The Holocaust, Nazi Germany, and the War on Bolshevism: Reexamining the Causes of World War Two



Jochen Hellbeck's talk reexamines the causes and the course of the Second World War by highlighting Nazi anticommunism as a central driver of the war. Existing scholarship often treats hatred of Communism and Marxism as a secondary factor in the rise of the Nazis, overshadowed by racial antisemitism. Hellbeck does not downplay antisemitism; rather, he shows that the Nazi hatreds of Jews and Communists were intertwined. It was for this reason that the Nazi mass killing of Jews started on the occupied territories of the USSR and spread from there. Hellbeck's talk engages in equal measure with the Soviet response to the Nazi invasion. He shows how well Soviet citizens were informed about German mass killings, and how integral feelings of outrage and hatred were to the Soviet war effort and, eventually, victory over Nazi Germany.

Wed, October 7, 2026 | 5 PM–7 PM
Room 6051, Academic Building-West Wing
15 Seminary Pl, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

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Jochen Hellbeck

Jochen Hellbeck is Distinguished Professor of History at Rutgers University, specializing in modern Russia, the Soviet Union, and the history of World War II. The recipient of fellowships from the New York Public Library's Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the American Academy in Berlin, among others, he is the acclaimed author of *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (2006), *Stalingrad: The City That Defeated the Third Reich* (2015), *World Enemy No. 1: Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the Fate of the Jews* (2025), and the online project *Facing Stalingrad*.

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