

## Generalgouvernement

(General Government), administrative unit established by the Germans on October 26, 1939, comprised of those parts of Poland that had not been incorporated into the Reich, an area with a total population of twelve million. The full official designation was Generalgouvernement für die Besetzten Polnischen Gebiete (General Government for the Occupied Areas of Poland), and it was only in July 1940 that the shortened name came into use. The Germans had used this name previously, when they occupied Poland in World War I and set up an administration there, also called the Generalgouvernement.

The Generalgouvernement area was divided into four districts, Krakow, Warsaw, Radom, and Lublin, which in turn were split into sub-districts. The administrative center was Krakow. In the summer of 1941, following the German attack on the Soviet Union, Galicia became the fifth district, adding between three million and four million to the population. Only a few Polish institutions were permitted by the Nazis to function, among them the bank that issued the country's currency; the Polnische Polizei, or Polish Police, known as Granatowa (Blue), from their dark blue uniforms; and the Central Relief Committee, all of them operating under the strict supervision of the occupation authorities. Heading the Generalgouvernement was the governor-general, Hans Frank. As of May 1940, Frank operated through the Generalgouvernement administration, headed by Josef Bühler. The SS and police were headed first by SS-Obergruppenführer Friedrich Krüger, and then by Wilhelm Koppe.

The occupation authorities believed that the task of the Polish population of the Generalgouvernement was to obey the Germans and work for them. At first the Poles were regarded as a reservoir of manpower, to be exploited for the needs of the Reich. Later, the Germans considered a number of projects, such as the establishment of colonies, "Germanization," expulsion of the

population of Zamosc, and identification of those Poles who were Deutschstammig (of German origin).

The obedience of the Polish population was attained by extreme terrorization. For every German killed by the underground, fifty to one hundred Poles were executed. Of exceptional cruelty were two terror actions that the Germans carried out. The first was Sonderaktion Krakau (Special Action Krakow) in November 1939, in which 183 staff members of schools and colleges in Krakow were arrested while attending a meeting with the German police. They were deported to Sachsenhausen, from which many never returned. The other action took place in Lvov, where 38 Polish professors were executed shortly after the Wehrmacht entered the city.

The Germans destroyed Polish cultural and scientific institutions, and a large-scale program of plundering artistic and archeological treasures was instituted. In the economic sphere, the Poles were left only with small industries and work on the land. Heavy food quotas were levied on the villages, and trade in foodstuffs was prohibited, so as to restrict the urban population to the starvation diet provided by the food rations. As a result, the Poles engaged in widespread food smuggling.

The Ukrainians in the Generalgouvernement were intended by the Germans to provide a counterweight to the Poles. In contrast to the treatment that the Germans meted out to the population of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine (Reich Commissariat for the Ukraine), which was exceedingly harsh, the Ukrainians in the Generalgouvernement received concessions and their living conditions even improved, in comparison with the prewar situation.

The Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement, numbering 1.8 million, were the victims of discriminatory decrees. Their property was confiscated, and they were drafted for forced labor. From early 1940, the Jews were imprisoned in ghettos, where they suffered from severe shortages and were isolated from the rest of the world. In the spring of 1942 the Germans began

deporting the Jews from the ghettos to extermination camps in the Lublin district, and by 1944 all the ghettos in the Generalgouvernement were liquidated. By early August 1944 a part of the Generalgouvernement - the area between the Vistula and Bug rivers - was liberated by Soviet forces and the Polish National Liberation Council had been formed, with its center in Lublin. The rest of the Generalgouvernement was set free in January 1945, in the course of the Soviet army's winter offensive.