

Judeo- Bolshevism: The Politics of Scapegoating

Rarely has a human being faced a greater threat than following capture as the enemy by the Nazi's during World War Two. The mentality surrounding National Socialism was one of militarism, systemic dehumanization and persecution. Such a callously militaristic mindset led to the deaths of millions of civilians and prisoners of war (POW's), as almost all conventions of war were broken. Throughout the 1930's the psyche of the German people was whipped into frenzy by the promise of a brighter economic future. People were led to believe that the road to such a future was paved with the realization of political conspiracy and the ever- present aura of stealthy anti-German activity. It was the acquisition of this mentality by a majority of German people that allowed for the justification necessary to round up and shoot innocent civilians. The mind of a Nazi killer was filled with war. Hitler in his master rhetorical craftsmanship was able to cultivate and tie together politics with race, thus turning separate racial groups into wartime enemies who were to face the wrath of 'annihilation'. There was no bigger political enemy to the Nazis than the Jews. In a wave of political paranoia Hitler openly fantasized about the destruction of the Jewish race in his infamous Prophecy speech, where he explicitly linked Jewry with 'Bolshevization'²¹. Most Germans of the time could agree that there was no greater political threat to Germany than Bolshevism, and because of the tie between war and politics, a war mentality surrounding the Nazis treatment of Jews was seen. This concept, Judeo-Bolshevism, supplied the impetus for the unconventional slaughter of civilians seen throughout the Holocaust as a necessary wartime action. Cold and callus, infected with these Judeo-Bolshevist beliefs, the Nazi military was able to put human sentiment aside long enough to proceed with the development of very effective mass murder programs protected by the cover of war.

Once any sentimentality for the life of a fellow human had been cast aside, it became much easier to focus on the logistics of their speedy annihilation. This was, at the very least, the hope of Nazi leadership between the war years of 1939 and 1945. The first victims of Auschwitz-Birkenau were soviet POW's. The Nazi's did not believe in the conventional rules of war that attempt to standardize treatment of POW's. The reasoning behind this is firmly rooted in their persistent paranoia that Bolsheviks were very much prone to plotting and were seen as a constant danger. This sentiment is reflected in field marshal Walter von Reichenau secret memo he wrote when stationed in Russia on the need to "pitilessly exterminate foreign treachery" to "protect the lives of military personnel"²². The killing of POW's in this regard was thus justified as an action to decrease imminent danger. Further criminalizing and distancing the Bolsheviks from the good and hearty German soldier was the predominant belief that they were uncivilized 'pigs', who according to the diary of an SS soldier 'slept on top or behind their stove', and had factions of women soldiers "fighting with their hair shorn, in uniform!"²³ The Nazis already had Hitler's notion of the Bolsheviks in their heads, which painted them as anti-German and unclean, so any sight that might reinforce this idea could go a long way in justifying their killing.

²¹ N.H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, 1, (London: 1942) 737-741.

²² Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, "Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 117-119.

²³ Karls Fuchs, "A German Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 119-124.

The excessively harsh treatment of Soviet POW's was rivaled only by the treatment of Soviet Jews. The brutality exerted upon this hapless population reached its peak in the summer of 1941 and served as an example of what a belief in 'Judeo-Bolshevism' could lead to. Throughout Christopher Browning's book "Ordinary Men", the day-to-day acts of violence against these Soviet Jewish civilians by Nazi police battalion 309 are thoroughly documented. As previously established, many Nazis already politically realized the impetus for Jewish destruction. This is why the Jews of Bialystok were treated so harshly as to have their beards burned off and to have been forcibly burned alive by the thousands in the local synagogue²⁴. Some historians even pin this event as the start of the Holocaust. Given the concept of Judeo-Bolshevism, it makes sense that it might start here. The Jews in this region were seen as responsible for 'whipping the Bolsheviks up into a frenzy'²⁵, further supporting this notion that a race of people were seen as being consistent with a political ideology.

When it came to rounding up and killing German Jews, some work needed to be done and precautions had to be taken. For one, some Jews were lucky enough to be involved with mixed marriages so they were at first seen as off-limits. The Nazi leadership, despite being very narrow-minded and displaced from reality was surprisingly receptive to the collective concerns of the German people. And the German people, at first, were reluctant to see the destruction of the German Jews. This is evident in the failure of the Boycott of 1933, where many Germans refused to avoid shopping at Jewish stores; these sentiments changed however. As the Nazi regime pressed on through the 1930's the idea that the Jews and the Bolsheviks were against Germany became much more prevalent, this greatly contributed to the great Jewish 'social death'. Jews were erased from society; laws prevented further mixed race marriages and by 1938 only 20 % of privately owned Jewish businesses remained²⁶. The Nazis considered shopping at Jewish stores as an act of aiding the enemy. In this sense, giving money to Jewish businesses was seen as giving life to Bolshevism. Jews, only after thoroughly being labeled, ostracized and villainized throughout German society, were moved away to the east for 'resettlement'. It was the combination of this particular euphemistic terminology and the thought of Jews as political enemies that led to the widespread indifference of deportations starting in 1939.

Jews were already seen as religiously different by many Germans, over 95% of the population was Christian, but it was the idea that they were *politically* different as well that prepared the German population for what was seen as a necessary removal of Bolshevik elements from a fascist society. For this reason, many Germans looked the other way when families were put on trains to the east. With public sentiment out of the way, the Nazis could now focus on the creation of their killing machine. The construction of death camps were to most, a means of eliminating not just a race of people, but an ideology, and thus the logistical aspects of controlling such destruction came into focus, now with war-time significance. The assembly of train schedules by notorious 'desk murderers' like Adolf Eichmann and the establishment of Jewish councils 'Judenrat' to organize things like

²⁴ Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998) 11-25.

²⁵ Karls Fuchs, "A German Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front," in ed. Robert Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009) 119-124.

²⁶ Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 17-46.

deportation/execution lists and train schedules became essential to the completion of the Holocaust. The creation of these councils freed up Nazis to work at different posts related to other war efforts.

Poland was the site for one such effort; that is, the massive logistical undertaking involved with the killing of millions of Jews. Poland was selected as the best site for such an operation because it provided the necessary cover of war. The killing that happened there looked less conspicuous mainly because German forces were already stationed there and the local civilians had either been driven out or enlisted as 'Hiwis', or paramilitary helpers. This rare combination of a politicized and persecuted race being subjected to the logistics of an unhampered war machine with an entire country at its disposal is what led to the destruction of a race.

The Polish war theatre was so suitable for killing in fact, that it also led to the continuation of more ambitious 'cosmetic' programs of the Third Reich, most notably the Action T-4 campaign which was the program responsible for killing more than 300,000 mentally and physically handicapped citizens by the war's end. Initially, the program was halted due to protests from widely respected Catholic Bishop von Galen, and numerous complaints of awful stench emanating from nearby hospital crematoriums, where the bodies of gassed victims were burned. This would not be a problem amid the Polish war theatre however, and after a brief halt in the program, T-4 was simply relocated to where nobody could or would complain.

Given the treatment of cosmetic undesirables inside the Reich, it is not hard to see just how harsh the treatment of *political* undesirables would be. The transport of such politically undesirable Jewish civilians into death camp barracks; located in the heart of the so-called 'bloodlands' of western Poland gave the whole operation a very militarized feel. Everyone involved in the Holocaust effort, from order police battalions to the guards at Auschwitz were infected with this idea of militarized necessity. Daniel Goldhagen in his book "Hitler's Willing Executioners", talks extensively about deep seated 'eliminationist anti-Semitism' that had been infecting the German population for centuries. This sentiment had started off as a religiously based hatred, but became secularized with the formation of the 'Weltanschauungskrieger', or 'ideological warriors' of the Nazi military²⁷. Goldhagen argues that the excessive brutality committed against innocent civilian Jews was born out of this notion of ideological superiority, the belief that Fascism was in every way superior to Judeo-Bolshevism. At no place or time is this concept of ideological domination more clearly demonstrated than in the callous killing facilities of Poland.

In order to fully understand the cold, distant and methodical approach the perpetrators of the Holocaust assumed, it is very important to understand just how deep the ideology of Jewish conspiracy infected German society. Christian Gerlach in his piece about the Wannsee Conference talks extensively about how the decision to carry out the murder of all European Jews came within a week after the bombings of Pearl Harbor. This is largely because Hitler believed the Jews were 'war agitators', and following the United States' declaration of war against Germany, delivered a speech to the Reichstag on December 11th, 1941 in which he claimed that 'the Jewish war agitators are behind Roosevelt'. The next week on December 18th, while at a meeting with Himmler it is believed that he answered the "Jewish question" by calling for their complete extermination as

²⁷ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996) 91-103.

'partisans'. This is a point of contention among historians however, because Himmler's only notation from the meeting read "Jewish Question | To be exterminated as partisans"²⁸. I propose however, that this is direct evidence of how the ideology of Judeo-Bolshevism was responsible for not just the de-sensitization of Nazi military in regard to killing Jews, but that it was also the main impetus behind Hitler's final solution to the Jewish question.

Millions of Jews were sent to their deaths because of an ideological falsehood. Judeo-Bolshevist thinking was as prevalent throughout the Third Reich as simple arithmetic. Jews were snuffed out of the population, isolated and branded as the enemy from within, and sent packing 'to the east', never to return. This callous wartime ideology made it easier for Nazis to kill innocent civilians as they considered themselves 'Weltanschauungskrieger', a certain type of warrior fighting not just a race or a religion, but a threatening ideology. Under the cover of war, many atrocities were allowed to go unnoticed and unstopped as the holocaust was carried out, much in accordance with Hitler's vision. Throughout the dark years of Nazism, humanitarianism was trumped by pressing wartime necessity and the public's conscious was appeased with euphemism. The result was an intense and startling loss of life.

²⁸ Christian Gerlach, *The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1998) 759-812.