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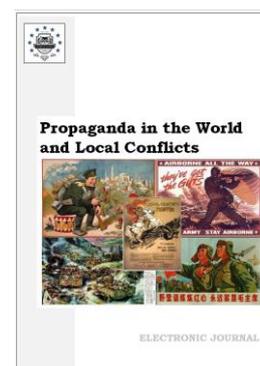
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Articles

“An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” (1919): An Account of the History of Don Cossackdom for Readers from the Countries of the Entente. Part 1

Artem Yu. Peretyat'ko ^{a, b, *}

^a Cherkas Global University, Washington, DC, USA

^b Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russian Federation

Abstract

This work analyzes “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, a book released by the Don government headed by Ataman A.P. Bogayevsky in 1919 for readers from the countries of the Entente (there were plans to release the book in English and French; the Russian edition of the book was intended for the Slav allies). It is shown that the book consistently advances the idea that the Cossacks were ideological allies of the British and the French and were committed to upholding the traditions of freedom and democracy. However, the book is inconsistent content-wise – for the most part, the factual material does not align with those ideas; it is mainly reduced to describing Cossackdom’s military victories (the exception is the section on the Civil War). This can be explained by the fact that as at 1919 there existed no summarizing works on the history of Cossackdom written from the standpoint of democratic and republican traditions, while it was also difficult to conduct meaningful research amid the Civil War in the country.

Keywords: Don Cossackdom, Almighty Don Host, Civil War, military propaganda, Entente, S.G. Svatikov.

1. Introduction

In 1919, the Don government headed by Ataman A.P. Bogayevsky released a small but well-illustrated book entitled “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919). What makes it a unique addition to pre-Soviet Don historiography is that, while the genre of popular historical essays was fairly common among Cossack authors from as early as the 19th century, this was the first time that an essay of this kind intended for foreign readers specifically had been produced. The situation in the country during the Civil War and the Intervention urged the Don government to create a positive image in the minds of the Western allies. It is well known that in that very year 1919 British Prime Minister D. Lloyd George showed his complete ignorance of Russian realities when he mentioned a “General Kharkov” as one of the leaders of the White Movement. This fact even made it into Russian culture, with V.V. Nabokov characterizing in “The University Poem” one of its female protagonists as a “well-educated” fool believing that Kharkov was a Russian general (Nabokov, 2001: 302). The Entente-oriented Bogayevsky government took advantage of the situation in the country to push its own propaganda,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: ArtPeretatko@yandex.ru (A.Yu. Peretyat'ko)

releasing a book intended to “enlighten our allies about the historic destiny and national significance of Don Cossackdom” ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: I](#)).

All of the previous popular essays on the history of Don Cossackdom created on commission from the government in the last decades of the existence of the Russian Empire were dominated by a conservative-patriotic view of the Cossack past. Specifically, Russian army General (and future Don Ataman) P.N. Krasnov concludes “The Pictures of the Past Quiet Don” with the following statement: “The glory of the Quite Don, a deep faith in the Lord and His Mercy, a boundless loyalty to the Sovereign, an ardent love for Mother Russia, and military prowess – this is what we ought to pursue as much as we can and dedicate our lives and everything we own to. So help us God!” ([Krasnov, 1909: 522](#)). A.N. Pivovarov, an adjutant to the Host Staff under another ataman, N.I. Svyatopolk-Mirskoy, hoped that his collection of essays “Don Cossacks” would help to fortify the reader’s faith in and loyalty to the Crown: “Learning about feats of selfless courage arouses a sense of deep sympathy and respect for the individuals who committed them, fosters and further fortifies one’s love for the Motherland and for the beloved Sovereign, and, lastly, makes it tempting to emulate these brilliant men of courage, these valiant performers of their duty” ([Pivovarov, 1892](#)). Understandably, monarchical declarations of this kind were of little value as a way to engage the sympathy of the British or French reader. In “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, Don history is considered through a totally different lens – with a focus on democracy.

It was stated as early as the little section “From the Publisher” prefacing the book that the easiest way for the “foreign reader” to get an idea of “the form of government in the ancient Cossack community” was by way of analogy to “the form of government in the most democratic cantons of Switzerland” ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: I-II](#)). This analogy was borrowed from the main text of the book. According to the publisher’s personal belief, the Cossacks’ democratism was not an accidental phenomenon but originated from the democratic forms of governance practiced in ancient Russia, which were eradicated by the Muscovite tsars ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: II](#)). On top of that, the “From the Publisher” section concluded with the following programmatic declaration about the historic significance of Russian Cossackdom, which is in diametric opposition to the beliefs of P.N. Krasnov and A.N. Pivovarov: “Cossackdom’s greatest historical accomplishment, and gift, is that it has preserved not only the memory of and not only the instinct for but also the clear consciousness of ancient Russian political freedom” ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: II](#)). As we can see, the purpose of the book is made clear right at the outset, with the idea being embedded into the mind of the Western reader right from the opening pages that the Cossacks are the principal bearers of democratic values in Russia.

There were plans to publish “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” in as many as three different languages – English, French, and Russian, with even the Russian edition intended for citizens of “the newly formed Slav states closely related to us” ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: I](#)). The “From the Publisher” section specifically notes that the events recounted in the book would be “covered from the viewpoint of the foreign reader” ([Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: I](#)). The Russian reader, arguably, might have been at a loss as to how to interpret this text, for, as stated above, it totally contradicted all previous (monarchical-conservative) popular essays on the history of Don Cossackdom. While the liberal tradition had, doubtless, fully taken form in Don historiography by the start of the 20th century, it mainly was limited, including for censorship reasons, to isolated research and opinion pieces. As at 1919, there existed no popular essays and fundamental research studies covering the entire history of Don Cossackdom and done in that tradition.

Accordingly, it would be quite interesting to know how “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” was received by the Russian reader, i.e. someone used to a monarchical interpretation of Cossackdom, and the Western one, for whom that text was intended. However, the foreign reader seems not to have had the chance to, actually, read the book – all attempts to locate it in the holdings of the largest British and French libraries have met with failure. On the other hand, the distribution of the book in Russia was hindered by the triumph of the Reds. Most of its copies may have physically perished. According to prominent Don historian S.G. Svatikov, “in March 1920, train cars carrying the property of the Don State Printing Office and the Regional Printery were abandoned to their fate at the Krymskaya station of the Kuban-Black Sea Railway and sacked” ([Svatikov, 1924: III](#)).

Thus, “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” can be of interest as one of the last texts of pre-Soviet Don military propaganda conducted in a committed manner. On top of that, this book appears to have been the only known attempt within the frame of that propaganda to project a positive image of Cossackdom to foreign readers. The first part of the present work will analyze this highly interesting text with the aim of learning how the Bogayevsky government wished to position itself in the international arena in the turbulent year 1919 and how organic the initial attempts to destroy the traditional image of the Cossacks as loyal servants of the Sovereign were.

2. Materials and methods

The primary source employed in this work is “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” (Очерк политической истории..., 1919). Unfortunately, searching the State Archive of Rostov Oblast and the Ataman Chancery holding for documents relating to the preparation of this book has produced no results. Therefore, the present work will primarily focus on its ideological component, comparing it both with a set of earlier summarizing works on the history of Don Cossackdom (“Materials on the Geography and Statistics of Russia Gathered by General Staff Officers: The Land of the Don Host” (Krasnov, 1863), “A Statistical Description of the Province of the Don Cossack Host” (Nomikoso, 1884), and “The Pictures of the Past Quiet Don” (Krasnov, 1909)) and with the monograph “Russia and the Don” (Svatikov, 1924), which, essentially, further develops and substantiates most of the ideas voiced in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”.

Use was made of the historical-descriptive and historical-comparative methods, with a focus on identifying the key differences between the concepts discussed in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” and the views common in early-20th-century Don historiography and also gaining insight into the key inconsistencies in the book.

3. Results

The very structure of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” is of definite interest. Although this book was positioned as an essay on political history, two of its five chapters are devoted to some other narratives. The small fourth chapter, “The Don Economy” (eight pages) provides a brief account of the region’s geography and economy (Oчерк политической истории..., 1919: 108). The author explains the inclusion of this chapter into the book by the need to “show that the region has the physical (geographic) and economic conditions necessary for independent existence – thus, the Don needs a certain degree of self-reliance in order to put its natural riches to good use” (Oчерк политической истории..., 1919: 90). It is worth noting that prerevolutionary Don historiography is characterized by a close interrelationship between history, geography, and statistics. For instance, the major works of Cossack statisticians N.I. Krasnov and S.F. Nomikoso serve as historical-statistical descriptions of the Don region (Krasnov, 1863; Nomikoso, 1884). Accordingly, the inclusion of a geographic-economic chapter into “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, which may seem somewhat strange from a contemporary standpoint, was well in line with the distinctive Don historiographical tradition, within the frame of which history and geography have normally been considered in tandem. Interestingly, in the same year 1919, there came out, on the initiative of the Don authorities, the popular work “Essays on the Geography of the Almighty Don Host” by V.V. Bogachev, a manuscript later panned for mixing history and geography, with its author criticized for regularly drawing upon historical issues to the detriment of geographic ones (Bogachev, 1919: 517).

Note that the fifth, and final, chapter, “The Don’s Political Aspirations” (even smaller in volume – seven pages), has no direct analogues in earlier Don historiography, but it is well in line with the book’s propagandist purpose (Oчерк политической истории..., 1919: 109). It openly describes and substantiates the wishes of the Bogayevsky administration with regard to the future form of government in Russia. Naturally, none of the previous popular essays on Don history and historical-statistical descriptions of the Don region, most of which were created on commission from the government, was in a position to voice such wishes. Besides, Don ataman administrations (as of 1848, the post of Ataman was exclusively held by Regular Army generals who were not Cossacks by descent) had never publicly stressed the need to undertake nationwide reforms. At the level of Don public opinion, the first cases of discontent being vented at the political agenda in the Russian Empire were recorded no later than the 1860s, when I.K. Babst and K.P. Pobedonostsev spoke of the effect on the local public of “childish

daydreams and fairytales about the independence of particular tribes in the Russian state, linguistic and institutional autonomy, the federative principle, and so on and so forth” (Volvenko, 2015: 22). The demise of the Russian Empire and the creation of an electoral Host government were making it possible now to describe “the Don’s political aspirations” in an officially published popular essay on the region’s political history, as opposed to local opinion pieces, logically concluding it with a description of the desired political future for the Cossacks. The problem is that this move exposed the book’s propagandist orientation, making it clear that it was intended not just to familiarize the reader with the history of the Cossacks but spread in Western society certain views of the future of Russia, for which it would provide a historical rationale.

It is through this lens that one must view the structure of the historical chapters in this book. These chapters appear to be characterized by an obvious disproportion – whereas the history of the Don region in the period from the 16th to the early 18th centuries is described in 35 pages (Chapter 1 – “The Ancient Don Volnitsa”; on a side note, the volnitsa was the Cossacks’ self-governing community), the period from the 18th to the early 20th centuries is covered in just 21 pages (Chapter 2 – “The Don as Part of the Russian Empire”), while the text devotes 29 pages to the period 1917–1919 (Chapter 3 – “The Revival of the Don”) (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 107-108). As evidenced even by its structure, the past serves in this text as the background and an explanation of the much more comprehensively described present, with the emphasis laid on the early history of Cossackdom to the detriment of the imperial period. This kind of logic behind the narrative is perfectly illustrated in the author’s small introductory section entitled ‘The Distinctive Position of the Cossacks among Other Population Groups in Russia’. It attempts to prove that, despite the fact that Cossackdom is ethnographically, and even physically, heterogeneous, the Cossacks are distinguished from all other population groups in Russia by “a love of freedom, but not the kind of love of freedom felt by a rebellious slave who identifies freedom with unbridled displays of base instincts and anarchy but the kind felt by a warrior and citizen” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 3-4). This “love of freedom”, on one hand, “finds an explanation in the origins and history of Cossackdom”. On the other hand, it is alleged to have given rise in the present to the Cossacks’ antagonism toward Bolshevism, of which much is said as early as the introductory section: “The Cossack Hosts were affected by Bolshevism only briefly, with a particularly short period of subjugation witnessed in the Don. It is particularly worth noting that a portion of the Don Host has rejected Bolshevism staunchly. It can be stated with confidence that the strife of the Don Cossacks against Bolshevism has been going on since the moment the Council of People’s Commissars let the hand of an international con artist reach out toward the patriarchal, freedom-loving Don” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 4). Thus, the book interprets Cossackdom’s past flat-out propagandistically – not as an intrinsically valuable phenomenon but as an explanation of its democratic traditions and contemporary struggle against the Bolsheviks.

So, it is even evidenced by the distinctive structure of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” that this text is constructed as a flat-out propagandist work – compared, say, with “Essays on the Geography of the Almighty Don Host”, whose author, V.V. Bogachev, asseverated that he had always kept to “scholarly inquiry templates” and that his research plan was well in line with that of scholarly books describing other governorates in the Russian Empire (Bogachev, 1919: 517). Overall, prerevolutionary Don historiography is characterized by propaganda being mixed with science – Don authors tend to mix elements of propaganda into scholarly works, with numerous new facts even introduced at times. The only such author to admit to writing popular essays for patriotic purposes was A.N. Pivovarov, who acknowledged this in 1892 (Peretyatko, 2020: 11-12). The logic behind the production of scholarly-propagandist research, which has been traditional in Don historiography, is clearly explained by N.I. Krasnov via the following statement: “We do not invent or make things up but write based on real documents and, where possible, try to cite top Russian historians; yet we do pick the periods that are of relevance to our time and to our current concerns – so as to suggest a possible future based on what happened in the past” (Krasnov, 1881: 66). Thus, the texts of Don authors who pursued strictly patriotic goals (e.g., A.N. Pivovarov and P.N. Krasnov), likewise, employed a move utilized in earlier scholarly-propagandist works – whereby patriotic ideas deemed important by the author of such a work could be put across not directly, i.e. via the author’s personal statements, but via particular facts discussed in that work or the dialogue of its protagonists. Even in the final part of “The Pictures of the Past Quiet Don”, where P.N. Krasnov openly voices his views of Cossackdom, some of the ideas of

importance to him are put across as “great precepts” of the forefathers M.I. Platov and Ya.P. Baklanov, which he himself just humbly followed (in actual fact, there is no evidence in support of the existence of some of those “precepts”, which seem to have been made up by him personally) (Krasnov, 1909: 521-522). “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” stands out in this context from the Don historiographical tradition and is a lot easier to analyze, as it is not masqueraded as something scientifically objective, nor does its anonymous author have historical figures utter made-up statements – but directly and openly expresses his position.

To gain insight into this position, we will explore its key tenets by way of comprehensive analysis of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” through the lens of early-20th-century Don historiography. The first part of this work will focus on the first three chapters, which cover the history of the Don Host from the time of its establishment to 1919.

The Ancient Don Volnitsa

Although this chapter is the largest, most of its content is not original and is not of much interest in the context of the present study. For the most part, it describes facts from the history of Cossackdom that were known pretty well by the start of the 20th century, like the conquest of Siberia by Yermak and the part played by the Don Cossacks during the Time of Troubles. The very chronological timeframe for the early history of the Don established by the author (from the emergence of Cossackdom to the suppression of the Bulavin rebellion (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 107) occupied a common place in Don historiography by the start of the 20th century. Back in 1864, N.I. Krasnov wrote that Don history was divided into two distinct periods (“sections”): “The first section is the primal existence of a community governed by a local government – just under the auspices of the Russian government. The second section is the existence of a community wholly subordinate to Russia and its laws – with the Cossacks still enjoying some rights and benefits, which they are expected to willingly relinquish sooner or later” (Krasnov, 1864: 2). Note that, while N.I. Krasnov placed the Bulavin rebellion in the second “section”, ending the first one with the year 1700, he offers the caveat that this border is nominal and can be pushed to 1738, i.e. when the Host Assembly, arguably, ceased operation (Krasnov, 1864: 2).

Compared with earlier popular works, what is different about “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” is not so much the way facts from the early history of Cossackdom are described but the way such facts are assessed in it – it was not legal for many of the statements contained in the book to be published in the Russian Empire back then. This book says nothing about the primal, primitive existence of early Cossackdom. On the contrary, it states that at that time the form of government in the Don Host was the “genuine republic”, regarded “as the ideal polity by Rousseau” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 30). The work separately characterizes the status of this republic as a “semi-sovereign state” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 30). By contrast, the Russian Empire is described as a highly primitive state, one that does not match contemporary democratic ideals: “What Russia’s Petersburg rulers have wanted for it is not true unity, but uniformity. Their ideal of the polity can be said to have found reflection in the infamous Arakcheev “military settlements”; Russia is like an army barrack” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 38-39).

We will not dwell here upon how valid this view of Don history is. It is not completely false – the Don Host was earlier termed “an independent bellicose republic” by V.D. Sukhorukov, the man who laid the foundation for Don historiography (Sukhorukov, 2001: 36). What is flat-out propagandist in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” in this case is the author’s assessments – the alleged “bellicose republic” of earlier Cossackdom, obviously, had little to do with the ideals of then-yet-to-be-born philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment, while “Russia’s Petersburg rulers” professed totally different state ideals, and much of that was far from the “Russia is like an army barrack” narrative (suffice it to recall the Great Reforms of Alexander II). Well, there is another thing about this book that is even worse from the standpoint of the impact of a propagandist narrative. The book’s assessments of early Don history do not match at all the factual material in the text tracing back to earlier works on the history of Don Cossackdom. Specifically, of the Russian tsars who reigned prior to the 18th century, the book speaks negatively only of Boris Godunov (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 20). Mikhail Fedorovich, for instance, is said to have “pursued a cautious policy and governed wisely” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 31). A high valuation is also placed on Peter I’s capture of Azov (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 35). Consequently, what remains unclear is what was wrong with the gradually growing subjugation of the Don to those wise rulers. On top of that, a large portion of the chapter

“The Ancient Don Volnitsa” is devoted to the Cossacks’ military activities, which are described from a perfectly traditional Russian patriotic perspective, while the “genuine republic” of the early Don Host is discussed rather succinctly – in a mere one and a half pages (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 29-30). In other words, even the way the narrative is constructed, which is done in the vein of earlier monarchical texts, keeps conflicting with the author’s republican-democratic declarations.

Perhaps, this is best illustrated by the description in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” of the uprising of Stepan Razin. Structurally, this description is close to the interpretation of this event in “A Statistical Description of the Province of the Don Cossack Host” by S.F. Nomikosov. It takes this prominent Don statistician just a couple of sentences to describe the uprising of S. Razin, the ataman of “the utterly destitute”. He speaks of it in a rather negative light and diminishes the role of the Don Cossacks in it as much as he can. He then dwells upon the Cossacks’ first official swearing of fealty to the Sovereign subsequent to the uprising (Nomikosov, 1884: 19). In “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, the Razin rebellion is, likewise, described briefly – it terms it “a brigand adventure” and “a rebellion of the utterly destitute” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 33). However, afterwards it all of a sudden states that “the image of brigand Razin in the public consciousness has changed”, with his movement being a “precursor to a great public protest against autocratic power” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 33). Next, the book provides a detailed description of the way the Cossacks swore fealty to the Sovereign. Note that it is stated that the Donians did it reluctantly – they wanted to serve Russia without swearing fealty to its Sovereign: “The thought of being subordinate and submissive must have made most of the freedom-loving Cossacks uneasy” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 34). The problem is that the book describes as the effects of the Cossacks’ swearing fealty to the Sovereign their numerous victories and their improved relationship with the central government – i.e., it turns out that the government was right when it imposed the swearing of fealty on the “freedom-loving Cossacks” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 34). So, the uprising of Stepan Razin was a bloody revolt of “the utterly destitute” – yet it entered public memory as a “great public protest against autocratic power”, and the Cossacks’ swearing of fealty to the Sovereign was incompatible with the Donians’ traditional love of freedom – yet a series of glorious victories ensued as a result.

Logical inconsistencies of this kind, which discredit the very idea of a democratic Cossackdom opposed to Russian despotism, are encountered in the first chapter of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” on a regular basis. In point of fact, exclusive of the author’s declarative statements, the democratism of the Cossacks of the period between the 16th and 17th centuries and the despotism of the Russian government are covered in the text fairly negligibly, but it provides detailed descriptions of the Donians’ patriotic exploits in defense of Russia and Christianity, something that would have been impossible without help from the Russian tsars and something that formerly made up the basis of conservative-monarchical propaganda in the Cossack environment.

The Don as Part of the Russian Empire

This chapter reveals the book’s inconsistent tone to an even greater degree. Given the above-stated declarations by the author about an “army barrack-like Russia” being the ideal to the “Petersburg rulers”, this chapter was to become the key part of the book and prove the despotism of the imperial government and the democratism of Cossackdom via specific examples. This kind of logic behind the construction of a narrative is brilliantly illustrated in “Russia and the Don” by S.G. Svatikov – most of this book (38 out of the 53 chapters) is devoted to this specific period (Svatikov, 1924: 590-592). However, “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” not just says little about the imperial period of the existence of Don Cossackdom – nothing at all is written in it about the narratives that are central to the author’s declarations.

Content-wise, a large portion of the chapter “Don as Part of the Russian Empire” is again devoted to Cossackdom’s military exploits, which are interpreted in a traditional, monarchical-patriotic, vein. Specifically, in relation to the Cossacks’ exploits committed between 1812 and 1814, the book even mentions the Imperial Commendation from Alexander I (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 48). There is no criticism of imperial policies in relation to the Don. Of all the sovereigns from the period between the 18th and 19th centuries, the text speaks negatively only of Paul I, which is done purely in the context of military history – the Cossack campaign to India masterminded by him was rated as a “pipe dream” that could have been born only in a “sick mind” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 45). The civil history of 18th-century Cossackdom is not

covered at all, not even as briefly as the early “genuine republic” of the Don Cossacks – subsequent to describing the Donians’ military exploits, the author immediately proceeds to discuss “major events in the civil life of the Cossacks in the 19th century” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 51).

Incidentally, this fact does the best job of proving the compilatory nature of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” content-wise. The thing is that as at the start of the 20th century it is the civil history of the 18th-century Don Host that had been relatively researched the least. All the existing texts on the subject, although not numerous anymore, interpreted the Don’s diminishing autonomy in that century as a positive phenomenon. Specifically, it is worth drawing upon the following description by N.I. Krasnov, who was quite liberal and never hesitated to criticize the imperial government, of the reforms that ensued following the suppression of the Pugachev rebellion: “The installation of a proper system of administration and governance eliminated the powers of the Host Assembly; verbal justice, some of which may have been unfair, was replaced with a sword of justice acting in accordance with the law; both public and private ownership rights could now be ensured” (*Krasnov, 1863: 59*). Thus, N.I. Krasnov and most of the Don prerevolutionary authors viewed the elimination of the Don’s autonomy and disbanding of the Host Assembly as civilization’s triumph over barbarism and a success for the better developed Russian Empire in the cause of installing a proper system of governance in the Don.

However, this way of looking at the events of the 18th century was incompatible with the book’s focus on the idea of the superiority of Cossack democratic institutions over Russia’s despotic ones. The first prominent text in historiography to speak of the erroneousness of the reduction of Don autonomy by the imperial government in the 18th century, actually, was the monograph “Russia and the Don” by S.G. Svatikov. Note, however, that S.G. Svatikov had admitted that a case for the idea of the early Cossack Hosts being full-blooded democratic republics was first made by him – if a bit earlier, in 1919, in some book entitled “The Political-Legal Environment in the Don in the Period between the 16th and 20th centuries’, which is yet to be located by contemporary researchers (*Svatikov, 1924: V*). This raises the question of whether perhaps “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” is actually that very lost work by S.G. Svatikov, in which he first made a case for his new view of the history of Cossackdom, a work possibly published amid the pandemonium of the Civil War under a different title (these narratives will be discussed in greater detail in the second part of the present work). In any case, we can see that, being unable to find any descriptions of the civil system in the 18th century Don Host that would fit with his concept, the author of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” simply omitted this subject, despite its significance. This is direct proof that, in discussing the Don’s history prior to the 20th century, the author exclusively retold third-party texts, which resulted in a mismatch between descriptions and concepts in the book.

What stands out somewhat in “The Don as Part of the Russian Empire” is the chapter’s final part, which covers the events that took place after 1905. It contains very few specific facts, which is no wonder, considering that as at 1919 the events that took place after the Russo-Japanese War remained insufficiently conceptualized in Don historiography. At the same time, it contains a number of original assessments by the author that clearly are something that the Western reader would have liked to hear. Specifically, the Cossacks are said to have “shed their blood” in World War I not only for the “greatness and political might of Russia” but also for “our allies – the French and the English” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 59); they are also said to have elected to the State Duma “representatives of pronouncedly democratic public currents fighting for the freedom and rights of the people” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 58). Finally, it is noted separately that it was wrong to have regarded the Cossacks at the time of the First Russian Revolution as “enemies of the public movement whose actions encroached upon the rights of the people” for their part in suppressing the public unrest (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 58). According to “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, the Cossacks “did what all upright citizens should – they fought against anarchy, confronting a debauch of the populace’s dark instincts, something that does not build but destroys the state” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 58). Arguably, it is in this part of the text, where the author’s declarations are not proved or disproved by specific facts, that the narrative of the book’s historical chapters is the least inconsistent.

The Revival of the Don

The work is not so much inconsistent in its description of contemporary events (the 1917 Revolution and the Civil War) as it is with regard to objective reality. It tends to handle facts in a

totally biased manner, with an obvious focus on presenting the Cossacks to the French and, especially, the English in as favorable a light as possible, including at the expense of the rest of the Russian people. For instance, the Provisional Government is characterized in the book as one “mainly formed of individuals totally unprepared for running the government and not endowed with a gift of statecraft” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 61). Even worse, the Petrograd Council of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Deputies is presented as a collection of individuals who “are un-Russian, do not love Russia, and do not know her” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 62). This tandem is said to have lost a war about to be won through the efforts of the Western allies: “Thanks to the allies, the Russian army was brilliantly armed at the time; its artillery outnumbered that of the enemy, and it had much ammunition and endless reserves. The army’s morale was high – one last offensive was coming up aimed at overpowering the enemy and securing a victory for the countries of the Entente a year and a half earlier than it would actually happen and ensuring a worthy role for Russia in the victorious conclusion of the war” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 62). The text lays particular blame for the army’s collapse on “the ambitious mountebank Kerensky”, who is said to have personally demoralized the units at meetings (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 62).

So, all of Russia had descended into chaos and anarchy, while, according to this book, things were completely different with the Cossacks: “The Donians were building a temple of freedom when in Russia they were paying a boisterous homage to freedom at a saloon” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 63). In the Don they were doing a deliberate and competent job of “reviving the self-government of our forefathers”, and on the frontline the Cossacks were the only ones who did not seek to desert (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 63). In July 1917, the Cossacks even saved Russia from a Bolshevik coup (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 64). They were headed by the democratically elected A.M. Kaledin, a “truly exemplary citizen” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 63).

What was left to do was to explain the reasons behind the establishment of Soviet power in the Don in early 1918 and Ataman A.M. Kaledin’s shooting of himself to death. Here, we encounter another inconsistency in the book. While just a few pages earlier it states that the Cossacks remained impervious to the anarchy that had engulfed Russia, it all of a sudden then turns out that some of the Cossacks returning to the Don had actually been affected by “the poison of depravity” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 67). Tellingly, back in December 1917, “there were many units that remained more or less disciplined”, but it is not clear why the number of guerilla fighters really answerable to the Host administration was so small that “it was becoming impossible to engage in meaningful armed combat with the Bolsheviks” (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 68).

We will not dwell here upon the description in the book of the events of the Civil War that followed. Enough has been said to give one an idea of the way this text tends to interpret facts. Let us limit ourselves to one important and telling narrative – the one dealing with the Cossacks’ attitude toward the Central States and the Entente. The Krasnov government established subsequent to the liberation of the Don from the Bolsheviks is known to have had a pro-German orientation, which was not something for the British or French reader to cheer about. Below is an outline of this book says on this.

“The Don, which received technical aid from the Germans to be able to sustain its existence, nurture the nascent forces of the new Russia (Volunteer Army), and fight the Bolsheviks, remained loyal to its allies in the world war. The Donians’ behavior can be confidently characterized as staying *loyal to the allies*. If it had not been for this wise policy, the struggle against Bolshevism either would have withered away altogether or would have been still in its early stage, as a consequence of which the Council of People’s Commissars would have been in a much stronger position than it is now and would have enabled Germany to refuse to sign a peace treaty, something it wished to do in reliance on assistance from Soviet Russia. And, had the Council of People’s Commissars not been in a hopeless position itself, it would have done Germany a favor in its struggle against the Entente”, says the text (Ocherk politicheskoi istorii..., 1919: 76). In other words, under this inconsistent narrative, the Don Host appeared to be receiving help from the Germans in the interests of their opponents, the English and the French, because this help was used for fighting the Bolsheviks, who, in turn, allegedly were loyal allies of the Germans. Apparently, the question of why the Germans would want to help the Don Host to fight their own allies is not raised in the book. At the same time, the Cossacks are said to have played a decisive

role in the signing of the Armistice of Compiègne – it appears that, if it had not been for their success in the struggle against the Bolsheviks, the latter would have fought alongside Germany, making World War I last longer!

“An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” openly praises “the wise and ingenious policy of Don Ataman Krasnov”, who supplied German weapons to the Volunteer Army, which was too sensitive to engage in a direct relationship with the Germans (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 73). Yet it is stated in another place that the Don Host was surrounded exclusively by “either the Bolshevik enemy or states servile to the Central Powers” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 76). Comparing P.N. Krasnov’s policy with those of other pro-German governments, the book’s author tries to prove that this policy was characterized by relative freedom and required “much courage” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 76). P.N. Krasnov’s leaving his post of Ataman was attributed not to his pro-German position but “some tensions between Don and Volunteer Army commanders” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 76).

This brevity contrasts with the text’s detailed descriptions of the activity of the British missions in Southern Russia. Overall, the British intervention is covered in the book in the following four chapters: “England’s Help”, “The Mission of General Poole: The Disappointment with the Allies”, “The Mission of General Briggs: The First Help”, and “The Assembly’s Gratitude to England” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 80-81, 88). Gratitude to the British government and British officers is expressed in these sections regularly (e.g., “A major factor in the further successful development of the events was help from our allies” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 80); “The direct (material) and indirect importance of this help is very high – it occupies a significant place among the reasons behind the successes achieved by the Don Army last spring” (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 81)). This was well in line with the policy of Ataman A.P. Bogayevsky. The book provides a detailed account of a special ordinance by the Host Assembly. This directive, which is of importance in the context of the present work’s subject matter, is described in the text as follows: “The ordinance defines the meaning of the struggle against Bolshevism and the significance of the help coming from the allied democracies. According to this directive, “English weapons in the hands of the Don Cossacks will help to advance the common historical ideals of democracy and freedom”. The English democracy will know that the Don’s struggle against Soviet power is waged not in the name of reaction and restoration but in the name of attaining a genuine democracy, living up to the precepts of the ancient Don volnitsa, and advancing the historical “ideals of democracy and freedom” common for the British and the Cossacks (*Ocherk politicheskoi istorii...*, 1919: 88).

The Bogayevsky government wished to position itself in the international arena as committed to European democracy and oriented toward the British Empire. However, it tried to make it look like that was not something that had come about situationally by 1919, subsequent to the demise of the conservative pro-German Krasnov government, but was something inherent to the Cossacks historically, having to do with “the common ideals of democracy and freedom shared by the British and the Cossacks”. Consequently, all the incoherencies and clearly inconclusive interpretations in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” were associated with the desire to prove the historical democratism of the Cossacks, thwarted by the despotism of the Russian Empire. Basically, it was all about building a propagandist image that would place the Don government (and all other Cossack governments during the Civil War) in a special position relative to the Western allies – above all, the Cossacks were to be presented as ideological allies of the democratic Entente.

Nonetheless, the image of Cossackdom created in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” came out quite underwhelming. Technically, the concepts of the “genuine republic” of the early Don Host and historical Cossack democracy did have some potential, both propagandist and scholarly. However, as at 1919 there simply existed no substantial research on Don history conducted in correspondence with these concepts, so the author mainly retold in the work’s historical part the texts of his predecessors in his own words, supplementing that information with his own assessments, which tend to be inconsistent with what happened.

4. Conclusion

The government headed by A.P. Bogayevsky wished to position itself in the mind of the European reader as an ideological, rather than situational, ally of the Entente. “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host”, intended for this reader specifically, paints the

Cossacks as committed republicans and bearers of the same “ideals of democracy and freedom” as the British. The entire history of the Don Host, from the 16th century to 1919, is interpreted in this particular way. On top of that, it is alleged that it was with the aim of upholding their ideals that ever since 1917 the Cossacks had consistently fought against the Bolsheviks, trying to both defend their lofty democratic traditions from the unruly mob and protect their ideological allies, the democratic English and French, from the Bolsheviks allied with the monarchal Germans.

It was, thus, perfectly natural for a text written from that kind of standpoint to be strictly propagandist and to badly distort (or, at best, simplify) real facts to suit the political trend of the day.

Besides, in 1919, when “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” was created, there simply existed no summarizing research works on the history of Cossackdom written from the standpoint of democratic and republican traditions. By contrast, the tradition of popular historical essays on the history of Cossackdom, pervaded by a conservative-monarchical spirit, had been around for several decades by then. Having said that, it looks like the author of “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” had not conducted any research of his own amid the Civil War and simply retold existing texts and supplemented that information with his own assessments. As a consequence, his narrative turned out to be highly incoherent and inconclusive. While these are popular monarchical essays and there are detailed descriptions of the Don Cossacks’ military exploits committed for the glory of Russian monarchs, the author’s assessments are not always well-aligned with that content, as they tend to deal with a narrative that factually is represented in the text quite poorly – the one about the democratic ideals of Don Cossackdom. Nevertheless, later on, the major ideas proposed in “An Essay on the Political History of the Almighty Don Host” would be picked up and finely elaborated by S.G. Svatikov. This will be discussed in the second part of the present work.

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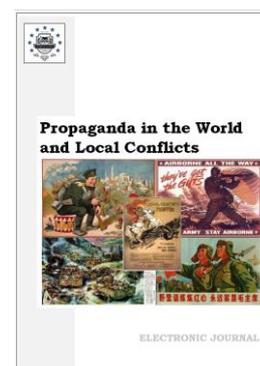
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The Russian Agitational Trains and Steamers Sector in 1918–1920: Apparatus, Practices, Challenges, and Solutions

Evgeniya V. Kravtsova ^{a, *}

^a Kuban State University, Krasnodar, Russian Federation

Abstract

This paper examines a unique phenomenon of the Soviet era – the use of agitational-propaganda trains and steamers subsequent to the 1917 October Revolution. Given the military-political situation at the time, the Bolsheviks, headed by V.I. Lenin, needed to have their statecraft agenda grounded in support from the wide masses of the nation's peasantry and working class. The search for ways to distribute agitational leaflets, brochures, and books among members of the Red Army in as mobile a fashion as possible would result in the launch of literary-instructional trains and steamers.

The paper offers an insight into the mechanics and practices behind the conduct of agitational work with local communities at the time. An attempt was made, based on the available statistical data, to identify the more common and effective propaganda techniques as well as the barriers in achieving the objectives for agitational vehicles. A noteworthy aspect touched upon in the paper is the Bolsheviks' interest, in this context, in the tenets of Taylorism, which found reflection in their plans to employ cutting-edge technical means.

Keywords: agitation, propaganda, agit-trains, agit-steamers, Soviet power, Bolsheviks, civil war, socialism building, V.I. Lenin, All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK).

1. Introduction

The establishment of Soviet power in Russia and in the future Union republics following the 1917 October Revolution was by no means an instantaneous and lightning-fast process. For several years, this process was also impeded by the large-scale Russian Civil War. In addition to military, economic, and organizational difficulties, a pressing objective was to win over and get the wider population to accept the new authority. One of the more interesting phenomena associated with the building of the Soviet state was the Bolsheviks' robust agitational-propaganda work, an area they would go on to be quite successful in.

Subsequent to the October Revolution, agitational-propaganda work was conducted by the Bolsheviks in an incredibly professional and well-orchestrated manner. Considerable attention was paid to it by leaders of the Russian Communist Party such as V.I. Lenin, L.D. Trotsky, and M.I. Kalinin. A major step forward in the cause of influencing the masses was the launch by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) of agitational trains and steamers, which were to be the mouthpiece of the newly established Soviet power across the country, including its most remote areas.

The purpose behind the research reported in this paper was to explore the operation of agitational trains and steamers in the early years of the Soviet state (1918–1920) and identify some

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: evgeniya-sinchina@yandex.ru (E.V. Kravtsova)

of the key characteristics of this phenomenon. Consequently, the objectives of the study were as follows: 1) conduct a brief analysis of the emergence of the agit-vehicles sector and explore its apparatus; 2) identify the key forms and methods of work with the population and establish which of those were the most effective in producing desired propaganda results; 3) identify the key challenges that were faced by agit-vehicle campaign personnel; 4) explore in a structured manner some of the action plans and recommendations for successful propaganda from participants in the initial agit-vehicle campaigns; 5) explore the views of contemporaries, including Russian Communist Party leaders, on the role of agitational-propaganda trains and steamers in the cause of spreading the ideas of Bolshevism and the Socialist Revolution.

2. Materials and methods

The primary source employed in this work is the collection of articles “The VTsIK Agit-Vehicles Sector: History, Apparatus, and Work Practices”, published in 1920 during the 8th All-Russian Congress of Soviets under the supervision of the Agitational-Instructional Trains and Steamers Department. Most of the authors in the collection, including V. Karpinsky (editor), Ya. Burov, A. Oborin, M. Buravtsev, R. Arsky, K. Samoylova, and A. Izrailovich, were actual participants in and witnesses to the initial agit-vehicle campaigns. Of particular note is the Appendix to the collection, which contains quotes from speeches by V.I. Lenin, L.D. Trotsky, and M.I. Kalinin, as well as a letter of appreciation from the Bukhara Central Revolutionary Committee and a set of draft regulations on organizing the operation of the agit-vehicles sector ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 60-67](#)). The other sources employed in this work include the various leaflets, brochures, posters, opinion pieces, and texts of decrees that were distributed by agitational trains and steamers. These materials can be accessed via special websites dealing with archival documents ([GAOSO](#)).

The study’s methodological basis was an interdisciplinary analytical approach and a set of socio-historical methods. A wide use was made of systems analysis, the cause-and-effect method, and the descriptive method. The study was conducted with observation of the following essential research principles – historicism, objectivity, and systematicity.

3. Discussion

The subject of agitational trains and steamers was researched by Soviet scholars quite extensively. This, in part, is associated with the fact that the nation’s agitational-instructional units, whose purpose was to help resolve critical socio-political issues at critical times in Soviet history, had not disappeared but had transformed, continuing their work. They were employed during World War II and during the nation’s major socialist construction projects (e.g., the use of the Red Echelon, the last agit-train in the history of the USSR, during the construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline Railway ([Elizarova](#))). Among the Soviet research studies on the conduct of agitational-propaganda work via trains and steamers, of particular note are the works by Ts. Gofman ([Gofman, 1948](#)), L.V. Maksakova ([Maksakova, 1956](#)), E.M. Mezhenina ([Mezhenina, 1958](#)), and A.T. Nasyrov ([Nasyrov, 1991](#)), which are distinguished by a rich source base, a detailed analysis of statistical documents, and an accurate insight into the operation of the nation’s most influential agit-trains.

Within Russian historiography, issues related to Bolshevik agitational-propaganda policy continue to attract the interest of researchers. Modern researchers have paid a significant amount of attention to the cultural and educational aspects of the use of agit-vehicles (e.g., [Tanin, 2002](#) and [Lezhen', 2013](#)). A major work focused on this subject was released in 2002 – the two-volume “Mass Agitation Art in Soviet Russia: Materials and Documents”, a colorful and informative collective publication ([Agitmassovoe iskusstvo Sovetskoi Rossii, 2002](#)). Research has also continued into the relatively little researched aspects of agitational-propaganda work conducted at the time. For instance, A.I. Karlyavina has explored the use of agit-vehicles to conduct antireligious propaganda ([Karlyavina, 2018](#)). Some of the researchers have focused on the effect of the use of agit-vehicles on regional history ([Filimonov, 2018](#)). In recent years, there has been increased interest in researching the way this sector was organized ([Timofeeva, 2016](#)) and the structure of the authority apparatus concerned with the Bolsheviks’ propaganda mechanisms ([Bochkareva, 2010](#)). Some interest has also been displayed in researching the use of such mechanisms against the White Guardsmen ([Konkin, 2015](#)).

4. Results

One of the key lessons derived by the Bolsheviks from the First Russian Revolution was the conclusion about the special significance of agitational-propaganda work, including within the nation's army and navy, which, both heterogeneous in composition, served as a firm support for the Tsarist regime to lean on (Gavrilov, 1955: 5-6). During that time, extensive use started to be made of leaflets and proclamations, with attempts even made to "have in place cheap canteens and reading rooms with games and relevant reading materials and organize all kinds of entertainment activities for officers" (Gavrilov, 1955: 17-18) – only to be clamped down on by the authorities. According to historian T. Shanin, the lessons derived from the army and navy uprisings did not go to waste for the revolutionary political parties (the Bolsheviks, in particular), who would put the best practices from the Revolutions of 1905–1907 and 1917 to good use. The issue of engaging all of the nation's armed forces in the process was just a matter of time, resources, and propaganda efforts (Shanin, 1997: 470). Consequently, subsequent to the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolsheviks were able to make a most effective use of the propaganda experience they had amassed over the years (Karlyavina, 2018: 112). The Russian Civil War provided a new impetus for the conduct of agitational work among the masses – all the more so given the aspiration of each of the conflicting sides to win over as much of the population and discredit the enemy as much as possible.

The year 1918 witnessed the launch of a new agitational apparatus – specially outfitted trains and steamers. The idea owed its inception to the Military Department of the VTSIK publishing house, which at the time was tasked with distributing Soviet literature at the fronts to boost the morale of members of the Red Army (Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 5). Transportation by rail was viewed as the most mobile of the delivery methods available at the time. To attract the attention of the locals to a literature-carrying train, it was to sport an eye-catching outward appearance. The solution was to "decorate the sides of the cars with illustrated posters". Later on, they switched to actually *painting* art on the sides, as paper posters were "vulnerable to damage by rain and wind" (Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 5).

The first experience in this area was the launch of the Mobile Military Frontline Literary Train Named after V.I. Lenin, which in August 1918 left Moscow to travel to Kazan under the command of Ya.I. Burov. Comprised of freight cars, it incorporated a books warehouse, a bookstore, a small front office, and a kitchen. This enterprise was a success and full of promise. The project participants returned to Moscow with a blueprint in hand for the design of a literary-instructional train (Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 6). Based on a directive from L.D. Trotsky, work would begin in the Moscow Railway District on the outfitting of five literary-instructional trains (the last of them, however, was ready to run only in 1920).

In 1919, the VTSIK issued a regulation on literary-instructional trains and instructors from the People's Commissariats on them. In charge of this sector was a special commission membered by Burov, Sosnovsky, Yeremeyeva, and Minina (Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 6). The main objective was to establish firm ties between the country's major cities (Moscow and Petrograd) and areas to which the young Soviet power was coming, as well as to help develop the country's economy, which would be so crucial to its recovery. The so-called "mobile network" had the various elements of its stationary counterpart mapped onto it – agitation, instruction, control, literature supply, and communication (Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 7). As a consequence, the sector's organizational establishment comprised following units: Political Department (split into the Instructional and Agitational-Lecturing Divisions), Complaints Office, Information Department, Cinema Department, Fairs Department, Technical Services Department, General Services Department, Budget and Accounts Control Department, Russian Telegraphic Agency (ROSTA), a books warehouse, and a bookstore. Action plans for work with a target region's local community were typically shared by political workers in advance, and agitators would work on the text of upcoming public addresses.

A few words will now be said about the technical side of the agit-vehicles business, which many view as a progressive phenomenon largely grounded in the teachings of F.W. Taylor concerning labor organization and production management (V.I. Lenin advocated employing in the building of the Soviet state what he saw as the positive part of Taylorism (Lenin, 1969: 187-190)). A typical agit-train was comprised of 16–18 freight or passenger walk-through cars with only minimal comfort for personnel and had an internal telephone link and a radio transmitter-receiver (capable of even receiving a signal from abroad). Each train had a staff of 15–18 political workers

and 80–85 technical assistants (agit-steamers employed 175–180 such staff) and a security team composed of members of the Red Army ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 8-9](#)). Internal life and routine on agit-trains were regulated via special written instructions.

Ya.I. Burov, a member of the VTsIK commission concerned with managing the operation of agitational trains and steamers, wrote the following on the matter: “Normally, a trip overlapped with a certain political event. Every time an area was freed from occupation, the Organization would instantly dispatch an agit-vehicle over there. These “uplifting” trains were intended to provide organizations and residents with assistance in building new Soviet power and Communist Party apparatuses” ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 10](#)). The first qualified instructional agit-train (which was named after V.I. Lenin as well) traveled in December 1918, under the command of Sosnovsky, to the country’s northwestern areas newly freed from German occupation. It would go on to become the nation’s flagship agit-train, making trips to Ukraine and Siberia in 1919–1920. The other agit-trains employed at the time were the October Revolution, Red East, Soviet Caucasus, and Red Cossack. Over the two-year period, these five agit-trains made a combined 18 trips, and the agit-steamer Red Star made two journeys. The agit-vehicles, combined, visited 96 governorates – from localities in Latvia and Belarus to areas in Turkestan, a combined 775 stops ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 18](#)).

The key types of propaganda activities that agit-vehicle personnel normally organized were open-air meetings, indoor meetings, nonparty conferences, congresses, lectures, fairs, cinema sessions, pieces of theater, and giving out literature. Concurrently, instructors were doing their share of the work too (mainly members of the People's Commissariats with significant political weight within the agit-vehicles establishment) – visiting local institutions, arranging meetings for the staff of the agency they represented, giving presentations, and tackling key issues of concern to a local community.

The Complaints Office on an agit-vehicle served to help develop a relationship between the central government and a target area’s authorities, inspect the latter’s work, and document (and, where possible, try to resolve) key issues of concern to the local community. In his paper “The Complaints Office on Agit-Vehicles”, which was released as part of the collection “The VTsIK Agit-Vehicles Sector: History, Apparatus, and Work Practices”, A. Oborin notes the following: “Making a complaint is the simplest and most elementary form of protest against reality or perceived injustice. There, accordingly, exists a need to teach the average citizen how to complain, expose, and protest” ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 35](#)). Note that it is this specific institution that would often serve as the bulwark of public trust in Soviet power at the time. This assertion can be supported by the following statistics: a single trip undertaken in the summer of 1920 by the steamer Red Star saw its Complaints Office receive 3,000 complaints from the local community, with the figure being 1,500 with the train Red East (March through July 1920) ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 32-34](#)). The most complained-about issues at the time included poor social support, confiscation, impressment, arrests, and land disputes. There was commitment to resolving resident complaints “as soon as possible, preferably on the spot, so as to show the local community the fairness of Soviet power and that it cared about workers and the poor” ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 33](#)). Success stories of exposing and bringing the guilty to justice and dismissing corrupt or ineffectual officials were helping dispel a local community’s fears and distrust of the new authority. This particularly was the case in Turkestan, where the Muslim population was at first reluctant to make contact. However, it took just a few trials of the guilty for the situation to change radically, with collective complaints even starting to be lodged against high-level officials for abuse of power (e.g., the exposure and dismissal of the Chief of Police of the city of Samarkand).

In addition to investigating injustice, the Complaints Office would also engage in gathering useful material about all kinds of issues of concern to an area’s local community and about the work of its local authorities, with this information then analyzed and put to good use in future agitational-propaganda endeavors. Consultation was another service provided by the Complaints Office. This included legal assistance and guidance on the latest legal regulations.

Of particular note are the methods employed in 1918–1920 by the Women's Department of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (“Zhenotdel”) in working with women during agit-vehicle campaigns. Agitators and instructors sought to reach out to the entire female section of the proletariat. During World War I, the number of women working in factories increased significantly, and women increasingly took part in the country’s socio-political life.

However, not all regions witnessed brisk progress and success in engaging women in the building of the Soviet state. Zhenotdel agitators placed particular emphasis on the need to nurture women's organizational skills and develop in them the ability to form socio-political institutions, to which end particular use was made of instructors and agitators specializing in working with females. An interesting description of the reactions an agit-steamer campaign drew from women was provided by Zhenotdel member K. Samoylova: "To the children and women, the arrival of the Red Star was a real fiesta. They put on their best outfits to spend the entire day at the steamer, attending an open-air meeting, a maternity protection fair, and a concert by a violinist, a cellist, and a pianist, which they loved. Lastly, they enjoyed a movie session, which included "Brain of Soviet Russia" (a film showcasing the input of the People's Commissars), "Red Turnip" (a film about the attempts by the White Guardsmen to destroy the Red Army), and, finally, "Soviet Medicine" (a film depicting how community service helped "heal the bourgeois of their maladies")" ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 46](#)). In addition to agitational-organizational work, educational and coordination work was also conducted. In areas that already had a women's department in place, such work included identifying and remediating issues in its work and providing guidance on how to conduct work with female residents and what objectives to focus on. Issues discussed at women's conferences and congresses typically included food security, labor protection, combating abuse of power and corruption, support for hospitals caring for members of the Red Army, maternity and childhood services (e.g., child day care), and joining the Party. Statistics indicate that such activities were very popular and drew many female residents. For instance, in the summer of 1920, instructor K. Samoylova organized nine women's nonparty congresses and conferences in the Volga Region, with the cities Tsaritsyn and Saratov drawing 645 and 672 female delegates, respectively ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 47](#)).

A crucial form of agitation on trains and steamers were art painting and posters – intended to have a visual effect on the masses. At first, artists had some freedom in what they chose to paint on an agit-vehicle. Consequently, many of the illustrations were too futuristic and figurative to have the right effect on the wider public. This would result in such art getting more realistic. In charge of all activity related to the development of poster slogans and inspection of poster art was a special editorial team headed by V.A. Karpinsky. The artists' team was headed by I.I. Nivinsky. The well-known artists whose services were enlisted for the purpose included K.S. Malevich, M.Z. Shagal, K.S. Petrov-Vodkin, D.S. Moor, and M.M. Cheremnykh ([Karlyavina, 2018: 115](#)). The choice of themes such as fighting both external and internal enemies, combating capitalist oppression, boosting labor productivity, restoring the economy, and doing away with illiteracy was in keeping with the political agenda set for the young Soviet state ([Konkin, 2015: 105](#)). The significance of posters and art painting to the success of agit-vehicle campaigns has been stressed by researcher E.E. Lezhen', who is convinced that this type of art "played at that time a significant educational role in a low-literacy, impoverished country that had virtually no other means of informing people about what was going on" ([Lezhen', 2013: 123](#)). While there were other channels for informing the population (e.g., leaflets, newspapers, theater, and cinema), what sets "mobile posters" ([Tanin, 2002: 59](#)) apart is that such images are known to remain photographically fixed in one's mind for long periods of time.

The majority of responses to the questionnaire (a special questionnaire that typically had to be filled out by local government officials to assess the effectiveness of agit-vehicle campaigns) concurred that agitational art painting was a critical and indispensable means. Firstly, such "mobile posters" easily caught the eye with their colorful artwork. Secondly, images could be understood by members of all social groups, including the illiterate. Thirdly, clear and catchy slogans were easy to commit to memory as a means of keeping up one's revolutionary ardor. A questionnaire from the stanitsa of Kavkazskaya dated June 12, 1920, contains the following answer: "Brightly colored, expressive revolutionary images are indispensable in influencing the masses. They can get even the most apathetic and indifferent people interested. Even detractors recognize that the Bolsheviks are exceptional at agitation" ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 63](#)). Thus, art painting was a cutting-edge method of agitation.

Despite the significant effort put into it, the general conclusion about the operation of the agit-vehicles sector in Russia in 1918–1920 was that there was a need to reconsider the methods used to conduct propaganda work. It turned out in practice that many agitators did not know the true state of affairs in a region and would employ a one-size-fits-all approach, setting priorities that

were out of step with the real needs of local communities. In an effort to help advance the cause of building socialism in the country, the central leadership also suggested paying more attention to industrial propaganda.

A key problem with agitational trains and steamers was a shortage of suitably skilled personnel, political workers, and instructors. Careful attention to the activity of instructors was drawn in the article “The Significance of Instructional Work within the VTsIK Agit-Vehicles Sector” by M. Buravtsev ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 36-40](#)). It was stressed that, being a representative of a particular People's Commissariat, instructors ideally had to be responsible, experienced individuals with comprehensive knowledge of the activity of their commissariat who were prepared to engage in joint work with other political workers within the agit-vehicles sector and practice joint decision-making.

Another problem was the relationship with the central leadership – over the two-year period, no special commission was established to manage and coordinate the work of political workers within the agit-vehicles sector and no statutory documents were created for the purpose – leaving personnel overloaded with work ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 11](#)). The mission had been affected by neglect, ignorance, and heedlessness on the part of the employees of the People's Commissariats and other central public agencies, many of whom viewed going on an agit-vehicle trip as going to a “resort” to relax and unwind from the stresses of their day job ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 11](#)).

In addition, instructors and agitators often witnessed high levels of incompetence by local officials – more specifically, ignorance of the contents of VTSIK decrees and directives, a lack of knowledge about the essence and functions of the People's Commissariats, and a lack of organizational skills. The work of the Complaints Office helped spot cases of inactivity, negligence, and gross abuse of authority on the part of local officials in the discharge of their duties. V.A. Karpinsky cited the following as key causes behind poor Party work in regions: 1) local organizations being detached from the people; 2) inability to combine Soviet and Party work (e.g., holding important activities without explaining anything to the population, which might have been met with aggression); 3) organizing work in a wrong way (forcing one to attend an activity, which might have been met with repugnance); 4) conducting nonparty conferences in an incompetent manner or absenting oneself from such events on a regular basis, which surely did not help to bring new members into the Bolshevik party – in fact, this even caused the numbers to drop (declines of up to 50%); 5) wrong interpretation of the idea of national autonomy; 6) overlooking many important aspects of life in a region (e.g., the women and youth problems); 7) reprehensible practices by Party organizations (e.g., giving approval to illegal conduct by local residents) ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 21-22](#)). Tackling these challenges and deficiencies and straightening the Party line was seen as a key objective for the agit-vehicles sector.

Another difficulty that faced Bolshevik agitators and propagandists at the time was a change in the consciousness of the masses, with people, who, for the most part, were concerned with basic everyday issues, as opposed to their government's international policy, getting increasingly demanding, selective, and critical. Of particular note in this respect is the following suggestion by V.A. Karpinsky addressed to political workers: “Try to picture, for a moment, the psychological state of peasants or workers attending a meeting in hopes of learning of the possibility of some kind of improvement in their life – and you will easily see that... amid a fireworks display of obscure words and phrases used to talk about things that are so alien to them, their eyes may go funny and they may get groggy – and they will either fall asleep or just leave. And chances are they'll never come back” ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 24](#)). Therefore, political workers and instructors had to be good communicators and be well-versed theoretically in the social, political, economic, and other aspects of life in a target region.

The key technical challenges that faced the agit-vehicles sector included the trains having to sit idle for too long in Moscow – for up to a month and longer (in addition to red tape, there was a civil war going on, which complicated travel on the railroads), insufficient funding for fit-out of trains, and the need for additional means of transportation (e.g., two-wheeled carriages, automobiles, longboats, motorboats, wagons, and barges).

The following initiatives were proposed by contemporaries and participants to help tackle the challenges facing the agit-vehicles sector:

1) Put in place regulations and standards for the operation of agit-vehicles; reorganize the Agitational-Instructional Trains and Steamers Department; centralize the operation of agit-vehicles and have the sector's accumulated best practices serve as a model for future campaigns.

2) Ensure a rigorous and thorough staffing process and seek to hire more well-qualified staff; have them design schemes for working with target communities and write topical content; get the People's Commissariats and other government institutions interested in getting these processes going in order to help remediate the existing imperfections; enlist various specialists to work within the sector, including musicians, actors, poets, and artists.

3) Make active use of technical tools – from the various modes of transportation (horses, air, water, and rail) to floating theaters (with a seating capacity of up to 1,500) and mobile fairs by the People's Commissariats; “Taylorize” agitational-propaganda methods and forms of influencing target audiences ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 17](#)) – employ as many mechanisms to streamline the work process as possible (e.g., mobile printing presses, radio stations, movie theaters, slide viewing, and slogans in the sky); set up socially significant facilities focused on assisting the masses and local authorities in advancing the cause of building socialism (e.g., show workshops, ambulatory care clinics manned by experienced nurses, and veterinary stations); provide humanitarian aid to the population (e.g., bring over linen, shoes, toys, kitchenware, glass, nails, textbooks, and paints ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 30](#))).

4) Adapt one's choice of agitational-propaganda methods to the changing reality, paying close attention to both public sentiment and needs; employ major methods of reasoning (e.g., induction) to get the thoughts of members of a target audience headed in the right direction; put to use one's knowledge of the statutory instruments of Soviet power.

5) Vest agit-vehicle staff – as direct representatives of the nation's highest authority – with appropriate authority in order to ensure their maximum involvement in the life of a local community; make the roles of agitator and instructor complementary to each other (these measures were to help enhance public administration in remote areas, with a focus on bolstering the position and standing of the Bolsheviks' there based on coordinated influence on an area's major local institutions); maintain sustained contact with a local population to obtain feedback on the implementation of initiatives launched during agit-vehicle campaigns (e.g., through the Complaints Office).

The above list is only a small selection of the proposals put forth by agit-vehicle campaign organizers and participants. All of those proposals were based on the practical experience gained and the material gathered through agit-trips, which is of significance for future research. Note that, actually, most of those proposals were passed into law by V.I. Lenin on January 25, 1920 ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 60](#)).

When it comes to contemporaries' assessment of the role of the agit-vehicles sector in spreading Communist ideology and the ideas of socialism building, there was no unanimity among them on this. An analysis of the materials in the collection “The VTsIK Agit-Vehicles Sector: History, Apparatus, and Work Practices” revealed the following two major standpoints on the subject: 1) viewing the use of agit-vehicles as a worthwhile approach (e.g., participation from foreign delegations and journalists from England and Czechoslovakia; unconditional support from Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin and his colleague M.I. Kalinin, who took part in a trip on the train October Revolution); 2) treating the use of agit-vehicles with skepticism and staying true to the old ways. While no specific names have been identified, there is one circumstance meriting attention here. While the October Revolution train, which ran under the supervision of VTsIK Chairman M.I. Kalinin, is known to have made the largest number of agit-trips across the country (22 as at 1925), it was stated by Ya.I. Burov, a member of the VTsIK commission concerned with managing the operation of agitational trains and steamers, to have actually failed its principal mission. First, no preparatory work had been conducted with the political workers, with the plans discussed just a few days before the trip and only over the phone. Second, while it was a fairly speedy campaign (three-week-long trips with 10–12-hour stops), which helped visit a large number of cities and localities, this took a toll on efficiency. Third, according to Ya.I. Burov, “work on the October Revolution trips was reduced to political demonstration and superficial instruction” ([Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 13](#)). Being insufficiently immersed in agit-work and detached from the realities faced by local residents was stressed by many of the authors in the collection as the most painful aspect of agit-vehicles activity at the time.

5. Conclusion

The Bolsheviks' agitational-propaganda activity was firmly rooted in, and shaped by, historical events such as the First Russian Revolution, World War I, the February and October Revolutions, and the Russian Civil War. The principal objective was to reach out to and win the support of the wider population, especially during the conflict with the White Guardsmen. To this end, a unique mechanism was devised – agitational trains and steamers.

The study examined the apparatus and practices of the agit-vehicles industry in Bolshevik Russia. It was established that this element of the Bolshevik agitational-propaganda machine was concerned with functions such as coordination, consultation, control, and education and was expected to cover as wide a spectrum of local issues as possible.

The key methods employed by the sector's political workers and instructors in their work with target communities in 1918–1920 included open-air meetings (which drew a combined 2.75 million people), lectures (25,500), mobile fairs (166,500), cinema sessions and concerts (2.21 million), giving out literature (newspapers and leaflets) in Russian and other languages (more than 3 million copies), and dealing with resident complaints and grievances (14,500 complaints) (*Agitparpoezda VTsIK, 1920: 18*). The principal forms of agitation at the time included posters and art painted on the sides of a train car, which were eye-catching and could grab people's attention from a distance with their realistic images and compact and relevant slogans. Agitational posters and art painting would go on to become an independent type of Soviet-era art. Of particular note is that agit-vehicles served as a source of inspiration for local political and cultural-educational organizations owing to the way they were organized and the unconventional methods of persuasion they employed, with some regions even attempting to emulate this kind activity. For instance, the Lenin Agit-Train's 1919 visit to Pskov produced such a stir that a year later the local leadership undertook a similar project. The result was an outfitted streetcar for local use (*Filimonov, 2018: 254*).

An analysis of the insights offered in the collection of articles “The VTsIK Agit-Vehicles Sector: History, Apparatus, and Work Practices” leads one to conclude that contemporaneous participants concurred on there being both deficiencies in the way the agit-vehicles industry was run and a lack of understanding and appreciation of the value of such work on the part of the government. There were various technical and staffing issues. Nevertheless, all those passionate about the agit-vehicles business would not give up and would continue to search for ways, and share in presentations to the government their ideas on how, to enhance the agitational apparatus and reach the remotest parts of the country. More so that the Bolshevik military-political authorities did have an interest in doing it – given the devastating effects of the Russian Civil War on the population. Going forward, well into the Soviet period, agit-vehicles would long remain the engine for the Bolsheviks' agitational-propaganda agenda.

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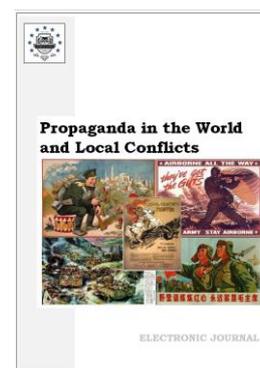
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An Analysis of the Principles of Military Propaganda Employed by the Soviet Union in January 1942 (based on Materials from the Krasnaya Zvezda Newspaper)

Serhii V. Stelnykovych ^{a, *}

^aZhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine

Abstract

This paper relies on relevant materials from the popular Soviet newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda to investigate the propaganda work conducted by the Soviet Union in January 1942.

It provides a brief historiographical overview of the theory of propaganda (J. Dewey, W. Lippmann, and H.D. Lasswell) and offers an insight into a special type thereof – military propaganda (A. Morelli, G. Demartial, and A.A.W.H. Ponsonby).

The primary source used in this study is publications (articles, short pieces, reports, citations of official documents, etc.) in the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper, the official mouthpiece for the People's Commissariat of Defense of the Soviet Union.

The degree is assessed to which the materials from Krasnaya Zvezda match the principles of military propaganda identified by A. Morelli's. Chronologically, the study centers on January 1942.

A key conclusion drawn from this study is that propaganda was actively employed by the Soviet media during World War II as a means of bolstering the morale of the people.

Besides the 10 general principles identified by A. Morelli ('we don't want war – we are only defending ourselves'; 'our adversary is solely responsible for this war'; 'our adversary's leader is inherently evil and resembles the devil'; 'we are defending a noble cause, not our particular interests'; 'the enemy is purposefully committing atrocities; if we are making mistakes this happens without intention'; 'the enemy makes use of illegal weapons'; 'we suffer few losses, and the enemy's losses are considerable'; 'recognized intellectuals and artists support our cause'; 'our cause is sacred'; 'whoever casts doubt on our propaganda helps the enemy and is a traitor'), the work explores a few other principles of military propaganda ('infallibility of our leader'; 'temporariness of failure'; 'our leader having the unconditional support of all the people in the country (the 'draw the nation together' effect)'; 'having the active support of the world community'; 'feats of courage being committed on a mass scale, with every single of our combatants being ready to commit one').

Keywords: propaganda, military propaganda, media, Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper, the year 1942, USSR, World War II, Great Patriotic War.

1. Introduction

Propaganda is a highly effective means of bolstering the morale of both the military and the civilian population. There are numerous forms and methods of conducting propaganda work. In the present age of a wide spectrum of media types (e.g., the Internet, TV, print, and radio), this area of activity has become a particularly efficient means of shaping public opinion and individual perceptions of reality. In an earlier study, we explored the theory of the phenomenon of

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: stel-s@ukr.net (S.V. Stelnykovych)

propaganda and examined some of its key forms and methods (Mamadaliyev, 2020). The present work is focused on analyzing the characteristics of Soviet military propaganda conducted during a critical moment in the first stage of the Great Patriotic War – the Soviet counteroffensive in the Battle of Moscow.

The study's chronological scope – January 1942 – was established for a reason. On December 5, 1942, the Soviet army started its counteroffensive in the Battle of Moscow (September 30, 1941 – April 20, 1942). The Wehrmacht's loss in this battle was its first major strategic defeat in World War II. On the other hand, I.V. Stalin's decision to push the enemy away from the capital as soon as possible – contrary to the advice of his top military commanders (e.g., G.K. Zhukov, B.M. Shaposhnikov, and S.K. Timoshenko) – caused the unprepared Germans to sustain heavy losses. January 1942 was a period of success for the Red Army, with Moscow already liberated, the army having suffered no significant losses as of yet, and the morale of Soviet troops and the nation's political leadership being up. This could not but be reflected in the way the Soviets would conduct their propaganda work at the time.

Let us now define some of the key terms the present work will be working with. Propaganda (derived from the Latin verb 'propagare', meaning 'to propagate', 'to disseminate', or 'to spread') may be defined as "spreading views, facts, arguments, (often) rumors, garbled information, or knowingly false information with the aim of forming a desired public opinion and manipulating public consciousness" (Filosofiya..., 2006: 712). A milder definition of propaganda is "spreading political, philosophical, scholarly, artistic, etc., views and ideas with a view to embedding them in public consciousness and galvanizing mass practical activity" (BSE, 1975: 89).

Military propaganda is "one of the crucial types of support for armed hostilities that is aimed at maintaining the faith of the civilian population and military personnel in the potential of their nation's armed forces and its ability to fight back and in the ability of its military-political leadership and unit and force commanders to achieve victory over the enemy" (O voennoi propagande, 2020).

The primary objective behind the propaganda in the Krasnaya Zvezda publications was to cultivate (bolster) the people's faith in victory over the enemy in a time of military conflict. Accordingly, the material under examination in this work is to be subsumed under military propaganda. To avoid confusion, the terms 'propaganda' and 'military propaganda' will be used in this paper interchangeably.

2. Materials and methods

The key source used in this study is publications in Krasnaya Zvezda for January 1942. The official mouthpiece for the People's Commissariat of Defense of the Soviet Union, this newspaper was founded on November 29, 1923. Its first issue came out on January 1, 1924. It was an all-Union (central) newspaper, i.e. it was published by federal authorities and circulated throughout the USSR. Up to this day, it has been the official mouthpiece for the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. During World War II, it was a leading national publication and employed prominent opinion writers such as A.N. Tolstoy, M.A. Sholokhov, K.M. Simonov, and A.P. Platonov. And, of course, it was one of the nation's primary media for military propaganda.

The present study employed an array of historical and general research methods.

The following traditional historical methods were used:

- historical-typological method (used for the purpose of classifying the methods and principles of military propaganda);
- historical-systems method (used for the purpose of analyzing relevant materials from the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper and interpreting them in integrated association with the period's front-line and political events);
- historical-genetic method (used for the purpose of exploring the development of relevant military propaganda as a logical consequence of previous historical events).

The study utilized general research methods such as historiographical analysis and systems analysis.

The present work's scholarly novelty lies in its filling the gap left by the lack of research analyzing Soviet propaganda in the period under review based on the sources mentioned here and its expanding the roster of principles of military propaganda based on new findings from the analysis of those sources.

3. Discussion

Issues of propaganda and military propaganda have been explored by numerous researchers, including philosophers, historians, psychologists, and opinion writers. Below is an outline of the more significant research works on the subject.

The foundational theories of propaganda were developed by H.D. Lasswell, W. Lippmann, and J. Dewey.

In his 'Propaganda Technique in the World War', H.D. Lasswell argues that propaganda affects vulnerable elements in a person's consciousness (e.g., fearing for the life and health of themselves and their family, worrying about their financial well-being, being worried about becoming dependent on someone or something, or being concerned about being able to exercise independence in decision-making) (Lasswell, 1927). The scholar is credited with having provided a theoretical substantiation for the phenomenon of demonizing the enemy as an effective propaganda tool (Lasswell, 1938).

W. Lippmann stressed the need for sound organizational work in the area of conducting propaganda activity on the part of the government. He is credited with having provided a substantiation for the theory of portioning out and filtering information and misinformation when sharing it with the broad masses of the people – as opposed to ensuring that a nation's political elites obtain all of the information (Lippmann, 1922).

There is another theory of propaganda that is worthy of specific mention. Developed by the prominent philosopher J. Dewey, it holds that every educated person is able to discern credible information from misinformation in today's fast-paced, information-packed world. According to this scholar, letting a nation's political elites control information would be a wrong thing to do, as that could lead to the people becoming intellectually weaker and enable the state's enemies to manipulate it with ill intentions (D'yui, 2000; D'yui, 2002).

While there are other theories of propaganda, the scope of this paper limits us to the three mentioned above, all the more so as, essentially, all of them are based on those three.

Military propaganda is examined as a separate type of propaganda in 'The Basic Principles of War Propaganda' by A. Morelli (Morelli, 2001). The work provides a theoretical substantiation of military propaganda and considers some of its key principles, which will be outlined in more detail below. A. Morelli openly admits to have summarized and elaborated the ideas of A.A.W.H. Ponsonby, a British politician, writer, and social activist, whose 'Falsehood in War-Time' was published in 1928 (Ponsonby, 1928), and G. Demartial, a French antiwar and opinion writer, whose works 'La Guerre de 1914: La Mobilisation des Consciences' (Demartial, 1922), 'Les Responsabilités de la Guerre. Le Patriotisme et la Vérité' (Demartial, 1916), and 'Le Mythe des Guerres de Légitime Défense' (Demartial, 1930) discuss the purposively false nature of military propaganda.

Of particular note in the context of the present study is the article 'Good Military Propaganda and Poor Military Propaganda' by Aleksandr Timokhin, published in the electronic journal *Voennoe Obozrenie* on November 21, 2020 (O voennoi propagande, 2020).

In terms of the use of encyclopedias, reference was made to the entry 'Propaganda' in the 21st volume of the 30-volume 'Great Soviet Encyclopedia' (3rd edition) (BSE, 1975) and the same entry in the encyclopedic dictionary 'Philosophy', published under the editorship of A.A. Ivin in 2006 (Filosofiya..., 2006).

Certain aspects of the theory and practice of military propaganda were also explored in some of our own works, more specifically in the context of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (Mamadaliyev, 2020a; Mamadaliyev, 2020b; Mamadaliyev, 2021a; Mamadaliyev, 2021b).

4. Results

In her 156-page monograph, devoted to general principles of military propaganda, A. Morelli considers 10 postulates that, if followed, can make one's military propaganda effort more effective (Morelli, 2001), which are as follows:

- 'we don't want war – we are only defending ourselves';
- 'our adversary is solely responsible for this war';
- 'our adversary's leader is inherently evil and resembles the devil';
- 'we are defending a noble cause, not our particular interests';

- ‘the enemy is purposefully committing atrocities; if we are making mistakes this happens without intention’;
- ‘the enemy makes use of illegal weapons’;
- ‘we suffer few losses, and the enemy’s losses are considerable’;
- ‘recognized intellectuals and artists support our cause’;
- ‘our cause is sacred’;
- ‘whoever casts doubt on our propaganda helps the enemy and is a traitor’.

As we can see, the above propaganda principles work for just about any armed conflict in history one can name. Our own research into the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict confirms their validity. The aim of the present paper is to establish the degree to which the propaganda in relevant materials published in *Krasnaya Zvezda* in January 1942 matches the above postulates.

The front page of *Krasnaya Zvezda*’s “New Year’s” issue of January 1, 1942, featured a perfectly natural felicitation: “Happy New Year, comrades! Under the banner of Lenin and Stalin, let us go forth and demolish the German invaders” (KZ, 01.01.42a: 1). The page also contains a New Year’s address by M.I. Kalinin (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR), an article entitled ‘To New Victories’, and several short pieces, all relating solely to the war.

As many as several principles of propaganda activity are utilized on the newspaper’s front page alone. The article ‘To New Victories’ states the following: “Last year was a special year in the history of our country. The war had chopped it in two with its axe – the first six months were filled with an atmosphere of peace-building, but the year’s second half witnessed immense battles against Hitler’s hordes of cutthroats”; “We remember the day when the ironclad Fascist hordes treacherously invaded the borders of our country and rolled through the Soviet land, putting its cities and villages to fire and sword. We remember the day when the great Stalin delivered a radio address calling on millions of people to confront German fascism in a patriotic war. We remember every word of our Leader, who told his people the whole truth about it all and inspired them to fight a deadly war against the enemy. We remember the days when we had temporary setbacks and when Soviet regiments had to retreat in the face of an enemy much superior in number and firepower” (KZ, 01.01.42a: 1). This is a good example of using the method of demonizing the enemy and their leader. Here use was made of the following two principles of military propaganda from the set proposed by A. Morelli: ‘our adversary is solely responsible for this war’ and ‘we don’t want war – we are only defending ourselves’. Besides those from A. Morelli’s set, the quote employs the following principles from our own set:

- ‘infallibility of our leader’ (what may seem an unwise decision on his part at first glance is actually part of a clever long-term strategy);
- ‘whatever military, economic, or social setbacks we have had, it is all just temporary, as we are superior to the enemy strategically’ (a focus on driving home the idea that the enemy has been just lucky or the enemy’s success has mainly been due to their treacherous tactics).

In fact, the ‘cult of personality’ idea runs through the material like a golden thread (e.g., “When retreating, we never faltered in believing in the wisdom of our leader and kept up our mighty will to advance”; “We remember the sun that morning, its light glittering on the tips of the bayonets held by the Red Army soldiers lined up in front of the Lenin Mausoleum for a parade. And, when the great Stalin spoke from its rostrum of the Red Army as a force capable of destroying the German aggressor, our Supreme Commander knew that this force would soon head to the West” (KZ, 01.01.42b: 1)). Locutions of this kind were employed not only in *Krasnaya Zvezda* but in virtually all of the period’s media outlets.

Statements regarding the cult of personality and the infallibility of the nation’s leader are found in every single issue of the *Krasnaya Zvezda* newspaper (e.g., “Back in the summer of last year, comrade Stalin called on us to try and make a wider use of Russian resourcefulness on the battlefield” (KZ, 03.01.42)). The principle of military propaganda dealing with the leader of the nation having the unconditional support of all the people in the country (the so-called “draw the nation together” effect) can be encountered in the short pieces ‘New Year’s Letter to Comrade Stalin from Uralians’ and ‘To Comrade STALIN [original upper case] from Baku Party Members’ (“The peoples of the Soviet country are celebrating 1942 with their heads held high. And, as is the case at any time, be it a public holiday or some other event in a time of peace or crisis, the thoughts of all Soviet people will be with you, our dear friend and commander. Our hearts are filled with

sincere gratitude to you, comrade Stalin. ...In your company and under your direction, with your wise advice guiding our way forward, we were able to survive the tough year 1941” (KZ, 01.01.42i); “The Members would like to assure you, comrade Stalin, that each and every Bolshevik, party or non-party, will do everything in their ability to work for the benefit of those on the front line, and will do so with redoubled zeal. A person who was content with their daily work quota yesterday will readily have it doubled tomorrow. ...We shall mobilize creative initiatives, make extensive use of local raw materials and resources to make every production facility, workshop, or machine tool work to maximum capacity, and implement a solid industrial culture in an untiring effort to support the seamless flow of defense products to the front line” (KZ, 01.01.42j)).

The ‘having the active support of the world community’ principle is employed in the short pieces ‘Greeting from Chiefs of Staff in London to Comrade Shaposhnikov, Marshal of the Soviet Union’ (“We are pleased to send you our cordial greetings in conjunction with New Year’s Eve. Following a heroic defensive effort against a treacherous invader, the Soviet army and air forces are currently advancing. We are convinced that 1942 will be a year in which your courageous soldiers and pilots, who are fighting our common enemy, will achieve a historic victory. We wish you success in this endeavor” (KZ, 01.01.42c: 1)) and ‘Greeting from General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief in India, to Comrade Shaposhnikov, Marshal of the Soviet Union’ (“On behalf of all troops under my command, I wish you and your courageous troops success in 1942” (KZ, 01.01.42d: 1)). This principle is utilized in other articles as well (e.g., ‘Foreign Press on Red Army’s Military Operations’ (KZ, 08.01.42c)). This method would not, of course, work for every single nation. What sets it apart from the other methods is that here the propagandist is keenly looking for an ally to their country. This approach was employed not only by the USSR and its allies but by the Third Reich and the Axis powers as well.

The principle ‘we suffer few losses, and the enemy’s losses are considerable’ is present in the short pieces ‘Germans Suffering Heavy Losses’, ‘Troops on Western Front Take Control of Kaluga. General Guderian Beaten’, and ‘Spoils of War Seized by Troops on Southwestern Front between December 7 and 25’. These publications detail the losses sustained by the Wehrmacht (e.g., “Between December 7 and 25, our troops on the Southwestern Front SEIZED [original upper case] the following spoils of war in their battles with the German invaders: 456 guns, 163 mortars, 555 machine guns, 257 assault rifles, 25 tanks, 7 armored vehicles, 1,479 motor vehicles, 239 motorcycles, 5 aircraft, 14 radio facilities, 29 anti-aircraft machine guns, more than 8,700 mines, nearly 700,000 rifle cartridges, 173 kilometers of communications wire, and other military assets” (KZ, 01.01.42f: 1)). An analysis of relevant battlefield reports released over a period of several straight weeks revealed that information as to the enemy’s losses was available in every single issue of the newspaper, while the Soviet army’s losses were not disclosed (KZ, 03.01.42b: 3; KZ, 07.01.42b: 2; KZ, 08.01.42b: 1; KZ, 09.01.42: 1; KZ, 10.01.42: 1; KZ, 11.01.42a: 1; KZ, 11.01.42b: 1; KZ, 13.01.42a: 1; KZ, 13.01.42b: 1; KZ, 14.01.42a: 1; KZ, 14.01.42b: 1; KZ, 15.01.42a: 1; KZ, 15.01.42b: 1; KZ, 16.01.42a: 1; KZ, 16.01.42b: 1; KZ, 17.01.42a: 1; KZ, 17.01.42b: 1; KZ, 18.01.42a: 1; KZ, 18.01.42b: 1; KZ, 20.01.42a: 1; KZ, 20.01.42b: 1; KZ, 21.01.42a: 1; KZ, 21.01.42b: 1; KZ, 22.01.42a: 1; KZ, 22.01.42b: 1; KZ, 24.01.42a: 1; KZ, 24.01.42b: 1; KZ, 25.01.42a: 1; KZ, 25.01.42b: 1; KZ, 27.01.42a: 1; KZ, 27.01.42b: 1; KZ, 28.01.42a: 1; KZ, 28.01.42b: 1; KZ, 29.01.42a: 1; KZ, 29.01.42b: 1; KZ, 30.01.42a: 1; KZ, 30.01.42b: 1; KZ, 31.01.42a: 1). As is commonly known, a piece of propaganda that relies on facts, even if they are made-up, tends to produce a better effect than an abstract text.

A. Morelli’s ‘the enemy makes use of illegal weapons’ principle is employed in a Krasnaya Zvezda article entitled ‘How German Generals “Manufacture” Russian Prisoners of War’. Here the focus is on the use of misinformation. This article also utilizes the ‘the enemy is purposefully committing atrocities’ principle (“The Soviet Information Bureau has new incontrovertible evidence of flagrant violations of the international rules on warfare committed by the German-fascist cutthroats, with their brutal treatment of the locals in captured areas and turning of civilians into prisoners of war” (KZ, 01.01.42h: 2)). The article uses the phrase “incontrovertible evidence” by way of confirmation, a method that is quite popular among present-day propagandists as well. The method of condemning enemy atrocities is employed several times in each issue of the newspaper. Suffice it to consider the titles of some of its front-page stories (e.g., ‘Bunch of Robbers and Murderers’ (KZ, 08.01.42a)).

While ‘the enemy is purposefully committing atrocities’ principle is likewise present in the article ‘In Kaluga’, the facts are now presented by way of fiction, perhaps because this genre tends to be a lot more effective in evoking feelings of hatred in the reader than opinion writing (“Unfortunately, traces of battle action are not the only thing you can see in Kaluga today. You should check out the horrible traces of the invaders’ presence there. 131 Lunacharsky St. The house of Mrs. Poloskova. Or what is left of it, to be exact – cinders, smoldering rubble, and six charred bodies – her mother, father, husband, two daughters, and nursing baby. What had this peaceful family ever done to the Germans to deserve this?”

“You can’t quite forget the Germans, not after what they did to us”, says Poloskova.

She is in bits, this poor woman. But she has a Russian heart.

“Go on. I’ll catch up with you. I’m going to join you, and we’re going to retaliate against these heartless beasts” (KZ, 01.01.42k)).

Combining the two genres, opinion writing and fiction, may amplify the overall effect on the reader. A fairly common technique is accompanying the text with photographs as supporting evidence.

The ‘our adversary’s leader is inherently evil and resembles the devil’ principle is masterfully employed in the article ‘Happy New Year’ by I.G. Ehrenburg, published on the newspaper’s back page (“Hitler is another man with colossal hopes. This maniac is a stranger to fun. He is not married. He does not eat meat and does not smoke. What really moves him is thousands of burning cities, millions of people suffering in agony, torture, and gallows. ...Just a year ago, Hitler was drunk on French blood. He breathed in the smoke from burning Rotterdam. He amused himself with the ruins of London and Coventry. To Hitler, the upcoming year is full of promise – many countries are yet to be plundered and many people are yet to be murdered! ...The maniac is rotating the globe – he is looking for suitable areas to house new cemeteries” (KZ, 01.01.42l)).

The ‘the enemy is purposefully committing atrocities’ principle is also employed in certain official documents published in *Krasnaya Zvezda* (e.g., the note ‘On Rampant Plunder, Depredation, and Monstrous Atrocities’ by V.M. Molotov (People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs) to “ambassadors and envoys of nations with which the USSR has diplomatic relations” (KZ, 07.01.42a)).

The principle ‘we are defending a noble cause, not our particular interests’ is employed in the article ‘Leaflets for German Soldiers’ (“These leaflets all have the same motif – Hitler’s rule has brought the German people war, famine, and the Gestapo’s terror. All of the Führer’s promises are just lies and downright deception aimed at turning the people of Germany into cannon fodder. The only thing that can save Germany is toppling Hitler’s regime” (KZ, 31.01.42c)).

The ‘our cause is sacred’ principle is employed in the article ‘Death and Immortality’ by I.G. Ehrenburg (“Inch by inch, town by town we are cleansing our land of these predators. This feat has no equal. We are losing many of our heroes in this tough battle. We must devoutly cherish the memory of them. We must consign their bodies to the earth with military honors. We must tend to their holy graves with care. ...History will consign to oblivion the names of German soldiers – who died in a land that was not theirs. The German people will plead with other peoples to forget them. But immortal are the names of our fallen heroes: when dying each of them was resurrected in other people – our brothers and children, our people. Most of the Germans who are still alive are actually already dead. They died the day they started their vile business of robbing, torturing, and murdering people. Nobody will ever speak well of them – neither here nor in Germany. ...Our fallen warriors have defeated not only the enemy – they have defeated death. They died for their loved ones, their friends, their villages, and our boundless country. No orphan will be left without a mother – you have all women in Russia. No childless person will be left without a child – you have all of the Russian people” (KZ, 31.01.42d)). This method was employed by other authors as well (e.g., KZ, 03.01.42c).

Another commonly used principle of military propaganda that is worthy of note in this context is ‘feats of courage being committed on a mass scale, with every single of our combatants being ready to commit one’. For instance, in the article ‘Company’s Political Officer in Offensive Combat’ this idea is expressed in the following words: “By influencing members of the Red Army mainly via Bolshevik persuasion methods, political officers within companies can inspire them to achieve some really great results on the battlefield. A person who will live forever in the loving memory of our people is political officer Diyev, who was in charge of a tiny team of guardsmen,

a total of 28 men, who fought for several hours an unequal, but close, battle with German tanks. Diyevev and his comrades died a courageous death, but victory was theirs. All German offensives were repelled, with the Fascist tanks failing to penetrate our defensive position" (KZ, 31.01.42b: 1). In 'Late-Night Communication of January 30', this principle is encountered in the following words: "In a recent battle on the Southern Front, considerable bravery was displayed by S.I. Bilichenko, a 68-year-old collective farm worker from the village of Nikiforovka. This old gunner participated in the War of 1904-1905. During a battle near the village of Nikiforovka, the Germans threw against our unit a group of tanks and started to press our men. Bilichenko stepped in to fire over open sights with one of the guns. He knocked out a German tank and smashed an armored vehicle. Following the battle, comrade Bilichenko quickly had a team of collective farm workers putting out the fires of houses that had been set to fire by the Germans" (KZ, 31.01.42a: 1). Feat-based propaganda is used in each issue for that period (e.g., KZ, 07.01.42b: 2; KZ, 08.01.42b: 1; KZ, 09.01.42: 1; KZ, 10.01.42: 1).

The Red Army, too, actively employed agitation to affect the enemy, which is attested by a Krasnaya Zvezda article entitled 'Leaflets for German Soldiers': "The Chief Political Directorate of the Red Army will be producing a series of new leaflets for German soldiers. The content of these leaflets has been written by prisoners of war in conjunction with the ninth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power" (KZ, 31.01.42c).

5. Conclusion

The study produced the following conclusions:

1. Military propaganda is an effective means of not only affecting the enemy's behavior but influencing the morale of the civilian population as well.

2. The theory of propaganda was developed by a number of scholars back in the first half of the 20th century. The three major theories of propaganda were developed by W. Lippmann, J. Dewey, and H.D. Lasswell.

3. In the early 21st century, A. Morelli identified 10 principles of military propaganda arguably employed in most armed conflicts. These general principles are outlined in her work 'The Basic Principles of War Propaganda'.

4. In addition to those identified by A. Morelli, this study brought forward a few other principles of military propaganda, which are as follows:

– 'infallibility of our leader' (his tactics prove right in the long run; some of his tactics may seem wrong, but in the end they turn out to be part of a clever strategic plan; the leader always shares the hardships of war with his people);

– 'whatever military, economic, or social setbacks we have had, it is all just temporary, as we are superior to the enemy strategically' (setbacks must be seen as something fleeting and something that has not affected us in a major way);

– 'our leader having the unconditional support of all the people in the country, or the 'draw the nation together' effect' (the people are united in the enthusiasm of a potent purpose and have, therefore, lined up behind their leader);

– 'having the active support of the world community' (most people around the world are convinced of the righteousness of our cause and many have provided us with both moral and material support);

– 'feats of courage being committed on a mass scale' (our men are committing feats of courage for the sake of victory, not in pursuit of personal gain or individual glory, with every single combatant unflinchingly prepared to commit one).

5. All of the above principles of military propaganda were actively employed during World War II, which can be attested by relevant materials from the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper.

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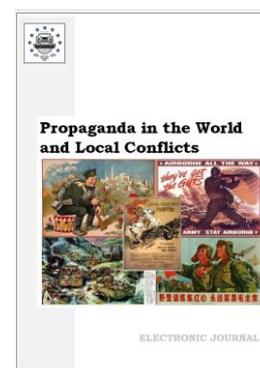
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Political Agitation and Mass Party Work in the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD during the Second World War (September – December 1942)

Konstantin V. Taran ^{a, *}

^a Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russian Federation

Abstract

The paper discusses political agitation and mass party work in the Sochi Militsiya (militsiya – Soviet-time police) Department of the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) in the period when a major part of the Krasnodar Region was occupied by NKVD troops (September – December 1942).

The sources used feature archival materials of the Center for Documentation of the Contemporary History of the Krasnodar Region, Krasnodar, Russian Federation, scholarly papers and publications by Russian researchers, and Soviet periodicals (Izvestia and Krasnaya Zvezda newspapers), as well as collections of archival documents and materials.

As a conclusion, the author shows that key forms and methods of mass party work included organizing political and morale building activities among the militia department personnel, raising political awareness in subdivisions, studies in groups of young communists and candidates for the membership in the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKPB), arranged by party workers. In addition, VKPB members ran mass party activities in the Komsomol organization of the NKVD Department. Political agitation placed an important focus on the work of the editorial board and publication of a wall newspaper. Propaganda teams were also created. Another central field of action was running patriotic and political campaigns, such as a rally in support of Red Army (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army) soldiers and raising funds to support them and purchase New Year’s gifts, as well as sewing and collecting warm clothes for the Red Army.

Keywords: political agitation, mass party work, rally, wall newspaper, political and morale building work, propaganda teams, militsiya, NKVD.

1. Introduction

The paper explores party agitation and mass party work by the VKPB¹ grassroots party organization in the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD² during the Second World War. Mass party work with the personnel of the Militsiya Department was rolled out in the period when most of the Krasnodar Region was occupied by Wehrmacht troops – this was the time when Sochi functioned as a regional center.

Methods and forms of political agitation were outlined in the proceedings of party meetings held by the VKPB primary organization in the Militsiya Department. The meetings, among other things, reviewed the current situation inside Sochi, operational activities of the Criminal

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: taran.constantin@yandex.ru (K.V. Taran)

¹ VKPB – All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

² NKVD – People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

Investigation Department, State Automobile Inspectorate, Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property (OBKhSS) and other subdivisions in the Sochi Department of the NKVD.

2. Materials and methods

The materials analyzed include the assemblages of the Center for Documentation of the Contemporary History of the Krasnodar Region, Krasnodar, Russian Federation, which encompass the activities run by the VKPB's primary party organizations.

Additionally, the paper relies on Soviet periodicals ([Izvestiya, 1942](#) and [Krasnaya Zvezda, 1942](#)), and collections of archival documents and materials ([Sbornik..., 1944](#); [Kuban'..., 1965](#); [Kuban'..., 2000](#)).

The study utilizes both general research methods and specialized methods of historical research.

The toolkit of the specialized historical research methods was comprised of the systemic analysis method (analysis of political agitation and mass party work of the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD, contextualized in the political and military situation in the USSR¹ in the chronological period under review); genetic method (examination of the propaganda forms and methods, leveraged by the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD, as resulting from previous historical events); historical retrospection (enabled a simulation of and investigation into the historical environment connected with the agitation and party work of the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD).

Non-conventional historical methods were also employed, namely the semiotic method that implies the use of historical and military history terminology in the context of the events described.

Speaking of the general research methods, those were historiographic and source analysis plus systemic analysis.

3. Discussion

The Russia-time source, which we previously published ([Taran, 2018](#)), can be defined as relevant for the historiography of the study into political agitation and mass party work in the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD because political agitation took place in the extermination battalions which operated in Sochi, Adler and Shapsugsky districts in the Krasnodar Region.

The extermination battalions, established in the Greater Sochi in the Great Patriotic War, were accountable to the NKVD Departments, and therefore sources, describing activities of the extermination battalions, can also be of certain interest ([Cherkasov, 2007](#); [Cherkasov, 2008a](#); [Cherkasov, 2008b](#); [Taran, 2019](#); [Mamadaliyev, Taran, 2021a](#); [Mamadaliyev, Taran, 2021a](#); [Mamadaliyev, Taran, 2022](#)).

4. Results

The Wehrmacht's Army Group A rapidly moved from Rostov in the southern direction so that the vanguard elements of the Axis powers' troops reached the northern spurs of the Main Caucasian Range as early as in mid-August 1942. Army Group A outnumbered Red Army units in many aspects – in the personnel, machinery, vehicles and aviation. The left flank of the Soviet forces – from the Taman Peninsula to the Fisht-Oshthen Massif – was defended by the troops of the North Caucasian Front under the command of Marshal of the Soviet Union Semyon M. Budyonny ([Taran, 2020: 67](#)).

Around 70 % of the Krasnodar Region was occupied by Third Reich troops. In late August, Wehrmacht troops took over the Taman Peninsula, the Anapa city and the central part of Novorossiysk in September with Novorossiysk's southeastern outskirts controlled by the 47th Army of the Red Army. The cities of Gelendzhik, Tuapse, Sochi, Adler and Shapsugsky districts, as well as parts of the Armenian and Tula districts, which were on the forward edge of the battle area and in close proximity to combat zones, remained unoccupied by German troops ([Mamadaliyev, Taran, 2021a: 34](#)).

Evacuation was under way during August 1942 to transfer material resources and Krasnodar Region population from northern areas to the Black Sea coast. A resolution by the Military Council of the Transcaucasian Front, dated 28 August 1942, created a Sochi Defense Committee headed by

¹ The USSR – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

P.K. Bychkov, the Second Secretary of the VKPB Regional Committee. Since the Shapsugsky and Adler districts were subordinate to the Sochi Defense Committee, and the city sheltered regional party bodies and institutions evacuated there, Sochi was the regional administrative center during the German occupation (Mamadaliyev, Taran, 2021a: 35-36).

The territory controlled by the Sochi Defense Committee was packed with refugees, among whom there were criminals released from prisons before the Germans came, Red Army draft evaders and deserters. As a consequence, crime rates went up in Sochi, and this, in turn, affected the operational activities of the Sochi militsiya (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 1).

The primary party organization of the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD carried on its party agitation and mass party work in this troubling operational environment, aiming to not only bring up political awareness level among the militsiya personnel, but also improve performance indicators for the crime solving rate.

On 17 September 1942, a closed party meeting of the Sochi Militsiya Department was conducted with 34 VKPB members and 22 VKPB candidate members in attendance. The meeting's chair was Dubkov, the secretary – Tsibizova. There were two items on the agenda:

1. Objectives of the party organization on the forward edge of the battle area (a report by Buevsky);

2. Elections to the Party Bureau of the Sochi Militsiya Department (a report by Orlenko).

After Buevsky's report, the floor was taken by Ozerova. She pointed out that it was imperative to build on the experience of the Krasnodar party organization. It created units to defend Krasnodar but failed to take any decisive measures to repulse the attack as soon as Wehrmacht troops approached the city – the party organization was confused and abandoned the units without leadership. Ozerova cited the example of the party leaders of the Khosta resort village, who slaughtered cattle, salted meat for personal use and were going to flee Khosta. Further, Ozerova said that kolkhoz collective farms and sovkhoz state farms needed help to harvest fruit crops because the produce rotted, and there was no one to collect them.

Next, the Head of the OBKhSS¹, Kiyashko, put forward a proposal to act on the discipline violations by the militsiya personnel, whose duty was to wage a fierce fight against thieves, swindlers and deserters, as well as plunderers of socialist property as their numbers in Sochi increased after prisons were dissolved during the retreat of the Red Army units.

In his speech, a VKPB member, Duntsev, pointed out that the party organization was not strongly engaged in building morale and improving living conditions of the militsiya personnel. Criminal Investigation officers, who came from the occupied areas of the Krasnodar Region, were not provided with food, they visited various canteens in search of food, their dormitory was totally unequipped, so some of the personnel abused their official position, and this undermined the work and reputation of the Soviet militsiya. The wall newspaper, according to Duntsev, was inert, while central newspapers were not delivered, which negatively affected the militsiya personnel.

The Deputy Head of the City Militsiya Department of the NKVD, Head of the Extermination Battalion, Lieutenant Ignatenko, said that while it was vital for the NKVD to identify cowards and panic-mongers in their ranks, who planned to flee the city, the organization also had to ensure a trouble-free and smooth operation of the Soviet rear. Regarding the militsiya personnel, which arrived from the Krasnodar Region's territory occupied by German troops, Ignatenko made a point that the people were not in fact engaged in the activities, while Sochi recorded 3-4 cases of theft every day, meaning the regional personnel should be engaged in the operational work.

Speaking on living conditions, Ignatenko said that he had repeatedly told the criminal investigation personnel where to receive beds and bedlinens but the people failed to follow his instructions. The militsiya personnel were fully provided with meals because they were assigned to a canteen organized in Sanatorium No. 1 of the NKVD, and transport was arranged for them to get to the site. At the same time, some of the militsiya personnel, instead of going and having lunch, persistently plagued directors of Sochi enterprises with requests to give them alcoholic drinks.

The meeting imposed a responsibility on the Head of the Agitation Board, Buevsky, to redouble morale building activities among the militsiya personnel and mobilize them to help collective farms and state farms to harvest fruit.

¹ OBKhSS – Department Against Misappropriation of Socialist Property

Shabaev said at the meeting that although the canteen for militsiya personnel was organized, food deliveries were irregular, so the Sochi militsiya leadership should focus on ensuring systematic food product supply to the canteen and improving the quality of the personnel's nourishment.

On the second item, the Head of the Sochi State Automobile Inspectorate, Orlenko, recommended that Neznaenko and Gorban of the militsiya personnel be elected instead of two drop-out members of the Party Bureau. Based on secret ballot, the individuals were unanimously granted membership in the Party Bureau (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 1-1ob.).

On 25 September 1942, the party organization of the Sochi Militsiya Department carried out an open general meeting with 35 VKPB members and 22 VKPB candidate members in attendance. Gorban presided over the meeting, and Sukhikh was the secretary. The agenda included two items:

1. On the pre-October socialist emulation;
2. On warm clothes collection for Red Army soldiers.

After Buevsky's speech on the pre-October socialist emulation, the floor was taken by Shutov who stressed the important role of socialist emulation in wartime and proposed to extend the reach of socialist emulation to the militsiya personnel from the Regional Directorate of the NKVD and districts of the Krasnodar Region.

The meeting resolved to approve the call by workers at the Ilyich Plant No. 70 for the pre-October socialist emulation. The Head of the Agitation, Buevsky, was instructed to draw up a work plan and launch mass agitation efforts among the personnel of the Militsiya Department. Agitation and political work before the 25th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution was designed to enhance operational performance and reduce the absence of disciplinary measures. The meeting approved the draft socialist agreement for participation in socialist emulation, submitted for consideration, and elected a commission to sign the document, consisting of: Buevsky, Lebedinsky, Nikitenko, Orlenko, Kurdyban, Neznaenko and Sytenky.

After Orlenko's presentation on the progress in collecting warm clothes for Red Army soldiers, Neznaenko, the Secretary of the Party Bureau, took the floor. He made a sharp observation that after the commission for warm clothes collection was set up, no specific activities were carried on for five days. Meanwhile, commission members continued to stay in their offices and waited when warm clothes would be brought to them. Further, Neznaenko suggested to Commission Chair Orlenko and commission members that they should use a more serious approach to the warm clothes collection for Red Army soldiers and proposed utilizing fabrics belonging to the Militsiya Department, processing them and making warm clothes.

After the vote, the party meeting suggested to Commission Chair Orlenko making use of curtains and draperies in the department to sew clothes and organize a sewing group, if required, to deliver on the warm clothes collection plan. The editor was requested to release a wall newspaper with a report on the progress in warm clothes collection (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 2).

The socialist emulation to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution was initiated by workers at Vladimir Ilyich State Machine-Building Plant No. 70, which was evacuated to the east in 1941. The initiative group proposed increasing product output, cutting production cost, reducing energy consumption and achieving economy in consumable material use as well as took on other commitments (Izvestiya, 1942; Sbornik..., 1944: 190-192).

The socialist emulation initiative received support at Soviet enterprises and institutions, and the personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department was no exception. Carrying out a socialist emulation and driving engagement was also an element of mass party activity, implemented under the leadership of party organizations.

In October 1942, the mass party work plan for November 1942 was approved for the VKPB primary party organization of the Sochi Militsiya Department and signed by Secretary of the Party Bureau Neznaenko (Table 1).

The Soviet Information Bureau announced to Soviet citizens via the Soviet periodical press that units and formations of the Red Army emerged victorious in the Stalingrad area and liberated several settlements near Vladikavkaz in the North Caucasus (Krasnaya Zvezda, 1942).

Table 1. Plan of mass party work for November 1942 (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 49-49ob.)

No.	Date	Type of work	Who implements	Where to implement	Completion status
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Every second day	Communicating political information to subdivisions and departments	Political Information Officer	Subdivisions	
2	9.11.42	Party bureau meeting: Agenda: 1. Reviewing materials on VKPB candidate members Ryzhenko and Popov. 2. On VKPB candidate member Bugaenko and VKPB member Zubov /report by Gorban/ 3. Information from Commission Chair Orlenko on the progress in warm clothes collection, and from Commission Chair Kiyashko, on gift collection for the Red Army. 4. On the militsiya's 25th anniversary /Buevsky/. 5. Approving a work plan.	Party Bureau Secretary	Room No. 1	
2	13.11.	Closed party meeting. Agenda 1. On the political and morale building work among the personnel / report by Bogucharsky/. 2. Approval of the party bureau proceedings dated November 9	Party Bureau Secretary	Club	
3	20.11.	Party bureau meeting Agenda 1. Granting party membership 2. Presentation on the work done by the editorial board /Ivashchenko, Forshnev/. 3. On self-improvement – Arnautov, Karagodin, Gorlov, Talalaev	Party Organization Secretary		
5	25.11.	Opened party meeting Agenda 1. Granting party membership 2. Presentation on the militsiya station performance / Saveliev / 3. On the activities in Rzhevsky and Chetverikov's task area	Party Bureau Secretary	Club	
6	10 and 24.11.	Learning session with young communists and VKPB candidate members in study groups	Study Group Leaders	In classrooms	
7	By 10, 20 and 30.11.	Releasing the wall newspaper	Responsible Editor		

Citizens of the Soviet Union felt exalted and enthusiastically hailed the battle victories of the Red Army against German troops, and with the leadership of party workers, cities, towns, enterprises and institutions carried out rallies throughout the country. The personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department, the NKVD Directorate for the Krasnodar Region (UNKVD KK), also conducted a rally to pass the following resolution:

“Resolution

by the rally of the personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department, NKVD for the Krasnodar Region,

dated 24 November 1942

The Soviet Information Bureau has brought us joyful news, which has filled us with gleeful excitement to bottom of our heart, about the successful advance of our heroic Red Army near Stalingrad.

This is the point where we have commenced to fulfil the great task set by Comrade Stalin in his November order:

‘We can and must clear our Soviet soil of the Hitlerite filth.

Near Vladikavkaz and Stalingrad, the accursed enemy has already experienced the power of the Red Army’s new strikes that will grow harder and harder every day and will give no rest to the Fascist beasts. The enemy will find its grave in the snows of our Soviet land instead of “expansion space”.

The final defeat of the enemy will still require exerting all the strength of the army and people, of the front and the rear.

With heartfelt greetings sent to the heroic defenders of Stalingrad, we, the personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department of the UNKVD KK, firmly believe that the heroic Red Army, guided by our beloved leader and commander, the great Stalin, will defeat the Nazi scum and cleanse the Soviet land of the hated enemy.

We will strain all our efforts to further strengthen the rear and help the Red Army, and will scale up operational work and the fight against crime to the maximum.

We shall have our day too!

Long live our dear heroic Red Army!

Long live our wise leader and commander Comrade Stalin!” (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 12).

In November, Party Bureau Secretary Neznaenko signed the plan of mass party work for the primary party organization of the Sochi Militsiya Department for December 1942 (Table 2).

Table 2. Plan of mass party work for December 1942 (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 50-50ob.)

No	Date	Type of work	Who implements	Where to implement	Completion status
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Every second day	Communicating political information to subdivisions and departments	Political Information Officer	In subdivisions	
2	4.12.42	Party bureau meeting Agenda: 1. Granting party membership 2. Information on the propaganda team organization 3. Information on the results of the evacuation of families of the personnel 4. Making provisions for military defense works	Neznaenko Buevsky Kardybaev and Aniskov Neznaenko	Room No. 2	
3	11.12.42.	Party meeting Agenda 1. Granting party membership 2. Information on the propaganda board organization 3. Presentation on the work of the State Automobile Inspectorate	Neznaenko Buevsky, Gromov Orlenko	Club	
4	17.12.42	Party bureau meeting Agenda 1. Granting party membership			

		2. On the work of the Komsomol organization 3. On the results of the military defense works accomplished	Neznaenko Kurdyban		
5	28.12.	Party meeting Agenda 1. Granting party membership 2. Presentation on the work of the OBKhSS for the second half-year of 1942	Neznaenko Kiyashko, Shutov, Malyshev	Club	
6	9 and 23.12.42	Learning sessions with young communists and VKPB candidate members in study groups	Study Group Leaders	Classes	
7	10, 20, 30.12.42	Releasing the wall newspaper	Responsible Editor		

On 28 December 1942, the primary party organization of the Sochi Militsiya Department carried out a closed general meeting with 32 VKPB members and 25 VKPB candidate members in attendance. The meeting's chair was Shutov, the secretary – Konchakov. The agenda included three items:

1. Granting party membership to VKPB candidate members Dachevsky and Bautin
2. Information item by Kiyashko on the New Year's gift collection for Red Army soldiers
3. Report by Kiyashko on the work of the OBKhSS for the second half-year of 1942

Speaking on candidate Aleksandr Yakovlevich Bautin, who applied for the full VKPB membership in April 1940, Neznaenko noted that Bautin showed not enough commitment to the work of the wall newspaper editorial board. The meeting took into account Bautin's positive characteristics and unanimously voted to accept Bautin as a full VKPB member.

Speaking on candidate Prokofy Prokofievich Dachevsky, who applied for the full VKPB membership in July 1941, Shutov said that although Dachevsky had no negative aspects, he was engaged in socialist emulation, had only a socialist emulation agreement, and, as a result, received no assessment of his work because no monthly performance reviews were carried out among drivers.

In his speech, Buevsky pointed out that Dachevsky was on the record as a driver in the NKVD department, and his work should be assessed against the social obligations he had taken by the garage personnel of the NKVD Department. Other drivers, in particular Makushchenko, Kosenko and others, were assigned to the subdivisions of the NKVD Department, which evaluated their work.

Kroshka spoke in defense of Dachevsky and said that he had only known Dachevsky for 4 months and noticed he maintained the car, entrusted to him, with great care and therefore Dachevsky deserved to be a member of the VKPB.

The party meeting unanimously resolved to accept Dachevsky as a full VKPB member (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 18).

The second item – on the progress made in collecting New Year's gifts for Red Army soldiers – was elaborated on by Kiyashko who said that the ongoing political campaign in the city department was successful, and raised 4,683 rubles to buy gifts.

In his speech, VKPB Member Gorban said that Commission Chairman Kiyashko had not played an active role in the commission leadership and did not specified in his speech the number of NKVD department employees that remained outside the political campaign.

Afterward Ermolenko took the floor and said that commission members had been responsible for the task areas assigned to them, and the commission had handled well the assigned tasks from the first days of their work. Despite this, there were some incidents when the commission purchased goods and products for a sum that exceeded the sum raised.

Speaking on the New Year's gift fund raising, Kroshka said that the political campaign had been rolled out without relevant preparatory and information activities among the personnel, and that was why it had failed to cover 100 % of the Militsiya Department.

Upon hearing all arguments, the meeting resolved to recognize that the work done by the fund raising commission to purchase New Year's gifts for Red Army soldiers was satisfactory, and suggested that the commission raised additional funds from the entire militsiya personnel to compensate for the overspend.

In his presentation, Kiyashko informed the party meeting of the results achieved by the OBKhSS in the second half-year of 1942. After that, Ignatenko took the floor and said that although Kiyashko reported on the work done, he did not specify what further measures were planned to improve the OBKhSS' performance. In the second half of the year, the OBKhSS significantly improved its results, but the progress was made thanks to the activities of the personnel of the regional OBKhSS apparatus. Ignatenko believed that the OBKhSS' primary pain points were unsatisfactory work on cases under investigation, which often led to cases being dismissed or returned for additional investigation, no operational record-keeping processes and inefficient operational work on the markets. Therefore, a 1943 plan should necessarily include operational measures and steps to put a practice in place to conduct conversations on production sites and encourage citizens to help the militsiya combat embezzlement and theft of socialist property. It was also important to set up prompt coordination between NKVD departments and the prosecutor's office (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 18ob.-19).

After Ignatenko, Malyshev made a critical review of the OBKhSS' work and pointed out that the OBKhSS leadership dragged on the processing of the cases under investigation that were to be closed within 3 or 5 days. Malyshev confirmed Ignatenko's comment that investigative proceedings were conducted unsatisfactorily, and as a consequence many cases were sent back by the prosecutor for additional investigation. When signing cases, Kiyashko disregarded the formal execution of cases, and as a result there were situations when the prosecutor returned cases only because interrogation protocols were not signed by witnesses or investigators.

In his speech, Neznaenko underscored the existing gaps in the OBHSS operations because with no efficient operational record keeping process and inadequate control of markets, the rate of speculative trading in commodities rose in Sochi. Sochi markets openly sold soap, matches, herring and other items that were in deficit in city stores. Further, Neznaenko drew the meeting participants' attention to the unsatisfactory communication the OBKhSS leadership maintained with the personnel of the prosecutor's office, which affected investigative processes.

The participants of the party meeting resolved to take into account Kiyashko's report on the work of the OBKhSS for the second half of 1942, and made the following proposals:

1. Formulate a unified plan of operational work in the OBKhSS and introduce an operational record-keeping process.
2. Carried out activities in cooperation with all operational departments of the NKVD and the prosecutor.
3. At enterprises, conduct conversations on combating embezzlers of socialist property and speculators.
4. Improve the quality of investigative cases by eliminating violations of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which resulted into case dismissal and return for additional investigation.
5. Hold a meeting with heads of enterprises on better protection of socialist property.
6. Together with Heads of the Criminal Investigation and the OBKhSS, hold a briefing with heads of enterprises on providing support to the Sochi Department of the NKVD in wartime conditions.
7. Strengthen operational control of Sochi markets (TsDNIKK. F. 2357. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 19).

In January 1943, Wehrmacht troops started pulling out their units from the North Caucasus. Accordingly, the Soviet troops initiated the offensive and as early as in February 1943 liberated Krasnodar, the regional center, where the party leadership and regional institutions returned from Sochi. This alleviated the operational load on the personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department. Mass party work and party agitation continued among the personnel of the NKVD Department but on a smaller scale.

5. Conclusion

Hence, political agitation and mass party work stepped up among the personnel of the Sochi Militsiya Department of the NKVD during the occupation of the most of the Krasnodar Territory by the Third Reich army. Political agitation activities were mainly managed by the Political Bureau of the VKPB's primary party organization.

Key forms and methods of mass party work included the following: organizing political and educational activities among the militia department personnel, raising political awareness in subdivisions, arranging studies by party workers in groups of young communists and candidates

for the membership in the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKPB). In addition, VKPB members ran mass party activities in the Komsomol organization of the NKVD department. Political agitation placed an important focus on the work of the editorial board and the publication of a wall newspaper. Propaganda teams were also created. Another central field of action referred to running patriotic and political campaigns, such as a rally in support of Red Army (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army) soldiers and raising funds to support them and purchase New Year's gifts, as well sewing and collecting warm clothes for the Red Army.

In addition to political agitation and mass party work, party meetings discussed the current situation in the city in the context of the front-line reality because crime increased as criminals, deserters and individuals who evaded conscription in the Red Army swarmed the city. Another major emphasis was placed on the operational performance of subdivisions inside the NKVD department, and solutions were proposed to efficiently fight crime.

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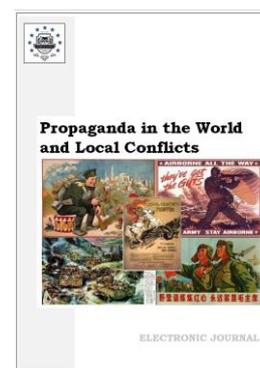
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Weapons of Propagandists

75-mm German Reactive Propaganda Mortar Mine (from the Experience of Using during the Second World War)

Joshua M. Giron-Gonzalez ^{a,*}

^a California State University Northridge, USA

Abstract

The work considers the experience of using a 75-mm reactive propaganda mine during the Second World War, Germany first used this ammunition on the Eastern Front in 1944.

The author used as materials, the documents of the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (Podolsk, Russian Federation), introduced for the first time into scientific research. Methodologically, the work is based on such principles as the principle of historicism, consistency and objectivity. Due to this, the paper was constructed using the maximum number of sources on the stated topic, systematized in chronological order, which allowed us to summarize the information and come to the appropriate conclusions.

In conclusion, the author notes that during 1944, on the Eastern Front, Germany used 75-mm reactive propaganda mines against the advancing soviet units. The work of such ammunition was recorded on the Narva direction against Soviet troops in June 1944, as well as against the 1st Shock Army of the Red Army in December 1944. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of such attacks, but the fact of the use of such ammunition has been documented.

Keywords: German propaganda, reactive propaganda mortar mine, 1944, World War II.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of June 1944, on the Narva direction, east of the Tyrval region ([TsAMO RF. F 2298. Op. 0000001. D. 0002. L. 131](#)), the Germans used a new type of propaganda ammunition – a 75-mm reactive propaganda mine. Soon one of this ammunition (unexploded) was picked up and carefully studied by Soviet specialists ([TsAMO RF. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 3784. L. 513](#)).

In December 1944, the same information was received from other areas of the front. So, in the zone of the 1st Shock Army on December 7, 1944, at 2.10 am, the enemy fired agitation shells the combat positions, firing more than 30 shells with methodical fire. According to the general arrangement, the projectile was classified as a reactive one. The caliber is about 75 mm. The shell was a remote device. The remote device of the shell was not studied, since the fuse worked at high altitude. The expelling charge was insignificant, since the leaflets ejected from the cylinder remained intact. This explanation of the new propaganda ammunition was given by Captain Skomoroshko, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence of the 137th Army Cannon-Artillery

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: Joshua.giron@gmail.com (J.M. Giron-Gonzalez)

Brigade. The officer also added that “the use of these shells on our sector of the front was not previously noted” (TsAMO RF. F. 9960. Op. 1. D. 8. L. 107).

2. Materials and methods

The source base of the research was the documents of the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense (Podolsk, Russian Federation) introduced into scientific circulation for the first time. There were used documents from five archival funds, namely: funds 217, 243, 1074, 2298, 9960.

Methodologically, the work is based on such principles as the principle of historicism, consistency and objectivity. Due to this, the paper was constructed using the maximum number of sources on the stated topic, systematized in chronological order, which allowed us to summarize the information and come to the appropriate conclusions.

3. Discussion

The theme of campaign ammunition is not new in historiography. At different times, this topic was dealt with by such authors as: S.N. Nikitin in his work “Propaganda Ammunition (Based on the Experience of World War I and World War II)” (Nikitin, 2020).

This discussion also focuses in the work by Yu.F. Katorin “The Flagship of the Soviet Political Agitation Squadron” (Katorin, 2017), although here the means of delivery of campaign materials was not a shell, but an airplane.

V.G. Krys'ko also paid attention to propaganda ammunition in his work “Sekrety psikhologicheskoi voyny (tseli, zadachi, metody, formy, opyt)” (Krys'ko, 1999). We also find materials on the use of campaign ammunition in the work V.A. Nesterenko “A Few Words about the Third Reich Propaganda Operations in 1944” (Nesterenko, 2015).

4. Results

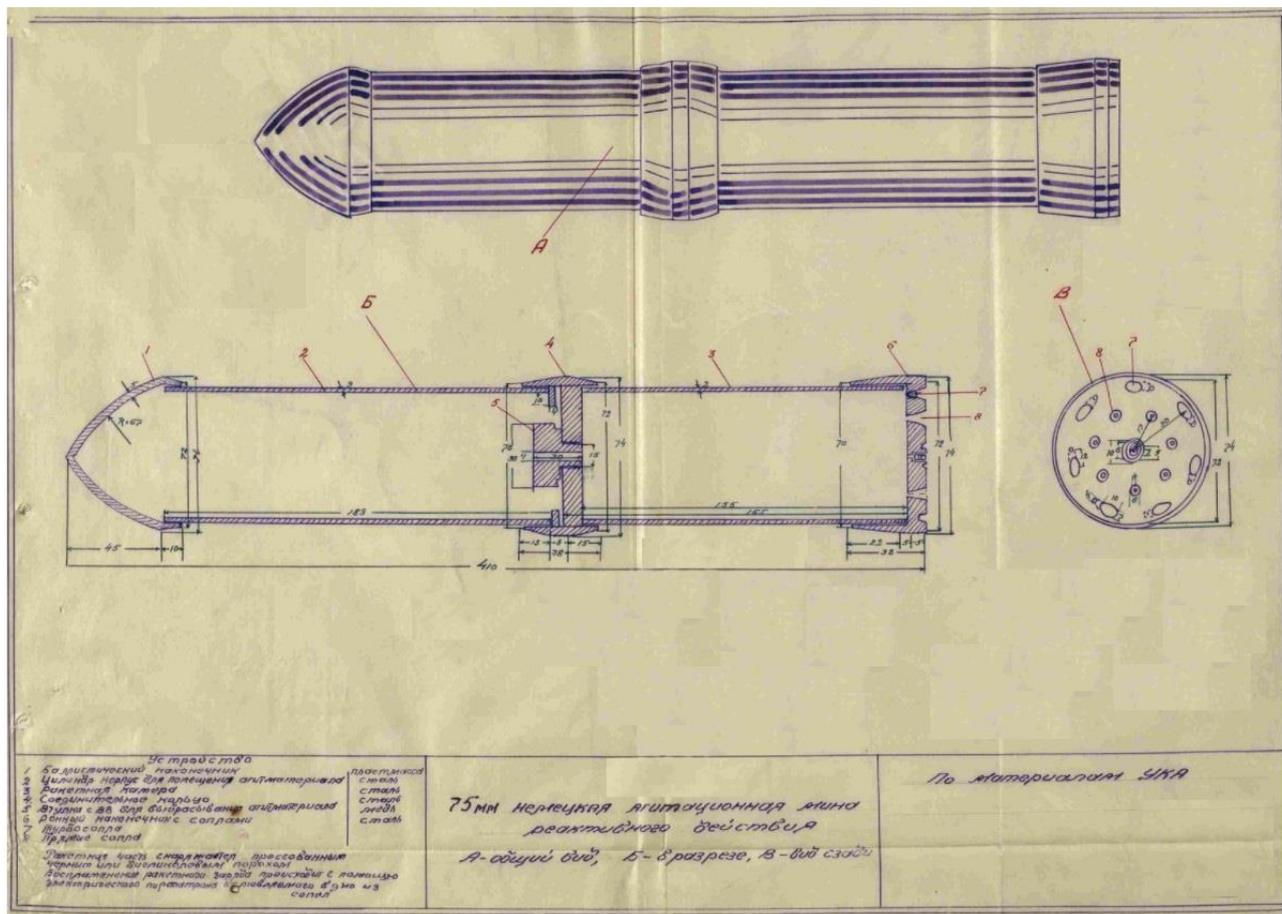


Fig. 1. 75-mm German Reactive Propaganda Mine (TsAMO RF. F. 243. Op. 2900. D. 2062. L. 32)

Notes:

A – General view; Б – in cut; В – back view.

Structure:

1. Ballistic cap;
2. Cylinder body for placing agitation material;
3. Rocket chamber;
4. Joint ring;
5. Bush with explosive substances for ejection of campaign material;
6. Ron tip with nozzles;
7. Turbo nozzles;
8. Straight nozzles.

The rocket part is equipped with pressed black or biglycol powder. The ignition of the rocket charge occurs with the help of an electric squib inserted into the bottom of the nozzles.

Brief description

1. The flight range of the mine is approximately 2.5 km. Having a purpose – propaganda, the mine, in addition to the charge, contains a remote tube, which, when burned, gives a weak explosion in the air, during which leaflets are thrown out. Part of the mines, not bursting in the air, fell to the ground. After a mine explosion, the case is completely preserved.

2. The mine system is similar in device to the mine of the 158.5-mm chemical mortar of the “Long-range” sample, except for the size: the length of the case, body and bottom is up to 38 cm, the diameter of the mine is 6.5 cm. The upper part of the mine (case) is equipped with leaflets, the lower part of the mine (body) is equipped with a large charge of the receiver tube. The bottom in the center has a capsule and two rows of holes on the sides designed to rotate the mine during its flight. The possibility of the use of fragmentation rocket mines by the enemy is not excluded (TsAMO RF. F. 1074. Op. 0000001. D. 0186. L. 159).

Summing up, Soviet experts noted that the use of agitation, reactive mines of small caliber is new in their application in this area (TsAMO RF. F. 217. Op. 1221. D. 3784. L. 513).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that during 1944, on the Eastern Front, Germany used 75-mm reactive propaganda mines against the advancing soviet units. The work of such ammunition was recorded on the Narva direction against Soviet troops in June 1944, as well as against the 1st Shock Army of the Red Army in December 1944. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of such attacks, but the fact of the use of such ammunition has been documented.

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