

THE BEDFORD SERIES IN HISTORY AND CULTURE

**The Nazi State and
German Society**
A Brief History with Documents

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... Being far from all political considerations of the future the soldier has to fulfill two tasks:

1. *Complete annihilation of the false bolshevistic doctrine of the Soviet State and its armed forces.*
2. *The pitiless extermination of foreign treachery and cruelty and thus the protection of the lives of military personnel in Russia.*

This is the only way to fulfil our historic task to liberate the German people once forever from the Asiatic-Jewish danger.

Commander in Chief
(Signed) von Reichenau
Field Marshal.

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KARL FUCHS

A German Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front 1941

Tank gunner Karl Fuchs (see Document 37) took part in the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. By November, along with the rest of the German army, he was bogged down in the Russian winter. His letters to his wife, infant son, and parents illustrate the harsh conditions that the German army faced and also the extent to which he embraced the virulent anti-Communism that was central to Nazi ideology.

28 JUNE 1941

My dearest wife, my dear little Horsti,

... Up to now, all of the troops have had to accomplish quite a bit. The same goes for our machines and tanks. But, nevertheless, we're going to show those Bolshevik bums who's who around here! They fight like

From Horst Fuchs Richardson, ed., *Sieg Heil! War Letters of Tank Gunner Karl Fuchs, 1937-1941*, trans. Horst Fuchs Richardson (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1987), 115-16, 118-19, 124, 138-39, 144-45, 155-57.

hired hands—not like soldiers, no matter if they are men, women or children on the front lines. They're all no better than a bunch of scoundrels. By now, half of Europe is mobilized. The entry of Spain and Hungary on our side against this Bolshevik archenemy of the world overjoyed us all. Yes, Europe stands under the leadership of our beloved Führer Adolph Hitler, and he'll reshape it for a better future. The entry of all these volunteer armies into this war will cause the war to be over soon.

The impressions that the battles have left on me will be with me forever. Believe me, dearest, when you see me again, you will face quite a different person, a person who has learned the harsh command: "I will survive!" You can't afford to be soft in war; otherwise you will die. No, you must be tough—indeed, you have to be pitiless and relentless. Don't I sound like a different person to you? Deep down in my heart, I remain a good person and my love for you and our son will never diminish. Never! This love will increase as will my longing for you. I kiss you and remain forever

your Korri

5 July 1941

My darling wife! My dear boy!

We have fought in battle many days now and we have defeated the enemy wherever we have encountered him. Let me tell you that Russia is nothing but misery, poverty and depravity! That is Bolshevism!...

Our losses have been minimal and our success is great. This war will be over soon, because already we are fighting against only fragmented opposition....

Intimate kisses to you, Papi

P.S. Greet your parents and my mother.

17 July 1941

Sweet Mädi! My dear son!

... Yesterday I participated in my twelfth attack. Some of these attacks were more difficult than others. With twelve attacks under my belt, I have now caught up to the boys who had a head start in France! You can imagine that I'm very proud of this achievement. Recent orders have moved us seasoned veterans to the rear so that others have a chance to engage in battle. That makes sense to us, but it wasn't necessarily right because all of us veterans had become accustomed to battle and were at ease on the front line. These newcomers must first earn their seasoned status....

Mädi, a few words about Russia. All those who today still see any kind of salvation in Bolshevism should be led into this "paradise." To sum it up with one phrase: "It's terrible!" When I get back I will tell you endless horror stories about Russia. Yesterday, for instance, we saw our first women soldiers—Russian women, their hair shorn, in uniform! And these pigs fired on our decent German soldiers from ambush positions.

... In my thoughts I hold you in my arms and kiss your lips and the cheeks of my son.

Your Papi

4 August 1941

Dear Father,

... The pitiful hordes on the other side are nothing but felons who are driven by alcohol and the threat of pistols pointed at their heads. There is no troop morale and they are at best cannon fodder. You should read the pamphlets that they drop from the sky with better accuracy than their bombs. "Desert! Join the Bolsheviks! You'll be safe with us!" They are nothing but a bunch of assholes! Excuse the expression, but there simply is no other term for them. Having encountered these Bolshevik hordes and having seen how they live has made a lasting impression on me. Everyone, even the last doubter, knows today that the battle against these subhumans, who've been whipped into a frenzy by the Jews, was not only necessary but came in the nick of time. Our Führer has saved Europe from certain chaos.

And so we move on to the final battle and victory. I shake your hand and greet you. Germany, Sieg Heil!

Your loyal son, Karl

22 September 1941

My dearest Mädi,

... If you only knew under what arduous conditions our victories were fought and won. Sometimes it was incredible, fighting on muddy Russian roads or in rainy weather that seemed to have no end. Time and space are suspended. Once this last battle is over, peace will return to Germany and Europe. We out here on the front carry this belief in our hearts. You back home should have the same belief and hope as we do. Due to this common belief and hope, the front and the homeland are united in the real sense of the word. This point of view should play an important part in the schools today. You as teachers who are able to mold and educate the youth of our great country

should, in this difficult and proud time, let our children participate in the heroism of their brothers and fathers. I would give anything if I were able to stand in front of my elementary school students for just one day....

You probably are spending much time with our son. Your entire love must belong to this child since it is our child. But when you are teaching school, you must also share this love and enthusiasm with your pupils. Otherwise you should quit your job. I've become very conscious of the fact that our teaching profession, especially today and after the war, will demand real idealists. You can't do this job well if you do it halfheartedly....

With all my love, Your Korri

15 OCTOBER 1941

My dear Mother,

While a terrible snowstorm is howling outside, my comrades and I are camping in one of these terrible peasant houses. Although it's not much of a home, we managed to clean it up yesterday. Up until now we've always preferred to dig a hole in the ground and maybe pitch a tent. Now, however, it's simply too cold outside. If you could see how these people live here, you would be horrified!

This present abode is in better shape than most. In one corner there is even a structure that looks like a bed. Most Russians don't sleep in beds, but either behind or on top of their stove. I won't describe the other facilities, such as water and sanitation. Suffice it to say that they hardly exist.

Our duty has been to fight and to free the world from this Communist disease. One day, many years hence, the world will thank the Germans and our beloved Führer for our victories here in Russia. Those of us who took part in this liberation battle can look back on those days with pride and infinite joy. That's all for today. I send you my greetings.

Your son, Karl

11 NOVEMBER 1941

My dearest, my little boy,

Today is a very happy day for me. It's almost as if I'm back in my childhood because I remember St. Nicholas Day and all the activities associated with it. Starting with St. Nicholas Day, the anticipation of Christmas grows real. I suppose St. Nick thought of me a distant soldier today since I received so many presents. Dear Mädi, I really want

to thank you for all the lovely gifts. Let me tell you what they are so that you know that I received them; first of all, many thanks for the cigarettes.... Thank you also for the candy, the toothpaste and the lotion, the woolen gloves and the woolen scarf. I can really use the last two items now.

Yes, here I am again, sitting in one of these God-forsaken, Russian peasant houses supporting my head with my hand and thinking of you, my dear boy and of all those loved ones back home who've been so good to me. And today, our boy is five months old. I suppose that's a birthday of sorts. I can imagine that he has grown big and strong and is a very sweet baby.

All of us out here, all my comrades, continuously ask the all important question—when, when are we going to be able to go home? I still can't give you a definitive answer to that question. When I do return from these battles, I will probably come empty-handed, but my heart will be full of endless love for you and that is probably worth more than any present.

A few days ago it really started to get cold around here. It's a gripping cold and not comparable to anything that we might experience at home. Yes, we really have to bite the bullet now but we will survive this as well.

I love you forever—you alone and Horsti.

Your Korri

2 DECEMBER 1941

My dear Mrs. Fuchs,

As leader of the unit to which your husband, Sergeant Karl Fuchs, was assigned, I have the sad duty to inform you that your husband was killed on the field of battle on 21 November 1941.

His heroic death occurred when he was fighting bravely for Greater Germany in the front lines during a heavy battle with Russian tanks. The entire company and I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to you for the terrible loss which has befallen you.

We commiserate and are saddened that fate did not allow Karl to see his little daughter¹ of whom he was so proud. Be assured, however, that we will never forget your husband who was one of our best and bravest tank commanders and who always fought in an exemplary fashion against the enemy.

¹Fuchs had a son, not a daughter.

We have prepared a dignified resting place for him near the city of Klin, north of Moscow. I hope it will be a small consolation for you when I tell you that your husband gave his life so that our Fatherland may live. I greet you with sincere compassion.

Lieutenant Reinhardt,
Company Commander

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"Total War" Cover Illustration
1943

This image served as the cover illustration for a pamphlet about Germany's "total war" proclaimed by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels after the defeat of the German army at Stalingrad in February 1943. Within Germany, that defeat triggered a dramatic shift in public opinion about the war and an acknowledgment that things were going quickly from bad to worse. In a famous speech before the party faithful in Berlin shortly after the German surrender at Stalingrad, Goebbels exhorted his listeners to ever more valiant efforts and greater self-sacrifice. The illustration quotes from Goebbels's speech: "Now, Nation, Rise and Storm, Erupt!" Note how the artist, not identified here, underscored Goebbels's claims that there was no separation between the military front and the home front.

