

What do the Treblinka War Diaries Really Say?

In a diary entry of October 24 1942, included in so-called "War Diary no. 1", written by a German military commander in the Government General, we find what is today considered the sole tangible evidence of "mass extermination" of Jews at Treblinka.

Given the magnitude of what hinges on a single sentence, I decided to have a look at this evidence myself, and compare some independent translations of the notation in question, as well as their context.

What I found was rather startling.

To get a feel for what's in the diary, I first looked at the previous full entry;

* * * * *

21/10/1942

German

Auf Anordnung OKW solen kgf. sowjetruss. Offiziere, die bei ihrer Vernehmung als Boschewistengegner besondere hervorgetreten sind, eines Sonderlager sugeuehrt werden.
erlaesst eine Verfg. ueber Ersatz der Juedischen Arbeitskraefte Anlage

English

In order [that] High Command W. consoles kgf. Soviet Russia. Officers, upon being questioned as [they are] special Bolshevik opponents, have brought it to attention, [that] a special camp will be led below.

O.Q./Qu.2 adopt a Constitutional Court. about [concerning] the Jewish workers compensation system (s. location/plant 256)

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Wow. First notice the attitude in the first line. Sarcastic! Basically, "to please our enemy..." Remember this is a German war diary, and Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941! Maybe not everything in this diary should be taken with a very heavy meaning.

Next, the Bolsheviks (i.e., Communist) camp inmate workers, want to have their own camp! Is this because the Communists are not getting along with the Jewish workers? What strikes me is that it's being treated as a done deal, just because the inmates want it. That seems like a waaaay too lenient attitude for the "death camp" theory!

But the second paragraph is even more amazing. The Jewish workers are being paid? I was always told this was a "slave labor" camp. Looks like that was wrong. Not only that, but the Jewish workers are getting their own court or council? Self-governing? That definitely doesn't fit the "death camp" scenario either.

There are two days of essentially blank entries, so now I skip to the oft-cited day.

* * * * *

24/10/1942

German

OKW beabsichtigt die Mitnahme von Waren aus dem GG. darin, zu regeln, dass der persönliche Riesebedarf und die zur Mibahme zugelassen Waren frei von jeglicher Abgabe bleiben.

OK Ostrow meldet, dass die Juden in Treblinka nicht ausreichend beerdigt seien und infolgedessen ein unertraeglicher Kadavergeruch die Luft verpestet.

English

High Command W [It is] intended the transportation of goods from the GG. be regulated, [so] that the tremendous personal needs[,] and with my approval[,] are to be kept free of any charge.

High Command Ostrow reports that the Jews at Treblinka are not adequately buried[,] and consequently an unbearable smell of cadavers pollutes the air.

* * * * *

Looks from the first line like the camp workers are to be well taken care of... and are to have their personal needs supplied for free? Who would think to do that at an "extermination camp"?

Now we got to the one sentence that is usually taken out of context to "prove" genocide. It appears from the previous entries that the diary serves *largely as a place for management to register worker's complaints*. Treblinka station also had a work camp, as well as a railway station – a fact that is usually left out. It was a village of 1,000 to 2,000 workers, And like any population of people, eventually someone is going to die.

So you need a cemetery – and Treblinka has one or two. Not “mass burial pits”, just cemeteries.



In Eastern Europe, then as now, most Jewish cemeteries are famously run differently from Christian cemeteries. In this custom, once the person is buried, they are often never visited or maintained (LEFT, BELOW).



*Two Treblinka **Christian** burial sites can be seen here (BELOW). (Source: <http://www.deathcamps.org/treblinka>)*



One tradition isn't any better than another – they're just different. Nevertheless, I have seen Christians display a certain degree of shock at this practice. It is rather an alien idea to them, and sometimes I have heard them speak of it as careless or disrespectful.

Over time, all burial sites settle. This is because it is nearly impossible to achieve the same soil density refilling a hole, as compared to soil which has had thousands of years to settle naturally. This is especially true if one does not want to *stomp upon* the freshly buried body as it is refilled. Most cultures would see such compaction as disrespectful. That's why other undertakers will refill the sink-hole left by the settling soil several times afterward over some weeks (even then, one can still sometimes smell decomposition.)

If the Treblinka worker's Jewish cemetery was being managed according to the aforementioned Eastern European Jewish practice, once the bodies are laid to rest, the site is *not disturbed again*. In fact, the same reasoning is being used by some today, to argue that a direct forensic examination of the legendary mass graves cannot be carried out. (The exception to this being the excavations for the Treblinka monument stones, whereupon no human remains were found.)

Therefore it is entirely possible - and in fact the most direct explanation for the "War Diary" entry so often cited - that the High Command Ostrow found this practice alien and "unacceptable." Due to natural settling of recent burials and an increased rate of burials due to the typhus epidemics sweeping Poland at that time, it is entirely possible that there was an objectionable odor due to these facts alone.

In fact, wouldn't one think that if there was mass-murder going on, that there would be *far greater issues to complain about* than 1) free goods for personal needs, 2) a special court to resolve payment issues for Jewish workers, and 3) communists wanting a separate place to live? Once the "foul odor" comment is put back in context, I think it's relevance among these other issues becomes far clearer.

Following are images of the exact document referred to, along with its cover page... just so you can verify that I'm not making any of this up.

Kriegstagebuch Nr. 1

Mil.-Befehlshaber i. Gen. Gouv.

Der Oberquartiermeister

(Kommandobehörde, Truppenenteil)

Begonnen: 1. 5. 1941

Abgeschlossen: 31. 12. 1943

unterstand *)

von bis dem

von bis dem

von bis dem

Name und Dienstgrad.

Das Kriegstagebuch wurde geführt von 1. 5. 41 bis 20. 2. 42 durch Odit. Schmied

von 21. 3. 42 bis 31. 12. 42 durch Hell. Gritkef.

von 1. 1. 43 bis 31. 12. 43 durch " Hoffmann

" 1. 11. 44 bis 16. 1. 45 " " "

*) Diese Eintragungen müssen die jeweiligen Unterstellungsverhältnisse klar erkennen lassen. Besonders wichtig für Artillerie, Panzerverbände, Pionierformationen usw.

Tag, Uhrzeit, Ort u. Art der Unterkunft	Darstellung der Ereignisse (Dabei wichtig: Beurteilung der Lage [Feind- und eigene], Eingangs- und Abgangszeiten von Meldungen und Befehlen)									
20.10.42 O.U.Spala	<p>Im September wurden im Bereich der O.F.K. 365 an Verwundete betreut:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Betreuungskommando Brody</td> <td>44 225</td> <td>Verwundete</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" Lemberg</td> <td>29 869</td> <td>"</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" Tarnopol</td> <td>4 185</td> <td>"</td> </tr> </table> <p>Auf Anordnung OKW sollen ggf. sowjetruss. Offiziere, die bei ihrer Vernehmung als Bolschewistengegner besonders hervorgetreten sind, einem Sonderlager zugeführt werden.</p> <p>O.Q./Qu.2 erlässt eine Verfg. über Ersatz der jüdischen Arbeitskräfte (s.Anlage 235).</p>	Betreuungskommando Brody	44 225	Verwundete	" Lemberg	29 869	"	" Tarnopol	4 185	"
Betreuungskommando Brody	44 225	Verwundete								
" Lemberg	29 869	"								
" Tarnopol	4 185	"								
21.10.42 U.O.Spala	<p>OKH weist darauf hin, dass Abgaben von Turkangehörigen aus K. Lagerh nur auf Befehl OKH und nur an von diesen benannten Stellen zu erfolgen haben.</p> <p>Verfg. über die Führung von Fahrtennachweisbüchern für die Bespannfahrzeuge und Kolonnen (s.Anlage 236).</p>									
22.10.42 O.U.Spala	Keine besonderen Ereignisse.									
23.10.42 O.U.Spala	Keine besonderen Ereignisse.									
24.10.42	<p>OKW beabsichtigt die Mitnahme von Waren aus dem GG. dahin, zu regeln, dass der persönliche Reisebedarf und die zur Mitnahme zugelassenen Waren frei von jeglicher Abgabe bleiben</p> <p>OK Ostrow meldet, dass die Juden in Treblinka nicht ausreichend beerdigt seien und infolgedessen ein unerträglicher Kadavergeruch die Luft verpestet.</p>									
25.10.42 O.U.Spala	<p>Die Erfassung von Getreide bis zum 20.10. betrug 90000 to gegenüber 310000 to im Vorjahr.</p> <p>Feldtransportabteilung ordnet an, dass für die dringliche und bevorzugte Rückführung des San.-Begleitpersonals der BVZ in allen zur Verfügung stehenden Zügen Sorge zu tragen ist.</p>									

*) Temperatur, Niederschläge, Sichtverhältnisse (Erde und Luft)
 **) Bis Regt. einschl. Schußzahlen, von Kommando-Behörden in Ausstattungen
 ***) Erfahrungen dürfen auch nachträglich eingetragten werden.

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