

# Adolf Eichmann Defines the Term “Sonderbehandlung” during His Trial (July 18, 1961)

## Abstract

---

Adolf Eichmann, the former head of the RSHA “Office of Jewish Affairs” and one of the main organizers of the Holocaust, had managed to escape to Argentina after the Second World War, where he lived under a false name and was eventually joined by his family. In May 1960, Israeli Security Service agents seized Eichmann and brought him to Jerusalem to stand trial in an Israeli court. Eichmann’s abduction caused some diplomatic tensions, but these did not prevent the trial from opening in 1961. After 114 days of trial, Eichmann was convicted of crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and membership in a criminal organization. He was sentenced to death and hanged.

The proceedings were recorded on videotape at the time; the short clip featured here shows a scene from session 101 of the trial, which took place on July 18, 1961. Eichmann is seen in a bullet-proof glass booth while he is being cross-examined by attorney general Gideon Hausner. In this clip, he is being questioned about the meaning of the term “Sonderbehandlung.” Throughout the trial, he denied all responsibility for his actions, claiming he was only following orders. The Eichmann trial was one of the first to be widely televised, and it played an important part in educating audiences worldwide on the events of the Holocaust.

## Source

---

/[In Hebrew] Eichmann is asked whether the term "Sonderbehandlung" means killing.

/Eichmann: It also means killing, yes.

/[In Hebrew] Hausner follows up.

/Eichmann: But I have to correct myself, now that I have to testify about this. This can also be checked at any time. "Sonderbehandlung" means the transportation in general, the deportation to the concentration camp or wherever it was ordered. Special treatment also means the use of the deportee in question by the authority that then took charge of these Jews, in this case the Administrative and Economic Main Office.

And this can also be substantiated by documents. Special treatment also means sending inmates from a concentration camp to armament centers. And special treatment also means killing, yes.

But all of these things, what the Administrative and Economic Main Office or the Inspectorate of the Concentration Camp System decided, IV B 4 could neither influence nor prevent nor promote. IV B 4 had nothing to do with that.

Source: Eichmann trial, session 101. USHMM: RG-60.2100.174

Accessed at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archives of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

---

Recommended Citation: Adolf Eichmann Defines the Term “Sonderbehandlung” during His Trial (July 18, 1961), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:video-5058>> [May 02, 2024].