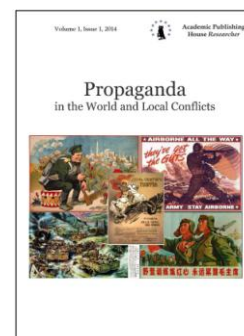


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German Propaganda in the Military Zone of Ukraine in 1941–1943

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Abstract

The article considers the propaganda in the press, radio, cinema and scenic art during the German occupation of 1941–1943 based on the examples of five regions that were a part of the Ukraine military zone (Chernigov, Sumy, Kharkov, Voroshilovgrad and Donetsk regions), controlled by the military authorities.

The works of the contemporary Ukrainian historians, as well as the archival documents of the supreme authorities and administration of Ukraine central state archive (KMF-8 foundation, which holds the documents photocopies of the "South" Army), state archives of the Sumy and Kharkov regions and the periodical press materials of the occupation time were used in the research.

It is noted that the ideological principles of the Nazi and their confidence in the success of the "blitzkrieg" did not allow the invaders to follow the pragmatic political course, offered by A. Rosenberg. Certain propaganda efforts were successful largely due to the involvement of the representatives of the local intelligentsia.

Keywords: German occupation, propaganda, Ukraine military zone.

1. Introduction

Since the ancient times propaganda has been an integral part of the warfare, because without the human resources mobilization and motivation of people, involved in military actions, achieving victory is unlikely. Earlier, however, it came usually in a rather primitive form of the direct commander-soldiers communication, which explained the goals of the war, its necessity and "justice" and promised material benefits.

In the twentieth century, the development of technology and the media: newspapers, radio, cinema, television, Internet, etc. made it possible to raise the propaganda to a new level. This is the past and present demand of the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The Nazi Germany and its propaganda, inherently connected to its creator Dr. J. Goebbels, is the textbook example (Bartov, 2011). He became a household name.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. The works of contemporary Ukrainian historians, as well as the archival documents of the supreme authorities and administration of Ukraine central state archive (KMF-8 foundation, which holds the documents photocopies of the "South" Army), state archives of the Sumy and

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Kharkov regions and the periodical press materials of the occupation time were used in the research.

Propaganda issues were covered in the works of V.I. Dashichev, M. Mikhailyuk, R. Cecil, Karel C. Berkhoff, V. Kosik, V.O. Shaikan, M.V. Koval, A.V. Skorobogatov, D.M. Titorenko in different ways.

2.2. The methodological workground is based on the principles of objectivity and historicism, assuming an unbiased approach to the analysis of the studied problems, a critical attitude to the sources, which enabled a thorough study of the investigated problems and provided the best usage of archival sources and historiographic developments.

3. Results and discussion

The racist ideology tenets of the National Socialists are widely known, assigning to the Slavic peoples an unenviable role of the "subhumans" (Ger. *untermensch*). The Nazi elites, in preparing the attack on the Soviet Union, despite the confidence in the power of the Wehrmacht, were aware of the enemy's human potential. Therefore the Nazis did not intend to show their attitude to the numerous peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union.

The ideological inspirer and developer of the foundations of the German occupation policy in the Soviet Union was Alfred Rosenberg (Fig. 1) (he was of a Baltic German descent and got his education in the Russian Empire), the ideologist of the National Socialist Party. He was considered to be an "Eastern areas expert". In his suggestions in April-May, 1941, he used the classical principle of "divide and conquer". In political terms, the Soviet Union was a multinational country and, in his opinion, was held in only by the power of the punitive authorities. A discontent was felt in the national suburbs, especially in the Baltic states and Western Ukraine. He suggested dividing the territory of the Soviet Union into the national geographical units in order to weaken the Great Russia. Regarding Ukraine, he suggested supporting their national independence aspirations, up to the foundation of the separate Ukrainian statehood, or the Black Sea Union, which would include the Don region and the Caucasus, in addition to Ukraine.



Fig. 1. Alfred Rosenberg.

Later, on June, 20, 1941, speaking in the narrow circle of the German leaders, he said that Russia's influence was felt everywhere in Ukraine, so Germany's aim was to ensure the freedom of the Ukrainian people. Thus, it suggested the national identity development by supporting Ukrainians' memories of their Hetman cults: Khmelnytsky, Sagaidachny, Mazepa, the formation of the Ukrainian language, publishing Ukrainian classics works, establishing University of Kiev and creating a political movement, based on the example of the Free Ukrainian Cossacks: «There is a difference – the speaker insisted – in a few years we will get forty million of people who will voluntarily cooperate with us, or we will have to put a soldier behind every peasant» (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 1, D. 171, L. 114).

Other German leaders, H. Himmler and H. Goering, did not support Rosenberg's approaches. But Hitler's opinion, which he announced at the meeting on July 16, 1941, was the decisive one. He rejected the suggestions of the party ideologist and supported G. Goering, who said that firstly it was necessary to supply the Wehrmacht and Germany with food, and all the "rest" issues must be put off. The only thing allowed by Hitler was to establish newspapers on the occupied territories to influence the population. However, A. Rosenberg was appointed the Minister of the occupied eastern provinces and could affect the situation.

At the stage of planning the attack on the USSR, it was decided to abandon the occupied territories' unified administration system. It was considered that the military could not implement the political line efficiently (Dashichev, 1973: 22). Therefore, the Wehrmacht rear was limited to the two hundred mile zone and during the invasion was to be passed under the control of the civil administration. On August, 20, 1941, the "Ukraine" Reich Commissariat was created. But the blitzkrieg failed, the march of the Wehrmacht was stopped and the Reich Commissariat did not reach its planned size. Thus, during the whole period of the occupation, five regions of Ukraine were under the military control – the Chernigov, Sumy, Kharkov, Stalin (now Donetsk) and Voroshilovgrad (Lugansk) regions, commonly called "the war zone of Ukraine" in the Ukrainian historiography. The Wehrmacht was considered to be the supreme authority. The field and the local commandants operated locally, under the political guidance of A. Rosenberg's Ministry. Some of the military supported his ideas of the "moderate" policy in Ukraine (Nesterenko, 2005: 175-178).

In 1938, Adolf Hitler issued a directive on war propaganda, which defined the interaction of the Ministry of propaganda and the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht). Since the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union, the Ministry of A. Rosenberg was involved in this work. The "Oriental" department with the Subdivision "Vineta" was established as a part of the Ministry of propaganda. It cooperated actively with the Office of Press and Propaganda of the Ministry of Eastern Occupied Territories and the OKW propaganda department. Propaganda companies were set up in the combat operations zone. In Ukraine, their activities were supervised by the "U" Propaganda Department (Ukraine), established at the headquarters of the rear operational area commander of the "South" army group. It controlled the local press, radio broadcasting, theater, etc. on the military administrated territories.

The most important means of propaganda, which could cover a significant number of urban and rural residents, was the press. A. Rosenberg, aware of this, signed a corresponding directive at the beginning of the war, which allowed establishing local newspapers, but only in a compliance of several conditions: the presence of politically reliable editors and a sufficient number of the German censorship authorities. The goals of the press and propaganda in general, were to implant the idea of the Reich's financial might, along with the thought of the invincibility of Wehrmacht and the need for an active cooperation with the new authorities in people's minds. At the same time it was necessary to cover the crimes of the "Yid-Bolsheviks" in Ukraine, for example, the famine and repressions of the 1930s, to talk about the "liberating" mission of the Wehrmacht and the Führer Adolf Hitler himself and to use the name "Ukraine" only in the territorial meaning, to avoid questioning on the further political structure (Mihailiuk, 2011: 644-646).

The Ukrainian military zone newspapers could be divided into the district and municipal ones. But some were distributed on a larger area. For example, the Kharkov newspaper "Novaya Ukraina" covered almost all the areas of the former Kharkov region (the Germans, in administrative terms, refused the regional authority). The table below represents the quantitative composition of the press (Table 1).

Table 1. A List of Ukrainian and Russian newspapers published by the propaganda battalion in Ukraine. On 01.10.1942 (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 478, L. 64)

Location of publishing	Name	Language
1. Stalino	«Donetskie izvestiya»	rus.
2. Debaltsevo	«Debaltsevskaya gazeta»	ukr.
3. Gorlovka	«Ukrainsky Donbass»	ukr.
4. Konstantinovka	«Konstantinovskaya gazeta»	ukr.
5. Snezhnoe	«Snezhnenskie izvestiya »	rus.
6. Chistyakovo	«Novaya zhizn»	rus.
7. Voroshilovgrad	«Novaya zhizn»	Not specified
8. Makeyevka	«Ukrainskaya zemlya»	Not specified
9. Marioopol	«Marioopolskaya gazeta»	ukr.
10. Kharkov	«Novaya Ukraina»	ukr.
11. Kransograd	«Konstantinogradskie izvestiya»	ukr.
12. Slavyansk	«Donetskaya gazeta»	ukr.
13. Artyomovsk	«Bakhmutsky vestnik»	ukr.
14. Konotop	«Osvobozhdenie»	ukr.
15. Nezhin	«Nezhinskie izvestiya»	ukr.
16. Oster	«Osterskie izvestiya»	ukr.
17. Priluky	«Pilootskiye izvestiya»	ukr.
18. Romny	«Vozrozhdenie»	ukr.
19. Snovsk (Shors)	«Novaya snovskaya gazeta»	ukr.
20. Chernigov	«Ukrainskoe polesye»	ukr.
21. Kursk	«Noviy put'»	rus.
22. Putivl	Not specified	ukr.
23. Rylsk	«Noviy put'»	rus.
24. Shostka	«Novoe vryemya»	ukr.
25. Belgorod	«Podyom»	rus.
26. Akhtyrka	«Golos Akhtyrki»	ukr.
27. Sumy	«Sumskoy vestnik»	ukr.
28. Millerovo	«Vozrozhdenie»	rus.
29. Rossosh	«Rossoshskiy vestnik»	rus.
30. Morozovskaya	«Morozovsky vestnik»	rus.

The Table 1 shows that some of the Russian territories were in the group "South" army action zone and was a part of the propaganda battalion area performing. But it is difficult to say whether it was in the plans of A. Rosenberg to include some parts of the Russian territories in the future "Great Ukraine" or not. Some newspaper titles are incorrect or not specified at all in the document: «Vesti Priluchchiny» (Priluky), «Donetsky Vestnik» (Yuzovka-Stalino), «Konstantinovskie vesti» (Konstantinovka), «Debaltsevsky vestnik» (Debaltsevo), «Snezhnyansky vestnik» (Snezhnoye). The translation may not be exact. In Putivle, the Sumy region the "Putivlyanin" newspaper was published. A number of the newspapers weren't mentioned at all, although they were published, according to the archive materials. For example, «Lebedinsky vestnik» (Lebedin), «Kramatorskaya gazeta» (Kramatorsk), «Chistyakovsky listok» (Chistyakovo), «Khartsizsky vestnik» (Khartsizsk), «Khleborob» (Volnovakha), «Ranok» (Popasna), «Golos Severshchiny» (Novgorod-Seversky), «Chernigovsky kurier» and «Ukrainsky kurier» (Chernigov), «Ukrainsky kurier» (Priluky). In some cases, the name changes were possible. In Oster, the Chernigov region the "Shkolyar" children newspaper was published in Ukrainian. In Bogodukhov, the Kharkov region, "Ridny kraj" magazine was published. In January, 1943, in Sumy, the "Sumskoy vestnik" editorial office opened a subscription to "Ukrainsky zasiv" monthly magazine and distributed the first issue.

Most newspapers were published on the permission of commandant officials, by local authorities (city and district councils) using the technical resources of the Soviet editorial offices. The local government covered the funding and also received profits, as it was very important for

the local budgets. But in 1943, despite the objections of the military administration, propaganda departments took under control the economic aspect as well (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 332, L. 66). Local intelligentsia representatives were commonly employed as the editors and authors of the materials.



Fig. 2. Newspaper «Novyi put».

A significant circulation of other printed material – various leaflets were published to achieve the propaganda aims. Posters were published in a smaller number, perhaps this was due to a limited technical capacity of the local publishers.

In order to give the idea of the amount of the printed materials, that were produced by the occupation authorities, we present data from the June, 1942 monthly report of the corps commander of security forces and the commander of the operational rear area of the “B” Army Group (Up to September, 1, 1942, the entire territory of Ukraine east to the Dnieper River was under the military administration control). On the anniversary of “the beginning of the war on the East” 37,000 posters and 275,000 leaflets were distributed among the local population. The total circulation of newspapers was 265,000 copies. The Ukrainian newspapers provided materials for two bulletins "Presse-und Bilderdienst" and "Politische Sneldienst" (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 195, L. 41-42).

In order to cover the rural population with the printed propaganda, the newspapers were instructed to send a part of the copies to the villages. Village prefects were obliged to install special display boards for newspapers and advertisements in public places.

Radio, both wireless and wired, had a great propaganda potential. The signal of the Berlin radio station that was rebroadcasted by the Warsaw, Belgrade, Bucharest and Helsinki radio stations, could be received on the territory of Ukraine. The signal could be received by the broadcasting centers of large cities and military radio stations. Radio programs in the Russian and Ukrainian languages were sometimes aired in 1943. The daily reports of the German command on the progress of military operations at the front, news, orders of the occupation authorities, music, etc. were aired (Mihailyuk, 2011: 651-652). But the effect was insignificant, due to the lack of relevant radio receivers among the Ukrainian population. During the pre-war period the residents couldn't afford the necessary equipment and only a small part, mainly state and party officials, “white collars” and intelligentsia, had such an opportunity. But at the beginning of the war, radio receivers were confiscated, not to be under the influence of the German propaganda. At the beginning of the German occupation, the confiscation was performed again. Those who dared to violate this order were sentenced to death. Thus, 8 people from Dymier, Ivanovo district of the Chernigov region, were executed for the use of radio and for listening to foreign stations (Visti Ostershini).

A slightly different situation was with the wired radio. In the USSR, there was a well-developed network of this type of radio, and local authorities, economic and other institutions, along with the population had radio receivers and plate-resembling radio transmitters. Since the beginning of the occupation period this networks were repaired and used in many cities. For a greater effect, as in Soviet times, the speakers were often installed in public places outside. For example, in the Sumy city, the central radio receiving station was fixed, and about 1,000 speakers were connected to it: approx. 300 – for the Wehrmacht and the rest – for the local population, on the chief of communications of the 6th Army permission in November 1941 (the city was occupied on 10 October) (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 156, L. 6).

The cars with loudspeakers operation were even less efficient.

The cinema, perhaps, was the most spectacular and potentially efficient means in the terms of propaganda. Local people had an opportunity to visit cinemas that were open for the Wehrmacht soldiers. German films mostly of an entertaining character were shown, specifically dubbed or subtitled in the Ukrainian or Russian languages. Newsreel was shown at the beginning of each session («Deutsche Wochenschau»).

A report of the Akhtyrka 198 (U) field commandant office on May 15, 1942 marked a positive propaganda effect from enabling the local population to visit soldiers' cinemas (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 157, T. 1, L. 3). Konotop field Commandant's Office 200 (U) reported on the demonstration of films for the German troops and the civilian population in the cities of Konotop, Shostka, Glukhov and Belopolye in June, 1942 (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 2, D. 157, T. 1, L. 206).

Scenic art also provided for propaganda purposes. It was an important activity of local intelligentsia for the purpose of national and cultural renaissance. In this aspect, its goals coincided with the needs of the German occupation authorities, who pursued the task to provide cultural recreation to the Wehrmacht soldiers. Therefore, in the military zone of Ukraine, theaters as well as numerous new theatrical groups, choir capellas, ensembles, orchestras, musical studios, etc. were reopened; a circus was open in Voroshilovgrad.

The repertoire mostly consisted of the works of the Ukrainian dramatists: I. Tobylevitch, G. Kvitka-Osnovyanenko, M. Staritsky, M. Kropivnitsky, T. Shevchenko and others. In the cities, with a larger number of professional theatre companies and with relatively better technical facilities, plays by the foreign authors, as well as operas, ballets, operettas and symphonic concerts were performed.

The military authorities, following the command of A. Rosenberg, almost did not interfere in this sphere of cultural life. This was supposed to testify the tolerance of the "new government" towards this matter (Nesterenko, 2005a: 54-61).

Exhibitions were held in order to demonstrate the greatness of Germany and also to attract volunteers to work for the Reich. For example, in November 1942, in the Chistyakovo city, the Donetsk region, a four day photo exhibition, named "German nation - German labor" was held, and it was attended by 4,300 people (Novaya zhizn). In October 1942, in Kharkov, the exhibition "Get' bilshovizm" (Get out, Bolshevism) was organized by the German propaganda department and the "Prosvita" ("Education") local partnership. It was organized "to celebrate the anniversary of the day of the European nations liberating war against Bolshevism" Its purpose was the following: "... In general, this exhibition demonstrating the essence of the Bolshevism destructive ideas, hostile to the Ukrainian people, should be an effective tool for anti-communist cultural resources propaganda and the fight against the "remnants" of Judeo Bolshevist ideology, and become the herald of the transition of Ukraine to the peoples of the New Europe" (translated from Ukrainian by the author) (KRSA, F. R-2982, Op. 1, D. 53, L. 1).

The propaganda penetrated into the sphere of education as well, for raising the youngsters in the spirit of the "New Order".

The local intelligentsia, on the orders of the Ministry of A. Rosenberg ("Eastern Ukraine" working group), performed the libraries' "purification" of the literature, banned by the occupation authorities. Thus, in Kharkov, on December, 15, 1941, Krivenko, the Kharkov city council propaganda department head, held a librarian meeting, on which he set the following rules of the "harmful" literature removal: 1. Literature, published from 1917 to October 20, 1941, with a few exceptions, should have been removed completely; 2. Fiction, art history, technical, scientific, etc. literature for this period – to be carefully reviewed, the "harmful" ones to be removed; some places to be cut out, the veracity of the texts of works of the Ukrainian and other writers to be checked;

3. This work was to be performed by the librarians themselves; 4. The same actions should have been performed in the bookstores (KRSA, F. R-2982, Op. 3, D. 76, L. 1). The «undesirable» Ukrainian author list included M. Bazhan, I. Goncharenko, I. Kulik, A. Malyshko, P. Panch, V. Vinnichenko, N. Zabala and others, in total 36; 13 – «Ukrainian-Yid» (Natan Rybak among them); 23 – «Yid»; 136 – Soviet; 38 – German and «Yid», which works were translated to the Ukrainian language (H. Heine, H. Mann, T. Mann, E.-M. Remarque among them) (KRSA, F. R-2982, Op. 4, D. 216, L. 18-19).

For example, 1263 books were seized from the school library of the city of Putivl, Sumy region on February 1, 1942 (SRSA, F. R-1955, Op. 1, D. 16, L. 1). These books lost their value and were brought to a special foundation, and were transferred to various enterprises to be used as writing paper. The following figures indicate the scale of these activities: only in May, 1942, in the above mentioned city of Putivl, 22519 books were seized. And this process continued (SRSA, F. R-1955, Op. 1, D. 16, L. 8-139).

At the same time teachers at schools were engaged in the textbooks "editing" in accordance with the instructions. The word «pioneer» was changed to «student» or «pupil», «kolkhozniki» – to «peasants», «impact class» – to «one of the best», «excellent pupil» – to «the best pupil», «sovkhoz» – to «state farm». The words «soviet», «Internationale», «socialist construction», «Ukrainian SSR», «USSR» and etc. were crossed out. Programs were being renewed. For example, a reading program for the 4th grade of the primary school included the students' acquaintance with such works of the Ukrainian classics: I. Franko «Zakhar Berkut», T. Shevchenko «Blind», «Ivan Podkova», «Gamaliya», «Chernets», «Gaydamaki», M. Staritsky, «Epiphany night», P. Kulish, «Black Rada», L. Ukrainka «Boyarynya» and others (KRSA, F. R-2982, Op. 1, D. 44, L. 1-6).

To assist the teachers, local newspapers sometimes published materials for children. In Oster, the Chernigov region, as already mentioned, the two-weekly «Shkoliar» («Shkolnik») newspaper was published. For instance, in its March issues of 1942 an article about Shevchenko, as well as his poem "Mati", Ukrainian fairy tales, stories, riddles, and the "Nibelungen" poem, translated into the Ukrainian language were published.

What were the spirits of the Ukrainian population and how did the Germans evaluate the effectiveness of their propaganda? The Zhitomyr Chief of Counterintelligence filed a confidential analytical note, dated 22 October 1943, which stated that in 1941, 90% of the population harbored a hope for the collapse of the USSR and the combat failures of the Red Army weakened even the Bolshevik supporters' faith. Several quotations: «All people unanimously moved to the service of the German authorities ...», «German soldiers felt calm in Ukraine ...», «mutual understanding between the army and the people was as its best ...», «the Ukrainians, first of all the peoples of the Soviet Union became an ally of Germany and all the other nations followed their example ...»

But at the same time he points out the mistakes, made, in his opinion, in the field of propaganda: 1. In their propaganda, the Germans operated the Great Germany scale and stated that the Ukrainians have no culture; 2. At first it was considered, that Ukrainians and Bolsheviks were identical and they were not distinguished; 3. Instead of engaging supportive Ukrainians to the cooperation, they involved people that had nothing to do with the Ukrainian matter; 4. The necessity of propaganda against the Russian imperialism, which was passionately hated by the Ukrainians, didn't receive any attention; 5. The criticism of Stalin in the German propaganda was considered as "breaking through the open door," because the Ukrainians knew the "very prosperity" of the Stalin regime; 6. The "New Europe" outlook and the place of the Ukrainians there was not explained; 7. Teachers, clergy, prefects, volunteers were not involved in the propaganda activities; 8. Radio and the press were able to cover only a small part of the population; 9. Incorrect grammar, historic misconceptions and even lies and nonsense in the economic issues reduced the value of the numerous propaganda appeals; 10. The propaganda in the fields of music, singing and theater fulfilled its task only partly; 11. Theatrical performances in the Russian language and with the participation of the Russian actors were alien to the Ukrainians, as well as the idea of "one and indivisible Russian Empire" (the territory of the Reich Commissariat "Ukraine"); 12. Articles on the historical facts of the heroic fights of the Ukrainians against the Bolsheviks were not covered in the press (CSASUA, F. KMF-8, Op. 1, D. 74, L. 1-12).

4. Conclusion

The ideological tenets of Nazism, in which the Slavic and other peoples of the USSR were considered "subhumans", and the confidence in the success of "blitzkrieg" did not enable the German authorities to perform propaganda activities pragmatically, as it was suggested by A. Rosenberg. The German propaganda did not answer the main question that interested the population of the occupied territories, and the Ukrainians in particular: what would happen tomorrow to them, their families and their country. Despite some progress in certain activities in the field of media, theater, cinema, etc., due to a large involvement of the representatives of the local intelligentsia, the whole occupants' propaganda activities were not efficient enough, and that was admitted by the Germans themselves.

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