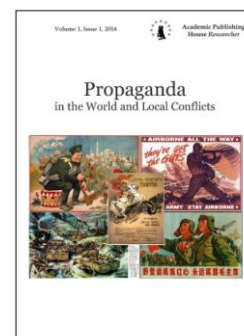


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Reviews

Postage Stamps in Propaganda: the German Secret Services and Repressive Apparatus

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Abstract

The review analyzes the book by Yuriy N. Logvinenko, entitled *German Secret Services and Repressive Apparatus between the 7th and 20th Centuries: A Literary and Historical Study through the Lens of Philately*, published in 2014. The book by Logvinenko is one of the few works which look at the German propaganda and the way it is represented in postage stamps. The reviewer considers this literary and historical study as a scientific and journalistic work which includes all basic elements of scientific research, is written in simple and clear language and richly illustrated. These factors, taken together, are sure to generate widespread interest to the book. The author primarily focuses on the secret services and repressive agencies which operated in Nazi Germany, as well as describes the history of German espionage and investigation operations in the Middle Ages and modern times, and the country's security services in the 5 decades between its division and reunification. The reviewer emphasizes the importance of the personalistic perspective adopted in the book, its respect to the German history, vivid historical and philatelic sketches on a variety of subjects, and patriotic and educational value of the work. The book also outlines possibilities of using the materials for learning purposes.

Keywords: security services, philately, propaganda, Germany, history, review, monograph.

The range of problems in the history of secret services and repressive agencies, chosen by Logvinenko for his literary and historical research, now both attracts historians and fascinates the general reader and is undoubtedly of popular, scientific and political interest. The array of works on the history of German repressive bodies and secret services has remarkably diversified in recent years with the flow of books on the Nazi period becoming exceptionally wide. This massive scale is largely caused by legends and mysteries that the state and political history of the Third Reich was shrouded in (Krinko, 2012: 75) and which were generated by the lack of sources or by their classified nature. The subject examined by Logvinenko encompasses the entire German history. This defines the significant role of the topic in understanding the true character of current international relations.

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Logvinenko has already established himself as the author of the work *History of the Russian Espionage and Investigations through the Philatelist's Eyes* (Logvinenko, 2012), which brought him the Award of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) in Literature and Art.



Fig. 1. Book cover

I should start straight with a rather controversial point that I will try to resolve myself. Logvinenko designed his research (Logvinenko, 2014) in the form of scientific and popular work, as evidenced already by its subtitle — *A Literary and Historical Study through the Lens of Philately*. However, this does not in the least diminish the merits of the author who has made serious efforts to collect, compile and systematize the large scientific material and select stamps. Logvinenko makes skilful use of ego sources as well as Russian and foreign literature, and on this basis, endeavors to provide a comprehensive reconstruction of the objective history of the German secret services and the repressive agencies. The exploration accomplished by the author features a thorough study into storylines, in-depth analysis, historical and psychological authenticity and kaleidoscopic integrity of the presentation without any emphasis on sensationalism of the information provided. The extensive range of issues addressed by the book demonstrates the author's vision of the structure and activities pertaining to the secret services and repressive agencies as a complex multi-level system. The author's style is characterized by scientific correctness regarding predecessor studies and accuracy in citing all major works.

Materials in the book are concentrated in three chapters of unequal size: "Espionage and criminal investigations from old Germanic kingdoms to the Kaiser's Germany," "Hitler's secret services in the fight for world domination under the shade of the swastika," "Security services in post-war Germany: a half-century history of violent confrontation." This architectonics fits logically to the topic. With its rich content, this book takes the reader on a journey on the progression of the German secret services and repressive authorities from the period the state was first founded up to our days. The book offers convincing evidence that the German intelligence services have carried out ambiguous and elaborate activities. It also spotlights their specific features both at different stages of historical development and in policies towards various countries, shows black and terrible pages of their history and uncovers facts that German intelligence agents can be proud of.

There is no doubt that the study is an excellent source that gives an insight in a spectrum of historical problems which reflect the great historical heritage of Germany and the German nation. The literary and historical examination brings to light such problems as the evolution of the German secret services during the reign of Frederick the Great, the successes that the Prussian intelligence and counterintelligence services notched in the unification of Germany, a tactical victory won by the German secret services to withdraw Russia from World War I, and a strategic defeat which led Germany itself to a catastrophe. The book delivers a scientific perspective on the stagnation of the special services in the Weimar Republic and their tremendous power in Nazi

Germany. All these issues are discussed by the author in the context of key social and political processes which took place in Germany in that period and the international situation in the world.

The geographical boundaries set in the title cover much more areas mainly in Europe. This enables the author to track down specific aspects of the work done by the German special services in different countries. This is particularly noticeable in the work of concentration camps in areas which suffered from ethnic conflicts.

Great finesse characterizes large-scale sketches of pivotal events in the Russian and European history during World War II. These events provided a plethora of philatelic materials. Pages of the book are filled with numerous stamps, directly or indirectly, related to the Nazi secret services and SS, the memory of the victims of Nazi concentration camps and death camps, the Holocaust and Nazi punitive operations against civilians. We think that the elaborate organization of the state apparatus in Nazi Germany (Litvin, Titova, 2015: 18) can be better arranged in a separate list of abbreviations at the end of the book.



Fig. 2. A stamp dedicated to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact

The last chapter deals with main challenges of our time, and the experience of efficiently responding to them, in one degree or another, is really helpful for today's special services to work towards methods, forms and approaches in the accomplishment of cope with certain tasks. These include putting together teams for newly established special services in western and eastern areas, intercepting undercover Nazi secret service networks by victor countries all over the world, as well as intelligence and subversive operations by FRG and GDR special services.

The book comes to a completely reasonable conclusion on a large historical legacy that the German secret services took with them to the 21st century. However, it is important to emphasize the great respect that the author shows to the GDR secret services for their operational excellence, allegiance to the Soviet Union and commitment to the principles which they continued to champion even when they faced political persecution after the unification of the country.

Logvinenko picks up a comprehensive selection of personalities which make the historical memory of the nation come to life. The book mentions many female names, such as N. Krupskaya, A. Kollontai, G. Peti, Z. Kosmodemyanskaya, Princess Mafalda of Savoy and many others. In this connection, an index of personalities abundantly represented on the pages of the book, would be highly instrumental in dealing with it.

Importantly, the stamps lavishly used in the book are not merely illustrative material. Being dedicated to specific historical facts, events or prominent figures, they help link and assemble a lot of different thematic pieces into a single narrative. The book also gives entertaining details on the stamps themselves. For example, the book recounts a curious story how the British intelligence issued counterfeit German stamps in 1943, when they replaced a portrait of Hitler with a portrait of

Himmler on the 6 pfennig stamp of 1941 in order to split the top leadership of the Third Reich. The operation eventually failed because no one noticed the substitution. The stamps were too identical in design, while the popularization of leaders was in line with the general propaganda campaigns and raised no questions.

I am sincerely grateful to the author for his efforts to imbue his book with a feeling of national pride, enhanced national identity and the experience of belonging to a victorious nation. In a broader sense, the book lifts the veil on the core ideas behind the national consolidation of the Russian super ethnos, so clearly manifested in the Great Patriotic War. The study suggests having a closer look at possible developments in the dialogue between Russia and Europe and makes the reader feel that many of our positions are not that distinct because of our long-lasting coexistence.



Fig. 3. A stamp dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Kursk

Being a teacher, I would like to define the didactic value and methodological perspectives of the work. Texts easily understandable by high school students (aged 16 and above) and university students, numerous personalities covered, and, especially, an impressive number of stamps are the outstanding benefits the book will bring to the educational process. I hope that the stamps depicting historical events and figures will become an integral part of the academic literature in history, as it was the case with caricatures. It is important to avoid creating a general reminder on how to work with stamps. On the other hand, a selected set of stamps introduced as illustrative material with structured assignments in certain paragraphs in textbooks and workbooks, in combination with individual texts from the book can become a good starting point for student research.

The book, despite its large format and considerable size, is easy and interesting to read. And it is not only about superb technical design – perfect hardcover, coated paper, creative layout – but, most importantly, about thorough proofreading and editing. It is gratifying to see that the author successfully manages to reach the general reader by applying a simple and clear style to his texts.

The book creates a sense of immersion, providing a captivating reading experience of a "historical" novel. This, coupled with carefully selected and well-analyzed illustrative material and verified historical facts, forms a solid platform for an integrated scientific effort to popularize history, based on the professional excellence which is so often amiss in the turbulent flow of mass historical and pseudo-historical literature. The personal, passionate, touch of the author in the descriptions of various events and phenomena not only makes the text more vivid but also allows the reader to "get the feel" of the history and witness the events and processes. At the same time, with the author's competent and impartial attitude to the narrative and the wealth of diverse factography, readers can form their own opinion about the events described by the book. The peer-reviewed publication is a well-documented and heavily illustrated account of history, which embraces both the German secret services and repressive apparatus and a wider picture – the overall military and political past of Europe and parts of Asia.

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