

= Sonderbehandlung =

Sonderbehandlung (abbr . S.B.) is a German noun meaning special treatment in English , also existing as a verb : sonderbehandeln (to treat specially) . While it can refer to any sort of preferential treatment , it is known primarily as a euphemism used by Nazi functionaries and the SS for mass murder . It first came to prominence during Action T4 , where SS doctors killed mentally ill and disabled patients between 1939 and 1941 , and was one of a number of nonspecific words the Nazis used to document mass murder and genocide . Another notable example was Sonderbehandlung 14f13 .

This term was also used to imprecisely refer to the equipment used to perpetrate their crimes , such as gas chambers and Zyklon B. The true meaning of Sonderbehandlung was widely known in the SS , and in April 1943 , Reichsführer @-@ SS Heinrich Himmler was so concerned about the security of it that he had it redacted in a secret report .

Berel Lang states that disguised language was used " ... not only in communications issued to the Jewish public when the intention of those issuing the communications was to deceive the Jews in order to minimize the likelihood of resistance , but also in addresses to the outside world and , perhaps more significantly , in internal communications as well , among officials who unquestionably knew (who were themselves sometimes responsible for) the linguistic substitutions stipulated by the language rules . "

= = Background = =

By the summer of 1941 , Action T4 became widespread public knowledge in Germany (and also in neutral countries and to Germany 's enemies) , and on August 24 , 1941 , Hitler ordered the joint chief of the operation Dr. Karl Brandt to halt it due to public protest (however it still continued , not only out of the public eye but in greater intensity) . Hitler did not want to run the risk of an order publicly embarrassing him again and , as a result , the explicit order to carry out the Holocaust was given by him orally . Even if there had been any written instances of this order , they would have almost certainly been destroyed by the Nazis when they realised their defeat was inevitable .

Where the Nazis had to document murder , Sonderbehandlung was one of a number of euphemisms used . The Action T4 doctors used " desinfiziert " (decontaminated) to document the gassing of mentally ill and handicapped individuals . The actual plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe was called " Die Endlösung der Judenfrage " (Final Solution to the Jewish Question) . Other words to describe extermination operations included :

" Evakuierung " (evacuation)

" Aussiedlung " (expulsion)

" Umsiedlung " (resettlement)

" Auflockerung " (thinning out ? as in the removal of inhabitants from a ghetto)

" Befriedungsaktion " (pacification)

" Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion " or " A.B. Aktion " (special pacification)

" Abwanderung " (having @-@ been @-@ migrated)

" Säuberung " (cleansing)

" Sicherheitspolizeilich durchgearbeitet " (directed or worked through in a manner in accordance with the Sicherheitsdienst)

The Posen speeches made by Heinrich Himmler in October 1943 are the first known documents in which a high @-@ ranking member of the Nazi government spoke explicitly about the perpetration of the Holocaust during the war . Himmler mentions the " Judenevakuierung " or " evacuation of the Jews " , which he uses synonymously with their extermination . At one point in the speech , Himmler says : " elimination of the Jews , extermination , we 're doing it " , briefly pausing in the middle of " elimination " (Ausschaltung) before going on to say " extermination " (Ausrottung) . His hesitation in the middle of saying " elimination " can be considered as a quick mental check to see whether or not it is acceptable to use such words in front of his given audience . The answer is yes : it is the seniority of the SS in private . This has been compared to another incident of self @-@ verification

in the opposite way , where Josef Goebbels , in his Total War speech on February 18 , 1943 , begins to say " Ausrottung des Judentums " (" extermination of Jewry ") but switches to saying " Ausschaltung " , bearing in mind that he is speaking very publicly . His resulting phrasing is " Ausrott ... schaltung des Judentums " , which can be likened to " extermin ... elimination " in English .

= = Usage = =

The term first appeared on September 20 , 1939 in a decree by the Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst chief SS @-@ Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich to all state police departments :

" To avoid any misunderstandings , please take note of the following : ... a distinction must be made between those who may be dealt with in the usual way and those who must be given special treatment . The latter case covers subjects who , due to their most objectionable nature , their dangerousness , or their ability to serve as tools of propaganda for the enemy , are suitable for elimination , without respect for persons , by merciless treatment (namely , by execution) .

However , the usage is directed against Germans rather than Jews (it relates to " the principles of internal state security in the war ") . Nevertheless , the law allowed for the killing of any person the regime wished . A memo dated six days later from a meeting at the SS @-@ Reichssicherheitshauptamt defines Sonderbehandlung with " execution " following it in brackets .

A report from the Eastern Front dated October 25 , 1941 , reads that " due to the grave danger of epidemic , the complete liquidation of Jews from the ghetto in Vitebsk was begun on October 8 , 1941 . The number of Jews to whom special treatment is to be applied is around 3 @, @ 000 . " An excerpt of a decree dated February 20 , 1942 , from the RSHA and written by Himmler regarding the treatment of " foreign civilian workers " advises that in particularly difficult cases , application should be made to the RSHA for special treatment , adding that " special treatment takes place by hanging . " In a letter to the RSHA , SS @-@ Hauptsturmführer Heinz Trühe requests additional gas vans for " ... a transport of Jews , which has to be treated in a special way ... " The gas vans were vehicles containing an airtight compartment in which the victims were locked and the exhaust gas was pumped into , killing the victims with the combined effects of carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation .

= = Equipment = =

In German , " Sonder- " , meaning " special " , can be used to form compound nouns . As well as in reference to actions , the Nazis used euphemisms to refer to the actual equipment used to carry out killing . In his letter , Trühe refers to the vans as " S @-@ wagen " (S @-@ vans) ; " Sonderwagen " (special vans) in full . Other documented references include " Sonderfahrzeug " (special vehicle) , " Spezialwagen " (special van) , and " Hilfsmittel " (auxiliary equipment) .

Several instances of this unspecific language in reference to equipment can be found in documents concerning Auschwitz concentration camp . A letter dated August 21 , 1942 referred to Bunker 1 and Bunker 2 (farmhouses west of Birkenau converted into gas chambers) as " Badeanstalten für Sonderaktionen " (bathing installations for special actions) . In the letter , this is given in quotes , further suggesting the euphemistic nature of what is meant . On blueprints , the basement gas chambers of Crematoria II and III were simply marked as " Leichenkeller 1 " (basement morgue 1) , and the basement undressing rooms were marked as " Leichenkeller 2 " . However , a letter dated November 27 , 1942 to chief Auschwitz architect SS @-@ Sturmbannführer Karl Bischoff referred to morgue 1 of Crematorium II as the " Sonderkeller " (special cellar) . A letter from SS @-@ Sturmbannführer Rudolf Jährling concerning Crematoria II and III to oven builders J.A. Topf and Sons dated March 6 , 1943 , refers to morgue 2 as an " Auskleideraum " (undressing room) . The units of prisoners forced to empty gas chambers and load bodies into ovens were known as the Sonderkommando (special squads) . A document dated August 26 , 1942 granted the camp authorities to send a truck " ... to Dessau to pick up material for special treatment ... " - Dessau was one of two places where Zyklon B was manufactured . Standard usage of the term for killing at Auschwitz applied . A letter dated October 13 , 1942 , signed by Bischoff , states that construction of

new crematoria facilities " ... was necessary to start immediately in July 1942 because of the situation caused by the special actions . " On September 8 , 1943 , 5 @, @ 006 Jews were transferred from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz under the designation " SB six months . " Six months later on March 9 , 1944 , those still alive were gassed . In his diary , SS @-@ Obersturmführer and doctor Johann Kremer describes seeing a mass gassing for the first time :

September 2 , 1942 : For the first time , at 3 : 00 A.M. outside , attended a special action . Dante 's Inferno seems to me almost a comedy compared to this . They don 't call Auschwitz the camp of annihilation for nothing !

Three days later , Kremer described the mass gassing of emaciated prisoners , nicknamed Muslims :

September 5 , 1942 : In the morning attended a special action from the women 's concentration camp (Muslims) ; the most dreadful of horrors . Master @-@ Sergeant Thilo (troop doctor) was right when he said to me that this is the anus mundi . In the evening towards 8 : 00 attended another special action from Holland [sic] . Because of the special rations they get a fifth of a liter of schnapps , 5 cigarettes , 100 g salami and bread , the men all clamor to take part in such actions . Today and tomorrow (Sunday) work .

In a letter dated January 29 , 1943 by SS @-@ Sturmbannführer Bischoff to SS @-@ Oberführer Hans Kammler , Bischoff refers to basement morgue 1 of Crematorium II at Auschwitz as a " Vergasungskeller " , literally " gassing cellar " . In the letter , the word is underlined , and at the top of the document is written : " SS @-@ Untersturmführer Kirschnek ! " There was a very clear policy in the architecture office that words such as " gas chamber " should not be used ; Second Lieutenant Kirschnek should be informed of this slip . Citing this unique letter , Robert Jan van Pelt states that in using " special action " or " special treatment " in place of extermination and killing , the first Holocaust deniers were the Nazis themselves , in that they attempted to deny to themselves what they were doing .

= = Sensitivity = =

Heinrich Himmler became increasingly concerned about the security of documenting the destruction of the Jews . On April 9 , 1943 , he wrote a secret letter to Heydrich 's successor as chief of the Gestapo and SD , SS @-@ Obergruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner , concerning the Korherr Report . Himmler considered the report " well executed for purposes of camouflage and potentially useful for later times . " The next day , SS @-@ Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Brandt passed a message to the author of the report , Richard Korherr , stating :

The Reichsführer @-@ SS has received your report on " The Final Solution of the European Jewish Question " . He wishes that " special treatment of the Jews " not be mentioned anywhere . On page 9 , it must be formulated as follows :

" They were guided :

through the camps in the General Government

through the camps in the Warthegau "

No other formulation is to be employed .

Himmler was so sure that almost everyone knew what " special treatment " meant , and ordered for it to be replaced with the even more vague " durchgeschleust " (guided through) , even though the document in question was top secret . The camps in question in the General Government were Treblinka , Sobibor and Belzec extermination camps , and Majdanek concentration camp . The only camp in the Warthegau was Chełmno extermination camp .

= = Nazi perspectives = =

In the course of investigations and criminal proceedings for Nazi war crimes , it was shown that among those involved , there was no doubt what was meant by this term . At his trial , SS @-@ Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann stated that " everybody knew " special treatment meant killing .

According to SS @-@ Gruppenführer and senior SS and Polizeiführer Emil Mazuw :

" During the war , the SS gave no meaning to Sonderbehandlung other than killing . I am certain that high @-@ ranking officers knew it . I don 't know whether the ordinary SS man did or not . According to the terminology used at the time , I understand ' special treatment ' to mean only killing and nothing else . "