

Ohlendorf, Otto
(1907-1951)



Commander of *Einsatzgruppe D*, a mobile killing unit that carried out the mass extermination of tens of thousands of Jews and other Soviet civilians and prisoners of war after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in mid-1941.

A cultured academic who had earned degrees in economics and law, Ohlendorf joined the Nazi Party in 1925 and the SS in 1926. He joined the Security Service (SD) in 1936, and when World War II broke out in September 1939 he was appointed the head of the SD's Inland section in the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA).

In June 1941 Ohlendorf was named commander of *Einsatzgruppe D*. In that capacity, Ohlendorf was responsible for the murder of at least 90,000 people. By June 1942 Ohlendorf's unit had rampaged through the Crimea and Ciscaucasia, exterminating Jews and other Soviet citizens. This brutal behavior won Ohlendorf a Military Service Cross.

After the war, Ohlendorf was the main defendant in the *Einsatzgruppen* case at the Nuremberg trials. He openly and unabashedly admitted his murderous actions during the war, and even explained why he thought his actions were justified. He was sentenced to death and hanged in 1951.