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GERMAN

WARTIME PROPAGANDA

IN THE U.S.S.R.

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CONTENT

	Page
INTRODUCTION	
MAIN SOURCES	
I ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE	1
II GENERAL TRENDS	2
III ECONOMY AND FORCED LABOR	8
IV NEWSPAPERS, MOVIES AND RADIO	12
V SOVIET ARMY, POWS AND PARTISANS	15
VI YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND REVIVAL OF COMMUNISM	19
CARTOONS ON GERMAN LEAFLETS	

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early months of their propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union, the Germans had two advantages. When they first advanced into Soviet territory they were considered liberators by the population, freeing them from Soviet tyranny; and, second, their victories over the Red Army during the first year of the war gave them great prestige.

Despite these advantages, all German observers agreed that their propaganda in the Soviet Union failed. There were many reasons for this failure.

For years the Soviet population had been taught that the Red Army was invincible, and it was difficult to convince them that this time the Soviet Government had met with an even stronger power. Therefore, the local population felt it must reckon with the possibility of a return of the Red Army and reprisals against those who had been anti-Communist.

As a result of their twenty-year experience with Bolshevik propaganda, the Soviet population had learned not to believe slogans, and was inclined to judge the Germans by their acts rather than words. German occupation policy, the treatment of war prisoners, and the forced deportation of workers nullified the effect of their propaganda.

Political terrorism, strict press censorship, prohibition of any political activity, and distrust of local self-administration recalled to the population the tactics of the Soviet regime.

The population finally came to regard German propaganda as false, according to a Security Police report of April, 1943. In the propaganda warfare the Germans were always on the defensive.

Nazi Germany, equally opposed to Communism and Democracy, could offer the Soviet population nothing but the substitution of one totalitarian system for

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another. It was therefore natural that, according to a High Command review of 1944, the people confronted with the choice between an alien or a native tyranny preferred the latter.

Lacking original ideas and political sense, German propaganda substituted for them crude attacks on the Bolsheviks, the Allies, and the Jews, which boomeranged against them. German propaganda made very little use of German technical abilities or of the German achievements which might have impressed the Soviet peoples. German propaganda also was less concrete than that of the Soviets.

As a result, Soviet counter-propaganda steadily gained ground. Use of the basic nationalism and patriotism of the Russian people, often recognized by the Germans as a very clever move, enabled the Soviet Government to appear as the defender of national interests, and this gained them widespread support. Rumors spread by the Communist Party, though never officially confirmed, raised hopes for a relaxation of the regime after the war. This belief helped Soviet and undermined German propaganda efforts.

It appears that the superiority of Soviet political warfare over the Germans was the result of clever exploitation of the weaknesses of the opponent, rather than of Soviet strength.

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## MAIN SOURCES

This contribution to the study of German Wartime Propaganda in the U.S.S.R. has been written from German Documents as listed below. This study is not meant to be exhaustive, but is authoritative in so far as its sources permit.

This study is one of a series made from official German Documents. Already published in this series are: "Russian Anti-Communist Forces in the German War," DW-01, and "Soviet Partisan Warfare Since 1941," DW-02. Forthcoming studies will deal with a further development of Partisan Warfare, the German Analysis of the Psychology of the Soviet People, and the Ukrainian Problem.

### Main Sources and Analyses:

Oberkommando Wehrmacht (OKW) and Oberkommando Heer (OKH) reports  
(German High Command)

Political analysis of the situation in the occupied areas, especially those under military administration. Valuable criticism of the policy of the Reich Commissars in their respective areas.

Sicherheitsdienst weekly and monthly reports  
(Security Police)

Regular and very valuable material, containing a great amount of factual data. The reports are conspicuous for independent criticism of German occupation policy and propaganda.

Vertreter des Auswärtigen Amtes (VAA) reports  
(Representative of the Foreign Office at the High Command)

In most instances an over-all picture of the situation in the occupied areas.

Auswärtiges Amt documents  
(German Foreign Office), including Hitler's orders, documents of the "Russia Gremium," Ambassadors' reports, and so forth.

Important documents on the deliberations and conflicts in the highest policy making bodies.

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Reichs Ministerium für Besetzte Gebiete documents and  
Reich Commissars reports  
(Ministry for the Eastern Territories)  
Current problems of propaganda.

Nürnberg Documents (Rosenberg files)

German leaflets - State Department microfilms

Soviet leaflets - State Department microfilms

Propaganda Abteilung "Ostland" reports  
(Propaganda Division for the Baltic States and  
Byelorussia, at the High Command)  
Contain factual material on propaganda in the  
Baltic States and Byelorussia.

Geheime Feld Polizei monthly reports  
(Army Secret Field Police)  
Valuable addition to the Security Police reports.

Reports of Field Mail Censorship  
Analysis of soldiers' mail.

Statements of Soviet prisoners of war  
Statements on various aspects of life in un-  
occupied territories, on the morale of the Soviet  
army, effect of German propaganda, and so forth.

Propaganda Abteilung W and U reports  
(Propaganda Division for Byelorussia and Ukraine)  
Contain vast factual data on propaganda in the  
Ukraine.

Individual reports on the political situation in the  
occupied areas and on propaganda, prepared on orders  
of the High Command  
Provide over-all pictures and analyses of the  
German policy, some of them uncritical, exagger-  
ating German successes and the friendship of  
the population toward the Germans.

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## I ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

A political report of the German Armed Forces High Command of February 7th, 1942, declared that "propaganda is the most important weapon in this campaign (the German campaign in the East). By its employment on a large scale, final victory in the East can be achieved far more quickly, and our losses of men can be greatly reduced." This was borne out by the views of prisoners of war, who said that leaflets rather than bombs should be dropped on the U.S.S.R.

The German estimate was based on the fact that in all wars waged by the Soviet Union the ideological element had played a major role, and, therefore, political propaganda had assumed great importance. For this reason, German propaganda in the East was concentrated more on such topics than German propaganda against the Western Allies. It was directed primarily against such targets as Communism, the "scorched earth" policy, and the partisans.

Several German agencies were responsible for propaganda. Hitler's order of September 8th, 1939, made the Foreign Office responsible for propaganda abroad. Yet the High Command claimed the right to conduct propaganda on all matters pertaining to military affairs, and especially in the combat zones. The Ministry for the Eastern Territories, also, had propaganda divisions, and the Reich Commissars of the various occupied areas, under that Ministry, set up their own propaganda and censorship agencies. The influence of the Ministry of Propaganda was almost eliminated. Since the functions of these various groups were not clearly defined, there were frequent disputes among them.

At first, German propaganda on the Eastern Front was handicapped by dislocation and destruction caused by the fighting. An Army High Command report of September 16th, 1941, stated that "there is no mail service, no railways, no movies, no press, in short no communication facilities, except by word of mouth." Lack of paper and printing plants created further difficulties. In this period, the Germans used loud-speakers mounted on trucks as their main method of propaganda.

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In the course of a few months, however, many of these difficulties were overcome. Printed matter, films, and similar material was sent from Berlin. A special train equipped as a complete printing plant traveled throughout the occupied areas doing reproduction work on propaganda material. By December 21st, 1941, according to a German Foreign Office report, 425 million leaflets had been dropped in the unoccupied areas of the U.S.S.R.

In the period between February and August of 1942 the following material was distributed throughout the Ukraine: 29 posters with a total of 1,400,000 copies, 16 pamphlets, 1,500,000 copies, 7 leaflets, 3,000,000 copies, 11 leaflet and wall newspapers, 1,800,000 copies, 15 pictures of Hitler, 300,000 copies and other material, 48,000 copies.

Extensive propaganda efforts were made by the Germans during their retreat. An army report of June 6th, 1944, states that during the preceding two months of comparative calmness at the front propaganda was increased; in April 64,561,000 leaflets were disseminated, and in May, 120,775,000.

It appeared, however, that the German effort fell far short of the Soviet. With their vast experience in mass propaganda the Soviets proved superior to the Germans both in quality and quantity of their material. In February, 1943, a report of the SS Security Police in the occupied areas stated that Soviet propaganda was "still not countered by effective German propaganda," and in April, 1943, that its activity was "intense, clever and far superior to German propaganda."

## II GENERAL TRENDS

German propaganda was mainly based on the theme of liberation from Soviet regime, and was supported by the anti-capitalist trend within the Nazi Party. This propaganda also sought to undermine Soviet charges that the Germans intended to reinstate big landowners and capitalist exploitation. It also tried to arouse the Russian people against their "plutocratic" western allies.

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A typical German leaflet stated that "two sides are now struggling for the right to live. One side is the old, out-moded, dying world of predatory capitalism and slave-owning Communism. The alliance of the capitalists Roosevelt and Churchill with the Communist Stalin is not accidental, they are two links of the chain fettering the toilers of the old world. The other side is the new world being built under Hitler's leadership. It is the world of justice and freedom."

The new order which the Germans would introduce in Russia was described in another leaflet as a regime "without capitalists, big landowners or Communists."

Exploitation of the struggle against Communism seemed the best weapon for German propaganda because a large part of the population of the U.S.S.R. was opposed to the Soviet regime. But since the peoples of the U.S.S.R. knew so much about their own government, they expected from their German liberators more than mere denunciations. They sought a political and economic way of life to replace the Soviet regime, and of ways and means to achieve this end.

According to a High Command review of the period 1941-1944, "the masses of the people instinctively expected that a new idea would be produced from the German side, an idea which would bring about spiritual liberation from Bolshevism. Instead, only promises came, and in a few months it became obvious that these promises were being broken."

In conversations with people in the occupied areas, and in questions asked after propoganda lectures, the problems were invariably raised: what form of government and what kind of economy will prevail in a future Russia, and what place will she occupy in Europe?

Because of their colonization policy in the Soviet Union, the Germans were unable to give satisfactory answers to these questions, and confined their propoganda to criticism of the Soviets and to vague promises.

Their "program," announced repeatedly in leaflets, consisted of the following points: 1. A tract of private

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land for each farmer; 2. adequate wages; 3. private trade and facilities for skilled artisans; 4. local administration, meeting the needs of the population; and, 5. restoration of industrial enterprises and homes destroyed by the Bolsheviks. In this rather meaningless program, there was no reference to any future form of government.

The various German propaganda agencies compiled regular monthly or weekly surveys of public opinion in the occupied areas. Almost every survey noted that during the period under review public feeling toward the Germans had become more unfriendly. These reports often urged the adoption of a more positive and concrete propaganda line, and more extensive treatment of political problems of the future in propaganda media.

While criticizing the defects of German propaganda, some of these reports suggested that even more lavish promises be given to the Soviet population, regardless of the possibility of their being fulfilled in the future.

"If Wilson managed to tempt the intelligent German people by promises, it should be easy to influence the credulous and primitive Russian people," stated a report of the Security Police about the end of October, 1941.

A Foreign Office report of October, 1941, saw the weakness in the fact that "leaflets dropped so far contain few positive statements concerning future measures planned by the Germans." Such slogans in leaflets as "Long live the liberty which the armies of Great Germany bring you!" or "For liberty, free labor, and a prosperous life for all" or "We bring you freedom of religion and liberation from Stalin's exploitation, terrorism and misery" had no lasting effect in the light of existing conditions.

The slogan is: struggle against Judeo-Bolshevism, but the reality is requisition, looting and hardship inflicted on the population, according to an army report of February 7th, 1942.

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German propaganda was more effective when it dealt with single concrete developments. Thus, a campaign was launched against the reinstatement in July, 1941, of political Commissars in the Red Army. Their reappearance, according to one of the leaflets, proved that "the Kremlin pack of hangmen does not trust you," that from now on the commanders would lose their authority, and the troops would be commanded by "civilian servants of the Kremlin gang of usurpers," rather than by military experts.

This approach was in accord with the bitterness of the Red Army against the political commissars. Another instance was propaganda on the occasion of the Soviet anniversary in November of 1941, when broadcasts were beamed from Belgrade, Rome, Bucharest, and Helsinki attacking Communism.

Many German leaflets and posters were repetitious and written in coarse language which reminded the population of Soviet propaganda. A year after the outbreak of war, a German observer noted that intellectuals in the occupied areas complained that the Germans "while changing the names of some institutions, maintain the Soviet spirit of crudeness." The poor style of some leaflets raised a suspicion among the Soviet population that the Russian translators were sabotaging and deliberately duping the Germans.

Part of the anti-Communist propaganda was devoted to an extensive and vigorous campaign against Jews. It held them responsible for the Soviet regime, for the hardships of war and the continued slaughter.

"We are not fighting against the peoples of the U.S.S.R., but against the criminal rule of the Jews and Stalin," said one of the many leaflets on this subject, while another carried verses: "Hit the Commissar-Jew, his ugly mug calls for a brick."

Anti-Semitism was also used to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. An appeal against Communism ended with the words: "Down with Stalin, the Jewish pack and the Communists! Down with Britain, the real warmonger!"

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Another leaflet stated: "Stalin's alliance with the Jews of London and Washington is not an alliance of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. with the peoples of Britain and America, but a union of Soviet, British and American Jews for the defense of their common Jewish interests."

Anti-Semitic propaganda was reported to be successful in many regions of the Soviet Union, especially in the West. Other reports stated that harsh measures applied against Jews were disapproved by the population.

The lack of subtlety in German propaganda can be illustrated by the following example. In December, 1941, the High Command suggested that leaflets be printed containing faked orders of the Soviet Government. It was hoped that such orders would create confusion among Soviet troops.

The Committee of Russian Experts at the Foreign Office agreed to this plan. But when the High Command printed an order allegedly signed by Stalin giving each Soviet soldier the free choice of whether to fight on or to desert, the Committee objected that in this case, as often before, "the intelligence of the opponent is underestimated and far too clumsy traps are set for him."

Despite the large number of leaflets dropped from German planes, the Soviet command obviously found means of intercepting them. According to a German report of May, 1942, prisoners of war often stated that they had never seen German propaganda, while the area behind their lines had often been flooded by Soviet leaflets.

Freedom of religion was a recurrent slogan in the German propaganda literature. Though many reports pointed out that the younger generation was often indifferent to religion, the importance of this problem in the U.S.S.R. was often stressed.

It was found, for instance, that in Catholic Lithuania anti-German feeling was bolstered by sympathy for Poland. As to the Russian Church, an army report of 1944 declared that it could not be used for any

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anti-Soviet campaign because of its pan-Slavic tendency and lack of fighting spirit.

German propaganda tried to enlist the support of national minorities in the Soviet Union, and on several occasions tried to stimulate their aspiration to independence. Thus, an appeal to the Ukrainians declared: "The hour of liberation for which you and your fathers have fought and made so many sacrifices in blood has struck!... The Tsars almost wiped out your language, and the Bolshevik Muscovites wanted to turn you, peasants and Cossacks, into permanent serfs... For twenty years Adolf Hitler and his National Socialists have watched your suffering... In the name of justice we came forward in support of the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian culture and a free Ukrainian state."

An appeal to the peoples of the Caucasus said: "With her invincible army Germany marches also for the freedom of all peoples of the East! Never again shall the yoke of the Muscovites be borne by these peoples... Long live free Caucasus in alliance with Adolf Hitler's Greater German Reich!"

The few scattered statements of this kind were not in accord with Hitler's real plans for these territories. They represented a swing away from Hitler's political line formulated by Reich Minister Hans Lammers, head of the Reich Chancery in a letter to Rosenberg on September 23rd, 1944; "The Fuehrer does not wish that any assurances be given to persons belonging to the Eastern peoples concerning their political future."

Similarly, a directive on propaganda and press for the Ukraine stated: "The press and the enlightenment work in the occupied Eastern regions will have to emphasize repeatedly that in the next years the only slogan for the population liberated from Bolshevism will be: work and still more work."

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### III ECONOMY AND FORCED LABOR

During an interrogation about the effect of German propaganda on the Red Army, a Russian prisoner of war said that in the Soviet Union effective propaganda must be based on a consideration of the Soviet standard of living. Soviet soldiers should be asked, "Why does the Soviet factory worker and kolkhoz farmer live in such bad conditions?" In the leaflets, he said, the answer could be confined to a few sentences describing Bolshevik mismanagement.

In the occupied regions, too, the economic problem played an important propaganda role. German reports stress that the economic disorganization of these regions was a major element in arousing the population against the Germans and undermining their propaganda efforts.

A report of June 4th, 1942, declared that because of food difficulties the population was more friendly to the Bolsheviks than several months before, and held the German administration responsible for the misery because of the large-scale requisitions.

The extent of this misery was illustrated by the following fact. In an area investigated by the Security Police in the fall of 1942, the number of cattle was 48.3 percent of the prewar figure, the number of sheep and pigs 22.9 percent, and the number of horses 62.7 percent. The population, which had expected a swift normalization of life by the Germans, came to the conclusion that the Germans "achieve not much more than our former Bolshevik rulers."

As soon as they occupied extensive areas, the Germans launched a propaganda campaign to stimulate agricultural production. In the areas of Mogilev and Orel this propaganda started very early in the war. Army horses were placed at the disposal of farmers. However, this propaganda admittedly was not an effective counter-balance for the continuing requisitions. Moreover, German observers commented that the Soviet population became contemptuous of the Germans who, it appeared, lived themselves in such misery that

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they needed the last piece of bread of the Soviet people. In the streets of Smolensk the children chanted: "Adolf Hitler, the German Fuehrer, has liberated us from bacon, meat and bread."

Abolition of the Soviet system of collective farms (kolkhozes) and Soviet state farms (sovkhozes) was promised by the Germans from the start, and was eagerly awaited by the population. When a moderate land reform program was enacted early in 1942, the Germans launched a big propaganda campaign. According to an army report of March 13th, 1942, in Byelorussia and the Baltic States one million copies of the German-published newspaper "Pravda", carrying the story, were distributed, and 16,000 posters bearing the text of the law and Rosenberg's statement, as well as 18,000 posters with the text alone, were plastered on walls.

In many towns such as Pskov and Luga mass meetings and religious thanksgiving services were held, and exhibitions to show the happy life of the German farmers were organized.

According to a Security Police report of June, 1942, the Soviets tried to counter this German propaganda by disseminating rumors that Stalin had granted land to the farmers, permitted religious services and removed Jews from responsible government posts.

Similarly, in Byelorussia pro-Soviet sources circulated rumors that Stalin had started breaking up the collective farms and that partisans were now fighting "not for Stalin, but for a new Russian order." When it appeared that the German reform existed only on paper, disillusionment was great both in towns and villages.

As early as April 15th, 1942, the High Command reported that "the favorable feeling of the population, greatly enhanced by the land reform, had turned into a rather expectant attitude."

Additional difficulty in the economic field was caused by the Soviet "scorched earth" policy and sabotage. The Germans used a large number of leaflets and lectures in an effort to persuade the population to refrain from following Soviet orders.

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"Citizens! Do not let Stalin's hangmen of the NKVD and extermination outfits burn your houses, your bread, your people's factories and plants," a typical leaflet stated.

Ukrainian peasants were told: "Your soil is your most important possession, think of this and work your fields. The product of the land will be paid for in good money."

In October, 1941, 700,000 leaflets were distributed among the miners of the Donets Basin.

One of them said: "Do not fulfill the irresponsible and stupid orders of the Soviet Government. If you destroy your plants, factories, mines and means of production, you and your families will remain without work and without bread... In Hitler's Germany the worker lives better than in the Soviet Union because he is recognized as an equal member of the National Socialist state."

Workers of oil refineries were urged: "Do not allow the prerequisites of your tomorrow's happy life to be destroyed." However, there is no indication from German sources as to the effectiveness of this propaganda.

German exploitation of the conquered areas was not confined to the purely economic field. In the U.S.S.R., as in the western nations, it included the mobilization of manpower for service in the Reich. This mobilization presented a new task to German propaganda. To popularize this supposedly voluntary mobilization the Germans used newspapers and letters allegedly written by Soviet workers shipped earlier to Germany.

The Germans were anxious to shift the onus for this mobilization to native members of the local administration. Meetings were held in towns with local mayors or known collaborators as the main speakers. German reports from some districts say the prescribed quota of workers was filled in many districts by voluntary enlistment. However, probably more reliable reports from other districts, for instance an army

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report of June 4th, 1942, stated that only a small percentage of the required number of workers had enlisted as a result of propaganda, and that "considerable pressure" had to be exercised to increase their number.

This pressure, coupled with information which leaked out about the appalling conditions in the labor camps, caused much resentment among the population. According to a report of the High Command of April 12th, 1942, the quota for Kiev was 30,000, but the very first group of workers, even before it left Kiev, was subjected to brutal treatment, and this became generally known in the Kiev area. As a result, by the fourth day of enlistment 5,000 eligible men had fled from Kiev. These circumstances, states the report, cut the ground from under German propaganda, which, even at best, was very inadequate. Here again, the population drew comparisons between the Soviet and the German occupation regimes.

"The opinion often prevails among the population that the recruitment for work in the Reich is nothing other than deportation to forced labor, well known under the Soviets," a Security Police report stated.

Soviet propaganda took advantage of the situation to incite the population against the Germans by leaflets and what the Germans called "whispering propaganda." In 1942, a Soviet leaflet charged the Germans were sending Ukrainian workers "like slaves to so-called concentration camps, in which hundreds of thousands of Poles, Czechs, Serbs and Frenchmen have died from hard labor, hunger, whips and bullets of the fascist guards." Beautiful German posters, noted the High Command, made no headway against this Soviet campaign. The accusations were believed by the population.

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## IV NEWSPAPERS, MOVIES AND RADIO

German observers noted on many occasions that the Soviet population was anxious to obtain information on current events. The people "show a strong urge for a steady and current supply of information on the political and military situation and a strong desire for reading material," a German High Command report noted. After a year and a half of occupation, a Security Police report stated that "it is amazing how difficult the reading hunger of the Russian population is to satisfy," since their criticism was sharp, and they were interested even in the advertisements which were hardly ever printed in the Soviet press. The Secret Field Police observed that farmers would sometimes offer an egg or some milk for the loan of a newspaper.

The Germans published periodicals in Russian and in other Soviet languages, though such publications were small and few in number. The Propaganda Division of the Ministry for the Eastern Territories reported in October, 1941, that the Pskov newspaper "Pravda" had a circulation of 225,000, and that in the Ukraine newspapers with a circulation from 4,000 to 40,000 each, appeared in ten towns. Some of them were weeklies. In August, 1942, there were 17 Russian and Ukrainian papers in that region with a total weekly circulation of 460,000. The Security Police reported in 1942 that the Germans were publishing in Vitebsk a farm journal, an illustrated paper, a comic paper and a "Monthly for Politics and Culture"; in Viazma, "The New World" with a circulation of 25,000; in Orel, "The Speech" with a 6,000 circulation, and similar publications in other areas. A popular calendar "New Europe" and various pamphlets met with appreciable success.

All these publications were strictly supervised by German propaganda agencies, which determined the place of publication, the printing plant to be used, the size and the price of the paper and the rate for advertisements. Since local newspapermen were few, most of the writing had to be done by propaganda officials. Newspaper material was sent from Berlin,

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and such material was sometimes criticized in German reports as showing a lack of understanding of the mentality of Soviet people.

The main columns of the newspapers were devoted to the German military communiqués. Articles were devoted mainly to current propaganda subjects, local affairs, and agricultural problems. Political comment was scarce. In the Ukraine, discussion of the postwar form of the Ukrainian state was explicitly forbidden. The constantly recurring German statement that the population asked for more news, and that the spreading of information by word of mouth never decreased, indicate that the comment and information sections of the newspapers were unsatisfactory.

Security Police reports noted that the rural population, which was difficult to reach by German propaganda, "obtained concrete material about Soviet successes" from Soviet sources, and that in Byelorussia "the native population was better informed through (Soviet) leaflets and oral propaganda about the circumstances of the fall of Stalingrad than the Germans through official information." Ten days after Pearl Harbor, in a place some 20 miles from Minsk even Germans knew nothing about the United States-Japanese conflict, the High Command reported.

Not much use was apparently made of radio propaganda. This may have been due to the fact that a considerable part of the Soviet population could not be reached by radio. Available texts of German broadcasts consist mainly of generalities and propaganda.

By contrast, Soviet broadcasts to Germany were more vigorous and better directed toward particular targets. Thus, they were used to disprove the accusation of maltreatment of German prisoners of war.

Soon after the beginning of the war, the Moscow, Leningrad, and Kuibyshev radio stations broadcast personal greetings from prisoners of war to their families in Germany, and anti-Nazi appeals to individual German military units and factories. These broadcasts, called "POW Mail," attracted the attention

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of numerous relatives of German soldiers, among them many old Nazis.

An attempt to reach soldiers' families was also made with postcards signed by German prisoners of war and dropped from planes behind the German lines. Handwriting experts of the German police found that these signatures were partly genuine and partly forged. Former Communist members of the Reichstag addressed their countrymen by radio. The National Committee of Free Germany, from its inception in July of 1943, also used the radio for communication with Germany.

Movies and theaters were also an important medium of propaganda. The German view on this subject was expressed by one German propaganda group working in the Ukraine.

"Worry about everyday life always focuses attention on political and economic problems," this group stated. "By opening or expanding movie theaters the attention of the population could be diverted and, simultaneously, propaganda influence could be exercised."

In all the occupied areas the population was mainly interested in two kinds of films: newsreels and films giving a true picture of life in Germany. In this field German propaganda proved especially weak. Even at the end of 1942, many German films were still shown without Russian captions, while in Vilno newsreels were three months old. Propaganda films designed for domestic German use were often shown, although they had no appeal for the Russians. Pictures showing the quality and quantity of German armament, however, produced a marked impression. On the basis of this observation, the Germans used to stage military parades when news from the front was unfavorable.

It was further observed that pictures of battles showing the bodies of Soviet soldiers had a depressing effect, since relatives of many of the audience were in the Soviet Army. Pictures of social life produced a mixed reaction, and some of them were criticized as immoral. A German order of 1942 directed that theaters "should under no circumstances be used for propaganda

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for reactionary-Tsarist, Bolshevik, Great Russian or Ukrainian nationalism." In the Ukraine, joint attendance at movies and theaters by German soldiers and Ukrainians was prohibited.

A similar line was taken in regard to other fields of cultural activity. The Germans sponsored reading rooms, museums and exhibitions, in an effort to at least give the appearance of satisfying the cultural desires of the Russian people. Special attraction was exercised by concerts. Exhibitions were sometimes used for direct propaganda purposes. In October, 1942, an exhibition was organized in Kharkov to show Soviet faults in handling art, economy, public health and education.

#### V SOVIET ARMY, POWS AND PARTISANS

The Foreign Office representative at the High Command supervised the publication of a "Newspaper for the Red Army Man," to spread German propaganda in the ranks of the Red Army, but only a limited number of copies were printed. In April, 1944, 10,000 copies of the current issue were dropped. But the main medium of this type of propaganda was leaflets stressing the superiority of the German Army and the difference between the misery behind the Soviet lines and the improvements in the occupied regions.

"Heroism and readiness for sacrifices alone are not enough to win a war... Your resistance is senseless, hopeless and unnecessary... Come over to us as thousands of your brethren have done. Long live peace!", one of these leaflets said.

A special appeal to the Cossacks urged them to turn their arms against the Soviets for the sake of their families and homeland. Attention was given to propaganda directed at Red Army officers, and the question of extending this field to cover political commissars was discussed but met with opposition.

One of the few appeals addressed to commissars said: "Drop your arms and surrender! Comrade

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Commanders, lead this reasonable cause! Comrade political commissars, cease all agitation for the continuation of war!"

The dropping of passes for crossing the German lines proved a successful device, and many Soviet deserters presented such passes to German posts. The text of the pass read: "The bearer of this wishes no senseless bloodshed in the interests of Jews and commissars, quits the vanquished Red Army and goes over to the German Armed Forces. German officers and soldiers will welcome the newcomer, will feed him and will give him a job."

A great number of leaflets addressed to the Red Army contained letters from the soldiers' families and Soviet prisoners of war urging Soviet troops to lay down their arms. These letters, whether genuine or forged, described the growing hardships and the reign of terror in the unoccupied part of the U.S.S.R. and the pleasant conditions in the German prisoner of war camps. In the fall of 1941, 750,000 copies of an appeal of this kind to Soviet soldiers from mothers and girls were disseminated.

Soviet counter-propaganda took a similar line. It published reports of huge German losses, and stressed the hopelessness of the German struggle, the terror prevailing in the occupied areas and the appalling conditions in German prisoner-of-war and forced-labor camps.

In 1943, it elaborated on the Allied successes in Africa, and on the economic and political tension in Germany. It paid special attention to German prisoners of war, and organized model camps with courses for their indoctrination.

The most important instrument of Soviet propaganda, however, were the partisans. The oral reports which they circulated were by far more effective than printed material. They became the main source of information, true or otherwise, in the occupied area, and hence an important element in influencing public opinion. They spread the new Soviet patriotic slogans, and stirred public feeling against the Germans who, they declared,

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were enslaving the Soviet people and making their last stand against the powerful Red Army.

The main advantage that Soviet propaganda derived from partisans was the spreading of rumors that could not be substantiated officially. In 1943 rumors were circulated by partisans in Dniepropetrovsk that the British fleet had entered the Dardanelles and shelled Sevastopol, that a British-American expeditionary force had landed in Murmansk, and that the Soviet Army had become a national Russian Army. The partisans, too, were the source of rumors about the forthcoming or even actual democratic trends within the Soviet regime.

This new line was first noted in a Security Police report of November 27th, 1942, which stated that a "new note" had appeared in Soviet propaganda: partisan groups now declared that a Russian national government would continue the struggle against Germany; the beginning of this development was the granting of religious freedom by the Soviet Government.

Numerous German reports noted persistent rumors about the end of the collective farm system and liberties already introduced by the Soviet Government or to be enacted immediately after victory. These rumors, according to German reports, exercised great influence upon the population and became a difficult obstacle for German propaganda to overcome.

A Security Police report of March, 1943, stated that "German propaganda is not in a position to counter this flood of rumors." In Byelorussia, the Security Police declared in another report that German propaganda was on the defensive "as long as we cannot overcome the partisans."

"The elimination of the influence of Soviet propaganda in areas cleared of bandits is especially difficult," because of the information they had spread an army report of May, 1944, declared.

The Soviet Government also used the partisans to carry on propaganda against collaboration with German authorities. A very successful method was used by the

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Germans for the recruitment of, and propaganda among officials of local administrations in the occupied areas. Groups of them were sent to Germany to see conditions in the Reich. They were greatly impressed by the difference between life in Germany and in the Soviet Union. For instance, in the summer of 1943 about 200 local officials from the Army Group Center area were given an opportunity to visit the Reich. Upon their return, they gave a favorable account of their trip to the local population.

However, after partisan raids, tracts were found in the streets and on the walls promising early return of the Soviet authorities and harsh punishment of mayors, policemen, and even teachers and doctors in the occupied areas.

In April, 1943, a tract signed by the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party declared: "Your sin against the Fatherland is great, and if you continue to help the Germans there will be no defense for you. But the Soviets will forgive you if you are faithful to the Russian people. Hurt the Germans wherever you can. Hide cattle and grain. Cheat the Germans, give them false information, hide refugees and help partisans. Singly or in groups destroy all telephone wires. Blast railroads. Destroy locomotives and cars. Set German dumps on fire."

In the town of Rovno, a Soviet tract addressed to policemen said: "You have sold out your homeland and your people... The people never forgive traitors. They will never forgive your children, wives, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers."

A German general declared in 1942 that "land grants, field kitchens, tobacco and propaganda are the most effective means for combatting partisans."

Actually, the Germans used only two themes in their propaganda against partisans. They maintained that the raids inflicted much suffering on the population and that such tactics could not harm the powerful German Army.

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A typical propaganda leaflet asserted: "Partisans cannot stop German advance. Sabotage and guerrilla warfare are madness. They will result in injury only to yourself."

Confidential German reports, however, stressed time and again that the partisans were an important factor in destroying the effect of German propaganda; the population was impressed by the fact that the German Army was unable to cope with the partisan forces.

As early as September, 1942, the High Command declared that the main cause of the extraordinary spread of the partisan nuisance lay in the defects of German political warfare.

## VI YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND REVIVAL OF COMMUNISM

Efforts to turn the youth against the Communists were hampered by German restrictions on education in the occupied parts of the Soviet Union. Even anti-Soviet teachers and students in the Ukraine were reported aroused by the German order limiting education to elementary and professional schools.

The Army Group Center made special efforts to support Russian and Byelorussian youth organizations. In July, 1943, a Byelorussian Youth Organization was founded, in which national and family ties were stressed, but political questions eliminated; members received uniforms and flags on the Nazi pattern. In May, 1944, a Russian Youth Organization was formed in Borisov, which enlisted 500 members within one month; it also received uniforms and flags. Attempts were made to influence children of 10 to 14. However, a Security Police report of 1943 stated that because German propaganda opened no political perspectives, young people between 15 and 30 years of age, concerned with their own future, were least receptive to it.

Another Security Police report of the same year noted that from the standpoint of German propaganda the most important fact was "the attitude of the great

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majority of the population which stands 'between left and right'."

In the beginning this large middle group was the most favorably disposed toward the Germans. But by 1943 the Security Police observed that this sector of the population "vacillates between antipathy (to the Germans), nationalism, and friendship to the Soviets." This same change developed progressively during the occupation and was reported from all occupied areas.

An army report from Smolensk of September, 1942, said that "at present there are more Reds in town than before. Under the Soviet regime many cursed Stalin, now they feel nostalgia for him."

According to the Germans, the main cause of this change was due to economic difficulties. In a Ukrainian village, the report added, peasants "making the sign of the cross expressed the wish for the return of the Reds."

Furthermore, traces of reviving Communist activities were reported even more frequently, especially in 1943. Thus, in April of that year, in Kagarlik, near Kiev, a Communist organization with 135 members was discovered, and in Kiev 97 Communists and 24 members of the Communist Youth Organization were arrested.

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