

**In a letter dated 8 September 1941, Franz Bergmann from Neheim an der Ruhr
criticizes the murder of psychiatric patients¹**

Letter, signed by Franz Bergmann, Neheim, to the Deputy General Command of the VI Army Corps,² Department of the Chief of Staff, Münster-Westphalia, dated 8 September 1941 (copy)³

Re: eradication of the mentally ill⁴

The murmurings about this grave and far-reaching problem are never-ending. They have now penetrated every home, ever since the Church, from a higher viewpoint, declared its religious and moral veto against it and described each such act as *vile murder*.⁵

The '*Hess affair*' did not depress and shock the people as a whole as much as this event has done.⁶ Men who are gladly willing to make concessions in hopeless cases are quaking in the face of the horror that addresses them from this ice-cold, rationalistic, and uncompromising stance. There is also the feverish imagination that continues to spin the threads once they have been caught, already wreaking havoc in homes for cripples and the elderly, killing off people with tuberculosis and cancer, and not even stopping at the blessed head of the infirm mother. Indeed, this conduct has already been transferred from the imagination to our *field hospitals at the front*. In every conceivable variation, this rumour has pervaded German lands, weakening the people's morale most severely. Hope and faith in the benediction of the Party are melting away *like snow in the sun*. Germany cherished a sheer, unshakeable confidence, and it seems to want to carry this to the grave.

No one knows what induced our government to tread this path. Some say that the mental hospitals had to be cleared out because of the *many mentally-ill aviation officers*; others speak of *economic measures concerning our sustenance*. Yet all of this fails to have the desired effect. These objections are easily parried with reference to the *many millions of Jews* who are still in the country. Why is this scum of humanity still living while our patients are simply killed? Who here wants to advocate for the Jews?

Above all it is Party Comrade *Himmler* who the people are incriminating for this act. Whether rightly or wrongly, I cannot say of course. *They (the people) categorically reject this man, in whom they plainly see the incarnation of evil*. The extent to which the *international adversary* has contributed to this view is difficult to determine.

1 BArch, RH 14/46, fol. 47. Facsimile published in Bernward Dörner, *Die Deutschen und der Holocaust: Was niemand wissen wollte, aber jeder wissen konnte* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2007), p. 803. This document has been translated from German.

2 The chief of the general staff from Jan. 1941 to July 1942 was Hans Degen (1899–1971), a colonel on the general staff.

3 The original contains handwritten annotations and the stamp 'Secret!'

4 On the murder of institutionalized patients in the context of the 'euthanasia' programme, see Introduction, pp. 32 f.

5 This refers to the sermon delivered on 3 August 1941 by Count Clemens August von Galen, Bishop of Münster, who openly criticized the 'euthanasia' murders.

6 In May 1941, Rudolf Hess had flown to Scotland, allegedly to engineer peace negotiations with Britain. He remained in British captivity until the end of the war.

The *army and its leadership*, on the other hand, are highly regarded among the people. Here, a mighty tower of unconditional trust is being established. The army is, in a sense, the unmoveable rock in the drive of surging waves.

By contrast, people view the German *medical profession* with *unmistakable distrust*. People know very well that here there were always voices actively issuing propaganda for the eradication of the mentally ill. These voices maintained that the capital invested in the mentally ill should be freed up for other purposes, purposes that would bring doctors more active capital turnover. For the medical profession revealed its true face during the *Systemzeit*,⁷ when the bank account was its all. This is of course an invalid generalization. Nevertheless, it seems that the morphine injection is set to become a horrifying symbol of the profession. People have recognized the devil's hoof and they are reacting accordingly.

Heil Hitler!

⁷ German for 'system era': a term used by the National Socialists to refer disparagingly to the period of the Weimar Republic.