material of mass atrocities and plans of the Nazis with the definition of genocide as outlined in the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. The novelty of the problem consists in the assertion of the thesis that the genocide against the Soviet people should be considered an integral issue to the civilized international community. The article presents arguments for the expediency and reliability of recognizing the genocide not only in ethnic, but also in civilizational terms. The approaches formulated in the article could potentially contribute to the adoption of a legal provision recognizing the genocide of the Soviet people and holding those responsible accountable at the legislative level of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: Soviet identity, mass extermination, UN Convention, Nazism, racial history, resettlement, famine, the atrocities of the German Nazis

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Геноцид советского народа в германской оккупационной политике: цивилизационный ракурс «войны на уничтожение»

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Аннотация: Рассматриваются исторические основания оценки политики Германии и ее союзников на оккупированной территории СССР в качестве геноцида советского народа. Ключевым методом исследования являлось соотнесение эмпирического материала массовых злодеяний и планов нацистов с определениями «Конвенции о предупреждении преступления геноцида и наказании за него», принятой резолюцией Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН 1948 г. Новизна постановки проблемы состоит в утверждении тезиса о геноциде против советского народа как целостной цивилизационной общности. Приводятся аргументы целесообразности и достоверности утверждения о факте геноцида не только в этническом, но и цивилизационном ракурсах. Сформулированные в статье подходы могут внести потенциальный вклад в принятие положения о геноциде советского народа и ответственности за него на законодательном уровне Российской Федерации.

Ключевые слова: советская идентичность, массовое истребление, Конвенция ООН, нацизм, расовая теория, переселение, злодеяния германских нацистов

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Introduction

Relevance. The increasingly frequent and large-scale attempts to falsify the history of World War II have prompted the Russian public to initiated process of fully recognizing the fact of genocide of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War by the Hitler regime. On March 22, 2023, the State Duma of the Russian Federation made a statement prepared by the State Duma Committee on International Affairs. By April 2024, the courts in 19 subjects of the Russian Federation decided to admit the fact these events were a genocide. The bill on the genocide was introduced to the State Duma. However, already at the initial stage, discrepancies arose in the key wording – “genocide of the Soviet people,” “genocide of the peoples of the USSR,” or “genocide of the multinational Russian people.” So far, no attention has been paid to the difference in wording, although there are substantive differences. The present article is based on the problem of the possibility of

applying the concept of genocide within the framework of Nazi policy towards the Soviet people as a civilizational entity¹.

One of the most complex, undeveloped, but at the same time key issues is the definition of Soviet identity as the target of the genocidal policy of Nazi Germany and its allies. Since the provision on the genocide of the Soviet people is being asserted, then accordingly there should be distinguished a separate Soviet identity. It should be proved that this identity was distinguished by the party accused of genocidal crimes. Indeed, uniting many ethnic groups, the USSR had a common single identification. In the Russian Empire, it was the ethnonym “Russians” which was such an identifier. There were at least two dimensions of Russian identity – ethnic, and another, supra-ethnic, civilizational. The civilizational level was associated with a certain set of values, ideas, and norms of life. During the USSR period, it was the identifier “Soviet” (Soviet people) which united the population. Belonging to the Soviet identity was associated with the ideology adopted by the state and society, historical, and cultural norms. As a civilizational marker, “Soviet” was a historical modification which designated their belonging to an encompassing Russian civilization.

Elaboration of the problem. In modern historiography, there has been accumulated an enormous amount of empirical material, representing the character of Germany’s genocidal policy, including its implementation in the Soviet territory. Of significance is the contribution of German and Anglo-American historiography to the development of the issue; unfortunately, it is little-known subject in Russia. Along with the line of studying the crimes of the Holocaust, which is a key one for the issues of the Soviet genocide, they also worked out the issues of the role of individual structures in committing genocide (controversy over the role of the Wehrmacht), its derivativeness from racist ideology, and the economic aspects of the war of extermination². However, in foreign historiography

¹ “Sudy dokazali genotsid sovetского naroda [The courts have proven the genocide of the Soviet people],” POBEDA RF. Rossiiskoe informatsionnoe agentstvo, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://pobedarf.ru/2024/04/19/sudy-dokazali-genocid-sovetского-naroda/>; “Vnesen proekt zaiavleniia o priznanii deistvii Germanii i ee posobnikov v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny genotsidom narodov SSSR [A draft statement has been submitted recognizing the actions of Germany and its accomplices during the Great Patriotic War as genocide of the peoples of the USSR],” Gosudarstvennaia дума Federalnogo sobraniia RF, accessed September, 1, 2024, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/56560/>; “Sudebnye razbiratelstva [Court proceedings],” Bez sroka davnosti, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://xn--80aabgieomn8afgsnjq.xn--p1ai/deyatelnost/sudebnye-protsessy/>

² G. Aly, *Endlösung: Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 1998); G. Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); C. Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000); C. Kakel, *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); A. Kay, *Exploitation, Resettlement, Mass Murder: Political and Economic Planning for German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1940–1941* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); W. Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); R.-D. Müller, G.R. Ueberschär, *Hitler's War in the East, 1941–1945: A Critical Assessment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1997); D. Olusoga, C.W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011); F. Römer, *Der Kommissarbefehl: Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008); J. Gantzenmyuller, *Osazhdennyi Leningrad. Gorod v strategicheskikh raschetakh zashchitnikov i aggressorov, 1941–1944* [Besieged Leningrad. The City in the Strategic Calculations of Defenders and Aggressors, 1941–1944] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf Publ., 2019); H. Mommsen, *Natsistskii rezhim i unichtozhenie evreev v Evrope* [The Nazi regime and the extermination of Jews in Europe] (Moscow: AIRO-XXI Publ., 2013); N. Müller, *Vermakht i okkupatsiia, 1941–1944: O roli vermakhta i ego rukovodiashchikh organov v osushchestvlenii okkupatsionnogo rezhima na sovetской territorii* [The Wehrmacht and the Occupation, 1941–1944: On the Role of the Wehrmacht and Its Leadership in the Implementation of the Occupation Regime on Soviet Territory] (Moscow: Voenizdat Publ., 1974); C. Streit, *Oni nam ne tovarishchi: Vermakht i*

there is no formulation of the problem of the plan and practice of annihilating the entire Soviet community.

A significant amount of evidence about the crimes of the Nazis in the territory of the USSR was collected in the course of special investigations and trials of the post-war years³. Soviet historians had paid great attention to revealing the misanthropic nature of fascism. However, the concept of genocide had not received due consideration in regards to the description of the atrocities committed. Perhaps, it also was due to its absence in the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal, as departing from the concluding document seemed undesirable.

It is important to note that the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” adopted by the UN in 1948 was ratified by a number of leading states after significant delay. The United Kingdom, in particular, joined the “Convention” only in 1970, and the United States ratified it only in 1988⁴. In this regard, the “Convention” became a practical document of the international community only relatively recently. Obviously, both the United Kingdom and the United States were in no hurry to adopt it fearing accusations of genocidal policies against them, for a number of good reasons.

In the 1990s, the issue of the repressive policy of Nazism in the post-Soviet space was leveled within the framework of the topic of crimes of “totalitarian regimes,” which generally had negative consequences for preserving the memory of the tragedy of the Nazi occupation. In this regard, the subject of the genocide of the Soviet people in the stated formulation of the problem is comparatively novel. A major role in relating the concept of genocide to the actions of Germany and its allies in the war against the USSR was played by the publications and public speeches of: A.R. Dyukov, V.G. Kiknadze, M.Yu. Myagkov, E.N. Yakovlev, and other Russian historians⁵. The amount of the empirical material at the regional level was significantly increased within the framework of the project “Without a Statute of Limitations.” However, despite this increase in material, the problem of the key definition of genocide remains an open question to this day.

The purpose of the research is to verify the hypothesis about the reliability of the interpretation of German policy in the occupied territories of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War as a genocide of the Soviet people.

The source base of the research is various types of published documents (including orders and instructions of the German command, interrogations of Nazi criminals and witnesses of crimes, regulatory and legal documents of international organizations). The materials of the historical documents are correlated with the data specifying the population dynamics of the regions that were in the occupation zone.

sovetskie voennoplennnye v 1941–1945 gg. [They Are Not Our Comrades: The Wehrmacht and Soviet Prisoners of War in 1941–1945] (Moscow: Russkoe istoricheskoe obshchestvo Publ.; Russkaia panorama Publ., 2009).

³ N.S. Lebedeva, *Podgotovka Nyurnbergskogo protsesssa* [Preparation for the Nuremberg Trials] (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1975).

⁴ “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” United Nations. Treaty Collection, accessed September, 1, 2024, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtldsg_no=IV-1&chapter=4&clang=en

⁵ A.R. Dyukov, *Za chto srazhalis sovetskie lyudi* [What did the Soviet people fight for] (Moscow: EKSMO Publ., Yauza Publ., 2007); A.R. Dyukov, *Russkii dolzhen umeret! Ot chego spasla nas Krasnaia Armia* [Russian must die! What the Red Army saved us from] (Moscow: EKSMO Publ., Yauza Publ., 2011); A.R. Dyukov, V.V. Simindei, E.N. Yakovlev, *Natsizm na okkupirovannykh territoriiakh Sovetskogo Soiuza* [Nazism in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union] (St. Petersburg: Piter Publ., 2023); V.G. Kiknadze, O.V. Romanko, A.S. Saenko, *Genotsid narodov Rossii: Prestupleniia protiv sovetskogo mirnogo naseleniia i voennoplennykh v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [Genocide of the Peoples of Russia: Crimes against the Soviet Civilian Population and Prisoners of War during the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: Prometei Publ., 2024); E.N. Yakovlev, *Voina na unichtozhenie. Tretii reikh i genotsid sovetskogo naroda* [War of Extermination. The Third Reich and the Genocide of the Soviet People] (St. Petersburg: Piter Publ., 2022).

In the present research, the consideration of the actions of Germany and its allies against the peoples of the USSR as genocide is based on the interpretation of genocide given by the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” adopted by Resolution 260 (III) of the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948⁶. The official definition of genocide appeared after World War II due to the comprehension of the atrocities committed by Nazi forces against humanity.

In the content of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” in light of the issue of genocide against the Soviet people, the following is noteworthy:

- identification of victims of genocide – national, ethnic, racial and religious groups (with special emphasis in the focus of the issues under consideration on distinguishing national and ethnic affiliation, as well as singling out the religious one) (Article 2);
- revealing genocide through the facts of murder and causing bodily harm due to belonging to the relevant group (Article 2);
- classification of the deliberate creation of living conditions that are designed to bring about the total or partial physical destruction of the relevant group as genocide (Article 2);
- classification of measures aimed at preventing childbirth in the relevant group as genocide;
- classification of measures of forcible transfer of children from one group to another as genocide;
- revealing genocide not only through the facts of physical destruction - actions, but also conspiracy and incitement to commit it (Article 3);
- classification of attempts to commit genocide, i.e. unrealized attempts to commit genocide, as genocidal acts (Article 3);
- accusations of accomplices of genocidal acts and plans of committing genocide (Article 3);
- holding any persons associated with committing genocide, both officials and private individuals accountable for genocidal acts (Article 4).

The research methodology consists in correlating information about the atrocities of the German Nazis and their allies, as well as plans to commit them in relation to the Soviet population in regard to the concept of genocide. On the basis of this information, a hypothesis on the possibility of applying the definition of “genocide of the Soviet people” seems valid.

Demographic losses of the USSR as a result of the Great Patriotic War

As is already known, because of the war, the Soviet Union suffered the greatest demographic losses among the countries of the world – 26,6 million people. China is in second place in terms of absolute losses – 15,5 million people, including the losses in the Civil War. Germany, the main aggressor ranks third in terms of casualties – from 6,9 million to 8,4 million people, that is, despite the defeat, which implies more significant losses, less than the USSR by 3.2–3.8 times. Such differences indicate the unnaturalness of the Soviet Union's wartime losses. The USSR's losses of civilians are estimated at 17,931,600 people and exceed the total number of losses among the civilian population of all European countries besides its own European portions. The number of civilian casualties in the Soviet Union is more than twice as high as the number of military casualties, with about half of them being Soviet prisoners of war, to whom Germany did not apply the principles of the Hague and Geneva Conventions during their captivity. The data on the

⁶ “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” United Nations, accessed September, 1, 2024, https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/genocide.shtml

number and composition of Soviet civilian casualties during World War II alone would be sufficient to establish the fact that a genocide had occurred⁷.

It was not until 1957, 12 years after the end of the war, that the pre-war population, including that of the territories which became part of the Soviet Union was restored: the RSFSR restored its pre-war population size in 1956, the Estonian and Latvian SSRs in 1955, the Moldavian SSR in 1957, the Ukrainian SSR in 1958, the Lithuanian SSR in 1965, and the Byelorussian SSR in 1972. A number of territories that were occupied by Nazi Germany for one period or another have not yet restored their population size recorded in the 1939 census, taking into account changes in administrative borders. These include, in the RSFSR: Bryansk, Voronezh, Kaluga, Kursk, Leningrad, Novgorod, Oryol, Pskov, Smolensk, Tver, and Tambov regions; in the Ukrainian SSR – Vinnytsia, Zhitomir, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytsky (formerly Kamenets-Podolsk), and Chernigov regions; in the Byelorussian SSR – Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. The Ternopol region in Western Ukraine and the Grodno region in Western Belarus have not restored their previous population size⁸. As a whole, the war changed the structure of the demographics reproduction in the USSR. Whereas from the mid-1930s there was a tendency for the birth rate to grow, then after the war it began to steadily decline towards mere nominal reproduction. Thus, in 1939, the total fertility rate in the RSFSR was 4.907 births, whereas after the war only in 1949 the level of 3 births per each women was exceeded, and in other years it was lower⁹.

War of Extermination

According to the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” not only actions to annihilate the population, but also such intent are considered as genocidal crimes. The Nazi Germany leadership certainly had this intent with regard to the Soviet community, and it was expressed within the framework of the concept of a war of extermination. The demographic damage inflicted on the USSR during the Great Patriotic War had been planned even before the German attack on the Soviet Union.

The goal of the war in the East for the German leadership was not only to push back the enemy geopolitically, but also to physically destroy it as a historical and cultural community. According to Colonel General Franz Halder, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht ground forces, less than three months before the attack on the USSR, Hitler

⁷ *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina. Iubileinyi statisticheskii sbornik* [The Great Patriotic War. Anniversary statistical collection] (Moscow: [N.s.], 2015); *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina. Iubileinyi statisticheskii sbornik* [The Great Patriotic War. Anniversary statistical collection] (Moscow: [N.s.], 2020); V.N. Zemskov, “Human losses of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War (estimates and calculations),” *Proceedings of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences* 14 (2017): 97–122; G.F. Krivosheev, *Rossia i SSSR v voynakh XX veka: Poteri vooruzhennykh sil: Statisticheskoe issledovanie* [Russia and the USSR in the wars of the 20th century: Losses of the armed forces: Statistical study] (Moscow: Olma-Press Publ., 2001); L.L. Rybakovskii, *Lyudskie poteri SSSR i Rossii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* [Human losses of the USSR and Russia in the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: Ekon-Inform Publ., 2010); R. Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (München: Oldenbourg, 2004).

⁸ “Vsesoiuznaia perepis naseleniia 1939 goda. Chislennost nalichnogo naseleniia SSSR po soiuznym respublikam, kraiam, oblastyam i avtonomnym respublikam [All-Union Population Census 1939. The number of the actual population of the USSR by union republics, territories, regions and autonomous republics],” *Demoskop Weekly*, https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_pop_39_1.php; “Predvaritelnye itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naseleniia [Preliminary results of the All-Russian Population Census],” *Demoskop Weekly*, accessed January, 14, 2025, <https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2022/0947/census01.php>; “Itogi perepisi naseleniia Respubliki Belarus 2019 goda [Results of the 2019 Population Census of the Republic of Belarus],” *Natsionalnyi statisticheskii komitet Respubliki Belarus*, accessed August, 24, 2024, <https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/e2c/jpupn3r17rtmxepj6vmh07qy6u5o09i.pdf?ysclid=m74u77h4cb313516132>; “Rezultaty perepisi naseleniia 2001 goda na Ukraine [Results of the 2001 census in Ukraine],” *Demoskop Weekly*, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0113/analit03.php>

⁹ E.M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, T.L. Kharkova, *Demograficheskaia istoriia Rossii: 1927–1959* [Demographic history of Russia: 1927–1959] (Moscow: Informatika Publ., 1998), [164–165].

had declared that the future war in the East would be a war of extermination and it would be fundamentally different from the wars that Germany had waged in the West and that the cruelty of the war would be a blessing for the future. Halder recounted the content of Hitler's speech:

Communists have never been and will never be our comrades. It is a question of a struggle for extermination. If we do not consider it this way, then even if we defeat the enemy, in 30 years the communist danger will arise again. We are not waging war in order to preserve our enemy... This war will be very different from the one in the West. In the East, cruelty is a blessing for the future. Commanders must sacrifice much to overcome their hesitation¹⁰.

The German leader's definition of the future military actions as a war of extermination is evidence of the planned genocide.

Hitler's approaches were shared by many of the Nazi leadership and therefore they all bear responsibility for the genocide. In particular, in April 1941, Colonel General Georg von Küchler, the commander of the 18th Army of Germany, and later the commander of Army Group "North" reasoned:

A deep gulf separates us from Russia in terms of worldview and race. Russia is an Asian state by the size of the land it occupies <...>. If Germany wants to protect itself for generations to come from the threat from the East, then Russia <...> should not just be pushed back a little, but the European part of Russia should be destroyed and the Russian European state should be abolished¹¹.

Von Küchler practically put his views into practice when he directed the siege of Leningrad and was convicted by the Nuremberg Tribunal.

In revealing the concept of the war of extermination an important place is given to the order of Field Marshal, V. von Reichenau, the commander of the 6th German army, "On the actions of troops in the East" of October 10, 1941, in which the Bolshevik system is characterized, on the one hand, as a Jewish one, and on the other hand, as an Asian one:

The main goal of the campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevik system is the complete destruction of state power and the eradication of Asian influence on European culture¹².

This is the way the order reveals the goal setting of the war in the East. Bolshevism is characterized as heresy. The task was set of the complete destruction of the "Bolshevik heresy, the Soviet state and its armed forces."¹³

The order clarified:

Only in this way can we fulfill our historical mission to liberate the German people forever from the Asiatic-Jewish danger¹⁴.

¹⁰ F. Halder, *Voennyi dnevnik. Ezhednevnye zapisi nachalnika Generalnogo shtaba Suhoputnykh voisk 1939–1942 gg.* [War diary. Daily entries of the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces 1939–1942], [430–431] (Moscow: Voenizdat Publ., 1969), [430–431].

¹¹ H. Boog, J. Förster, and J. Hoffmann, *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion* (Frankfurt am Main: FISCHER Taschenbuch, 1991), [49].

¹² "Prikaz komanduiushchego 6-i armiei general-feldmarshala Reikhenau 'O povedenii voisk na Vostoke' ot 10 dekabria 1941 g. [Order of the Commander of the 6th Army, Field Marshal Reichenau, "On the Conduct of Troops in the East," December 10, 1941]," in *Nyurnbergskii protsess* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo iuridicheskoi literatury Publ., 1957–1960), 345–346.

¹³ "Prikaz komanduiushchego 6-i armiei general-feldmarshala Reikhenau 'O povedenii voisk na Vostoke' ot 10 dekabria 1941 g. [Order of the Commander of the 6th Army, Field Marshal Reichenau, "On the Conduct of Troops in the East," December 10, 1941]," in *Nyurnbergskii protsess* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo iuridicheskoi literatury Publ., 1957–1960), 346.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The imperative nature of the order – “complete destruction,” “complete defeat,” “forever,” “merciless eradication” – conveys the radical character of the warmongers’ political attitudes toward the Soviet Union and its people.

Reichsführer SS H. Himmler was an adherent of the idea of a war of extermination against the USSR. In August 1942, he focused on the racial aspect of the conflict and noted that the Germanization of the eastern territories implied, above all, the resettlement of people of “truly German blood” in the East¹⁵. In April 1943, delivering an address at Kharkov University to the commanders of the SS divisions, Himmler drew parallels with the XIII century, speaking about a new invasion of Asiatic forces:

There is no doubt that everyone in Europe, including us Germans, underestimated the Russians. We did not immediately notice that in Russia the thing happened which 700 years ago happened a little further away, in Mongolia¹⁶.

The Reichsführer drew attention to the astonishing capacity of the Russians for military mobilization, and therefore the task was set to defeat the dangerous enemy by physical destruction, achieving the ultimate depopulation of its territory. Himmler’s alternative was as follows:

People in this struggle must either be taken to Germany and become a labor force for Germany or die¹⁷.

Thus, the adoption of the concept of a war of extermination meant that genocide was part of Hitler’s plan for military action against the USSR and was included in the operational plan. The executors of the genocide policy were representatives of all main departments of the German government.

Massacres of the civilian population

In the occupied territories the Nazis sought to create a system of extermination of the local population. We can speak about the creation of a conveyor belt of death. The interrogations of Nazi criminals and survivors testify, in particular, to the use of mobile gas chambers (G-cars) in the occupied territories. “There is a lot of fuss and noise with mass executions,” G. Heinisch, Obersturmbannführer SS, former district commissioner of Mariupol explained to the investigators the implication of using G-cars¹⁸.

Heinisch who refused to condemn the practice of massacres referred to the approach established in the German leadership:

Regarding this matter, the ruling circles of Germany and the leaders of the German army have a special opinion, which, to my mind, justifies a lot <...> In Germany, it was thought that the Russian army could be defeated, but it would be very difficult to keep the Russian people in obedience. Therefore, any attempt at resistance on the part of the Russians must be brutally suppressed, and while exterminating

¹⁵ “Statiya reikhsfuerera SS Gimmlera o planakh natsistov po germanizatsii vostochnykh territorii iz zhurnala ‘Deiche Arbeit’ (‘Nemetskii trud’) [An article by Reichsfuehrer SS Himmler about the Nazi plans for the Germanization of the eastern territories from the magazine ‘Deutsche Arbeit’ (‘German Work’)],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov*, (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [74–80], Bez sroka давности, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://xn--80aabgieomn8afgsnjq.xn--p1ai/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/elektronnyj-resurs-polnyj.pdf>.

¹⁶ “Heinrich Himmler. Speech at Kharkiv University in front of SS division commanders,” Nuremberg, accessed September, 24, 2024, <https://nuremberg.media/project/20210914/261738/Gimmler-Vesti-voynu-provodya-liniyu-na-unichtozhenie-lyudey.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Protokol doprosa obershturmbanfyurera SS, byvshego okruzhnogo komissara g. Mariupolya Khaynisha Georga o politike natsistov na okkupirovannykh territoriakh SSSR 28 noiabrya 1943 g. [Protocol of the interrogation of the Obersturmbannführer SS, the former district commissioner of Mariupolya Heinisha Georga on Nazi policy in the occupied territories of the USSR November 28, 1943],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [83].

as many people as possible. On the one hand, this will reduce the population of the Soviet Union, and on the other hand, it will intimidate the Russians, so much that they will obey, and otherwise the colonization of the Soviet Union would be unthinkable¹⁹.

Heinisch also referred to the discussion of the practical intention of the complete extermination of the civilian population in the occupied territories. In particular, Erich Koch, the Reichskommissar of Ukraine was a supporter of this approach. Heinisch told the investigators as follows:

In mid-August 1943, in one of the villages, the name of which I do not remember, near the town of Rovno, a conference of 28 district commissars of Ukraine took place. The work of the conference was led by Reichskommissar of Ukraine Koch. The conference was convened due to the fact that the forced mobilization of labor for Germany did not satisfy the Reichskommissar. From the reports of the district commissars it followed that the population was resisting forced mobilization for work in Germany. In this regard, Koch spoke about the need to intensify measures against the population and eliminate several thousand people. In particular, he stated that he had decided to send the maximum number of able-bodied residents of Northern Ukraine to work in Germany, and to completely destroy the rest of the population of these areas, since several elusive partisan detachments were operating in these areas, and the repressive measures previously taken against the civilian population – burning of villages, mass shootings and destruction of residents of these areas, according to Koch, did not yield satisfactory results. The destruction of the huge number of citizens of Soviet Russia can only benefit Germany, since this weakens Russia. Koch's last words reflect the line of Hitler and his headquarters <...>. It is clear that such measures have no other meaning than the destruction of the maximum number of Soviet people to prevent them from receiving labor and reinforcements for the army²⁰.

During the interrogation after the end of World War II, on December 27, 1945, Heinisch confirmed E. Koch's words about the need to completely eliminate the population of the occupied territories. According to the Reichskommissar of Ukraine, measures of mass extermination and removal of the population were supposed to facilitate the task of colonization²¹.

Provoking to genocide

In accordance with the criteria of the UN Convention, it can be stated that the Nazi regime created conditions for committing genocide. Such conditions were created, in particular, by the order “On the application of military jurisdiction in the Barbarossa area and on special measures of the troops” issued on May 13, 1941²². The date of the order is important from the point of view that it was preventive in nature and was not a response to the actions of partisans and other resistance groups. On the one hand, the order removed “enemy civilians” from the jurisdiction of military and military field courts, which meant the possibility of exterminating suspects without due process of law. On the other hand, it removed judicial responsibility from Wehrmacht soldiers for crimes against the civilian

¹⁹ “Protokol doprosa obershturmbanfiurera SS, byvshego okruzhnogo komissara g. Mariupolia Khaynisha Georga o politike natsistov na okkupirovannykh territoriiakh SSSR 28 noiabria 1943 g. [Protocol of the interrogation of the Obersturmbannführer SS, the former district commissioner of Mariupolya Heinisha Georga on Nazi policy in the occupied territories of the USSR November 28, 1943],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [87].

²⁰ Ibid., [87–89].

²¹ “Protokol doprosa obershturmbanfiurera SS, byvshego okruzhnogo komissara g. Mariupolia Khaynisha Georga o politike natsistov na okkupirovannykh territoriiakh SSSR 28 noiabria 1943 g. [Protocol of the interrogation of the Obersturmbannführer SS, the former district commissioner of Mariupolya Heinisha Georga on Nazi policy in the occupied territories of the USSR November 28, 1943],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [137–147].

²² “Rasporyazheniie Gitlera ‘O voennoi podsudnosti v raione ‘Barbarossa’ i ob osobykh polnomochiakh voisk’ ot 13 maia 1941 g. [Hitler's decree ‘On military jurisdiction in the Barbarossa area and on special powers of the troops’ of 13 May 1941],” in *Nurnbergskii protsess* (Moscow: Yuridicheskaia literature Publ., 1991), 288–290.

population. Murders of civilians committed by German soldiers had no punitive consequences. The order effectively provoked the German armed forces to commit genocide in the occupied territories and, according to Heinz Guderian, had destructive consequences for discipline²³.

Modern German historian Wolfram Vette writes:

The wording of the order was such that Wehrmacht soldiers were completely exempt from responsibility for committing any violence. Every participant in the Wehrmacht's Eastern Campaign knew that he was allowed to do anything, and he would not be brought before a military tribunal²⁴.

Julius Reichow, German army captain and former chairman of the military tribunal of the 267th infantry division testified during the interrogation that the order on the immunity of German soldiers was brought to the attention of the rank and file the day before the attack on the USSR. Reichow confirmed as follows:

In accordance with Hitler's order, in the first days of the war and subsequently German soldiers led by officers committed various kinds of atrocities against the civilian population; they destroyed it, drove some into German slavery and completely burned down towns and villages²⁵.

Thus, the responsibility for the atrocities of German soldiers lies not only with each of them personally, but also with the Nazi regime as a whole, which provoked them to commit crimes by decriminalizing criminal acts.

Concept of racial inferiority of the USSR peoples

The Nazi genocide was based on the theory of racial inequality. According to it, racially inferior peoples that exist should be deprived of their rights, and are subject to control of their population size, up to the use of violent methods of their physical extermination. The peoples of the Soviet Union were classified as racially inferior on the basis of three racist concepts: 1) the confrontation between Europe and Asia, according to which the USSR and Russia were the bearers of the spirit of Asianism; 2) anti-Semitism expressed in the assertion that the supreme power in the Soviet Union belonged to the Jews; 3) Slavophobia based on the thesis of racial mixing of the Slavs and their degeneration. Among the arguments about the racial inferiority of the Slavs, there was also the one about their inability to independently create a state, which was supposedly formed exclusively with the participation of the Germans (an appeal to the “Norman theory”). Russian collectivism was interpreted as an inability for ethnic Russians to manifest individual subjectivity. In Hitler's propaganda, Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were racially divided, but not to the extent that they could be classified as peoples of full value²⁶.

²³ H. Guderian, *Vospominaniia nemetskogo generala. Tankovye voiska Germanii vo Vtoroi mirovoi voine. 1939–1945* [Memories of a German General. German Tank Troops in World War II. 1939–1945] (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf Publ., 2022), 164.

²⁴ W. Vette, “War of Extermination: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust,” *Modern and Contemporary History*, no. 3 (1999): 72–79.

²⁵ “Vypiska iz protokola doprosa kapitana germanskoii armii, byvshego predsedatelya voennogo tribunala 267-i pekhotnoi divizii Raikhova Iuliusa o prikaze Gitlera ob unichtozhenii sovetskogo naseleniia 19 iul'ya 1944 g. [Extract from the interrogation protocol of the captain of the German army, former chairman of the military tribunal of the 267th infantry division, Julius Reichow, about Hitler's order to exterminate the Soviet population on July 19, 1944],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [89–90].

²⁶ A.R. Dyukov, “Nazi Ideology and Planning of the “War of Extermination” against the Soviet Union,” *Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies* 2, no. 25 (2021): 7–69; V.V. Rodionov, “Slavs – a mixed people based on an inferior race: the racial foundations of the Third Reich's Russophobia,” *Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies* 1, no. 20 (2020): 42–64, <https://doi.org/10.24411/2409-1413-2019-10056>; G.A. Kumanev, “Gitlerovskii genotsid slavyanskikh narodov Evropy v 1930-e – pervoi polovine 1940-kh godov [Hitler's genocide of the Slavic peoples of Europe in the 1930s – first half of the 1940s],” *Voina*

In addition, the concept of the Asiatization of Russia was of great importance in justifying the genocide. In the eyes, of Hitler's regime, the European population of the USSR, above all the Slavs, was united with the Asian population through Asiatization. This formed a single Asiatic marker, which was positioned the Soviet population as the enemy in the war in the East. In German propaganda, the war with the Soviet Union was presented as a continuation of the centuries-old conflict between Europe and Asia. Indicative in this regard are the testimonies of Colonel General Erich Höpner, the commander of the 4th Panzer Group, who combined anti-Semitism, Slavophobia, Asiaphobia and anti-communism:

The war against Russia is the most important part of the struggle for the existence of the German people. It is a longstanding struggle of the Germans against the Slavs, the protection of European culture from the Moscow-Asia invasion, the repulse of Jewish Bolshevism. This struggle must pursue the goal of reducing today's Russia to ruins, and therefore it must be waged with unprecedented cruelty. Each battle must be organized and carried out with an iron will, aimed at the merciless and complete destruction of the enemy. No mercy, above all, for the representatives of today's Russian Bolshevik system...²⁷

Despite the hopes of Ukrainian nationalists that the Germans would recognize the Ukrainian state that they had proclaimed, they received a harsh response from them with the arrest of the OUN (b) leaders, including S. Bandera, for their arbitrary actions. In accordance with the plans for implementing German policy in the occupied territories, each of the Slavic peoples was to be subjected to reduction of the population size in varying proportions depending on the degree of potential danger they might pose²⁸. The planned reduction of the size of peoples, as well as the plan for their complete extermination is defined in accordance with the 1948 Convention as genocide. According to the 1939 census, the number of Eastern Slavs – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, subject to partial targeted reduction, as well as the number of Jews and Roma intended for complete extermination accounted for 79.8% of the population of the USSR, that is, an outright majority of the Soviet community. Taking into account the territories of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine which became part of the Soviet Union, this proportion increased even more. Thus, the Nazis' genocidal policy focused on the majority of the population of the Soviet community. The concept of the fight against Asia made it possible to include the rest of the population of the USSR in the group defined as racially inferior as well. In their propaganda materials, the Nazis demonstrated images of Soviet soldiers with a Mongolian appearance, which according to them was supposed to confirm the thesis about the racial inferiority of the enemy. Considering the racial stereotypes, the threat of becoming victims of Nazi genocide was no less for the non-Slavic peoples of the USSR than for the Slavs. The Slavs were considered racially inferior for their “Asian admixtures” compared to supposedly belonging to Europeans. Thus, the racist theory of Nazi Germany determined the application of genocidal policy to the entire Soviet community.

The widespread idea that the Nazis singled out certain peoples of the USSR from the rest as not subject to genocide is a myth. Such myths include, for example, the special attitude towards the Balts. The true racist approach of German Nazism towards the Baltic

za proshloe, <https://razboiulpentrutrecut.wordpress.com/2016/02/25/гитлеровский-геноцид-славянских-нап/>; J. Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice,” *Central European History* 32, no. 1 (1999): 1–33.

²⁷ “Iz prilozheniia № 2 k prikazu komanduiushchego 4-i tankovoi gruppoi v svyazi s predstoiashchimi boevymi deistviiami na vostoке. 2 maia 1941 g. [From Appendix No. 2 to the order of the commander of the 4th tank group in connection with the upcoming military operations in the east. May 2, 1941],” in *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine. Nakanune. 1 ianvarya – 21 iunya 1941 g.* (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole Publ., 1995), 338–339.

²⁸ G. Picker, S. Haffner, *Plan ‘Ost.’ Kak pravilno podelit Rossiui* [Plan ‘Ost.’ How to divide Russia correctly] (Moscow: Algoritm Publ., 2011).

population is revealed, in particular, in the materials of the interrogation protocol of Friedrich Jeckeln, the police general, former head of the SS and police in the Baltics. He referred to the position of the Reichsführer SS towards the local population:

Himmler said that I should organize the work in "Ostland" in such a way that there would be quietness throughout the Baltics and Belarus, and that each and every Jew in "Ostland" should be exterminated.

Himmler spoke of the other nations in the territory of "Ostland," in particular emphasizing his hatred of the Lithuanians, calling them an inferior race. He spoke somewhat better of the Latvians, but expressed his disdain for them as well, stating that of all the Latvians, in his opinion, only 30% should be considered people who can be used. Himmler also considered the Estonians to be an inferior race, especially those living east of the Baltic Sea.

Himmler further said that after Germany's final victory it would be necessary to Germanize those Estonians and Latvians who would work for Germany well.

All other Latvians and Estonians, he said, would have to be deported from the Baltics to Germany, where they would be used for work, and the vacated space would be filled with Germans. Himmler called the Belarusians an inferior race, and he said of the Russians that they were supposedly backward, uncultured, and in no way capable of leading a large state²⁹.

From Jeckeln's testimony it follows that the Nazis considered all the peoples of the USSR to be racially inferior and accordingly pursued an active policy of genocide.

H. Himmler's vision of the "Ukrainian question" is evidenced by the materials of the interrogation of Lieutenant General Paul Scheer, another official of the German administration, the former head of the security police and gendarmerie in Kiev. Scheer reported on a meeting of the heads of German punitive bodies in Ukraine in June 1942 at Himmler's headquarters near Zhitomir. The Reichsführer substantiated the special rights of the Germans to Ukraine with allegedly existing evidence that in the V century the Ukrainian territory was inhabited by German tribes. The plan he outlined consisted of organizing a new "resettlement of peoples." Scheer's further testimony directly indicates the encouragement of genocide by the German leadership towards the Ukrainians:

Himmler said that our task, i.e. the task of the punitive bodies, is to clear the territory of Ukraine for the future resettlement of Germans. To this end, we must conduct mass extermination of Soviet citizens – Ukrainians.

According to Himmler, the number of Ukrainians should also decrease due to losses at the front, and those remaining in the army, along with the entire Red Army, will be destroyed.

Himmler said that Ukrainian civilians in the occupied territory must be reduced to a minimum. Himmler gave us instructions that in order to achieve this goal it is necessary: to arrest and exterminate as many Soviet civilians as possible under the guise of fighting against the anti-German movement. We must certainly destroy everyone who is in the slightest degree suspected of fighting against the Germans or resists our actions; to forcibly take part of the able-bodied population of Ukraine to Germany for hard labor³⁰.

Incredible as it may seem, the plan of genocide of the Soviet people (notionally Hitler's plan) had a latent alternative. What is even more surprising is that it was associated with Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister of the Eastern Occupied Territories. However, it was not a humanistic alternative. Only the idea of the main victims of the genocidal policy

²⁹ "Stenogramma protokola doprosa obergruppenfyurera SS i generala politzii, byvshego rukovoditelia SS i politzii v Pribaltike Ekkelna Fridrikha o politike natsistov v Pribaltike. 14 dekabria 1945 g. [Transcript of the interrogation protocol of SS-Obergruppenführer and Police General, former leader of the SS and Police in the Baltics Friedrich Jeckeln about the Nazi policy in the Baltics. December 14, 1945]," in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [109].

³⁰ "Protokol doprosa general-leitenanta politzii, byvshego nachalnika okhrannoï politzii i zhandarmerii v g. Kieve Sheera Paulya o politike natsistov na okkupirovannikh territoriiakh Ukrainy 20 dekabrya 1945 g. [Protocol of interrogation of Lieutenant General of Police, former Chief of the Security Police and Gendarmerie in Kyiv, Scheer Paul, about the policy of the Nazis in the occupied territories of Ukraine on December 20, 1945]," in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [132].

was different. Hitler adhered to the policy of genocide against the entire Soviet community, including the three East Slavic peoples – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. Rosenberg believed it was necessary to play the card of internal contradictions of the USSR peoples³¹.

He divided the Soviet territory into 7 regions – potential states under the German protectorate. The outlying peoples of the USSR were set against the Russians. It was supposed to deport Jews and undesirable ideological figures from other regions to the zone of settlement of Russians. It was against the Russians, as well as against the Jews, that the policy of genocide was supposed to be pursued, whereas the separatism of others was supposed to be supported. Apparently, the initial establishment of the Ukrainian state in Lvov was also connected with the existence of an alternative plan; this action was arbitrary, which greatly irritated the Führer, who cancelled the decisions taken. Rosenberg's alternative was not implemented, but it existed. Partly, the strategic line of a united action of the peoples against the Russian core would be succeeded by the activities of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Peoples headed by Yaroslav Stetsko³².

Plan of deportations

There are different views on whether the General plan “Ost” (the view of the policy of governance in the occupied eastern territories) was a single document or a collection of different documents, but in either interpretation, there was intention of genocide. One may object that the plan was designed for 30 years and therefore cannot be considered an implementable program. However, only course of the war made its implementation impossible; but, as indicated above, genocide is revealed not only as practice, but also as intent to implement. The “Ost” plan was derived from the geopolitical concept of the struggle of the German race for living space. Based on the view of the prospects for expanding living space eastward, the corresponding territories were to be cleared for settlement by Germans and racially related peoples. The “clearing of territories” could be carried out by three methods – the extermination of the local population, its Germanization, and deportations. German authorities calculated the proportions for the Slavic peoples as well as the proportion of the groups subject to resettlement. The resettlement of the Slavs to Asia assumed their subsequent historical disappearance. At the same time, they noted the difficulties with the resettlement of the Russians. In part, the problem with them was supposed to be solved by measures leading to a reduction in the birth rate. Measures aimed specifically at reducing the birth rate, according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, also qualify as genocide, along with the direct destruction of representatives of the corresponding community. In fact, it was a question of a fundamental change in the ethnic structure of Eastern Europe space, which cannot be classified otherwise than the intent of genocide; it was the entire Soviet community in the totality of its ethnic components which was supposed to be the victims of the planned genocide³³.

³¹ *Politicheskii dnevnik Alfreda Rozenberga, 1934–1944 gg.* [Political Diary of Alfred Rosenberg, 1934–1944] (Moscow: Fond ‘Istoricheskaiia pamyat,’ Assotsiatsiia knigoizdatelei ‘Russkaia kniga’ Publ., 2015).

³² A.R. Dyukov, “Free Ukrainian state in close ties with the Great German Reichom: instructions by A. Rozenberg for Reichom soldiers in the occupied territories of the USSR, May 1941,” *Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies* 4 (2019): 112–130, <https://doi.org/10.24411/2409-1413-2019-10046>

³³ D. Aikhkholtz, “Germany's goals in the war against the USSR,” *Modern and Contemporary History*, no. 6 (2002): 62–89; L.A. Bezymenskii, *Germanskie generali – s Gitlerom i bez nego* [German Generals - With and Without Hitler] (Moscow: Mysl Publ., 1964); V.N. Bogdanov, “German Plans in the War against the USSR,” *MGIMO Review of International Relations*, no. 3 (2011): 113–123; “Zamechaniia i predlozheniia ‘Vostochnogo ministerstva’ po generalnomu planu Ost [Comments and suggestions of the ‘Eastern Ministry’ on the general plan of Ost],” in *Bankrotstvo strategii germanskogo fashizma. Istoricheskie ocherki, dokumenty*

Plan for organized famine

The provision of the 1948 UN Convention on classifying as genocide the creation of conditions aimed at the physical destruction, in whole or in part, of a given community was implicit, above all, by the Nazi famine plan. It was the organized famine that Nazi Germany initially relied on in its policy of genocide in the East. The author of this idea was Herbert Backe, a native of the city of Batumi, State Secretary and then Minister of Food and Agriculture. According to his forecasts, in the near future Germany was to face the immediate problem of its own shortages. Its solution was seen in the use of food resources of the Soviet Union and, above all, Ukraine, for which it was assumed that millions of “racially inferior population” of the eastern territories could be exterminated. According to Backe's plan, this could be achieved by depriving a significant part of the Soviet population, above all, the population of large cities, of food supplies³⁴. The number of people who died of famine in the Soviet territories during the period of German occupation ranges in historiography from 3 to 7 million people. This was less than Backe had assumed; he planned that it would amount to 20-30 million “unnecessary people.” Unlike the spontaneous famine, the victims of the famine of the German occupation were pre-planned. At the meeting of the headquarters of the “Oldenburg” plan (the economic project of the Barbarossa plan), which was held in May 1941 and was entrusted to Goering, it was pointed out that as a result of the food export to Germany, “tens of millions of people will undoubtedly die of starvation.”³⁵ According to the testimony of G. Heinisch during the interrogation, the occupation forces confiscated 75% of the food from the peasants of Ukraine³⁶.

The famine plan was also directed towards blockaded Leningrad. As A.R. Dyukov convincingly showed in his research, mass mortality in the city was purposefully organized by the enemy. The Nazi leadership ordered not to accept the capitulation of Leningrad. The city's population was supposed to die of starvation and disease. “There is no doubt that Leningrad must die of starvation,”³⁷ Quartermaster General E. Wagner summarized the German military's discussion of the fate of Leningrad. On September 16, 1941, in a conversation with the German ambassador to France O. Avetz A. Hitler described the plan for the Leningrad blockade as follows:

The poisonous nest of Petersburg, from which poison has been “gushing” into the Baltic Sea for so long, must disappear from the face of the earth. The city is already blockaded; now all that remains is to shell it with artillery and bomb it until the water supply, energy centers and everything necessary for the life of people are destroyed³⁸.

i materialy (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1973), 30–41; G. Picker, S. Haffner, *Plan ‘Ost.’ Kak pravilno podelit Rossiю* [Plan ‘Ost.’ How to divide Russia correctly] (Moscow: Algoritm Publ., 2011).

³⁴ E.N. Yakovlev, *Voina na unichtozhenie. Tretii reikh i genotsid sovetского naroda* [War of Extermination. The Third Reich and the Genocide of the Soviet People] (St. Petersburg: Piter Publ., 2022).

³⁵ A.R. Dyukov, “Participation of Baltic Collaborators in the Siege of Leningrad: Problems of Legal Qualification,” *Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies* 4 (2018): 108–132, <https://doi.org/10.24411/2409-1413-2018-10053>

³⁶ “Protokol doprosa obershturmbanfyurera SS, byvshego okruzhnogo komissara g. Mariupolya Khaynisha Georga Yuzefovicha o politike natsistov po kolonizatsii Ukrainy. 27 dekabrya 1945 g. [Interrogation protocol of SS-Obersturmbannführer, former district commissioner of Mariupol, Georg Yuzefovich Heinisch, about the Nazi policy of colonizing Ukraine. December 27, 1945],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [139].

³⁷ A.R. Dyukov, “Participation of Baltic Collaborators in the Siege of Leningrad: Problems of Legal Qualification,” *Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies* 4 (2018): 108–132, <https://doi.org/10.24411/2409-1413-2018-10053>

³⁸ M.I. Frolov, “Adolf Hitler: “The poisonous nest of Petersburg...must disappear from the face of the Earth,” *Military History Journal*, no. 9 (2001): 23–29.

Thus, it can be stated that the real famine-genocide, that is, an artificially organized famine, unlike the famine in the USSR in 1932–1933, was planned and organized in the Soviet territories by Nazi Germany. At the same time, despite the obviousness of the Nazis' use of famine as an instrument of genocide, not a single Western state (which without evidence accused the Soviet leadership of genocide against the Ukrainian people) made any assessments of the policy of Nazi Germany in the Soviet territories.

Fight against cultural and religious tradition

The removal of children from their parents and their transfer to another community for upbringing is defined by the 1948 UN Convention as one of the chief methods of genocide. During German occupation, was also removal of Slavic children who had signs of “Aryan nature.” It was necessary to take the natural Aryans beyond the framework of “barbarian culture” and inculcate in them with a German identity. There was a directive to Germanize that part of the Soviet community that could be Germanized. This part was insignificant, but it was singled out in the German racist doctrine and was subject to separation from the majority of “Untermenschen” of the Soviet Union³⁹.

The directive of removing children revealed the way of genocide through the destruction of the culture of the corresponding community. It could be achieved both by removing children from the cultural space and then by destroying that cultural space. In this perspective, the list of genocidal acts can include numerous precedents of the destruction of cultural monuments by the Nazis in the occupied territories. Many of the acts of vandalism were presented in the indictment of M.Yu. Raginsky during the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Blows were dealt not only to the bearers of culture, but also to cultural monuments. Among the historical and cultural monuments looted or destroyed were the following: near Leningrad, these were the Alexander Palace and the Catherine Palace in Pushkin; the Pavlovsk Palace in Pavlovsk; in Novgorod, these were the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, the Church of the Assumption, the Annunciation church, and the Millennium of Russia monument; in Smolensk – Ivano-Bogoslavsky, Spassky, Dukhovskiy, Pokrovskiy, Verkhne-Nikolsky, Vvedensky churches, the monument to Kutuzov, etc. In total, according to the Soviet prosecution, in the territory of the USSR the Nazis completely destroyed or partially damaged as follows: 1670 Orthodox churches, 69 chapels, 270 Roman Catholic churches, 4 mosques, 532 synagogues, 254 other buildings of cult. Thus, damage was inflicted on all confessions⁴⁰.

Seemingly, the Nazis who fought against the Soviet community were to destroy exclusively communist symbols, but the blow was aimed historically deeper, since in their understanding Soviet identity was also rooted in the historical past of the country.

Fight against Soviet identity

In the “UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” Soviet identity can be correlated with a national group of potential victims of genocide. In the USSR, the concept of nation was used virtually identical as to the concept of an ethnic group. The concept of “nationality” was used even closer to the designation of ethnicity. However, the Convention presents a clear division of groups into ethnic and national. With such a divisive interpretation a national group means belonging to the corresponding state, the entire community as a whole. Belonging to the state and the entire

³⁹ G. Picker, S. Haffner, *Plan ‘Ost.’ Kak pravilno podelit Rossiyu* [Plan ‘Ost.’ How to divide Russia correctly] (Moscow: Algoritm Publ., 2011).

⁴⁰ “Nuremberg Trials. Looting of Cultural Values,” Rossiiskoe agentstvo pravovoi i sudebnoi informatsii, accessed September, 1, 2024, https://rapsinews.ru/historical_memory_publication/20220928/308330101.html

community in the USSR was expressed by the concept of “Sovietness” or “Soviet people.” Accordingly, the proof of genocide against the entire Soviet people will correspond in the classification of the UN Convention to genocide against a national group⁴¹.

The UN Convention also indicates the potential possibility of committing genocide against representatives of a religious group whose identity is based on a defined system of worldview and faith. In this case, mass exterminations are committed for a group's adherence to a certain system of views. It can be said that during the war, communists were also exterminated for their adherence to a certain system of views, namely, communist ones. In a strictly legal sense, it is difficult to define the communist ideology as a religion, but a direct comparison of the mass extermination of communists with the genocide of representatives of religious groups is possible and appropriate.

Speaking to the top military command on July 31, 1940, Hitler made, according to Halder, a statement that their goal was to liquidate Russia. The deadline was the spring of 1941. After Hitler's speech, there began the practical development of the plan for the future war, later known as the “Barbarossa plan.” It is noteworthy that the leader of the Nazis spoke about the destruction of Russia, rather than of the USSR. Certainly, it was not only the RSFSR that was supposed to be destroyed, but the use of the identifier “Russia” shows that the enemy thought in a civilizational sense and that German authorities considered the entire Soviet people as a common community, a successor to the previous modifications of Russian statehood.

The pace of achieving Hitler's goal of destroying Russia (by December 1941) meant that in the plan for the future war, it included radical means⁴².

In Hitler's speech to the generals on March 30, 1941, the ideological nature of the future war was emphasized. Its result was to be the destruction of Bolshevism, “Bolshevik commissars and the communist intelligentsia,” and it was ordered to take all measures against the emergence of new intelligentsia⁴³.

It was the elimination of the enemy's cultural layer that was seen as a means of combating the identity of the enemy community. It was assumed that the Russian people deprived of their cultural layer and assessed as “insufficiently strong” would disintegrate without a common set of unifying ideals⁴⁴.

The initial version of the plan for organizing governance in the occupied eastern territories reflected in the “Instructions for Special Areas” which were developed by the operational leadership headquarters of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht was presented in early March 1941; it was based on the traditional practice of military administration. However, Hitler sent the proposed version back for revision, drawing attention to the discrepancy between it and his vision of waging a war of extermination. The revised version of the Instructions was approved by Wilhelm Keitel on March 13, 1941. In the adopted version of the plan, the system of political governance established in the occupied territories was subordinated to the idea of “the final and decisive struggle of the two opposing political systems.” This meant, above all, the elimination of the bearers

⁴¹ V.E. Bagdasaryan, “Nation building or Empire building: fork approaches,” *Problem Analysis and Public Administration Projection Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014): 47–50; V.E. Bagdasaryan, S.I. Resnyanskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz kak tsivilizatsiia: ot rastsiveta do zakata: Kollektivnaia monografiia* [The Soviet Union as a Civilization: From Rise to Fall: Collective Monograph] (St. Petersburg: RHGA Publ., 2022).

⁴² F. Halder, *Voennyi dnevnik*; R.-D. Müller, *Vrag stoit na vostoke. Gitlerovskie plany voiny protiv SSSR v 1939 godu* [The Enemy Stands in the East. Hitler's War Plans Against the USSR in 1939] (Moscow: Piatyi Rim Publ., 2015).

⁴³ *Otkrovenii i priznaniia. Natsistskaia verkhushka o voine 'tretyego reikha' protiv SSSR. Sekretnye rechi. Dnevnik* [Revelations and confessions. The Nazi elite on the war of the ‘Third Reich’ against the USSR. Secret speeches. Diaries] (Moscow: Terra Publ., 1996); W. Vette, “War of Extermination: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust,” *Modern and Contemporary History*, no. 3 (1999): 72–79.

⁴⁴ F. Halder, *Voennyi dnevnik*.

of Bolshevik ideology – the communists. It was intended to combat ideological opponents by means of “preventive measures,” i.e. extermination based on suspicion of hostility⁴⁵.

Despite the involvement of various departments in waging the war of extermination, special functions for implementing the policy of genocide were assigned to the Einsatzgruppen. The presence of such groups testifies to the existence of a plan to commit genocide on the part of the Nazi leadership. In the occupied Soviet territory there operated four Einsatzgruppen, which distributed among themselves spatial zones of responsibility. In addition to identifying Jews, which was the task of the Einsatzgruppen in European countries, in the USSR they also identified communist and Komsomol activists. Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Security Main Office, pointed out in a note dated July 2, 1941 as follows:

There must be an elimination of: all functionaries of the Comintern (as well as all communist politicians), high- and mid-level party functionaries, as well as radically minded rank-and-file party members, members of the Central Committee, district committees, regional committees, people's commissars, Jews in party and government institutions, and other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, partisans, instigators, etc.)⁴⁶.

Thus, extermination based on ethnicity was combined with that based on ideological community.

On the eve of the war with the USSR, on June 6, 1941, in furtherance of Hitler's vision of the nature of the future war, the Wehrmacht High Command issued the order “On Commissars” (“Directive on the Treatment of Political Commissars”)⁴⁷. Political commissars were accused of initiating “barbaric Asian methods of waging the war.” The accusations of “barbarism” and “Asianism” revealed a combination of the ideological aspect of the war of extermination with the civilizational aspect – a war against barbarism and the racial aspect – a war against Asianism. According to the order, captured Soviet political workers were to be immediately executed as bearers of an alien ideology. The liquidation of commissars was justified by the prevention of their influence on other soldiers. It was pointed out that the system of international legal protection of prisoners of war did not apply to them. After the war, in their memoirs a number of German military men tried to present the matter in such a way that this order had been ignored in the army. However, numerous reports on the execution of commissars indicate the opposite. The order to liquidate commissars as bearers of ideas accepted as the basis of Soviet identity points directly to the directive of its destruction⁴⁸.

There were also directives that expanded the scope of the order's application. Thus, in particular, at the beginning of the war Colonel General Heinz Guderian, the head of the 2nd Panzer Group as part of Army Group Center, issued an explanatory order:

“Unjustified humanity towards communists and Jews is inappropriate. They must be mercilessly shot.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ “Instruktsiia ob osobykh oblastiakh k direktive № 21 (variant ‘Barbarossa’). 13 marta 1941 g. [Instructions on special areas to Directive № 21 (Barbarossa version). March 13, 1941],” in *Niurnbergskii protsess* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura Publ., 1989), 547–550.

⁴⁶ “Documents 22/6/1941 – 12/1941,” Yad Vashem. Holocaust Remembrance Center, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://www.yadvashem.org/ru/education/resources/documents/documents1941.html>

⁴⁷ “Prikaz Verkhovnogo komandovaniia vermakhta ot 6 iyunya 1941 g. otnositelno obrashcheniia s politicheskimi komissarami Sovetskoi Armii [Order of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht of June 6, 1941 regarding the treatment of political commissars of the Soviet Army],” in *Politiko-strategicheskoe sodержanie planov Tretyego reikha v otnoshenii SSSR: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole Publ., 2015), 252–253.

⁴⁸ O.G. Nekrylova, M.E. Kuznetsov, “The ‘Order of Commissars’ and its performance during the Great Patriotic War,” *Problems of Social and Human Sciences* 2, no. 23 (2020): 121–125.

⁴⁹ A. Shneer, “‘The Commissar Order’ – the legal justification for the extermination of Soviet Jewish prisoners of war,” *Jewiverse*, accessed September, 1, 2024, https://www.jewiverse.ru/RED/Shneyer/glava1os_v%5B2%5D.htm

Thus, not only commissars but also ordinary communists were to be executed. Communists were equated with Jews. Thus, two groups of the implemented genocide policy were indicated: ethnic – Jews and ideological – communists. The fact of the extermination of these people was indicated during the interrogation on January 17, 1946, by Eberhard von Kurowski, Lieutenant General of the 110th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht; he also noted that according to the order, all of them were to be “mercilessly eliminated without exception.”⁵⁰

The issue of the Holocaust, the genocide of the Jews, has been described in sufficient detail both in the West and in Russia, which is fundamentally important part of the memory of the tragedy that took place. However, the issue of the mass extermination of communists has paradoxically remained unexplored. For the West, for obvious reasons, focusing on it was undesirable. In the USSR, the fact of this extermination was well known, but in terms of genocide this issue was not covered properly. However, today, bearing in mind, in particular, the Law on Decommunization in Ukraine⁵¹, the policy of decommunization in other post-socialist states, the reminding of the mass extermination of communists by the German Nazis and the drawing of corresponding historical parallels are of fundamental importance.

The extermination of communists as the core of Soviet identity falls under the characteristics of genocide, and ignoring this problem distorts the true picture of the crimes committed by the Nazis. Members of the Bolshevik Party (regardless of nationality) were put on a special register immediately upon the establishment of the occupation regimes on whose territory the executions were carried out. According to numerous testimonies, the policy of mass extermination of Soviet communists began in the spring of 1943. On May 21, 1943, V.N. Merkulov, the People's Commissar of State Security of the USSR reported to head of the Chief Political Directorate of the Red Army A.S. Shcherbakov that “families of communists and Soviet activists previously registered are shot together with their children.”⁵² Stalino resident N.T. Antontseva testified during the interrogation:

By order of command, all party members were registered, including those who had left the party many years ago. These people were also executed, at first individually or in small groups, and then, beginning from March 1943, the executions became of mass character. Mass shootings of communists took place in the camp at the Petrovsky mine, where all the politically unreliable people were driven, in the camp at the Stalino stock yard, and other places⁵³.

⁵⁰ V.S. Khristoforov, “Protokol doprosa general-leitenanta E. fon Kurovski. 17 ianvary 1946 g. [Interrogation protocol of Lieutenant General E. von Kurowski. January 17, 1946],” in *Vermakht na sovetsko-germanskom fronte. Sledstvennye i sudebnye materialy iz arkhivnykh ugovolnykh del nemetsikh voennoplennykh. 1944–1952* (Moscow: Knizhnitsa Publ.; Russkii put Publ., 2011), 294–301.

⁵¹ Law of Ukraine ‘On the condemnation of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and the prohibition of propaganda of their symbols’, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, accessed September, 1, 2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220304035916/https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/317-19#Text>

⁵² “Soobshchenie narodnogo komissara gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR Merkulova V.N. natchalniku Glavnogo politicheskogo upravleniia Krasnoi armii Shcherbakovu A.S. o nachale v g. Kieve prinuditelnoi mobilizatsii na rabotu v Germaniiu muzhchin i zhenshchin, rodivshikhsya v 1922–1923 gg. 21 maia 1943 g. [Message of the People's Commissar of State Security of the USSR Merkulov V.N. Chief of the Main Political Department of the Red Army A.S. Shcherbakov at the beginning in Kiev forced mobilization of men and women born in 1922–1923 to work in Germany. May 21, 1943],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [441].

⁵³ “Protokol doprosa svidetelya Antontseva N.T. o zlodeianiyakh, sovershennykh natsistami v otnoshenii mirnogo naseleniia okkupirovannogo Donbassa, i o nanesennom materialnom usherbe gorodam i predpriatiyam regiona. 19 dekabrya 1945 g. [Interrogation protocol of witness Antontsev N.T. about the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the civilian population of the occupied Donbass, and about the material damage caused to the cities and enterprises of the region. December 19, 1945],” in *Natsizm. Dokumentalnye svidetelstva prestuplenii: sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2023), [343].

The extermination of communists by the Nazi occupation authorities certainly does not fall under the classical interpretation of genocide as extermination based on the principle of belonging to an ethnic, national or religious community. However, in the two decades following the Russian Revolution, communist ideology and the broader identity of the Soviet community merged. Accordingly, in the realities of the Great Patriotic War the extermination of the bearers of communist ideas was a fight against the Soviet identity – representatives of its most active part, which can be considered an analogue of genocide based on the principle of belonging to the corresponding civil nation. The development of the theme of genocide based on the principle of civilizational affiliation (“civilizational genocide”) would allow characterizing the genocidal policy of Nazi Germany and its historical analogues more accurately.

Conclusion

Thus, the conducted correlation of the actions, propaganda, and policy goals of Nazi Germany and its allies in the occupied territory of the USSR with the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” allows us to assert the obvious fact of that genocide, which had an integral focus on the destruction of the Soviet community of peoples and the identity associated with it, had been conducted. The conclusion about the presence of such an integral focus allows us to openly assert the justification for using the concept of “genocide of the Soviet people.” The enemies of the Soviet people sought to destroy an entire civilizational community marked in the corresponding historical period by the Soviet identifier. At present, in the context of the spread of Russophobia in the world, including the occasional use of the practices of the so-called “cancel culture” in some Western countries, it is important to record the historical fact of the “genocide of the Soviet people” as one of the gravest atrocities in the history of mankind.

The genocide of the Soviet people was manifested in the widest possible range of forms:

- massacres;
- organized famine;
- forced displacement from the territory of residence;
- destruction of cultural traditions and monuments;
- destruction of the core of identity and bearers of ideological ideas;
- attempts to destroy civilizational unity.

There were those directly guilty of committing genocide; there were also those who indirectly contributed to it. There was a majority of the population of the aggressor countries that shared the ideology of racial superiority. Previously, for reasons of political correctness, this broader responsibility for these acts was not mentioned. Now that neo-Nazism is on the rise, it is no longer possible to ignore this guilt and to avoid speaking about the responsibility for the crimes committed.

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