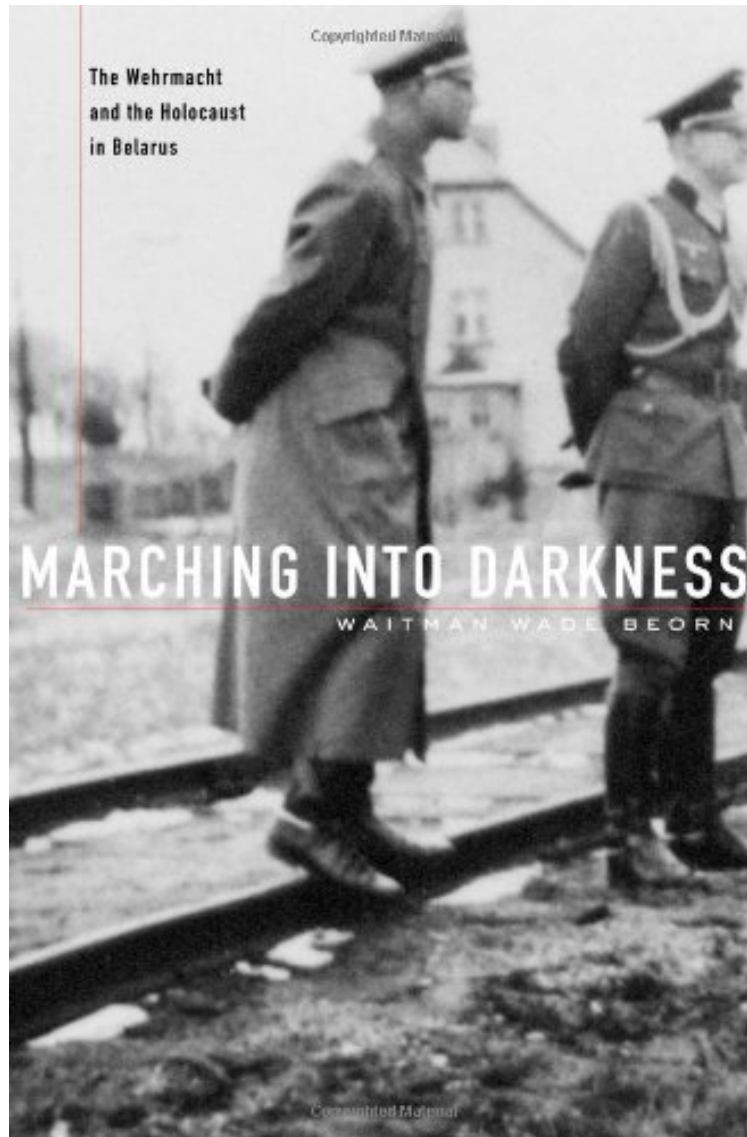


Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus

Waitman Wade Beorn

**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



#1208131 in Books 2014-01-06Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.50 x 1.18 x 6.381, 1.35 #File Name: 0674725506336 pages | File size: 31.Mb

Waitman Wade Beorn : Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus:

39 of 42 people found the following review helpful. A solid contributionBy M. PitcavageWaitman Wade Beorn's

"Marching Into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus" is a contribution to two of the more active and interesting areas of World War II scholarship in recent decades: 1) the role of the German Army (as opposed to the SS) in perpetrating atrocities and taking part in the Holocaust; and 2) the debate over how and why Germans (in general) came to do such killing. I believe this book began as a dissertation under the guidance of Christopher Browning, who has played a leading role in this second debate. The book is not a general study of occupation policies and activities but rather essentially a set of case studies of specific killing incidents in 1941-1942 that illustrate a growing but not always planned involvement of the "Wehrmacht" (Beorn's shorthand for the German Army) in the Holocaust, from taking part in the "roundup" of Jews and others for elimination by others to eventual "pro-active" killing activities initiated by themselves. It is well-written and well-researched and the author takes the trouble to find nuance, something that not everybody who contributes to these debates actually does. Some might find it useful to read Yitzhak Arad's *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* first, for some additional information and context, but this is not truly needed. The one weakness that the work has is not unique to this book but also exists in a number of other works that attempt to implicate the German military in the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity. This is the fact that the book strongly concentrates on Security Divisions and a few other units essentially designed for occupation duties. Units like these were a very small minority of the German military in the Soviet Union (in contrast to the "front-line" units) and someone could legitimately attempt to argue based on works like Beorn's that this speaks more to a suborning of a select subset of the German Army rather than a broad indictment of the German Army in the Soviet Union. Thus I think more attention needs to be paid by scholars in this area to units such as "normal" infantry and armored divisions in the Soviet Union to examine their role in the East. In any case, this book is well worth getting for anybody interested in these areas. 25 of 27 people found the following review helpful. An Important Contribution to Scholarship about the Eastern Front- most notably about Belarus By Romi Mahajan Even of those interested in World War 2, few would know that Belarus saw perhaps the highest mortality rate of any country. Further, that the genocidal plan for the East was carried out in heavy terms in Belarus. Even further, given the redaction of history so commonly used as a weapon in the hands of the powerful, few would know about the sheer blood lust of the Wehrmacht (not only the SS) in Belarus. Dr. Beorn's work then comes at a very important time as layers of mythology are being peeled back by scholars all over the world. *Marching Into Darkness* describes a series of incidents in Belarus that culminated in the wholesale slaughter of over 1.5M people. His documentary work indicating the importance of the Mogilev Conference and the clear conflation of "Jews" with "Partisans" as a fig-leaf to carry out the Holocaust in the East are necessary reading for all WW 2 scholars. Perhaps most important is Dr. Beorn's clear empathy with all victims of Nazism and his ability to couch the Belarus holocaust in the larger terms of the Nazi's crazed plan of domination in the East. Very important reading. I recommend it highly. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. *Marching Into Darkness* was truly, marching into Evil. By ordinary Soldiers. By Zenhead *Marching Into Darkness*. I give this five stars. An unremitting, withering examination of the Wehrmacht, and the sickening "myth of a clean Wehrmacht" deserves some flaws. The German exposition in roughly 2000, with photos of Wehrmacht members involved in shootings, hangings, public burning of Jews in barns or synagogues, sabbath day humiliations of Orthodox Jews ... I didn't think the Wehrmacht would get away clean ... but that exhibit rocked post war German survivors and Wehrmacht veterans to the core. "Holocaust By Bullets;" "Christopher Browning's "Ordinary Men," Daniel Goldhagen's "Hitler's Willing Executioners;" a recent book on women in camps who were brutal ... I'm sorry, but Saul Friedlander and Raul Hillberg's excoriation of Goldhagen's thesis that in Hitler's era Germany, the German people, even above the Austrians, were very, very willing executioners. Who else, who were fascist in nature ... ever accomplished the extraordinarily precise slaughter of Jews ... the Italians? Bulgarians? Hungarians? Austrians? Ukrainian fascists? Polish anti-semites? Who was so ruthless, thorough, exacting in trying to kill every last Jew they could find? There are many soldiers who wrote about killing Jews, kommissars, patisans. I encountered a daughter of an Ordnungspolizei about the time Goldhagen's book emerged. He served, as I remember, his entire tours on "the Eastern Front," and had bragged to her of the ruthlessness of the Eastern Front War against communists, partisans, kommissars, etc. He apparently did not ever believe, when telling her his exploits, that Goldhagen, Browning, Beorn, would ever dig up all the evidence they did on this other element: the Wehrmacht. And the myths perpetuated by almost every single German Wehrmacht general, right up until the most recent past, continues to deny Wehrmacht involvement. There were plenty of Wehrmacht soldiers who knew about the killings; a small # asked to be relieved; a miniscule condemned the killings; many failed to see cordoning off Jews, kommissars, partisans, was part of the same thing. No, they did not kill or shoot. But they sent clothes home; justified looting bodies; said that better them than our own people. Most knew full well the Wehrmacht was involved. Not every division, but when juxtaposed with the Sicherheistdienst (SD, Einsatzgruppen, Waffen SS, SS Death's Heads, and other groups, the Wehrmacht was needed. Even books that portray fighting on the Russian front describe the ruthlessness. It's best seen in the Belurusse film: "Come and See [Me]." It is about as accurate a portrayal of the aktions described in these books, and by Beorn's new addition, as it gets. I have no sympathy whatsoever for any Wehrmacht soldier whose record shows cooperation, collusion, joint activities in the Divisions cited, as well as any not mentioned. If they were killing partisans, then the Mogilev Conference in 1941 was crystal clear: Partisans are communists. Communists are likely Jews. Jews are likely communists. Jews likely aid and

abet partisans. The one common denominator is: "Jews." The equation made it clear: kill every Jewish man, woman and child encountered. A very, very tiny minority of German Wehrmacht likely said: I really and truly never knew. I hope letters home are opened next. It will be interesting to learn what the wives and children who received those letters telling of the unfortunate need to kill partisans, or komissars, or Jews, thought. During the war, and all these years later. Do they rest easy remembering the justifications given for the Holocaust by Bullet that was perpetrated East of the German/Polish line of 1939? I guess my friend ... I would like to talk with her again now. She was livid at the time. I told her to read Goldhagen's and Browning's books. I doubt she ever did. And so, Germans, to my way of thinking, made it more likely than not that the Holocaust happened than any other people in Europe. No one carried it out to such degrees. And so, was Goldhagen really that wrong? The minutiae of Holocaust theories I do not pretend to get. But the evidence shows that the German people allowed Hitler to come to power. Jews and bolsheviks were maligned and outcasts. We must be careful who WE malign, and say, they must "go." All must "go" and walls must be erected between our country and that country to the south. I wonder how many Wehrmacht, SS, SD, etc., ever, ever repented, and asked God for forgiveness? I doubt many. They seemed so certain during the war. I hope many did. I hope they tried to salvage their souls. God would forgive, but what is the amend? Honesty, I think. Just "yes, we did that. I did this much. For that I am guilty." That would be a worthwhile book. Has any been written? I hope so.

On October 10, 1941, the entire Jewish population of the Belarusian village of Krucha was rounded up and shot. While Nazi death squads routinely carried out mass executions on the Eastern Front, this particular atrocity was not the work of the SS but was committed by a regular German army unit acting on its own initiative. *Marching into Darkness* is a bone-chilling exposé of the ordinary footsoldiers who participated in the Final Solution on a daily basis. Although scholars have exploded the myth that the Wehrmacht played no significant part in the Holocaust, a concrete picture of its involvement at the local level has been lacking. Among the crimes Waitman Wade Beorn unearths are forced labor, sexual violence, and graverobbing, though a few soldiers refused to participate and even helped Jews. By meticulously reconstructing the German army's activities in Belarus in 1941, *Marching into Darkness* reveals in stark detail how the army willingly fulfilled its role as an agent of murder on a massive scale. Early efforts at improvised extermination progressively became much more methodical, with some army units going so far as to organize "Jew hunts." Beorn also demonstrates how the Wehrmacht used the pretense of anti-partisan warfare as a subterfuge by reporting murdered Jews as partisans. Through archival research into military and legal records, survivor testimonies, and eyewitness interviews, Beorn paints a searing portrait of a professional army's descent into ever more intimate participation in genocide.

Winner of the 2012 Thomas J. Wilson Memorial Prize The Thomas J. Wilson Memorial Prize is awarded to an author's first book manuscript, approved for publication by the Board of Syndics of Harvard University Press in a given calendar year, that is judged outstanding in content, style, and mode of presentation. The author's mastery of his or her field of interest and ability to fit his or her special contribution into some major problem in that field are a determining factor in the award of the prize. Eligible books are judged in terms of effective achievement of the author's purpose. "Marching into Darkness illuminates the shadowy details of the Wehrmacht's complicity in the Holocaust. Beorn's study is a significant achievement and offers a compelling narrative to better understand how German soldiers became entangled, willingly or not, in the Final Solution. His work also provides an important link connecting the scholarship on the Holocaust to that on the Eastern Front." Kenneth Slepian, *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* "Proposing a broad notion of complicity that includes knowledge about, and explicit or implicit approval of the genocidal project, Waitman Wade Beorn's meticulously researched and intriguingly well-written case study on the murderous activities of Wehrmacht units in Belarus is, to date, the most convincing, most complex, and in the English language certainly the most important contribution to this crucial area of Holocaust history, of military history, and of German history." Prof. Thomas Khne, *American Historical* "Yet, the ordeal of many victims remains untold while many perpetrators have never been exposed or brought to justice. Waitman W. Beorn takes us to the intersection of institutional involvement, individual agency, collective action and tremendous suffering in his hard-hitting microhistory of the Holocaust in Belarus 1941." Christoph Rass, *European History Quarterly* About the Author Dr. Waitman Wade Beorn is Director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond.