

Prelude to Race War:

The Ideological Drivers behind German Atrocities Committed against POWs and Civilian Populations during the September Campaign of 1939

Roger Moorhouse

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8811-6734

Abstract

It is well known that the German invasion of Poland in 1939 was the start of the most hideous and murderous phase in Poland's already blood-soaked history, yet the extent of the atrocities committed during the September Campaign is not widely appreciated. This article will assess, as far as is possible, what may have driven those excesses, asking whether they were primarily ideologically driven, or whether, perhaps, they can be attributed to circumstances, or to something more traditional, and less ideological in nature.

First of all, it is very clear that the conduct of the invading armies during the September Campaign – German and Soviet – was exceedingly brutal. Right from the outset, German forces did not hesitate to target civilian populations – Jewish and non-Jewish – for reprisals, hostage-taking, casual brutality and outright murder. From the massacre committed at Częstochowa, in the opening days of the war, to the murder of some 600 Polish Jews at Przemysł, to the machine gunning of over 300 civilians and POWs at Śladów on 18 September, to the massacre at Zakroczym, which followed the surrender of Modlin, German atrocities were committed, without respite, throughout the campaign. In the 1960s, the Polish historian Szymon Datner calculated that the Germans committed over 600 massacres and atrocities against Poles during the September Campaign alone (Datner, 1967, pp. 358–359). Despite his writing during the Communist period, there is no reason fundamentally to question his findings.

It is, of course, an open question how far motives can be divined on the part of the perpetrators, but this paper seeks to ascertain the extent to which these atrocities were driven by ideology, or alternatively whether they might have been driven by circumstances, the “fog of war,” or by old-fashioned anti-Polish prejudice.

Twenty years ago, my former colleague Norman Davies wrote an essay entitled *One Thousand Years of Polish-German Camaraderie*, in which he argued – with tongue only slightly in cheek – that the shared history of the Poles and the Germans should not be seen solely as one of mutual mistrust and hostility. As so often, he was tilting against the prevailing opinion, pointing out exceptions and inconsistencies to undermine the stereotype. But in the introduction to the piece, he nonetheless conceded that “Poland and Germany have lived through a very long period when mutual hatred and contempt have been all too common” (Davies, 1999, p. 261).

On the German side, that hostility was closely bound up with the emergence of the German nation itself. Frederick the Great of Prussia – despite presiding over a dynastic rather than a national state – essentially set the tone by deciding that Poland had to decline if Prussia were to rise. Thereafter, as Poland waned in the last quarter of the 18th century, falling into chaos and partition at the hands of its avaricious neighbours, the stance of the German peoples towards its western frontier hardened and a sense of innate superiority began to develop.

Through the 19th century, German attitudes to the Poles ossified further. Indeed, they could be seen as broadly comparable to the contemporary attitudes held by the British towards the Irish; a modicum of sympathy at best, but much more a sense of superiority towards an impoverished, backward and primitive neighbour. Such sentiments were amply reflected in the historiography of the time, with the German “*Drang nach Osten*” of the late medieval period portrayed as a benign eastward expansion, bringing trade and the rule of law to a wasteland. The historian Heinrich von Treitschke even went so far as to question the very existence of the Poles as a nation, calling them “born slaves” (Ceran, 2017, p. 221). It is no surprise, perhaps, that the policies of the German Empire towards its Polish minorities in the late 19th century were seen through the same prejudicial lens; with Germanisation and the anti-Catholic legislation of the *Kulturkampf* portrayed by Berlin as something akin to a civilising mission.

In the early decades of the 20th century – and in particular with Germany’s defeat in the First World War – this casual anti-Polish prejudice morphed into something more immediately aggressive. Poland’s restoration in 1918, to a large extent at the expense of Germany, which lost territories in Upper Silesia, West Prussia and Posen to the new Poland, seemed almost to symbolise Germany’s “humiliation” at the hands of its enemies. As a result, German political revanchism towards Poland – far from being a specifically Nazi phenomenon – ran through the history of the Weimar Republic like a blood-red thread (see, for instance, Detlev Peukert: Peukert, 1991, pp. 202–203). As the German general Hans von Seeckt outlined in a memorandum to Chancellor Joseph Wirth, in 1922, the very existence of Poland was “incompatible with Germany’s vital interest” (Kochański, 2012, p. 35).

Nazism, which – despite its origins in southern Germany – found high levels of support in Germany’s impoverished and imperilled eastern

territories, and exacerbated this trend, mutating it into something more murderous. Hitler had had comparatively little to say about the Poles in his autobiography-cum-manifesto *Mein Kampf*, in which he railed more usually about the Czechs and – of course – the Jews. But this omission rather reflected his Austrian perspectives, and, as historian Michael Burleigh suggests, he was nonetheless quick to internalise the anti-Polish prejudices that were so common at the time, which were in turn catalysed by his own anti-Semitism. Poland, in Nazi eyes, was expendable: its elites slated for annihilation, its cultural life worthless, its territory to be reclaimed, and its population to serve as little more than slaves to their German masters.

It was an attitude that arguably predated the war itself, and indeed was typified by the infamous Potempa Murder of 1932, in which a Polish Communist, Konrad Pietrzuch, was kicked to death by a group of SA men in the Upper Silesian village of Potempa. Despite widespread condemnation and a swift trial, which ended in a sentence of death, the murderers became a favourite cause for Hitler, as he claimed they had been acting in Germany's name. In Munich that autumn, Hitler summarised his thinking: "in a National Socialist Germany, German men will never be convicted on the testimony of a Pole" (Kluke, 1957, p. 279). Predictably, after he came to power in January 1933, Hitler granted the Potempa killers an amnesty.

The Potempa Murder arguably summed up that shift from what we might call "traditional" German anti-Polish sentiment – the idea that the Poles were merely inferior – to its more murderous Nazi variant, which held that they were not only inferior, but also that they could be murdered or otherwise done away with, with impunity. Another murder, that of Franciszek Honiok, is just as grimly symbolic of this shift. It was Honiok, of course, who was murdered on the night of 31 August 1939, in the Gleiwitz Incident, the clumsy German attempt to cast Poland as the villain in the conflict that was to come. Selected at random from Gestapo files in Berlin, he was innocent of any crime. He was expendable; an unfortunate pawn in the wider German effort to discredit and isolate Poland on the eve of the invasion (Moorhouse, 2019, pp. 1–8).

These two examples demonstrate that, among the Nazi hierarchy at least, a much more contemptuous, murderous anti-Polonism was at play than had previously been the case. But one has to ask whether that same sentiment had already spread to the ordinary soldiers of the Wehrmacht, who invaded Poland on the morning after Honiok's death.

Of course, it is difficult to divine precisely the motives and the thinking of ordinary German soldiers from 1939. But a couple of points deserve mention. The first is that – in contrast to the acts of brutality committed by German forces during the French Campaign of 1940 – in Poland the vast majority of atrocities are carried out by Wehrmacht units, rather than the SS. Secondly, when looking for sources, published memoirs

are too often unreliable, as they are either too keen to conform to Nazi “norms,” if published before 1945, or else too ruthlessly sanitised thereafter. So, preserved *Feldpost* letters and private diaries can perhaps be best relied upon to give the most genuine, unfiltered flavour of an ordinary soldier’s thinking.

This is a rich and rather underused resource. Examples from 1939 are legion; not only was the experience of war very novel and so likely to be recorded or reported back to loved ones at home, but the chances of such materials being kept were greater, unimpeded by the vast distance and the chaos of defeat that would hamper later writers (*Das Feldpost-Archiv*). They are often full of sneering contempt for the country that German forces were invading, with nothing but hostility for its unfortunate people. Many of them described Poland as ‘Asiatic’, ‘primitive’ and ‘uncivilised’. Another soldier gave voice to the thought that others merely seemed to imply; that the Poles were barely human.¹ Typical, perhaps, was this soldier’s description of the villages and civilians he encountered during the German advance north-west of Częstochowa:

The houses in these villages are crammed with filth, outside and inside. Tiled roofs are apparently unknown in Poland; one sees nothing but thatched cottages. The people who stand outside their huts and gape at us appear never to have heard of the word ‘culture’; they all look dirty and bedraggled, the women as well as the men. It seems to me that these ‘representatives of civilisation’ are in a competition to be the dirtiest (Extract from war diary of W. K., n.d.).

Such violently pejorative attitudes were not merely theoretical, they were also acted upon. A good example of this is the massacre at Ciepielów, near Radom, where some 300 Polish soldiers were massacred by men of the German 15th Infantry Division, on 8 September (Moorhouse, 2019, p. 113; Rossino, 2003, pp. 182–184). The circumstances surrounding the action are illuminating. German forces, under the command of Colonel Walter Wessel, had been temporarily halted by a skirmish with the Polish 74th Infantry Regiment, and in the aftermath Wessel was evidently so enraged that he cursed the Poles for having had the “cheek” to resist his advance. He then ordered that his Polish captives be stripped of their uniform jackets and marched to the rear, where they were then machine-gunned. It would appear that, to Wessel – who was not a Nazi party member and was a career soldier – even a legitimate Polish defensive

¹ Report of Gefreiter Potesegger in National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 242, T-314, r. 1644, fr. 213, quoted in Alexander B. Rossino (Rossino, 2003, p. 205).

action was considered a provocation. Evidently he considered that the Poles were not worthy even to defend themselves.

This sense of German racial superiority was, of course, intertwined with anti-Semitism. Many German commentators and diarists noted the presence of Orthodox Jews in Poland, whose appearance was often similar to the crude caricatures of Jews presented so often in the Nazi press, such as *Der Stürmer* or the *Völkischer Beobachter*. As one soldier noted, those caricatures suddenly seemed to have been made very real; in Poland, he wrote, anti-Semitic stereotypes “which once appeared to us to be exaggerated, were eclipsed by the reality that we saw and smelled” (Testimony of Philipp Mamat, n.d.).

Even the redoubtable hero of the later German resistance, Count Claus von Stauffenberg, was unable to resist the racist zeitgeist. He wrote home in September 1939 that the Poles were “an unbelievable rabble, very many Jews and very much mixed population. A people which is surely only comfortable under the knout” (Hoffmann, 2003, p. 115). Such anti-Semitic attitudes were relatively common, punctuating many diaries and *Feldpost* letters. But Stauffenberg’s words illuminate an essential part of the equation that few others expressed so succinctly – namely that the Polish population was seen, through the Nazi lens, as thoroughly “Judaized,” so infiltrated – “infected” even – with Jewishness that there was scarcely anything worth salvaging.

The results of that mentality were brutally obvious and witnessed in the massacres of Jews that were carried out at Przemyśl, Częstochowa, Błonie and many other locations. The massacre at Końskie is interesting in this respect. That action – which is well known mainly for the presence of German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, who was a horrified witness of events – saw some 22 Jews murdered by Wehrmacht soldiers in conditions similar to an old-fashioned pogrom. But the origins of the massacre are instructive. Końskie’s Jews were rounded up by the Germans in a collective act of revenge for the death of four German soldiers killed in the earlier defence of the town. Initially forced to dig graves for the fallen soldiers, they were then abused and beaten until the punishment degenerated into a riot, during which the soldiers opened fire. So, the legitimate Polish defence of Końskie resulted in a pogrom in which the town’s Jews were massacred (Moorhouse, 2019, pp. 136–137; Böhler, 2005, pp. 121–123). One might surmise that, to the Nazi mind at least, Polishness and Jewishness were fatally intertwined.

Consequently, it was not only Jews that were targeted. In countless instances, German troops behaved with wanton, murderous cruelty towards ethnic Polish civilian populations as well, targeting ordinary people as hostages, or murdering them in revenge attacks, or as ‘bandits’. A few examples will have to suffice to give a flavour of the brutality that was in evidence. At Sulejówek, for instance, fifty civilians were murdered in retaliation for the death of a single German officer (Wardzyńska, 2009, p. 96).

At Złoczew, near Sieradz, units of the 95th Infantry Regiment murdered around 200 Poles, including refugees, women and children, in a frenzy of night-time violence. One survivor recalled the Germans shooting 'not only at those fleeing, but at anyone that they saw on the lane, on the street, or in the courtyard' (Böhler, 2005, p. 42). A later investigation by the German military found no explanation for the killings (Rossino, 2003, p. 161). Most preposterously, in the village of Kajetanowice near Radomsko, seventy-two Polish civilians were shot or burned alive in a night-time rampage by German troops. It was thought to be revenge for the death of two Wehrmacht horses in a 'friendly fire' incident (Böhler, 2009, pp. 115–116). Alongside such casual brutality, the burning of villages was similarly routine; indeed it was becoming standard practice when German units came under fire (Shepherd, 2016, p. 53; Polish command report..., n.d.). In this way, local civilians were often targeted in revenge for the legitimate defensive actions of the Polish army.

In addition, the convention that civilians were executed if they were found in possession of a weapon gave carte blanche to some of the most brutal impulses of German soldiers. As many eye-witnesses recalled, a weapon could be interpreted in myriad ways and could include such innocuous items as flintlocks, pocketknives, razors or rusty bayonets (*Testimony of Helena Szpilman*, n.d.). Farmers were particularly at risk, as even the most routine search of their properties could often yield a shotgun or a pitchfork. Consequently, they regularly found themselves victims of German massacres: eighteen were shot after the defence of Uniejów, for example, twenty-four were murdered at Wylazłów, thirty were killed in Chechło and thirty-two were executed near Łowicz (Wardzyńska, 2009, pp. 94–96). The list goes on.

The barbarisation of German troops in 1939 is self-evident, therefore, but one must examine what other factors – aside from a prejudicial ideology – could possibly explain the phenomenon. One is the relative inexperience of Wehrmacht cadres, for most of whom – excepting the tiny minority who had seen service in the Spanish Civil War – Poland represented the first experience of combat. It should come as little surprise, perhaps, that German soldiers often reacted in a trigger-happy fashion. Their commanders even recognised this at the time, with a few of them bemoaning the inexperience of their men, and their resulting willingness to resort to arson and wanton violence. The war diary of the German 31st Infantry Division, for instance, noted that "the first days of the war have already shown that the men and the inexperienced officers were made insufficiently aware in their training of the typical conditions in warfare." The result, it said, was a "nervousness, anxiety and disorientation" which led to "shootings and arson" (Böhler, 2006, pp. 113–114).

Also, one must analyse the role played by *Blitzkrieg* itself in fuelling the incidence of atrocities. German military doctrine of the time, which – contrary to popular assumptions – was not yet being systematically or

universally employed in 1939, foresaw, among other things, a disruption of enemy defences through the use of fast-moving armoured spearheads. Such tactics, by preventing the formation of any coherent front line, naturally meant that it was easy for German forces to interpret any continued resistance in their rear as the work of “bandits”; and they often reacted accordingly, by rounding up those still resisting and shooting them as “irregulars.”

Related to this was what some historians have called “partisan psychosis”²: the fear that the enemy is hidden behind every corner and in every tree, waiting to strike – a fear that is also especially prevalent in units with limited combat experience. This, too, chimed with anti-Polish attitudes, as a common German complaint of the Poles in 1939 was that they refused to “stand and fight” and that they made disproportionate use of ambush tactics. This was seen as “dishonourable,” and fed into the growing anti-Polish prejudice. Harrying and ambushing a superior enemy, German soldiers told themselves, was the sort of cowardly warfare that was waged by the racially inferior – and by Nazi logic, it deserved the most brutal punishment. As one soldier wrote at the time, the Poles “behave in an un-European way and indeed an un-human way. The civilians go to prayer, hiding themselves behind holy pictures and crosses, but then fire at our people again whenever they can. Who can blame us for feeling bitter and using harsher methods?” (Shepherd, 2016, pp. 51–52).

Another possible explanation is pharmacological: the use of the stimulant *Pervitin*, which was fairly widespread in the German military in 1939 and may have contributed to the trigger-happy atmosphere. As a form of amphetamine, *Pervitin*’s benefits for fighting soldiers are obvious: those that can fight for three days straight, without requiring sleep, are at a distinct advantage; indeed, a Wehrmacht assessment of 1940 noted that the German victory of the previous autumn had been “crucially influenced” by the use of the drug (Ohler, 2016, p. 78). Yet, as *Pervitin* also reduces inhibitions and increases recklessness, it is plausible to suggest that it also contributed to the growing barbarisation of combat. Just as it made German soldiers into better fighters, it also made them into more ruthless killers.

The last aspect to be borne in mind is that of the legal framework in which German troops were operating in 1939. In late August, a week before the German invasion began, Hitler briefed his generals at the Berghof outside Berchtesgaden, informing them unequivocally that in the forthcoming conflict “the destruction of Poland has priority.” In the very next sentence, he reminded his generals to “Close your hearts to pity” and “Act brutally” before reassuring them that “the winner will

2 “Partisan Psychosis” is discussed in Böhler (Böhler, 2005, p. 115).

not be asked afterwards if he told the truth" (Noakes & Pridham, 1988, p. 743). This last statement is generally taken to explain Hitler's intended manipulation of public opinion surrounding the outbreak of the war, but it could also be interpreted to be giving his commanders carte blanche to conduct the war as they saw fit, with the ends justifying the means. And so it proved.

Of course, there were some in the German military who objected to the brutal actions being inflicted on the Polish population. Some complained on moral grounds. The military commander of Przemyśl, for instance, General Alfred Streccius, reported to his superiors about the "shootings without legal process and illegal excesses" being carried out by units of the ss and police. The resulting investigation was quickly shelved (Böhler, 2006, p. 213). Others bemoaned the fact that so many young men were "testing their mettle" against unarmed civilians, rather than fighting at the front. One local commander, General Wilhelm List, who was in command of the Wehrmacht's 14th Army in September 1939, complained about the decline in military discipline that such atrocities signified. In a rather wordy memorandum, he noted that "arbitrary shootings without a legal sentence, the maltreatment of the defenceless, rape and sexual assault, the burning of synagogues... are indicative of a deterioration in the conduct and discipline of the troops, especially those units deployed in the rear" (Böhler, 2006, pp. 213-214).

Some senior Wehrmacht officers sought, rather inaccurately, to single out the ss and Einsatzgruppen for criticism. One general, for instance, claimed that there was an "evident discord in the comments of the officers and men towards all those who wore ss uniform"; another went further, writing of the attitude of his troops to the ss alternating "between abhorrence and hatred" (Krausnick, 1998, p. 44). Already in mid-September, the Wehrmacht command was trying in vain to distance itself from the actions of the ss, when its commander, General Walther von Brauchitsch, banned the participation of its soldiers in what he called "police executions." A few went even further. Major Rudolf Langhaeuser, of Army Group South, attempted to halt the execution of some 180 veterans of the Polish Uprising of 1918-1919, who had been handed over to the Einsatzgruppen in Częstochowa. However, while seeking the support of his military superiors for his intervention, Langhaeuser discovered that the executions had already been carried out (Böhler, 2005, p. 138).

Such protests, however, were very much the exception rather than the norm. The norm for the Wehrmacht, indeed, was at best indifference to the suffering of the Poles, and at worst complicity in their wanton slaughter - as had already been witnessed at Końskie, Ciepiałów and countless other locations. Moreover, the few that did seek to protest quickly discovered that the orders for mass shootings and extra-judicial killings had come from the very top. When the head of the Abwehr, Wilhelm Canaris, warned his superiors that the Wehrmacht was being made

complicit in the massacres in Poland, the answer he received was that “the matter had already been decided by the Führer” (Böhler, 2005, p. 136).

The most notable critic of German policy in Poland in 1939 was the commander of the 8th Army, Colonel General Johannes von Blaskowitz. A veteran of the First World War and a Christian, Blaskowitz was closer to the older Prussian tradition than many of his fellows and so, despite his successes, never enjoyed Hitler’s favour (Clark, 1995, p. 33). He sent a memorandum to Hitler, in November 1939, in which he expressed his worries about the breakdown in discipline and requested a restoration of legal process when carrying out any executions. Hitler was unimpressed, complaining about “childish attitudes” and “Salvation Army methods” among the Army leadership (Noakes & Pridham, 1988, pp. 940–941). By this point, of course, Hitler had already signed an amnesty for all those troops who were being investigated for committing atrocities in Poland (Burleigh, 2000, p. 438).

When Blaskowitz wrote again, in February 1940, he was rather more blunt, criticising the slaughter of “tens of thousands of Jews and Poles” and damning ss violence as “the rule of the thug.” Above all, he opined that such “pacifications” would ultimately prove counter-productive: “The idea that one can intimidate the Polish population by terrorism and rub their noses in the dirt will certainly prove to be false. This people’s capacity for enduring suffering is too great for that” (Noakes & Pridham, 1988, pp. 938–940).

Blaskowitz’s protests were ignored by his superiors, but they would nonetheless cost him his command: he was removed from his post in May 1940. His error was to cleave to an earlier military doctrine – one which targeted the opposing army rather than the entire population. He had failed to appreciate that Germany’s invasion of 1939 had heralded a genocidal race war against the Polish people.



Any historical event is the product of the complex interplay of numerous factors, and it is almost always misguided to attribute cause to any one single aspect. In this case, all of those factors mentioned: the relative inexperience of Wehrmacht troops, the psychological effects of the use of *Pervitin*, the prevalence of “partisan psychosis,” the consequences of the Blitzkrieg doctrine itself, and the facilitating legal framework, certainly contributed to the high incidence of atrocities witnessed during the German invasion of Poland. But they alone do not suffice to explain the phenomenon. One simple comparison makes this clear; that is the comparison with the number of atrocities committed during the French Campaign of 1940.

In France in 1940, many of the same criteria applied; the campaigns were of similar length – 6 weeks versus 5 for Poland – German forces were

still relatively inexperienced, *Pervitin* was still being used (arguably more so), and the *Blitzkrieg* was also being employed more coherently and effectively against an enemy that had stubbornly refused to learn the lessons from the Polish defeat. If these circumstantial factors had been decisive in the incidence of atrocities, then one would expect to see similar statistics to the 600 or so mass killings committed during the Polish Campaign. And yet, they are nowhere near. German atrocities carried out in France and the Low Countries in 1940 amount to only around 25 – including those at Le Paradis and Wormhoudt – the majority of which, incidentally, were committed by units of the SS (see, for instance, Raffael Scheck: Scheck, 2006).

Given this 20-fold disparity, one must conclude that there was a different driver of German behaviour in the Polish Campaign to that seen in the French Campaign. It is logical, in that case, to cite ideology as the primary difference. German troops had imbibed from the Nazi regime a racial vision, which saw Jewish and Polish lives – unlike French and British lives – as essentially expendable, as collateral damage in the creation of a Nazi utopia. This was the horrific vision that they put into practice in 1939.

One can conclude, therefore, that though Nazi ideology might not have penetrated the mind of every ordinary German soldier in 1939, it nonetheless exerted sufficient influence to make significant numbers open to, and complicit in, the committing of atrocities against both prisoners of war and civilian populations. Nazi racial ideology – even if imperfectly understood – provided the catalyst for a race war, which would be brutally realised in the September Campaign.

Bibliography

Archival sources:

- German Historical Museum (Deutsches Historisches Museum – DHM)
 Testimony of Philipp Mamat (n.d.). DMH, LeMo. Source: <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/philipp-mamat-aufzeichnungen-aus-dem-krieg-gegen-polen-1939.html> [accessed: 09.09.2020].
- Imperial War Museum Archive in London (IMW)
 Extract from war diary of W. K. (n.d.). IMW, file no. 94/26/1.
- The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (PISM)
 Polish command report of operations of the 10th Cavalry Brigade by Maj. Franciszek Skibiński (n.d.). PISM, file no. B.1.58a.

Publications:

- Böhler, J. (2006). *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg: Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Böhler, J. (2009). *Zbrodnie Wehrmachtu w Polsce. Wrzesień 1939, wojna totalna* (transl. by P. Pieńkowska-Wiederkehr). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Böhler, J. (ed.) (2005). “Grösste Härte...”. *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht in Polen, September/Oktober 1939. Ausstellungskatalog*. Warszawa: Deutsches Historisches Institut.

- Burleigh, M. (2000). *The Third Reich: A New History*. London: Macmillan.
- Ceran, T. (2017). Anti-Polonism in the Ideology of National Socialism, *Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies*, vol. 1, pp. 218–239.
- Clark, Ch. (1995). *Johannes Blaskowitz: Der Christliche General*. In: R. Smelser, E. Syring (eds.), *Die Militärelite des Dritten Reiches* (pp. 28–49). Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Hc.
- Das Feldpost-Archiv. Source: <http://www.feldpost-archiv.de/feldpost-d.html> [accessed: 09.09.2020].
- Datner, S. (1967). *55 dni Wehrmacht w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej.
- Davies, N. (1999). *One Thousand Years of Polish-German Camaraderie*. In: R. Bartlett, K. Schönwälder (eds.), *The German Lands and Eastern Europe* (pp. 260–275). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Hoffmann, P. (2003). *Stauffenberg: A Family History 1905–1944*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Kluge, P. (1957). Der Fall Potempa, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 5, pp. 279–296.
- Kochański, H. (2012). *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Krausnick, H. (1998). *Hitler's Einsatzgruppen: Die Truppen des Weltanschauungskrieges, 1938–1942*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag.
- Moorhouse, R. (2019). *First to Fight: The Polish War 1939*. London: Bodley Head.
- Noakes, J., Pridham, G. (eds.). (1988). *Nazism 1919–1945*, vol. 3: *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination*. Exeter: University of Exeter.
- Ohler, N. (2016). *Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany*. London: Allen Lane.
- Peukert, D. J. K. (1991). *The Weimar Republic*. London: Allen Lane.
- Rossino, A. B. (2003). *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology and Atrocity*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas.
- Scheck, R. (2006). *Hitler's African Victims. The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shepherd, B. H. (2016). *Hitler's Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich*. London: Yale University Press.
- Testimony of Helena Szpilman* (n.d.). In: J. Böhler (ed.) (2005). "Grösste Härte...". *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht in Polen, September/Oktober 1939. Ausstellungskatalog* (p. 109). Warszawa: Deutsches Historisches Institut.
- Wardzyńska, M. (2009). *Był rok 1939: operacja niemieckiej policji bezpieczeństwa w Polsce "Intelligenzaktion"*. Warszawa: IPN. Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu.