

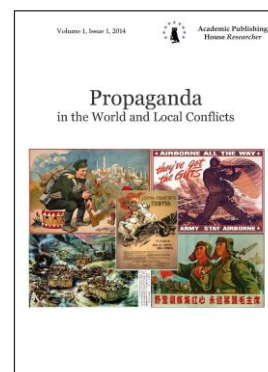
Copyright © 2017 by Academic Publishing House Researcher s.r.o.



Published in the Slovak Republic
Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
Has been issued since 2014.

ISSN 2500-1078
E-ISSN 2500-3712
2017, 4(2): 124-127

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2017.2.124
www.ejournal47.com



Letters to the Editor

Military Agitation Campaign on the Territory of Carpatho-Ukraine in 1945

Anton Sebyshev^{a,*}

^a Academy of Basic Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article examines Soviet military propagandists activities on the territory of Carpatho-Ukraine in 1945. The forms of work and types of agitation as well as some attempts of the Ukrainian nationalists to counter Soviet propaganda were reflected in the article. It is noted that military propagandists actively used meetings, rallies, reading sessions, as well as collective and individual conversations in their work. Different kind of activities also took place – creating slogans and holding concerts. As a result, a significant number of defectors stopped supporting rebel ideas in the area of propaganda campaign.

Keywords: special propaganda brigades, military agitation, 1945, Carpatho-Ukraine, Ukrainian nationalists.

1. Introduction

After Germany's defeat in World War II, the situation on the territory of the Carpathian Ukraine still was very difficult. A large number of rebel Ukrainian nationalists remained in the forest zones of the region. These units, equipped with light and heavy weapons, were a significant problem for the Soviets (Cherkasov et al., 2015).

The first clashes between the Soviet army and the rebels showed that the victory won't be achieved easily. As a result, a whole range of measures was developed to reduce insurgent activity in 1945 with propaganda as a key role. Let us have a close look at the army propagandists' activity. Special propaganda brigades were organized in accordance with the general planning, for the first time in the practice of army operations. Only those officers, communists and Komsomol members who knew the Ukrainian language perfectly as well as local customs, got an appropriate political and general education and had operational work skills were selected for this job. Agitators from the special propaganda brigades were to expose the provocative rumors spread by Ukrainian nationalists, assist the district authorities in strengthening Soviet power in the villages, elect the members of the rural councils and their chairmen.

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: ased@mail.ru (A. Sebyshev)

2. Materials

The archival documents of the Central Archive of Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia served as materials for this article.

3. Discussion and results

An epidemic of typhus broke out on the territory of the Carpatho-Ukraine in 1945 making a large-scale mass work and meetings with a big number of participants impossible. Thus, the main emphasis was placed on individual conversations in families and meetings of representatives from 3-5 families. The following data indicates the scale of agitation work and its intensity.

The agitators of the 24th Infantry Brigade held 257 meetings, rallies, talks, 38 reports and other activities during the operation in the Carpathian settlements (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 207, 220).

The subjects of these activities according to the documents were as follows:

1. What did Soviet power give to the peoples of the USSR?
2. The Red Army is the liberator of the peoples of Western Ukraine;
3. Who are the Ukrainian-German nationalists?
4. The Ukrainian people in the fight against the German invaders;
5. What will Poland and its borders look like?

The agitators explained to the villagers the content of the decisions of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine on taking measures to restore and develop the national economy in Western Ukraine.

Active work among the local population quickly gave positive results, according to the documents. Many accomplices of the nationalists returned to the settlements, hundreds of local citizens, intimidated by the OUN members and hiding in the underground, came out from their hiding places. The number of people who returned voluntarily significantly increased.

27 citizens of draft age came to the Commander of the mortar company Lieutenant V. I. Zgonik in the village of Struten Nizhny in Rozhnyatovsky district on 9th of April. 20 of them came late in the evening and even at night, not to be seen by anyone. In addition, the newly arrived gave valuable operational information about the two brothers from the "security service"¹ living in the village. Early in the morning the Company Commander organized a search and, using the probes, discovered a hiding place on the outskirts of the village. There were four people, showing desperate armed resistance. Soldiers threw grenades in the hiding place and destroyed the resisting. The corpses of the terrorists were taken to the village square and laid on the ground. As the agitators noted in the report: "when they looked at the corpses, the villagers sighed with relief, as they recognized the fierce Bandera men, who threatened the whole village" (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 221).

Two days later, Praskovya V., resident of Richka village, Kosivsky district, came to the command post of the 207th OSB and reported that two brothers Ivan and Nikolai P., as well as Ilya A., were the members of a local "village fighting group". A month ago they took away her son and two daughters. Praskovya pointed out the fighters' hiding place and the group was eliminated (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 222).

However, most of the volunteers feared persecution by the leaders of the nationalist "security service" and asked to keep their names in secret.

The ideologists of the insurgents very quickly assessed the effectiveness of the special military propaganda and took urgent countermeasures. They focused their agitation activities on covering the international events, making them look favorable for themselves. So, in Goshchan, Mlynivsky, Ostrogsky and other regions, Ukrainian-German ideologists spread the rumor that at the international conference in San Francisco the former allies demanded from the USSR the obligatory participation of the delegation from Carpatho-Ukraine. They stated that such a delegation, along with another delegation from the "independent Ukraine" participated in the

¹ OUN Security service.

conference¹. In addition, the insurgents spread their activity to neighboring territories, for example, Slovakia (Šmigel, Cherkasov, 2013).

It should be noted that OUN's agitation had considerable means of propaganda, including a powerful printing press. Freshly printed leaflets, proclamations, newspapers and other printed materials spread over the villages at night.

The course of the operation showed that the activities conducted by the task forces in the daytime were not effective. By questioning the captured guerrillas they found out that during the day militants go into the woods and hide in carefully disguised and well-equipped hiding places. At nightfall, they return to the farmsteads and villages, collect food, distribute leaflets, conduct verbal propaganda and punish those who sympathize with the Soviet authorities or cooperate with the NKVD.

In this regard, the Head of the operation ordered to organize individual night operating units consisting of at least a platoon. Changing troop tactics did not mean a change in the general operation plan. Thorough area purge continued in the afternoon as well. A special task was set for the 2nd infantry company of the 218th OSB (under the command of Lieutenant K. A. Selyodkin) – search and capture of the printing house. Three units of 20 people each were formed. According to the operative data, the printing house could be located in Oneginsky district, since it was the first district to receive the fresh printed materials. The area was divided into squares. All groups started their search simultaneously. Secretly making their way to the villages and buildings, strictly observing the rules of masking and precautions, soldiers probed straw stacks, piles of manure and all the buildings attached to the area. Along with the search, the personnel conducted reconnaissance work by interviewing local residents. On May 24, 1945, Sergeant Borodin, acting with a metal probe, discovered a carefully disguised hiding place on a depth of one and a half meters with two rebels inside. This was a signal for further actions to be taken. In the next three days, twelve more hiding places were discovered, but they were all empty. Continuing the cleaning, Sergeant Klychikhin's group drew attention to the traces of the passing wagons coming out of the barn and leading towards the forest. To find out where the tracks were going, the Sergeant sent a three-man watch. Half an hour later, the sentinels found freshly dug ground in the forest and its volume allowed to assume that there was a hiding place for 15-20 people in the barn. The Red Army soldier Davidov probing the ground in the barn at great depth, discovered the ceiling boards of the hiding place, and later its entrance. The Commander ordered the rebels inside to surrender, but they didn't give out their presence. The soldiers threw two grenades before examining the hiding place, but they did not hurt the people inside. The rebels opened fire from a shotgun and a machine-gun and the soldiers opened fire from a machine gun in response. As a result, the barn burst into flames. By this time, the second search group led by the platoon commander, junior lieutenant O.P. Khakimov arrived. The farm was cordoned off and observation posts were put up. The owner of the farm was detained and interrogated. She told that on May 18 two unknown people arrived at night and stated that they would set up a hiding place in her barn. Two hours later, 8 more people arrived; they took carts from the locals and began equipping the shelter. During their work the owner heard that the Central OUN representatives and 3 people from the printing house will be hiding there. After the fire, the burned corpses and the printing station with all the equipment were found underground. According to the documents, a member of the Central OUN, the "Ukrainian Head Rada" (UGVR) representative (alias "Kolya") and the editor (alias "Verlon") were among the burnt rebels.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the actions of the 24th Infantry Brigade in the Carpathian region were distinguished by an unprecedented scale of work with the local population. During the period from May 12 to May 26, 1945, 39 meetings were held by the Brigade agitators (attended by about 2 thousand people) and 256 group interviews of about 2.5 thousand people were conducted. More than a thousand individual interviews took place, 960 slogans were written

¹ The San Francisco Conference was held in June 1945. Representatives of the governments of 50 states took part in the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter became the constituent document of the OUN.

and 18 concerts were given, attended by almost 1,5 thousand people (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 210).

As a result of the operation, 47 partisans were killed, 287 people were captured, 7 deserters, 190 accomplices, 45 citizens evading mobilization and 135 people requiring “filtration” were detained (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 210).

For the second quarter of 1945, 1734 people voluntarily came to the Brigade Command posts (TSAVV. F. 240. Op. 1.s. D. 64. L. 233).

References

TSAVV – Central Archive of Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia.

Šmigel', Cherkasov, 2013 – Šmigel' M., Cherkasov A. (2013). The 14th Waffen-Grenadier-Division of the SS «Galizien Nr. 1» in Slovakia (1944–1945): Battles and Repressions. *Bylye Gody*. 28(2): 61-72.

Cherkasov et al., 2015 – Cherkasov A.A., Krinko E.F., Smigel M. (2015). Ukrainian nationalism during world war II: Its nature and manifestations. *Rusin*. 40(2): 98-117.