**The Commissar Order of 6 June 1941**

***Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars***

In the battle against Bolshevism, the adherence of the enemy to the principles of humanity or international law is not to be counted on. In particular the treatment of those of us who are taken prisoner in a manner full of hatred, cruelty and inhumanity can be expected from the *political commissars of every kind* as the real pillars of opposition.

The troops must be aware that:
1. In this battle mercy or considerations of international law with regard to these elements is false. They are a danger to our own safety and to the rapid pacification of the conquered territories.

2. The originators of barbaric, Asiatic methods of warfare are the political commissars. So *immediate* and unhesitatingly severe measures must be undertaken against them.
They are therefore, when captured either in battle or offering resistance, as a matter of routine to be dispatched by firearms.
The following provisions also apply:

2. ...Political commissars *as agents of the enemy troops* are recognizable from their special badge—a red star with a golden woven hammer and sickle on the sleeves.... They are to be separated from the prisoners of war *immediately*, i.e. already on the battlefield. This is necessary, in order to remove from them any possibility of influencing the captured soldiers. These commissars are not to be recognized as soldiers; the protection due to prisoners of war under international law does not apply to them. When they have been separated, they are to be finished off.

3. *Political commissars who have not made themselves guilty of any enemy action nor are suspected of such* should be left unmolested for the time being. It will only be possible after further penetration of the country to decide whether remaining functionaries may be left in place or are to be handed over to the Sonderkommandos. The aim should be for the latter to carry out the assessment. In judging the question "guilty or not guilty", the personal impression of the attitude and bearing of the commissar should as a matter of principle count for more than the facts of the case which it may not be possible to prove.

**QUESTIONS:**

**What are the main points in this order? How does it illustrate that the war against the Soviet Union would be a different kind of war?**

**Excerpts from “Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia” (May 19, 1941)**

Regarding the conduct of troops towards the Bolshevistic system, vague ideas are still prevalent in many cases. The most essential aim of war against the Jewish-Bolshevistic system is a **complete destruction of their means of power** and the elimination of Asiatic influence from the European culture.

In this connection the troops are facing tasks which exceed the one sided routine of soldiering. The **soldier in the eastern territories is not merely a fighter according to the rules of the art of war but also a bearer of ruthless national ideology and the avenger of bestialities which have been inflicted upon German and racially related nations**.

Therefore **the soldier must have full understanding for the necessity of a severe but just revenge on subhuman Jewry**. The Army has to aim at another purpose, i. e., **the annihilation of revolts in hinterland which, as experience proves, have always been caused by Jews**.

The **combating of the enemy behind the front line is still not being taken seriously enough**. Treacherous, cruel partisans and unnatural women are still being made prisoners of war and guerilla fighters dressed partly in uniforms or plain clothes and vagabonds are still being treated as proper soldiers, and sent to prisoner of war camps…..

The fear of the German counter-measures must be stronger than the threats of the wandering Bolshevistic remnants. Being far from all political considerations of the future the soldier has to fulfill two tasks:

1. **Complete annihilation of the false Bolshevistic doctrine** of the Soviet State and its armed forces.

2. **The pitiless extermination of foreign treachery and cruelty** and thus the protection of the lives of military personnel in Russia.

This is the only way to fulfil our historic task to **liberate the German people once forever from the Asiatic-Jewish danger**.

Commander in Chief
(Signed) von Reichenau
Field Marshal.

**QUESTIONS:**

**What are the main points in this order? How does it illustrate that the war against the Soviet Union would be a different kind of war?**