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Babette Quinkert. *Propaganda und Terror in Weißrußland 1941-1944: Die deutsche "geistige" Kriegsführung gegen Zivilbevölkerung und Partisanen.* Krieg in der Geschichte. Paderborn: Schöningh Paderborn, 2008. 420 pp. EUR 58.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-506-76596-3.

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Nazi Germany's Battle for Hearts and Minds

On June 22, 1944, German occupation authorities staged an especially dramatic "day of celebration" in Minsk. During the early morning hours, marching columns of boys and girls from the White Ruthenian (Belarusian) Youth Organization (WJW) as well as members of a Belarusian SS unit marched to the German "cemetery of heroes" where they laid a wreath in recognition of Germany's efforts to free Belarus from the Soviet yoke. Following this part of the day's festivities, focus shifted to the center of the city where another procession took place, one that illustrated the German narrative of the war. The first few wagons that passed symbolized Bolshevik rule. A group of individuals wearing tattered clothes and standing behind the hammer and sickle flag were soon followed by a Stalin puppet manipulated by six "Jews." Slogans declaring that "Bolshevism destroyed the intelligentsia" and "Stalin and Lenin preach that religion is opium" were accompanied by sculptors of destroyed churches. The " 'freedom' of the NKVD" was symbolized by a prison and a rail car traveling towards Siberia. "After such poverty, misery, exploitation and terror," (p. 363), the second stage of the procession–which focused on German "achievements" in the Soviet Union–began. Slogans such as "the path to European freedom" and "long live a free White Ruthenia" were accompanied by marching German troops and more WJW members. Doctors and workers, who symbolized modern medical care and the unity of Europe laboring to defeat the communist menace, followed the military procession. As Babette Quinkert notes in her comprehensive study of German propaganda in Belarus during the Second World War, this event was not isolated; rather, it was the culmination of the German state's approach to total war. Quinkert's work persuasively challenges the prevailing view that the Third Reich utilized only terror in its attempt to conquer the Soviet Union. Instead, she suggests, Germany pursued a much more balanced policy towards civilians living in the occupied territories.

As her title indicates, Quinkert examines connections between propaganda and terror as they developed from planning by Wehrmacht officials during the 1930s to the actual occupation of Belarus between 1941 and 1944. Her

first section deals with the development of psychological warfare during the interwar period with a focus on its orientation towards the Soviet Union. Quinkert begins her analysis with a look at how Germany grappled with the importance of psychological warfare during the interwar period. Building upon the lessons of the First World War–which highlighted the importance of propaganda, both to strengthen one's own military and home fronts and to weaken the enemy's morale–German military thinkers attempted to construct a military policy that effectively employed propaganda. This process was accelerated after the reintroduction of conscription in 1935 and in 1938 chief of the Oberkommando des Wehrmacht Wilhelm Keitel enunciated its necessity for future war. He argued that Germany would have to exploit its entire means "against the enemy's armed forces, against the material sources of the strength of the enemy and the spiritual strength of his people" (p. 34). This statement was not mere rhetoric; the German army had established already in 1929 a Psychological Laboratory within the Reichswehr Ministry, which led to the creation of four Wehrmacht propaganda companies by 1938. Quinkert persuasively argues that not only did the Germans recognize "that wars of propaganda, economics and combat constituted an inseparable unity," but that they followed this idea to its logical end by building an institutional basis to wage such a multifaceted conflicted (p. 42).

One of Quinkert's most interesting theses concerns the development of the "criminal orders" that turned the German invasion of the Soviet Union into a war of unbridled savagery and atrocity. As Europe underwent a process of ideological polarization during the 1930s–a development most tangibly manifested by the Spanish Civil War–Germany's military thinkers engaged in a "war before the war" with the Soviet Union (p. 43). Two important points arose during this early planning. First, German authorities believed that the Soviets would utilize propaganda behind the advancing German front, stirring up resistance among civilians to the occupiers. This agitation, according to a 1935 study of such possibilities, could have "a devastating effect" on German operations (p. 45). Thus, individuals who could inspire both civilians and soldiers to such actions required special attention; this clearly meant commissars. Second, German propagandists believed that Soviet society could be split along "national and racial lines" and thus developed different programs for the various national groups (p. 47). One commonality among these propaganda lines was the failure of Bolshevism to provide its subjects with the land, peace, and bread it had promised and the resulting use of violence by the regime to keep the state together. Again, the commissars occupied a special place in this propaganda. One position paper from 1935 suggested the use of the following slogans to be directed towards Soviet conscripts: "beat them [commissars] to death, desert either individually or in entire units.... We promise you proper treatment and nourishment.... Turn your bayonets around and fight with us against the damned Jewish commissars" (p. 47). Here, the desire to break up the Soviet Union from within combined with a call for the murder of allegedly Jewish commissars. Already, six years before the Commissar Order was drafted and distributed to the Ostheer, commissars had been targeted for death by at least one section of the German army.

According to Quinkert, this line of thinking directly led to the formulation and implementation of the Commissar Order. The political and military leadership believed that murder of Soviet commissars would both destabilize the Red Army and ensure a far easier occupation of the eastern territories, as no one would lead civilian resistance in the rear areas. In other words, the murder of Soviet commissars was understood as what Quinkert describes as a "preventative defensive strategy against the guerilla war [*Kleinkrieg*] in the rear area" (p. 59). While her claim that that the German military carried out this order not merely for ideological reasons, but also for "independent pragmatic motives" is not entirely novel, it is certainly convincing and it provides evidence of a German army prepared to contravene the established rules of war long before the opening of Operation Barbarossa.

The implementation of the Commissar Order constituted one aspect of the terror utilized by Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. Quinkert then shifts gears and examines the other side of German occupation policies in her second section: the institutionalization of propaganda for the eastern campaign. The resources devoted to the propaganda mission reflected its status as an important component of the operation. The Wehrmacht propaganda section attached thirteen propaganda companies to the army with another twelve war reporter companies attached to Luftwaffe, naval, and Waffen-SS units. These were complemented by units under the Reich Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories (which were active in the civilian-administered areas) as well by individuals attached to Joseph Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry. In addition, SD and police units, the Foreign Ministry, and Soviet nationals also worked to propagate the Nazi view of the war to the civilian population. Unlike

the generally held view that "polycracy" doomed any rational occupation policy in the east, Quinkert persuasively maintains, "the central authorities not only cooperated closely, but also worked together in an effective and solution-oriented way" (p. 109).

Germany utilized various forms of media to reach the civilian population, ranging from pamphlets and posters (both image and text) to film and radio, on a hitherto unprecedented scale during the war. Quinkert notes that during the entirety of the French campaign, a total of two million leaflets were distributed by the Germans; in comparison, during the first week or so of the Soviet campaign, the Germans circulated some thirty million different pieces of propaganda materials. By the turn of the year, this number had risen to 433,000,000 pieces. Some of these materials originated in the Reich but the majority were produced locally by Wehrmacht propaganda units that ran their own printing presses and paper factories. This impressive production system, however, was stymied by problems of delivery: the same lack of roads and vehicles that starved the blitzkrieg made it very difficult for propaganda units to spread their message throughout rural Russia.

Quinkert then examines how German propaganda activities and messages changed during the course of the war by focusing on Belarus. While Belarus is perhaps the best-researched area of Germany's eastern empire, her analysis of connections between terror and propaganda allows for a generally fresh interpretation of the occupation. During the opening phase of the invasion, the propaganda line revolved around the idea of the Germans as liberators, saving Soviet civilians from "Jewish-criminal despotism" that had produced only "poverty and misery" (p. 140). The focus on the alleged links between Judaism and Bolshevism was complemented by concerted efforts to rouse the civilian population into open revolt against the Soviet state; this policy resulted directly from planning during the 1930s. Such cooperation, however, was framed by threats against those who failed to rise to the occasion.

Despite these attempts to win over or at least coerce the Soviet population into supporting the side of the invaders, such propaganda efforts failed. As Quinkert notes, "civilians were not only witnesses to such [German] crimes, but they themselves were also affected" by German occupation policies (p. 157). German claims that the Soviets caused their desperation and misery failed to convince individuals living in cities destroyed by German bombing or those who were rounded up and sent to prison camps in which the Germans murdered various categories of prisoners. Therefore, during the opening months of the war, the reality of German actions completely extinguished any possibility of winning the hearts and minds of the Belarusian population through positive propaganda.

Quinkert shows that in contrast to scholarly assumptions, once this initial propaganda foray failed, the Germans displayed flexibility by changing their message in hopes of achieving greater resonance with the population. Three primary and interconnected themes dominated the remainder of Germany's propaganda campaign in Belarus: the agrarian question; labor policies; and anti-partisan warfare (and its ties to the genocide of the Jews). Since Belarus was primarily an agricultural region, some Germans–primarily within the Wehrmacht and Alfred Rosenberg's Ministry–believed that a policy that promised an end to the hated *kolkhoz* system promised to generate real support for the occupiers. This policy was to be introduced to the population as one that would be an "intention for the long term" (p. 166) as the Germans feared that the immediate closing of the collective farms would disrupt their ability to live off the land in the Soviet Union.

When it was clear that the war would continue into 1942, German authorities became much more concerned about winning the support of Soviet civilians for the war effort and agricultural reform was made a priority. The propaganda campaign in support of these reforms concentrated on making them comprehensible to peasants and illustrating the "advantages" (p. 221) for them. That this was a major effort is evidenced by the ten million leaflets, one million copies of a special edition of a Russian-language newspaper, sixteen thousand posters, and one hundred eighty thousand sheets of guidelines distributed by Propaganda Section Ostland alone. Despite the intensity of this campaign, it proved a political failure. After an initial surge in peasant support for German policies, attitudes soon retreated back to indifference to the occupiers at best.

This swing was due in part to German anti-partisan policies–where the connection between terror and propaganda of Quinkert's title manifested itself most concretely. From the German perspective, partisans posed a real threat to the systematic exploitation of the country's agricultural resources, especially in 1942 and 1943. The Germans adjusted their policies from a more spontaneous reaction to partisans in 1941 to much larger, more systematic operations in later years. These "large opera-

tions" utilized terror on a tremendous scale in the rear areas in an attempt to quash the partisan movement. As Quinkert notes, these operations targeted "actual or alleged partisans ... with a merciless persecution and death" (p. 256), but they were accompanied by a propaganda campaign designed to delegitimate the partisan movement and convince civilians to assist the Germans. While German authorities hoped that the combination of terror and propaganda would lead to a quieter rear area, the campaign failed to extinguish the partisan threat. German rhetoric and promises failed to compensate for the murder of family members or friends linked to the partisans and use of violence actually drove civilians over to the resistance. The final German policy that led to a mushrooming of the partisan movement was the Reich Labor Action, and here again, propaganda constituted an important part of the program.

Part of Germany's newfound engagement with the civilian population drew on the realization that workers–both for the Reich and for the occupied territories–were desperately needed. Once again, the occupiers utilized various means of propaganda to persuade Soviet civilians to work for the Reich. Two primary themes emerged. First, propaganda emphasized the cultural and economic superiority of Germany, in order to convince Belarusians both that the Reich could not lose the war and that Germany could serve as a model for Belarus. Second, and by far the more important, especially as the war dragged on into 1943 and 1944, was the idea that Europe needed to unify around the German core in order to defeat Bolshevism. This idea of a new Europe struggling to save western civilization against the "Jewish Bolsheviks" led to a campaign that revised many long-standing German attitudes; as Quinkert notes, even the SS began to "revise ... anti-Slavic tendencies" in its training materials (p. 291).

This radical change in propaganda was part of a "change in course" (p. 274) that sought to elevate Belarus (or, in the contemporary terminology, White Ruthenia) to the level of an independent and sovereign state within the Nazi New Order. The idea of the "rebirth of White Ruthenia" (p. 297) now constituted a major piece of the German propaganda effort. The celebration described in the opening paragraphs of this review was the culmination of this effort; it was, in short, an attempt to construct a national identity for Belarusians distinct from competing Soviet or Russian identities that was, however, inextricably linked to Germany. As Quinkert points out, this day of national celebration took place a mere two weeks before the Red Army liberated Minsk from German rule. The military situation was just part of the quandary facing the occupiers. One of the higher-ranking members of the propaganda section in Minsk listed numerous problems plaguing the German propaganda effort: forced requisitioning and labor (some 380,000 Belarusians toiled in the Reich during the war); a peasantry increasingly caught between partisans and Germans; and destruction of homes and lives as well as other daily horrors facing the civilian population. He concluded by stating that all of these "could not be used by even the best propaganda!" (p. 365).

Quinkert has produced an important and useful addition to the literature on German occupation. Her exploration of the neglected topic of German propaganda in the occupied Soviet territories fills a considerable void in the literature without overstating its importance relative to the terror and violence applied on a wide scale by the Wehrmacht, SS, and other Nazi organizations. One minor difficulty in her study is its overwhelming reliance on German sources. While she has utilized three archives in the former Soviet Union, these have been primarily mined for German-language sources. Certainly the propaganda arm of the Wehrmacht was concerned with the ways in which its various messages were received by the population and it made every effort to gauge their effectiveness. Some Belarusian voices, however, would be useful in determining how civilians actually interpreted and understood German propaganda. Aside from this minor caveat, however, Quinkert's study persuasively highlights the totality of Nazi Germany's war effort in the Soviet Union.