

## Execution of Soviet “Partisans” (1942)

### Abstract

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After the invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Soviet Union in 1941, the Wehrmacht and SS worked to root out resistance among the populations of eastern Europe. In many cases, SS trained Einsatzgruppen carried out the search and execution of thousands of Polish and Russian “partisans.” The term partisan was broadly defined: former politicians, communists, Jews who fled into the forest, resistance fighters, and those found aiding and abetting the underground resistance. In initial postwar testimonies, the Einsatzgruppen were said to have carried out most of these executions. However, images such as this one taken in 1942 revealed that the Wehrmacht also participated in the murder of thousands of so-called partisans. Here, a Wehrmacht firing squad of 18 men are shooting six men. The decision and summary executions of partisans did not just come from the official level. In many cases, men and women were executed based on the whims of local Wehrmacht and SS units. While photographs of these killings were formally forbidden, many Wehrmacht soldiers carried cameras with them and documented their participation in these crimes. In some cases, photos were sent home to a soldier’s family along with a letter describing such “work” on the eastern Front.

### Source

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Source: Original title: Northern Soviet Union, firing squad executing six men, September 1941.  
Photographer: Thiede. Bundesarchiv Bild 101-212-0221-07. Online at Wikimedia Commons:  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_101-212-0221-07%2C\\_Russland-Nord%2C\\_Erschie%C3%9Fung\\_von\\_Partisanen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ABundesarchiv_Bild_101-212-0221-07%2C_Russland-Nord%2C_Erschie%C3%9Fung_von_Partisanen.jpg)

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