

## Extract From the Commissar's Order for "Operation Barbarossa," June 6, 1941

June 6, 1941

Staff Command Secret Document

Chief Only

Only Through Officer

High Command of the Wehrmacht

WFST [Armed Forces Operational Staff] Div. L (VI/Qu)

No. 44822/41 g.K Chiefs

### Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars

In the fight against Bolshevism it is *not* to be expected that the enemy will act in accordance with the principles of humanity or international law. In particular, the *political commissars* of all kinds, who are the real bearers of resistance, can be expected to mete out treatment to our prisoners that is full of hate, cruel and inhuman.

The army must be aware of the following:

1. In this battle it would be mistaken to show mercy or respect for international law towards such elements. They constitute a danger to our own security and to the rapid pacification of the occupied territories.
2. The barbaric, Asiatic fighting methods are originated by the political commissars. Action must therefore be taken against them *immediately*, without further consideration, and with all severity. Therefore, when they are picked up in battle or resistance, they are, as a matter of principle, to be finished immediately with a weapon.

In addition, the following regulations are to be observed:

#### *Operational Areas*

- 1) Political commissars operating *against our armies* are to be dealt with in accordance with the decree on judicial provisions in the area of "Barbarossa." This applies to commissars of every type and rank, even if they are only suspected of resistance, sabotage or incitement to sabotage....

**Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalio (Eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1981, Document no. 170, pp. 376-377.**