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Press release  
November 23, 2000

## **Hamburg Institute for Social Research announces the principles of the new concept for its exhibition about the war of annihilation**

At a press conference held today in Hamburg, Jan Philipp Reemtsma, Director of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, presented the principles of the new concept for the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg* (War of Annihilation). Reemtsma stated that the results of the review by an expert committee and further discussions in the Institute had led to the decision to “take leave of the idea of merely revising the old exhibition.” Addressing the supporters and the visitors of the old exhibition, Reemtsma said: “I expressly regret the errors and flaws in the exhibition.”

Reemtsma thanked the independent committee that reviewed the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* (War of Annihilation: Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941-1944), which presented its report last week. The committee “clearly defended the authors of the exhibition and the Institute in the face of exaggerated critique” and determined “that the basic statement of the exhibition about the intentional war of annihilation” was in keeping with “the state of research.” The Institute must, however, concentrate on the critical passages in the report and the flaws reported on there are significant.

Reemtsma then presented the principles of the concept for the new exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg*, which he referred to as also being the product of experience with debates about the old exhibition. Reemtsma noted that, beginning last fall when the moratorium was announced, he considered this pause to be an opportunity to include new aspects in the exhibition, aspects which had been taken up in public discussions again and again since the exhibition was first shown in 1995. The result is now a completely new exhibition, with the concept of war crimes and thus questions of international law and military law at the center. The individual rooms of the exhibition are devoted to various kinds of crimes: genocide, the politics of hunger, war against the partisans, prisoners of war, repressive measures, deportation.

Reemtsma then introduced Dr. Ulrike Jureit and Christoph Bitterberg, the spokespersons of the 15 member research team responsible for preparing the new exhibition.

Ulrike Jureit described the manner in which the new exhibition will present its arguments and its documentary material with examples from the section focussing on the genocide perpetrated against the Jewish population of the Soviet Union. She went on to illustrate the new team’s critical approach to the use of photographic images with photo material from the site of the Babi Yar massacre. Uncommented series of images, which were criticized by the expert committee, will not be included in the new exhibition. The presentation will not leave it up to the interpretation of visitors to decide whether a photograph shown in the exhibition has the status of documentary evidence or serves merely as an illustration.

Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel emphasized that the decision reached last November to call a moratorium and to entrust an expert committee with the review was correct. The review not only established what errors were made, it also facilitated the development of a learning process, leading finally to the new concept. For him, Vogel stated, the central issue was that

this topic was not going to be laid to rest. In order to recognize new warning signs in time, this period must be kept alive in people's consciousness, so Vogel.

Press release  
November 15, 2000

**Report of the committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* presented today in Frankfurt am Main**

The committee which reviewed the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* presented its final report to the public at a press conference in Frankfurt today. The members of the committee present at the press conference summarized the results of their review of all of the texts and images presented in the exhibition.

The following committee members participated in the press conference:

Dr. Cornelia Brink  
Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hirschfeld  
Prof. Dr. Friedrich Kahlenberg  
Prof. Dr. Manfred Messerschmidt  
Dr. Christian Streit  
Prof. Dr. Reinhard Rürup  
Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer

Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov was unfortunately unable to attend.

A three-page summary of the report and short biographical notes on the committee members in English and German and the complete report in German are available on the Institute's website as PDF files for downloading: [www.his-online.de](http://www.his-online.de).

Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Press release  
November 15, 2000

**Statement of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research on the report of the committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The committee which reviewed the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* submitted its final report to Jan Philipp Reemtsma in the *Deutsche Bibliothek* in Frankfurt today.

In a first statement, Reemtsma made the following remarks:

“Reviewing the exhibition entailed more time and work on the part of the committee than we expected one year ago. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the committee and to their research assistants for their expert evaluation of the images and texts shown in the exhibition.

“The results of the committee’s work presented today confirm the decision of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research to discontinue public showings of the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*. We greatly regret that we did respond to a number of critics, whose objections have been shown to be correct, with due earnestness and that we did not decide to impose a moratorium at an earlier date.

“Nonetheless, we reiterate that the key statement of the exhibition – that the *Wehrmacht* led a war of aggression and annihilation – is correct and is upheld.”

At a press conference to be held next week, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research will explain its views on the committee’s report in greater detail and present the basic conceptual principles for a new exhibition about the crimes of the *Wehrmacht*.

Regine Klose-Wolf  
Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Press release  
Hamburg, September 19, 2000

**Eighth meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The members of the academic committee which is reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met this past weekend. The following members attended the meeting: Dr. Cornelia Brink, Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. Friedrich Kahlenberg, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Rürup, Dr. Christian Streit und Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer.

The committee members discussed evaluation criteria and various other topics of relevance for its written report on the results of the review. In particular, they again focused on the key hypotheses of the exhibition and their historical valences and dealt with fundamental questions regarding the presentation of the photo material included in the exhibition. According to Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hirsch, the final version of the committee's report will be presented at a press conference in mid-November.

Press release  
Hamburg, 10 July 2000

**Seventh meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met for the seventh time this past Saturday. All members of the committee (Dr. Cornelia Brink, Prof. Dr. Omer Bartov, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. Friedrich Kahlenberg, Prof. Dr. Manfred Messerschmidt, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Rürup, Dr. Christian Streit und Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer) attended the meeting.

Researchers Florian Dierl, Andrej Angrick, and Peter Klein reported to the committee on their on-going work in the following archives: Belorussian Archive for Film and Photographic Documents, Dzerzhinsk; Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance Movement, Vienna; GARF - State Archives of the Russian Federation, Moscow; War History Archive, Prague; Russian State Archive for Film and Photographic Documents, Krasnogorsk. The three historians are continuing the process of reviewing the legends of all photographs obtained from these archives for use in the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*.

The committee intends to meet at least two more times this coming fall. The presentation of the committee's expertise, tentatively scheduled for October 2000, will take place according to present plans at a press conference conducted by the committee in early November.

Shortly after the presentation of the committee's report, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research will invite interested journalists to a press conference at which the Institute will announce its plans for a new presentation of the exhibition.

Press release  
Hamburg, 15 May 2000

**Sixth meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

This past Saturday, 15 May 2000, the members of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met for the sixth time. Present at this meeting were Dr. Cornelia Brink, Prof. Dr. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Rürup, Prof. Dr. Christian Streit, Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer.

The committee members provided Hannes Heer, one of the authors of the exhibition, with an opportunity to comment on the results of the investigations conducted for the committee by Andrej Angrick, Peter Klein and Florian Dierl, in particular with respect to the documents dealing with the war against the partisans.

The committee will continue to meet throughout the summer. Due to the long summer vacation period during which the relevant Russian archives are closed, the committee was forced to abandon its provisional plan to complete its final report by the end of the summer. The commission will complete its expert report in October and then present it to the public at a press conference.

After the committee's report has been completed, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research will hold a separate press conference and inform the public of its plans as to when, where, and in what form a new presentation of the exhibition will take place.



Press release  
Hamburg, 12 April 2000

**Fifth meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The members of the academic committee (Dr. C. Brink, Prof. Dr. G. Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. F. Kahlenberg, Prof. Dr. M. Messerschmidt, Prof. Dr. R. Rürup, Prof. Dr. C. Streit, Prof. Dr. H.-U. Thamer) reviewing the text and image documents in the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met again this past Saturday, 8 April 2000.

The committee members discussed the statements made so far by both critics of the exhibition—Dr. Bogdan Musial and Dr. Krisztián Ungváry—and the authors of the exhibition—Hannes Heer, Dr. Bernd Boll, and Dr. Walther Manoschek. The committee also considered the reports of investigations carried out by Andrej Angrick, Peter Klein, and Florian Dierl in which issues centering on Bjelorussia, Serbia, and the Wehrmacht's campaigns against partisans. These three historians have been asked by the committee to continue their work until all images and texts in the exhibition have been reviewed. This work is expected to consume several more months so that the committee's final report will not be completed before the end of the summer.

After the committee ended its meeting, Prof. Dr. Jan Philipp Reemtsma presented a preliminary concept for a possible transformation of the exhibition to committee members.

Press release  
Hamburg, 21 March 2000

**Fourth meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The academic committee which is reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met for the fourth time this past weekend.

At two previous meetings, Dr. Bogdan Musial and Dr. Krisztián Ungváry had accepted the committee's invitation to elucidate in detail their critique of the exhibition. This weekend's session was devoted to providing the authors of the exhibition (Hannes Heer, Dr. Walther Manoschek, and Dr. Bernd Boll) with an opportunity for responding in equal detail to this critique.

The material presented by the authors was so extensive that the committee will require a further meeting (tentatively scheduled to take place in April) to review it. The review of all images and texts used in the exhibition is still underway and will be the focus of a future committee meeting.

Press release  
Hamburg, 14 February 2000

**Third meeting of the academic committee reviewing the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The academic committee which is reviewing the text and image documents in the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met this past weekend for the third time. Besides the committee members (present at this third meeting were Dr. C. Brink, Prof. Dr. G. Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. F. Kahlenberg, Prof. Dr. M. Messerschmidt, Prof. Dr. R. Rürup, Prof. Dr. C. Streit, Prof. Dr. H.-U. Thamer), Prof. Dr. J.P. Reemtsma, Director of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research also regularly participates in the meetings. At each meeting, historians Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein report to the committee about their progress in checking all image documents used in the exhibition in the relevant archives.

During a break in the meeting, Prof. Dr. Jan Philipp Reemtsma stated: "As I explained in November 1999 when the moratorium was announced, all documents used in the exhibition are being checked, regardless of whether or not they have been the target of critique. This kind of investigation requires a great deal of time, but the time taken up by the review process does not allow direct conclusions regarding the extent of possible changes to be made in the exhibition. The moratorium will be extended beyond the three months originally announced as the minimum time period required."

Following Dr. Bogdan Musial who attended the January meeting, Dr. Krisztián Ungváry was invited to last weekend's meeting to present his critique of the exhibition. Ungváry and Musial gave detailed accounts of the critical assessments published in October of last year. The discussion between Ungváry and the committee was very constructive.

At one of the next meetings, Hannes Heer, Dr. Bernd Boll and Dr. Walter Manoschek will report to the committee and react to the critique presented by Musial and Ungváry.

To what extent the exhibition will be revised can be decided only after the review of all text and image documents been completed and the various critical comments have been discussed and evaluated.

Reemtsma also stated: "The moratorium provides the Institute with an opportunity to present a revised version of the exhibition, incorporating our reactions to critical comments and objections into the exhibition itself. To date, our reactions to criticism could only be expressed in interviews or public events organized at the various exhibition venues. In the revised version of the exhibition, we also intend to address the issue of how crimes were defined at the time with respect to perpetrators, accomplices and responsibility and the status of international law of the time. Furthermore, we plan to include a section dealing with the debate about the exhibition."

Press release  
Hamburg, 19 January 2000

**Status of the review of the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944***

The academic committee which is reviewing the text and image documents in the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* has conducted two meetings to date and is scheduled to convene again in February. Dr. Christian Streit has now joined the committee, at the request of the members of the committee appointed previously (Dr. Cornelia Brink, Prof. Omer Bartov, Prof. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Prof. Friedrich Kahlenberg, Prof. Dr. Manfred Messerschmidt, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Rürup, Prof. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Thamer). Historians Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein are assisting the committee in its work. At the January meeting, Dr. Bogdan Musial presented his critique of the exhibition to the committee. Dr. Krisztián Ungváry will present his critical assessment at the up-coming meeting.

It has already become apparent that the review of the documents used in the exhibition—including all the documents which were not the focus of the recent public controversy—will require more time than the three months previously announced as the minimum time period for a moratorium on the presentation of the exhibition. It is anticipated that the exhibition will re-open in the second half of the year 2000. Arrangements regarding the first presentation site for the exhibition following the review process will be made when the precise date for re-opening has been determined.

Press release  
Hamburg, November 22, 1999

### **Academic committee begins its work**

The academic committee which will review the documents presented in the exhibition *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944* met on Saturday, 20 November 1999 for the first time.

In a press conference held on November 4, 1999, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research and the *Verein zur Förderung der Ausstellung "Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944"* (an independent non-profit organization which had taken over the presentation of the exhibition in Germany in July 1999) had previously stated that there would be a moratorium of at least three months on further presentations of the exhibition in Germany and abroad. The Institute and members of the also announced their decision to have all documents shown in the exhibition reviewed by an independent committee.

All members of the committee (Dr. C. Brink, Prof. G. Hirschfeld, Prof. Dr. F. Kahlenberg, Prof. M. Messerschmidt, Prof. R. Rürup and Prof. Dr. H.U. Thamer) were present for the first meeting, with the exception of Prof. O. Bartov. Historians Peter Klein and Andrej Angrick will support the committee's work.

During the discussion on the modalities of the committee's work, Professor Jan Philipp Reemtsma, board of directors of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, informed the committee members about his ideas on the future presentation of the exhibition. The committee agreed to advise the Institute on these questions as well. In the course of its work, the committee will also invite critics of the exhibition, in particular Bogdan Musial and Kristián Ungváry, to participate in discussions.