

## **The Jäger Report: An Invaluable Source of the Efficiency of *Einsatzkommando 3 (Einsatzgruppe A)* that Illustrates the Annihilation by Bullets of Jewish Men, Women, and Children in Lithuania**

### **El informe Jäger: una fuente inestimable de la eficacia del *Einsatzkommando 3 (Einsatzgruppe A)* que ilustra la aniquilación a balazos de hombres, mujeres y niños judíos en Lituania**

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#### **Abstract**

The *Einsatzgruppen* massacres mark a turning point in the mass extermination of Jewish men, women, and children during the Shoah. The Jäger report is one of the most detailed sources of the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres; it thoroughly details the killings of 137,448 victims (the total number of victims given in the report is inaccurate), of whom 135,392 are Jewish victims and 2,056 are non-Jewish victims. The disproportion between Jewish victims (98.5 percent) and non-Jewish victims (1.5 percent) in the report is gigantic. The massacres of the Jäger report were carried out by *Einsatzkommando 3* of *Einsatzgruppe A* (with the enthusiastic collaboration of the Lithuanian auxiliary police), mainly in Lithuania, from July 4, 1941, to November 29, 1941, solely by bullets. Although there are in fact two Jäger reports (September 10 and December 1, 1941), in the present paper I focus on the later one, known as ‘the’ Jäger report. After briefly introducing Operation Barbarossa and describing the structure of the four *Einsatzgruppen*, I analyze the Jäger report, while emphasizing the high number of Jewish victims (who were slaughtered only because they were Jewish) versus the much lower number of non-Jewish victims (all of whom, except for one Roma/Sinti child and 48 children with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities –so-called ‘*Geisteskranke*’, do not include children). I argue that separating Jewish victims from non-Jewish victims is paramount to a serious research of both the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Shoah.

#### **Keywords**

Jäger report, *Einsatzgruppen*, *Einsatzgruppe A*, *Einsatzkommando 3*, Jewish victims, Shoah

#### **Resumen**

Las masacres de los *Einsatzgruppen* marcan un punto de inflexión en el exterminio masivo de hombres, mujeres y niños judíos durante la Shoah. El informe Jäger es una de las fuentes más detalladas sobre las masacres de los *Einsatzgruppen*; en él se detallan minuciosamente los asesinatos de 137.448 víctimas (el número total de víctimas que figura en el informe es incorrecto), de las cuales 135.392 son víctimas judías y 2.056

son víctimas no judías. La desproporción entre las víctimas judías (98,5 por ciento) y las no judías (1,5 por ciento) en el informe es gigantesca. Las masacres del informe Jäger fueron llevadas a cabo por el *Einsatzkommando 3* del *Einsatzgruppe A* (con la colaboración entusiasta de la policía auxiliar lituana), principalmente en Lituania, desde el 4 de julio de 1941 hasta el 29 de noviembre de 1941, únicamente a balazos. Aunque en realidad hay dos informes Jäger (10 de septiembre y 1 de diciembre de 1941), en el presente artículo me centro en el último, conocido como “el” informe Jäger. Tras presentar brevemente la *Aktion Barbarossa* y describir la estructura de los cuatro *Einsatzgruppen*, analizo el informe Jäger, al tiempo que hago hincapié en el elevado número de víctimas judías (que fueron masacradas solamente por ser judías) frente al número mucho menor de víctimas no judías (las cuales, salvo un niño romaní/sinti y 48 niños con discapacidades físicas, psíquicas e intelectuales –llamados ‘*Geistesranke*’–, no incluyen niños). Sostengo que separar a las víctimas judías de las no judías es primordial para una investigación seria tanto de los *Einsatzgruppen* como de la Shoah.

### Palabras claves

Informe Jäger, *Einsatzgruppen*, *Einsatzgruppe A*, *Einsatzkommando 3*, víctimas judías, Shoah

### Introduction

Operation Barbarossa (*Unternehmen Barbarossa*), June 22, 1941, the invasion of the Soviet Union, i. e., the eastern territories (Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) marked the beginning of the mass extermination of Jewish men, women, and children, mainly by bullets but also in gas vans (although *Einsatzkommando 3* did not use gas vans in the killings of the Jäger report, only shooting, since the first gas vans were delivered for the use of the *Einsatzgruppen* only in mid-December 1941). This horrific and dirty ‘job’ was carried out (proudly and efficiently) by the *Einsatzgruppen* [task forces]: “Four SiPo and SD especial SS *Einsatzgruppen* advanced with the front units of the German army, and one of their ‘special tasks’ was to murder Jews”.<sup>1</sup> The *Einsatzgruppen* “followed the Wehrmacht into Soviet territory where they rounded up Jews of all ages and killed them, usually by shooting them into mass graves”.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, “the murder of the Jews in the Soviet Union marked a quantum leap in the process of genocide”.<sup>3</sup>

The invasion of the eastern territories was a ‘war’ of total destruction against the ‘Jewish Bolshevik enemy’.<sup>4</sup> This grotesquely antisemitic invention of an ‘all-powerful’ (imaginary) ‘enemy’ gave carte blanche to mass murder Jewish men, women, and children: “The German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, marked the

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<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard Death Camps. Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, rev. and exp. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press & Yad Vashem, 2018), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Doris L. Bergen, “Antisemitism in the Nazi Era”, in *Antisemitism: A History*, eds. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 207.

<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Matthäus, “Controlled Escalation: Himmler’s Men in the Summer of 1941 and the Holocaust in the Occupied Soviet Territories,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 21, 2 (Fall 2007): 219.

<sup>4</sup> “In March 1941, in planning for their Soviet offensive, Hitler informed his generals that the coming struggle against the Soviets would be an ideological war in which no mercy would or should be granted to the enemy: the war was to be a race war against the Jewish Bolshevik Soviet Union”, Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, rev. ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 2001), 210.

beginning of a new phase ... the stage of total extermination”.<sup>5</sup>

One third of all victims of the Shoah were massacred by the *Einsatzgruppen*: “At least 1.5 million and possibly more than 2 million Holocaust victims died in mass shootings or gas vans in Soviet territory”.<sup>6</sup> Raul Hilberg gives a low estimate of 1,400,000 Jewish victims.<sup>7</sup> Operation Barbarossa is undoubtedly a turning point in the annihilation of the Eastern European Jewry.

Léon Poliakov calls the massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen* “*les exterminations ‘à ciel ouvert’*” [‘open-air’ exterminations];<sup>8</sup> and Patrick Desbois calls them “*la Shoah par balles*”<sup>9</sup> [the Holocaust by bullets]. While these definitions are useful for distinguishing the annihilation of millions of Jewish men, women and children in the six extermination camps (Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka II, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek)<sup>10</sup> from that of the *Einsatzgruppen*, they are also somewhat problematic because they obscure the use of gas vans in the *Einsatzgruppen* operations. Indeed, besides shooting, the *Einsatzgruppen* also used gas vans as a method of extermination (probably, 14-16 gas vans in total).<sup>11</sup> However, for the subject of the present paper, it is important to stress that *Einsatzkommando 3* did not use gas vans, only bullets.

Although it is true that possibly “no area of Holocaust studies has been more intensively researched and debated (...) than the nature and timing of the decisions that led to the emergence of the [so-called] Final Solution”,<sup>12</sup> we must bear in mind that the outcome for the Jewish victims was the same: death in the ghettos, death in the transports, death in the massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen*, and death by gassing in the six extermination camps: Chełmno (gas vans, exhaust fumes), Bełżec (gas chambers, exhaust fumes), Sobibór (gas chambers, exhaust fumes), Treblinka II (gas chambers, exhaust fumes), Birkenau (gas chambers, Zyklon B), and Majdanek (gas chambers, exhaust fumes and Zyklon B).

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<sup>5</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Introduction to *Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, eds. Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalit (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 1990<sup>4</sup>), 368.

<sup>6</sup> USHMM, “Einsatzgruppen: An Overview”.

<sup>7</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup> Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, Tome II. *L'Âge de la science* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1981), 525.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Desbois, *La Shoah par balles: la mort en plein jour* (Paris: Plon, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> The extermination camps were exclusively designed to annihilate ‘all’ European Jewish men, women, and children. During the Shoah, there were six extermination camps: Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka II, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek (although Birkenau and Majdanek were actually hybrid camps, i. e., extermination camps and concentration camps –it is important to stress that some historians do not consider Majdanek as an extermination camp). The distinction between extermination camp (*Vernichtungslager*) and concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager*), as well as the distinction between Jewish victims and non-Jewish victims, is crucial for understanding the Shoah.

<sup>11</sup> See Cameron Munro, “The Science and Engineering of Murder-The Nazi Gas Vans: 1939-1945”, Tiergarten 4 Association, May 11, 2023, <https://youtu.be/qbgfZSDjh68>

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 213.

Preparations for the invasion of the eastern territories can be traced in written documents dated March 13,<sup>13</sup> May 21,<sup>14</sup> and June 6,<sup>15</sup> 1941. Guidelines for the elimination of ‘enemies’ are written in Heydrich’s order of July 2, 1941. Once the massacres in the East were underway, the next step was the organization of the annihilation of ‘all’ European Jewish men, women, and children. According to Browning, “there were two decisions for [the] implementation [of the so-called ‘Final Solution’]: mid-July 1941 for the total mass murder of Soviet Jewry and early October for the Final Solution in German-occupied Europe”.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it is well-known that the “order of July 31 marks a turning point in anti-Jewish history”;<sup>17</sup> from there onwards, “centuries-old policy of expulsion was terminated and a new policy of annihilation was inaugurated”.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, neither the order of July 31, 1941 nor the decisions of October 1941 were sudden decisions, but rather the result of a genocidal idea proclaimed long before: “we are dealing not with a sudden decision but with the emergence of an idea”.<sup>19</sup> As early as 1939, Hitler announced the extermination of the Jews in his Reich speech of January 30, 1939. This speech should not be underestimated when researching the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres. Two millennia of Christian antisemitism embedded in the minds and hearts of ordinary people, eight years of indoctrination, and a sheer hatred against a sick and distorted image of ‘the Jew’ (which was a danger, a virus, an infection and a powerful enemy all at once) made possible, even easy, the annihilation of two million Jewish men, women and children by bullets (and in gas vans).

The *Einsatzgruppen* massacres were “disguised as cleansing operations (*Säuberungsaktionen*) and retaliatory actions (*Strafaktionen*), smoothly and without any interference, thus signaling the beginning of the ‘Final Solution’”.<sup>20</sup> Dehumanizing the victims made the horrific murders of Jewish men, women, and children possible: “Antisemitism, long embedded in German and European history and culture, served as an ideological driving force and, hence, precondition for mass murder”.<sup>21</sup> In the case of

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<sup>13</sup> “Within the area of Army operations the *Reichsführer SS* [Himmler] will be entrusted, on behalf of the Führer, with *special tasks* (...) Details will be worked out directly between the High Command of the Army and the *Reichsführer SS*”, translation of NOKW-2302, in *Documents on the Holocaust. Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, 4th ed., 375.

<sup>14</sup> “*Die Aufgaben der Einsatzgruppen und Einsatzkommandos der Sicherheitspolizei (SD) sind durch das Schreiben des OKH vom 26.3.1941 bereits festgelegt*” [The tasks of the *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommandos* of the *Sicherheitspolizei* (SD) have already been defined by the OKH (*Oberkommando des Heeres*, Upper Command of the Army) letter of March 26, 1941], “*Sonderauftrag des Führers*”, [Special order from the Führer], written by Himmler, RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 11-12.

<sup>15</sup> “In the fight against Bolshevism it is *not* to be expected that the enemy will act with the principles of humanity (...) In this battle it would be mistaken to show mercy,” translation of NOKW-484, in Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot (eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust*, 376-377.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Browning, “The Nazi Decision to Commit Mass Murder: Three interpretations. The Euphoria of Victory and the Final Solution, Summer-Fall 1941”, *German Studies Review* 17, 3 (1994): 473.

<sup>17</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 262.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>20</sup> Konrad Kwiet, “Rehearsing for Murder: The Beginning of the Final Solution in Lithuania in June 1941”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 12, 1 (Spring 1998): 3.

<sup>21</sup> Konrad Kwiet, “Rehearsing for Murder: The Beginning of the Final Solution in Lithuania in June 1941”, 3.

Lithuania (where the vast majority of the Jäger report massacres took place), antisemitism was deeply rooted in the population.<sup>22</sup>

There are two reports written by Karl Jäger;<sup>23</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 104–107, written in Kaunas on September 10, 1941, and ‘the’ Jäger report, RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 109-117, two copies of the same report, written in Kaunas on December 1, 1941.

In the first section of the present paper, I analyze the structure of the *Einsatzgruppen*. In the second section, a brief description of the 9-page Jäger report is provided. In the third section, the massacres carried out by Lithuanians on July 4 and 6 (and before July 4), 1941, are discussed. The fourth section analyzes the massacres from July 7 until August 8, 1941. The fifth section is consecrated to the murder of Jewish women and children from August 9-16, 1941, as a turning point. In the sixth section, I analyze the massacres from August 23 to August 31, 1941. The seventh section is dedicated to the September 1941 massacres. In the eighth section, the massacres from October and November are discussed. Sections 9, 10, 11, and 12 are dedicated to the massacres in Daugavpils (Latvia), Vilna (Ponary), eight more Lithuanian villages and cities, and Minsk. The thirteenth section is entitled: “*In Litauen gibt es keine Juden mehr, ausser den Arbeitsjuden incl. ihrer Familien*” [There are no more Jews in Lithuania, except for the working Jews and their families]. In the Conclusion, I stress the importance of separating Jewish victims from non-Jewish victims in order to have a clear understanding of the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres and the Shoah. To avoid falling into a historiography focused solely on the perpetrators (which often forgets, neglects, or overlooks the Jewish victims), I have interspersed throughout the paper testimonies of survivors of massacres of *Einsatzgruppen* A (although it is not possible to know whether they were perpetrated by *Einsatzkommando* 9 or *Einsatzkommando* 3) along with a testimony of a survivor who discusses the *Einsatzgruppen*.

## 1. The structure of the *Einsatzgruppen*

The official name of the *Einsatzgruppen* was ‘*die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (Sicherheitsdienst)*’ [the *Einsatzgruppen* of the Security Police and the Security Service].<sup>24</sup>

The number of men who were part of the *Einsatzgruppen* was extremely small: around 3,000-3,600 German and Austrian men. This number included SS officers, SiPo (*Sicherheitspolizei*: Gestapo and Kripo) and SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*).<sup>25</sup> By the end of July 1941, members of the Orpo (*Ordnungspolizei*) [Order Police] and Waffen SS (the

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<sup>22</sup> “Traditional forms of primitive antisemitism such as clerical antisemitism (identification of Jews as ‘Christ-killers’) and peasant-society antisemitism, based on the negative assessment of the traditional Jewish niche in the peasant economy (livestock and grain traders, petty merchants, tavern-keepers) were already well-entrenched in Lithuania,” Michael MacQueen, “The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 12, No 1 (Spring 1998): 29.

<sup>23</sup> Jäger was never tried for his crimes; he was arrested in 1959 but committed suicide while awaiting trial.

<sup>24</sup> The *Sicherheitspolizei* (abbreviated as SiPo) was divided into the *Kriminalpolizei* [Criminal Police] (abbreviated as Kripo) and the Gestapo (Political Police). Their members were avid antisemites and willing executioners. The *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) [Security Service] was an intelligence agency.

<sup>25</sup> “There were not many *Einsatzgruppen* men, and they required additional forces to execute the extermination *Aktionen*”, Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, 18.



military branch of the SS) were added to the *Einsatzgruppen*, constituting a killer strength of 20,000 German and Austrian men. These assassins (or ‘ordinary men’ and ‘ordinary Germans’, according to Browning and Goldhagen) also relied on the cooperation of the Wehrmacht<sup>26</sup> and on the enthusiastic participation of the Schuma (*Schutzmannschaft*, local collaborators recruited as police auxiliaries):<sup>27</sup> the “Germans were able to implicate others in the slaughter, and they were able to recruit squads among the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Latvians”.<sup>28</sup> The locals “were encouraged to murder the Jews –and appropriate their properties. Local collaborators were recruited as auxiliaries”.<sup>29</sup> Holocaust survivor and Lithuanian Jewish historian Dov Levin (Kaunas, 1925-Jerusalem, 2016) states that the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres carried out in Kaunas were mainly perpetrated by Lithuanians: “The word *Einsatzgruppe* we didn’t heard at the time”.<sup>30</sup> In many shtetls, “local populations were encouraged to murder the Jews”.<sup>31</sup> The murderers “often knew their victims, adding a further layer of horror to the massacres”.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres (including those of the Jäger report) could not have been carried out in such large numbers had it not been for the active, eager, and wholehearted collaboration of the local population: “Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians by the tens of thousands stepped up first as civilians, then as auxiliaries, and finally as uniformed elements of the German police to seize, guard, and often shoot the Jews living in their midst”.<sup>33</sup>

Wehrmacht’s assistance in the massacres must be emphasized: “there is no known document in which top representatives of the Wehrmacht, or even individual generals, express any objections to having the *Einsatzgruppen* operate behind the

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<sup>26</sup> “It would be impossible for the *Einsatzgruppen* to conduct a monumental killing operation ... without the wholehearted approval and cooperation of military authorities (...) In addition to facilitating the work of the *Einsatzgruppen*, in many instances the army went out of its way to turn over Jews to the *Einsatzgruppen* and to request their speedy dispatch. Moreover, the army frequently participated in the killing in order to get the job done quickly. The extermination program was popular with the generals”, Rubenstein and Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz*, 130. There was, indeed, a “[h]armonious cooperation between the SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Wehrmacht”, Alex Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941: Einsatzkommando 9 and the Annihilation of Soviet Jewry”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, vol. 27, 3 (Winter 2013): 429; “the *Einsatzgruppen* reported within the first few weeks the active participation of the army in the destruction process”, Ronald Headland, “The Einsatzgruppen: The Question of their initial Operations”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 4, 4 (1989): 404.

<sup>27</sup> “The Security Police [SiPo] employed only a small percentage of these auxiliaries. The great bulk of the helpers, eventually hundreds of thousands, were placed under the command of the Order Police [Orpo]. Native personnel augmenting the Order Police were designated the *Schutzmannschaft*. Mirroring the organization of the Order Police in Germany, the *Schutzmannschaft* could be found in cities, rural districts, and battalions. The stationary component of the *Schutzmannschaft* included Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Russians, Estonians, Lithuanians, and Latvians. The battalions, which were organized by nationality, did not contain ‘Russians’ but did include ‘Cossacks’. Each battalion had an authorized strength of about five hundreds”, Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933-1945* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 93.

<sup>28</sup> Richard L. Rubenstein and John K. Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 128; “The Wehrmacht was one of four independent hierarchies in the machinery of destruction,” Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Eastford: Martino Fine Books, 2019), 177-178.

<sup>29</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, 214-215.

<sup>30</sup> Dov Levin, “Oral history interview with Dov Levin”, interviewed by Randy M. Goldman, November 10, 1994, USHMM, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504793>

<sup>31</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, 214.

<sup>32</sup> Saul Friedländer, *The Years of the Extermination: Nazi Germany & the Jews 1939-1945* (London: Phoenix, 2008), 240.

<sup>33</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 198.

lines”.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the “[h]armonious cooperation between the SS-*Einsatzgruppen* and the Wehrmacht”<sup>35</sup> must be underlined: “the *Einsatzgruppen* reported within the first few weeks the active participation of the army in the destruction process”.<sup>36</sup>

The locations selected for these killings were either natural ravines, antitank ditches, or pits specially dug for the purpose. The Jews were concentrated at assembly points and taken in groups to the killing sites. As a rule, men were taken first, then the women, and finally the children. The victims were lined up either inside the ditch or at its edge; then they were shot. After one group had been killed, the next was brought over. In cities with large Jewish population, the killing sometimes went on for days or even weeks.<sup>37</sup>

Although Arad states that, as a general rule, Jewish men were slaughtered first, then Jewish women, and then Jewish children, it is important to highlight that Jewish mothers were almost always massacred along with their children, and that sometimes three generations of Jewish women were slaughtered at the same time.<sup>38</sup>

The *Einsatzgruppen* were organized in *Einsatzgruppe A*, *Einsatzgruppe B*, *Einsatzgruppe C*, and *Einsatzgruppe D*. Each *Einsatzgruppe* was attached to an Army Group (or, in the case of *Einsatzgruppe D*, to the German Eleventh army),<sup>39</sup> and “was to serve in a specific area (...) With the invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, the murder machine was ready”.<sup>40</sup>

The *Einsatzgruppen* were structured into *Einsatzkommandos* and *Sonderkommandos*: *Sonderkommandos* operated “in the ‘rear operation areas’ (*rückwärtige Armeegebiete*) close to the front, while the [*Einsatzkommandos*] operated in the ‘rear army areas’ (*rückwärtige Heeresgebiete*) somewhat further back”.<sup>41</sup> In addition, *Sonderkommandos* focused in securing NKVD and Red Army material and finding ‘communists’ and ‘spies’, while *Einsatzkommandos* were fully dedicated to massacring (however, many massacres were also committed by *Sonderkommandos*).

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<sup>34</sup> Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein, *The “Final Solution” in Riga. Exploitation and Annihilation, 1941-1944*, trans. Ray Brandon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 38.

<sup>35</sup> Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 429.

<sup>36</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Question of Their Initial Operations”, 404.

<sup>37</sup> Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard Death Camps*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Šķēde beach massacre, Liepāja, Latvia, December 15-17, 1941 (2,749 Jewish men, women, and children massacred), carried out by Einsatzkommando 2 of *Einsatzgruppe A*. See Yad Vashem Photo Archive 85DO2 in “December 15-17, 1941, Jewish women before their execution in Skede, Latvia”, Yad Vashem, <https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/this-month/december/1941-2.html>, and Matt Lebovic, “Harrowing Šķēde massacre photos help reframe Holocaust in German-occupied Latvia”, *The Times of Israel*, September 22, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/harrowing-skede-massacre-photos-help-reframe-holocaust-in-german-occupied-latvia/>

<sup>39</sup> “The first three *Einsatzgruppen*, A to C, were assigned respectively to the three Army Groups. North (for the Baltic), Center (for Belorussia), and South (for northern and central Ukraine). *Einsatzgruppe D* was assigned to the German Eleventh Army, which was set to advance together with the two Romanian armies through southern Ukraine, the Crimea, and the Caucasus”, Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 412.

<sup>40</sup> Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, 214.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, 225.

*Einsatzgruppe A* (led by Stahlecker –killed in March 1942) operated in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and the Leningrad district; its headquarters was in Riga.<sup>42</sup> It was structured in two *Sonderkommandos*: *Sonderkommando 1a* [Ia] and *Sonderkommando 1b* [Ib], and two *Einsatzkommandos*: *Einsatzkommando 2* [II] and *Einsatzkommando 3* [III] (*Einsatzkommando 3* is the subject of the Jäger report).<sup>43</sup> Even though the four *Einsatzkommandos* operated in Latvia at some point, “EK 3 operated in Lithuania, EK 1a in Estonia, ... EK 1b in Belorussia, ... [and] EK 2 ... in Latvia”.<sup>44</sup> With a strength of 990 (977 men and 13 female employees), *Einsatzgruppe A* “was the largest group. The smallest was *Einsatzgruppe D*, which had 400 to 500 men”.<sup>45</sup> From these 990 members, 340 were Waffen-SS, 172 motorcycle riders, 133 Orpo, 89 Gestapo, 87 *Hilfspolizei* [Auxiliary Police], 35 SD, 18 administrative staff, 41 Kripo, 51 interpreters, 13 ‘female employees’, 8 operators, and 3 teletype operators.<sup>46</sup> However, what is of interest here is the strength of *Einsatzkommando 3*, which had 141 members: 140 men and one woman: 34 drivers, 32 *Reservisten SS* [reservists SS], 29 Gestapo, 15 *Hilfspolizei* [auxiliary police] 10 Kripo, 10 SD, 8 interpreters, one administrative staff, one radio operator, and one female employee.<sup>47</sup>

*Einsatzgruppe B* (led by Nebe –hanged in March 1945 for his opportunistic participation in the July 20 plot) operated in Belorussia and Smolensk; its headquarters was in Smolensk. It had an “initial strength of 665 men”<sup>48</sup> and it was structured in two *Sonderkommandos* (*Sonderkommando 7a* [VIIa] and *Sonderkommando 7b* [VIIb]) and two *Einsatzkommandos* (*Einsatzkommando 8* [VIII] and *Einsatzkommando 9* [IX]).

*Einsatzgruppe C* (led by Rasch –indicted and released; he died at his home in 1948) operated in Northern and central Ukraine; its headquarters was in Kiev. *Einsatzgruppe C* perpetrated the Babyn Yar massacre (September 29-30, 1941), in which 33,771 Jewish men, women and children shot in two days, as well as the Lubny massacre (October 16, 1941): 4,500 Jewish victims. It was structured in two *Sonderkommandos* (4a [IVa] and 4b [IVb]) and two *Einsatzkommandos* (5 [V] and 6 [VI]).

*Einsatzgruppe D* (led by Ohlendorf –executed by hanging in 1951) operated in Southern Ukraine, Crimea, and North Caucasus; its headquarters was in Piatra-Neamt (Romania). By July 17, 1941, it was structured in two *Sonderkommandos* (10a [Xa] and 10b [Xb]), and two *Einsatzkommandos* (11 [XI] and 12 [XII]).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “Einsatzgruppe A was designated for the Baltic region and northern Russia and assigned to Army Group North”, Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein, *The “Final Solution” in Riga*, 42.

<sup>43</sup> “Einsatzgruppe A was made up of a command staff, *Sonderkommandos* 1a and 1b (Sk 1a and Sk 1b) and *Einsatzkommandos* 2 and 3 (Ek 2 and Ek 3)”, Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein, *The “Final Solution” in Riga*, 44.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941-1944. The Missing Center* (Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia and USHMM, 1996), 392.

<sup>45</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 189.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941-1944*, 392 (based on the Stahlecker report of October 15, 1941, Appendices 1a and 1b).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>48</sup> Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 412.

<sup>49</sup> Most German documents use Roman numerals to designate the *Sonderkommandos* and *Einsatzkommandos*; but since the Jäger report uses Arabic numerals to designate *Einsatzkommando 3*, I have chosen to use Arabic numerals to designate the *Sonderkommandos* and *Einsatzkommandos* of the four *Einsatzgruppen*.



Usually, the Jewish victims were taken by truck to the ditches and slaughtered there. Holocaust survivor William Good (Wowa Zev Gdud, 1924–2020) recounts the massacres at Ponary (Paneriai), carried out by either *Einsatzkommando* 9 (July 1941) or *Einsatzkommando* 3 (from August 1941 onwards):

They put us on trucks ... and took us outside Vilna about ... 10 km or so. And that was Ponar [Ponary] ... And that time, nobody knew about the place. When we arrived there, there was a huge mass grave, a huge ditch prepared, and there were two machine guns facing the truck ... there was a German with a camera who was supervizing the operation [...] Drunk Lithuanians, some of them in uniforms, some of them in civilian clothes, were using a hand gun to shoot in the back of the head of the victim. The others in the truck were standing there in disbelief, and frozen, and when my turn came I went towards the grave ... with terror in my heart and shortly before the ditch I simply fell and ... there was a synchronous shot [...] [The Lithuanians] were all drunk, so they took the next victims ... who fell on top of me; it was a terrible sensation to sense the agony of the dying man who was shot. The trucks were coming and the people were being shot; this went on for hours and hours.<sup>50</sup>

After all the victims had been shot, the perpetrators fired several bullets at them, as some of the victims were still alive. William Good managed to escape from under the bodies. He was 17 years old.

## 2. The 9-page Jäger report

Among all the Operational Situation Reports, the Jäger report is, along with the Stahlecker report of October 15, 1941, one of the most detailed accounts on the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres. The original “is held at the Special Archive for Preservation of Historical Documents of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Collection 500, series 1, folder 25”.<sup>51</sup> The report is classified: “*Geheime Reichssache!*” [Secret Reich Matter!] Five copies of this report were made. The fourth and fifth copies survived: RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy) and RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 119-127 (fifth copy).

The 9-page Jäger report lists the massacres of *Einsatzkommando* 3 of *Einsatzgruppe* A from July 4, 1941, to November 29, 1941, in great detail (although with some errors), including 4,000 Jewish victims killed in pogroms before July 4 listed in the report from September 10, 1941 and added at the end of the sixth page of the Jäger report from December 1, 1941 –Figure 6. Indeed, the “Germans also encouraged the local population to launch pogroms and spontaneous massacres”.<sup>52</sup> As Hilberg point out, “[t]he Baltic volunteers had become tools. They had killed and many of their victims, their own Jewish neighbors, were buried in Baltic soil”.<sup>53</sup> In Kaunas there were pogroms already one day before the Germans occupied the city on June 24, 1941: “As early as 23 June 1941 –thus even the arrival of the first Wehrmacht combat units– pogroms lasting several days erupted in Kovno, during which Lithuanian partisans

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<sup>50</sup> William Good, Testimony, interviewed by Peggy Laine, January 7, 1996. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation. <https://sfi.usc.edu/>

<sup>51</sup> Michael MacQueen, “The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania”, 41.

<sup>52</sup> Richard L. Rubenstein and John K Roth, *Approaches to Auschwitz*, 128.

<sup>53</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 198-199.

murdered an unknown number of Jews”.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the antisemitism that already existed in Lithuania and that crystallized in bloody pogroms was an indispensable weapon for the effective massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen* against Jewish men, women, and children, which were organized by the Germans and fully assisted by the Lithuanians (see the appalling numbers of Jewish victims in Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

Figure 1. First page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy) Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-002.

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<sup>54</sup> Ruth Leiserowitz, “Memel Territory”, in *The Greater German Reich and the Jews. Nazi Persecution Policies in the Annexed Territories 1935-1945*, ed. Wolf Gruner and Jörg Osterloh, trans. Bernard Heise (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 151.

Figure 2. Second page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy). Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-003.

Figure 3. Third page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy). Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-004.

Figure 4. Fourth page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy). Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-005.





Figure 5. Fifth page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110–117 (fourth copy). Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-006.

Figure 6. Sixth page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110–117 (fourth copy) Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-007.

The last three pages of the report describe the condition of the ‘*Arbeitsjuden*’ [working Jews] remaining in Šiauliai, Kaunas, and Vilna, and depict the ‘organization’ of the *Aktionen*.

Figure 7. Seventh page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy) Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-008.

Figure 8. Eighth page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110–117 (fourth copy) Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-009.

Figure 9. Ninth and last page of the 2nd Jäger report (December 1, 1941). RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 110-117 (fourth copy) Bundersarchiv. Bild 183-B0716-0005-010.

One of the officers of *Einsatzkommando 3* was Hamann (1913-1945, he committed suicide after the war); the report states that he appointed 8-10 men from *Einsatzkommando 3* to carry out the massacres listed in the Jäger report, with the collaboration of Lithuanian nationalists: “*Nach Aufstellung eines Rollkommandos unter Führung von SS-Ostuf.Hamann [sic] und 8-10 bewährten Männern des EK.3 wurden nachfolgende Aktionen in Zusammen-arbeit mit den lit.Partisanen [sic]*



*durchgeführt*".<sup>55</sup> [After setting up a mobile commando under the leadership of SS-*Obersturmführer* Hamann and 8-10 trusted men of the EK.3, the following actions were carried out in cooperation with Lithuanian partisans]. Nevertheless, *Einsatzkommando* 3 had a strength of 140 men and one woman (thus, the massacres were carried out by many more people, not just 8–10 men). Although all were perpetrators, not all were 'killers' (as we have seen before, some were drivers and translators).

Even if the report pretends to be a complete tabulation of the executions carried out up to December 1, 1941 ("*Gesamtaufstellung der im Bereich des EK. 3 bis zum 1. Dez. 1941 durchgeführten Exekutionen*,")<sup>56</sup> [Complete list of the executions carried out in the area of EK. 3 up to Dec. 1, 1941], it is important to highlight that the last massacre of the Jäger report was carried out on November 29, 1941 (not on December 1).

Although Jäger states that 137,346 victims were massacred by Ek 3, all victims added together are 137,448. Once again, it is crucial to distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish victims, since the vast majority of the victims are Jewish. 'Only' 2,056 victims are non-Jewish victims, of whom 'only' 49 are children (one Roma/Sinti child and 48 victims with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities). The rest, 135,392, are Jewish victims (men, women, children, and babies).

The vast majority of the Jäger report massacres took place in Lithuania. However, "more than 12,600 of [the victims] were killed outside Lithuania"<sup>57</sup> (in Daugavpils, Latvia, and the Minsk region, in Belorussia).

As MacQueen states, the report is "inaccurate in citing the execution figures for the areas in [Jäger's] jurisdiction (...) [The] Jews killed at the time of the enclosure of the Vilnius ghettos (September 6, 1941) [are not mentioned]".<sup>58</sup> Moreover, "Jäger is also inaccurate in terms of the Jews left alive as of December 1941 (39,500 divided among the ghettos in Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai",<sup>59</sup> since he did not know that some Jewish men and women avoided registration. Notwithstanding the inaccuracy of the figures, the Jäger report is a proof of German and Lithuanian atrocities against the Jewish people in Lithuania, as it provides "a picture of a systematic program of extermination".<sup>60</sup>

According to Dina Porat, "the fate of Lithuanian Jewry [was] unique".<sup>61</sup> The "systematic overall extermination of Jewish communities one after the other ... began in Lithuania."<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the "persecution and killing of the Jews began within hours of the

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<sup>55</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 110 & 119 (p. 1).

<sup>56</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 110 & 119 (p. 1).

<sup>57</sup> Michael MacQueen, "The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania," 41.

<sup>58</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Headland, "The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Question of their Initial Operations", 404.

<sup>61</sup> Dina Porat, "The Holocaust in Lithuania. Some unique aspects", in *The Final Solution. Origins and Implementation*, ed. David Cesarani (London: Routledge, 1994), 159.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*.

[German] invasion of Lithuania”.<sup>63</sup> By December 1941, eighty percent of the Jewish men, women, and children in Lithuania had been murdered. Abba Kovner “predicted... ‘The Jews of Lithuania are fated to be the first in line.’ And so they were”.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, about “95 percent ... of this Jewish group was [ultimately] murdered”.<sup>65</sup> In November-December 1939, “there were 265,000 Jews in Lithuania, out of whom 254,000 were killed”.<sup>66</sup>; of “the 220,000 Jews living in Lithuania at the beginning of the German attack, only some 8,000 survived”.<sup>67</sup> Almost half of the murders of all Jewish men, women, and children in Lithuania are listed in the Jäger report.

**3. The massacres carried out by Lithuanians before July 4, and on July 4 and 6, 1941**

At the beginning of the first Jäger report, two entries with a total of 4,000 Jewish victims are listed (3,200 and 800 Jewish men), killed in pogroms by Lithuanian partisans.<sup>68</sup> Antisemitism (along with greed<sup>69</sup>) was the cause of these bloodbaths: “Beginning with the German invasion ..., Lithuanian antisemitism manifested itself in pogroms spanning over forty cities and villages, or fully one-quarter of all Jewish communities”.<sup>70</sup> Lithuanian Jewry dated back at least six centuries (from the 14th century) and had existed for many generations; however, this fact did not prevent the killing of Jews from becoming a ‘hobby’ for Lithuanian nationalists: “the vast majority of the Lithuanian population greeted the German army with great enthusiasm. Many Lithuanians –particularly members of the ... L.A.F [*Lietuvių Aktivistų Frontas*, Lithuanian Activist Front] willingly cooperated with the Germans”.<sup>71</sup>

4,000 Jewish men	0 non-Jewish victims
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Table 1. Pogroms perpetrated by Lithuanians before July 4, 1941.

It is important to note that these figures appear to be rounded. These massacres are listed on page 6 of ‘the’ Jäger report: “Vor der Übernahme der sicherheitspol. Aufgaben durch das EK.3, 4 000 Juden durch Pogrome und Exekutionen – ausschliesslich von Partisanen – liquidiert”<sup>72</sup> [Before the takeover of the security police

<sup>63</sup> Christoph Dieckmann and Saulis Sužiedėlis, *Lietuvos žydų persekiojimas ir masinės žudynės 1941 m. vasarą ir rudenį: šaltiniai ir analizė / Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews During Summer and Fall 1941* (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2006), 97.

<sup>64</sup> Dina Porat, “The Holocaust in Lithuania. Some unique aspects”, 159.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>66</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>67</sup> Konrad Kwiet, “Rehearsing for Murder: The Beginning of the Final Solution in Lithuania in June 1941”, 4.

<sup>68</sup> “In Kaunas in late June 1941, there were over 3,360 registered partisans”, Michael MacQueen, “The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania”, 37.

<sup>69</sup> A Pole who lived near Ponary (Paneriai) wrote in his diary: “To the Germans, 300 Jews means 300 enemies of humanity. To the Lithuanians it means 300 pairs of pants, 300 pairs of boots”, Michael MacQueen, “The Context of Mass Destruction: Agents and Prerequisites of the Holocaust in Lithuania”, 36.

<sup>70</sup> Konrad Kwiet, “Rehearsing for Murder: The Beginning of the Final Solution in Lithuania in June 1941”, 11.

<sup>71</sup> Dov Levin, *The Litvaks. A Short History of the Jews in Lithuania*, trans. Adam Teller (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000), 37-38.

<sup>72</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 114 & 124 (p. 6).

tasks by EK 3, 4,000 Jews were liquidated through pogroms and executions – exclusively by partisans].

The Jäger report indicates that *Einsatzkommando 3* (hereinafter Ek 3) started its operations on July 2, 1941: “Übernahme der sicherheitspolizeilichen Aufgaben in Litauen durch das Einsatzkommando 3 am 2.Juli 1941”,<sup>73</sup> [Takeover of Security Police duties in Lithuania by *Einsatzkommando 3* on July 2, 1941] and states that Ek 3 took over the Vilnius area on August 9, 1941 (which, until then, was under *Einsatzkommando 9*) and the Schaulen area on October 2, 1941 (which, until then, was under *Einsatzkommando 2*).

The Jewish victims on July 4 and 6, 1941, were shot by Lithuanian partisans under Jäger's orders at the Seventh Fort of the Kaunas fortress: “The killings carried out in the Seventh Fort could be heard throughout the city”.<sup>74</sup> On Friday, July 4, 1941, 416 Jewish men (“*Juden*”)<sup>75</sup> and 47 Jewish women (“*Jüdinnen*”)<sup>76</sup> were murdered; on Sunday, July 6, 1941, 2,514 Jewish men were murdered. The first Jäger report specifies that the victims on July 6 were “*Juden durch Maschinengewehr*” [Jews through machine guns].<sup>77</sup>

2,977 Jewish victims (2,930 men and 47 women)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Table 2. Massacres on July 4 and July 6, 1941.

#### 4. The massacres from July 7 to August 8, 1941

According to the Jäger report, from Monday, July 7 until Monday, July 28, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 700 Jewish victims (628 Jewish men and 72 Jewish women). The number of non-Jewish victims is 130. The massacres took place in Marijampolė, Girkalnis, Vandžiogala, Kaunas (Fort VII), Babtai, Panevėžys, Kėdainiai, Panevėžys (Lithuania).

700 Jewish victims (628 men and 72 women)	130 non-Jewish victims
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Table 3. Massacres from July 7 to July 28, 1941.

According to the Jäger report, from Tuesday, July 29 until Friday, August 8, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 3,000 Jewish victims (2,632 Jewish men and 368 Jewish women). The number of non-Jewish victims is 50. The massacres took place in Raseiniai, Ariogala, Utena, Vandžiogala, and Ukmergė (Lithuania).

3,000 Jewish victims (2,632 men and 368 women)	50 non-Jewish victims
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Table 4. Massacres from July 29 to August 8, 1941.

<sup>73</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 110 & 119 (p. 1).

<sup>74</sup> Christoph Dieckmann, and Saulis Sužiedėlis, *Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews During Summer and Fall 1941*, 138.

<sup>75</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 110 & 119 (p. 1).

<sup>76</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 110 & 119 (p. 1).

<sup>77</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 104 (p. 1).

5. A turning point. August 9-16, 1941: murdering Jewish women and children

Saturday, August 9 (or Saturday, August 16, it is not very clear) marks a turning point in the Jäger report. Why? Because from August 9/16, Jewish children were also massacred along with their mothers or their families. Even though “the escalation of the killing to include women and children –... the transition to genocide– has been for years a subject of intense debate among historians”,<sup>78</sup> it is certain that by mid-August Jewish children were massacred en masse by the *Einsatzgruppen* (one of the first *Einsatzkommandos* to massacre Jewish children was *Einsatzkommando 9* of *Einsatzgruppe B*).<sup>79</sup> According to Headland, by “22 June 1941 the leaders knew they were to kill the Jews”.<sup>80</sup>

The massacres in Raseiniai, which include Jewish children among the victims for the first time, are listed as: “9.bis 16.8.41”.<sup>81</sup> [9 to 16.8.41]. The victims in this entry are 294 Jewish women (“*Jüdinnen*”<sup>82</sup>) and 4 Jewish children (“*Judenkinder*”);<sup>83</sup> however, this entry ‘only’ lists 4 Jewish children and comes after the entry of August 15-16. The number of victims on August 15 and 16 in Rokiškis is overwhelming: 3,200 “*Juden, Jüdinnen und J-Kinder*”,<sup>84</sup> nevertheless, no details are given as to how many victims are Jewish men, how many Jewish women and how many Jewish children (only from August 23 onwards, the Jewish victims are clearly listed separately as ‘*Jude*’, ‘*Jüdinnen*’ and ‘*Judenkinder*’).

According to the Jäger report, from Saturday, August 9 to Friday, August 22, 1941, Ek 3 massacred a total of 8,737 Jewish victims. The number of non-Jewish victims is 1,062 (Russians, Lithuanians, a few Poles, five Roma and Sinti –including one child, and victims with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities, so-called “*Geisteskranke*”,<sup>85</sup> including 48 children). The massacres took place in Kaunas (Fort IV), Panevėžys, Utena, Alytus, Jonava, Rokiškis, Raseiniai, Ukmergė (Lithuania), and Daugavpils (Latvia). These figures also include victims from an entry from June 27 to August 14.

8,737 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	1,062 non-Jewish victims (including one Roma/Sinti child and 48 children with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities).
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Table 5. Massacres from August 9 to August 22, 1941.

6. The massacres from August 23 to August 31, 1941

<sup>78</sup> Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 411.  
<sup>79</sup> “Filbert [*Einsatzkommando 9, Einsatzgruppe B*] received an order to include Jewish women and children in the massacres at the end of July 1941”, Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 411.  
<sup>80</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Question of their initial Operations”, 408.  
<sup>81</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 111 & 120 (p. 2).  
<sup>82</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 111 & 120 (p. 2).  
<sup>83</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 111 & 120 (p. 2).  
<sup>84</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 111 & 120 (p. 2).  
<sup>85</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 112 & 121 (p. 3).

From Saturday, August 23 to Sunday, August 31, Jewish men, women, and children were massacred in shocking numbers: Ek 3 slaughtered 15,189 Jewish victims (3,289 Jewish men, 7,795 Jewish women, and 4,105 Jewish children).

In the Kaišiadorys massacres of August 26 and the Prienai massacres of August 27, it is not specified how many Jewish victims are men, how many women and how many children. In these massacres the number of Jewish victims (“*alle Juden, Jüdinnen u.J.-Kinder*”) <sup>86</sup> is 2,989. The “Lithuanians forced men from the [Prienai] ghetto to dig two large pits behind the barracks. The next day, with help from a German police unit, the Lithuanians marched approximately 1,100 Jews to the pits in groups and shot them with machine guns”. <sup>87</sup>

The massacres in Dagda and Krāslava (Latvia) list 212 Jewish men. From August 27 to August 29, Ek3 massacred 7,399 Jewish victims (1,435 Jewish men, 3,422 Jewish women, and 2,542 Jewish children). The number of Jewish women and children killed in Utena and Molėtai on August 29 is staggering: 1,731 Jewish women and 1,469 Jewish children (in addition to 582 Jewish men). The massacres were carried out in Panevėžys, Raseiniai, Obeliai, Šeduva, Zarasai, Pasvalys, Kaišiadorys, Prienai, Dagda, Krāslava, Joniškis, Wilkia (either Vilkija or Vilkiautinis), Kėdainiai, Rumšiškės, Žiežmariai, Utena, Molėtai, and Alytus and environs (all the places are in Lithuania, except Dagda and Krāslava, which are in Latvia). In the massacres of Obeliai (Abel, in Yiddish), “[t]he shootings were conducted by units of Hamann, subordinated to Einsatzkommando 3, assisted by Lithuanian[s]”. <sup>88</sup>

The total number of Jewish victims from August 23 until August 31, 1941, is 26,022 Jewish men, women, and children. The number of non-Jewish victims is six.

26,022 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	6 non-Jewish victims
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Table 6. Massacres from August 23 to August 31, 1941.

To these figures must be added the victims listed in page 4, which include victims from August 28 to September 2, 1941, and victims from August 25 to September 6, 1941. Since it is impossible to know which massacres took place in August and which in September, these massacres are listed in the next section.

## 7. The September 1941 massacres

On Monday, September 1, 1941, in a single day, Ek 3 massacred 4,979 Jewish victims in Marijampolė (1,763 Jewish men, 1,812 Jewish women, and 1,404 Jewish children). The number of non-Jewish victims was 111 (of whom 109 were ‘*Geistesranke*’). In this massacre, the Jewish victims “were stripped down to their underwear, forced to lie down in the trench in groups, and then shot with machine guns

<sup>86</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 112 & 121 (p. 3).

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Kruglov and Geoffrey P. Megargee, “Prienai”, trans. Steven Seegel, in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*. Volume II: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*. Part B, eds. Geoffrey P. Megargee and Martin Dean. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press & USHMM, 2012), 1107.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Dean, “Obeliai”, in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*. Volume II: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*. Part B, 1096.



from the side. Many of them were only wounded and buried alive”.<sup>89</sup> Some Jewish victims attempted to escape: “Three men of Einsatzkommando 3 prevented an escape attempt by killing 38 people who tried to flee down a forest path. Some infants were clubbed or trampled to death. Many of the killers were drunk during the Aktion”.<sup>90</sup>

1,763 Jewish men	1,812 Jewish women	1,404 Jewish children	111 non-Jewish victims
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4,979 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	111 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 7 and 8. Jewish victims (4,979 Jewish men, women and children) and non-Jewish victims (111) massacred on September 1, 1941, in Marijampolė.

On page 4, several massacres that took place from August 28 to September 2, 1941, are listed; the number of Jewish victims is 4,575 (1,054 Jewish men, 2,526 Jewish women, and 995 Jewish children). The number of non-Jewish victims is zero. The massacres took place in Darsūniškis, Garliava, Jonava, Petrašiūnai (Kaunas), Jesuas (the name of this village is listed in the report but is nowhere to be found), Ariogala, Josvainiai, Babtai, Vandžiogala, and Krakės (Lithuania).

1,054 Jewish men	2,526 Jewish women	995 Jewish children	0 non-Jewish victims
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4,575 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 9 and 10. Jewish victims (4,575 Jewish men, women and children) massacred on several massacres from August 28 to September 2, 1941.

On September 4, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 929 Jewish victims (324 Jewish men, 320 Jewish women, and 285 Jewish children). There were no non-Jewish victims. The massacres took place in Pravieniškės, Čekiškė, Seredžius, Veliuna, and Zapyškis (Lithuania).

324 Jewish men	320 Jewish women	285 Jewish children	0 non-Jewish victims
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929 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 11 and 12. Jewish victims (929 Jewish men, women and children) massacred in four Lithuanian villages/towns on September 4, 1941.

On Friday, September 5, 1941, the number of Jewish victims is overwhelmingly high: 1,123 Jewish men, 1,849 Jewish women, and 1,737 Jewish children; overall, 4,709 Jewish victims were shot in one single day. There were no non-Jewish victims. This massacre took place in Ukmergė.

1,123 Jewish men	1,849 Jewish women	1,737 Jewish children	0 non-Jewish victims
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4,709 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 13 and 14. Jewish victims (4,709 Jewish men, women, and children) massacred on September 5, 1941.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Dean, “Marijampolė”, in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*. Volume II: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*. Part B, 1089-1090.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Dean, “Marijampolė”, 1090.

On page 4, two massacres that took place from August 25 to September 6 are listed: one in Raseiniai (described as “*Säuberung*” [cleansing]), in which 16 Jewish men, 412 Jewish women, and 415 Jewish children were shot, and another one in Jurbarkas, where all the Jewish men, all the Jewish women, and all the Jewish children were shot (412 Jewish victims).

1,255 Jewish men, women, and children	0 non-Jewish victims
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Table 15. Jewish victims (1,255 Jewish men, women, and children) massacred from August 25 to September 6, 1941, in two towns in Lithuania.

According to the Jäger report, from Tuesday, September 9 to Friday, September 26, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 5,226 Jewish victims (1,475 Jewish men, 2,157 Jewish women, and 1,594 Jewish children); the number of non-Jewish victims is 43. The massacres took place in Alytus, Butrimonys, Merkinė, Varėna, Leipalingis, Seirijai, Simnas, Užusaliai (the only village where non-Jewish victims were shot), and Kaunas (Lithuania).

1,475 Jewish men	2,157 Jewish women	1,594 Jewish children	43 non-Jewish victims
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5,226 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	43 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 16 and 17. Jewish victims (5,226 Jewish men, women, and children) and non-Jewish victims (43) massacred from September 9 to September 26, 1941.

The total number of victims from August 28 to September 26 is 21,673 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) and 154 non-Jewish victims.

21,673 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	154 non-Jewish victims
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Table 18. Jewish victims (21,673 Jewish men, women, and children) and non-Jewish victims (154) massacred from August 28 to September 26, 1941.

There were more massacres perpetrated by Ek 3 in September 1941, but they are listed in sections 9, 10 and 11 of the present paper.

## 8. The October and November 1941 massacres

In October 1941, there were three *Aktionen* carried out by Ek 3 (on October 2, 4, and 29). On October 2 (Žagarė) and October 4 (Kaunas, Fort IX), 948 Jewish men, 1,819 Jewish women, and 1,314 Jewish children were shot; On October 29 (Kaunas, Fort IX), the number of victims is alarmingly high because this massacre belongs to the “*Säuberung des Ghettos von überflüssigen Juden*” [cleansing of the ghetto of superfluous Jews]: <sup>91</sup> 2,007 Jewish men, 2,920 Jewish women, and 4,273 Jewish children were shot. Since Jewish women and children were in principle considered ‘less suitable’ for working, the number of women and children massacred in this *Aktion* is much higher than that of men. The total number of Jewish victims in these three days of October 1941 is 13,281. There were no non-Jewish victims.

2,955 Jewish men	4,739 Jewish women	5,587 Jewish children	0 non-Jewish victims
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<sup>91</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, 113a & 123 (p. 5).

13,281 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 19 and 20. Jewish victims (13,281 Jewish men, women, and children) massacred on October 2, 4, and 29, 1941.

On November 3 and 15, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 521 Jewish men, 559 Jewish women, and 570 Jewish children. On November 25 and November 29, 1,852 Jewish men, 2,755 Jewish women, and 327 Jewish children were shot at the Ninth Fort (Fort IX) of the Kaunas fortress. These victims came from Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, and Breslau. Also on November 29, 1941, 18 Jewish men, one Jewish woman, and 15 non-Jewish victims were shot at the Ninth Fort of the Kaunas fortress. The overall number of Jewish victims of these four days (November 3, 15, 25, and 29) is 6,603 (2,391 Jewish men, 3,315 Jewish women, and 897 Jewish children). The overall number of non-Jewish victims is 15.

2,391 Jewish men	3,315 Jewish women	897 Jewish children	15 non-Jewish victims
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6,603 Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, and children)	15 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 21 and 22: 6,603 Jewish victims (2,391 men, 3,315 women, and 897 children) massacred on November 3, 15, 25 and 29, 1941. The 15 non-Jewish victims were shot on November 29, 1941.

The total number of victims in October and November 1941 is 19,884 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) and 15 non-Jewish victims.

19,884 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	15 non-Jewish victims
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Table 23. Total number of Jewish victims (19,884 Jewish men, women, and children) and non-Jewish victims (15) massacred in October and November 1941.

There were more massacres perpetrated by Ek 3 in October and November 1941, but they are listed in sections 9, 10 and 11 of the present paper.

## 9. Appendix 1: Massacres in Daugavpils (Latvia) from July 13 to August 21, 1941

According to the Jäger report, Ek 3 massacred 9,012 Jewish men, women, and children, and 573 non-Jewish victims in Daugavpils from July 13 to August 21, 1941.

9,012 Jewish men, women, and children	573 non-Jewish victims
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Table 24: Massacres in Daugavpils (Latvia) from July 13 to August 21, 1941: 9,012 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) and 573 non-Jewish victims.

## 10. Appendix 2: Massacres in Vilna (Ponary) from August 8 to November 25, 1941

The Germans entered Vilna on June 24, 1941; at that time, “60,000 Jews were in the city. In the previous two days, after the start of the German invasion, about 3,000 Jews managed to escape”.<sup>92</sup> The first *Einsatzkommando* to arrive in Vilna was *Einsatzkommando* 9. Only in July, *Einsatzkommando* 9 “murdered about 10,000 Jews

<sup>92</sup> Elżbieta Rojowska and Martin Dean, “Wilno”, trans. Katrin Reichelt, in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945. Volume II: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe. Part B*, 1148.

near the Ponary railroad station”.<sup>93</sup> In August, “*Einsatzkommando 3* took over responsibility for Wilno [Vilna]”.<sup>94</sup>

In early September, 1941, “40,000 Jews were crowded into two separate ghettos, whose combined area had previously housed only about 4,000 people”.<sup>95</sup> Jews ‘unfit’ to work were trapped in ghetto 2 (which was liquidated in October 1941); all the Jewish men, women, and children of ghetto 2 were massacred at Ponary (Poneriai), 12 km from Vilna.

Holocaust survivor Dina Levine Baitler (born in Vilna in 1934) recounts with pain and anguish (in Hebrew) how she survived a massacre in Ponary. When she arrived, she saw the pits; the murderers circled the Jewish victims with their dogs and told them to undress; she did not have time to undress, so she kept her dress and shoes on. Her grandmother and aunt were completely naked. The perpetrators took ten Jewish women at a time and told them to stand by the pit; the victims were shot and fell into the pit. Levine Baitler was among the last and when she stood by the pit the perpetrators shot (the pit was so full that she fell at the edge). Some victims were still alive, so cries came from the pit. The Germans fired into the pit; she was shot but managed to survive. She was seven years old.<sup>96</sup>

Holocaust survivor Shalom Shorenzon recounts with sadness (in Hebrew) his survival in Ponary. Shorenzon was with his grandfather, Shmuel Lifshin. The ones shooting were Lithuanians, not Germans. They shot from outside the pit; the victims were inside the pit, above the corpses. Just before they were shot, Shorenzon's grandfather began to say Shema Israel (שמע ישראל); Shorenzon said the first two words of the Shema and fell, and the victims fell on top of him. He lay in the pit many hours, without crying, terror-stricken, while the Lithuanians kept on shooting. He was sixteen years old.<sup>97</sup>

Ek 3 carried out several *Aktionen* in Vilna (Ponary) on August 12–September 1, 2, 12, 17, October 14, 16, 21, 25, 27, 30, and November 6, 19, 20, and 25. In these massacres, 21,234 Jewish victims were slaughtered (5,904 Jewish men, 10,691 Jewish women, and 4,639 Jewish children). As for the non-Jewish victims, ‘only’ 39 were murdered. By December 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed about 40,000 Jewish men, women, and children at Ponary. From this figure, more than half (21,234 Jewish men, women, and children) were killed by Ek 3.

5,904 Jewish men	10,691 Jewish women	4,639 Jewish children	39 non-Jewish victims
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21,234 Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, and children)	39 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 25 and 26: Massacres in Vilna: 21,234 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) and 39 non-Jewish victims.

<sup>93</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 1149.

<sup>95</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>96</sup> Dina Levine Baitler, “Holocaust Testimony: Murder of the Jews of Lithuania”, Yad Vashem, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEWpx5dfj8w>

<sup>97</sup> Shalom Shorenzon (Shorenson), Testimony, interviewed by Veshayahu Pery, February 18, 1996. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, <https://sfi.usc.edu/>

### 11. Appendix 3: Some other massacres from September 20 to October 9, 1941

Ek 3 carried out *Aktionen* in eight more Lithuanian villages and cities (Nemenčinė, Naujoji Vilnia, Riesa, Jašiūnai, Eyshishok, Trakai, Semeliškės, and Švenčionys), from September 20 to October 9, 1941, in which 13,484 Jewish victims (4,060 Jewish men, 5,962 Jewish women, and 3,462 Jewish children) were shot. There were no non-Jewish victims.

4,060 Jewish men	5,962 Jewish women	3,462 Jewish children	0 non-Jewish victims
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13,484 Jewish victims (men, women, and children)	0 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 27 and 28: Massacres in eight more Lithuanian villages and cities: 13,484 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) from September 20 to October 9, 1941

The massacres in Lithuania and the annihilation of the Jewish communities reflect the atrocities that were carried out in all three Baltic countries: “Within six months, during the second half of 1941, Baltic Jewry was annihilated save for remnants in ghettos”.<sup>98</sup> The Estonian Jewry was completely annihilated.

### 12. Appendix 4: Massacres in the Minsk region (Belorussia) from September 28 to October 17, 1941

The Jäger report includes several massacres in five villages and towns of the Minsk region from September 28 to October 17, 1941, in which 3,011 Jewish victims were murdered (600 Jewish men, 1,285 Jewish women, and 1,126 Jewish children). There were 19 non-Jewish victims.

600 Jewish men	1,285 Jewish women	1,126 Jewish children	19 non-Jewish victims
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3,011 Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, and children)	19 non-Jewish victims
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Tables 29 and 30: Massacres in the Minsk region (Belorussia): 3,011 Jewish victims (men, women, and children) and 19 non-Jewish victims.

### 13. “In Litauen gibt es keine Juden mehr, ausser den Arbeitsjuden incl. ihrer Familien”

On page 7, Jäger proudly declares: “*Ich kann heute feststellen, dass das Ziel, das Judenproblem für Litauen zu lösen, vom EK. 3 erreicht worden ist. In Litauen gibt es keine Juden mehr, ausser den Arbeitsjuden incl. ihrer Familien*”.<sup>99</sup> [I can state today that the goal of solving the Jewish problem for Lithuania has been achieved by EK. 3. There are no more Jews in Lithuania, except for the working Jews and their families]. Jäger states that only about 34,500 Jewish men, women, and children are left alive: ca. 4,500 in Šiauliai; ca. 15,000 in Kaunas; and ca. 15,000 in Vilna. Jäger grotesquely declares that he also wished to kill these remaining Jewish families, but this was

<sup>98</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, 198.

<sup>99</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 115 & 125 (p. 7).



forbidden to him: “Jäger even complained bitterly at not being allowed to complete the job by killing the Jews who remained as workers in the ghettos”.<sup>100</sup>

Jäger praises Hamann for his leadership and acknowledges the valuable collaboration of the Lithuanians, while detailing the ‘organization’ of the *Aktionen*:

*Die Juden mussten an einem Ort oder an mehreren Orten gesammelt werden. An Hand der Anzahl musste der Platz für die erforderlichen Gruben ausgesucht und ausgehoben werden. Der Anmarschweg von der Sammelstelle zu den Gruben betrug durchschnittlich 4 bis 5 km. Die Juden wurden in Abteilungen zu 500, in Abständen von mindestens 2 km, an den Exekutionsplatz transportiert.*<sup>101</sup>

[The Jews had to be gathered in one or more places. The place for the necessary pits had to be selected and dug based on the number of Jews. The average distance from the assembly point to the pits was 4 to 5 km. The Jews were transported to the execution site in groups of 500, at intervals of at least 2 km].

Jäger proposes sterilization for Jewish men in the Kaunas ghetto and declares that if any Jewish woman becomes pregnant, she is to be ‘liquidated’. Satisfied, Jäger states: “*Ich betrachte die Judenaktionen für das EK.3 in der Hauptsache als abgeschlossen*”.<sup>102</sup> [I consider the Jewish *Aktionen* for the EK.3 mainly completed]. Indeed, the Jäger report “proves that from the beginning all the killings [of Jewish people] were viewed in the same way, as part of Jäger’s determined effort to rid the east of Jews”.<sup>103</sup>

Jäger describes the support and affection the Germans received from the Lithuanian population. Indeed, the “Holocaust, defined as the organized murder of Jewish men, women, and children, could not have evolved on Lithuanian soil if imported German violence had not harmonized with residual anti-Jewish sentiment among the local population”.<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

The Jäger report is an astonishing document that lists the victims murdered by Ek 3 of *Einsatzgruppe A*, between July 4, 1941 and November 29, 1941. Nevertheless, it presents several problems. It must be taken into account that there are some calculation errors; Jäger lists 137,346 victims, while the correct number is 137,448, assuming that the number of each *Aktion* is accurate (which it certainly is not, as some victims, after falling into the pit and lying in the middle of corpses for several hours survived, as we know from the testimonies of the few Jewish survivors of *Einsatzgruppen* massacres).

There is a gigantic disproportionality between Jewish and non-Jewish victims; hence, it is of utmost importance to keep in mind that in this report 135,392 are Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, and children) and 2,056 are non-Jewish victims, of whom ‘only’ 49 are children (one Roma/Sinti child and 48 victims with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities).

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<sup>100</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Questions of Their Initial Reports”, 404.

<sup>101</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 115 & 125 (p. 7).

<sup>102</sup> RGVA Moscow, 500-1-25, pp. 116 & 126 (p. 8).

<sup>103</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Questions of Their Initial Reports”, 404.

<sup>104</sup> Jürgen Matthäus, “Controlled Escalation”, 230.

Since there are five entries that do not specify whether the Jewish victims are men, women, or children, we cannot know with certainty how many Jewish men, how many Jewish women, and how many Jewish children were murdered in these *Aktionen*. These entries include the massacres in Daugavpils, Latvia, from July 13 to August 21, 1941 (9,012 Jewish victims), the massacres in Rokiškis on August 15 and 16, 1941 (3,200 Jewish victims), the massacres in Kaišiadorys on August 26, 1941 (1,911 Jewish victims), the massacres in Prienai on August 27, 1941 (1,078 Jewish victims), and the massacres in Jurbarkas (August 25 to September 9, 1941) (412 Jewish victims). Excluding these entries, which together account for a total of 15,613 Jewish victims, the number of Jewish victims, separately, is:

41,726 Jewish men

48,592 Jewish women

29,461 Jewish children

To these figures should be added 15,613 Jewish victims.

The number of non-Jewish victims is extremely low compared to the one of Jewish victims. The first page of the report lists 136 non-Jewish victims; the second page, 569 non-Jewish victims; the third, 661 non-Jewish victims (of whom 653 are so-called ‘*Geisteskrankes*’ victims); the fourth page of the report lists ‘only’ 43 non-Jewish victims; the fifth, 605; and the sixth, ‘only’ 41.

135,392 Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, and children)	2,056 non-Jewish victims
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Table 31. Total number of Jewish victims (135,392 Jewish men, women, and children) and non-Jewish victims (2,056) listed in the first six pages of the Jäger report.

The massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen* are a horrific and crucial episode of the Shoah (often forgotten). The *Einsatzgruppen* massacred 2,000,000 Jewish men, women, and children in Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, after Operation Barbarossa (June 22, 1941), with the cooperation of the Wehrmacht and the enthusiastic and willing collaboration of the local auxiliary police (mainly Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian). We have to bear in mind that just in six months, “[b]y the end of 1941 some 800,000 Jews were murdered in some regions of the occupied Soviet Union”.<sup>105</sup>

Bartov states that “[d]espite the increasingly common- and disturbingly comforting- image of the Holocaust as an event of impersonal ... and distant industrial murder, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Jews, the majority of whom were children, women, the sick, and the elderly, were murdered in full view of the populations in whose midst they had lived”.<sup>106</sup> This is evident in the case of the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres and the massacres of the Jäger report, in which entire Jewish communities and shtetls were annihilated in full view with the collaboration or the indifference of the local population.

For a better understanding of the territories in which the *Einsatzgruppen* operated and for a clearer identification of the local population who avidly collaborated

<sup>105</sup> Christoph Dieckmann and Saulis Sužiedėlis, *Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews During Summer and Fall 1941*, 105.

<sup>106</sup> Omer Bartov, “Eastern Europe as the Site of Genocide”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 80, 3 (2008): 571.

in the massacres, I would propose to use ‘Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia’, instead of ‘Soviet Union’. Even though Germany launched a war against the Soviet Union, we refer to ‘Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian and Latvian’ collaborators (not ‘Soviet’ collaborators); Vilna, the ‘Jerusalem of Lithuania’, was the capital of Lithuania, not a city in the Soviet Union; thus, it does not make much sense to talk about the ‘Soviet Union’ when discussing the *Einsatzgruppen*. Therefore, it is more logical to speak of Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia when referring to the eastern occupied territories, since both the local population (which eagerly collaborated in the murder of Jewish men, women, and children) and the Jewish victims who found themselves confined in the ghettos with no escape, trapped between the German murderers and the local antisemites, were Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian, not ‘Soviet’.

Even if the Ek 3 did not use gas vans, it is very important to keep in mind that the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres were not carried out solely by bullets, but also inside 14-16 gas vans. Therefore, ‘Holocaust by bullets’ or ‘exterminations à ciel ouvert’ are somehow not very accurate descriptions of the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres. The horrifying gas vans as method of extermination should not be forgotten and should always be mentioned when discussing the *Einsatzgruppen*.

The *Einsatzgruppen* did not murder ‘only’ Jews, but it is clear that Jews were treated differently, and unlike the non-Jewish victims, were massacred en masse. In the Jäger report they occupy a distinct position: “The fact that the Jews were almost always listed as a separate category in the reports ... underlines their unique status in the eyes of the killing units”.<sup>107</sup> It is obvious that the number of Jewish victims (men, women, and children) is extremely high compared to the number of non-Jewish victims. As an illustration, on August 23, Ek 3 massacred 7,523 Jewish victims (1,312 Jewish men, 4,602 Jewish women, and 1,609 Jewish children) in Panevėžys; there were zero non-Jewish victims; on August 26, Ek 3 massacred 2,567 Jewish victims (767 Jewish men, 1,113 Jewish women, and 687 Jewish children) in Zarasai; there were two non-Jewish victims. The same day, Ek 3 massacred 1,349 Jewish men, women, and children in Pasvalys (there were no non-Jewish victims) and 1,911 Jewish men, women, and children in Kaišiadorys (and, again, there were no non-Jewish victims); on September 5, 1941, Ek 3 massacred 4,709 Jewish victims (1,123 Jewish men, 1,849 Jewish women, and 1,737 Jewish children) in Ukmergė; there were no non-Jewish victims. As we can see, the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish victims is exorbitant, and it is only due to carelessness, lack of serious research, revisionism, negationism, denialism, or antisemitism that no clear distinction is made between Jewish and non-Jewish victims. Although the suffering of the victims is the same, the mass massacres of Jewish men, women, and children only because they were Jewish, and the murder of other victims (mostly adults, often for ideology, and in very small numbers) cannot be compared in any way. That is why I maintain that the victims of the *Einsatzgruppen* can never be placed on the same level: on the one hand we have the Jewish victims (Jewish men, women, children, and babies) who were massacred routinely and in huge numbers (revealing a clear intention from the perpetrators of ‘murdering them all’); and on the other hand we have the non-Jewish victims, who were in no way subject to genocide (except for the Roma and Sinti), were killed in small numbers and had a chance to escape and survive (in the event of surviving a massacre – which was almost impossible, for

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<sup>107</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Questions of Their Initial Reports”, 405.

Jewish men and women survival outside the pit was very unlikely, since the local population was fiercely antisemitic). The case of the killings of Soviet POWs is different because they were neither civilians nor women nor children nor babies.

The Jewish victims of the Jäger report account for 98.5 percent of all victims of the Jäger report. In contrast, the non-Jewish victims account for ‘only’ 1.5 percent of all victims.

Furthermore, the Jewish victims (along with thousands of Roma & Sinti victims) were the only ones subjected to genocide. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the Jäger report includes only five Roma and Sinti victims, of whom only one was a child. This number is surprisingly low and it may be useful to take into consideration the proportion between Jewish and non-Jewish victims in the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres. The same applies to victims with physical, psychiatric, and intellectual disabilities (‘only’ 653 victims out of 137,448), and to some extent the ‘communists’. In any case, regarding Roma and Sinti victims more research is needed. Although there was never a plan to annihilate ‘all’ the Roma and Sinti people and although ‘pure-blooded’ Roma and Sinti in Germany and Austria were not considered a threat to ‘German blood’ and were in principle (though not in fact) exempt from deportation, we do know for sure that the Roma and Sinti were victims of genocide; the crucial questions are to what extent and how many Roma and Sinti men, women, and children were actually murdered in the Porajmos.

Given the dramatic and staggering difference between Jewish and non-Jewish victims, I argue that it is essential to distinguish between Jewish victims (men, women, and children), both victims of genocide and mass murder, and non-Jewish victims when researching the massacres of the *Einsatzgruppen*.

We cannot know with certainty when the decision to kill ‘all’ Jewish men, women, and children in the newly occupied eastern territories was taken (intentionalist versus functionalist debate), but, ultimately, this matters very little if we consider the victims. According to Arad, “the decision to destroy the Jews of the Soviet Union was taken during the preparation ... [of] ‘Operation Barbarossa’, in the first two or three months of 1941”.<sup>108</sup> According to Friedman, “[t]he idea of totally annihilating the Jews most probably crystalized in the spring of 1941”.<sup>109</sup> According to Headland, this decision was a “pre-June 22 [1941] verbal order”;<sup>110</sup> indeed, “the *Einsatzgruppen* leaders knew when they went into Russia that they were to kill the Jews”.<sup>111</sup> According to Kay, the decision was taken five weeks after June 22, 1941: “Heydrich issued the order to the commander of EK 9 [Filbert] in person in Berlin between July 23 .... and July 29 [1941]”.<sup>112</sup> Headland states that to murder “all Jews is, of course, not quite the same as killing as many Jews as possible. Yet the difference is marginal (...) it really means that if it had been possible to kill all the Jews, then all the Jews would have been

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<sup>108</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Introduction to *Documents on the Holocaust*, 368.

<sup>109</sup> Philip Friedman, “The Extermination of the Polish Jews during the German occupation”, in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ada June Friedman (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 223.

<sup>110</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Questions of Their Initial Reports”, 401.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

<sup>112</sup> Alex J. Kay, “Transition to Genocide, July 1941”, 429.

killed”;<sup>113</sup> indeed “the practice of killing ‘only’ ... as many Jews as possible does not in itself rule out that a total extermination plan was being pursued”.<sup>114</sup> And, even if I agree with Arad, Friedman, and Headland rather than with Kay, in reality, it is of little importance whether the order to kill Jewish women and children was given before Operation Barbarossa or at the end of July 1941. The Jewish victims (men, women, children, and babies) were in any case slaughtered without mercy; naked and frightened, they were butchered with a bullet in the neck (or by gassing inside gas vans).

Holocaust historiography that is only concerned with the perpetrators or when the orders were given tends to forget the victims, and it is a historiography that is missing the most important part of its research. The Shoah was the annihilation of six million Jewish men, women, and children, and the victims (their suffering, their agony, and their deaths) must always be at the center of Holocaust research. It is for this reason that in researching massacres and studying *Einsatzgruppen* reports, it is absolutely necessary to also find the voice of the Jewish victims through the few survivors. The protagonists of the Shoah (unfortunately) are the victims, not their executioners.

Jäger’s arrogance, coldness, and precision in listing the massacred victims reveal the horrifying effectiveness of the *Einsatzgruppen*, and the ridiculous belief (rooted in an extreme antisemitism loaded with the most grotesque delusions) that ‘the Jew’ was a ‘powerful enemy’ that ‘had to be’ exterminated. And in the most appalling conditions, naked and digging their own graves, terrified, crying and saying the Shema Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע), two million Jewish victims were murdered by the *Einsatzgruppen* (135,392 just by one *Einsatzkommando* of one *Einsatzgruppe*, in less than five months, as shown in the Jäger report).

Since these savage killings left some perpetrators with severe psychological sequelae and were sometimes somehow chaotic,<sup>115</sup> the murder in gas vans and gas chambers in extermination camps (Chełmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka II, Birkenau, and Majdanek) was soon organized and coordinated to annihilate the entire European Jewry. This decision was taken in October 1941 and actively started with the deportations of western Jewish men, women, and children to the ‘East’; the gassing of Jewish men, women, and children began in Chełmno as early as December 8, 1941. Some topics (the fate of the so-called ‘*Mischlinge*’, ‘mixed-marriages’, the prohibition of further emigration, the use of Jewish slave labor in the East before the annihilation, and the ‘removal’ of Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* as quickly as possible)<sup>116</sup> were quickly and cheerfully discussed in a 90-minute ‘*Besprechung*’ [meeting] accompanied by a delicious breakfast Am Großen Wannsee 56-58, on January 20, 1942. The industrial death machine would be dramatically effective and would spare the perpetrators the sight of thousands of blood-soaked Jewish men, women, and children in the massacres, petrified, crying, and praying the Shema.

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<sup>113</sup> Ronald Headland, “The *Einsatzgruppen*: The Questions of Their Initial Reports”, 404.

<sup>114</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>115</sup> “There were great discrepancies between the plans made in Berlin and the realities in the ground”, Peter Klein, *The Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942. An Introduction* (Berlin: Metropol, 2023), 30. On November 30, 1941, 1,000 Jewish men, women, and children from Berlin were shot along with thousands of Latvian Jewish men, women, and children from the Riga ghetto at the Rumbula forest ‘by mistake’.

<sup>116</sup> See the minutes of the meeting (*Besprechungsprotokoll*) both in facsimile and in English translation in Peter Klein, *The Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942*, 96–125.



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