Bandenbekämpfung was a brutal military campaign conducted by the Nazi regime during World War II, aimed at eliminating “bandits” or “anti-bandits” in occupied territories. The term “Bandenbekämpfung” was rigorously applied to areas where resistance movements were active. The campaign was launched in the early 1940s, targeting regions that had been invaded by Nazi forces. It involved the use of SS-Police, army, Luftwaffe, and native auxiliary units, who were tasked with securing areas free of resistance fighters. The campaign was characterized by ruthless tactics and mass arrests, leading to the imprisonment and death of thousands of civilians. The campaign was not limited to military operations but also extended to the suppression of economic activities and the destruction of infrastructure in targeted areas. The term “Bandenbekämpfung” was used to undermine the morale of the occupied population and maintain the Nazi regime’s control over these territories.

The campaign was not only a military endeavor but also a strategic move to consolidate Nazi control over the occupied territories. It involved the systematic persecution of individuals who were suspected of engaging in activities that were considered subversive to Nazi interests. The campaign was characterized by the use of propaganda and misinformation campaigns to further destabilize the occupied populations and to create a climate of fear.

The “Bandenbekämpfung” campaign was particularly harsh in areas where the resistance movements were strong, such as in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The campaign was also extended to other parts of Europe, including Poland and the Eastern front. The campaign’s impact was profound, as it led to the displacement of millions of people, the destruction of infrastructure, and the disruption of economic activities.

The “Bandenbekämpfung” campaign was a reflection of the Nazi regime’s ideology, which prioritized the defense of the Fatherland and the suppression of any threats to national security. The campaign was a byproduct of the broader strategy of the Third Reich to consolidate its control over Europe and to maintain its grip on the conquered territories.

The “Bandenbekämpfung” campaign was a significant aspect of the broader historical context of World War II, and its legacy continues to be studied by historians to understand the complex dynamics of occupation and resistance during this period.
the Czech Institute for Military History in 1960, focusing on the history of Czech resistance to Nazism. After the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, Zámečník was prohibited from conducting historical research, but with the help of German contacts and a friendly librarian in Prague, he was nonetheless able to obtain sources and literature to continue work on this book, publishing a few shorter pieces in Germany, notably a brilliant examination of Heinrich Himmler’s reputed order to murder all camp inmates before liberation (“‘Kein Häftling darf lebend in die Hände des Feindes fallen,’ Zur Existenz des Himmel-Befehls vom 14./18. April 1945,” Dachauer Hefte [1985]: 219–231), and a memoir of his time in the Dachau infirmary (“Erinnerungen an das ‘Revier’ im Konzentrationslager Dachau,” Dachauer Hefte [1988]: 128–143). After 1989 Zámečník incorporated into his study a host of new archivally based research on the concentration camps, such as Johannes Tuchel’s dissertation, Konzentrationslager: Organisationsgeschichte und Funktion der “Inspektion der Konzentrationslager,” 1934–1938 (1991), to name only one of the most important. Zámečník has succeeded in integrating these studies based on bureaucratic documents with the hundreds of published and unpublished accounts of the Dachau camp by those who experienced it firsthand.

This book represents the pinnacle of monographic concentration camp histories. Monographic histories of Nazi concentration camps have long remained the province of camp survivors, beginning with Eugen Kogon’s Der SS-Staat (1946; The Theory and Practice of Hell, 1950; both still in print). The international association of Dachau survivors commissioned Belgian military historian Paul Berben to write the first monograph about Dachau, published in 1968 as Histoire du Camp de Concentration de Dachau, 1933–1945 (published in English in 1975 as Dachau 1933–1945: The Official History). Berben’s fine narrative focuses solely on the camp itself, however, without consideration of the historical context. Berben’s research and documentary appendices were incorporated into the first Dachau museum catalog, published in German in 1975 and English in 1978, which remained the only widely available book about the camp until the new catalog was published in 2005. Günther Kimmel’s article “Das Konzentrationslager Dachau: Eine Studie zu den nationalsozialistischen Gewaltverbrechen,” included in volume two of Martin Broszat’s project on the history of everyday life in Bavaria, Bayern in der NS-Zeit (1979, pp. 349–413), was the first attempt at a scholarly overview of the camp’s history. More recent monographs, such as Hans-Günther Richard’s Schule der Gewalt (1983, 1995) and Sybille Steinbacher’s Dachau, die Stadt und das Konzentrationslager (1993), focus on specific aspects of the camp.

Zámečník’s monograph is divided into three chronological-thematic parts, covering the phase of consolidation and preparation for war until 1939, the period of military successes until 1941, and the period in which prisoner labor was used for wartime production. Each of these parts is divided into clearly titled sections and subsections that comprise essays on the crucial issues of Dachau’s and the entire Nazi camp system’s history. Throughout the book Zámečník moves effortlessly between specifics about Dachau and developments in the camp system, making this book a gripping narrative that provides a superb analysis of how integral the concentration camp system was to the Nazi Reich itself. As such it is eminently suitable for lay readers (including advanced undergraduates), but it also represents the cutting edge of research on the Dachau camp’s history, masterfully assessing the source material on such questions as the “night and fog” executions in fall 1941, medical experiments, the Dachau gas chamber, and the extent to which an “international” resistance movement in the camp existed. We must hope that a major publisher will make the English translation widely available as well.

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At the end of World War II, some 12 million German soldiers were imprisoned and thousands of Nazi leaders interned. Most POWs were released within a year, and many of the Nazi small fry returned home soon too. Few admitted outright guilt; most thought they were victims of the war or Allied punishment.

But how do you deal with the leadership of a nation that unleashed the worst aggressive and genocidal war in history? The Allies faced this unprecedented challenge, once Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Germany invaded Poland, killed civilians in the bombing of London and other cities, and unleashed a war of racial extermination against Jews and other minorities. They decided to set up the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg (and many succession trials) and indicted the worst offenders on charges of conspiracy, crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity (e.g., the murder, enslavement, deportation, or extermination of civilian populations). The last charge in particular was a new legal concept that opened up the floodgates of charges of “victor’s justice,” or applying ex post facto law to defeated enemies (p. 10). This allowed major war criminals to feel victimized too.

The four-power IMT lasted from November 1945 to October 1946. Twelve of the defendants were sentenced to death by hanging, three were acquitted, while seven received unexpected prison terms. Norman J. W. Goda’s book is about the fate of these seven prisoners, incarcerated at Spandau in the British sector of Berlin.

This is a masterpiece of sophisticated historical analysis on the intersections among legal history (“the trial of the century”) and the administration of justice of the imprisoned Nazi war criminals), Cold War diplomatic