

Agilolf Kesselring

# Continuity and Change in Wehrmacht Anti-Partisan Warfare

## The Example of the XVIII Mountain Corps in Yugoslavia and on the Arctic Karelian Front

### Abstract

Based on the archival finding of a German suggestion for the deportation of the Karelian inhabitants of Finnish occupied Russian Karelia to concentration camps, this article discusses how the anti-partisan warfare policies of a mountain corps changed while being deployed in the Balkans and the Arctic Circle. This finding is contextualised with the different forms of cooperation and collaboration with the national socialist Third Reich and its genocidal agenda in Serbia and Finland vis-à-vis military circumstances. While highlighting the nexus between anti-partisan warfare and the Holocaust, the finding is that where there has been no automatic road from anti-partisan warfare to genocide, like in Finland, anti-partisan warfare could still have served as a cover and facilitator for the Holocaust – but, even under political pressure, that did not happen. By focusing on the operative level in one special case, the article again opens the field of the history of warfare to questions related to genocide and Holocaust studies in order to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and (in)human decisions which have led to mass murder under conditions of war.

This article focuses on the question of change and continuity in anti-partisan warfare during the Second World War, using the example of the XVIII Mountain Corps in Serbia and Russian Karelia. It deals with the relevance of choices in the history of the Second World War and the impact of circumstances. This is relevant for a deeper understanding of the interlinkage of partisan warfare and the Holocaust on one hand, as well as of the stereotypes of the Wehrmacht and SS on the other hand. Using the example of one specific army corps – the XVIII Mountain Corps – and thereby concentrating on the military operational level, the question follows as to why “the same” military organisation acted genocidally in one theatre of operations and non-genocidally in another one. The example of the XVIII Mountain Corps is of special usefulness, as it is one of the few cases of an army corps in which changes cannot be attributed to the personal factor, as the commanding general and his staff was the same in Serbia and in Russian Karelia. In this article, it is thus argued that it did not only matter if the commanding general could be considered a national socialist or not, but that a deeper examination of the military, political, and cultural circumstances needs to be made. Even though the principle of command responsibility is a good tool for dealing with war crimes<sup>1</sup> – also genocidal war crimes under circumstances of ideologically motivated genocidal policies – in juridical terms, in

1 Agilolf Kesselring, “Die historische Analyse paramilitärischer Verbände als Herausforderung für die Neueste Militärgeschichte am Beispiel der Kommandoverantwortung im zerfallenden Jugoslawien”, *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 77, no. 2 (2018): 415–457.

the historiographical sense of understanding the driving forces of past genocidal war crimes, a broader approach is needed. In terms of research ethics, this article is based on the assumption that a better understanding of the driving forces leading to criminal mass murder under the umbrella of warfare might be useful in order to avoid or minimise such developments in the future.

During Second World War, the German 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army fought – under different names and with changing troops – in Finnish Lapland on the very left side of the outer northern flank of the Eastern Front, with the never reached goal of taking the crucial railroad connection between the harbour of Murmansk in the Arctic Ocean and Leningrad. While researching the archival sources concerning this German Arctic army for the purpose of a biographical project on German generals in Finland during the Finnish Continuation War from 1941 to 1944 – when the Republic of Finland fought as a co-belligerent side by side with Adolf Hitler's Third Reich against Josef Stalin's Soviet Union, which had attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 beginning the Winter War – the author's attention was caught by a so far unknown document.<sup>2</sup> This short document, a small dossier of seven pages in a file of the XVIII Mountain Corps' Third General Staff officer (the intelligence officer, commonly known under the abbreviation as "Ic") contains a proposal of the commanding general for concentrating all of the Karelian inhabitants of Finnish-occupied East Karelia into Finnish camps. It consists of two letters from the XVIII Mountain Corps to its superior level (the command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army under Colonel General Eduard Dietl)<sup>3</sup>, and the protocol of a meeting of the Chief of Staff of XVIII Mountain Corps with Finnish Lieutenant Colonel Olli Paloheimo, the chief of staff of the East Karelian military government. The protocol is dated 24 July 1942.

As we know, there has not been something like a deportation of all of the Karelian inhabitants of Finnish-occupied East Karelia to concentration camps. So, why should this issue be dealt with when it seems to be a counterfactual, alternative path for history? The German proposal is, however, still noteworthy. It has not been mentioned by any other scholar, even though the nature of the German-Finnish *Waffenbrüderschaft* (brotherhood-in-arms) has been debated and researched for eighty years. And even though it may not have been realised, a military plan still has to be taken seriously. This plan had for a short time been the policy of a mountain corps, it had been communicated to its army command, and there was an attempt to put it into practice in (failed) cooperation with the highest regional occupational administration. This occupational administration, though, was not German, but it was part of the host country, co-belligerent Finland. The dossier gives an idea of the nature of this co-belligerency during the summer of 1942. But the dossier is also relevant for other reasons, as will be shown.

2 Bundesarchiv (BArch), RH-24-18/ 173b, map, Feindmeldungen vom 25.-29.7.42, 33; Generalkommando XVIII. (Geb.)A.K., Abt. Ic, Betr. Kareliche Bevölkerung ostwärts der alten finnischen Grenze, 26. 7. 1942, 37–38; Generalkommando XVIII. (Geb.)A.K., Abt. Ic, Nr. 1449/ 42 geheim, Betr. Abschiebung der sowjetrussischen Zivilbevölkerung ostwärts der alten finnischen Grenze, 20. 7. 1942, 39–40; Aktennotiz über die Besprechung mit Obstlt. Paloheimo, dem Leiter der Ostkarelischen Militärverwaltung in Kuusamo am 24. 7. 1942. For an account of partisan warfare in the rear area of the XVIII Mountain Corps, see Aktenvermerk über das Auftreten von Partisanen bis 7. 7. 1942, 61–62.

3 For obvious reasons, research and literature on Dietl is most advanced in Finland and Germany. See Kurt Herrmann, *Dietl – napapiirin kenraali* (Loviisan uusi kirjapaino, Loviisa 1957); Kalevi Mikkonen, *Dietl. Lapin kenraali jatkosodan aikana* (Väyläkirjat, Rovaniemi 2023); Winfried Heinemann, "Eduard Dietl. Lieblingsgeneral des 'Führers'", in *Die Militärelite des Dritten Reiches. 27 biographische Skizzen*, eds. Ronald Smelser and Enrico Syring (Berlin: Ulstein, 1995), 99–112; Roland Kaltenecker, *Generaloberst Eduard Dietl. Teil 1: Die Symbolfigur der deutschen Gebirgstruppe 1890–1933 und ihre Zeit* (Würzburg: Flechsig Verlag, 2012); Roland Kaltenecker, *Generaloberst Eduard Dietl. Teil 2: Der Held von Narvik 1933–1944* (Würzburg: Flechsig Verlag, 2012).

## The Political and Military Setting at the Arctic Karelian Front in 1942

The above-mentioned protocol is dated 24 July 1942. Hitler had just paid a visit at very short notice for the Finnish Commander-in-Chief Marshal Mannerheim's seventy-fifth birthday on 4 June 1942.<sup>4</sup> This was when the Finnish government awarded Mannerheim the unique title of Marshal of Finland. According to Finnish military historian Martti Turtola, this was the climax of Mannerheim's popularity and, with that, also of his political power.<sup>5</sup> On this occasion, Hitler also promoted Eduard Dietl to colonel general. Hitler's courtesy visit was clearly supposed to strengthen the German-Finnish ties of *Waffenbrüderschaft* in a military situation, after the German Wehrmacht had lost its nimbus of invincibility during the winter of 1941.<sup>6</sup> In January 1942, Finnish president Risto Ryti emphasised to his envoy in Berlin, former prime minister Toivo Mikael Kivimäki, that Finland's status as a co-belligerent but non-allied country should be defended.<sup>7</sup> Already during the spring of 1942, a regrouping had started on the Finnish front. Before that, one of the three army corps under the command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army had been the III Finnish Army Corps under Lieutenant General Hjalmar Siilasvuo – the already legendary hero of the Battle of Suomussalmi during the Winter War. The bi-national integration had gone even further: the army corps consisted of two divisions. One of two divisions under Siilasvuo's command was the German 163<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, and in return the 6<sup>th</sup> Finnish Division stood under the command of the German XXXVI Mountain Corps. After the spring of 1942, Mannerheim disengaged the Finnish troops from the German ones – a first step towards a clearer distinction in the policy of being co-belligerents against a common enemy – but not allied on all fronts. As a result, the 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army had to get a third mountain corps with two new mountain divisions in order to replace Siilasvuo's III Finnish Army Corps in the Finnish theatre of war. The only dispensable mountain corps was the XVIII Mountain Corps, which was transferred from Belgrade via Salzburg to the most southern wing of the Arctic Front against the Red Army at Loukhi (or *Louhi* in Karelian and Finnish) starting in April 1942.<sup>8</sup> The change of troops from Siilasvuo's Finnish III Army Corps to General der Gebirgstruppe Franz Böhme's XVIII Mountain Corps at Uhtua took place shortly after Hitler's visit.<sup>9</sup>

4 For a detailed account of the preparations of the visit, the visit itself, and the background to it, see General der Infanterie Waldemar Erfurth's war diary, which has been published only in Finnish: *Waldemar Erfurth. Sotapäiväkirja 1942–1943*, ed. Pekka Visuri (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2018), 153–178.

5 Martti Turtola, *Mannerheim* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2016), 269–262. For a critical discussion on Mannerheim's art of warfare, see Mikko Karjalainen and Toni Mononen, *Mannerheimin sotatäito* (Helsinki: Ottava, 2022).

6 For the German political, diplomatic, and military context, see Bernd Wegner, "Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion", in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 6: *Der globale Krieg. Die Ausweitung zum Weltkrieg und der Wechsel der Initiative 1941–1943*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1990), 828–834.

7 For the political context of the military dislocation, see Martti Häikiö, "Jatkosodan ulkopoliittikka: asemasotavaihe", in *Jatkosodan pikkujättiläinen*, eds. Jari Leskinen and Antti Juutilainen (Helsinki: Werner Söderström, 2006), 353–354.

8 BArch, RH-24-18/ 171.

9 *Waldemar Erfurth. Sotapäiväkirja 1942–1943*, ed. Pekka Visuri (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2018), 176. The often-forgotten short courtesy visit by Mannerheim took place on 27 and 28 June 1942 as a visit to Hitler in his *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair) military headquarters in Rastenburg, to Mauerberg, as well as to Göring in Rominten in Eastern Prussia all in one day, with the return flight on 28 June.

## The Probable Connection with Himmler's Finnish "Vacation"

The protocol's date, 24 July 1942, might also be relevant in the context of the Holocaust. One day later, the German Wehrmacht's liaison officer for the Finnish headquarters, Erfurth, wrote in his war diary that Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler would come to Finland on 30 July, and that he wanted to meet Mannerheim and proceed to Rovaniemi, where Dietl's headquarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> Mountain Army was situated.<sup>10</sup> Erfurth's diary tells little about Himmler's visit to Mannerheim. The purpose of the visit remains unclear. Himmler and his entourage, including Chief of Personal Staff Reichsführer-SS SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, left the following day from the Helsinki-Malmi airfield.<sup>11</sup> In his book *Finland and the Holocaust: The Rescue of Finland's Jews*, Finnish historian Hannu Rautkallio deals with Himmler's visit to Finland in relation to the issue of whether or not Himmler then demanded, proposed, or requested the deportation of Jewish refugees in Finland or even the extradition of Finnish Jews.<sup>12</sup> Rautkallio shoots down the narrative established by Himmler's masseur Felix Kersten, who had Finnish citizenship, that Kersten would have helped the Finnish government to postpone a decision on extradition until the fall of 1942 during Himmler's visit to Finland. In fact, Kersten's credibility in respect to his own role seems to be exaggerated, at least.<sup>13</sup> Rautkallio's critical arguments for doubting Kersten's strong role in "rescuing" the Finnish Jews should be taken seriously. Rautkallio does unfortunately not apply the same level of source criticism when dealing with Finnish Prime Minister Johan Wilhelm Rangell's famous quotation made during a car drive on 4 August 1942:

Himmler asked, 'how is the situation with the Jews of Finland?' I said to him that in Finland there are roughly a couple of thousand Jews, decent families and individuals whose sons are fighting in our army like the rest of the Finns and who are as respected citizens as all the rest. I concluded the statement with the words, "*Wir haben keine Judenfrage*" [We don't have a Jewish question A.K.], and I said it with such clarity that the discussion of the matter ended then and there. The Jewish question was not discussed with Himmler at any other time.<sup>14</sup>

There is no other independent source existing for that quotation, and Rangell may have also exaggerated his own role. Nevertheless, it is a historical fact that, besides the eight known extradited non-Finnish Jews,<sup>15</sup> as well as a number of between 39 and probably 74 Jewish out of 520 Soviet prisoners-of-war, who were extradited to the Germans, there is no known extradition of any Finnish Jew to Germany.<sup>16</sup> The

10 Waldemar Erfurth, 215.

11 Ibid., 218–219.

12 Hannu Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust: The Rescue of Finland's Jews* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987), 159–179.

13 *The Memoirs of Doctor Felix Kersten*, ed. Herma Briffault (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1947/Kessinger Legacy Reprints), 123–132.

14 J.W. Rangell's interview, 3 November 1961, cited in Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 168. The quotation is in fact from an interview that Finnish historian Mauno Jokipii conducted with Johan Wilhelm Rangell in 1961, and which is cited in an article on Himmler's visit to Finland. Mauno Jokipii, "Himmlerin Suomen matka v. 1942", in *Juhlajulkaisu Einar W. Juwan kunniaksi hänen täyttäässään 70 vuotta 7.1.1962* (Helsinki: SHS, 1962), 430–431.

15 For a list from the Finnish state police, dated 6 November 1942, of the twenty-seven persons extradited, of whom eight were Jews – seven of whom were murdered in Auschwitz, while one survived – see Rautkallio, *Finland and the Holocaust*, 261–262.

16 For the findings of the Finnish historians' commission, see *Prisoner of War Deaths and People Handed over to Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939–55: A Research Report by the Finnish National Archives*, ed. Lars Westlund (Helsinki: National Archives, 2008).

role of the German ambassador in Helsinki, Wipert von Blücher, has been researched in depth. He had a clear influence at least on not accelerating the national socialist impact on Finland, conducting rather a traditional German power policy. German historian Michael Jonas shows how Blücher used the Finnish general opposition to German *Judenpolitik* as an argument for his own obstruction, always carefully covered by pointing at the military needs for traditional diplomacy.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Finnish historian Oula Silvennoinen has proven that, during the second half of 1941, a small Finnish state police unit worked under SS-Einsatzkommando Finnland, which was led by SS-Sturmbannführer Gustav vom Felde. The SS-Einsatzkommando was tasked with filtering out certain groups from the Stalag 309 prisoner-of-war camp in Salla. There existed a list of eleven groups which had to be segregated, among those “professional revolutionaries”, “political commissars of the Red Army”, “members of the Soviet Russian intelligentsia”, and “all Jews”.<sup>18</sup>

### Command Responsibility and Dramatis Personae

The commanding general of the XVIII Mountain Corps, who started the (failed) initiative for the deportation of the ethnic Karelian inhabitants of East Karelia to Finnish-run concentration camps, was the General der Gebirgstruppe (then a German three-star general) Franz Böhme. He and the staff of his corps had been moved from Greece to Finland some three months before in April and May 1942, as a result of the disengagement of German and Finnish troops on Finnish soil. Böhme, a former Austrian general staff officer, was not just another commanding general of a mountain corps. He was the one who had been put in charge of the Austrian intelligence office following the Anschluss, in order to integrate it into the Greater German security apparatus.<sup>19</sup> This was a task for a convinced national socialist, who before had been disadvantaged in republican Austria. Böhme’s XVIII Mountain Corps had fought its way through the Greek Metaxas Line and was then used as staff for the occupation administration in Greece.<sup>20</sup>

From 9 October 1941 until 7 December 1941, Böhme and his staff took over from the “Befehlshaber Serbien”, General der Flieger Heinrich Danckelmann, who in most sources is said to have been in charge of this command until 20 October 1941. Böhme’s new appointment was called “Bevollmächtigter Kommandierender General in Serbien (Kommandostab Serbien)”, which can be translated as plenipotentiary commanding general in Serbia. The civil government was conducted in those days by the collaboration government of the former chief of the Yugoslav general staff (from 1934 to 1935) and minister of war of Yugoslavia (from 1939 to 1940) Milan Nedić, who was in charge as prime minister from 29 August 1941. Nedić committed suicide after he was indicted by the Tito regime on 5 February 1946, by jumping

17 Michael Jonas, *NS-Diplomatie und Bündnispolitik 1935–1944. Wipert von Blücher, das Dritte Reich und Finnland* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 2011), 381–387.

18 Oula Silvennoinen, *Geheime Waffenbrüderschaft. Die sicherheitspolitische Zusammenarbeit zwischen Finnland und Deutschland 1933–1945* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010), 164–171, list on 167–168.

19 For the military career of Franz Böhme, see his German personal file BArch, PERS 6/ 85, and his German “general’s card” BArch, PERS 6/ 299430.

20 Detlef Vogel, “Das Eingreifen Deutschlands auf dem Balkan”, in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 3: *Der Mittelmeerraum und Südosteuropa. Von der ‘non belligeranza’ Italiens bis zum Kriegseintritt der Vereinigten Staaten*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart 1984), 448–454.

from a window of his Belgrade prison. Danckelmann was extradited to Yugoslavia and executed on 30 October 1947. Böhme was indicted in the so-called “Hostages Trial” (officially “The United States of America v. Wilhelm List, et al.”), and committed suicide by jumping from a window in Nürnberg on 30 May 1947. Böhme’s chief of staff from the moment of the establishment of the XVIII Mountain Army Corps in November 1940 until April 1943 was General Staff Colonel Max Pemsel, later a Wehrmacht general lieutenant, who made his way into the West German Bundeswehr, where he served as commanding general of the Second Corps.<sup>21</sup> As chief of staff, Pemsel had no legal command responsibility. This does of course not affect his moral responsibilities.

On the Finnish side, again, the documents mention Olli Paloheimo, with whom Pemsel negotiated. About one year later, he became colonel and commander of the Finnish East Karelian military government, which reported straight to Marshal Mannerheim. The other Finn mentioned in the document is General Major Johan Arajuri, who was the commander of the Finnish East Karelian government at the time. Paloheimo declined to decide about the deportation, pointing to a visit of Arajuri in Böhme’s headquarters in the near future.<sup>22</sup> We have no written evidence, but it seems that it was Arajuri who declined, probably after consultations with Mannerheim. It is interesting that both Paloheimo and Arajuri were “Jeger-officers”, which means that they had fought as volunteers in the Prussian-run Finnish Legion during the First World War, like nearly all commanders of the Winter War.<sup>23</sup>

### War Crimes, Genocide, and the Context of Several Historical Debates

The debate on the contribution of the Wehrmacht to national socialist rule and measures, including the Wehrmacht’s role concerning the Holocaust, could be called a “frozen debate”. The debate, emerging strongly in the 1990s after the so-called *Wehrmachtsausstellung* (Wehrmacht exhibition) in 1992, focused among others on the example of Serbia, where Böhme, as plenipotentiary commanding general, and his staff from October to November 1941. Special attention in this context concentrated on the 717<sup>th</sup> Infantry division, which was the specific unit in place and committed massacres in Kraljevo and Kragujevac. Böhme was responsible for ordering the taking hostages at a ratio of 1:100 for every German soldier or Volksdeutscher who was killed, and 1:50 for each one who was wounded. The massacres are well documented in the Nuremberg indictment, and at Kragujevac there is evidence that, under Böhme’s command, the ratio of 1:100 was not just been a number on paper but was indeed practiced in the field. The Austrian historian and political scientist Walter Manoschek highlighted in his dissertation<sup>24</sup> that the hostages murdered were selected, among other factors, based on national-socialist racial criteria: Böhme’s order for the taking of hostages from 10 October 1941, on the first day after he took over the command as Befehlshaber Serbien, referred to “communists, all Jews and a certain

21 BAArch, RH-24-18/ 173b; on Max Pemsel, see BAArch, PERS 6/ 30333; Roland Kaltenecker, *Generalleutnant Max Josef Pemsel. Vom Armeechef während der alliierten Invasion zum Kommandierenden General in der Bundeswehr* (Würzburg: Flechsig Verlag, 2014).

22 BAArch, RH-24-18/ 173b.

23 Agilolf Kesselring, *Des Kaisers finnische Legion. Die finnische Jägerbewegung im Kontext der deutschen Finnlandpolitik im ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2005).

24 Walter Manoschek, “Serbien ist judenfrei”. *Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judenvernichtung in Serbien 1941/42*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1995), 158–168.

amount of national (Serb) and democratic minded inhabitants”.<sup>25</sup> The interlinkage between Second World War anti-partisan warfare – basically a military task today known under the acronym “COIN” for counterinsurgency warfare – on the one hand, and, on the other, mass murder based on German national-socialist racial ideology primarily targeting European Jews as part of the bigger picture of the Holocaust, have for decades been well known to Holocaust researchers and military historians.<sup>26</sup> Anyway, there prevails the idea that anti-partisan warfare as a pretext or framework for the genocidal mass murder of Jews and a clear connection with the Holocaust had usually been conducted by SS-formations and the SD-Einsatzgruppen. The contribution and guilt of the Wehrmacht as the regular army of the Third Reich has been researched and controversially discussed since the 1990s.<sup>27</sup> In the Wehrmacht exhibition, the example of the 717<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division served as the most prominent example of the involvement of Wehrmacht units in the Holocaust. It remained unclear and unresolved, though, how typical or untypical such an abuse of the cover of anti-partisan warfare for genocidal policy had been. Was it an exception or was it the rule?

## Results and Remaining Questions

The example of the XVIII Mountain Corps shows that the same commander with the same staff, and in a similar situation of dealing with partisan warfare in his rear area, acted in two different ways. While in Serbia the defence against the partisans can be seen as a pseudo-legal cover for committing genocide, in Finland it did not lead to the deportation of the Karelian population of Soviet Eastern Karelia. While in Serbia the paramilitary Četniks under Dragoljub Mihailović were radical nationalists with an antisemitic agenda, who cooperated in providing the troops under Böhme’s command with non-Serb or at least non-Četnik hostages, the Finnish regular military, the army of a democratic state, did not cooperate by agreeing to the deportation of the Karelian population. The argument was that there were Karelians in Finland, too. It would not be possible to explain to the Finnish Karelians why their fellow Karelians on the wrong side of the former border should be put into concentration camps. Even though – or perhaps also because – there was an at least rough treatment of Soviet prisoners, strong anticommunism, and the ideal of a Greater Finland, there was no policy for treating Finnish citizens with different ethnic (e.g. Finnish, Swedish, Karelian, Ingerman, Tatar, Russian, and German) or religious (e.g. Lutheran, Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim) backgrounds badly.

Böhme, who, like Dietl, was ideologically a convinced national socialist, tried at first to implement methods of segregation, as he was used to from the Serbian theatre of war. The SS had already started to implement its murderous segregation policy by establishing an SS-Einsatzkommando under vom Felde. We can imagine the Einsatzkommando as a nucleus for a future Einsatzgruppe. Yet, as soon as Böhme and

25 Walter Manoschek, “Die Massaker in Pancevo und Kragujevac”, in *Repressalien und Terror. ‘Vergeltungsaktionen’ im deutsch besetzten Europa 1939–1945*, ed. Oliver von Wrochem (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), 97.

26 Christian Hartmann, Johannes Hürter, and Peter Lieb, *Der deutsche Krieg im Osten 1941–1944. Facetten einer Grenzüberschreitung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009). Concerning partisan warfare on the Western Front, see Peter Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg oder NS-Weltanschauungskrieg? Kriegsführung und Partisanenbekämpfung in Frankreich 1943/44* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007).

27 Walter Manoschek, ed., *Die Wehrmacht im Rassenkrieg. Der Vernichtungskrieg hinter der Front* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1996).

his staff were confronted with a clear objection, they started to change their attitudes through a kind of *realpolitik*. It is noteworthy that it is not historically clear who from a higher political level exactly opposed the deportation of Karelians, but it was most probably Mannerheim. It is also unknown who should be attributed with opposing the extradition of Finnish Jews, and it is not even clear if their extradition was ever demanded or suggested by Himmler or Hitler. Still, opposition to this has been attributed to Rangell, but the social democrat Väinö Tanner is also said to have protested. It seems that there was an all-party agreement on not crossing certain lines, which was common sense among the political and military leadership, as well as among the lower military level in charge. That does not mean that there was no anti-semitism, radical nationalism, or high esteem for the Germans and perhaps even Nazi ideology, among some Finns. What was decisive was that the Finnish leadership, be it President Ryti, Marshall Mannerheim, or Prime Minister Rangell, had a common goal, based on common national values shared with the greater part of the Finnish citizens. Together with the high strategic value of Finland for the war against the Soviet Union, Hitler's high esteem for Mannerheim led to an exception in national socialist anti-Jewish policy. On the other hand, where the political leadership did agree to extradite the non-Finnish population, the national-socialist murder machine functioned as it did in other places. SS-Einsatzgruppe A was also in a geographical sense not far away.

It has not been confirmed, but it is possible, that Böhme's suggestion for deporting the Karelian population inhabiting the eastern side of the former Soviet-Finnish border to Finnish concentration camps – which would first have to be established – was part of a first trial for or a first step to the Holocaust. The timely coordination with Himmler's visit suggests that it was not simply a coincidence. It is noteworthy that the preparations for Himmler's visit started after SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich had been killed on 4 June 1942, which coincided on the same day, were Hitler had visited Mannerheim. The reason behind Himmler's "vacation" together with SS-Obergruppenführer Wolff is still unknown. If Böhme's suggestion was part of a first step to the Holocaust, it would be a similar pattern to the one in Kragujevac, where Böhme filed the order on his first day in command. Perhaps the small finding of a so far unknown document concerning the sparsely inhabited Arctic area might open new perspectives and encourage new interdisciplinary research at the junction of Holocaust and military history.



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**Agilolf Kesselring**, Associate Professor, History of European Warfare, Department of Warfare/(Finnish) National Defence University. Kesselring, born 1972 in Tokyo, Japan, is a German-Finnish military historian with a focus on the history of warfare, and intelligence in the “long” 20<sup>th</sup> century. He studied History, Social Sciences and International Law in Hamburg, earned his Doktor der Philosophie (PhD) in History at the Helmut-Schmidt-University of the German Armed Forces (Hamburg) and was named dosentti (associate professor) at the Finnish National Defence University’s Institute of Warfare (Helsinki) with the *venia legendi* of History of European Warfare in 2019. Kesselring teaches also as Lehrbeauftragter (associate sr. lecturer) at the German University of the Public Administration’s intelligence studies faculty (Berlin) on a regular basis since 2022. He has published several books on North-European military history, German Intelligence history, Southeast-European military history, as well as over 70 popular articles covering warfare and intelligence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Finnish and German. Currently he works on a monography on the topic of the hidden German armament of the 1920s and 1930s.

Email: [agilolf@hotmail.de](mailto:agilolf@hotmail.de)

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