

RESOURCES ON THE GERMAN MILITARY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Racial Ideology in Practice in the Soviet Union

One motivation for the German invasion of the Soviet Union was the desire to acquire *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German people to colonize at the expense of the Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Baltic peoples whom the Nazis considered racially inferior. Consequently, German forces murdered almost all of the Soviet Jews they could identify, and shot, starved, or worked to death millions of Soviet civilians and prisoners of war. This was the result not only of Nazi propaganda—in which the Soviet population was portrayed as subhuman—but also of the basic orders issued by the military leadership, who shared the Nazi view that Soviet soldiers and civilians were inferior.

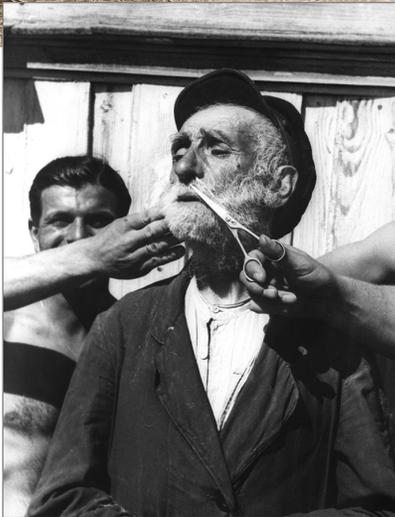


“Only a Jew can be a Bolshevik, for this blood-sucker there can be nothing nicer than to be a Bolshevik Wherever one spits one finds a Jew As far as I know ... not one single Jew has worked in the workers’ paradise, everyone, even the smallest blood-sucker, has a post where he naturally enjoys great privileges.”

— Lance-Corporal Paul Lenz, Russia, 1941¹

“Hardly ever do you see the face of a person who seems rational and intelligent. They all look emaciated and the wild, half-crazy look in their eyes makes them look like imbeciles These scoundrels, led by Jews and criminals, wanted to imprint their stamp on Europe.”

—Soldier Karl Fuchs on Soviet POWs, August 1941²



Top: This photo was found by an American liberator and was likely taken by a German soldier who fought with Army Group Center in the Soviet Union. Lieutenant Baier interrogates newly captured Soviet prisoners of war. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Left: German soldiers publicly humiliate an elderly Jewish man in Ukraine by cutting off his beard. *Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-187-0203-11*

¹ Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160.

² Bartov, 159.