

## **ADDITION TO THE FOREWORD, FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE FINNISH-LANGUAGE EDITION IN DECEMBER 2019**

The text to Professor Lars Westerlund's research, originally published in English in February 2019, has been supplemented prior to the publication of the Finnish-language version. The aim has been to fill out the overall picture of events and of the political background to Finnish actions at the time. The Director General of the National Archives, Dr. Jussi Nuorteva, has written an additional chapter exploring National Socialist racial doctrines, *Lebensraum*, and the New European Order, and an edited and updated chapter on events that took place in Toldzgun (a village in what is now North Ossetia) in December 1942, when a platoon of Finnish Pioneers executed "civilian spies" and prisoners of war.

The expansionist concept of a "Greater Finland" was associated with the German *Lebensraum* policies, in pursuing the objective of annexing territory – occupied by ethnic Finnish or Finnish-speaking populations – located to the east of Finland's existing borders, in the wake of the seemingly inevitable defeat of the Soviet Union. Among the Finnish SS-volunteers, Finland's own "living space" ambitions played a part, helping to forge an understanding of the Germans' *Lebensraum* thinking and of the killings and mass displacement of peoples it entailed. Even so, many objected to these doctrines and particularly did not approve of the widespread slaughter of Jews, civilians, and prisoners of war.

The picture we have of incidents in Toldzgun in late December 1942 has changed materially after a joint study involving the Finnish National Archives and the University of North Ossetia brought to light oral evidence from local residents and supporting archive material. It has also been possible to draw on a wartime diary kept by a Finnish SS-volunteer, in which the events in Toldzgun on 31.12.1942 are described in great detail. On the basis of this new information, it is possible to say with certainty that the Finnish soldiers were ordered to execute five local civilians and two prisoners of war in their custody. However, it seems likely that the actively Communist civilians had participated in resistance acts against the occupying SS-forces.

The original SS-volunteers' diary material used as a central source in this report contains dozens of entries describing brutal acts against different groups, and also involvement in such violence. An extremely powerful image of the viciousness of the SS-Division Wiking actions and behaviour is further brought out in the diaries, correspondence, and newspaper writings that have survived from

Dutch and Norwegian SS-volunteers. These documents have also been used as source material in this report, for the Finnish SS-volunteers served during the rapid advance in the summer and autumn of 1941 in the same combat units alongside Germans and volunteers drawn from other countries. There are no logical grounds for asserting that the Finns would somehow have been able to avoid taking part in acts that others were obliged to participate in. The diaries indicate that the Finnish volunteers also knew of the operations of the German *Einsatzgruppen* (literally “task forces”; in practice mobile death squads in German-occupied Europe, under SS direction), and that they saw action in many of the same places where the *Einsatzgruppen* were deployed.

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