

German Security Police and SS Records (1939–1942) – Analysis

This collection (Irving File 36) is an extensive compilation of Nazi security apparatus documents from 1939–1942. It includes SS and **Reich Security Main Office (RSHA)** memoranda, directives, training curricula, operational orders, personnel lists, and forms. Examined section by section, these records reveal how the **SS** and **Security Police** (Sicherheitspolizei, combining Gestapo and Kripo) functioned bureaucratically and ideologically during the early war years. Common patterns emerge in their formal language, meticulous logistics, rigid chain-of-command, and use of euphemisms to mask atrocities. Below is a breakdown of each major section and the purpose and implications of the documents within, along with historical context and connections to broader Nazi policies.

Student Training and Indoctrination: The *Langemarck-Studium* Program (1939)

One portion of the file deals with SS educational initiatives, notably the *Langemarck-Studium*. This was an SS-endorsed program to fast-track gifted young men (often from non-elite backgrounds) into higher education and leadership. A June 1939 directive by the SS Main Office exhorts SS units to encourage more applications, noting that **few SS men had applied despite an earlier announcement**. The memo – circulated to all SS offices (“Verteiler V”) – stresses the *Schutzstaffel* must place “great value” on having qualified SS men take this opportunity for advancement. It even **extends the application deadline to 25 June 1939** to boost participation. This push reflects how the SS sought to cultivate an educated elite loyal to its ideology. The *Langemarck* name evoked the WWI Langemarck myth of student soldiers’ sacrifice, underlining the program’s ideological tone.

The records likely include **admission criteria and lecture plans** for this course of study. These documents demonstrate the SS’s bureaucratic thoroughness in indoctrination: from issuing formal orders about deadlines and distribution, to detailing curricula. Such programs served an *ideological function* – grooming SS men in Nazi worldview – and a *bureaucratic function* by standardizing how SS personnel could earn advanced credentials. The tone is formal and motivational, yet beneath the encouragement lies the SS’s intent to create a corps of politically reliable, educated fighters. This aligns with the broader Nazi emphasis (especially pre-war) on merging academic advancement with ideological training, preparing loyal cadres for leadership in the expanding Reich.

Equipment and Logistics Directives for SS/SD Units

Another section contains detailed **equipment lists and logistical directives** for SS and Security Service (SD) units, highlighting the operational planning behind SS field missions. For example, an *Ausrüstungsplan* (equipment plan) enumerates every item an SS man must carry, reflecting almost obsessive preparation. Each man’s kit for deployment is specified down to clothing, weapons, rations, and personal items. A mid-1941 list (likely for Einsatzkommando units prior to Operation *Barbarossa*) shows that an SS member was to have: steel helmet, pistol with 50 rounds, bayonet, gas mask, blanket, bread bag, canteen,

mess kit, flashlight, first-aid packets, writing materials, three days' food (sausage, canned goods, biscuits, chocolate), a set of civilian clothes, hygiene supplies, shoe polish kit, sewing kit, sports attire, and even a boot jack. Nothing was left to chance – **each man would be self-sufficient and ready for field operations.**

These directives also include unit-level provisions. For instance, an order for an *Einsatzkommando* (mobile SS/SD unit) prescribes **one or two portable typewriters with supplies** for reports, as well as at least **one submachine gun with ammunition** for the team. Special instructions note that personal gear is to be packed in standardized cases sent by the SD Main Office, and certain heavier items (extra blankets, field uniforms, etc.) would be issued at assembly points as needed. This illustrates the **bureaucratic coordination of logistics** – the RSHA centrally equipped its units to ensure uniform readiness. Even fuel and transport were managed through high-level orders. In late 1941, as resources grew strained, the RSHA forwarded Hermann Göring's decrees on **fuel rationing (Kraftstoffbewirtschaftung)** to security commanders in occupied Western Europe and to Einsatzgruppen in the USSR, underscoring that SS and police units had to abide by overall war economy measures.

The meticulous detail of these lists and orders shows the SS as not just an instrument of terror but a highly organized bureaucracy. The *logistical function* of the SS/Police is on full display – from office supplies (typewriters and carbon paper) to weaponry and rations. This thorough preparation enabled SS and police units to operate efficiently across Europe, whether setting up offices in occupied Paris or following combat troops into the Soviet Union. The dry inventory language masks the reality that this efficiency was in service of horrific goals. Nonetheless, it reveals a pattern: **military-like thoroughness blended with police administration**, allowing the SS and SD to quickly establish their operations in any theater of war.

RSHA Lecture Schedules and Ideological Curriculum

The collection also contains internal training curricula and lecture timetables from the RSHA, shedding light on how Nazi security officers were indoctrinated and instructed. A striking example is a **multi-day RSHA training course in July (year likely 1941)**, complete with a daily schedule of lectures and exercises. The program is pedagogically structured: trainees were expected to do group study sessions and daily reviews of material, even writing short tests (Kurzarbeiten) during course “repetition” sessions. The documents give teaching guidelines – instructing lecturers to **recap key points and quiz all participants** to ensure engagement. They emphasize discipline in discussion (trainees' questions should not veer into trivial or off-topic matters) and note that beyond academics, each day included *physical training* (morning exercise, afternoon sports and pistol shooting practice) as a “compensation” to desk work.

Most illuminating is the **schedule of lecture topics and instructors**, which reveals the ideological and operational content the RSHA deemed essential. According to the timetable, over the course of the training the officers would learn about:

- **The SD: Organization, Purpose and Tasks** – an overview of the Security Service's role.

- **Intelligence Gathering and Reporting** – methods of Nachrichtenerfassung (information collection) and Berichterstattung (reporting).
- **“Churches and Sects” & “Jews and Freemasons”** – separate sessions on handling religious sects and on the regime’s chief ideological enemies, Jews and Freemasons. Notably, *Jews and Freemasons* were paired, reflecting the Nazi conspiracy view that tied Judaism to secret societies; the lecture was delivered by an SS officer (Stubaf. Ehlers) experienced in these “ideological opponent” matters.
- **Emigration** – likely discussing political émigrés or “enemies abroad,” taught by an SS-Obersturmbannführer.
- **Bolshevism** – the doctrine of Communism, framed as a mortal threat, taught by an SS-Untersturmführer (junior officer).
- **Ethnic and Racial Topics:** “*Raum, Volk, Verwaltung*” (Territory, People, Administration) and specific lectures on populations like “White Ruthenians and Ukrainians,” as well as German domestic and foreign policy. These were vital given impending operations in the East – officers were being briefed on how to view and manage Soviet ethnic groups.

This curriculum demonstrates the **fusion of operational training with ideological indoctrination**. Trainees learned practical skills (intelligence, reporting, administration) alongside a heavy dose of Nazi world-view (anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism, anti-Church sentiment). The presence of physical fitness and firearms practice underlines that these were not ordinary bureaucrats but soldier-bureaucrats of the SS, expected to be as adept in field operations as at desk work. The chain-of-command is implicit in the lecture line-up: high-ranking RSHA officials or experts led sessions in their specialty (for example, the *Kirchen und Sekten* lecture by SS-Stubaf. Hartl and the *Juden und Freimaurer* lecture by SS-Hauptsturmführer Ehlers). By enumerating subjects like “Jews” and “Bolshevism” in a course plan, the documents show how **ideologically charged terms were institutionalized** – every officer was systematically taught to view Jews, Freemasons, and Bolsheviks as core adversaries. Such training helped create a cohesive mindset among SS and Security Police: a crucial factor when these men later implemented policies like the Holocaust and repression in occupied lands.

Administrative Directives for Occupied Territories (Poland, USSR, Western Europe)

As the Nazi empire expanded from 1939 onward, the SS and Security Police issued numerous directives on administering and pacifying occupied territories. The records here reflect how the **bureaucratic machinery adjusted to govern conquered areas** like Poland, the Soviet Union, and countries of Western Europe, in close coordination with the military.

One early document (signed by SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Werner Best in *February 1939*, on behalf of Heydrich) reveals foresight in planning for war. It instructs *Inspektoren der Sicherheitspolizei* (regional inspectors of Security Police) to prepare for potential conflict by securing sensitive files and ensuring transport for evacuating materials if needed. Referencing lessons from the 1938 crisis, it orders that in any “period of tension” or mobilization, local Sipo offices should be ready to **remove or disguise archives and documents as routine administrative moves** so they can be quickly carted to safety. Inspectors had to coordinate with *Wehrkreiskommandos* (Army district commands) and even a “Commissioner for Local Transport” to obtain transport, and report by 1 April 1939 on their preparations. This dry,

bureaucratic language conceals its import: the secret police were quietly bracing for an invasion of Poland well before it happened, ensuring their apparatus (personnel files, indexes of political suspects, etc.) would be ready to roll into new territories or be pulled back if offices were endangered. It highlights the **chain-of-command and cooperation with the Wehrmacht** – themes that would recur.

After Poland's defeat in 1939, the SS and police became the de facto administrators of occupied Polish territories (alongside civilian authorities in the Generalgouvernement). Although the file's main focus is 1939–42 directives, we can surmise it contains orders related to Poland's occupation: likely guidelines on dealing with Polish civilians, intelligentsia, and Jews. Historically, SS Einsatzgruppen and Security Police carried out the **AB-Aktion** in mid-1940, murdering Polish intellectuals and leaders. While specific AB-Aktion orders may not appear here, the *tone* of extant documents suggests similar euphemistic language and rigid process. For example, when dealing with "*cleansing*" (*Säuberung*) of enemy elements, the SS often wrote in bureaucratic code. In a later directive (early 1942) concerning Soviet territories, Heydrich speaks of "**Säuberung der Gefangenenlager**" (**cleansing the POW camps**) of Soviets, a phrase equally applicable to how camps and ghettos in Poland were handled.

In the occupied **USSR (from 1941)**, administrative directives took on an openly genocidal character under the cloak of security. A telling document from *October 1941*, signed by Reichsführer-SS **Heinrich Himmler**, addresses the treatment of the population in the Pripet Marshes region. It bluntly frames villages in partisan-infested areas as either "**strongpoints for bandits or for us**". The criterion for a village being useful to the Germans is racial: if the inhabitants "are not criminals but, ethnically speaking, consist of Ukrainians or some other minority" friendly to Germany and hostile to "the Russians or the Poles," then the village can be turned into a German outpost. In such cases, the order is to install German-approved mayors and arm the populace for self-defense against partisans. Villages deemed full of "criminal" elements (code for partisan-sympathizing, often meaning Belorussian or Polish populations) are implied to be treated as enemy nests. The Security Police is assigned to implant *Vertrauensleute* (trusted local informants) in friendly villages. This directive illustrates several key patterns of SS operational language: **ethnic divide-and-rule tactics, and euphemistic labeling of entire groups as "criminals" or "bandits"** to justify brutal pacification. The explicit mention of Ukrainians as potential allies and Poles/Russians as foes shows the ideological lens – Nazis exploited ethnic tensions, considering Slavs variably valuable or expendable based on political convenience and racial hierarchy.

In **Western Europe**, where Nazi occupation was less overtly genocidal in 1940–41, SS and police directives still enforced harsh control and intelligence-gathering. The records indicate RSHA sections monitoring French and Belgian territories. For instance, one summary lists concerns such as "**Russian émigrés and White Ruthenians in Paris; emigrants of German origin in French military service; [and] terror acts against the Wehrmacht in France.**". This suggests that the SD (probably RSHA's Amt VI for foreign intelligence) kept close watch on exiled Russians in Paris, on ethnic Germans in France, and on Resistance-type attacks on German forces. The language remains matter-of-fact, but the implication is a wide surveillance net cast over occupied societies. Directives to the *Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD* in Paris or Brussels likely ordered cooperation with the German military commanders and stringent measures against dissent. By mid-1942, as the Holocaust expanded west, these same offices (under RSHA guidance) would begin deporting Jews from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Although the file stops in 1942, the

bureaucratic groundwork for those actions is visible: **standardized reporting on “Jewish matters,” liaison channels between SS offices and military or civilian occupation authorities, and classification of Resistance sabotage as “terrorism” warranting draconian reprisal.**

Across all occupied zones, a few themes are consistent in these documents: **insistence on coordination with the Wehrmacht**, careful administrative planning (transport, communication, chain-of-command), and the use of sanitized terms. The SS perfected a *euphemistic bureaucratic lexicon* – e.g. calling executions “special treatment” or partisan extermination “pacification” – in orders that nonetheless had lethal effect. The occupied-territory directives show the SS/Police as the **executor of Nazi occupation policy**: suppressing opposition, exploiting resources, and implementing racial policies (from ghettoization in Poland to anti-partisan massacres in the USSR), all through written orders and memos that framed mass violence as “security” necessities.

Einsatzgruppen Orders for Operation *Barbarossa* (1941)

One of the most significant sets of documents in this file are the **operational orders and guidelines for the Einsatzgruppen** – the SS mobile death squads – issued in preparation for and during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. These records provide a window into the *operational and ideological function* of the SS in the genocidal campaign against “Judeo-Bolshevism.”

A key document, likely a directive from RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich in June 1941, is titled along the lines of “*Instructions for the Einsatz of the Security Police and SD in the Operation ‘Barbarossa’*.” It lays out the **mission and command structure** of the Einsatzgruppen. The order begins by citing a March 26, 1941 OKH (Army High Command) directive authorizing the deployment of these units and lists their **tasks**. In the *immediate front-line areas* (rückwärtiges Armeegebiet), their task was to secure important materials and targets: **archives, files of hostile organizations, and key individuals (such as “leading emigrants, saboteurs, terrorists”)**. In the *rear army territories* (rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet, the larger occupied hinterland), their role was the “**investigation and suppression of all anti-Reich and anti-state activities not directly part of the enemy armed forces, as well as keeping the local military commanders informed of the political situation.**”. Crucially, this order establishes that **the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommandos were subordinated to the Higher SS and Police Leaders (Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer)** in each region. This created a clear chain-of-command: although working alongside the Army, SS-General Himmler’s deputies (the HSSPFs) had authority over security operations. The document notes that the roles of the HSSPF, the Order Police, and the Wehrmacht would be defined in a separate order, but emphasizes that Army commanders could limit Einsatzgruppe actions if they threatened to interfere with military operations.

The **relationship with the Wehrmacht** is a recurring point: the directive explicitly stresses “the closest cooperation” and loyalty to the Army, instructing that all orders from the military within the agreed framework must be followed strictly. This is historically significant – it shows that from the start, the Army and SS coordinated the violence in the East. The Army’s order gave the SS a broad mandate, and Heydrich’s order in turn guaranteed the Army that *its* needs (operational security) would be respected even as the SS pursued its ideological aims.

While couched in bureaucratic terms, these orders paved the way for mass murder. The reference to combating “anti-Reich elements” was a euphemism encompassing communists, partisans, *and Jews*. Although “Jews” are not named in the snippet we have, in practice Heydrich had verbally briefed Einsatzgruppen leaders to target Jewish functionaries and the Jewish population generally as part of “combating Bolshevism.” Indeed, subsequent communications used coded language. For example, a situation report from an Einsatzgruppe in late 1941 (noted in the file) bluntly states “*Die Haltung der Juden ist nach wie vor eindeutig deutschfeindlich und kriminell.*” – “The attitude of the Jews is still unequivocally anti-German and criminal”. By branding all Jews as inherently “criminal” and “hostile,” the SS justified their wholesale execution under the rubric of security. Another report line mentions “**Gypsy bands identified and rendered harmless**” alongside the note on Jews – a grim indication that Roma were also being targeted under the “bandit” label.

The file likely contains the famous **Heydrich telegram of 2 July 1941**, or similar instructions, ordering Einsatzgruppen to quietly instigate and guide “self-cleansing” actions (pogroms) by locals and to execute certain categories of people (Party officials, intelligentsia, Jews in state and Party positions). By August 1941, more explicit orders for the *Final Solution by bullets* were circulated. The bureaucratic tone rarely stated “kill all Jews” outright – instead, euphemisms like “**special treatment**” (**Sonderbehandlung**) were used. Tellingly, one guideline in the file addressing the handling of Soviet POWs (a 1941 RSHA order worked out with the OKW) instructs that *if POW camps in the General Government (occupied Poland) are near the border, the “prisoners are to be transported to formerly Soviet-Russian territory for ‘special treatment’”*. It adds, “*Should executions be necessary for camp discipline...*” – indicating that even before formal extermination camps, the SS was planning to execute selected prisoners out of sight. *Sonderbehandlung* – ostensibly “special handling” – was the code for execution without trial, a prime example of the chilling SS euphemistic language.

Another related document from Heydrich (dated October 1941) deals with the **screening of Soviet POWs** in German custody. It orders the “*cleansing of POW camps containing Soviets*”, and directs that **teams (Einsatzkommandos) identify dangerous prisoners – communists, state officials, intellectuals, Jews, “agitators” – among the inmates for elimination**. The instructions, coordinated with the Army’s POW department, state that this political screening is necessary now that initial military selection was done – “*the military’s purely military considerations must now give way to the political purpose: to protect the German people from Bolshevik agitators and secure the occupied territory*”. In practical terms, this meant thousands of POWs were handed over to the Security Police to be shot (an estimated 30,000–50,000 were killed in 1941–42 under this program). The chain-of-command is clear: camp commandants were ordered by the Army to cooperate and the RSHA supplied liaison officers. Notably, **if a camp was in the Generalgouvernement (Poland) and executions were to occur, prisoners should whenever possible be moved to “formerly Soviet” soil to carry it out** – again, a bureaucratic consideration to relocate mass murder away from areas where it might cause public stir or administrative complications.

Throughout these Einsatzgruppen and POW directives, **ideological imperatives are wrapped in bureaucratic orders**. The documents seldom say “exterminate Jews” in plain words. Instead, they speak of “secure specified objects,” “combatting elements,” “special treatment,” and “cleansing.” The pattern of language is deliberate: it provides a paper trail that appears professional and detached, even as it unchains extraordinary violence. The bureaucratic form (referencing file numbers, distribution lists, signing *i.V.* “in representation”

for superiors) lent an air of normality to criminal orders. In turn, this facilitated obedience down the chain-of-command – after all, orders came stamped and signed from Berlin, in dry official prose with legalistic vocabulary. Historian Raul Hilberg famously observed that the Holocaust was carried out by paper and pen as much as by bullets; these documents are a prime illustration. They reveal how the **SS security apparatus functioned as an organized murder machine under the guise of an administrative hierarchy**.

Personnel Lists and Organizational Structure of the RSHA/SS

The Irving File 36 also contains **personnel lists and contact directories** for the SS and Security Police offices, offering insight into the bureaucratic structure and chain-of-command. These directories list names, ranks/titles, department assignments, office locations, and telephone numbers of officials, painting a picture of the RSHA's internal organization. For example, one directory page is formatted with columns for "*Name; First Name; Rank; Office; Room Number; Telephone (internal, post, private)*". We find entries such as "*Abendroth, Hermann – Reg.Rat (Regierungsrat) – IV E 2 – Lutherstr. 17 – [phone] 164 (int.) 642 (priv.)*", indicating Hermann Abendroth, a government counselor in Department IV E2 (within the Gestapo) located at Lutherstrasse 17 in Berlin, with his extension and private number. In another entry, "*Arndt, Heinrich – K.S. (Kriminalsekretär) – IV B 4 – [Room] 35 – 965 (int.) 693 (priv.)*" appears. Notably, *Department IV B4* was the **Gestapo office for "Jewish Affairs and Evacuation"** – Adolf Eichmann's notorious bureau. Seeing a lower-ranked Kriminalsekretär (H. Arndt) listed in IV B4 with full contact info underscores how even the most murderous tasks were handled via normal bureaucracy: office rooms, phone lines, case files, clerks and secretaries.

The directory covers multiple departments of the RSHA, likely arranged by office (Amt) or function. We see references to **Amt IV (Gestapo)** sections like IV A, IV B, IV C, IV D, IV E, etc., as well as **SD departments**. For instance, there are listings for **Amt VI (SD-Ausland, Foreign Intelligence)**, where regional desks are evident: one part mentions "*Russ[ische] Emigranten, Weißrussen in Paris; ... Terrorakte gegen Wehrmacht in Frankreich*" – presumably a brief for Amt VI C (Western Europe intelligence). Another section might list Amt III (SD-Inland, Domestic Intelligence) personnel, and so on. Women appear too (e.g. *Gabel, Lina – Xz. Ang. (Hilfsarbeiterin? perhaps a clerical worker) – IV E4 – tel. 965* etc.) indicating that secretaries and file clerks were part of this machinery.

These personnel rosters reveal the **breadth of the SS and Security Police bureaucracy**. Far from being a small covert force, the RSHA was a sprawling organization with hundreds of officials at HQ and many more in field offices. Each entry's *Dienstgrad* (rank) and *Dienststelle* (office) situates the person in the chain-of-command. For example, the listing of a Kriminalkommissar Robert Wabnik in "IV B..." and a Kriminalsekretär Gerhard Warzecha in "IV E3" shows the hierarchy within departments. Senior figures like SS-Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller (chief of Gestapo, Amt IV) or SS-Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg (later SD foreign intel chief) would presumably appear at the top of their sections, with deputies and clerks beneath. The presence of room numbers and multiple telephone lines (internal extensions and external lines) highlights the **modern administrative nature** of the RSHA – it operated like a government ministry or a large corporate office, complete with directories to reach any official. This bureaucratic normalcy was a key enabler of Nazi crimes: genocide

was organized through office desks and filing cabinets, by people with titles and addresses, interconnected by phone and courier.

For the historian, these lists are gold in understanding who was where and how information flowed. The chain-of-command is both horizontal and vertical – horizontally, we see coordination between the RSHA and other entities (the directories often note liaisons or refer to Inspectors and Commanders of Sipo/SD in various occupied regions), and vertically, we see each *Referat* (section) staffed down to junior ranks. It also shows the blending of SS ranks with civil service grades (e.g., Regierungsrat, Kriminalrat, etc., were police bureaucratic ranks). The SS sought to integrate Party, SS, and traditional police bureaucrats into one apparatus, and by 1941 this was largely achieved under the RSHA umbrella. Ultimately, these personnel records humanize the bureaucracy of evil – behind each phone number is a person implementing Nazi policy, from high-level architects like Heydrich to mid-level desk murderers like Eichmann and the clerks typing out deportation orders.

Standardized Forms and Reporting Procedures

The final section of the file includes **blank forms, templates, and instructions for reporting** – evidence of how the SS and Security Police standardized their paperwork and intelligence flow. The SS was notorious for generating copious reports: daily *Ereignismeldungen* (event reports), weekly summaries, special action reports, etc. This collection preserves some of the actual templates and guidelines that field offices were expected to use, reflecting the *bureaucratic mindset* of the Nazi security apparatus.

One document provides a template for inter-office communication regarding case transfers. It shows RSHA Amt IV C (Gestapo central office) sending information to a subordinate State Police (Stapo) office: “*IV C1a forwards a report from ... which shows that the person ... has relocated. The report is to be sent to the State Police office in ... with **Formblatt 19** for immediate action, since the original case files are located there.*”. This small instruction is telling – even for something as routine as notifying another city’s Gestapo that a suspect moved to their area, a specific **form (No.19)** had to accompany it, and the office of origin retained copies. It highlights the **systematic information-sharing** and the emphasis on proper procedure (the use of standard forms ensured consistency and traceability of orders).

Other pages list **categories of reports and duties**. We see references to terms like “*Schutzangelegenheiten, Attentatsmeldungen, Wirtschaftsangelegenheiten, Presseangelegenheiten, Kartei, Personenakten, Auskunftswesen*” – i.e., “protective custody matters, assassination reports, economic matters, press matters, card index, personal files, information service”. Further lines mention “*Berichterstattungen, Ereignismeldungen, A-Kartei, Nachrichtensammelstelle, Observations, Sonderaufträge*”. This appears to be outlining the responsibilities or sections within a Gestapo office or the flow of different report types. It indicates that **every aspect of security work was compartmentalized**: there were officers handling protective custody and arrest reports, others compiling daily incident reports, others maintaining the card index of persons, others dealing with press surveillance, and so on. “A-Kartei” likely refers to the card index of opponents (probably *A* for *Abwehr* or *Anti-state*). There is also mention of “*Hausgefängnis*” (house prison) and “*Erkennungsdienst*” (identification service) in some lists, confirming that local Gestapo offices had holding jails and fingerprinting/photograph units, and these too generated regular reports.

Crucially, the SS system demanded **regular summary reports up the chain**. A captured directive from RSHA IV in 1941 instructs all regional Sipo and SD commanders to submit weekly reports: “*By courier (Schnellbrief) to the RSHA, [send] a short report containing: 1) a brief summary of activity in the past week, ...*”. The document likely continues with point 2, 3, etc., detailing what to include (e.g. noteworthy arrests, special incidents, local mood). It even notes that distribution of these reports to various RSHA departments will be handled in Berlin, and that Heydrich himself reserves the right to compile the **overall summary for the Reichsführer-SS (Himmler) and Chief of German Police**. This illustrates the **chain-of-command in reporting**: local offices report to RSHA; RSHA distills information for Himmler (and ultimately Hitler). We see here the vertical integration of intelligence that allowed a flow of information from the ground level (a partisan attack in Ukraine or a resistance leaflet in France) all the way to the top (Himmler’s desk) within days. Meanwhile, horizontal dissemination was controlled – local offices only got what Berlin chose to forward to them, keeping the central authority strong.

The use of **form numbers and pre-printed templates** points to how even extraordinary actions were normalized. There was a form for everything – *Formblatt 17* for one type of report, *Formblatt 19* for another, etc. This not only created a paper trail but also enabled the **mass production of orders**. For example, when the order came to deport Jews, the RSHA sent out telegrams and forms to each Stapostelle to fill in number of Jews, transport details, etc., akin to bureaucratic bookkeeping. We can imagine that some of those bureaucratic preliminaries are reflected in these documents (though the mass deportations from Germany and Western Europe began in late 1941–1942, slightly beyond some of the dates here, the administrative mindset was already in place).

The language in forms is typically dry and technical, but even here one finds euphemisms. A line in a template might say “...*should be sent for immediate handling since the originals are there*” instead of explicitly stating “take this person into custody.” In one guideline about coordinating between the Gestapo and SD, it states if one agency is about to act on a person of interest to the other, they must give the other a chance to proceed first – a sort of bureaucratic courtesy to avoid conflict. This shows that even within the Nazi apparatus, **overlapping jurisdictions were managed through formal directives** to ensure all organs (Gestapo, Kripo, SD, Order Police, etc.) worked in concert according to Himmler and Heydrich’s plans.

In summary, the forms and reporting instructions highlight the **operational efficiency and bureaucratic nature of Nazi repression**. Every arrest, shooting, or seizure generated paperwork; every regional office was tethered to Berlin by a web of reports. The euphemistic and acronym-laden language (“Ereignismeldung,” “Sonderauftrag,” “Evakuierung,” “Sonderbehandlung”) provided a coded veil for horrific deeds, but everyone involved understood the true meaning. This paperwork also had an *ideological function*: by reducing people to case numbers and statistics, it dehumanized victims and habituated the perpetrators to systematic killing as “just another process” to file reports about. The existence of a form even for murder (e.g., Formblatt for special treatment requests) illustrates how deeply *bureaucratized evil* had become in the Third Reich.

Conclusion: The Functioning of the SS and Security Police Apparatus

Taken together, the Irving File 36 documents portray a comprehensive picture of the SS and Security Police at work in 1939–1942 – a period when their power and responsibilities grew in step with Nazi expansion and radicalization. Each section of records illuminates different facets:

- **Operational Function:** We see the SS/Police acting as combat troops (Einsatzgruppen in the East), intelligence gatherers (SD reports on occupied countries), and enforcers of Nazi policies (from rounding up Jews and political opponents to running camps). The directives for Barbarossa and occupied territories, as well as the equipment and training given, show how operations were planned and executed with precision and ruthlessness.
- **Bureaucratic Function:** These records could easily be mistaken for mundane civil-service files if one didn't know the context. They reveal an organization that prized order, hierarchy, and procedure. There were offices and sub-offices, each with specific duties; information moved through defined channels; orders were copied to multiple recipients (the use of extensive distribution lists – *Verteiler* – ensured everyone “involved” was informed). Even crimes like mass murder were governed by written orders, signed by officials who often invoked legalistic justifications. This bureaucracy made the *Nazi police state efficient* – it could coordinate a continent-wide oppression machine from a set of desks in Berlin.
- **Ideological Function:** Underlying all the paperwork is Nazi ideology – *Führerprinzip* (leader principle) in the strict chain-of-command, and racial hate in the content. The training curricula explicitly taught racial and political ideology. The memos and orders repeatedly refer to “elements” like Jews, communists, partisans, priests, or Freemasons as threats to be monitored or eliminated. They also employ ideological euphemisms: calling Jews “**agitators**” or “**bandits**”, describing genocide as “**special treatment**”, or mass shootings of POWs as “**executions necessary for discipline**”. The language patterns – whether in the Himmler directive dividing villages by ethnicity or the Einsatz report vilifying Jews – are historically significant because they show **how ideology was translated into administratively bland terminology**. This made it easier for ordinary officials to participate; one could tell oneself one was fighting “bandits” or “disease” rather than committing murder.
- **Logistics and Resources:** From the uniform on an SS man's back to the fuel in an Einsatzgruppe's trucks, the records demonstrate attention to material needs. The SS and Police were not ad-hoc terror squads; they were a **well-supplied force**, integrated into the war economy and military planning. Logistics also meant communication – telephone networks, courier systems, encoding of messages (some documents show “*verschlüsselt*” – encrypted – correspondence). The ability to swiftly mobilize, supply, and direct units like the Einsatzgruppen was key to their deadly effectiveness in 1941 when they killed hundreds of thousands in a matter of months.

The chain-of-command comes through clearly: directives flow downward (Heydrich and Himmler issuing orders), while information flows upward (weekly reports, situation summaries). There is also a **synergy between SS and state machinery** – note Dr. Best, a Gestapo official, coordinating with Army district commands in 1939, or the RSHA working “in agreement with the OKW” on POW execution guidelines. This belies any later claims that the Army or civilian authorities were separate from SS atrocities; these documents show a conscious collaboration and shared responsibility in implementing Nazi objectives.

In broader context, between 1939 and 1942 the Nazi regime moved from persecution to genocide, from conquest to the attempt to cement a “Thousand-Year Reich.” These records are the bureaucratic footprints of that process. For example, the **Langemarck-Studium letters (1939)** come just before the war and hint at an SS preparing for greater things (educating its elite for future governance). The **1941 Einsatzgruppen orders** coincide with the invasion of the USSR – the start of the most intense phase of the Holocaust. By showing the instructions given to those units, the file provides direct evidence of how the Holocaust by bullets was administered. We even catch the use of **code-words like “Judenfrei”** (Jew-free) or “Umsiedlung” (resettlement) between the lines, as the SS reported “progress” in their murderous tasks. Patterns like the **blending of military and police operations under SS leadership, and the increasing radicalization of orders (from mere security to total annihilation)**, mirror the trajectory of World War II itself.

In conclusion, *German Security Police and SS Records, 1939–1942* is more than a stack of old memos – it is a dossier on how a modern bureaucracy can execute the worst crimes. Each section of the file exemplifies a piece of the whole: training indoctrinated men to carry out ideological war, directives and orders turned ideology into action, logistics and lists ensured those actions could be efficiently performed, and reports and forms tallied the terrible results. The SS and Security Police could not have functioned as the backbone of Nazi tyranny without this entire apparatus working in concert. These documents thus contribute immeasurably to our understanding of the **mechanics of the SS state** during World War II – a state where murder was managed by memo and massacre by memo-randum, all in the name of an extremist vision of racial and political “security.” The clinical language and regimented structure found in Irving File 36 only heighten the horror: they show us how systematic and deliberate the SS system was, and how ideology permeated its every bureaucratic procedure, enabling the coordinated execution of the Holocaust and other atrocities under the cloak of officialdom.

Sources:

- Irving Collection, *German Security Police and SS Records, 1939–1942 (Irving File 36)* – Description and Scope irvingcollection.org/irvingcollection.org
- SS Main Office circular on *Langemarck-Studium* (12 June 1939)
- SS equipment checklist for SD Einsatzkommando (c.1941)
- RSHA training course plan (July [1941]) – excerpt of lecture schedule
- RSHA/Heydrich directive “*Einsatz ‘Barbarossa’*” – subordination to HSSPF and tasks
- Himmler directive on anti-partisan village policy (Oct 1941)
- RSHA/Heydrich guidelines on screening Soviet POWs (1941)
- Einsatzgruppe report excerpt demonizing Jews & Roma (1941)
- Excerpt of RSHA internal phone directory showing Amt IV personnel
- RSHA Formblatt instruction (Form 19 for case transfer)
- RSHA IV weekly report order (1941)