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## The Escalation of German Reprisal Policy in Occupied France, 1941–42

In 2003, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published several articles on Ernst Jünger's involvement in the escalation of German reprisal policy. Jünger's memorandum on the hostage policy of the military commander in France had recently been discovered and was about to be published in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. Jünger probably wrote most of this between October 1941 and February 1942, the period when Otto von Stülpnagel was responsible for imposing reprisals.<sup>1</sup> This is one of many works on reprisal policy in France, which has become a central topic in German historiography in recent years and one on which Ahlrich Meyer wrote extensively. Meyer tried to revise earlier research by arguing that a more severe reprisal policy had been implemented by the German armed forces.<sup>2</sup>

The role of the Wehrmacht during the war of extermination has been a focal point of historiography since the mid-1980s. The discussion gained momentum with the end of the Cold War, the opening of archives in the East, and the highly controversial *Wehrmachtsausstellung*. At first, however, it mainly concerned crimes on the Eastern Front, such as those committed in Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, there has been a debate on

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I would like to thank Professor Richard J. Evans for his useful comments and Dr Stefan Martens, deputy director of the German Historical Institute in Paris, for his help and advice.

1 Christian Jostmann, 'Ausweg ins Verderben. Repression und Judenmord: Hintergründe eines Berichts', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 59 (14 July 2003), 14, and Sven Olaf Berggötz, 'Ernst Jünger und die Geiseln. Die Denkschrift von Ernst Jünger über die Geiselerchießungen in Frankreich 1941/42', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 51, 3 (2003), 405–72, here 405–6; Ahlrich Meyer, 'Kleistische Prosa oder Polizeibericht? Anmerkungen zu Ernst Jüngers Denkschrift Zur Geiselfrage', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 52, 2 (2004), 281–6; Claudia Moisel, *Frankreich und die deutschen Kriegsverbrecher. Politik und Praxis der Strafverfolgung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen 2004); Bernhard Brunner, *Der Frankreich Komplex. Die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen in Frankreich und die Justiz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Moderne Zeit*, vol. 6, Göttingen 2004).

2 Ahlrich Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich, 1940–1944. Widerstandsbekämpfung und Judenverfolgung* (Darmstadt 2000); idem, 'Der Beginn der "Endlösung" in Frankreich — offene Fragen', *Sozial. Geschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Analyse des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 18 (2003), 35–82; Regina M. Delacor, *Attentate und Repressionen. Ausgewählte Dokumente zur zyklischen Eskalation des NS-Terrors im besetzten Frankreich 1941/1942. Préface de Henry Rousso (Instrumenta*, vol. 4, Stuttgart 2000).

3 E.g. Dieter Pohl, 'War, Occupation and the Holocaust in Poland', in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (Basingstoke 2004), 88–119; Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Bogdan Musial (eds), *Genesis des Genozids. Polen 1939–1941 (Veröffentlichungen der*

whether the war of extermination started with the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 or — as claimed by Mallmann and Musial — in 1939 with the German attack on Poland.<sup>4</sup> The war crimes in the West have long been neglected, but recently they, too, have drawn the interest of historiography.<sup>5</sup> In June 2004, Gaël Eismann organized a workshop at the German Historical Institute in Paris on the role of the Wehrmacht in the radicalization of violence in occupied Europe. It was the aim of the workshop finally to close this discussion on the role of the Wehrmacht. The topics presented dealt with crimes in both theatres of war, East and West, and combined the latest results of historical research in this area. The workshop showed that no distinction could be made between ‘correct’ behaviour of the German armed forces in the West and ‘incorrect’ behaviour in the East.<sup>6</sup>

So far, this recent change in historiography has not been recognized by British historical researchers. This is apparent in Robert Gildea’s brilliant regional study in which he depicts the everyday life, problems and fears of the French during the German occupation. He also portrays German reprisal policy, notably the ‘strategy of repression that had been devised in advance by the highest German military authorities’ which was triggered off by the assassination of a German officer.<sup>7</sup> This strategy increased friction between the occupier and the occupied. Gildea also briefly describes how reprisal policy could escalate and lead to mass execution. However, as he only deals with one incident, albeit in detail, he is unable to portray the overall picture of German reprisal policy from the beginning of the occupation to liberation. Furthermore, he claims that after this case ‘the whip hand on the German side passed from the military authorities who were tough but fair to the secret police who were interested only in repression’.<sup>8</sup> In his view, the German reign of terror

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*Forschungsstelle Ludwigsburg der Universität Stuttgart*, vol. 3, Darmstadt 2004); Wolf Kaiser (ed.), *Täter im Vernichtungskrieg. Der Überfall auf die Sowjetunion und der Völkermord an den Juden* (Berlin and Munich 2002); Rolf-Dieter Müller and Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Hitlers Krieg im Osten 1941–1945. Ein Forschungsbericht* (Darmstadt 2000); Christian Hartmann, ‘Verbrecherischer Krieg — verbrecherische Wehrmacht?’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 52, 1 (2004), 1–75.

4 Mallmann and Musial (eds), op. cit.

5 Besides the recent publications on the situation in France, there also have been publications on other western countries, e.g. Steffen Prauser, ‘Der Anschlag in der Via Rasella und die deutsche Vergeltung in den Fosse Ardeatine im März 1944’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 50, 2 (2002), 269–301, and Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Persecution. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge 2000).

6 *Von der ‘Aufrechterhaltung der öffentlichen Ordnung und der Sicherheit’ zum ‘Vernichtungskrieg’: Die Rolle der Wehrmacht in der Radikalisierung der deutschen Gewaltmaßnahmen im besetzten Europa. Atelier des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Paris. Paris, June 11, 2004.* Reviewed by Gaël Eismann and Christopher Neumaier, published by AHF-Information No. 045/04 (19 July 2004), URL: <http://www.ahf-muenchen.de/Tagungsberichte/Berichte/pdf/2004/045-04.pdf>. It is planned to publish the results in due course.

7 Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains. In Search of the German Occupation, 1940–1945* (London 2002), 246.

8 *Ibid.*, 259.

was introduced during the first half of 1942 when the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) gained control over reprisal measures and the police forces.

This article will argue that the theory that there was a strict separation between the methods of the Wehrmacht and those of the SS is not supported by the documentation, which shows rather that there is a striking continuity in reprisal measures from the summer of 1941 to the winter of 1942. Further, the article aims to broaden the perspective of recent German historiography and to introduce a new interpretation to British historiography by showing that, starting in the summer of 1941, the Wehrmacht was responsible for war crimes committed by the occupying forces, especially the execution of hostages and the deportation of 'Jewish Bolsheviks'. Until May 1942 the Wehrmacht was the authority in France which supervised those measures before losing control to the SS. Therefore, the idea of a 'correct' occupation in the West, which prevailed for a long time in historical research, cannot be sustained and has to be revised. This article will address such questions as: why did reprisal policy escalate and how did the military authorities react to this change? Did the SS pursue a different reprisal policy from that of the Wehrmacht?

The German attack on the Soviet Union started on 22 June 1941. In France, the Wehrmacht registered increasing resistance. This change did not surprise the occupiers, who regarded the resistance as having only a marginal influence on the average French person, who was unsure whether to fight or to collaborate with the enemy; indeed, there was no significant increase in acts of sabotage, such as the cutting of communication cables. Therefore, the German attack on the Soviet Union did not bring about an imminent threat to the German armed forces in occupied France.

The consequences of the termination of the Hitler–Stalin Pact did not become apparent until August and September when French communists awoke from their 'lethargy and shock',<sup>9</sup> ending their self-imposed silence arising from the alliance between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The German situation reports (FN) recorded 82 cases of active resistance in August and 145 in September 1941.<sup>10</sup> The Wehrmacht was especially worried because there were many incidents of railways being sabotaged, attacks on members of the German armed forces and arson. At that time the Resistance still lacked a strategy covering all the occupied territory. Nonetheless, the Germans investigated whether there was a coherent Resistance movement operating in some regions.<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Nestler views this change as the pivotal juncture when millions of French people realized that there was a possibility of driving the

9 BA-MA RW 35/8, situation report August/September 1941.

10 See the internet edition of the German and French situation reports, published by the German Historical Institute in Paris and the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent. The situation reports should be online in due course.

11 BA-MA RW 35/8, situation report August/September 1941, military commander; BA-MA RW 35/238, supplement to situation report August 1941, military commander.

occupiers out of the country.<sup>12</sup> This is a socialistic interpretation of the events. The actual facts suggest a different interpretation. The Resistance was weak in number at that time and only a minority of the French supported its actions against the Wehrmacht out of fear of retribution and the belief that the Third Reich was invincible.

On 15 August 1941 *L'Humanité* called the French to arms to force the nazis out of France.<sup>13</sup> Two days earlier, a communist demonstration had taken place at the Porte Saint-Denis in Paris where German soldiers and French police had collaborated in attacking the demonstrators. A day later, the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) informed the military commander of the incident and reported that four out of the six French people arrested were Jews. This association of communists with Jews was already evident in the term 'communist demonstrators' and in the remark 'with lots of Jewish participants', and became common in later Wehrmacht documents in the term 'Jewish Bolsheviks'. Nazi ideology was not confined to the SD reports, but also played a crucial role in the documents of the Wehrmacht. Meyer calls this an ideological overstatement of the Resistance for propagandistic reasons by the German armed forces.<sup>14</sup>

Stülpnagel reacted by issuing the so-called *Kommunistenerlass* on 15 August, whereby the Communist Party was banned, and any French men or women who supported it would be considered to be aiding and abetting the enemy and would, therefore, suffer the death penalty.<sup>15</sup> German reprisal policy now came down heavily on the Jews and communists. As a result, Henri Gautherot and Samuel Tyszelman, who had been arrested after the demonstration, were executed on 18 August. Tyszelman's Jewish background was explicitly mentioned to legitimize his execution and also the ensuing actions against the Jews.<sup>16</sup> Further, there was a raid on Jewish citizens in Paris's 11th *arrondissement* on 20 August when around 3000 Jews,<sup>17</sup> including French citizens, aged

12 Wolfgang Schumann et al. (eds), *Die faschistische Okkupationspolitik in Frankreich, 1940–1944. Dokumentenauswahl und Einleitung von Ludwig Nestler. Unter Mitarbeit von Friedel Schulz (Europa unterm Hakenkreuz, vol. 2, Berlin 1990), 84.*

13 Stéphane Courtois, *Le PCF dans la guerre. De Gaulle, la Résistance, Staline . . .* (Paris 1980), 221; Delacor, op. cit., 19.

14 Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 57, 81.

15 BA-MA RW 35/536, announcement, 15 August 1941. Sometimes it is dated 4 August 1941, when the Germans started to punish communist activities by death, such as Ulrich Herbert, 'Die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Paris und die Deportation der französischen Juden' in Christian Jansen, Lutz Niethammer and Bernd Weisbrod (eds), *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit. Politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Hans Mommsen zum 5. November 1995* (Berlin 1995), 427–50, here 436. However, proof for this date is not provided.

16 Delacor, op. cit., 20–1 noted that the execution was on 19 August. However, German documents refer to 18 August. BA-MA RW 35/238, supplement to situation report August 1941, military commander.

17 An exact number is not available since German sources contradict each other. For instance, counter-intelligence recorded a different number: around 3000 Jews and an additional 200 Jewish intellectuals, BA-MA RW 35/238, supplement to situation report August 1941, military commander. A report in the French morning press mentions 6000 Jews arrested, BA-MA RW

between 18 and 50 years old, were arrested and deported to camp Drancy by German forces aided by 2500 French policemen. This deportation aimed at deterring Jews who, according to the occupiers, had played a leading role in the public demonstration.<sup>18</sup>

The demonstration of 13 August 1941 has to be seen as a catalyst and a turning point for reprisal policy in France, leading to the execution of two demonstrators, the raid on 20 August, and the unleashing of a repressive reprisal policy by the occupiers. Regina Delacor notes that ‘the NS-occupying power arrested and liquidated communist activists independently from the assassinations by the French Resistance movement and, consequently, extended the ideological war into the West’.<sup>19</sup>

Reprisal policy was not a consequence of the assassinations, but was ideologically based and developed before the Resistance started to attack German soldiers.

After the situation of the Third Reich changed drastically with the attack on the Soviet Union, and when the Bolsheviks and their Resistance movement ended their ceasefire in occupied France, the way was paved for escalation due to the ideological orientation of the *Sühnemaßnahmen* (reprisal measures). Hence, as time passed, ideology became more entrenched in the thinking and the orders of the commanders and reprisal policy was charged with both pragmatism and Nazi ideology. It did not target ordinary French citizens but the ‘Jewish Bolsheviks’, who were held responsible for any public disturbance in the occupied territory. This change in reprisal policy became obvious in the reactions to the first politically motivated attacks on members of the Wehrmacht in late August and September 1941.

The Resistance reacted swiftly to the sharp increase in German reprisal measures. On the morning of 21 August 1941 the Marinehilfsassistent Alfons Moser was shot in the metro station Barbès-Rochechouart by two unknown assassins.<sup>20</sup> That evening in the underground station Bastille a Frenchman fired at two German soldiers, Sergeants Walter Schötz and Heinrich Trill. The

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35/1248, report in French morning press, 20/21 August 1941, and the situation reports mention 4000 arrests, BA-MA RW 35/8, situation report August/September 1941, military commander. The literature on this raid also gives different numbers; however, 3000 seems to be the most likely. It also agrees with the 2894 arrests mentioned in Serge Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz. Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question Juive en France — 1942* (Paris 1983), 27.

18 BA-MA RW 35/8, situation report August/September 1941, military commander, BA-MA RW 35/1248, report from French morning press, 20/21 August 1941; Delacor, *op. cit.*, 21; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, *op. cit.*, 57–8; Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover, NH and London 2001), 207–8.

19 Delacor, *op. cit.*, 21.

20 *Ibid.*; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, *op. cit.*, 59, however, sees no connection between the execution and the raid as well as the assassination of Moser. For him the assault was part of the communist dynamic of that summer. Nonetheless, he concedes that contemporary documents mention the link. For details of the course of action see Berggötz, *op. cit.*, 418–21.

Germans were quite sure that the assassination of Moser was politically motivated, but, the background to the second assassination attempt was obscure, and initial investigations were unable to establish a link between the two cases. A later German report gave a different interpretation, finding the assaults to have been politically motivated, even stating that Walter Schötz was wounded,<sup>21</sup> which was probably not true since the original report failed to mention it. The circumstances were much clearer in the case of Moser since it was proved that the assassins were two communists. Therefore, it can be concluded that the attack was definitely politically motivated. For the *Militärverwaltung* (military administration), this incident was the catalyst for an escalation in reprisal policy in the following months.<sup>22</sup>

These assaults on German soldiers put the military administration in a quandary because it could either let the French investigate or it could apply measures taken in the East to the West. The former would enrage the OKW, Hitler and the troops in France, while the latter would undoubtedly prevent any co-operation from the French.<sup>23</sup> On 22 August, the commander of Greater Paris Major General Ernst Schaumburg announced, in the absence of the military commander, that from the following day all those imprisoned by the German authorities or those in French prisons under German authority would be regarded as hostages. This reaction to the attacks showed that any further resistance activity would lead to a corresponding number of hostages being shot. The announcement explicitly mentioned that responsibility for the attacks lay with the 'Jewish Bolsheviks'.<sup>24</sup> Hans Luther stresses that these measures were not a retaliation for crimes committed, but were rather intended to deter the French from carrying out any anti-German activities in the future.<sup>25</sup> However, this contradicts the facts. From August 1942, reprisal measures were always taken as a reaction to attacks on members of the Wehrmacht or on German property.

In September, several assaults on members of the Wehrmacht were reported and, in retribution, the Germans began to execute their first hostages. Ellen Hammer and Marina Salvin were correct in their assessment that hostage policy had 'become a major weapon of warfare'<sup>26</sup> in the second world war. On 3 September, two juvenile civilians fired a shot at Sergeant Ernst Hoffmann in a hotel in Paris and Stülpnagel ordered the execution of three communist

21 BA-MA RW 35/539, interim report on the assassination of Moser; BA-MA RW 35/542, Das Geiselnverfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers.

22 Delacor, op. cit., 21; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 58–9.

23 Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989* (Bonn 2001), 299–300.

24 BA-MA RW 35/9, copy of Paris newspaper, 22 August 1941, Berggötz, op. cit., 418–19; Delacor, op. cit., document 18, 99–100.

25 Hans Luther, *Der französische Widerstand gegen die deutsche Besatzungsmacht und seine Bekämpfung (Studien des Instituts für Besatzungsfragen in Tübingen zu den deutschen Besetzungen im 2. Weltkrieg*, vol. 11, Tübingen 1957), 174.

26 Ellen Hammer and Marina Salvin, 'The Taking of Hostages in Theory and Practice', *The American Journal of International Law*, 38 (1944), 20–33, here 20.

hostages. This was intended to show the French that the Germans meant to put their announcement of 22 August 1941 into practice. The low numbers of deaths would allow them to increase the number of executions if more German soldiers were assaulted.<sup>27</sup>

When Adolf Hitler heard that three communists had been executed, he told the military commander that this could only be the first act of retaliation since he considered the life of one German soldier to be more valuable than the lives of three communists. He ordered at least 50 additional executions to be carried out, mainly of leading communists. Furthermore, he ordered that 300 new hostages should be taken and warned that the next assassination of a German would result in at least 100 executions. Hitler also wanted an explanation as to why the military commander had acted with clemency. From Stülpnagel's point of view, the execution of three hostages was quite sufficient because this flexible policy allowed for an increase if there were further incidents. After Hoffman's case had been closed it would have been untenable — in the military commander's view — to order additional executions of French hostages, as Hitler wished. Stülpnagel even let headquarters know that if it planned to enforce such shootings, he would resign immediately. The *Militärbefehlshaber* opposed mass executions generally on the grounds that they would undermine the loyalty and the willingness of the French to collaborate politically and economically. Furthermore, mass executions might be regarded by the French as a sign of weakness, whereas rational behaviour within certain boundaries could be interpreted as strength. According to Stülpnagel, mass executions would rather increase support for the Resistance among French civilians. Despite the acceleration in Resistance activity from late August, domestic security was never threatened in France.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the decree issued on 22 August was the basis for the 'ideologically based terror policy of the military commander'<sup>29</sup> to carry out the execution of communist and Jewish hostages.<sup>30</sup>

This policy of limited executions was not in accordance with the ideas and orders of the headquarters in Berlin, and Hitler ordered the use of the 'most drastic measures'<sup>31</sup> in order to terminate the activities of the Resistance. The OKW issued several guidelines for dealing with Resistance movements: first, any Resistance activity had to be communist-inspired; second, the most drastic deterrents had to be applied immediately. The execution of 50 to 100 communists was advised for every assassinated German soldier and 'the method of execution should act as an extra deterrent'.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, political relations

27 BA-MA RW 35/542, *Das Geiselerfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers*; Berggötz, op. cit., 422–3.

28 BA-MA RW 35/8, situation report August/September 1941, military commander; Delacor, op. cit., document 24, 114–5; *ibid.*, document 24, 115–18.

29 Meyer, *Die deutsche Besetzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 61.

30 *Ibid.*, 61–2.

31 BA-MA RW 35/536, letter to the *Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, 16 September 1941.

32 *Ibid.*

between the Third Reich and the occupied country were deemed irrelevant in applying the reprisal measures.<sup>33</sup> So, finally, the Wehrmacht was forced to adopt the policies practised in the East, in the West, most notably mass executions.

Less than two weeks later, Stülpnagel responded by devising a harsher reprisal policy for France. In some cases, the district military commanders were allowed to take additional hostages from certain social groups such as students, professors, etc. Released prisoners were no longer considered hostages, but known communists and anarchists could only be released with the consent of the Militärbefehlshaber. Stülpnagel also acknowledged that the execution of hostages had to take place immediately after any acts of sabotage or assassination. Therefore, the district commander had to make lists of hostages on the grounds that the threat of executing hostages would deter violence against Germans by linking Resistance fighters with hostages.<sup>34</sup>

In October, the Resistance moved its sphere of activity into the provinces, because the situation had become too difficult for Resistance fighters in Paris. This relocation gave the organization the opportunity to mount fierce attacks on German soldiers all over the occupied territory.<sup>35</sup> The violence started on the morning of 20 October 1941, when the Feldkommandant of Nantes, Lt Colonel Fritz Hotz, was assassinated by two communist Resistance fighters. At first the German armed forces and headquarters suspected that English agents were responsible, not communists,<sup>36</sup> (this was the first assassination of a high-ranking German officer), but shortly after the murder it became evident to the Wehrmacht that the culprits were communists. Hitler and the head of the OKW Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel intervened and the military administration was not allowed to operate independently. They wanted to punish the French severely and ordered the execution of between 100 and 150 hostages, in addition to putting a price of one million gold francs on the heads of the assassins. The lenient reprisal policy advocated by the Militärbefehlshaber was totally unacceptable to headquarters. Stülpnagel complied with the orders and set the number of hostages to be executed at 100. However, he suggested that a delay of execution of three days would allow information about the reward to spread. The final orders from Berlin were to shoot 50 hostages at once and to despatch the second group 48 hours later. The atmosphere in the Hotel Majestic in Paris was one of hate for both the assassinations and the reprisal measures. The executions were ordered on 22 October. The commander

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33 Ibid.

34 BA-MA RW 35/1362, decree of military district commander, 28 September 1941.

35 Gilbert Brustlein, *Le chant d'amour d'un 'terroriste à la retraite'* (Paris 1989), 141.

36 BA-MA RW 35/1264, Militärverwaltungsbezirk B, situation report Abt. Ic, 19. November 1941; BA-MA RW 35/542, Das Geiselnverfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers; Eberhard Jäckel, *Frankreich in Hitlers Europa. Die deutsche Frankreichpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte, vol. 14. Stuttgart 1966), 192.*



informed the Feldkommandant of Nantes — after negotiations with the Militärbefehlshaber — that two hostages had to be taken off the list because they were not inmates of either a German or a French prison. This led to the execution of 48 hostages. Gildea describes the situation differently. In his account, the two hostages were spared execution due to the intervention of Edmond Duméril, who worked as an interpreter at the *préfecture* of Nantes. Yet another report is given in the recently discovered memorandum of Jünger. He noted that the two hostages were removed from the list because they were imprisoned after the attack had occurred, and, could not, therefore, be considered hostages.<sup>37</sup> Duméril's story is doubtful, because he appears as a collaborator portraying himself in a more favourable light after the occupation. It is unclear exactly when Jünger wrote this particular part of his memorandum, and indeed it could have been written in retrospect. If so, this, and the fact that Jünger was not involved in naming the hostages, makes it impossible for him accurately to depict the events. Therefore, the German letter dated 22 October 1942 appears to be the most reliable evidence, indicating that a mistake had been made in putting the names of two people who were not actually incarcerated on the list.

Less than 48 hours after the incident in Nantes, on 21 October 1941, there was a second fatal attack on a German soldier in Bordeaux where the Kriegsverwaltungsrat Dr Hans-Gottfried Reimers was assassinated. Neither French nor German investigations were able to trace the culprits. Nonetheless, the Wehrmacht took the same reprisal measures they had taken the day before in Nantes, leading to the immediate execution of 50 hostages, mainly communists. The military commander felt that any other action would have been unjust to the hostages executed in Nantes. Neither of the second groups of 50 hostages were executed because the occupying forces hoped that the French would show their opposition to these political assassinations by helping the Germans to find the culprits.<sup>38</sup>

In general, the French public was shocked by the executions of hostages after the assassinations in Nantes and Bordeaux. The Wehrmacht believed that most of the population kept quiet because they deplored the assassination of Germans by Resistance fighters and saw the German reaction as a necessity of war. It is definitely true that the Resistance did not have the support of many of the French at that time, but the lack of response was not because the French condoned mass executions, but rather because they feared another wave of German retaliation.

Fear that the population might turn openly hostile towards the occupiers

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37 BA-MA RW 35/542, Das Geiselnverfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers; BA-MA RW 35/1263, letter from Chef des Militärverwaltungsbezirks B, 22. Oktober 1941; Walter Bargatzky, *Hotel Majestic. Ein Deutscher im besetzten Frankreich. Vorwort von Peter Scholl-Latour* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1987), 87; Gildea, op. cit., 249; Berggötz, op. cit., 430.

38 BA-MA RW 35/542, Das Geiselnverfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers; BA-MA RW 35/1330, report from officer Lt Dr Hansen, 22 October 1941, and telex no. 490 21 October 1941; BA-MA RW 35/11, copy of Paris newspaper, 29 October 1941; Berggötz, op. cit., 437.

forced the military administration to rethink its reprisal policy. The actions of the Resistance and the attitude of the French population, who still opposed the attacks by Resistance fighters, made it obvious to the Germans that mass executions were not successful in either deterring people from attacking the occupiers or increasing support for the collaborationists. Furthermore, since the assassinations were single incidents and neither public order nor public security were threatened, the army questioned the legitimacy of the executions.<sup>39</sup>

Stülpnagel informed Berlin that he wished to be given clear orders on how to react in the future, as he wanted to have a policy that did not jeopardize French collaboration. This was vitally necessary since there was an immediate threat of further assassination attempts on German soldiers, and the current policy seemed to be inappropriate.<sup>40</sup> To his contemporaries it was obvious that the arch-conservative Stülpnagel opposed mass executions because of his 'humanitarian, Christian responsibility'.<sup>41</sup> However, pragmatic rather than humanitarian reasons were responsible for Stülpnagel's stance. The Militärbefehlshaber opposed mass executions because it was small terrorist groups which were responsible for the attacks on members of the German armed forces and not the majority of the French population. Executions, which affected all French social groups, would intensify the friction between occupiers and occupied in France. Further, if the French ceased to collaborate with the Germans this could have a devastating effect on the Germans' economic exploitation of France.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Stülpnagel warned German headquarters once more against the use 'of Polish methods in France'.<sup>43</sup>

The military administration was forced to find new reprisal measures, but approval had to be sought from the headquarters in Berlin. Mass deportations of Jews and communists were an appropriate way for the military administration to avoid mass executions. Mass deportations would ease the friction in France and simultaneously satisfy Berlin by showing that the military commander was willing to take vigorous action. This change was part of a process that had started in the summer months when the Nazi regime began to plan ways of carrying out the Final Solution and reached the West in the winter of 1941/42. Deportation was not a new action, but was adopted by the military administration after seeing it applied in Germany where the authorities had decided to transport Jews to the East in September 1941. Since the German

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39 BA-MA RW 35/11, supplement to political situation report October 1941.

40 BA-MA RW 35/1, notes on telephone consultation with Brigadier General Wagner of 22 and 23 October 1941.

41 Bargatzky, op. cit., 53–4; BA-MA RW 35/46 Vorbeugungs- und Sühnemaßnahmen des Militärbefehlshabers in Frankreich zur Bekämpfung der Sabotage in Frankreich, undated; Hans Speidel, *Aus unserer Zeit. Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt am Main 1977), 105, 117.

42 Delacor, op. cit., 50.

43 BA-MA RW 35/1, notes on telephone consultation with Brigadier General Wagner from 22 and 23 October 1941.

embassy and the SD in Paris were always at the forefront of German anti-Jewish policy in France, the military administration, fearing to lose authority in this respect, started to intensify its anti-Jewish measures at the end of February 1941. This rapidly accelerated the anti-Jewish policy and culminated in the mass deportations ordered in December. The administration labelled these reprisal measures, thus anticipating an order for deportations from headquarters. By linking reprisal measures and deportations, the military administration participated in a radicalization of the persecution of the Jews. They accepted the fate of the Jews, despite being aware in December 1941 of atrocities being perpetrated in the East, in particular the mass murder at Babi Yar.<sup>44</sup> Walter Bargatzky noted that from that time onwards there was ‘no ignorance any more’.<sup>45</sup>

The antisemitic views held by the officers in the military administration, for example Stülpnagel, and constant pressure from Berlin facilitated the transition from mass executions to mass deportations, the aim being to show no mercy after any attacks on Germans. The Jews were useful scapegoats from the German point of view, because they were seen as aliens by the French and, consequently, would lack public support for their plight. Furthermore, the Wehrmacht believed that they were behind the Resistance, as seen in the stereotype of the ‘Jewish Bolshevik’ perpetrators described in the situation reports, and this would deter them from joining the Resistance. However, the antisemitism of the military administration was not as pronounced as that of the SD.<sup>46</sup>

During November the Resistance movement was quiescent, possibly because of previous German reprisal measures or maybe because of slow planning. This quiet phase ended when a new wave of assassination attempts and bomb attacks swept across Paris between 26 November and 7 December. Since the number of assaults was increasing and the operations were well planned, the German armed forces thought that Resistance groups were behind these incidents. The military commander suggested to headquarters that 100 hostages should be shot in retaliation, and 1000 Jews and 500 young communists deported. For the first time, it was publicly announced that more ‘Jewish Bolsheviks’ were to be deported to the East and that the Jews of

44 Herbert, *Best*, op. cit., 312–13; Christopher R. Browning, *Fateful Months. Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York and London 1985), 37; Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich and Zürich 1998), 427–34, 437; Roland Ray, *Annäherung an Frankreich im Dienste Hitlers? Otto Abetz und die deutsche Frankreichpolitik, 1930–1942 (Studien zur Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 59. Munich 2000), 355–74; Herbert, ‘Die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Paris’, op. cit., 437, 442–5.

45 Bargatzky, op. cit., 103. Meyer, ‘Der Beginn der “Endlösung” in Frankreich’, op. cit., 73–7 questions Bargatzky as a reliable source. Meyer concedes that the military administration knew of the mass murders on the Eastern Front and that Bargatzky is in this respect trustworthy. The exact date, however, of the arrival of the news remains uncertain.

46 Herbert, ‘Die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Paris’, op. cit., 449; Longerich, op. cit., 437. For the antisemitic policy of the SD see Claudia Steur, *Theodor Dannecker. Ein Funktionär der ‘Endlösung’ (Schriften der Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte — Neue Folge*, vol. 6, Essen 1997).

Paris would be fined a billion francs. According to German authorities, these measures targeted the terrorist groups, the Jewish communists. The French general public was also threatened with more deportations. According to German documents, this move towards mass deportation enabled the *Militärbefehlshaber* to reduce the number of hostages executed. Finally, 95 communist and Jewish hostages were shot.<sup>47</sup> These extreme measures were justified in a report by Hans Speidel, in which he explained that the executions were aimed at the Jewish communists who were behind the attacks on the *Wehrmacht*. As a result, the majority of those executed were not French citizens but people from the East. A close examination of the 50 hostages who were taken from Drancy confirms this.<sup>48</sup> In the third large-scale raid on the Jews on 12 December in Paris, 743 Jews were arrested by German police forces. However, this was not enough to reach the target of 1000. Consequently, the Germans took an additional 300 Jews from the internment camp at Drancy. Finally, 1043 Jews were brought to Compiègne, where they were prepared for deportation to the East. Two days later the military commander made a public announcement warning of future deportations of 'Jewish Bolsheviks'.

While implementing the shift towards mass deportations, the *Wehrmacht* continued to put into practice guidelines from Berlin that advised commanders either to impose the death sentence or arrange deportation,<sup>49</sup> but the main initiative to do so came from Paris and not from Berlin. The military administration hoped to decrease the number of mass executions by suggesting to Hitler mass deportations instead<sup>50</sup> — a move Ulrich Herbert describes as a 'macabre haggle over human lives'.<sup>51</sup> The number of executions never again reached the peak of mid-December 1941, when 95 hostages were shot by the German armed forces, and mass deportation became the common reprisal policy of the occupiers in combination with execution.

There was no reduction in the tension between Berlin and Paris in the winter months of 1941/42. In January 1942 Otto von Stülpnagel contacted army headquarters to stress, once more, his view on the situation in occupied France. He informed Berlin that Resistance activities were carried out by small, but well disguised, terrorist groups and that the majority of the French were not involved; it was only a fraction of the population who played an active role in the Resistance and these fanatics, mainly communist juveniles,

47 BA-MA RW 35/542, *Das Geiselerfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers*; BA-MA RW 35/13 (D.), report on domestic security; Schumann, op. cit., 192; Klarsfeld, op. cit., 32–4; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 74.

48 Serge Klarsfeld (ed.), *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich. Dokumentationszentrum für Jüdische Zeitgeschichte CDJC Paris. Deutsche Dokumente 1941–1944* (Paris 1977), 32–3; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 75.

49 Delacor, op. cit., document 66, 196–7, and *ibid.*, document 67, 197.

50 Herbert, *Best*, op. cit., 303–5, and Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 80–2.

51 Herbert, *Best*, op. cit., 304.

were not deterred by the current reprisal policy involving mass executions. It seemed to him that the aim of the Resistance fighters was to provoke strong reactions by the occupiers in order to precipitate a public outcry.<sup>52</sup>

This argument has often been adopted by German historians, who claim that the Resistance wanted deliberately to provoke harsh reprisal measures by their attacks on German soldiers and German property. However, Meyer showed that this thesis, introduced into historical research via the uncritical adoption of Werner Best's reports on events in France during the second world war, cannot be sustained. Werner Best argued that the Resistance fighters who attacked German soldiers were responsible for the reprisal measures of the Wehrmacht. Such provocation was intended to drive a wedge between French civilians and German soldiers. This thesis was supported not only by German documents but also by research on the Resistance, which argued that Resistance fighters wanted to create a gulf between the occupiers and the occupied. However, Meyer thinks this is highly doubtful since the escalation was part of a bigger programme.<sup>53</sup> A close look at the escalation of reprisal policy and its change of distinction during the autumn and winter of 1941/42 supports his interpretation. The acts of the Resistance formed a catalyst which allowed the Germans to apply reprisal measures shaped by Nazi ideology, which resulted in the mass arrest of Jews and finally their deportation.

Stülpnagel hoped to find approval for his measures. He repeated his previous request dated 25 October 1941 and asked headquarters to grant him the authority to 'determine the implementation, type and extent of future reprisal measures'.<sup>54</sup> He planned to concentrate on arresting communists, and, in some cases, deporting interned Jews and communists to the East. Under this plan, executions would take place on a limited scale after there had been assassination attempts on members of the Wehrmacht or many acts of sabotage. His aim was:

. . . to order executions only in limited numbers, which are in accordance with the crime. I cannot reconcile mass executions with my conscience, nor accept the responsibility for them before history — at least at the moment and under current circumstances — after knowing the general situation and the consequences of such drastic measures on the population and on our relationship with France. In my opinion they are acceptable after a serious intensification of the situation and then they would be ordered by me.<sup>55</sup>

The *Militärbefehlshaber* hoped to retrieve some of the influence he had lost to Berlin headquarters on the question of reprisal policy and to force them to agree to his new policy. Indeed, he was not the only soldier who had such thoughts. The reaction from Berlin was rapid: early in February, Keitel and Hitler commanded Stülpnagel to restrict himself to military matters, refrain from politics

52 BA-MA RW 35/536, letter from the military commander in France, 15 January 1942.

53 Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 30 and 79–80; Courtois, op. cit., 221–2.

54 BA-MA RW 35/536, letter from the military commander in France, 15 January 1942.

55 Ibid.

and obey their orders. Thus, headquarters did not grant the military commander any authority with respect to his initiative on reprisal measures.<sup>56</sup>

As a result, Otto von Stülpnagel resigned on 15 February 1942. Officially, health problems and Hitler's lack of support forced him to take this step. However, in a private letter to Generalfeldmarschall Keitel he revealed his feelings on the situation in occupied France and his difference of opinion with Berlin on the execution of hostages. Stülpnagel argued once more that limited executions and mass deportations were much more of a deterrent than random mass executions, which were unacceptable to the French people.<sup>57</sup>

Just two days after Otto von Stülpnagel's resignation, Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel became the new Militärbefehlshaber in France.<sup>58</sup> He was, in Bargatzky's eyes, also an opponent of the Nazi regime. A major problem for Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel was the attacks on German soldiers — for example, in the derailment of trains. Two cases are striking because in each, 110 hostages were ordered to be shot but the numbers actually shot were surprisingly low — 24 and 28. The Maastricht–Cherbourg train was derailed twice because of sabotage near Caen on 16 April and 1 May 1942. In the first incident, the Militärbefehlshaber commanded the immediate execution of 20 Jews and communists. He ordered that if the culprits were not caught within one week, 25 more hostages were to be shot and 500 Jews and communists deported to the East. In the end, Hitler made Stülpnagel order the execution of 110 hostages and the deportation of 1000 Jews and communists. Since both cases were very similar, the military commander applied almost identical reprisal measures to each. In the second incident on 1 May, 110 hostages were to be shot and an additional 500 Jews and communists deported. The French opposed these dire measures, considering them too harsh, and expressed their feelings by refusing to show sympathy towards the dead members of the Wehrmacht at the collective funeral. The prefect of Calvados was the only representative of the French state at the funeral, and he neither expressed his condolence nor laid wreaths on the graves.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, Stülpnagel was in the same dilemma as his cousin and predecessor concerning the ordering of mass executions; observing the failure of reprisal policy, he ordered limited executions and stopped short of ordering the shooting of all 220 hostages.

These examples show that Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel — like his cousin — opposed mass executions because of their negative impact on relations between occupiers and occupied. He did not alter reprisal policy; limited executions of

56 BA-MA RW 35/46, Vorbeugungs- und Sühnemaßnahmen des Militärbefehlshabers in Frankreich, undated; Jäckel, op. cit., 194.

57 BA-MA RW 35/1, letter from the military commander in France, 15 February 1942; Delacor, op. cit., 48; BA-MA RW 35/1, letter from the military commander in France, 'Sehr geehrter Herr Generalfeldmarschall', 15 February 1942.

58 Jäckel, op. cit., 195–6; Hans Umbreit, *Der Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich 1940–1944 (Militärgeschichtliche Studien, vol. 7, Boppard am Rhein 1968)*, 14.

59 BA-MA RW 35/16, situation report April/May 1942, military commander; BA-MA RW 35/542, Das Geiselnverfahren im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers; BA-MA RW 35/308, propaganda department France, memorandum, 21 April 1942.

Jews and communists were carried out and large numbers of the same social groups were deported to the East. This policy was in accordance with a *Führer-erlass* of 10 April, which stated that in addition to the execution of appropriate persons, 500 Jews and communists had to be deported after each assassination.

The discrepancy between the number of hostages ordered to be shot and those actually shot is evidence for Umbreit that both Stülpnagels gave incorrect numbers to their superiors in order to satisfy Hitler's thirst for retaliation. However, this does not take into account the pragmatism of the military administration which wanted to maintain the security of its troops, and the fact that the military commander knew perfectly well that severe reprisal measures interfered with that aim.<sup>60</sup> That is why both the Stülpnagels targeted the 'Jewish Bolsheviks' with mass deportations and limited executions.

Despite the continuity of German reprisal policy between February and the end of May 1942, this should be seen as a transitional period because with the resignation of Otto von Stülpnagel a power vacuum had been created that was exploited by the headquarters in Berlin in order to establish the position of Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer, HSSPF (Higher SS and Police Commander) by *Führer-erlass*. Long before Carl Albrecht Oberg, the first HSSPF, came to Paris, Hitler cast doubt on the ability of the military commander to handle the situation. Hence, the creation of the HSSPF was a logical step for Berlin headquarters to take in order to pursue their own reprisal policy.<sup>61</sup> The establishment of the HSSPF increased the importance of the SD and Gestapo complex in France. Berlin wanted a new strong man to take over control of the police and the justice departments in the military administration. The transition went smoothly because Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel prepared the ground for the arrival of Oberg in May. He made clear to the military administration that both the police and justice departments had to be handed over to the SS, and that from 1 June 1942 the HSSPF would be responsible for the actions of both the French and German police forces. This also meant that the SS was now in charge of reprisal measures in France.<sup>62</sup> Oberg and Stülpnagel, who had known each other for a long time, having served in the same division during the first world war, worked well together.<sup>63</sup>

In May 1942 when the HSSPF was inaugurated, Reinhard Heydrich proclaimed that the policy in the West had to be different from that in the East.

60 Umbreit, op. cit., 140; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besetzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 88.

61 BA-MA RW 35/617, Führer-erlass, 9 March 1942; Jäckel, op. cit., 195–6; Bernd Kasten, 'Zwischen Pragmatismus und exzessiver Gewalt. Die Gestapo in Frankreich 1940–1944' in Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (eds), *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg. 'Heimatfront' und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt 2000), 362–82, here 367; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besetzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 26–7.

62 BA-MA RW 35/338, Die Polizeiverwaltung unter dem Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich; BA-MA RW 35/617, letter from the military commander in France, 22 May 1942; letter from the military commander in France, Kommandostab Ic, 29 May 1942, and Schreiben Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich, 29 May 1942.

63 Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer. Himmlers Vertreter im Reich und in den besetzten Gebieten* (Düsseldorf 1986), 255; Jäckel, op. cit., 197–8; Umbreit, op. cit., 114.

For Heydrich it was crucial that the perpetrators of crimes were found and punished. This would allow the Germans to halt the executions of hostages. Indeed, during Oberg's two years in France fewer French were executed by the SS than under the authority of the *Militärbefehlshaber*; nevertheless, under his regime 254 French civilians were shot between June 1942 and December 1943. Birn suggests that this change was possibly due to Berlin headquarters' trust in the HSSPF. Another reason was that the improved police forces solved crimes faster and carried out more effective pre-emptive strikes against Resistance fighters. Thirdly, Oberg did not report every assassination to Berlin. As a consequence, historical research often portrays Oberg as a relatively lenient member of the SS due to the decrease in the number of executions of hostages. However, a closer look at the course of events in the summer of 1942 reveals a different picture. On 10 July, Oberg introduced the practice of making all members of a family liable for the crimes of one member. This enabled the occupiers to shoot the male relatives of fugitive perpetrators, to deport the female relatives for forced labour and to put the children into custodial institutions. This liability decree intensified the reprisal policy of the occupiers because it allowed the Germans to gain access to the social background of latent perpetrators. Thus, this closely targeted the enemies of the Third Reich — the Jews and the communists.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Oberg applied the cloak-and-dagger order (*Nacht-und-Nebel Erlass*) which allowed the deportation of unwanted people to concentration camps in Germany more extensively than the military administration did in the first half of 1942.<sup>65</sup>

Hence, the claim that the SS's reprisal policy was lenient appears incorrect. Furthermore, Meyer showed that, despite the relatively small number of hostages executed between June 1942 and December 1943, Carl Albrecht Oberg ordered mass executions between the summer and autumn of 1942. On 11 August 1942, the execution of 93 hostages was ordered to avenge the death of several German soldiers in a bomb attack on 5 August. Eventually, 88 Frenchmen were executed by the SS. The second mass execution took place on 21 September when 116 hostages were shot in retaliation. In both cases the HSSPF applied the liability order. The SS ordered a third mass execution and another deportation of Resistance fighters, and by the beginning of November 160 hostages were ready for execution. However, the command was never carried out because Oberg realized the failure of the policy of mass executions — just as Otto and Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel had before him. He saw that they increased the friction between the French and the Germans and, subsequently, made collaboration with the Vichy government difficult. Besides,

64 Birn, op. cit., 256; Delacor, op. cit., 54–6; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 100–1, 114.

65 For details see Birn, op. cit., 256–7; Umbreit, op. cit., 142–6; Jäckel, op. cit., 271–3; and Ulrich Lappenküper, 'Der "Schlächter von Paris": Carl-Albrecht Oberg als Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer in Frankreich' in Stefan Martens and Maurice Vaisse (eds), *Frankreich und Deutschland im Krieg (November 1942–Herbst 1944). Okkupation, Kollaboration, Résistance (Pariser Historische Studien, vol. 55, Bonn 2000)*, 129–43, here 133.



when the Wehrmacht invaded the unoccupied part of France on 11 November 1942, the Germans were well aware that this was another factor that increased hostility between French and Germans. Nevertheless, the deportations continued. The following year, the deportation of Jews became the most common reprisal policy of the occupiers. The Jews had already been the main target of SS policy when another antisemitic regulation was introduced in July 1942. This stated that Jews who did not act in accordance with the decree might not be punished with a fine or prison, but instead could be deported to a concentration camp. Hence, there was a difference between the reprisal measures of the military administration and those of the SS, in that in the summer of 1942 the latter dramatically intensified the measures against Jews in order to implement the Final Solution in France. Despite this difference, the similarity in the reprisal policies of the military administration and the SS is striking. This is not surprising since the SS simply adopted the policy of the military administration. The perpetrators were the same during both periods — mainly Jews and communists.<sup>66</sup>

The attack on the Soviet Union was a major turning point after which the communist Resistance movement gradually emerged and the Wehrmacht spread the ideological view of war in France. This meant that from then on Jews and communists became the primary targets of German reprisal policy and were thenceforth shot in mass executions because these two social groups were seen by the Germans as key figures in the Resistance movement. Nevertheless, these executions caused some difficulties for the occupiers because they were strongly opposed by the French.

The occupiers, therefore, were forced to rethink their policy. The deportation of Jews started due to the antisemitism of the German military commanders who thought that this measure would be less opposed by the French people, and to pressure from Berlin. This led to a shift in policy from mass executions to mass deportations in December 1941. With this initiative the military administration anticipated Berlin's inevitable orders for deportations and actively participated in the radicalization of anti-Jewish measures in France. From December 1941 reprisal policy focused on a combination of mass deportations and limited executions because, in Otto von Stülpnagel's view, this was the most effective way of fighting the Resistance. Indeed, he propagated an ideological war in the West.

When Otto von Stülpnagel resigned from office because of conflicts over the appropriate reprisal policy, his cousin Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel became the new military commander of France and adopted the measures his cousin had previously introduced without changing them. Limited executions as well as mass deportations took place under his command and these became the most common reprisal measures of the Wehrmacht. Since Berlin no longer

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66 BA-MA RH 36/139, decree SS and Police Commander, 13 July 1942; Meyer, *Die deutsche Besatzung in Frankreich*, op. cit., 100–5, 108–13.

considered the military administration capable of dealing with the Resistance, it created the post of HSSPF to fill the power vacuum.

Surprisingly, reprisal policy was not altered by Carl Oberg when he took office as HSSPF in June 1942. Oberg ordered three mass executions, but the third was never carried out because the SS had realized at the beginning of winter 1942/43 — as the Wehrmacht had the previous winter — that they intensified the friction between occupiers and occupied to an almost unbearable extent. Consequently, the SS resorted to the mass deportation of Jews which at that time was considered the most appropriate way to appease the French. It was also in accordance with its own policy of summer 1942 of intensifying actions against Jews. Accordingly, the SS not only adopted the measures of the armed forces concerning Jews, but also started to intensify the implementation of the Final Solution.

When focusing on German reprisal policy, a picture of the German Occupation as being lenient cannot be sustained. From the summer of 1941, German measures intensified gradually; however, at that time it was not the majority of the French who were the targets but the Jews and the communists. Thus, the ordinary French were often able to relate to the occupiers, as portrayed in Gildea's masterpiece *Marianne in Chains*, but the Jews and the communists were not. The latter were constantly oppressed by a reprisal policy shaped by pragmatism, antisemitism and Nazi ideology. This started in the summer of 1941 and not with the arrival of the SS in France. Therefore, German reprisal policy cannot be divided between the SS and the Wehrmacht but the continuity when the Wehrmacht lost its authority to the SS in 1942 has to be stressed.

The Wehrmacht was responsible for committing war crimes in the autumn and winter of 1941 when it ordered mass executions and mass deportations of Jews and communists in France. The German armed forces, consequently, can no longer be left out of the discussion on war crimes on the Western Front.<sup>67</sup> Gaël Eismann went even further in her presentation during the workshop. She showed convincingly that ordinary French people were also targeted by reprisal measures when being sentenced by German military courts, which gradually intensified the application of the law following the German attack on the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup> A detailed analysis of the role of the military administration with regard to the radicalization of reprisal measures up until the end of the occupation in France has still to be made.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Ahlrich Meyer, 'Kriegs- und Besatzungsverbrechen in Frankreich, 1940–1944', in Wolfram Wette and Gerd R. Überschär (eds) *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt 2001), 274–87.

68 For details see Eismann and Neumaier, op. cit. or the forthcoming publication of the workshop results.

69 Gaël Eismann's forthcoming dissertation should provide historiography with the necessary information. The latest tendency in historiography should not be neglected. It focuses on the role of the German embassy in the radicalization of the persecution of Jews in France. For details see Barbara Lambauer, 'Der deutsche Botschafter Otto Abetz und die Judenverfolgung in Frankreich (1940–1942)', *Vierteljahrshafte für Zeitgeschichte*, 53, 2 (2005), 241–73.

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