

A Member of the SD Cuts the Beard of a Warsaw Jew (October 1939)

Abstract

Most of the 1.5 million German soldiers who participated in the attack on Poland had been socialized in the Nazi state and had also undergone ideological indoctrination in the party's mass organizations. In late 1939, 31 percent of the soldiers in an average German infantry division were members of a Nazi organization. One-fifth were former Hitler Youth members, between one-third and one-half had served in the Reich Labor Service [*Reichsarbeitsdienst* or RAD], and all had done at least one year of military training. Members of the SS and the police, most of whom had an affinity for Nazi doctrine anyway, underwent special ideological training. Propaganda and indoctrination were used to strengthen and radicalize the already widespread resentment of Poles and Jews in German society.

After the German invasion of Poland, aggressive antisemitism found release in “lightning pogroms” [*Blitzpogrome*], during which so-called Eastern Jews [*Ostjuden*], in particular, were humiliated, abused, and also murdered. In addition to subjecting these Jews to drills and forced labor, the regime's henchmen often mocked them by cutting or burning off their beards—a practice that was later continued during the military campaign against the Soviet Union.

The photograph shows a member of the Security Service [*Sicherheitsdienst* or SD] cutting a Polish Jew's beard. It comes from a series of photos of a staged raid by the Security Police in Warsaw.

Source



Source: “Search for hidden weapons” – An SD man cuts off the beard of a Polish Jew. Photo: October 1939. Photo: Arthur Grimm.

bpk-Bildagentur, image number 30010007. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at requests@artres.com (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de (for all other countries).

© bpk / Arthur Grimm

Recommended Citation: A Member of the SD Cuts the Beard of a Warsaw Jew (October 1939), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-3760>> [July 14, 2025].