

Captives of Hell:
The Treatment of Soviet Prisoners of War
Captured by the Nazi Army 1941-1942

Crystal Rayle

“With the death of the victim this people’s vampire will also die sooner or later”¹

Russian prisoners of war captured by the Nazi Wehrmacht during the Second World War survived some of the most inhumane forms of treatment imaginable. Nazi propaganda heavily influenced the belief that the Soviets were conspiring against Germany on the side of European Jewry, resulting in the capture and subsequent genocide of millions of Soviet POWs. The ideological war waged against the Soviet Union resulted in the starvation, torture, mutilation and murder of half of the captured prisoners. The Nazis considered the Soviet POWs to be animals unworthy of life due to their Bolshevik political ideology and the fact that they belonged to a lesser race as a “Slavic” people. However, the same ideology that encouraged the capture and killing of Soviet soldiers also embodied the manner in which the Germans treated these men. The numerous stories emerging from German officials as well as eyewitness accounts from other Holocaust victims show that the Soviet prisoners of war were not the animalistic creatures depicted by Nazi propaganda. Conversely, the Nazis themselves with their cruel torture, sick amusement, and indifference for human life defined who the real animals were.

The Soviet Union did not ratify The Hague Convention of 1907 or the Geneva Convention of 1927.² As a result the German Government announced prior to the 1941 Operation Barbarossa that the Nazi Army would have no obligation to honor the guidelines set forth regarding the treatment of captured prisoners of war laid out by these two conventions. However, most believed belligerent nations would follow the rules of humane treatment that included providing food, clothing, and adequate shelter to the POWs.³ Germany abided by the 1907 agreement during the First World War; out of the 1.4 million Soviet POWs captured only five percent perished.⁴ This was a stark contrast to the vast number of Soviet POWs who would die in German captivity during WWII. Following the end of the war Nazi officials stood trial at Nuremberg. The crimes against humanity the Nazis faced were defined as follows; “the truth remains that war crimes were committed on a vast scale, never before seen in the history of war...POWs were ill-treated, tortured and murdered, not only in defiance of the well established rules of international law, but in complete disregard of the elementary dictates of humanity.”⁵

The months between June 1941 and February 1942 that this study focuses on deserve special attention because during this period the greatest number of Soviet soldiers lost their lives. The actions that took place regarding the treatment of such prisoners in those first eight months revealed the horrid animalistic actions of the Nazi regime. Scholars need to further examine the link between Hitler’s ideology of the Soviets as a “mortal enemy” of Germany and the gross perversion of this ideology, which was used as a justification for starving, murdering, and torturing Soviet POWs. Hitler’s ideology can best be described as the motivating beliefs and ideas regarding race, ethnicity, and political associations, manifested by the Nazis into barbarous actions and atrocities

imposed upon the Soviet POWs during the first eight months of their capture.

This paper focuses on the role ideology played in the atrocities meted out to Soviet POWs by their Nazi captors. My approach is to contrast the political and racial ideology concerning the Soviets as laid out in *Mein Kampf*, speeches given by Nazi officials, and direct orders given to the Wehrmacht regarding the treatment of POWs with the memoirs of concentration and death camp commandants, eyewitness reports, testimonies given at the Nuremberg Trials, and survivor accounts. These sources will not only reiterate the fact that the Nazis treated Soviet POWs worse than animals but will also show that some members of the Nazi army were exceedingly cruel in their treatment of the Soviet POWs. Officials had become so deeply entrenched in their own propaganda that they actually internalized the traits they had used to describe the Soviets.

Historians tend to agree that the Germans treated Soviet POWs more ruthlessly than other POWs, including the notion that they were deliberately annihilated. Christain Streit points out that aside from the Jews, the Soviet POWs were the second largest group of victims whose lives were claimed by the Nazi regime.⁶ He argues that the story of the Soviet POWs has also been largely “neglected,” especially since they faced greater losses than British or American POWs.⁷ “Anti-bolshevism” was the motivating factor of the vile treatment encountered by the Soviet POWs as the hatred of Bolshevism drove participants of the Wehrmacht to comply with orders to annihilate the mortal enemy of Germany.⁸ Streit, however, dismisses the fact that the Germans considered the Soviets to be a lesser race. Although Streit states that there is truth in the fact that some Soviet POWs were treated mercilessly due to their race, he believes the overarching theme in their demise was a result of their alleged association with Bolshevism.⁹

Catherine Merridale’s account of Russian soldiers during the Second World War relies on the stories of two hundred veterans lucky enough to survive. She points out that during the first five months of the war the Germans captured over two and a half million Soviet POWs, and reveals how atrociously the Nazis treated captured Soviet Soldiers.¹⁰

Laurence Rees’ recent and influential work on Auschwitz points out that camp commandants, notably Rudolf Hoess, acted with such indifference because the Soviet POWs, once they were forced to resort to such acts as cannibalism to survive, were perceived as fulfilling Nazi prophecy regarding their bestial nature.¹¹

Other historians offer varying views on why so many Soviet POWs died during the initial months of capture. Some have even alleged that the neglect of the Soviet POWs was due to the fact that the Nazi Wehrmacht was given precedence over the needs of the captured prisoners. The occupied territory in the east was being “stripped” of its food to provide for the German soldiers and as a result the Wehrmacht was simply unable to provide anything for its Soviet captives.¹²

The subject of the treatment of the Soviet POWs has been studied in a neglected manner. The Soviet POWs, even though they are the second greatest victims of World War II, tend to be regarded as the “other” victims. Although nothing can compare to the experiences of the six million Jews who lost their lives during the Holocaust, Soviet POWs deserve a stronger presence in the history of Genocide.¹³ The Nazis considered the Soviets, unlike other groups, political *and* racial enemies of the Reich. Soldiers sent off to defend the Soviet Union were persecuted because of their racial inferiority as a Slavic people as well as their political associations with Bolshevism. The treatment of

Soviet POWs is different from “other” victims of the war in that it exceeded a level of cruelty that is almost inconceivable.

The Germans launched Operation Barbarossa 22 June 1941, severing the alliance secured in the Nazi Soviet Non-Aggression Pact signed just two years earlier.¹⁴ The German Army captured nearly six million Soviet POWs from 1941 onwards¹⁵ as it was stated “the red tide had to be stemmed before it engulfed the Reich.”¹⁶ Upon liberation of the POW and concentration camps in 1945, only 3.3 million Soviet POWs were left alive.¹⁷ As many as 57.5% of the Soviet POWs perished while in Nazi captivity.¹⁸ The first eight months after the launch of Operation Barbarossa comprise some of the most evident crimes against humanity as a myriad of fates awaited the captured Soviet prisoners.

The Soviet Commissars became the first victims of the Nazi Wehrmacht as Hitler’s *Kommissarbefehl*¹⁹ was issued just sixteen days prior to the launch of Operation Barbarossa. This decree gave German senior commanders and their counterparts direct orders to execute Soviet generals once captured; “in the struggle against Bolshevism the enemy’s conduct will not be based on the principles of international law or humanity! These commissars are the originators of barbarous Asiatic methods of warfare and they must therefore be dealt with all possible severity...while captured in battle or whilst offering resistance they must be *shot*.”²⁰

Other Soviet prisoners encountered different fates. If deemed unfit to work, the Nazis sent prisoners to a concentration camp, or in the case of Auschwitz a death camp, where their fate would strongly resemble that of the Jews. In fact some of the POWs became the earliest test subjects for the use of the poisonous gas Zyklon B.²¹

Initially Soviet POWs were simply detained in makeshift POW camps, sometimes only consisting of abandoned Red Army barracks or barbed wire pens. Faced with relentless starvation and the extreme cold as well as the exposure to epidemics of typhoid and dysentery, several million prisoners perished before December 1941.²²

Hitler’s reasoning for invading the Soviet Union was manifold. First, Hitler, dismayed by the Treaty of Versailles, sought to increase the *Lebensraum* or living space for the German Volk.²³ The vast Soviet territory seemed to be the appropriate place for Hitler to invade and occupy in hopes of creating greater German territory. Hitler stated, “to guarantee the German Nation the soil and territory which it is entitled on this earth...this is the only action which before God and our German posterity, would seem to justify an investment of blood.”²⁴

Secondly, the invasion of the Soviet Union was also a war waged against opposing political and racial beliefs.²⁵ In order to understand why Adolf Hitler wanted to wage an ideological war against Bolshevism, one must first understand why Hitler encompassed such a hatred for this particular political association. After the Beer Hall Putsch, a failed attempt to seize power in Germany in 1923, Hitler was imprisoned for less than a year when he composed his book *Mein Kampf*, which laid out his ideological beliefs regarding race, political associations, and a perceived Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy. Hitler’s reasoning for the hatred of Bolshevism and Communism arose out of his idea that Bolshevism was a product of the Jews; he stated “The Jew forms the strongest contrast to the Aryan, the Jew doesn’t possess a culture of its own...it dominates the property of other people which it spoils.”²⁶ He believed that Jews were parasites living in the body of other nations, namely the USSR, and that “a racially pure

people conscious of its blood can never be enslaved by the Jew.”²⁷ Hitler demonized the Soviet people by describing them as having a Slav-tartar body with a Jewish head.²⁸ Hitler believed that Marxism was a product of Jews responsible for the “poisoning of the individual...who rules both politically and economically with a brutal fist” and that “slowly the fear of the Marxist weapon of Jewry sinks into the brains and souls of decent people like a nightmare.”²⁹ Because in Hitler’s mind the Jews duped and enslaved the Bolsheviks, these two groups were basically linked. Hitler gives the example of how the Jew had subjugated the Russians by “killing or starving thirty million people with a truly diabolic ferocity, under inhuman tortures.”³⁰ He stated in his *Zweites Buch* that, “he [the Jew] formed the vocational estate of the handicraftsmen into a special class which he now allowed to take up the struggle against the national intelligentsia. Marxism became the spiritual father of the Bolshevik revolution.”³¹ Therefore those who fell victim to the Jew’s poison were just as bad as the Jewish people themselves. The Jews had preyed upon and corrupted the Soviet government thus the Soviets themselves then became the cultural supporters of the Jew’s poison known as Marxism. Alfred Rosenberg comprised a simple equation to define the relationship between Communism and Jewry: “Russia=Bolshevism=Jewry”.³²

Furthermore, Hitler believed in a conspiracy between the Jew and the Bolshevik, stating that, “Marxism itself plans to transmit the world systematically into the hands of Jewry.”³³ According to Hitler the Jew and the Bolshevik were one and the same, sharing a common goal of achieving world domination.³⁴ He described in his book that “Marxism itself was nothing but the transmission, carried out by the Jew Karl Marx, of a long existing attitude and conception...to a form of a definite political creed: international Marxism.”³⁵

Hitler was further angered by what he believed was the exploitation of the Russian workers through Bolshevism.

Never forget the rulers in present day Russia are common blood stained criminals; that they are the scum of humanity which, favored by circumstances, overran a great state in a tragic hour, slaughtered and wiped out thousands of her leading intelligentsia...and now have been carrying on the most cruel and tyrannical regime of all time. Nor must we forget that these rulers belong to a nation, which combines a rare mixture of bestial horror with an inconceivable gift of lying, and today more than ever before believes itself called upon to impose its bloody oppression on the whole world.³⁶

Hitler believed, in part due to the exploitation of Russian workers, that Russia was a nation whose destiny was ruin. When speaking of the doomed empire Hitler stated

For centuries Russia drew nourishment from this Germanic-Nucleus of its superior strata of leaders. Today (1925) it has been uprooted and obliterated almost without a trace. The Jew has replaced it. Impossible as it is for the Russians alone to shake off the yoke of the Jews through their own strength, it is equally impossible in the long run for the Jews to maintain the mighty empire.³⁷

Furthermore, Hitler feared both racial and political “contamination” of Germany and of the Aryan Race. Anyone who was of “mixed blood”, who was not purely German, posed a serious threat to the Aryan race. To Hitler, when racial mixing occurred people not only lost their uniformity but also their “culture, their creative abilities and as

a result they will give way to complete ruin and bastardization.”³⁸ If the only “pure” race in Hitler’s eyes was that of the Aryan, then he deemed the Soviets a people of mixed blood and of little importance; he stated, “the Slavs are a mass of born slaves.”³⁹ Hitler described the Aryans as the bearers of racial superiority or the *Herrenvolk*, which he described as “the founder of higher humanity as a whole, thus the prototype of what we understand as the word mankind.”⁴⁰ Hitler divided people into three distinct categories. The first, the Aryans, he termed the culture-founders. Non-Aryans, which comprised the Jews, fell into the category of culture-destroyers.⁴¹ The third group contained the Slavs, which Hitler described as culture-supporters.⁴² Between the Aryan and the Jew were the lesser races, namely the Russians who were depicted as being a mixture of several different nationalities including the Ukrainians, Tartars, Mongolians, Muscovites and Georgians. The Russians were perceived as being a backward society associated with the Asiatic far east.⁴³ Furthermore, he referred to certain Russians as the *Untermensch*, or the subhuman.⁴⁴ Once the Nazis occupied part of the Soviet Union, they divided it into several racial hierarchies. The Ukrainians, or people from WeissRussland (white Russia) were believed to pose the least possible threat to the Aryan Race, whereas the Great Russians and the other Slavs were believed to be the greatest threat to the Aryan race because they possessed the strongest connection to Bolshevism.⁴⁵

Hitler continued his allegations against the Bolsheviks up until, and continuing after the launch of Barbarossa, in June 1941, as a means of propaganda to instill hatred for the enemy in the Wehrmacht. Hitler had signed a non-aggression pact with Josef Stalin in August 1939 with both sides vowing to remain neutral in case of a second world war.⁴⁶ However, given Hitler’s obvious loathing of the Bolsheviks the agreement was bound to be broken. Hitler in a letter to Benito Mussolini gave his explanation for the launch of Barbarossa. He had decided that the pact with Stalin had to be broken because, as he stated, “The partnership with the Soviet Union, in spite of the complete sincerity of the efforts to bring about a final reconciliation, was nevertheless very irksome to me, for in some way or other it seemed to me to be a break with my whole origin, my concepts, and my former obligations. I am happy now to be relieved of these mental agonies.”⁴⁷

Hitler justified his launch of Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union by claiming that “For over ten years, Jewish Bolshevik leaders [in Russia] had been endeavoring from Moscow to set not only Germany but all Europe aflame. At no time ever did Germany attempt to carry her National Socialist *Weltanschauung* into Russia.”⁴⁸ He believed this ideological warfare against his greatest political enemy would give him the space necessary to settle ethnic Germans in the east and to completely abolish both the presence and threat of Bolshevism.⁴⁹

A secret document concerning the treatment of Soviet POWs issued before the invasion of the Soviet Union and brought forth during the Nuremberg Trials warned that “the German Soldier is encountering not only a military opponent but one, at the same time, politically educated, who sees in communism his ideal, every method to him is legal: snipping, guerrilla warfare, sabotage...murder.”⁵⁰ With such allegations brought against the POWs the Nazis believed that the actions they were to carry out against the Soviets were justifiable because the Soviets were the ones responsible for committing crimes against humanity.

One year after the fall of France the Soviet Union was awakened by the invasion of Nazi troops ripe with the hunger to destroy their eastern enemy. The argument that the

plan to capture Soviet soldiers through encirclement coincided with a plan of mass death for the captured soldiers gives an insightful explanation for why the “greatest loss of life of the Soviet soldiers was to occur during the first months of capture.”⁵¹ The prisoners’ deaths can be attributed to five main elements, including liquidation of Soviet Commissars, a lack of adequate transportation, exposure to the winter cold, starvation, and relentless cruelty.⁵² A letter written by Alfred Rosenberg to General Wilhelm Keitel, head of the OKW, surfaced at Nuremberg as evidence of the atrocious war crimes committed by the Nazi Army. It stated, “The fate of the [Soviet] Prisoners of War in Germany is... a tragedy of the greatest extent. A large part starved, or died because of the hazards of the weather. In many cases, when prisoners of war could no longer keep up on the march because of hunger and exhaustion, they were shot before the eyes of the horrified population, and the corpses were left...in numerous camps, no shelter for the prisoners of war was provided at all...even tools were not made available to dig holes or caves.”⁵³ Some Soviet soldiers knew that to be captured by the Wehrmacht was to be sentenced to death. As one of the Red Army soldiers stated, he knew that “in the town of Rzhev there is a concentration camp with fifteen thousand captured Red Army Soldiers.” Furthermore, through a letter that had been circulated he knew that “they [the Germans] were holding them in unheated huts, and they feed them each one or two frozen potatoes a day. The Germans throw rotten meat and bones through the barbed wire at the prisoners. This has made them ill.”⁵⁴ As a result, in Rzhev alone, as many as thirty prisoners a day were dying.⁵⁵ The account of an escaped soldier further showed that the Soviets knew the hell that would await them if captured: “they say there is no shelter, no water, people are dying from hunger and disease, many are without clothes or shoes, they are treated like slaves, shot for the slightest misdemeanor, or just out of mischief, for fun.”⁵⁶

Hitler’s Kommissarbefehl was the first attempt to take direct action against the alleged enemy of National Socialism; it was to be put into effect as soon as the invasion of the Soviet Union began on 22 June 1941. The Commissar order, which gave German generals direct orders to liquidate those deemed political enemies, was the first bit of evidence that Hitler was attempting to annihilate the Soviets. In the Kommissarbefehl Hitler states

The war against Russia cannot be fought in knightly fashion. The struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be waged with unprecedented, unmerciful, and unrelenting hardness...The commissars hold views directly opposite to those of National Socialism. Hence these commissars must be eliminated. Any German soldier who breaks international law will be pardoned. Russia did not take part in the Hague convention and therefore has no rights under it.⁵⁷

With this order Hitler gave permission for his troops to kill Russian Generals with the promise that they would not be punished for their actions.

A month later the Gestapo sent out an order, giving directions to “liquidate” all Soviet POWs who were considered politically harmful. The Soviets, once in Nazi control, were separated according to three elements. The first element included “the politically undesirable,” including fanatics and commissars. The second group consisted of the politically harmless and the third included the politically reliable.⁵⁸ These three elements decided which Soviet POWs would initially survive capture and which would

be executed immediately. According to the testimony of a former member of the Nazi Gestapo, “there existed in the POW camps on the Eastern front small screening teams headed by lower ranking members of the Gestapo. These teams had the job to segregate the POWs who were candidates for execution.”⁵⁹

The Germans again used propaganda to instill a sense of hatred towards the Soviets on 8 September 1941. Field Marshall Walter Von Reichenau gave instructions regarding the conduct of troops in Eastern Territories in order to harden the attitudes towards the Soviets. In this order, which was also widely used by other German generals, the terms Jew and Bolshevist become completely intertwined to the point that a soldier would certainly have to associate a Bolshevist with a Jew. A passage from the order states:

Regarding the conduct of troops towards the Bolshevist system, vague ideas are still prevalent in many cases. The most essential aim of war against the Jewish-Bolshevistic system is a complete destruction of their means of power and the elimination of Asiatic influence from the European culture. The soldier in the eastern territories is not merely a fighter...but also a bearer of ruthless national ideology and the avenger of bestialities which have been inflicted upon German and racially related nations.⁶⁰

The terminology present in Hitler’s ideology often includes the word bestial, which reiterates the idea that Hitler and other Nazi leaders truly believed that the Soviets were animals who had no rights as human beings. The propaganda issued constantly reminded Nazi officials that Soviet POWs had no rights to any form of humane treatment. Consequently, at the time when such propaganda was being issued the greatest numbers of Soviet POWs were losing their lives even though direct orders had only been given to execute captured Soviet Generals. Between the launch of Barbarossa until 1942 when the Nazis began to use the POWs for slave labor there is a major discrepancy between what was ordered and what *some* of the Nazi’s actually did.

Authorities issued special orders concerning how the Soviet POWs would be treated once in Nazi captivity. First, German soldiers were expected to give the strictest treatment to captured Soviet POWs, “displaying pride and superiority while guarding the Soviet soldier, especially when visible in public.” If a captured Soviet displayed “the slightest insubordination” the German guard had to use force, against him, including bayonets, butts and firearms. Furthermore, if a guard thought that a Soviet POW was attempting to escape they were to shoot him, “without warning.”⁶¹

Evidence proves Reinhard Heydrich carried out the Commissar Order. The first Commissars who had been “weeded out” and placed in the group termed politically undesirable were shipped to the death camp Auschwitz because Heydrich wanted their executions to be private.⁶² Jerzy Bielecki, a fellow prisoner at Auschwitz overheard what the Soviet POWs endured. After their arrival, during the night Bielecki heard “great yelling and roaring.”⁶³ Not only were the political undesirables shot but according to Bielecki’s account some were also gassed. He states “the Soviet POWs at Auschwitz were forced to run, naked, in the freezing cold, with machine guns firing at them, into the crematorium.” He described what he saw as the prisoners ran by his window at night as a “devilish, hellish image.”⁶⁴ By the fifth of December, just six months after the beginning of Barbarossa, of the 22,000 Soviet commissars who had been captured 16,000 had been

“liquidated” by the SS, showing the extent to which the Kommissarbefehl had been implemented.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the final estimates regarding how many Commissars were liquidated ranges between 140,000 and almost 600,000.⁶⁶ The vast number of political commissars murdered shows that the German Army had become deeply invested in the idea that they were fighting against their greatest political enemy. Against the laws of modern warfare they carried out Hitler’s ideology by massacring even the Commissars who were surrendering during battle.

Evidence suggests that those POWs who died by gunfire were not just limited to political commissars. The Nazis mercilessly shot some of the POWs because they thought that they were trying to escape or even out of “fun” or because the POWs were too weak to carry on. Others, as shown in a testimony given by a private at the Minsk camp in eastern occupied territory, showed that the Nazis often shot POWs along with the Jews; as stated, “the prisoners came from the battle of Minsk-Bialystok captured through the German practice of encirclement,” and “the Jews and commissars of the Russian army were both shot.”⁶⁷ In a separate incident, a witness stated, “by day the German guards used Soviet POWs for target practice and baited some of them with dogs.”⁶⁸

General Reinecke was in charge of dealing with the Soviet POWs once they arrived at the POW camps, which consisted of Dulags or transit camps and Oflags for Russian officers.⁶⁹ The *Einsatzkommandos*⁷⁰ separated the various groups of prisoners depending on the degree to which they associated them with Bolshevism. The groups included party functionaries, fanatical communists, intelligentsia, and Soviet Jews.⁷¹ The Soviet citizens who comprised these groups were to be sent to Auschwitz where, under Himmler’s direction, they were ordered to build their own camp at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. On 7 October 1941, two thousand Soviet POWs were brought to Auschwitz. They had arrived from a POW camp in Lamsdorf. At Auschwitz they were separated, by electric fence, from other prisoners. Nearly ten thousand POWs would remain there until November.⁷² A vast number of these prisoners died while in captivity at Auschwitz. Ironically, because so many POWs died at Auschwitz, Himmler realized that he could replace them with Jews who would then meet their own demise at these camps. The Soviet POWs initially taken to Auschwitz, because ideology depicted them as a subhuman group, were to serve a morbid purpose for the Nazi officials.⁷³ Himmler did not want to execute the incoming prisoners so instead he used them as a “test subject” for Zyklon B. Over six hundred Soviet POWs were killed at Auschwitz alone in this manner, and because of the “efficiency” of the use of Zyklon B, Hoess discovered how easy it would be to kill other incoming prisoners, namely Jews, in the same exact fashion.⁷⁴ Hoess himself in his memoir even gave an account of the gassing of Soviet POWs as he stated

Before the mass destruction of the Jews began, all the Russian Politruks and political commissars were killed in almost every camp in 1941 and 1942. According to the secret order given by Hitler, the Einsatzgruppe searched for and picked up the Russian Politruks and commissars from all POW camps. They transferred all they found to the nearest concentration camp for liquidation....The first small transports were shot by firing squads..[While visiting Auschwitz] my second in command Fritsch, experimented with Gas for theses killings. He used

Zyklon B, prussic acid, which was often used as an insecticide to exterminate lice and vermin. There was always a supply on hand.⁷⁵ Hoess further went on to explain where and how the gassing of the POWs was carried out. "The gassing was carried out in Block eleven. I viewed the killings wearing a gas mask for protection. Death occurred in the crammed-full cells immediately after the gas was thrown in. Only a brief choking outcry and it was all over."⁷⁶ Despite Hoess's vivid recollection of the events he stated, "the first gassing of people did not really sink into my mind."⁷⁷ However Hoess does remember a time when he was impressed by the liquidation of nine hundred POWs. He seemed to be fascinated by the process of killing so many POWs through the use of gas. He remembered how the prisoners were marched into the chambers and how they remained calm because they thought that they were going to be disinfected. However gas was poured into the holes of the makeshift death chamber as the victim's horrific screams could be heard. Afterwards Hoess viewed the dead bodies. He stated "I imagined death by gas to be much worse. I always imagined death by gas a terrible choking suffocation, but the bodies had no signs of convulsions."⁷⁸ Much to Hoess's disappointment Zyklon B did not cause the physical signs of asphyxiation because it paralyzed the lungs.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the Soviet POWs gassed to death did experience excruciating pain. They were crammed into a tiny, dark room with the belief that they were being deloused. Once they realized that gas was leaking into the room they pushed one another to try and get air or else they trampled over one another until there was no more air.

The POWs also suffered from starvation. For the Nazi officials the easiest way to rid themselves of the burden for caring for so many Soviet POWs was simply to let them starve. The economic staff, particularly Albert Speer, clearly instructed the German generals that, "we are not bound by any international obligations to feed Bolshevik prisoners."⁸⁰ With the ideology that granted permission to disregard both international law and moral obligations to sustain human life nearly a million Soviet POWs would die by starvation alone.⁸¹ Prisoners who were given food were given rations based upon their status as a worker or a non-worker. A soldier deemed fit to work was given around 2100 calories a day, or twenty grams of bread or millet. Those unable to work initially received 2040 calories a day, which was further reduced to a mere 1500.⁸² In any case all of these diets provided fewer calories than necessary to maintain a healthy diet. In a report to Rosenberg the *Ministerialat* described what he witnessed during a visit to a POW camp at Minsk. "The prisoners of war who have created an insoluble food supply problem go six to eight days without food, and in the animal apathy caused by hunger, have but one single craving to get something to eat."⁸³ Hoess gave a firsthand account of what he indifferently witnessed while at the camp. He noted that when the troops finally arrived at Auschwitz they were already in a terrible state because they had been forced to march for weeks with very little food to fuel them for the journey. In another example of how Nazi ideology portrayed the Soviet POWs as beasts Hoess states that during their marches "they were told to graze like cattle."⁸⁴ Many of the soldiers would end up eating whatever they could find, including grass and dirt, just to survive. Hoess noted that the food distribution in the camp was "inadequate and one could not call what they did eating."⁸⁵ As the starvation continued the digestive systems of the POWs would begin to collapse.

I saw countless Russians die while they were swallowing turnips or

potatoes...for a period of time I had detailed approximately five thousand Russians daily to unload the turnip trains. The entire railway complex was jammed because the turnips lay like a mountain on top of the tracks... It was an impossible task because the Russians could no longer do any physical labor. They walked around aimlessly in a daze, or they crawled anywhere into a protected area to swallow something edible that they found. They tried to force it down their throats, or they just simply, quietly found a place to die.⁸⁶

Furthermore Hoess recounts an incident where a group of POWs, during one of their marches, stumbled upon a field of potatoes.

I once witnessed a column of several hundred Russian prisoners...suddenly charge into a field of potatoes...Russians threw themselves into the piles.

It was almost impossible to tear them away. Some died while digging into the pile, others died while still chewing; their hands full of potatoes.⁸⁷

Aside from starvation the continuous exposure to the elements became another means of death for the POWs. Because Nazi ideology deemed the Soviet POWs as a subhuman group the German Army put very little care into the POWs housing. The prisoners were often kept, like animals, in barbwire "pens" left to the mercy of the weather.⁸⁸ Constant exposure to the heat in the summer or the freezing temperatures in the winter contributed to a number of deaths. Furthermore, in order to get to the "prisons" the Soviets had to march for miles; if they seemed too tired to continue or if they were perceived as trying to escape they would be shot.⁸⁹ The POWs were left to wear the same "thin" uniforms that they had been captured in.⁹⁰ With such initial cruelty imposed upon them it is not surprising that just a few months later over 100,000 Soviet Soldiers would be dead.⁹¹ As winter approached the housing conditions for the prisoners who actually did reach their destination were atrocious. Some lived in dugouts within the cold ground, others were detained in trenches, and some still remained in barbwire fences like animals.

There was also a lack of adequate transportation to move the soldiers around from camp to camp. Even transport did not protect the Soviet POWs from the chilling winter cold since only open cattle cars were designated for their transport. The temperatures, which in the eastern territory could fall as far as thirty degrees below freezing, made hypothermia an inescapable death.⁹² Just two months after the invasion, when prisoners were still being transported to their locations, sometimes only ten or twenty percent of those transported to a camp arrived as living beings.⁹³ The testimony given by Carl Languth at the Nuremberg Trials illustrates how the Germans moved Soviet POWs about like animals; he described that at times the Nazis packed as many as 3,200 POWs into a single open freight car during the winter of 1941. He adds that, "nearly all froze to death."⁹⁴ Languth also testified that the Germans executed many POWs while marching to the camps, stating that, "along the way the route was strewn with five to six hundred corpses."⁹⁵

Typhoid and dysentery epidemics ran rampant throughout the camps due to inadequate sanitary conditions and the overcrowding of the camps. According to Hoess the epidemics were so widespread that in Auschwitz alone "they died like flies."⁹⁶ Before 20 October 1941, 54,000 Soviet POWs had perished due to widespread epidemics. By 30 October, just ten days later, another 46,000 would die. The death rate had increased to

almost five thousand POWs a day.⁹⁷

The treatment of the POWs exceeded an unfathomable level of cruelty made worse only by the fact that several Nazi officials enjoyed the grotesque form of amusement that the suffering POWs could provide. The ideology that continuously depicted the Soviet POWs as animals was abhorrently perverted as the prisoners had now become a source of entertainment for the Nazis. In an attempt to “cover up” some two million deaths that occurred within the first eight months of the war, Nazi officials began creating reasons for why so many POWs did not survive. They recorded the presence of the POWs by tattooing them upon arrival at Auschwitz. However, unlike other prisoners, the Germans tattooed the Soviet POWs with great force on their chests. To account for the great number of deaths the officials alleged that six hundred POWs had died from “heart attacks” alone.⁹⁸ Furthermore, to compensate for the massive amount of death Nazi officials often gave incoming Soviet POWs the numbers of deceased prisoners, which made it difficult to decipher the real death rate.⁹⁹

The POWs were forced to endure treatment that made the chance of survival almost impossible. The starvation prevalent among the POWs forced them to commit one of the most macabre acts in order to survive: at times, when there was no food available, the POWs were forced to feed off of the dead. Sometimes they fed off of the dead corpses of animals, notably horses, rats, and cats to survive.¹⁰⁰ However, at other times they were forced to commit cannibalism to survive another day in hell. Hoess vividly recounts in his memoir several incidents of cannibalism. In one instance he found a dead body of a Soviet POW that had been pried open with a blunt object and the “liver was removed.”¹⁰¹ Hoess, who seemed to be quite amused by what he witnessed while commandant at Auschwitz, also stated that sometimes the Russians would even kill each other over food. “One day while riding on my horse outside the barbed wire fence, I spotted a Russian huddled behind a pile of stones chewing on a piece of bread. Another Russian struck him with a brick so that he could grab the bread away. The victim was already dead..by the time I got to the scene of the action; his head was caved in.”¹⁰² Hoess also stated that several Russian prisoners seemed to just disappear from the camps. The corpses of several Russians were found stuck in the trenches during the construction of Birkenau. Apparently, according to Hoess, “they were beaten and partially eaten.”¹⁰³ Of course he only bothered to “investigate” these incidents after a death occurred; he did not increase the food rations that the prisoners received nor did he do anything to ensure that murder or cannibalism ceased. In fact, because his accounts of such acts are so vivid, he must certainly have enjoyed what he saw, especially since the incidents of murder and cannibalism are how he explains a prisoner’s survival. Hoess, in a bizarre sense, seems to have admired those few prisoners who managed to survive:

Of the ten thousand Russian Prisoners of war who were supposed to be the main labor force for the construction of Birkenau only a few hundred were alive by the summer of 1942. This remnant became the elite. I never lost the impression that these survivors made it through only at the expense of their fellow prisoners because they were more ruthless, more unscrupulous, and were basically tougher.¹⁰⁴

Hermann Goering further showed just how rampant cannibalism was among the POWs. He stated, “Russian Prisoners of War, after having eaten everything possible,

including the soles of their boots, they have begun to eat each other, and what is more serious they have also eaten a German Sentry.”¹⁰⁵ It is probable that fellow Soviet POWs did feed off of each other considering the prevalence of death. However, given the fact that the POWs were heavily guarded it is highly unlikely that the POWs would have been able to kill and feed off of a German Sentry without it being recorded. This account should be likened to dubious Nazi propaganda that was circulated as a way to further depict the POWs as animals.¹⁰⁶

Because Nazi ideology incessantly reinforced the notion that the Soviet POWs had absolutely no right to decent treatment as human beings they would often become the victims of the Kapos cruel and humiliating beatings. Often the prisoners were beaten with sticks. As Bielecki recalls he once saw a Kapo beating a *dead* Soviet POW with a stick.¹⁰⁷ It is evident from such beatings that many other Nazi officials found the Soviet POWs to be a form of entertainment. In a disturbing form of useless labor a witness recalled that Nazi guards forced Soviet POWs to push around wheelbarrows full of sand over wooden planks, which shifted under their feet naturally causing them to stumble. This was quite amusing to the guards as they yelled and beat the prisoners while SS guards often fired at the POWs not with the actual intention of hitting them but rather just to scare them.¹⁰⁸ In July 1941 the POWs working in the pits had been liquidated in only a few days as they were either shot or beaten to death with a shovel or pickaxe.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, for simple amusement the Nazis would “pour alternating jugs of either icy or boiling water all over the inmates” for no other reason than to watch their reactions.¹¹⁰

The testimony of Languth at the Nuremberg Trials uncovered a cruel plan to get rid of the problem of overcrowding at the Bobruysk camp. Along with the other grisly details that Languth revealed he also described a plan to deliberately burn down the barracks at the camp he commanded. The plan, implemented on 7 November 1941, was to set the barracks on fire with the hope that the prisoners would be burnt alive because they could not escape. As the barracks burned the Nazi guards executed prisoners who managed to escape by machine gun fire. To exacerbate the situation the plan included the stipulation that the fire would be considered an act of arson committed by disgruntled Soviet POWs. During this act over four hundred Soviet POWs were murdered.¹¹¹

In another attempt to torture the POWs the Nazis locked some four hundred trapped POWs inside a burning building. The building was four stories high and the only way to escape was to jump. As the POWs jumped out of the windows the Germans hunted them down with gunfire. As a result seventy POWs were either shot or burned alive.¹¹² Furthermore, in what could be used to show how the POWs were a grotesque form of entertainment for their captors, the Nazi guards often placed bets between who would die first, the Soviet POWs or the dogs incited to attack them.¹¹³

Pavel Stenkin, who was a previous victim of Stalin’s forced collectivization of agriculture in the 1930s, was captured within the first two hours of operation Barbarossa. Having had the strength to survive the first six months of occupation during which the largest number of POWs lost their lives, he would go on to build his own hell at Birkenau. Pavel witnessed firsthand the enormous amount of death encompassing the camp, noting that “the average living time for a Soviet POW was two weeks...if you got something eatable you must swallow it, you go to bed and you are alive, and by the morning you are dead. It was death death death.”¹¹⁴ Pavel was able to bear witness to the atrocities that occurred at Birkenau because he wanted to “die a free man.” Stenkin

decided in 1942 that the only way he was going to fulfill his dream was to escape Birkenau. He successfully fled the camp, along with several other prisoners, when asked to fetch a dead Soviet POW whose body lay just outside the camp. Instead of returning, the men dispersed into separate directions, bewildering the guards and giving themselves the chance to hide in the nearby woods.¹¹⁵

Evidence from the Nuremberg trials, specifically the testimony of General Pokrovsky, showed that German officials violated “the rights of disarmed persons according to the Hague Convention of 1907.”¹¹⁶ This particular segment of the trial notes that

The Soviet Military command is aware of the numerous cases of the subjugation of captured Red Army men, the majority of them wounded, to savage torture ill usage, and the murder at the hands of the German Military command, and German military units. Captured Red Army men are tortured with bars of red hot iron, their eyes are gouged out, their feet, hands, fingers ears and noses are hacked off, the stomachs ripped open, they are tied to tanks and torn asunder.¹¹⁷

Further evidence that some of the Nazis took enjoyment in the suffering of Soviet prisoners can be found from a German witness. In reference to the Soviet POWs he stated, “they whined and groveled before us. They were human beings in whom there was no longer a trace of anything human.”¹¹⁸ Perhaps this statement should not be used to describe the Russian prisoners begging for food; rather, it could more accurately be attributed to the actions of the Nazi soldiers who, for amusement, threw a dead dog into the pen of the prisoners just to watch the starving soldiers rip it limb from limb to devour it. “Yelling like mad the Russians would fall on the animal and tear it to pieces with their bare hands, the intestines they’d stuff in their pockets.” This portrays yet another gruesome scenario encouraged by the Nazis.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the commandants of some of the concentration camps were angered by the fact that these soldiers were receiving such a weak diet, not because they cared about their diet, but rather because so many died in route to the camps, “denying the commandants the pleasure of executing them.”¹²⁰

Despite the overwhelming evidence that many Nazis treated Soviet POWs with extreme brutality there is proof that some Nazi officials did not advocate such inhumane treatment of their captives. Some Nazi officials even disapproved of the routine shooting of POWs who collapsed while marching. Others, such as Reichenau himself, strongly advocated such shootings. Although the Kommissarbefehl was heavily carried out by frontline troops there was also opposition and even a call for its repeal by Helmuth James von Moltke. The call for repeal was ignored due to the fact that many Nazi officials still believed that they were fighting a war to protect their own Weltanschauung.¹²¹ In addition to Moltke, Admiral Canaris and General Lahousen both protested the order but it was again denied by Keitel who stated that he approved and backed the order.¹²² Rosenberg, who clearly understood and accepted the terms of Hitler’s ideological war against the Soviet Union, even pleaded for more humane treatment of the prisoners stating that “the treatment of POWs must correspond to the laws of humanness.”¹²³ It has been suggested, despite the large numbers of Soviet generals who were liquidated, that some Nazi officers ignored the Commissar Order. During the Nuremberg Trials the Nazi General Von Manstein testified that his division did not follow the order. When asked about the Commissar Order he stated

It was the first time I found myself involved in a conflict between my soldierly conceptions and my duty to obey. Actually I ought to have obeyed, but I said to myself as a soldier I could not possibly co-operate in a thing like that, and I told the commander of the army group under which I came at the time...that I would not carry out such an order, which was against the honor of a soldier.¹²⁴

Manstein claimed that he did not comply with the Commissar Order and that his regiment treated captured Soviet prisoners humanely. He testified

With reference to the POWs, as far as it came under our jurisdiction, I must say first of all that basically we as soldiers respected every brave enemy, and secondly, that we knew very well from the first World War that any maltreatment of enemy POWs would finally have repercussions upon our own soldiers. As a matter of principle, therefore, we treated POWs in the manner which we had been taught as soldiers, and as we were bound to do in accordance with the laws of warfare.¹²⁵

Furthermore, the appalling conditions within the Eastern POW camps were hidden because Stalin and Hitler forbade the Red Cross to visit the camps. The Soviets, namely Stalin, believed that, “any soldier who fell into enemy hands was a traitor and deserved no protection from his government.”¹²⁶ Also, Hitler, because he knew he was defiling the laws of modern warfare, did not want to give out the list of captured soldiers and thereby reveal the mass death of several million POWs.¹²⁷

Certain members of the Wehrmacht complied with the orders given to them because they did believe, due in part to propaganda, that they were fighting a war against an opposing political ideology. It has been questioned as to whether or not the soldiers of the Wehrmacht knew what was occurring inside the camps. If they did know they “went along with it and accepted it because these actions were an integral part in the fight against Jewish Bolshevism.”¹²⁸ Furthermore, in several of the orders given to German officials the Nazis could be punished if they did not comply or if they were caught giving any leniency. According to a secret order revealed during the Nuremberg Trials “anyone carrying out the order who does not use his weapons, or does so with insufficient energy, is punishable...”¹²⁹ With the threat of an unspecified punishment it can be assumed that some German soldiers probably felt like they had no choice but to conform and comply with the inhumane treatment of the POWs. Despite the numerous reasons that have emerged for why such atrocities were imposed on the Soviet POWs, the question of personal morality and responsibility should not be ignored. Orders given to disregard human life trickled down from Hitler to the camp commandants and Nazi officers who chose to obey such orders. As it has been stated “individual senior commanders spelled out the consequences of Hitler’s demands...his ideological intentions were cast into legally valid form.”¹³⁰ But Nazi ideology and propaganda cannot entirely explain why the Soviet POWs were treated with such cruelty. General Eric Hoepner, who was not an ardent member of the Nazi party, advocated the inhumane treatment of the POWs. He described Operation Barbarossa as a battle between “Germans and Slavs”. He had an “iron will to exterminate the enemy totally” despite the fact that he was not deeply invested in Nazi rhetoric.¹³¹

The first eight months after the launch of Barbarossa was truly a living hell for captured Soviet POWs. Murder, torture, starvation, disease and death encompassed their

daily lives. The ideological war waged against the Soviet Union would ultimately result in the death of the nearly two million POWs detained in camps, the liquidation of the 1.3 million commissars, and the relocation of nearly two million politically “reliable” whose fate was to take a drastic turn in February 1942.¹³² Hitler had specifically forbidden the use of Russian POWs for the use of labor because he feared they would contaminate Germany like some sort of disease. However, as the Wehrmacht began to suffer defeat due to the freezing Russian winter labor was desperately needed. Out of the 1.1 million POWs transferred to the Reich less than half had the ability to perform any kind of labor. Those 400,000 surviving POWs would become Nazi slaves.¹³³ Although they were now working they were in fact being fed more as well as being housed in better conditions. The mortality rate of the POWs began to drop off and the worst had passed, or so it seemed.¹³⁴

Even with the change in status of Soviet POWs from being merely subhuman beasts to a useful form of labor by February 1942 executions, torture and abuse of these POWs did continue for inexplicable reasons. In May 1941, after five POWs escaped, Nazi officials executed the remaining prisoners, in retaliation for the escapees actions.¹³⁵ Furthermore in August 1942 similar incidents continued when the Nazis executed some three hundred Soviet POWs in a ravine in Rostov.¹³⁶ Several POWs were used as guinea pigs for scientific experiments in bacteriological warfare.¹³⁷ Moreover, when the Nazi occupied zones of the Soviet Union were liberated in April 1945, the freedom that prisoners like Pavel Stenkin had dreamed of seemed to vanish before their eyes. Having survived German captivity the Soviet Regime accused the remaining POWs of being traitors, spies, and saboteurs. Stalin sent the Soviets who were captured by the Wehrmacht to Gulags, where many would remain until his death in 1953.¹³⁸

The horrific treatment of Soviet POWs by their Nazi captors is another complex aspect of the Holocaust. It is perhaps impossible to supply, with any accuracy, an answer for why these POWs were treated with such an unfathomable amount of cruelty. It is further hard to comprehend how anyone could witness the cruelties suffered by the POWs and yet act with such apathy and indifference to the destruction of human life. The propaganda circulated concerning the belief that Soviets were conspiring with the Jews to dominate the world in many ways influenced the Nazis that the complete destruction of a Judeo-Bolshevik threat was necessary. With the permission to disregard human life certain members of the Wehrmacht, as well as Nazi officials, took full advantage of their Soviet captives. Even with the presence of such appalling propaganda no excuse can or will ever justify the malice imposed upon the Soviet POWs. Furthermore the reasoning for why both members of the Nazi Party and non-members alike took pleasure in the annihilation of the Soviet POWs is as ambiguous as many other events of the Holocaust. Nearly three million men lost their lives because of the belief that they had no value as living human beings. Furthermore, no one can ever comprehend what motivated the Nazis to act in such brutal fashion against victims who were in most cases already half dead. To shoot a prisoner of war is appalling in itself but to mutilate and torture a dead body, to go so far beyond one’s orders, is inconceivable. In spite of the atrocities committed on behalf of the Nazis faith in the good of humanity was not lost. There were attempts to relieve the suffering of the POWs, even though many were denied, however, these acts shed light on the fact that not all Nazis or Germans were as sordid as their counterparts who relished in the suffering and death of some three

million Soviet Prisoners of War. Even in the most tragic of all circumstances there were people willing to preserve the lives of fellow human beings. While some of the Nazi perpetrators reflected the monstrous propaganda promoting Soviets as subhuman others displayed the highest quality of humanity by offering care and help for those who were suffering.

¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939), 451.

² Michael Burleigh, *Ethics and Extermination: Reflections on Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60.

³ Ibid, 60.

⁴ Ibid, 60.

⁵ The Nuremberg Trials, 1936 The Avalon Project,

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/judwarcr.htm> [accessed October 11,2007].

⁶ Christain Streit, *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: University Press, 1990),

^{vii} Ibid, 142.

⁸ Ibid, 142.

⁹ Ibid, 146.

¹⁰ Ibid, 145.

¹¹ Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Metropolitan, 2006) 3, 9.

¹² Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz a New History* (Britain: BBC Books, 2005), 66.

Continuing with the work of other historians Rees, by composing a six-hour documentary in accordance with the BBC, used actual survivor memoirs to reify the fact that Soviet POWs were in fact treated horrifically.

¹³ See Michael Burleigh, *Ethics and Extermination Reflections on Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ See Also Karel C. Berkhoff, "The "Russian" POWs in Nazi-Ruled Ukraine as Victims of Genocidal Massacre", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15(2001):1-32.

¹⁵ Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957), 3.

¹⁶ The Hamburg Institute for Social Research, *The German Army and Genocide: Crimes Against War Prisoners, Jews, and Other Civilians, 1939-1944* (New York, 1996), 140. Approximately 5.7 million Soviet POWs were actually captured.

¹⁷ Dallin, 6.

¹⁸ *The German Army and Genocide*, 140.

¹⁹ S.P. Mackenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II", *The Journal of Modern*

History, 66(1994): 487-522., 510.

²⁰ Commissar Order

²¹ *Ibid*, 140.

²² Michael Berenbaum, *Holocaust and History The Known The Unknown The Disputed and The Reexamined* (Indiana University Press and in association with The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998), 376.

²³ Streit, 143.

²⁴ Mackenzie, 505.

²⁵ Dallin, 7.

²⁶ MacKenzie, 505.

²⁷ *Mein Kampf*, 412, 416.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 420, 441-445.

²⁹ Dallin, 9.

³⁰ *Mein Kampf*, 441-445, 447.

³¹ *Ibid*, 447.

³² Documents from the Holocaust, Excerpts from Hitler's *Zweites Buch*, http://yad-vashem.org.il/about_holocaust/documents/part1/doc5.html [accessed on November 11, 2007].

³³ Dallin, 9.

³⁴ *Mein Kampf*, 578-9.

³⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Speech of 12 April, 1921* <http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111hit1/html>

³⁶ *Mein Kampf*, 579.

³⁷ *Speech of April 12, 9. and Mein Kampf*, 959.

³⁸ *Mein Kampf*, 951-2.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 604.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 398.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 398.

⁴² *Ibid*, 398.

⁴³ Dallin, 47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 99, 201, 207.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 413.

⁴⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Explanation of the Invasion of the Soviet Union 21 June 1941* <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410621a.html>

⁴⁸ Weltanschauung means worldview. Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Proclamation on War with Soviet Union 23 June 1941* <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/4106221.html>

⁴⁹ Dallin, 57.

⁵⁰ The Nuremberg Trials, The Avalon Project, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume IV*, http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/document/nca_vol4/1519

⁵¹ *The German Army and Genocide*, 142.

⁵² *Ibid*, 142.

⁵³ The Nuremberg Trials, The Avalon Project, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/judwarcr.htm> [accessed on November 11, 2007].

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 141.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 141.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 141

⁵⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Commissar Order to his Generals*, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-commissar.htm> [accessed on September 8, 2007]

⁵⁸ The Nuremberg Trials, The Avalon Project <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/judwarcr.htm>

See also *The Anatomy of the SS State*, 529.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ Field Marshall Walter von Reichenau, *Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories 10 October 1941*

<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~german/gtext/nazi/reichenau-english.html>

⁶¹ The Nuremberg Trials, The Avalon Project, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, 5

⁶² Rees, 39.

⁶³ Ibid, 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 81.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 529.

⁶⁶ Burleigh, 69.

⁶⁷ *The German Army and Genocide*, 144.

⁶⁸ Merridale, 142.

⁶⁹ Burleigh, 64.

⁷⁰ Mobile killing squads, special units of the SS.

⁷¹ Streit, 146.

⁷² Hoess, 340-1.

⁷³ Ibid, 147.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 147.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 155-6.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 156.

⁸⁰ Dallin, 419.

⁸¹ Ibid, 142.

⁸² Streit, 144.

⁸³ *The German Army and Genocide*, 142.

⁸⁴ Hoess, 132-3.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 133.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 133.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 133.

⁸⁸ Streit, 144.

⁸⁹ Streit, 144.

⁹⁰ Merridale, 142.

⁹¹ Streit, 144.

⁹² Dallin, 142.

⁹³ Streit, 144.

⁹⁴ *The German Army and Genocide*, 148.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 148.

⁹⁶ Hoess, 132.

⁹⁷ Streit, 143.

⁹⁸ Rees 65-6.

⁹⁹ Eugene Aroneanu, *Inside the Concentration Camps: Eyewitness Accounts of Life in Hitler's Death Camps*, (Library of Congress, 1996), 144.

¹⁰⁰ Stated by Hermann Goering, Dallin, 415.

¹⁰¹ Hoess, 133.

¹⁰² Ibid, 133.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 133. Hoess witnessed another murder of a Russian pushed by a fellow Russian prisoner into the electric fence for whatever he was carrying around in his bucket.

¹⁰⁴ Hoess, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Dallin, 415.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 415.

¹⁰⁷ Rees, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Hoess, 340-1.

¹¹⁰ Merridale, 142.

-
- ¹¹¹ *The German Army and Genocide*, 148.
- ¹¹² Merridale, 128.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid*, 142.
- ¹¹⁴ Rees, 65.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 65.
- ¹¹⁶ The Nuremberg Trials, Project Avalon <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/02-13-46.htm#prokrosky> 346-7.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹⁸ Merridale, 290.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 290.
- ¹²⁰ Berenbaum, 62.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid*, 62 and Dallin 416, 421.
- ¹²² Dallin, 421.
- ¹²³ Dallin, 417, 421.
- ¹²⁴ The Nuremberg Trials, The Avalon Project, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/08-10-46.htm>
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid*.
- ¹²⁶ Dallin, 420.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹²⁸ Idea proposed by Christian Streit, 148.
- ¹²⁹ War Crimes, 4.
- ¹³⁰ *The Policies of Genocide*, 69.
- ¹³¹ Mackenzie, 506.
- ¹³² Dallin, 423.
- ¹³³ *Ibid*, 509.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 423.
- ¹³⁵ *Inside the Concentration Camps*, 110
- ¹³⁶ Jeffrey Jones, "Everyday Life and the Reconstruction of Soviet Russia During and After the Great Patriotic War 1943-1948" (Forthcoming, Slavica Publishers).
- ¹³⁷ The Nuremberg Trials 1936, The Avalon Project, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/judwarcr.htm> [accessed November, 11, 2007].
- ¹³⁸ Mackenzie, 511. See also Rees.