

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: GERMAN RADIO PROPAGANDA IN THE SOVIET UNION: A WAR OF WORDS

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The focus of this study is the content of Nazi radio propaganda to and concerning the Soviet Union. The radio was a new and innovative means for the Nazi regime to directly communicate with the masses of illiterate civilians in the Soviet Union on a daily basis. This study finds that as the war in the East progressed, there was an increasingly stark dichotomy between the positive messages found within German radio propaganda and the harsh reality of the Nazi occupation. It seems almost as though there was a morbid inverse correlation between the amount of violence the Germans inflicted upon civilians (including forcibly sending them to work in Germany) and the amount of radio propaganda exhorting these same civilian populations to join the Nazi cause. It is also important to note that every German radio broadcast to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was not propaganda. In fact, by 1943, a great deal of news items broadcast on German radio in occupied territory were administrative in nature. Announcements such as local curfews, blackouts, conscription and mobilization decrees, and warnings were frequently broadcast.

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A WAR OF WORDS

By

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2012

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

I dedicate this book to my Mother, Father and Brother, not only for putting up with me for two plus years as a graduate student, but for providing me with the love and support that allowed me to make something of myself.

I'd like to thank Professor Jeffrey Herf for tirelessly encouraging me to be the best historian I could possibly be. I'd also like to thank my aunts, Florence and Mary Gallagher whose help with formatting and editing was key to the ultimate success of this project.

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Introduction

Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Reich Minister of Propaganda anticipated the importance of telecommunications and the power it would hold between the government and the masses in his 1933 speech “The Radio as the Eighth Great Power” when he said that “future generations may conclude that the radio had as great an intellectual and spiritual impact on the masses as the printing press had before the beginning of the Reformation.”¹ During the ensuing war between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, German propagandists used the radio in a concerted and sustained effort on a scale never before seen in history. Through this new medium, they attempted to gain the support of occupied civilians and utilize it to more efficiently govern and administer those under their rule. The ultimate goal of German propagandists in the Eastern territories was to administer the occupied population in such a way as to allow the Nazi regime to carry out their long term plans for the Soviet Union.

While newspapers, leaflets and posters all played a major role in the German propaganda campaign in the East -- and I certainly consider them in my analysis -- the main focus of this study is the content of Nazi *radio* propaganda to and concerning the Soviet Union. The radio was a new and innovative means for the Nazi regime to directly communicate with the masses of illiterate civilians in the Soviet Union on a daily basis. Thus, the radio was not used merely for propaganda

¹ Goebbels, Joseph. „Der Rundfunk als achte Großmacht,“ *Signale der neuen Zeit. 25 ausgewählte Reden von Dr. Joseph Goebbels* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938), pp. 197-207.
<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb56.htm>.

purposes, but was employed as a brand new form of technology to administer populations under Nazi occupation.

This study finds that as the war in the east progressed, there was an increasingly stark dichotomy between the positive messages found within German radio propaganda and the harsh reality of the Nazi occupation. It seems almost as though there was a morbid inverse correlation between the amount of violence the Germans inflicted upon civilians (including forcibly sending them to work in Germany) and the amount of radio propaganda exhorting these same civilian populations to join the Nazi cause.² It is also important to note that every German radio broadcast to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was not propaganda. In fact, by 1943, as I mentioned, a great deal of news items broadcast on German radio in occupied territory were administrative in nature. Announcements such as local curfews, blackouts, conscription and mobilization decrees, and warnings were frequently broadcast.

My analysis of Nazi radio propaganda also provides valuable insight into the priorities of the German occupation administration in the East by painting a chronological picture of the overall Nazi propaganda effort. Within which themes and strategies changed significantly on a monthly and even daily basis all the while maintaining a constant overall appeal for the occupied populations to rally around the German cause in the face of ever increasing partisan activity. On any given day, the tone and content of radio broadcasts or newspapers was most likely different in

² It must be noted that many civilians in the borderlands between the German Reich and the Soviet Union originally greeted the invading *Wehrmacht* as a liberating force. After years of oppression under the Soviet regime, many remembered the German occupation during the First World War fondly in comparison.

Warsaw when compared to Smolensk, indicating that German radio propagandists produced different broadcasts for peoples of varying ethnicity, nationality, and even religion. Specifically, my analysis of German radio broadcasts from 1942-1944 indicated the importance and intensity of the campaign to recruit civilians to work in the *Reich*.

Due to the fact that there has been a relative lack of English (and even German language) scholarship focusing specifically on German radio propaganda to the East, my thesis does not significantly challenge the existing historiography concerning German propaganda in the Soviet Union. What it does accomplish is to add a new chapter to this historiography, supplementing and strengthening it with an analysis of radio broadcasts specifically aimed at civilian populations in the east.

Throughout my exhaustive study of secondary sources, I rarely found any work focusing on Nazi propaganda that had more than a few pages dedicated to German radio broadcasts in general, much less broadcasts specifically intended for the occupied Soviet Union (with the exception of Jeffery Herf's "Nazi Propaganda to the Arab World" and Micheal Balfour's "Propaganda at War").³

Concerning the entire German radio campaign in the East, when the staggering number of government bureaucracies that technically had some control over different aspects of propaganda in the East is considered, I found that while

³ Herf's work clearly is focused on Arabic language Nazi propaganda, while Balfour's focus is largely concerned with the propaganda war between England and Germany and Berlin's broadcast's to the world. Herf, Jeffrey. "Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World." (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and Balfour, Micheal. "Propaganda in War 1939-1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany." (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.)

fluid, geographically diverse, and at times contradictory, German radio propaganda to the Soviet Union was remarkably consistent. Nazi propagandists identified the invading Germans both pragmatically and ideologically as liberators who presented a superior “European” alternative to Stalin and Communist rule.⁴ In this contention, I agree with Babbette Quinkert and her study on German propaganda in Belarus -- “Propaganda und Terror in Weissrussland 1941-1944: Die deutsche “geistige” Kriegsführung gegen Zivilbevölkerung und Partisanen” -- that the German radio effort was not so much strictly ideological as it was inherently opportunistic.⁵

While Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism were certainly major facets of the German propaganda campaign in the East, they were not the only subjects touched upon by Nazi propagandists, nor were they even the majority. Though anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism were essentially inseparable in Nazi ideology -- I must concur with Daniel Uziel’s recent findings in “The Propaganda Warriors” -- the number of news items in which anti-Semitism or “The Jewish Question,” were dominant topics on German radio decreased in the occupied eastern territories after the first year of the war, only to occasionally reappear, most notably in the case of the Katyn Massacre.⁶ My findings do not challenge Jeffrey Herf’s contention in “The Jewish Enemy,” that Nazi print and radio propaganda was highly ideological and virulently anti-Semitic. Herf’s book superbly documents and explores the vicious nature of German domestic

⁵ Quinkert, Babbette. “Propaganda und Terror in Weißrußland 1941-1944: Die deutsche “geistige” Kriegsführung gegen Zivilbevölkerung und Partisanen. Krieg in der Geschichte” (Paderborn: Schöningh Paderborn, 2008.)

⁶ Uziel, Daniel, “The Propaganda Warriors: The *Wehrmacht* and the Consolidation of the German Home Front.” (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 286. Uziel contends that the PK’s or Propaganda companies who were responsible for covering events in the occupied Soviet Union for the German press gradually reduced their reports concerning Jews to “zero” due to the fact that they had “more than enough military events to report about (and) because of the gradual disappearance of the Jews from the scene.”

propaganda, which is a completely different topic than foreign propaganda.

Regardless, Herf's finding regarding a worldwide, Jewish led conspiracy of Capitalists and Bolsheviks were consistent thematically with many of the radio broadcasts I analyzed, especially during the first year of the war.

Though indirectly related to my study of German propaganda in the occupied Soviet Union, I owe a great deal to Manfred Messerschmidt and Omer Bartov's works regarding propaganda and the *Wehrmacht*, "Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat" and "Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich," respectively.

Messerschmidt's work was the first to strongly argue that ideology played a major role within the Wehrmacht leading to further research on Propaganda *Kompanies* (as did Bartov's), that played such a large role in the propaganda campaign in the East.⁷

Peter Longerich must also be noted for his groundbreaking work "Propagandisten im Krieg," concerning propaganda and the foreign ministry. Most notably for my purposes he identified the key elements that made up the complicated organizational structure of Nazi propaganda in the Soviet Union.⁸

The works of Aristotle Kallis, Peter Longerich and Michael Balfour were all critically important to my understanding of the vitally important power struggles at the RMVP, which often were decisive in determining the content of propaganda to the East. The feud between Reich Minister of Propaganda Goebbels and Reich Press Chief, Otto Dietrich, played out over the radio and due to their previous research

⁷ Messerschmidt, Manfred, "Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Zeit der Indoktrination." (Hamburg, Schenk, 1969) and Bartov, Omer. "Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.)

⁸ Longerich, Peter, "Propagandisten im Krieg: Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop," (Munich: Studien zur Zeitgeschichte, 1987.)

concerning the nature of the feud, I was able to identify when Goebbels “realistic” propaganda approach was adopted and how this affected the German radio campaign in the Soviet Union.

I analyzed thousands of German radio broadcasts to the occupied Soviet Union as intercepted and deciphered by the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, the OSS and the OWI, as well as the relevant secondary literature concerning German propaganda. My study argues that regardless of Hitler’s brutal policies and the Nazi state’s complicated bureaucracy, German radio propaganda consistently attempted to recruit civilians under their administrative control to their cause by using a variety of ideological and pragmatic themes. While Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism played a major part in the German propaganda campaign in the East, daily administrative concerns such as agriculture, food rationing, and the recruitment of foreign workers were often given priority over ideology in German radio broadcasts.

The Organization of German Propaganda During Operation Barbarossa

Nazi Germany's foreign propaganda apparatus was marked by constant inner- and inter-department squabbling that resulted from Hitler's insistence upon delineating propaganda duties to multiple different bureaucratic organizations that in turn created competing power structures. The German Foreign Ministry, the RMVP, the *Wehrmacht*, and the Department of Occupied Territories in the East were all to some degree in charge of propaganda duties in the occupied Soviet Union.⁹

With 42 offices across Germany in 1941, including a Reich Foreign Propaganda Office, the Ministry of Propaganda had its own organizational structure within the bureaucratic structure of the German government. However, even within the RMVP itself, there were serious divisions and active competition between the power structures built around Joseph Goebbels and Otto Dietrich.

Hitler appointed Dietrich as Press Chief of the Nazi Party and was subsequently appointed as Press Chief of the Ministry of Propaganda. Goebbels was nominally the head of the RMVP from 1933 on creating an awkward situation in which Dietrich was technically under Goebbels at the Propaganda Ministry, though they held the same rank in the Nazi party.¹⁰ As noted by Peter Longerich and Jeffrey Herf, it is particularly difficult to ascertain the amount of power that Dietrich actually yielded. Because of his daily briefings with Hitler and his "great personal political

⁹ Longerich, Peter. "Propagandisten im Krieg: Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop," (Munich: Studien zur Zeitgeschichte, 1987) pp. 109-120.

¹⁰ Longerich, 111-112.

skills, his role in Nazi press policy seems larger than he wanted to admit after the war.” Longerich logically concluded that both men played an important role in shaping Germany’s propaganda message and that their differences mainly “resulted from their different functions,” as Dietrich was responsible for day to day matters, while Goebbels focused more on long term overall propaganda strategy.¹¹

For Operation Barbarossa, the RMVP created an “Eastern Department,” that was located in Cracow. The Cracow propaganda office incorporated Eberhart Taubert’s Anti-Comintern organization and its departments that consisted of an anti-Jewish section, an anti-Bolshevik section and a Press section. These departments collected, evaluated and translated materials that became the basis for leaflets, posters, brochures and pre-written radio broadcasts.¹² Every German department involved with propaganda in the east was forced to liaison with the RMVP’s Cracow office.

The German Foreign Ministry’s Department of Radio Policy (*Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung*) also shared responsibility for broadcasts to the occupied and unoccupied Soviet Union.¹³ The importance of the Russian division in the Department of Radio Policy was exemplified by its staff of 51 employees, by far the largest foreign language division in the Foreign Ministry, constituting nearly a quarter of its entire staff of 226 employees.¹⁴

¹¹ Longerich, 113-115.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Herf, 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Technically, most of the propaganda duties in the occupied Soviet Union were under the operational control of the field offices of the German Armed Forces Propaganda Branch (*Wehrmachtpropaganda-Abteilung*).¹⁵ The *Wehrmachtpropaganda-Abteilung* had been created in 1937 to coordinate the activities of the German Armed Forces with the Reich Ministry of Propaganda.¹⁶ In April 1941, a special section known as Section WPR IV was created within the staff of the *Wehrmacht* Propaganda Branch for work in the upcoming Russian campaign. This section trained special units known as *Propagandakompanies* or PK's who were responsible for propaganda in the occupied territories.¹⁷ Goebbels and his Ministry of Propaganda played a major role in finding and vetting these men.¹⁸

PK's were purely military units consisting of officers and non-commissioned officers that were subordinate as army units to the command of their respective armies.¹⁹ Their personnel had expanded to about 15,000 men by mid-1942 and included professional journalists, radio reporters, photographers, movie camera operators, and interpreters. Their mission as stated in the "directives for the operation of propaganda in "Case Barbarossa," issued by the *Wehrmacht* Propaganda branch, prior to the start of the Russian campaign was as follows:

The propaganda units are allowed to start producing all types of reports when the fighting against the USSR begins. Atrocities and breaches of international law committed by the Red Army should be especially emphasized. Reports based only on stories are unusable. They should be based on official reports

¹⁵ Tyaglyy, 424.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Tyaglyy, 424.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Herzstein, Robert E., "Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Orel Region of Great Russia, 1942–1943: The German Army and Its Russian Collaborators," Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual 6 (1989), pp. 2.

written by officers. It is most important that the first reports about the fighting reach OKW as fast as possible.

Forward propaganda liaison bases shall be established in Reichshof (Rzeszow), Warsaw, Konigsberg and Rovaniemi. The delivery of the material from the units to the liaison bases in Berlin is the duty of the liaison units. Direct Army or *Luftwaffe* courier connections should be used whenever possible.

Telephone connections shall be used, to the extent possible, for the delivery of press reports to Berlin. In any case these reports must also be sent to Berlin in written form at the first opportunity. Cracow, Warsaw, and Konigsberg shall be the relay stations for the radio reports (in other words the information that PK units sent to Berlin was then transmitted back to the occupied territories in the form of a polished radio broadcast).²⁰

PK's were also subordinate to local *Wehrmacht* Propaganda Branches (WPr) of the Supreme Command of the German Army (OKW) that were organized along territorial lines. For instance, in Robert Herzstein's study "Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Orel Region of Great Russia, 1942-1943," the unit he examines in detail, PK693, collaborated extensively with the lc or "third general staff officer" of the army *Oberkommando*, but was subordinate to the Smolensk office "W" of the WPr.²¹ The departments were further subdivided in 1942 into subunits (for instance, Propaganda Section "U" was responsible for implementing propaganda activity in occupied Ukraine). By 1942, Propaganda Section "U" had been broken down into Section U1 in Zaporozhe, Section U2 in Simferopol, and so on).²² Each of these departments would then report their actions to Propaganda Section "U," which sent monthly summaries to the *Wehrmacht Propaganda-Abteilung* in Berlin and Cracow.²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Herzstein, 2-3.

²² Tyaglyy, 424.

²³ Tyaglyy, 424.

In October 1939, German shortwave radio stations were beaming to foreign countries in 113 separate daily broadcasts from Zeesen, a suburb of Berlin, for 15 hours a day, 7 days a week.²⁴ The number of daily hours on air had increased to 22 by January 1940, 31 by the summer of 1940, and 53 by January 1943.²⁵ On November 14, 1942, the Federal Communications Commission's Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service reported that the Germans were broadcasting to the occupied and unoccupied Soviet Union on multiple frequencies. Shortwave broadcasts were beamed from Berlin, while medium and longwave broadcasts were beamed from Baranowicze, Donau (Austria), Lwow, Madona (Latvia), Minsk, Smolensk, Vinnitsa, and Weichsel (Warsaw) for a total of over nine hours of programming daily in Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaidjani, Great Russian, Ukrainian, White Russian, Ruthenian, Transcaucasian, and Caucasian.²⁶

By May 28, 1943, the number of daily hours of German broadcasts to the Soviet Union had increased to nearly 14 and now included broadcasts in Tartar and Daghestani and even broadcasts in French and Spanish for Frenchmen and Spaniards fighting on the eastern front.²⁷ The scope of the linguistic abilities of German radio clearly indicate that German propagandists had collaborators from most of the ethnic minority groups who called the western Soviet Union home at their disposal.

²⁴ Herf, Jeffrey. "Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World." (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Program Schedules of Foreign Broadcasts (Revised)," November 14, 1942, Program Schedules of Foreign Broadcasts: 1942-1947, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #51.

²⁷ "Program Schedules of Foreign Broadcasts," May 28, 1943, Program Schedules of Foreign Broadcasts: 1942-1947, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #51.

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service

Meanwhile, by early 1941, the U.S. State Department had become seriously concerned about Nazi Germany's intensifying foreign language propaganda campaign.²⁸ In response, the Federal Broadcasting Monitoring Service (FBMS) was established on February 26, 1941, as a unit within the Federal Communications Commission and its mission was to monitor foreign radio broadcasts with a concentration on those emanating from Germany.²⁹ By September of 1941, the FBMS was comprised of an Office of the Director, an Advisory Board, and seven separate sections: Translation and Transcription, Report, Analysis, Monitoring, Engineering, Mail and Files, and Stenography. Listening posts were originally established in Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; Kingsville, Texas; Santurce, Puerto Rico; and London, England.³⁰

On July 28, 1942, the FBMS changed its name to the Federal Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS) and by this time had established additional listening posts at Silver Hill, Maryland; Hawaii; and at several foreign locations.³¹ The FBIS now had the capability to monitor broadcasts from all over the world and its stated mission was to "intercept broadcasts of foreign news, intelligence, or propaganda emanating from authorized or clandestine transmitters in belligerent, occupied, and neutral

²⁸ "Preliminary Inventories," Records of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, compiled by Walter W. Weinstein. The National Archives and Records Services Administration, Washington D.C. 1959, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

countries.”³² Recordings, transcripts, and translations were made at listening posts and then cabled or mailed to FBIS headquarters where they were edited. Noteworthy material was teletyped to Government agencies concerned with “military, diplomatic, and propaganda aspects of the war.”³³ The records of the FBIS were preserved and are now kept at the National Archives and Records Services Administration in College Park, Maryland.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Preliminary Inventories,” Records of the Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, compiled by Walter W. Weinstein. The National Archives and Records Services Administration, Washington D.C. 1959, 2.

A War of Liberation

German radio propagandists attempted to portray the battle against the Soviet Union as one of “liberation.” A circular from the OKW (the High Command of the German Army) made public shortly after the invasion was launched stated “the enemies of Germany are not the peoples of the Soviet Union, but exclusively the Jewish-Bolshevik Soviet government.”³⁴

Contrary to this public façade, the OKW issued its own internal instructions to Army commanders on the 19th of May entitled, “Guidelines For Behavior of Troops in Russia.” Part of this OKW order states as follows:

Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of the National Socialist German people. Germany’s fight is against this corrosive worldview and its bearers. This fight requires ruthless and energetic measures against Bolshevik agitators, partisans, saboteurs, Jews, and the ruthless elimination of active or passive resistance.³⁵

What the *Wehrmacht* and the Nazi regime revealed to the occupied Soviet populace and the world regarding the rationale behind Operation Barbarossa was drastically different than what the Nazi regime and the German armed forces said internally. As Omer Bartov argues in “Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich,” and made clear by the above OKW order, *Wehrmacht* soldiers were

³⁴ Steinberg, Jonathan. "The Third Reich Reflected: German Civil Administration in the Occupied Soviet Union, 1941-4." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 110 (1995): pp. 634.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

indoctrinated to believe that the war in the East was to be one of “annihilation” not “liberation.”³⁶

Echoing the ideological nature of the *Wehrmacht*’s internal propaganda, Colonel General Hoepner, Commander of Panzer Group 4 (who later died hanging by piano wire from a meat-hook for his part in the coup attempt of July 20, 1944) also saw the battle in the East not as one of liberation but as an “essential component of the German people’s struggle for existence.”³⁷ On May 2, 1941, Hoepner wrote:

The war against the Soviet Union is an essential component of the German people’s struggle for existence. It is the old struggle of the Germans against the Slavs, the defense of European culture against the Muscovite-Asiatic flood, the warding off of Jewish Bolshevism. This struggle must have as its aim the demolition of present Russia and must therefore be conducted with unprecedented severity. Both the planning and execution of every battle must be dictated by an iron will to bring about a merciless, total annihilation of the enemy. Particularly no mercy should be shown toward the carriers of the present Russian-Bolshevik system.³⁸

German propagandists in the East thus had to work in an extremely difficult environment. Behind the frontline *Wehrmacht* divisions, units of SS, Gestapo, and *Wehrmacht* security units killed millions of innocent civilians. Jurgen Forster found that the 707th Infantry Division, deployed in White Russia killed a remarkable 10,431 “captives,” in one month out of a total of 10,940. The division suffered only two dead and five wounded during this “combat.”³⁹ The dichotomy between the German “liberation” propaganda and the reality of German conquest would only grow as the

³⁶ Bartov, Omer. “Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich.” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 125-130.

³⁷ Forster, Jurgen. “Barbarossa Revisited: Strategy and Ideology in the East,” *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 50 (Winter, 1988-Spring, 1992), pp. 23.

³⁸ Bartov, 128-129.

³⁹ Forster, 30.

war progressed and would force German propagandists to change their tactics, while remaining committed to their goal of recruiting collaborators to their cause.

During the first few months of the war, the Germans largely focused their radio propaganda on justifying their invasion of the Soviet Union both pragmatically and ideologically as a “war of liberation.” The FBIS did not decipher any German broadcasts specifically aimed at the East during the first few days after the invasion. Thus, I analyzed Nazi broadcasts to America and the World during this critical period as the theme of a United European, Anti-Bolshevik crusade was already apparent and would remain a cornerstone of Nazi propaganda until German forces were pushed west of the Bug River in 1944. Thirty-six hours after launching Operation Barbarossa, Germany broke its silence and announced to the world that Nazi Germany was now officially in a state of war with the Soviet Union. Berlin announced to the world in German at 8:00 p.m. EST on the 23rd of June that an ideologically driven war of liberation in the East had begun:

This is the German Short Wave Transmitter, Berlin, with the News Service.

On the 22nd of June, a (special) action was begun. The German Army, in collaboration with allied forces, crossed the Soviet border in attack. This battle in the East is the battle of Europe against Bolshevism...The Soviet Russian population has again been placed under terror and horror by the Moscow Government. From reports coming from the Moscow Transmitter, it can be seen that even the least important incident will lead to the death penalty...The population in the Ukraine, (has) in general, refused to take up arms and support the Soviet system and attempts have been made in this region to liberate the political prisoners.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ DZD Berlin in German, June 23, 1941, “News in German,” Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Less than 48 hours after the invasion was launched, the Germans were already using some of the dominant propaganda themes that they would attempt to inculcate into the occupied populations. The main theme at this early stage of the war was that of a “United European Army” that came as liberators to free the Russian people from a detestable “Bolshevik” regime.⁴¹ It seems that this news report was also following Goebbels comment in his diary entry of June 5, 1941 to “sharply criticize Bolshevism and its inability in all areas of life,” as the report mentions both the refusal of Ukrainians to take up arms against the Germans and a reign of terror in Moscow. This implied that the Soviet government was not only unable to convince its citizens to fight the invader, but that it was unable to control its population without resorting to mass violence.

The following day, June 24, 1941, another explanation was given by Berlin for the invasion of the Soviet Union, this time in an 8:45 a.m. broadcast specifically beamed to North America in English in a program known as “Letters to Harry.” This highly detailed, precise explanation concerned why Germany was “forced” to attack the Soviet Union differed greatly in tone from the previous German bulletin addressed to the world on June 23 and echoed a theme German propagandists would return to after the battle of tide turned against Germany. The broadcast did not present the war as one of liberation, but one of absolute necessity for the survival of the Reich in the face of the growing Bolshevik threat, “At this great moment in Western Civilization, German troops and their Rumanian and Finnish Allies are

⁴¹ An analysis of German radio reports from the first few months of the war clearly indicates that when Nazi broadcasters referred to a “United European Army”, they clearly had in mind a “United Western European Army.” Following their defeat at Stalingrad, the Germans would later include eastern peoples in their definition of a “United European Army.”

pushing back the Red Army of Soviet Russia in the direction from which it came. Let us together (examine) the causes of the conflict.”⁴²

The announcer then argued that Adolf Hitler, though a “natural foe of Russian Bolshevism,” had tried to preserve peace on the European continent by agreeing with the Soviet Union to a non-aggression pact and “further pledging (to not) exert any influence on the affairs of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Bessarabia, and Russia” while also ceding eastern Poland to Stalin. Following this agreement, Stalin repeatedly broke the original deal that Hitler “so kindly,” bestowed upon the Russians through their occupation of Lithuania, their invasion of Finland, and the military occupation of Estonia and Latvia. All of these actions thus “made it evident every day that there was no stopping the Reds now that their appetites for neighboring lands had been whetted.” At this juncture, Hitler again tried to ensure peace by allowing Stalin to seize the area of Rumania known as Bessarabia. However, after a tense meeting with Molotov in Berlin -- it became clear to the German government that Russia was intending to resume its offensive in Finland and occupy Bulgaria militarily -- all after having had the “nerve” to request German permission to occupy certain military bases in the Dardanelles. When Germany made it clear that they would resist such measures, anti-German sentiment among the Russian government greatly increased along with British-Soviet cooperation. Germany was now

⁴² DZD Berlin in English, June 24, 1941, “Letters to Harry,” Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

completely encircled and with “Russian troop concentrations on the borders of the Reich,” Germany was left with little choice.⁴³

The comparative pragmatism of “Letters to Harry” is particularly remarkable when compared to another broadcast beamed from Berlin to North America five days later on June 29, 1941, at 9:00 p.m. EST in English. This broadcast, entitled “Jane Anderson” and intended for American Catholics, portrayed the German invasion of the Soviet Union as an ideological and religious “ holy war of liberation,” or a “crusade” against Godless Communism.

On last Sunday morning, (Adolf Hitler’s) battalions crossed the frontiers and demarcations of the leer of the Red Beast of Russia and forty-eight hours later in the clear of open day the consecrated folds of universal Catholic truth was delivered unto him in a message to the total diocese of the Catholic Church of Germany that her fifty million Catholics stand united and as one man, the German hierarchy glorifies the war against the Soviet Union as a battle on behalf of the entirety of (Catholicism) and assured the Fuehrer that the Catholic Church in Germany will support by word and deed the crusade against the Communist enemies of the Christian world.⁴⁴

The announcer, “Jane Anderson,” depicted Operation Barbarossa as a religious “crusade against the Communist enemies of the Christian world” and Hitler as almost a messianic figure, “fighting against Stalin and his foully slain twenty

⁴³ DZD Berlin in English, June 24, 1941, 8:45 A.M. “Letters to Harry,” Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁴⁴ DZD Berlin in English, June 29, 1941, 9:00 P.M. “Jane Anderson and Musical Program,” Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service.
It must be noted that while religion was used in Nazi propaganda particularly in Poland, Western Ukraine, and the Baltic, this type of direct appeal to Catholicism was largely absent from German radio broadcasts to both Nazi and Soviet controlled territory.

million stands Adolf Hitler and a new social order.”⁴⁵ This direct German appeal to Catholics was clearly aimed at building support amongst the American public for the Nazi cause to such an extent that they would reverse their interventionist course. It is also interesting to note that it appears that in singling out Catholics, German propagandists may have been familiar with Father Charles Coughlin’s weekly radio show that was virulently anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik. It is possible that they believed his listeners would be the most sympathetic to their message as the “Jane Anderson” program was frequently full of bombast and anti-Semitic rants.⁴⁶

In the earliest days of the war, the *Wehrmacht*’s blitzkrieg attack was met with fantastic success. By June 28, Minsk, one of the largest and most culturally important cities in the Soviet Union, had fallen and by the 30th, Army Group Center was a mere 300 miles away from Moscow.⁴⁷ By July 3, the traditionally conservative Head of the Army General Staff, Franz Halder, was confident enough to declare that “On the whole then, it may even be said that the objective to shatter the bulk of the Russian army this side of the Dvina and Dneiper has been accomplished.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵NARA, RG262, Entry #3. For an interesting (though not particularly objective) contemporary analysis of German shortwave broadcasts to North America see Harold N. Graves Jr. “Short Wave: Berlin Calling America,” *The Public American Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Dec., 1940) pp. 601-619.

⁴⁶ DZD Berlin in English, June 29, 1941, 9:00 P.M. “Jane Anderson and Musical Program,” Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, RG262, Entry #3.

⁴⁷ Pleshakov, 228-230.

⁴⁸ Pleshakov, 230.

Overconfidence

By late August, the military situation had become increasingly desperate for Stalin's Soviet Union. The Baltic, Belorussia and most of the Ukraine were all in German hands; Leningrad had been completely cut off from its main sources of supply on the 21st of August.⁴⁹ Voroshilov Zhdanov and Chairman of the City Soviet, Piotr Popkov informed the citizens of Leningrad that the enemy was closing in and might attempt to take the city by a letter published in the *Leningradskiaia Pravda* on the same date.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, a massive pincer attack led by Army Group South in coordination with Army Group Center's 2nd Army in the Ukraine continued to achieve spectacular successes resulting in the encirclement of Timoshenko's entire army in the Ukraine by mid-September.⁵¹

Ahead of the advancing German troops of Army Groups Center and South, Radio Breslau beamed a broadcast entitled "Ukraine Under the Soviets" in the direction of what remained of "Soviet Ukraine" on September 12, 1941, at 3:22 p.m. EST in Ukrainian. It encouraged civilians to welcome their "German saviors. Have nothing to do with the Stalin dogs. Come over to us. Peasants of the Ukraine greet the German units as your saviors and listen to our broadcasts, transmitted from Breslau."⁵²

⁴⁹Bidlack, Richard. "The Political Mood in Leningrad during the First Year of the Soviet-German War." *Russian Review* vol. 59 1(2000): pp. 100.

⁵⁰ Bidlack, 100.

⁵¹ Clark, Alan. "Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-1945." (New York: HarperCollins 1985.), 129-144.

⁵² Breslau in Ukrainian, September 12, 1941, "Ukraine Under the Soviets," Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

The broadcast sharply criticized the false promises of Stalin and Bolshevism and the horrible political, economic, and social conditions that prevailed in the Soviet Ukraine. It also made vague implications of a better life under German rule -- yet still failed to lay out a clear vision concerning the future governing of Soviet territories under German control if the Nazis won the war -- would they be ruled by the Germans as colonies or would they be granted autonomy?

Surely you have heard all the promises. You have the right to live well. You have the right to reside freely in the hotels; live in the concentration camps; and (of course) you have all the rights to participate in the digging of the Stalin canal. You also have all the right to be happy when you walk barefooted and starve to death... (By Stalin's order) the nation of the Ukraine became free. (Speaker makes guttural sneering sound). Yes, of course you have rights -- a right to work like a slave and the right to die. You have the right to operate a tractor, work like a slave, and deliver all you produce to the Soviet. You, workers of the Ukraine, all that you got was tyranny and persecution.⁵³

During the middle of the broadcast, the announcer quickly changed tone, and directly threatened the "gangs of bandits...helping the Soviet Union" with death, clearly indicating that some type of partisan formations were already harassing the *Wehrmacht* by mid-September 1941:

And you guerrillas must realize that you are a gang of bandits which the German Army will shoot on the spot when apprehended...The heroic German Army will crush once and for all the Soviet state. Those who are helping the Soviet state will pay a full price for it. We will have no mercy for them.⁵⁴

⁵³ Breslau in Ukrainian, September 12, 1941, "Ukraine Under the Soviets," Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

At the same time, Army Group North under Field Marshal Von Leeb had not only surrounded Leningrad, but by mid-September was directly threatening the city itself. The severity of the situation for Soviet forces was made painfully clear by the September 16 headline in *Leningradskaia Pravda* that screamed, “The Enemy is at the Gates! We Will Fight for Leningrad to the Last Beat of our Hearts!”⁵⁵ During the previous week, *Wehrmacht* propaganda units set up loudspeakers in forward areas all along the Leningrad Front urging Soviet soldiers to surrender and defect.⁵⁶ As a result of the continuously deteriorating military situation, the number of Soviet deserters rose from hundreds a week during the first few weeks of the war to 3,500 in a mere five days between the 13th and 17th of September 1941.⁵⁷

There is some evidence to suggest that citizens of Leningrad and potentially even Soviet soldiers were listening to broadcasts other than those of the Soviet Union. Despite Soviet propaganda depicting the Germans as fascist beasts who wanted to colonize the Slavic peoples, NKVD reports from the fall of 1941 indicate that many Leningraders were not particularly alarmed at the prospect of a German occupation. According to the NKVD reports it was “widely assumed that the city would fall, no European city had yet withstood the *Wehrmacht*. The population was convinced the

⁵⁵ Bidlack, 101.

⁵⁶ Lomagin, Nikita. “Soldiers at War: German Propaganda and Soviet Army Morale During the Battle of Leningrad, 1941-44.” (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998.) 4-12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Bidlack, 101

⁴⁹ Radio Khabovorsk in Russian, January 13, 1942, “Anti-Fascists Gassed.” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945. Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

occupiers would liquidate Jews and party personnel, but were divided over the rest of the population.”⁵⁸ The reference to the “liquidation of Jews,” in particular, is interesting, as the Soviet press rarely singled out “Jews” as the victims of atrocities, but generally referred to such victims as “anti-fascists,” especially early in the war.⁵⁹ On the contrary, German news reports especially to the East contained clearly anti-Semitic messages. By December 20, 1941, the general ideological anti-Semitism found in German broadcasts during the first months of the war began to include reports of specific anti-Semitic measures that were taking place. On the 20th, German controlled Radio Weichsel, broadcast to Poland in Polish the following message, “a new ghetto has been established at Radom to safeguard the Aryan population from the danger of diseases spread by Jews.”⁶⁰

The direct threat to Leningrad was lifted on October 2, when Adolf Hitler ordered his Fourth Panzer Army south to support Army Groups Center’s all out offensive on Moscow, Operation Typhoon. In advance of and during this all out offensive, Germany continued to send shortwave broadcasts to Soviet Russia in Russian, but adhered to strict radio silence regarding “Typhoon,” until October 8 (at which point the Germans were confident their aims had been achieved). German radio instead continued to devote time to what they considered to be the most pressing practical and ideological issues that resonated with the occupied populace.

⁶⁰ Radio Weichsel in Polish, December 20, 1941 “Jews Balked From Spreading Disease,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945. Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19. It is interesting to note that anti-Semitic stories broadcast on German radio occasionally concerned specific anti-Semitic measures such as “Jews Must Leave Sofia For Provinces” (May 24th, 1943) and “Sofia Has Transferred 19,339 Jews” (June 20, 1943).

In a pragmatic appeal, Nazi broadcasters also stressed the dichotomy between the living conditions experienced by the general Soviet populace and that of the Communist party leadership.

A Russian language broadcast sent on October 3, 1941, at 9:16 a.m. in the direction of Russia from Radio Weichsel (Warsaw) characterized the Moscow Conference as one with “noisy speeches and the clanking of wine glasses” but no real substance behind it.⁶¹ The announcer implied that while the majority of the Soviet population suffered the privations of war, the Soviet leadership in Moscow was still living a privileged life replete with banquets and wine.⁶² The broadcast disparaged the Conference, referring to its results as a “flat zero.” “While Roosevelt and Churchill were well aware of the fact that Stalin’s chances for victory had long been lost,” they “did not want the world to know that they considered Stalin’s situation as hopeless” so as to prolong the war in the East as long as possible and gradually wear down Germany. Introducing a new theme, German propagandists blamed Stalin and his British and American allies for prolonging the war and the suffering of Soviet civilians unnecessarily.⁶³

The announcer then abruptly changed the topic of discussion to address the question of private property, specifically “What is meant by private property in Germany?” The far higher living standards within the Reich were noted, vaguely implying that if Germany won and private property was allowed, such living

⁶¹ Radio Warsaw in Great Russian, October 3, 1941, 9:16 A.M. “Features,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Radio Warsaw in Russian, October 3, 1941, 9:16 A.M. “Features,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

conditions would be possible in European Russia. While the higher standard of living in Germany was stressed, the idea of private property was also reconciled with National Socialism and its allegedly anti-capitalist ethos.

The anti-capitalism that Goebbels emphasized as a cornerstone of German propaganda in the occupied Soviet Union was also evident in the following appeal to the masses of Russian peasants forced to work on unpopular collective farms.

In vain did the Soviet government destroy private property claiming it was a product of the capitalist system, whereas it failed to understand that ownership is the very basis of human nature which knows no classes, slaves and so forth. Doesn't every one of you, in his innermost thoughts, including the most fanatical Marxists, dream of a little home, or at least an apartment, a motor car, a little business of your own? There is nothing wrong in this, comrades.

In National Socialist Germany, capitalism was destroyed, but private property, far from being abolished is further encouraged...Any employee or peasant may open his own business...Every employee, worker and peasant is able to own his own home and garden...The houses are nicely built and comfortably furnished.⁶⁴

The broadcaster signed off with 'Attention! Attention! Toilers of the Soviet Union. You have been listening to our Russian language broadcast. This is the Vistula-Warsaw radio station...'⁶⁵

German radio's consistent critique of the alliance of British and American capitalism with Soviet communism closely matched historian Robert E. Herzstein's findings in his article, *Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Orel Region: 1942-1943*, which mainly examines German print publications in the Orel region of the Soviet Union. Herzstein found that "OKW propagandists believed that the Russians were particularly vulnerable to an anti-capitalist, anti-Jewish line...while the Russian

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Radio Warsaw in Russian, October 3, 1941, 9:16 A.M. "Features," United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

peasant would respond well to attacks on American, British, and Jewish capitalism.”⁶⁶

This ideologically anti-capitalist theme was a major part of the German propaganda campaign until the Battle of Stalingrad.⁶⁷

The German drive on Moscow commenced on October 2nd with two of the largest battles of encirclement in the history of the world. Field Marshal Ritter Von Bock’s Army Group Center had been reinforced by the 48th Panzer Corps from Army Group South and the entirety of Hoepner’s *Panzergruppe* from Army Group North and was poised for a massive breakthrough.⁶⁸ Within three days, according to Heinz Guderian, Commander of the 4th Panzer Army, “a complete breakthrough (had) been effected.” Guderian swung south, while Hoepner broke the Russian front in two in the center, and in the north Hoth wheeled his troops behind the Soviet forces achieving a complete encirclement.⁶⁹ Over 500,000 Soviet troops were caught in the trap and the last major obstacle standing in the way of the German capture of Moscow appeared to have been removed.⁷⁰

In contrast to earlier German policy, as mentioned above, Hitler ordered a total press blackout on all information regarding the offensive until its success was “guaranteed.”⁷¹ Following the stunning German victories at Briansk and Vyazma, Hitler decided it was time to break the media silence regarding the new offensive on October 9, 1941, a date which British foreign radio correspondent Howard K. Smith

⁶⁶ Herzstein, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Clark, 154

⁶⁹ Clark, 154-157

⁷⁰ Werth, Alexander. “Russia At War.” (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1964) pp. 230-234.

⁷¹ Smith, Howard K. ed. Lubrich, Oliver, “Travels in the Reich 1933-1945: Foreign Authors Report From the Reich.” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) pp. 256.

called “the Great Watershed, that point in time before which all was rising and after which all fell, in the history of Hitler and National Socialism.” Smith recalled the atmosphere and mood at the press conference held at the Reich Propaganda Ministry and headed by Reich Press Chief Otto Dietrich on the afternoon of October 9:

On the great stage behind the central figure, Dietrich, the red velvet curtains were drawn apart to reveal a monstrous map of European Russia thrice as high as the speaker. The effect was impressive... With an air of finality, Dietrich announced the very *last remnants* of the Red Army were locked in two steel German pockets before Moscow and were undergoing swift merciless annihilation. This was sensational. To understand how big the story was one must remember the circumstances. This was the first substantial news about the mighty, new offensive. It came directly from Adolf Hitler himself and could not be doubted. Dietrich continued: behind the two pockets there stood between the German armies and Moscow just so much space and nothing more... Now nobody will contest the contention that the Nazis tell lies, and great big ones. But it is true that Hitler himself has never told a lie about a specific military fact which can be checked. There are two good reasons for this. First, he does not have to lie about them; you don't have to tell a lie when you're winning. Second, a specific military fact can be so easily checked, and if it were found out that the 'Almighty' had told a blunt untruth, especially about something so big as this particular event, it would be disastrous to his position. So we of the fourth estate had no choice but to believe these dramatic assertions were gospel truth. Behind (these) words there arose, in the minds of his listeners, inevitable images. Russia, with her rich resources in Hitler's hands: an increment of almost 200,000,000 units of slave labour to make implements of war, bringing the total of manpower at Germany's disposal to a figure greater than that of England, and North America and South America combined. Hitler's armies, ten million men, flushed with victory, eager for more of the easy, national sport, were in the main free to return west and flood England, at long last, with blood and Nazis.⁷²

The same theme was emphasized on October 11, 1941, at 11:00 p.m. EST in the following broadcast beamed to North America from Berlin in German:

Dear friends and countrymen!... With the smashing of Timoshenko's armies, the campaign of the East is decided. The Soviet Union is finished militarily. In spite of every exertion they will never succeed again in establishing any

⁷² Smith, 256

sort of defense. How long they will be in a position to offer resistance is a question that we are not even prepared to answer today...But just as the Polish campaign was already decided on the 18th of September, 1939, and the breakthrough at the Seine resulted in the decision over France, likewise the history of the Soviet Army is sealed with the new destructive battles...All moral consequences of this suicidal decision (for the continuation of the fighting) (must be placed) on the rulers of the Kremlin.⁷³

This radio broadcast and Dietrich's elaborate press conference conveyed the confidence the Germans had in ultimate victory at this time and continued to hammer on the theme that Stalin and a small (Jewish) clique around him were prolonging the war for their own personal gain (and that of American and British Jews) with no regard for the horrors the war was bringing to the Soviet population. The new propaganda line absolved the *Wehrmacht* and Germany from the privations of war that the occupied populace was suffering and claimed that their hardships would cease if Stalin and the Soviet leadership would merely do the sensible thing and surrender to superior German forces. This message was echoed in the occupied territories in an October 21, 1941, broadcast at 4:08 p.m. from Novgorod that was beamed toward the Ukraine in Ukrainian. The program was called "Against Stalin" and the announcer calls Stalin a "bloody tyrant," calling Russian resistance a "useless waste of life."⁷⁴

⁷³ DJP Berlin in German, October 11, 1941, "Commentary and More," United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁷⁴ Novgorod in Ukrainian, October 21, 1941, "Against Stalin," United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Reality Sets In

As bombastic and optimistic as Nazi propaganda appears in retrospect, it certainly seemed within the realm of possibility in mid-October of 1941 that Moscow would fall before winter. *Pravda's* headline on October 14, 1941, reading "The Bloody Hitlerite Hordes are reaching for Moscow and (are) thrusting into the Donbass," was certainly not reassuring news for Moscow's civilian population.⁷⁵ On the same day, General Hermann Hoth's tanks broke through Moscow's northern defenses and entered Kalinin sparking complete panic in the Soviet capital city. The news that government offices were to be moved to Kuibyshev created mayhem in the city as distribution broke down and plundering began.⁷⁶ On October 19, Moscow was officially declared to be under a state of siege and NKVD troops were brought in to restore order.⁷⁷

The panic in Moscow turned out to be premature. Towards the end of October, the Russians were granted a reprieve as rain and snow, as well as the persistent thawing and refreezing of dirt roads, slowed the German advance to a crawl. The weather also began to take a serious toll on the Army's motorized vehicles, so critical to their blitzkrieg tactics.⁷⁸ By the 27th of October, Goebbels was obliged to be the bearer of bad news (certainly not for the last time), and informed a

⁷⁵ Stites, 13

⁷⁶ Clark, 161

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Clark, 164

“somewhat startled press conference that weather conditions have entailed a temporary halt in the offensive (toward Moscow).”⁷⁹

Regardless of the worsening weather conditions and the deteriorating physical and mental condition of the German troops, most of whom had been fighting for months without any respite, Hitler demanded that one last attempt be made to take Moscow before the winter set in. By the time the German offensive was underway in November, Soviet commander Marshal Zhukov’s defenses around Moscow had been doubled in strength by the transfer of divisions from Siberia. Army Group Center began its final push towards Moscow on November 15. German troops found the ground was “hard as a rock” which allowed their panzers to finally move freely once again.⁸⁰ However, now that the *Wehrmacht*’s supply lines were stretched hundreds of miles, vital supplies such as oil were in short supply and the length of the front had almost doubled making it difficult to concentrate armor and force at any one point, just as the Red Army had been significantly reinforced.⁸¹ It soon became clear that this time the Germans had overreached. On the 28th of November, Guderian expressed his frustrations with what had become of the Russian campaign:

Only he who saw the endless expanse of Russian snow during this winter of our misery, and felt the icy wind that blew across it, burying in snow every object of his path; who drove for hour after hour through no man’s land only at last to find too thin shelter with insufficiently clothed, half starved men; and who also saw by contrast the well-fed, warmly clad and fresh Siberians, fully equipped for winter fighting; only a man who knew all that can truly judge the events which now occurred.⁸²

⁷⁹ Clark, 168, this is a preview of the ‘Realist’ approach Goebbels would attempt to take following the German defeat at Stalingrad.

⁸⁰ Clark, 158-186

⁸¹ Bartov, 16

⁸² Clark, 175

On December 5, Zhukov threw his newly transferred Siberian divisions along with civilian volunteers (*opelchenie*) and the remains of shattered Army units against Army Group Center and broke the German encirclement of Moscow piece by piece, inflicting massive losses on the Germans and stopping them in their tracks.⁸³ Additionally, a further 130,000 cases of frostbite were reported amongst the men of Army Group Center.⁸⁴

The Battle of Moscow destroyed the myth of German invincibility (an important weapon for German propaganda during the first months of the war) and the Nazis suddenly seemed vulnerable.⁸⁵ Earlier radio broadcasts from September and October (not to mention Dietrich's lavish October 9th press conference) predicting the complete defeat of the Soviet Union now made the Germans look foolish in the face of the Moscow counterattack. As such, Nazi radio propaganda was forced for the first time to drastically change its tone. Testifying to this fact is a Christmas message the Germans beamed from Warsaw to the Soviet Union on December 25, 1941, at 2:15 p.m. in Russian entitled "Nap in Russia." The once supremely confident German radio announcers in Warsaw no longer referred to great German military victories but instead reported on a speech by German Foreign Minister, Joachim Von Ribbentrop, in which he explained why the Germans were retreating before Moscow:

If the Soviets intend with their last assembled forces to penetrate into territories so far cleared from Bolshevism, without any consideration to their

⁸³ Merridale, 120

⁸⁴ Werth, 245-275

⁸⁵ For a discussion on the Battle of Moscow's impact on German civilian morale see Welch, David, "The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda" (Routledge: New York, 1993) 132-135 and Braithwaite, Rodric, "Moscow 1941: A City and its People" (Vintage: New York, 2006).

losses of men and supplies, then we Germans can only be happy about it. In the nearest future, the German Army will finally solve the eastern problem.⁸⁶

Just two months prior, German radio reported that the eastern problem *had* been solved, now it was to be solved in the *near* future. The *Wehrmacht*, just weeks before the invincible conquerors of Europe, was now bogged down before Moscow in the bitterly cold Russian winter wearing the same clothes they had gone to war with on June 22.

On December 26, Allouis radio, broadcasting to the Reich, urgently asked housewives to donate wool goods intact, “Wool goods are easily unwound and knit into ear muffs, wrist and knee warmers, particularly appreciated by our soldiers.”⁸⁷ On January 18, Berlin radio broadcast what could be considered a desperate plea for “wooden cases” and “old newspapers” by a soldier from the front describing the cold in Russia: “It is hard to get firewood because all wood is frozen. We sleep on the ground covered with twigs and possibly with newspapers. We lie close together but move as much as possible to keep ourselves warm.”⁸⁸

Additionally, for the first time, in a December 30 broadcast, Radio Berlin categorized the *Wehrmacht* as being engaged in a “defensive” battle before Moscow in which German infantrymen “have to stand in the biting cold for three or four hours

⁸⁶ Radio Warsaw in Great Russian, December 25, 1941, “Nap in Russia,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁸⁷ Radio Allouis in German, December 26, 1941, “Wool Clothing Asked For Soldiers,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945. Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

⁸⁸ Radio Berlin in German, January 18, 1942, “Hardships,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945. Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

without being relieved” adding that “the army must hold out in its defensive fight against the Bolsheviks.”⁸⁹ After six months of broadcasts reporting stunning German advances and guarantees of victory, Radio Berlin now had to admit that the mighty *Wehrmacht* was actually on the *defensive*.

During the Battle for Moscow, the Soviets were able to take the initiative in the propaganda war for the first time. Radio Moscow took full advantage of the desperate plight of the Germans outside of Moscow, littering reports from the front with descriptions of the Nazi soldiers in summer dress in the bitter cold Russian winter. On December 10, 1941, a Soviet writer speaking over the shortwave radio on the southwestern front reported, “the warm clothing and good food of the Soviet forces are contrasted with the thin uniforms of the Germans and Italians.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Radio Berlin in German, December 30, 1941, “Wehrmacht Fights to Hold Back Reds,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

⁹⁰ Radio Moscow in Russian, December 10, 1941, “Foreign Propaganda Strategy,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: 1941-1945, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

The Failure of Ideology

By mid-February of 1942, the once mighty Soviet counteroffensive before Moscow had completely lost its momentum. The *Wehrmacht* had dug in and refused to retreat, inviting the Russians to make the same kind of suicidal frontal attacks that had cost them so dearly the previous fall. German propaganda to occupied Russia during the spring of 1942 emphasized the fruitlessness of continuing Soviet counterattacks, and at the same time increasingly focused on the connection between Jewish capitalists in London, Washington, and Moscow “(who) will fight to the last Red Army man.”⁹¹ Additionally, now that the front had somewhat stabilized, German propagandists once again stressed that the war was one of “liberation,” as a quick victory still seemed within reach. The FBIS monitoring station “Shinda” picked up a shortwave radio broadcast from Smolensk (the location of the radio wing of *Wehrmacht* Propaganda Office “W”) on February 20, 1942, in Russian at 12:15 a.m. EWT that argued that Russian blood was being shed not for the Soviet Union, but for a small clique of overseas Jewish capitalists who had a financial interest in seeing the war in Russia continue.

The rivers of blood which are being shed by the Red Army fighters do not make any difference to American capitalists. They are perfectly ready to “fight” to the last drop of blood of the last Red Army man (sarcasm)...The terrible losses, do not stop the Soviet command, being faithful to their bosses, that is, the English and American capitalists, they will fight to the last Red Army man.⁹²

⁹¹ A common theme, notably in the first few years of the war, was to portray Moscow, London and Washington as all being controlled by “Jewish plutocrats and Bolsheviks.” Why else, the Nazis argued, would the west have allied with the Soviet Union after it was invaded by Germany as the west and Moscow had a tenuous relationship at best prior to June 22, 1941.

⁹² Radio Smolensk in Great Russian, February 20, 1942, “German Propaganda to Russia,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946,

Static prevents much of the broadcast from being heard, but when the broadcast once again becomes audible, the Russian announcer derided “Jewish rule of the world” and claimed that the “most influential co-workers of Roosevelt, such as the Jewish banker Baruch, Frankfurter, Neimann, and others (belonged to) Jewish Masonic organizations which have as their purpose Jewish rule of the world.”⁹³

The broadcast ends with a message of liberation and stressed the solidarity between German workers and those of the USSR: “That ends our broadcast. Attention! All the workers of the Soviet Union, you were addressed by the workers of the regions which were liberated from Bolshevism and also the workers of Germany.”⁹⁴

Another German broadcast beamed from Smolensk in Great Russian intercepted by the FBIS’ “Shinda” monitoring station a month and a half later on April 7, 1942, used a different tact, but still emphasized the theme of liberation. German propagandists in Smolensk combined heavily satirical and sarcastic anti-Semitic anecdotes criticizing Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill with liberation propaganda that vaguely promised a better life for the Russian peasant under German rule. This particular broadcast was beamed from Smolensk on Easter Sunday and largely consisted of a satirical tale about “an old custom, to send eggs as a gift for

Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁹³ Radio Smolensk in Great Russian, February 20, 1942, “German Propaganda to Russia,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Easter.”⁹⁵ Churchill received a “huge egg” which he was “at first glad to see,” but “(as) his empire was cracking on all sides and crumbling (so was the egg).” Churchill was informed that the egg was an Australian soldier, but upon further inspection, he discovered that “(inside the egg) was a Jap!” An assistant of Churchill’s then attempted to comfort him “be reasonable, how could this be possible,” to which Churchill replied:

Impossible, oh yes, but all our defeats were impossible. It was impossible to be chased out from Norway, Yugoslavia, and the Island of Crete. It was impossible to lose Hong Kong, Singapore, Rangoon, Java, Bengal, Borneo, everything was impossible. But nonetheless, everything was surrendered...Everywhere are Japanese, Japanese, Japanese. In Australia there are Japanese too. To arms-guards! Help, help, HELP.⁹⁶

Roosevelt was also supposed to receive an egg which was to be provided by “the Jew LaGuardia.” He never received it though because “the egg, among other things, was sunk by German submarines.” Stalin, being an atheist naturally did not receive an egg in this broadcast but instead a present “wrapped in red” inscribed, “this is a red token from the Red Army.” The present was in fact filled with blood of Red Army soldiers causing Stalin to “scream and call for help.”⁹⁷

The satirical anecdote highlighted the setbacks recently suffered by all of the major Allied powers and was indicative of the crude tone common to German propaganda in the Soviet Union. It was followed by a bulletin announcing the end of

⁹⁵ Radio Smolensk in Great Russian, April 7, 1942, “News,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁹⁶ Radio Smolensk in Great Russian, April 7, 1942, “News,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

the collective farm system entitled, “A resolution drawn up by the peasants of the region of Podol citing the destruction of the collective farms in the districts liberated from the Soviet regime,” that again portrayed Hitler as a messianic figure and the *Wehrmacht* as the great liberators of the Soviet populace:

(This) resolution is read by the peasant Jacob Nikolayevitch Polieshcuk: Attention! This announces the end of the collective farm method which has wrought so much havoc amongst the peasants. The victorious German Army with Hitler at its head, have liberated the peasants from the Bolshevik yoke, which has been oppressing the peasantry, robbing them of the fruits of their labors. Under Stalin, the peasant suffered hunger and other privations. But now under the rule of the German army and the great Fuehrer, Hitler, there is no (longer) any collective rule. A new life has started for the peasant with the expulsion of the Bolsheviks.⁹⁸

This broadcast followed the “passage” of the *Agrarerlass* on February 15, 1942, a decree by Minister of the Occupied Eastern territories, Alfred Rosenberg, that declared an ‘end’ to the hated *Kolkhoz* or “collective farm.” In reality, as noted by John Erickson in his article “Nazi Posters in Wartime Russia,” the decree was worth little more than the paper it was printed on. The Nazi leadership had previously already declared the absolute need to keep the collective farm system in place as an efficient means of feeding the *Wehrmacht*. Karel Berkhoff also concluded that the propaganda campaign surrounding the “abolition of collective farms,” was a complete failure. Berkhoff notes that “village assemblies listened to special fifteen-minute radio broadcasts and heard that the hard-working peasant will get land of his own.” In reality, the “new” agricultural program was a return to “Soviet ‘labor days’, the notorious system of payments that took into account the time worked, the skill

⁹⁸ Radio Smolensk in Great Russian, April 7, 1942, “News,” United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

involved, and the size of the harvest, and that ensured peasants received very little.”⁹⁹

German State Secretary Herbert Backe declared as much when he said, “if the Soviet regime had not set up collective farms, we (the Germans) would have had to invent them.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Berkhoff, “Harvest of Despair,” 120-121

¹⁰⁰ Erickson, John. “Nazi Posters in Wartime Russia.” *History Today* 44.9 (1994) 16-18.

A Glance at Soviet Counter Propaganda

The Russians rebutted the concerted and organized German propaganda effort by stressing the importance of the Soviet people in the war effort rather than the Communist Party or Soviet leadership (as was the case prior to the Summer of 1941) by publicizing the horrific deeds of the Germans in occupied territory while emphasizing the great military and moral superiority of the Soviet Union.

In Russia, the war allowed the ordinary to suddenly become heroes or martyrs overnight as was the case with a young seventeen year old female partisan named Zoya Kosmodemanskaii who was said to have resisted fiercely when German authorities attempted to hang her. She was reported to have given a fiery speech to the villagers gathered around promising Soviet retribution for German authorities as she was led to the gallows. When her story was published in an issue of *Pravda* in January of 1942 -- her name quickly became known throughout the Soviet Union overnight -- she was forever associated with the Russian resistance.¹⁰¹

The heroism of the average Soviet citizen was also stressed in a March 16, 1942, Soviet Information Bureau Report, "The names of many of the heroes are unknown. People who perform exploits stand humbly aside. This is the way a *kolkhoz* woman from the village of N. Starousski district acted...Risking her life, the *kolkhoz* woman ran across a field strafed with fire from both sides and gave information to the commander."¹⁰² Such stories were valuable as they inspired and raised the morale of the populace, which at the same time providing soldiers at the

¹⁰¹ Stites, 'Culture and Entertainment', 18

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

front with greater incentive to fight. Surely any soldier at the front was as brave as a poor, old kolkhoz woman or as a seventeen-year old girl.

To maximize the morale of the civilian populace in the Soviet Union, it was vital that they were aware of the desperation of their situation. The method in which Soviet propaganda instilled this concept unto civilians was to describe the choice the Soviet populace had as a simple one, either enslavement or freedom. As early as July 17, 1941, Pravda characterized Hitler's view towards the East with the following description: "His most vicious hatred is and was nourished by the racist monster Hitler for the Slavic peoples...In the opinion of this fiend, the lowest of all races is Slavic."¹⁰³

The most consistent Soviet counter-propaganda effort throughout the war was publicizing German atrocities. This effort was highly successful in inciting hatred and anger towards the German invaders according to James von Geldern in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*.¹⁰⁴ Von Geldren also cites the Spring of 1942 as the date in which Soviet propagandists first began publicizing German atrocities against civilians. According to Russian radio broadcasts intercepted by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, the Soviet campaign against German atrocities in fact began within the first few weeks of the war. On September 26, 1941, FBIS summarized Radio Moscow's recent broadcasts:

Moscow still speaks of the extreme misfortune of the people living in German-occupied territories. Also continuing its heavy barrage of atrocity

¹⁰³ Radio Moscow in Great Russian to the Soviet Union, July 17, 1941, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁰⁴ Geldern, James, Von, ed. Stites, Richard. "Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900." (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 49.

stories, the Soviet radio says the ‘enslaved’ people are used by the Germans as beasts of burden, and illustrates charges of German brutality with a typical story describing the murder of a Russian baby.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ “Summary of Recent Broadcasts,” September 26, 1941, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

German Military Superiority?

The summer military campaign season began with nearly unmitigated disaster for the Red Army in the southern sector of the front. During the spring of 1942, Army Group South deployed a large number of aircraft to the Kerch peninsula to interdict the ability of the Soviets to re-supply their foothold on the peninsula. The *Luftwaffe* quickly established air superiority by the beginning of May cutting the Soviets' supply lines to their three armies on the Kerch Peninsula.¹⁰⁶

In April, the *Stavka* had asked Stalin for permission to withdraw from the Kerch region. Characteristically, he refused and instead ordered preparations for an *offensive* to liberate the entire Crimea on April 21. On May 6, Stalin abruptly changed his mind and now ordered the Kerch divisions to go over to the defensive *in combination with a limited offensive*.¹⁰⁷ These contradictory and divergent orders from Stalin of course led to much confusion and ultimately left the Soviet forces on Kerch woefully unprepared in the face of an inevitable German offensive by the *Wehrmacht's* 11th Army under General (and later Field Marshal) Erich von Manstein.

Manstein did not waste any time. On May 8, German forces launched *Operation Trappenjagd* with the aim of eliminating the Soviet bridgehead near Kerch. By May 18, German forces with strong air support had captured three entire Soviet Armies consisting of nearly 200,000 men enabling the subsequent capture of

¹⁰⁶ Clark, 200

¹⁰⁷ Clark, 201-202

Sevastopol on July 4.¹⁰⁸ Most importantly, Army Group South's southern flank was now secure allowing Hitler to launch Operation *Fall Blau*, the massive German summer offensive that the Fuhrer and OKH had been planning since February.

In advance of the launch of *Fall Blau* in late June 1942, the FBIS "Shinda" station intercepted an increasing number of German broadcasts to unoccupied and occupied portions of the southern Soviet Union beamed from the vicinity of Voroshilov, Russia on June 16-20, 1942. Unlike all of the other FBIS transcriptions, the Voroshilov radio broadcasts were summarized instead of being transcribed precisely. The broadcasts, however, still provided a snapshot into the themes and narratives of German radio propaganda in Russia during June of 1942, when the *Wehrmacht* was arguably at its "high tide" and most confident, prior to the stunning setbacks that would come to define the Nazi military effort over the next year (and beyond). Over this four-day span, German radio hammered away at the themes they had established during the first year of war which were remarkably similar to those that Goebbels jotted down in his diary in early June of 1941, all the while continuing to portray the war as one of "liberation."

The broadcasts focused on four major themes: the military superiority of the German armed forces and the enormous losses that the Red Army continued to suffer; the instability of the Bolshevik regime "in all areas of life"; the fruitless continuation of the war by Stalin and a small Jewish clique around him; and the complete denunciation of the Soviet-British-American treaty and any potential lend lease aid that the Soviets might have received. The station identified itself as "against Stalin

¹⁰⁸ Clark, 202-203

and for the Russian people...fighting against the Jewish-Stalinist domination of enslaved Russian peoples, against collective farms and for a free liberated Russian nation.” (Interestingly, this is the only time I found any mention of a “free, liberated Russian *nation*” in any form of German propaganda to the occupied U.S.S.R.) The approach of the broadcasts was to essentially combine a certain amount of Nazi ideology with more pragmatic themes such as food supply and German military superiority that would seem to resonate to a greater extent with rural peasants.

Concerning the military superiority of the *Wehrmacht* and the hopeless situation of the Red Army, Voroshilov Radio reported on June 16 that the “Sevastopol Front is strewn with the corpses,” while on the Kharkov Front “there are many cases of Russian fighters shooting themselves not being able to face hardships (at the front) again.”¹⁰⁹ On the 17th, it was broadcast: “as predicted by this station several days ago, the Germans are bound to take Sevastopol. Their successes there continue and Russians are giving up one fortified point after another.”¹¹⁰

In the face of such German superiority, Voroshilov radio announced the following on June 19: “Stalin was deliberately shedding the blood of the Russian people by not allowing Sevastopol and Leningrad to surrender regardless of enormous, bloody losses.” The announcer further encouraged peasants and workers to rise up against Stalin and argued that “only Stalin and the small clique around him keep Russia in misery, and (that) Russia would be a free and happy country if this

¹⁰⁹ Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 16, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹¹⁰ Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 17, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

clique were overthrown...It's up to (the) exploited and impoverished workers and peasants to get rid of Stalin and company.”¹¹¹ Further indicting Stalin's continuation of the war, Voroshilov quoted Erich Remarque's classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* as the “speaker voices bitter indignation about the Russian attitude in their (official military communiqués)” and adds that “while millions of Russians (are) dying on the battlefield, (the) Russians have the temerity to say there are no significant changes along (the) entire front.”¹¹²

Voroshilov Radio further attempted to undermine Stalin and his Bolshevik government by reporting on instability within the Soviet regime and its territories. On June 16, German radio broadcast: “reports from (the state of) Omsk (indicate) the situation there is very bad, many uprisings (are taking place) among wives of workers due to poor rations. Many executions are taking place.”¹¹³ While on June 17, it was reported that “women in Krasnodar protested against the war” while “economic chaos in Soviet life is becoming worse and worse. The industrial and economic life of the country is out of gear.”¹¹⁴

When Hitler launched Operation *Fall Blau*, on June 28, 1942, it must have been difficult to imagine it would end with perhaps the largest and most important propaganda (and military) defeat of the war for the Nazis. But, German propaganda

¹¹¹ Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 19, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹¹² Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 16, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹¹³ Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 16, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹¹⁴ Radio Voroshilov in Great Russian, June 17, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

had been largely undermined by the time the Sixth Army surrendered on January 31, 1943, and would never be able to regain whatever semblance of credibility it had enjoyed prior to the *Wehrmacht's* crushing defeat at Stalingrad.

The German offensive consisted of a three-pronged attack across Russia's southern steppes. Hermann Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army reinforced by the German Second Army was to attack from Kursk to Voronezh, anchoring the northern flank of the Sixth Army's drive toward the Volga.¹¹⁵ The aforementioned German Sixth Army under the command of General Friedrich Von Paulus was ordered to rapidly strike east and reach the Volga at Stalingrad (although the German High Command originally did not view the capture of the city as necessary to the success of the operation). The German First Panzer Army was to simultaneously drive toward the Lower Don, protected by the Seventeenth Army on its western flank and the Fourth Romanian Army on its eastern flank, en route to Grozny and the Black Sea port of Baku. The overriding strategic goal of the operation was to seize the Soviet oil fields at Maikop, Baku, and Grozny that were essential to further German military operations.¹¹⁶

When the offensive finally commenced on June 28, 1942, Stalin along with the majority of the Red Army leadership were caught completely off guard. Lacking in intelligence, the *Stavka* was unable to determine the aims of the inevitable German summer offensive. Stalin, however, strongly believed that the Nazi attack would be on the Moscow axis and positioned his forces accordingly. In June of 1942, much of

¹¹⁵ Clark, 204-218

¹¹⁶ Glantz, David M., "Zhuvok's Greatest Defeat: The Red Army's Epic Disaster in Operation Mars, 1942" (University Press of Kansas: 1999), 5-8.

the Red Army's best troops and equipment were concentrated in the central sector of the front.¹¹⁷

On the 28th, Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army quickly struck out toward Voronezh as the Red Army fell back toward the city in complete disarray. Voronezh fell on July 13, but not after several days of bitter house-to-house fighting that caused Hitler to completely alter the entire operational plan of *Fall Blau* in *Fuhrer Directive No. 45*. Hitler's ambitious new directive instructed Army Group South be split into Army Groups A and B. Army Group A was tasked with taking the Caucasus and the oil fields along the Black Sea, while newly formed Army Group B was ordered to simultaneously attempt to take Stalingrad and cut off the Volga River, a vital source of supply for the Southern Russian steppe.¹¹⁸

By the end of July, the German offensive appeared nearly unstoppable and Nazi propaganda began to reflect this. On July 23, Army Group A recaptured Rostov and forced a crossing of the Don, the last obstacle standing between German troops and the Caucasus. By this time, the division that had been brewing since the Summer of 1941 (and before) between Goebbels' wish for a more cautious propaganda line in light of the disasters of the previous winter (and the dangers of overconfidence) on one hand and Dietrich's more optimistic stance (with the support of Hitler temporarily) was coming to a head. Dietrich desired to continue the "triumphalist" propaganda that had previously defined German propaganda towards the East. As Aristotle Kallis notes in "Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War," Goebbels was worried that the coverage of German victories during the summer offensive --

¹¹⁸ Clark, 204-218

even if deliberately toned down -- seemed to resurrect the illusion of a “short war” that was nearing its successful conclusion (similar to the situation that came about in October 1941).¹¹⁹ Goebbels’ concerns were noted at an RMVP conference that took place on August 15:

The Minister raises the subject of the powerful mood of optimism in the Reich and in particular refers to various reports by the SD and the Gauleiters which all agree in pointing out that the German people are full of hope of an early end to the war. Even the smallest news items in the press or on the radio serve to strengthen that belief and to make it into a certainty for many people. The Minister says he has done nothing to nourish such optimism and that he regards it as extremely dangerous.¹²⁰

For the Soviets, the reality was that the situation in the southern sector of the front had become increasingly desperate. This was reflected in Stalin’s infamous “Secret Order No. 227” as well as in the tone of radio broadcasts and *Pravda* articles. Stalin’s secret directive, otherwise known as the “not one step back order,” stated that: “No one commander has the right to retreat without an order. Anyone who does so (will) be subject to immediate military tribunal” (which really meant and was understood to mean “shot”).¹²¹

On the 20th of July 1942, *Pravda* published an article entitled “The Whole Might of Artillery Fire Against Enemy Tanks,” that aptly conveyed the desperation of the Soviet situation:

It is a month since fierce battles are being waged on the steppes of the southern Soviet Union. Despite huge losses, the enemy is pressing forward.

¹¹⁹ Kallis, Aristotle, “Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War,” (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 123-125 Also see Longerich, Peter, “Joseph Goebbels und der Totale Krieg. Eine unbekannte Denkschrift des Propagandaministers vom 18. Juli 1944,” *Vierteljahrshesfte fur Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 25 2(Apr., 1987) .

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Glantz, 5-8

In a number of sectors, the situation is extremely tense. Concentrating big forces and launching strong counter attacks, the enemy is seeking to reach the Volga as quickly as possible. The problem of stopping the enemy must be solved and the hordes must be routed.¹²²

All the while, Army Group A was advancing at lightning speed toward the Caucasus, meeting only scattered Soviet resistance. During the German advance southeast throughout the late summer of 1942, the Nazis and the Soviets waged a propaganda battle for the hearts and minds of the Caucasian peoples.

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service's London branch intercepted the following radio broadcast on its teletype, purported to be transmitted by a group that identified itself as the "Militant Union of Russian Nationalists" in Russian on August 22, 1942:

In the southeast, the Germans are advancing towards the Grozny oil area. Last night, German advance units were sighted in the outskirts of Ordzhonidze. According to information just received, the German military flag is flying on summit of the Elbruz.¹²³

It is highly probable that the "Militant Union of Russian Nationalists," was a group of ethnic Caucasian collaborators organized by the Germans that had either been parachuted into the Caucasus ahead of Army Group A's advance or had made

¹²² Radio Moscow in Great Russian, July, 20 1942, "The Whole Might of Artillery Fire Against Enemy Tanks," United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Transcriptions of Foreign Broadcasts 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹²³ Radio Militant Union of Russian Nationalists in Great Russian from unknown location, December 30, 1941, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

contact with German special forces.¹²⁴ No anti-Soviet partisans in this highly isolated and tribal region had the ability to make radio broadcasts that could be picked up in London without German assistance. Nevertheless, the radio report was largely factual, as German troops had indeed reached the top of Mount Elbruz on August 12, 1942, and were fast advancing towards Grozny and its expansive oil fields.

On August 22, Moscow also made a broadcast directed to the Caucasian peoples, urging them to “remain” loyal to the Soviet cause in light of the rapid German advance. Essentially ignoring the long and fractured history between the peoples of the Caucasus and Russian regimes from 1850 onward, Radio Moscow made an urgent appeal stressing the unity and equality of all Soviet peoples and praising the Caucasian’s heroic deeds thus far in the war:

The history of the Caucasian peoples is full of examples of Azerbaidjanians, Armenians, Georgians, and Dagestanis fighting hand in hand against foreign invaders courageously defending their homes, honor and liberty. During (the) years (under) the Soviet regime and the Constitution of Stalin, the Republics of the Caucasus have blossomed forth with friendships (between) different peoples (and) the Caucasus became strong as steel.

As soon as (the) Fascist bandits trod on Soviet soil, the sons of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Dagestan joined the Red Army. Many have covered their names with glory on the fields of the Ukraine and Belorussia and near Moscow and Leningrad. (Here the Soviets directly address German efforts to win over the Caucasian peoples.) The enemy, counting on spreading quarrels amongst (different) peoples of the USSR have been badly mistaken. (The) sons of the Caucasus are the same as their brother Belorussians, Ukrainians, Russians and Uzbeks and only have one aim, to destroy the invaders.

For (the) Hitlerites, the Caucasus mean petrol. They are striving to seize the black gold to enslave the whole world. These fascist plans are doomed to failure.

Together, with all the Great Russian people, led by Comrade Stalin, the Caucasians will cut off the grabbing paws of Hitlerites following old

¹²⁴ See Burds, Jeffery “German Fifth Column in Chechnya, 1942-1944” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 42 5(April, 2007), pp. 267-314.

traditions. (The) peoples of Azerbaijan, as well as all people of Transcaucasia will fight to complete victory.

Representatives, petrol workers, engineers, poets, and collective farmers will tell at today's meeting how they are fighting for petrol and increasing daily output of munitions, how heroically, they (are) helping the front by giving more and more agricultural produce. (Everyone) is straining all their forces in order to throw back (and) destroy the enemy who (are) making an attempt to enslave all that is most precious to mankind: honor and liberty.¹²⁵

In this time of great anxiety for the Soviet Union, the theme of a United Russia quickly took precedence amongst Soviet propagandists in light of the myriad different nationalities that resided in the southern sector of the front. The equality and fraternity of all Russian peoples was paramount in the above message to the peoples of the Caucasus. Completely absent from the broadcast were mentions of party or ideology. There was one single mention of Stalin but it was made strictly in the context of being a benevolent friend and brother to the peoples of the Caucasus. It is also interesting to note that by this time in the war, both the Soviet's and the German's were respectively using the themes of United Russia and United Europe. It was clear to both sides that they needed to mobilize as many people as possible, racial and ideological purity was not as major of a factor for either side than it once was.¹²⁶

By August 23, the German Sixth Army and their Hungarian, Italian, and Romanian allies had largely crossed the Don and had eliminated all Soviet resistance in the area, essentially leaving open the door to Stalingrad. By this time, the Germans had also been able to establish forward air bases only 60 km's from the city allowing

¹²⁵ Radio Baku in Great Russian, August 22, 1942, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: 1941-1945, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #19.

¹²⁶ See Martin, Terry, "The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939," (Cornell University Press, 2001).

for a massive Luftwaffe bombardment that night which left over 40,000 civilians dead and turned the once sprawling industrial and cultural center into a smoldering, charred mass of metal, earth, and human remains.¹²⁷

Following the air attack on the night of the 23rd, Army Group B launched an offensive designed to quickly encircle the two Soviet Armies standing between Axis lines and Stalingrad (the 62nd and 64th). Fourth Panzer moved north toward the city, while the Sixth Army moved south. Despite a successful offensive conducted by Fourth Panzer on August 29, the Sixth Army was unable to snap the ring of armor surrounding Stalingrad's western suburbs shut owing to a strong Soviet counterattack. This allowed the bulk of the Russian troops to withdraw to the city of Stalingrad.

The Fourth Panzer Army finally linked up with the Sixth Army on September 3 and the first German troops entered the city limits on September 13, marking the beginning of the battle whose name would eventually be heard the world over, Stalingrad.¹²⁸ In reality, although German forces had not officially entered the city until the 13th, extremely strong *Luftwaffe* formations (essentially the entirety of *Luftlotte 4*) completely dominated the air over Stalingrad and by September 1 the Soviets could only reinforce the city of Stalingrad by ferrying men and supplies from the east bank of the River Volga. German planes attacked anything moving across the Volga making this a nearly suicidal proposition, but at this stage in the battle

¹²⁷ Clark, 220-239

¹²⁸ Clark, 220-239

losses were of no significance for Soviet commanders who were instructed to hold the important industrial city bearing their leader's name "at all costs."¹²⁹

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Stalingrad and the Crisis in the RMVP

Prior to the “beginning” of the battle, the German high command quickly realized that the city of Stalingrad would be defended far more tenaciously than any of the towns that Army Group B captured on the Russian steppe during the previous summer’s offensive. Instead of continuing their disorganized retreat further into the Russian steppe, German intelligence indicated that General Vassily Chuikov’s 62nd Army was not only preparing to defend the city, but was receiving significant reinforcements.¹³⁰

In anticipation of a potentially ferocious battle and in an attempt to avoid repeating the propaganda debacle of October 8, 1941, the RMVP issued an urgent request to the German press to refrain from writing or mentioning anything regarding the “forthcoming fall” of Stalingrad. RMVP instead urged the press to refer to the fight as “the beginning of a major battle.” Nevertheless, as indicated by Kallis, triumphalist propaganda “came from other sources that Goebbels was still incapable of controlling” (mainly Press Chief Otto Dietrich, whose daily conferences with Hitler indicated how much clout he actually had within the vast Nazi bureaucracy).¹³¹

On the third of September, Otto Dietrich ordered newspaper editors to report on the “enormous economic and cultural importance of Stalingrad as a military-industrial center and as a Communist citadel,” in an attempt to boost German morale. On September 7, Radio Berlin announced to the world:

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Kallis, 125

Operations in the fortified Stalingrad sector were described by German sources on Tuesday evening as taking their planned course. On the whole, the Soviet's power of resistance may be regarded as waning and Berlin-informed sources no longer believe the Soviets, despite their moving up strong reserves, will still be able to disturb German operations and thus delay them for any considerable part of time.¹³²

Although at this point in the battle, it *did appear* as though the far better equipped German forces would eventually prevail over the Soviets at Stalingrad, any definitive announcement at this stage in the battle that proclaimed victory was premature. Repeated incidents of this nature severely damaged the credibility of the Nazi Press. Goebbels seemed to understand this and his position could not have been more at odds with that of Dietrich (and the Fuhrer). On September 18, a mere three days after Dietrich had predicted the fall of Stalingrad within hours, Goebbels instructed his subordinates to divert attention from the Stalingrad battle, "the question about the fall of Stalingrad has been asked amongst the people for some time now, but military progress is not such that a final capture of the city can be expected as yet. For this reason other subjects will now be brought to the fore."

Similarly, on the 22nd of September, OKW sharply rebuked the German press for "creating the illusion that the capture of Stalingrad is imminent."¹³³ Regardless, it was clear that Hitler sided with Dietrich's approach at this point. In his September 30 address marking the opening of the Winter Relief campaign, Hitler said "the occupation of Stalingrad, which will also be carried through, will deepen this gigantic

¹³² Berlin in German to the World, September, 7 1942, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹³³ Zeman, Z.A., "Nazi Propaganda," (Oxford Press, 1973) 168-182.

victory and strengthen it, and you will be sure that no human being will drive us out of this place later on.”¹³⁴

In contrast to the bombastic proclamations and unfulfilled pledges broadcast over German radio, Soviet propagandists saw the battle of Stalingrad in far starker and more pragmatic terms. To prepare the Russian populace for a potentially catastrophic battle at Stalingrad, Radio Moscow did not mince words, reporting on the 27th of August, 1942:

In the south, the enemy is headed for the Volga and into the depths of the Caucasus Range. History has perhaps never known such a gigantic battle. Huge masses of men are engaged in it with masses of tanks, planes and artillery. Red Army units are selflessly holding against the pressure of the enemy.¹³⁵

The cautious optimism of the Soviets would soon prove to be the more prudent propaganda approach. In October, bitter house to house (and factory to factory) fighting took place as the Soviets began to neutralize German air power by positioning their infantry as close as possible to the German attackers making it nearly impossible for German pilots to detect friend or foe.¹³⁶

The only Germans that received somewhat accurate portrayals of battles were the troops fighting on the eastern front who were already keenly aware of the ferocity of the fighting. On October 12, 1942, a broadcast was read by a member of the *Propagandatruppen* as a tribute to the “unnamed” German infantry soldier whose job

¹³⁴ Kallis, 126

¹³⁵ Radio Moscow in Great Russian, August, 27, 1942, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹³⁶ Clark, 225-249

was just as vital as it was thankless.¹³⁷ This particular broadcast provided a detailed account of the fighting that Army Group A was experiencing on its drive toward the Black Sea and covered an intense battle fought for the Soviet town of Terek (a town that Hitler would coincidentally cite during his November 8 speech as evidence of the vast territories seized during the summer military offensive), located in the north Caucasus mountains on the approach to the oil fields of Grozny. It was transmitted from Warsaw's Radio Vistula on October 12, 1942, in German to the troops of the Eastern Front in a program known as "Front Reports":

In a rapid push forward yesterday, we advanced still further in two combat groups and here we encountered the first tenacious resistance. Forest terrain (areas hard to overlook) offered excellent possibilities to the enemy to seek cover and camouflage. An armored train had arrived on the railroad line and attacked our advance with violent shooting. Pioneers (sappers I believe would be the correct translation) were put to combat. The armored train was shot to pieces by our tanks during the evening hours. But the attack continued to advance only with difficulties. The enemy defended himself tenaciously and desperately. In the unsurveyable (sic) forest terrain our tanks had no fighting possibilities. The enemy set in brushwood and threw concentric charges at our tanks. That was work for our infantry. With machine guns and hand grenades the forest was combed and when night fell, our infantrymen stood at the outskirts of town. There the bridge over the Terek blew up into the air with a terrific explosion, the Bolsheviks had blasted the bridge without consideration for the strong (Soviet force that lay on the other side of the river). They had but one choice: to surrender or die. During the night we settled down. We dug holes into the ground and waited for the morning. And morning came and now it is time! Today, in the early morning hours, we took positions for the concentrated attack and everywhere, even in the streets of the town, a bitter battle, inhumanly hard, lasted for hours. The Soviets throw their hand grenades under our feet, they shoot from behind walls, from gardens, from trees, machine gun fire scurging (sic) through the streets, it is a fight of man against man. With these same weapons we break every resistance. Our motorcycle riflemen are iron-hard. Street after street is being fought free, each house must be cleaned up individually and now we have reached the center of the town.

The fight in the heavily damaged town continued without interruption. The German infantrymen were bearing (sic) this fight. The anonymous hero of

our great victories has been fighting for weeks. His weapons, the hand grenades and the rifle, decide the possession of streets and houses, breaking into the barricades in the fortified field systems, extensive in depth and with many lines in the terrain in front of town, these are his deeds, decisive in battle.

The airforce (softens up the enemy) but conquering and occupying is the last task of each individual fighter of the infantry. We see them here in front of us, these men, unshaven, not washed, rifles clasped tightly, hand grenades in the boot legs...¹³⁸

In Stalingrad, with superior numbers and firepower, the Germans had forced Chuikov's 62nd Army into a 1,000-yard strip of land on the western bank of the Volga by early November. On November 8, Hitler felt confident enough to announce to the world that the Battle of Stalingrad was as good as won:

Now I do not always do things just as the others want them done. I consider what the others probably believe, and then do the opposite on principle. So if Mr. Stalin expected that we would attack in the center, I did not want to attack in the center, not only because Mr. Stalin probably believed I would, but because I didn't care about it any more at all. But I wanted to come to the Volga, to a definite place, to a definite city. It accidentally bears the name of Stalin himself, but do not think that I went after it on that account.

Indeed, it could have an altogether different name. But only because it is an important point, that is, there 30 million tons of traffic can be cut off, including about 9 million of oil shipments. There all the wheat pours in from those enormous territories of the Ukraine, of the Kuban territory, then to be transported to the North. There the manganese ore was forwarded. A gigantic terminal was there; I wanted to take it. And do you know, we're modest: that is, we have it; there are only a couple of very small places left there.

Now the others say: Why aren't you fighting there? Because I don't want to make a second Verdun but would rather do it with very small shock units. Time plays no part here. No ships come up the Volga any more—that is the decisive thing. They have also reproached us, asking why it took us so long at Sevastopol? Because there, too, we did not want to cause an enormous mass murder. Blood is flowing as it is—more than enough. But Sevastopol fell into our hands, and the Crimea fell into our hands. We have reached goal after goal, stubbornly, persistently.

¹³⁸ Radio Vistula in German to the Eastern Front, October, 12, 1942, "Front Reports," Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

And if the enemy, on his part, makes preparations to attack, don't think I want to forestall him there, but at the same moment we let him attack also. Because then defense still is less expensive. Then just let him attack; he'll bleed to death that way, and thus far we have always taken care of the situation anyhow. At any rate, the Russians are not at the Pyrenees or before Seville; that, you see, is the same distance as for us to be in Stalingrad today, or on the Terek, let us say; but we are there; that can really not be disputed. That is a fact, after all.

Naturally, when nothing else will do any more, they also say it's a mistake. Then they suddenly turn around and say: 'It is absolutely a mistake for the Germans to have gone to Kirkenes, or to have gone to Narvik, or now perhaps to Stalingrad—what do they expect to do in Stalingrad? For Stalingrad is a capital mistake, a strategic mistake.' We will just wait and see whether that was a strategic mistake.

We see already from present indications whether it was such a great mistake that we took possession of the Ukraine, that we-uh, took possession of the ore region of Krivoi Rog, that we got our hands on the manganese ores, or whether it was really such a great mistake that we got hold of the Kuban region, the greatest granary in the entire world, perhaps, whether it was a mistake that we, and I can safely say this, have now destroyed or got into our own possession four-fifths or five-sixths of all their refineries, that we alone either have right in our hands or have completely shut off, a production of 9 or 10 million tons of oil, and we have further cut off the transportation of perhaps 7, 8 or 9 million tons over the Volga.¹³⁹

Declaring that “we are modest, that is we have the city (Stalingrad), there are only a few pockets (of resistance left),” Hitler once again showed his penchant for making premature statements that would come back to haunt him. He displayed his inability to learn from past mistakes by declaring that “if the enemy wants to prepare an attack (on German forces at Stalingrad)...we let him attack because defense still is less expensive...he'll bleed to death that way.”¹⁴⁰ In this speech, he also identified his strategic reasoning for placing such paramount importance on capturing the city

¹³⁹ Radio Berlin in German to the World, November 9, 1942, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁴⁰ This is an unbelievable strategic miscalculation by Hitler as it should have been apparent through 18 months of fighting that the Soviets were incapable of bleeding to death.

that bore Stalin's name, oil. Interestingly, perhaps in light of the complete destruction of Soviet oil fields in the Caucasus, Hitler did not justify the German offensive in terms of securing oil for the *Wehrmacht*, but concluded that in *preventing* oil shipments from reaching Soviet troops and industry he would break the Red Army. Thus, he declared the Nazi effort successful owing to his belief that the actual capture of Stalingrad was not of great importance as German arms had already accomplished their goal of cutting off the 30 million tons of supplies (including between seven and ten million tons of oil) that would have been shipped north to the Soviet Union via the Volga.

While Hitler was proclaiming victory at Stalingrad to the world and essentially daring the Soviets to attack -- on the other side of the Volga River -- Marshal Georgii Zhukov had been busy assembling a massive force consisting of over one million men and the latest in Soviet tanks, airplanes, rocket launchers, and heavy artillery. Zhukov had organized this force into two separate pincers that met on November 22, 1942, and effectively surrounded the Sixth Army in Stalingrad, an army that was running desperately low on time and supplies.¹⁴¹ Hitler's gamble had failed: there were scant reports referring to Stalingrad in the German press for nearly two months.¹⁴²

Erich Von Manstein made a futile attempt to rescue the besieged troops at Stalingrad by breaking through Soviet lines, but by January it was increasingly clear to all that the fate of the Sixth Army was all but sealed. As Kallis notes "following a

¹⁴¹ Kallis, 127

¹⁴² This was my observation through a thorough analysis of FBIS reports and is supported by Kallis' conclusions.

lengthy meeting between Goebbels and Hitler on the 13th of January,” the topic of Stalingrad began to make its way back into German propaganda in the middle of January 1943. Now, however, the troops were not described as invincible warriors marching east, but more as mythical heroes fighting for the great German homeland until their last bullet.¹⁴³

German radio prepared the troops encircled at Stalingrad for their new role as martyrs (and also used sentimentality in an effort to perhaps dissuade the soldiers from the thought of surrender) in a January 16, 1943, broadcast in German to the “German troops in the Stalingrad sector.” The broadcast began ominously and stated, “there are situations in which one’s reason is at the end of its rope and sees no way out. In such situations man performs deeds he never thought himself capable of performing.” The broadcast continued:

During the past winter, our fighter in the east has needed a stout heart and he has had it. The infinite bravery and readiness of the soldiers on the Eastern Front to sacrifice themselves have given the German people intense strength. The Eastern campaign has opened the eyes of the German people to the enormous danger in which it stood. But the bravery and splendid deeds of our fighters in the east have instilled in the German people the conviction that sooner or later we shall overcome this danger. The homeland, therefore, has taken new courage. It is determined to be worthy, to the last man, of our fighters in the East. No man out there is alone. The attention and hopes of their dear ones are focused on every single one of them.

The homeland, by working constantly, is producing weapons, tools, clothes, and food so that, together with spiritual strength, unending supplies are pouring into the East. Every fighter in the East must know this. He must trust that one day this will have its effect upon him, too, however hard the present situation may appear to be. The homeland will never forget you. It thinks of you day and night and stretches out millions of hands to support you. It knows how vital is your fight and your victory. Without you and your bravery, the brown hordes would already be in our homeland and millions of innocent women and children would be slaughtered and raped.

¹⁴³ Kallis, 128

Is there anything greater in the life of a man than to stand protectingly (sic) before those to whom nature has allotted the sacred task of erecting new life? Is there anything more beautiful than our soldier's fight for the wellbeing of our people and for its youth? In this spirit, the homeland greets you, as the nation's guardians, with deep and infinite gratitude!¹⁴⁴

Following such a moving tribute to the encircled Sixth Army, which was losing over 1,000 dead per day in the month of January 1943, the following January 29 broadcast, entitled "Goering Rewards Famous Chilean Diva," in English to the world would seem to be in very poor taste (especially considering that Goering was the man who had guaranteed Hitler that his Luftwaffe would re-supply the encircled Sixth Army, a venture that failed catastrophically). The broadcast read as follows:

The Chilean singer, Rosita Serrano, does not even think of leaving Germany...German recognition of her many performances for the benefit of German soldiers was manifested anew by a gift from Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, who sent her a golden bracelet decorated by yellow amethysts, and who thanked her for the joy which she had brought to soldiers. In addition, the Reich Marshal let her know that she was under his personal protection, and free to move about no matter how relations might be in the future between Chile and Germany.¹⁴⁵

Nonetheless, as far as the German populace knew, the Battle of Stalingrad came to a heroic end. As noted by Kallis, the official declaration that Stalingrad had been lost came on February 3, 1943. Prior to reading the declaration, the German

¹⁴⁴ Radio Vistula in German to the "Stalingrad Sector," January 16, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁴⁵ Radio Berlin in English to the World, January, 29 1942, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

radio played the sounds of Beethoven's "Heroica" symphony.¹⁴⁶ The regime's instructions to newspaper and magazine editors read:

The heroic battle at Stalingrad has reached its end. This moving event, which casts even the greatest heroic military deeds of the past into the shadows, must be presented to magazines as an example of the highest heroism and complete willingness to sacrifice for the victory of the German people. The word Stalingrad must become a holy symbol for the German people. The immortal heroism of the men at Stalingrad will unleash even more than before the spirit and strength of the German nation, which will ensure the victory it is now even more fanatically determined to win.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Kallis, 128

¹⁴⁷ Kallis, 129

Total War!

Following what could only be described as a total military and propaganda failure at Stalingrad, the RMVP found itself “increasingly in conditions of psychological competition against enemy broadcasts and leaflets, rumors, individual testimonies from soldiers, who had first-hand accounts of the fighting both in North Africa and the Soviet Union.”¹⁴⁸

As noted by Peter Longerich, Goebbels attempted to use the difficult military situation to maximize his influence over the German propaganda apparatus. As early as the Winter of 1941/1942, Goebbels had warned against “unrealistic optimism,” and felt that Dietrich had once again been overzealous during the Stalingrad campaign, leaving him politically vulnerable.¹⁴⁹ Goebbels tried to persuade Hitler to not only adopt a more “realistic approach” to German propaganda, but to transform the civilian sector onto a “Total War” footing. Hitler reluctantly agreed and on January 13, 1943, signed a decree for “the deployment of men and women for the tasks of the Reich Defense,” that forced the arms industry to send its youngest workers to the Wehrmacht. The losses in the arms industry were made up by “exploiting” the remaining work force reserves including women.¹⁵⁰

Hitler appointed a “Tripartite Commission,” to implement these new measures -- the Commission was composed of Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann -- much to

¹⁴⁸ Kallis, 129-132

¹⁴⁹ Longerich, 293

¹⁵⁰ Longerich, 293-294

Goebbels' chagrin.¹⁵¹ Goebbels' requests were largely ignored by the Commission as were his attempts to join it. In order to circumvent the Commission he took his case to the German nation in a dramatic speech at the "Sportspalast," to the German nation and for the first time used the phrase "total war," in an attempt to "put the pressure of public opinion on his opponents" (Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann). According to Longerich, the speech was considered a great propaganda feat, but it still did not translate into any actual concrete action, and when the eastern front stabilized in March of 1943, Goebbels efforts "fell apart."¹⁵² While it is true that Goebbels may not have had any concrete success moving towards total mobilization within the Reich until the summer of 1944, he still pushed his program of "realism" and "total war" from late 1942 onward in the area of the Nazi bureaucracy where he still retained influence, the RMVP. A new sense of "realism," particularly as regarded the Axis military situation and the idea of a United European civilization mobilized against the Bolshivik hordes increasingly defined German radio broadcasts.¹⁵³

Around this time, Himmler's S.S. and the *Wehrmacht* began actively courting European and Russian volunteers for military, police, and administrative duty throughout occupied Europe and even on the Eastern Front.¹⁵⁴ Even as early as November 27, 1942, the United States Office of War Information succinctly analyzed

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Longerich, 295-297

¹⁵³ The successful German counteroffensive at Kharkov is an example of the dramatic change in the way Nazi propagandists presented even military victories. In a broadcast entitled, "Kharkov Becomes 'One Mass of Flames,'" on February 17, 1943, Radio Berlin reported "Incessant artillery shelling and a veritable downpouring of bombs caused numerous conflagrations in parts of the city...Street fighting, which continued with great ferocity on the night of Feb. 16-17, is still going on in the outer Kharkov districts."

¹⁵⁴ Clark, 408

the significance of a Bratislava radio broadcast in German, titled “Nazis Recruit S.S. Troopers in Slovakia”:

Until very recently membership in the Nazi S.S. organization was restricted to handpicked Nazis in the Reich. The exigencies of the Russian campaign saw many of the black-clad troopers pressed into military service at the front, and their ranks were thinned out by the relentless Russian campaign. In order to fill these depleted ranks and to implant the proper Nazi ‘*Kultur*’ among the servile satellites, rules for admission into the elite S.S. organization were relaxed to such a degree that new members can now be recruited in the occupied territories and satellite states. The consent of the puppet governments to such recruiting is a mere formality.

Recently, the Bratislava radio broadcast in German to the ‘Nazis’ in Slovakia the following announcement: “Attention!! Here is an important message to all male members of our national group, the Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. has given permission for Germans living in Slovakia to volunteer for the armed S.S. With competent authorities of the state having given their consent, medical examinations will now be carried out in all local groups of the German party in Slovakia. Appropriate instructions will be issued by the leader of our ethnic group.”¹⁵⁵

By the Spring of 1943, nearly every other broadcast emanating from German or German-controlled radio mentioned the phrase “United Europe.” News items regarding economic clearing agreements between German vassal states, opportunities for foreign workers in the Reich, and military recruiting of nationalities dominated the airwaves. The discovery of mass graves containing Polish officers massacred by the Soviet secret police in 1940 near the town of Katyn in late March 1943 only intensified his campaign against the “Yid-Bolsheviks.”¹⁵⁶

A rather inconspicuous February 19, 1943, broadcast (not coincidentally the day after Goebbels’ “Total War” speech) from Berlin in English to the world

¹⁵⁵ Czechoslovak News Bulletin For Press, “Nazis Recruit S.S. Troopers in Slovakia,” “November 27, 1942 Records of the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence, Research Reports, Records of the Office of War Information, NARA, College Park, MD, RG208, Entry #366, Boxes #219-223.

¹⁵⁶ Fox, John P. “Der Fall Katyn und die Propaganda des NS-Regime.” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* vol. 30 (1982) 462-499.

announced the supposedly dramatic shift in Nazi policy; the “benevolent” German authorities now allowed members of the “free European family of peoples” the “privilege” of volunteering to participate in the Axis war effort:

Because the population of occupied eastern territories dreads nothing more than the return of Bolshevism, soon after the occupation of those territories by the Germans many persons reported to the German Armed Forces, asking to be permitted to take part in fighting the Bolsheviks.

At first the German command was most reticent in granting such requests made by Estonians, Lithuanians, Bessarabians, West Ukrainians, White Russians and Russians. Finally they decided to give a number of these volunteers an opportunity to take part in the battle for the protection of their home country. The volunteer formations have proved excellent, especially in the heavy fighting this winter.

They were given their own uniforms with their national colors. Under their own commanders they were included as equals in the German Armies in the East. A special formula was used by them in taking the oath of allegiance, which stated that they pledged themselves to fight for the liberation of their home country from the Bolsheviks, and for safeguarding their cultural and economic development within the framework of the Free European family of peoples. They are on an equal footing with German soldiers in pay, clothing and food. Their religious customs are respected.¹⁵⁷ The wounded are treated in German hospitals. The mutilated, as well as war widows and orphans are looked after in the same manner as the Germans.

Apart from the volunteer formations, there are also men willing to help (*Hilfswigen*). They support the German Armed Forces in the East, driving carts in supply columns or joining the local police. Both formations have a chance of living their own cultural lives. They have papers in their own languages, they have theatres, dance their own folk dances and sing their own folk songs.¹⁵⁸

It was clearly no coincidence that the Germans changed their policy regarding racial purity in the *Ostheer* following a winter of catastrophic defeats at the frontline and a rapidly growing partisan movement in their rear that threatened lines of

¹⁵⁷ See Berkhoff, Karel. “Was There a Religious Revival in Soviet Ukraine under the Nazi Regime?” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 78 (July, 2000), 536-567.

¹⁵⁸ Radio Berlin in German to the Reich, February, 19 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

communication and supply. This left the *Wehrmacht* with a severe manpower shortage. Regardless of the dichotomy between Nazi war aims and the actual content of Nazi radio broadcasts -- Goebbels understood the importance of mobilizing European economic and military resources -- if the Reich was to have any chance at winning the war.¹⁵⁹

Broadcasting from Warsaw in Russian to the Soviet Union on March, 26, 1943, an announcer read the first speech given by ex-Soviet General Andrei Vlasov on German radio, head of the newly formed 'Russian Committee for Liberation' in which he assailed 'Commissar domination of the Red Army and called upon the Russian people to "fight Bolshevism for a new Russia."¹⁶⁰

For propaganda (and certainly not practical) purposes the Nazis exploited General Vlasov and the idea of a "Russian Liberation Army" until nearly the end of the war. While Radio Berlin announced to Europe on May 2 that:

The war on the Eastern Front will be decided in western Russia, it is in the west of her immense territories that Red Russia will be strangled. *Real Russian Armies* are preparing to enter the struggle on the side of *United Europe*. This *United Europe*, if it was to be defeated by Stalin's Army, should have been last winter.¹⁶¹

Similarly, Radio Berlin broadcast the following message on May 13 in a piece entitled "Vlasov Tours Liberated Territory":

¹⁵⁹ Kallis, 129-136

¹⁶⁰ Radio Vistula in Great Russian to the Soviet Union, March 26, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁶¹ Radio Berlin in German to Europe, May, 2 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

The Chairman of the Russian Liberation Committee, Lt. Gen Andrei Andreyivitch Vlasov, recently inspected troops of the Russian Liberation Army in the northern sector of the Eastern Front. Among others, Vlasov attended tactical exercises of the artillery division of this Army. Subsequently, Vlasov visited liberated eastern regions and made several speeches before the population. He was received with great enthusiasm everywhere.¹⁶²

Contrary to the claims of German propaganda, Vlasov's "armies" -- which in reality consisted mainly of Soviet POW's who "volunteered" for service rather than face almost certain death in open air POW or concentration camps -- were used almost exclusively for anti-Partisan operations throughout Europe. Hitler expressed great skepticism about any "Russian Army" and was particularly suspicious of Vlasov himself.¹⁶³ As a result, Russian volunteers were strictly forbidden from fighting on the Eastern Front, where most quickly deserted to the Red Army rather than fight their fellow countrymen in any case. While the German military situation crumbled on all fronts, Himmler officially authorized Vlasov to raise a "Russian Liberation Army" (the ROA) under his command in September 1944.¹⁶⁴

Incidentally, an after action report from an OSS parachute mission involving German-American citizens and *Wehrmacht* deserters (who volunteered for clandestine missions across the continent) reported that the area between Maribor, Slovenia, and Frauenthal, Austria was "swarming with brutal Russian Cossacks associated with Vlasov who were sent there by the Germans to conduct anti-Partisan

¹⁶² Radio Berlin in German to the Reich, May 13, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁶³ Clark, 408, 661

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

operations,” in February of 1945.¹⁶⁵ It was just north of this area (roughly north of Prague) that Vlasov and the First Division of the ROA fought their only battle against Soviet forces. They quickly retreated in the face of overpowering firepower and eventually turned their guns against German SS troops defending Prague before reaching American lines in Tyrol. Here, Vlasov was captured by Soviet troops while under the custody of the U.S. Army and was hung by the Soviets about a year later.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ “The Dania Mission”, Box 138, NARA, College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #190, Box 138.

¹⁶⁵ Clark, 461

¹⁶⁶ Fox, 462-467

Katyn

In the last week of February 1943, the German *Propagandatruppen*'s 537th Regiment -- at the time stationed several of kilometers west of Smolensk -- telegraphed Berlin regarding a startling discovery made by their comrades in the 570th unit of the *Wehrmacht*'s secret field police embedded with Army Group Center. They appeared to have found the decomposed bodies of hundreds, if not thousands, of Polish officers.¹⁶⁷ The 570th reported to Berlin that immediate and extensive exhumations at the site of the potential mass grave were impossible because of the deep ground frost. Apparently, local inhabitants were also thoroughly interrogated by the field police and a certain Dr. Butzh of Breslau University who was a forensic scientist attached to Army Group Center.¹⁶⁸

Buhtz was firmly convinced that the 570th had indeed found a mass grave and he spent the rest of March preparing for the exhumation of corpses, their transportation, their autopsy, and their labeling while ensuring the objects found with them (the bodies) were not "compromised." The Commander of Army Group Center ordered a thorough exhumation led by Dr. Butzh on March 29, 1943, which quickly led to the discovery of the bodies of thousands of Polish officers. When the military delivered this information to Goebbels and the RMVP on April 1st or 2nd, Goebbels

¹⁶⁸ In his new work, "Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in the Ukraine Under Nazi Rule," Karel Berkhoff offers a different interpretation of the Katyn affair. Berkhoff contends that the German field command was aware of the mass graves near Vinnytsia as early as August 15, 1941, and they only became an "allowed" topic of conversation in 1943 when the propaganda value of the graves was realized. 188.

was reported to have replied “*das Glück*, das ihm zugefallen war, kaum glauben konnte,” or “I cannot believe that good luck that has befallen me!”¹⁶⁹

Two weeks later, on April 12, 1943, Radio Berlin reported the spectacular news that German troops had discovered the bodies of 10,000 Polish military officers who were massacred by the Soviets. The first broadcast concerning the massacred Polish officers was entitled “OGPU Killed 10,000 Polish Officers” and was transmitted to North America in English by Robert Broese, a writer for Germany’s Transocean press agency from Smolensk:

I am now in a position to give General Sikorsky, Chief of the Polish Émigré Government in London, definite assurance that he is waiting in vain for the return of 900,000 Polish soldiers interned by the Soviets after the break-down of Poland in 1939. The question of what was to become of these soldiers, it will be recalled has resulted in serious divergences of opinion between the Polish ‘Government’ and Soviet authorities.

I have just returned to Smolensk from a visit to the grave of the Polish officers corps, in the forest at the former Soviet workers recreation home of Kosegary, 20 kilometers west from Smolensk. According to a thorough investigation by German military authorities, no fewer than 10,000 Polish officers, that is, all Polish officers who fell into Soviet hands, had been liquidated by the OGPU by shots to the back of the neck during February and March, 1940.

These were buried in a common grave like dead dogs, in the Kosegory woods. I will never forget the hour which I spent at this grave, when I saw horrors which can hardly be described. As I write this report, the frightful stench of decaying bodies is still in my nostrils. I saw half-decayed bodies of murdered Polish officers heaped up by the hundreds.

The half-decayed bodies still clearly showed bullet marks in the nape of the neck from the OGPU executioners shots. The hands of some of the murdered officers had been tied behind their backs. All dead officers were fully uniformed and booted. Some field flasks, bread-bags and other pieces of military equipment, as well as empty vodka bottles, which presumably belonged to the executioners were to be seen. The assumption of the

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

internationally known professor of medicine, Buthz of Breslau that other bodies will be found in the nearby woods was confirmed.¹⁷⁰

There are several striking features about the initial German announcement regarding the discovery of mass graves at Katyn. The announcer directly addresses the entire broadcast to General Sikorsky, who was then the head of the Polish government in exile. This was a clear attempt to divide the Allies (England/America and the Soviet Union) by causing a rift between the Polish government in exile and the Soviets. As Broese said, the disappearance of Polish enlisted men and officers during the Soviet occupation (between 1939-1941) was a matter of great contention between Sikorsky and the Poles in exile and the Kremlin. The Poles had long suspected Stalin was not telling them the truth regarding the whereabouts of arrested members of the Polish Army and it was impossible for them to ignore the German report.¹⁷¹

The style in which Broese's report was written was unique for Nazi propaganda. It was extremely vivid and contains many facts, as opposed to the more dull, ambiguous form that German propaganda most often took. Details such as "the frightful stench of decaying bodies still in my nostrils" and "the half-decayed bodies (that) still clearly showed bullet marks in the nape of the neck from the OGPU executioners shots," lent credibility to Broese's report. This was indicative of the overall intensified German effort to make a serious attempt to rally civilians around

¹⁷⁰ Radio Berlin in English to North America, "OGPU Killed 10,000 Polish Officers," April 12, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁷¹ Bell, P.M.H. "Censorship, Propaganda, and Public Opinion: The Case of the Katyn Graves," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, Vol. 39 (1989).

the Nazi cause in the aftermath of Stalingrad. On April 15th, broadcasting in English to North America and Europe, the Moscow radio carried a TASS (Soviet Press Agency) statement that claimed the Nazis, not the Soviets, were guilty of the mass shootings of Polish officers. The Soviet Information Bureau released the following statement:

In the past two or three days, Goebbels' slanderers have been circulating vile fabrications alleging that in the spring of 1940, the Soviets effected mass shootings of Polish officers in the Smolensk area. In launching this fresh monstrous fabrication the German scoundrels do not hesitate to use the most unscrupulous and base lies in an attempt to cover up these unparalleled crimes which, as has now become obvious, were committed by themselves.

German-fascist reports leave no doubt whatsoever as to the tragic fate of the former Polish prisoners of war who, in 1941, were engaged in building operations in the areas west of Smolensk and who, together with many Soviet residents in the area, fell into the hands of the Germans after the retreat of the Soviet troops. Beyond any doubt Goebbels slanderers are now trying to cover up their own sanguinary crimes. In their clumsily made up lies about numerous graves allegedly discovered near Smolensk they mention the village of Gnezdovaya, but like true crooks, they omit the fact that it was precisely near this village that archeologists excavated the historic Gnezdovaya burial place. The Hitlerite frauds resort to cruel forgery and juggling with facts when they circulate slanderous fabrications about Soviet atrocities allegedly perpetrated in the Spring of 1940. Thus, they try to divert from themselves the responsibility for their own brutal crimes.¹⁷²

The Soviet denunciation of involvement in the massacre was accompanied by an increase in coverage of the extermination of the Jewish population in Europe. As Karel Berkoff contended in "Total Annihilation of the Jews: The Holocaust in Soviet Media." Berkhoff argued that the increase in coverage of Jewish matters in the Soviet press was a direct attempt by Stalin to connect the Polish government in exile to anti-Semitism (as they were, according to *Pravda*) working in "collusion" with the

¹⁷² Radio Moscow in English to Europe and North America, "Nazis Shot Polish Officers," April 15, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Germans.¹⁷³ This would appear to be true -- during the month following the announcement of the discovery at Katyn -- more time was devoted on Soviet radio to the treatment of Jews than during any other time period in the war. For example, on April 15, the FBIS picked up a Khabarovsk radio broadcast on the Soviet Home Service:

Reports coming from Bulgaria tell of the growing resentment among wide circles of the Bulgarian population towards the inhumane treatment meted out to the Jewish population by the authorities in Macedonia.

As has been reported before, the Bulgarian authorities are evacuating many Jews to Poland. The Jewish male population is at hard labor within the country, building fortifications and roads while old men, women, and children are sent to Poland -- to certain death. They are shipped in sealed freight cars and denied food and drink for days on end. Neither are they given any medical aid. This organized extermination of the Jews causes resentment among the Bulgarian people. Various delegations, one of them including a Cabinet member, have protested this inhuman attitude toward the Jews. During a stormy session of the Bulgarian Parliament, 42 deputies demanded that the maltreatment of Jews be investigated. This demand was rejected by the Government. The resentment against the Hitlerite anti-Semitic measures taken by the Bulgarian government will continue to grow.¹⁷⁴

Following the simultaneous approaches by the Polish government in-exile and the German government to the Red Cross to investigate the graves at Katyn, the Soviet government formally broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile.¹⁷⁵ While Goebbels and the Nazi propaganda apparatus

¹⁷³ Berkhoff, Karel C. "Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population": The Holocaust in the Soviet Media, 1941-45," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 10, Number 1, Winter 2009, pp. 89-94.

¹⁷⁴ Radio Khabarovsk in Great Russian to the Soviet Union, April 15, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3. '

¹⁷⁵ Bell, P.M.H. "Censorship, Propaganda, and Public Opinion: The Case of the Katyn Graves," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series*, Vol. 39 (1989), pp. 64-65.

accomplished their goal of splitting ties between the Soviet government and the Polish émigrés in London, relations between the Soviet Union and Britain and America were not damaged to the point where the Allied military effort was affected. Nonetheless, the Katyn incident became the catalyst for a major new German propaganda offensive throughout Europe and the occupied Eastern territories based around the theme of a United European Front standing firm against the Jewish Bolshevik hordes of the East.

A United European Campaign

Having been denied the opportunity to establish even nominally autonomous states during the Nazi occupation up to this point – strangely enough, following the *Wehrmacht's* defeat at Stalingrad -- the peoples of Eastern Europe increasingly found themselves included in the new German conception of a “United Europe.” Nazi propagandists also used social, political, ethnic and religious overtones in an attempt to convince the occupied population that the Germans were essentially the lesser of two evils.

Just prior to the release of information regarding the infamous Katyn Massacre and during the ensuing uproar, German radio increased the amount of coverage devoted to the idea of a “United Europe” stretching from France to the Ukraine. This followed Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels proclamation in February 1943 during his “Total War” speech that the “*ostvolker* must be mobilized in order to win the war.”¹⁷⁶

Broadcasts announcing the formation and recruitment of national armies to serve alongside the Axis on the Eastern Front continued to be a dominant theme throughout the Spring and Summer of 1943. On May 22, Berlin Radio (DNB) reported from Lvov in German that a new Galician S.S. division was being formed. This broadcast is especially interesting due to its high praise of the “European nature and culture” of the Galician (Ukrainian) people:

¹⁷⁶ Herzstein, 9

The formation of a Ukrainian volunteer unit to fight at the front, started at the instigation of the Ukrainian population of the General Government has been so enthusiastically received that within a fortnight a large number, exceeding all expectations has volunteered for this 'Volunteer Legion Galicia,' which is said to have the strength of a Rifle Division.¹⁷⁷ The solemn ceremony inaugurating this Legion at the end of April in the Governor's Palace at Lvov was attended by numerous representatives of the Ukrainian population, members of the General Government administration and representatives of the Armed Forces, the SS, the Police and the Party. Then Dr. Waechter, the Governor, pointed out the European character of the Galician area, on whose fields, thanks to the efforts of the Reich, the gigantic mass onslaught from the East had been beaten back in 1941, as so often in history. A message from the Governor General stated that through this active fight against Bolshevism, the Ukrainian population of Galicia was securing for itself the blessings of European culture. Dr. Kubyovych, Head of the Ukrainian Chief Committee, affirmed in his vote of thanks that the fundamental attitude of Ukrainians sprang from their European attitude. They were determined to do everything in their power to help in this great effort for the New Order in Europe...¹⁷⁸

Continuing the theme of foreign military collaboration, on the 24th, Berlin Radio broadcast in German to Europe that: "(Albanian) Premier Libohava announced the formation of purely Albanian Armed Forces intended for the defense of Albania in conjunction with Forces of Italy against enemy attacks."¹⁷⁹

On the 26th, broadcasting in German to the world, Berlin reported from Bucharest:

In the areas of Rumania inhabited by Germans, in Transylvania, Banat, and in the mountains, male members of the German national group are at present joining up for enrollment in the Waffen S.S. at the Kronstadt station. The first

¹⁷⁷ It must be noted that extensive new research regarding the history of the German occupation in Galicia and the General government (Timothy Snyder and Wendy Lower, in particular) has revealed that most Polish and Ukrainian collaborators had no interest in fighting for the Nazi cause, but simply joined to procure weapons for the increasingly brutal Polish-Ukrainian civil war that raged from 1942-1945 in Volhynia and Galicia.

¹⁷⁸ Berlin to Lvov in German, "New Galician S.S. Division Formed," Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch Files of the Chief; R and D Sample Books; German Press Extracts and Reports, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, NARA, College Park, MD, RG226, Entry #145.

¹⁷⁹ Radio Berlin in German to Europe, May 24, 1943, "Albania to Organize Own Armed Forces," April 15, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

transport of S.S. recruits was dispatched to the Eastern front or for service within the framework of the Rumanian Army.¹⁸⁰

The very next broadcast emanating from Germany that FBIS picked up on the 26th was entitled “Walloon Legion Expanded to Brigade” and was broadcast from Berlin to the Reich in German:

Since the autumn of 1941, the Walloon Legion has proved its outstanding valor in severe fighting against Bolshevism at the Eastern Front, and month after month volunteers have flocked to its colors in very considerable numbers. The Legion is now being extended to form a brigade which will be called the S.S. Volunteer Brigade Wallonia.¹⁸¹

And on July 9, the FBIS even picked up a Berlin broadcast titled “Georgian Unit Sent to Atlantic Wall” announcing the first deployment of “native volunteers from the east”:

It is learned that a unit of native volunteers from the East has been sent, for the first time, to the Atlantic Wall. They are a Georgian infantry unit whose members have proved their mettle in fighting at the Eastern front and against Bolshevik gangs (partisans) in the rear. Many of them are wearing the green ribbon decoration for gallantry.¹⁸²

It is interesting to compare the upbeat and heroic sounding recruitment broadcasts in Eastern Europe with the comparatively mocking, frustrated tone of similar appeals in Western Europe. In a call for volunteers for the Norwegian Panzer

¹⁸⁰ Radio Berlin in German to the World, May 26, 1943, “Rumanian Army Gets New S.S. Recruits,” Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁸¹ Radio Berlin in German to the Reich, May 26th, 1943, “Walloon Legion Expanded to Brigade,” Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

¹⁸² Radio Berlin in German to Europe, July, 9 1943, “Georgian Unit Sent to Atlantic Wall,” Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Grenadier Regiment (otherwise known as the Wiking S.S.), the commentator declared on the Tromsø radio on April 12, 1943, at 1:15 p.m. EWT that “Europe will have to make a total contribution”:

We make an appeal to young Norwegians to join the Grenadier Regiment. They have an ideological task to perform, not only to defend Norwegian freedom against the Bolshevik menace, but also to defend Europe. In the beginning of the struggle the Norwegian contribution had only a symbolic character. There were very few Norwegians who realized the inner meaning of this world-wide battle and had the courage to offer their lives for their beliefs. The great majority of the Norwegian people remained indifferent and preferred to keep aloof.

‘The position now is, however, different. The past winter has been a great strain on the European troops.¹⁸³ The enemy’s assault is being made with tremendous masses of troops and at a great sacrifice of human material.’ It is no use concealing the fact that the situation is serious on the European front and that the future of the world is at stake. Soldiers from Germany, Norway, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy have so far managed to beat off the Bolshevik menace and the third year of the war on the Eastern Front is about to begin and we all have a feeling that it will be decisive.

‘Europe will have to make a total contribution and our country (Norway) cannot avoid shouldering her share of the burden. Norway will have to make her contribution to enable victory to be won. We, therefore, appeal to all Norwegians to do their duty, to join the Panzer Grenadier Regiment and secure Norway’s future.’¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ It is interesting to note the reference to ‘European’, not ‘German’ troops on the eastern front.

¹⁸⁴ Radio Tromsø to Norway in Norwegian, April 12, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3. This broadcast in particular was indicative of the “realist” approach that German Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, advocated following the German defeat at Stalingrad. Worried that Germans still believed in the idea of a “short war,” he wanted to stress the great difficulties that German troops were encountering on the Eastern Front and prepare the German people for complete mobilization, a measure that he saw as the only way to German victory. See Kallis, 129-136.

German Propaganda in Occupied Eastern Europe

Following the German defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad, the National Socialist regime greatly expanded its propaganda efforts in the occupied Eastern European countries. This coincided with the RMVP's new theme of a United European Continent standing firm against the Jewish Bolshevism of the Soviet Union. While German broadcasts, newspaper articles and posters increasingly exhorted the peoples of Eastern Europe to contribute as much as possible to the Axis war effort as the military fortunes of the Third Reich steadily declined, regional news outlets were generally used for utilitarian purposes and were largely devoid of the relatively 'positive' messages that dominated Radio Berlin.

The German propaganda apparatus in Eastern Europe significantly differed from that in the occupied Soviet Union as it was completely under the control of civilian authorities and the RMVP until the eastern front rapidly began to move westward in 1944 and the *Wehrmacht* once again asserted control. Jan Grabowski chronicles the German propaganda apparatus in Poland in his article, "German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the *Generalgouvernement*, 1939-1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions."

Nazi propaganda in occupied Poland was directed by a branch of the General Government's administration known as the *Fachabteilung für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (FAVup or Department of Education and Propaganda). German employees of this department were recruited primarily by Goebbels Propaganda

Ministry in Berlin; while Grabowski contends that most of the other propagandists had been active in German media or the “liberal professions.”¹⁸⁵

Another important medium for propaganda throughout the occupied Eastern European countries was what the Polish referred to as the ‘*yapper*’ (a loudspeaker). Loudspeakers were strategically placed throughout public areas in Eastern Europe to provide the population with important information, much of which came in the form of warnings, curfews, and directives to civilian populations following German defeat at Stalingrad and the emergence of strong partisan movements in nearly every country under German occupation.¹⁸⁶ Not surprisingly, Eastern European newspapers and radio broadcasts also contained incessant calls for foreign workers to come to the Reich, as well as frequent reports from foreign workers describing the high standards of living in Germany. The already extensive use of anti-Semitic propaganda also increased, even though, as noted by Jeffery Herf, Jan Grabowski, Robert Herzstein, and Mikhail Tyaglyy, most Jews in Eastern Europe had already been annihilated.¹⁸⁷

In late 1942, the United States Office of War Information began publishing a top secret weekly analysis of foreign radio broadcasts in the occupied Eastern territories while the OSS began translating certain newspaper articles and radio

¹⁸⁵ Grabowski, Jan, “German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939–1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 23. 3 (Winter 2009) pp. 382-383.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ It must be noted that by the Spring of 1943, Nazi propagandists in the East were not using anti-Semitic demagoguery to incite violence or pogroms against Jews in the Eastern territories. Through my analysis of daily German broadcasts it is clear, as Jeffery Herf posited in “The Jewish Enemy” that the matter of Jews and the Jewish question was a central tenet of National Socialist ideology and worldview. It is clear from Joseph Goebbels public announcements and diary entries, as well as the speeches of Hitler that the leadership of the National Socialist regime firmly believed that they were facing a Jewish world conspiracy that essentially controlled the governments of the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain through dominance of finance and media. Thus, propaganda of an anti-Semitic nature continued in all areas under German control until the fall of the regime in May 1945, long after most Soviet and European Jews had been murdered.

broadcasts emanating from Eastern Europe. The OSS translated the following newspaper article entitled “The Life of Workers in Germany” that was published in the German controlled Serbian newspaper *Novo Vreme* on January 10, 1943:

Mladen Babic, correspondent of *Novo Vreme* in Germany sent an article describing the pastimes of young Serbs working in Germany: Now in the fourth year of the war, in intimate contact with German realities, our young flock are capable of appreciating all the characteristics of the German people and in particular of their country life... We have had the opportunity of seeing with what interest our young people follow the work of the German farmers who, in their own way, endeavor to explain everything to these young Serbs... On Sunday mornings they often have lectures by German specialists which leave a profound impression upon our Serb lads... On Sunday evenings they meet in the cafés with their newly found friends and drink beer...¹⁸⁸

The OSS recorded a steady stream of articles from *Novo Vreme* that presented a favorable view of living conditions for foreign workers in the Reich. On April 10, *Novo Vreme* reported:

Everyday the number of our workers in Germany increases. Some are placed in communal camps with Frenchmen, Dutchmen, and Belgians. Others are in exclusively Serb camps. The food everywhere is good. Some of the workers when asked why they came, reply that it was to find work, others that the salaries were better here and others again because they enjoy more freedom and security here.¹⁸⁹

On April 18, *Novo Vreme* similarly reported on a visit by Serb “journalists” to Vienna. The article stated that the newsmen were pleased to see the sincere

¹⁸⁸ *Novo Vreme* in Serbian, January 10, 1943, “The Life of Workers in Germany,” Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch Files of the Chief, R and D Sample Books; German Press Extracts and Reports, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, NARA, College Park, MD, RG226, Entry #145.

¹⁸⁹ *Novo Vreme* in Serbian, April 10, 1943, Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch Files of the Chief, R and D Sample Books; German Press Extracts and Reports, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, NARA, College Park, MD, RG226, Entry #145.

friendliness with which the Serb workers had been received in Germany. The German nation, it concluded, was “imbued with social justice.”¹⁹⁰

“Social Justice” was most likely not the first term that came to the mind of most Serbs living under the German controlled puppet regime of General Neditch. Most broadcasts in Eastern Europe, especially following Stalingrad, had a negative tone that contrasted sharply with the flowery reports concerning the living conditions of foreign workers in Germany. If one could read between the lines, the brutality of the German occupation was clearly revealed. The FBIS picked up a broadcast emanating from Budapest on June 9, 1943, at 9:00 EWT entitled ‘Public Must Listen to Serbian Radio:

The Serbian Minister of the Interior has issued an order, according to which, in all public places in Serbia, in cafes and restaurants, it is obligatory to play the radio for certain Serbian new broadcasts and other transmissions, such as speeches, public announcements, official statements, and warnings. And it is obligatory for the public to listen to these programs. The Serbian order prescribes that during these transmissions there has to be complete quiet and the guests should not be served. Those who fail to comply with this order will be severely punished.¹⁹¹

The use of radio for important announcements such as curfews and compulsory labor, military drafts and most ominously reprisals was by no means limited to Serbia or Yugoslavia. Following the assassination of RSHA leader Reinhard Heydrich, the

¹⁹⁰ *Novo Vreme* in Serbian, April 18, 1943, “Serb Journalists Visit Vienna,” Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch Files of the Chief, R and D Sample Books; German Press Extracts and Reports, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, NARA, College Park, MD, RG226, Entry #145.

¹⁹¹ Radio Budapest in Hungarian to Europe, “Public Must Listen to Serbian Radio,” June 9, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Nazis unleashed a bloodbath of retribution in Prague and, according to the OWI's analysis of the the pages of the German controlled Prague newspaper, *Prague Neuetag*, the Nazis did not hide their brutality from the Czech public. During January of 1943, OWI concluded that:

The *Prague Neuetag* recently reported that eleven Czechs were executed for treason and espionage on January 11 in Praha. Among them was Frantisek Pavelka who was accused of sabotage. On January 13th, eleven more Czechs were executed on charges of high treason, according to reports reaching the Office Of War Information. Previously, the same paper had reported the execution of seven Czechs on January 8th. They were charged with planning a revolutionary movement against Germany and the Protectorate. Further reprisals against the 'restless' Czechs were announced in the January 17th edition of the newspaper, which reported the execution of four persons accused of possessing arms, and eight charged with 'insulting conduct towards the *Volksdeutsche*.'¹⁹²

The Czech home radio also broadcast a speech made by the puppet Czech "Minister of Education in the Protectorate," which was essentially a furious tirade against the people he was supposed to be serving. It was analyzed by the OWI and provides a fascinating look into the relationship that the leaders of German puppet states had with their own population:

Col. Emanuel Moravec, Minister of Education in the Protectorate, recently told his radio audience that as long as the enemy 'recruits allies in Europe,' the nations which stand for it will 'suffer unhappy consequences.' He urged that force be employed where kindness is of no avail.

In his harangue, Col. Moravec lashed out at the widespread underground movement. The Colonel showed special bitterness and hate towards the Czech intellectuals, who in his words, as the educated stratum 'still contains circles of unreformable elements.' Pitting the worker and the farmer against the intellectuals he boasted that 'the position of the worker and farmer has improved, and that members of the intelligentsia, too, would be entitled to

¹⁹² OWI weekly report, January, 29 1943, "Nazi Reprisals on Czechs Continue," Office of War information, Records of the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence, Research Reports, Records of the Office of War Information, NARA, College Park, MD, RG208, Entry #366, Boxes #219-223.

better remuneration, if they were worthy.' He stamped the educated class as 'lazy,' because of its subtle methods to hinder protection for the Nazis. In his bitter tirade against Czech officials (in exile) he was forced to admit the effectiveness of the sabotage practiced by them. Moravec cried: 'How can I ask you the Czech intelligentsia ask for equal pay with the German officials, when its average work amounts to half that of German officials!'

War is but a difficult test, along the way to lasting peace. Nobody must therefore think that the present conditions are lasting, both as regards food policy and security measures by the Police. So long as the enemy goes on trying to recruit allies for himself in Europe in the form of conspirators and terrorists, so long will it involve unhappy consequences for the nations in whose midst such gentry are found.'¹⁹³

Also of note during the January 29 OWI analysis of propaganda directed to Czech lands was a decree published in *Der Neuetag* on January 12, 1943, that "cancelled the legal status and constitution of the Czechoslovak Orthodox Church; the property of the Church was confiscated soon after Heydrich's assassination." This decree certainly did not square up with the Nazi claim that Germany was the "sole protector" of Christianity against the "Bolshevik hordes." Nor was it consistent with their propaganda further east and north in the Ukraine and the Baltics where the Germans claimed to be champions of religious tolerance.

It also became clear that so called "volunteers" for foreign labor in the Reich or for police and anti-Partisan units in the occupied East were in reality being forced to work by Nazi authorities. The U.S. Office of War Information analyzed a Prague

¹⁹³ OWI weekly report, December 26, 1942, "Czech Quisling Berates Patriotic Officials," Office of War information, Records of the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence, Research Reports, Records of the Office of War Information, NARA, College Park, MD, RG208, Entry #366, Boxes #219-223. Also of note in this weekly report is the first mention of the existence of Auschwitz that I found. In a report entitled "Sixty Die Daily at Nazi Camp", OWI reported: "A Reuters dispatch reports that more than sixty people die every day in the notorious Polish concentration camp at *Oswiecim* (Auschwitz). Nearly 4,000 prisoners are kept at the camp by the Nazis, and of these at least 3,000 are women, according to the dispatch. The prisoners are kept in crowded quarters, are fed sparingly and the least infraction of rules is punished by floggings and other tortures."

broadcast in Czech made during the week of May 12, 1943, that began “You are about to hear an important announcement!” which ordered:

The ‘compulsory’ labor registration in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia for men between the ages of 16 and 65 and women between the ages of 17 and 45 in accordance with the government order of May 4, 1943, on the mobilization and direction of labor power announced by the Minister for Labor and National Economy. This order exempts women with two or more children below the age of 14 and women with at least one child under the age of six. The order also excludes German military, political, and labor personnel; civil service workers, foreign consuls, their staffs and families; ministers of religion; persons in reformatory and criminal institutions and men and women in schools of ‘general education.’¹⁹⁴

On June 11, 1943, Budapest radio reporting from Belgrade announced in German:

It is officially announced that all inhabitants of the town (Belgrade) born between 1903 and 1907 must register for public labor service. Compulsory registration also applies to public officials. Fit persons will be liable to one month’s service in the homeland. Recalcitrant persons will be sent abroad. If they evade the draft their relatives will be held as hostages.¹⁹⁵

German-controlled radio announced that if any inhabitant of Belgrade “evaded” the labor draft -- not only would they be sent abroad (to Germany) for compulsory labor service -- their relatives would also be held as hostages. Clearly, going to work in the Reich was not as popular as the articles in *Novo Vreme* would imply.

¹⁹⁴ OWI weekly report, May 12, 1943, Office of War information, Records of the Bureau of Overseas Intelligence, Research Reports, Records of the Office of War Information, NARA, College Park, MD, RG208, Entry #366, Boxes #219-223.

¹⁹⁴ Radio Budapest in German to Europe, June 11, 1943, Transcription of Foreign Broadcasts: 1941-1946, Records of the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service, NARA College Park, MD, RG262, Entry #3.

Conclusion

While ideology remained an important part of German radio broadcasts until the end of the Second World War, after the Winter Crisis of 1942/1943, Nazi broadcasts to the East became utilitarian in an effort to more effectively administer the occupied Eastern territories and to round up all available manpower in light of the increasingly difficult military situation on the Eastern Front. While German propagandists clearly aimed to indoctrinate occupied populations over the long term, in the short term, Nazi radio broadcasts also reflected the need to effectively govern and administer the masses through labor and military mobilization, announcements regarding foreign labor, and various other decrees. The fact that the Russian section was the largest in the German Foreign Ministry's Department of Radio Policy and had the ability to transmit daily broadcasts in eleven different languages found in European Russia testifies to the importance the German regime placed on the new medium of radio broadcasting as a major part of "Operation Barbarossa."

Nazi radio broadcasts were aimed at the Soviet Union to convince civilians of the righteousness of the German cause through both ideological and pragmatic appeals. German propagandists consistently presented Germany's campaign against the Soviet Union as a war of "liberation" against Stalin's brutal brand of Bolshevik rule. As the military situation continually deteriorated for the German army on the Eastern Front following the defeat at Stalingrad, Nazi propagandists increasingly used radio broadcasts in an attempt to administer and mobilize the resources and manpower of the entirety of the area under their occupation. In the end, the brutal

German administration of the territories in the East severely undermined their propaganda efforts. The massive scale of partisan activity in areas under Nazi control by 1944 reinforces the idea that the German radio campaign in the Soviet Union was ultimately a failure.

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