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**SOVIET MILITARY PRESS IN MARCH 1944 – MAY 1945:
ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROPAGANDA ASPECTS**

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Relevance of the Research Topic

Propaganda played a significant role in Soviet society. In the Soviet Union, propaganda activities became a priority area of State policy. Thus, researchers often refer to the Soviets under Lenin and Stalin as the world's first propaganda state, whose state key characteristics are ideology, propaganda itself, and mass indoctrination.¹ Propaganda, on the other hand, was designed to control the thinking and actions of those groups of the Soviet population to whom it was addressed, i.e., virtually all of them.² One of the main tools of ideological control was the periodical press. The phenomenon of the Soviet newspaper was formed along with the development of the administrative and command system. Mass propaganda was carried out through millions of copies of the party, Komsomol, and other publications.³

The military periodical press is one of the aspects of this colossal Soviet propaganda 'machine'. It reflects both the general challenges facing propaganda and the problems of Soviet society, at least those millions of people who visited abroad during the war. The military periodical press acquired particular importance during the war years when it was supposed to motivate millions of Soviet soldiers to fight

¹ See on propaganda state Peter Kenez, *The Birth of Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927–1941* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2011).

² Karel Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³ Irina Lysakova, "Vozdeĭstvie russkogo gazetnogo teksta na mentalitet lichnosti," *Russian Language Journal* 49, no. 162/164 (1995): 287.

in defense of their own country and then to no less bloody battles for the liberation of European countries. Since the 2000s, there have been active discussions on the interaction of the Red Army with the civilian population in European countries.⁴ How did the Soviet military press function during this period, and how did it reflect the problems of the Red Army's liberation campaign in Europe? In this context, the Soviet military press has not yet become the subject of a particular study.

Studying the history of the military press, in particular, during the European campaign of the Red Army from March 1944 to May 1945, allows us to understand how Soviet propaganda functioned during this period. What goals did it pursue? How did it explain a higher standard of living abroad compared to Soviet realities, primarily because, in the pre-war period, printed propaganda proclaimed the USSR to be an advanced country in all respects? How did it try to influence Soviet service members? The study of the Soviet military press will provide an answers to these questions.

New sources, primarily recently declassified archival materials, allow for a comprehensive study of the organizational foundations of the Soviet military press (management mechanisms, censorship, circulation policy, editorial structure, training and activities of military journalists), the content and propaganda practices of military newspapers, as well as the attitude of Red Army soldiers to print propaganda during the combat actions in Europe. It determines the novelty and relevance of the dissertation work.

Literature Review

The literature on the problem considered in the dissertation is divided into several groups. **The first** of which consists of studies by Soviet historians devoted to the history of the Soviet periodical press in the period from – the 1940s – to the

⁴The work served as a catalyst for discussions Antony Beevor, *The Fall of Berlin, 1945* (New York: Viking, 2002).

1980s.⁵ An important point at this stage was the appearance in 1981 of the monograph by Nikolai Gorokhov and Nikolai Popov, which studied the functioning of the military press in much more detail.⁶ The work was based on archival documents and newspaper materials. The authors analyze the activities of Chief of the Political Directorate of the Red Army (hereafter – Chief of PDRA) and Chief of the Political Directorate of the Navy, political departments of fronts and fleets for the management of the military press, analyze the structure and composition of editorial offices of military and naval newspapers, circulation and training of journalistic personnel. At the same time, historians could not pay attention to such issues as censorship and objective assessments of the effectiveness of printed propaganda.

Another **group** includes studies on the history of the military press published after 1991.⁷ In particular, historians of the military press have addressed the problem of the organizational structure of the press in certain regions, including showing its activities in the example of the Karelian Front.⁸ Nevertheless, there is still no comprehensive study of the Soviet military press system, in which previously secret

⁵ See Semën Zhukov, “Frontovaia pechat’ v period zavershaiushchikh pobed Sovetskoï armii v Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïne Sovetskogo Soiuz (1944–1945 gg.)” (PhD diss., Moscow State University, 1963); Al’bert Aĭnutdinov, “Tatarskaia frontovaia pechat’ (1942–1945 gg.)” (PhD diss., Kazan State University, 1971); Nikolaï Shaposhnikov, “Deiatel’nost’ frontovoï pechat’ po povysheniiu urovnia raboty armeïskikh partiĭnykh organizatsiĭ na zaklyuchitel’nom etape Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïny (po materialam pechat’i 1–go Ukrainskogo i 1–go Belorusskogo frontov, oktyabr’ 1944 – maĭ 1945 goda)” (PhD diss., Moscow, 1972); Nikolaï Popov, “Sovetskaia voennaia pechat’ v gody Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïny (opyt frontovykh i armeïskikh gazet 1941–1945 gg.)” (PhD diss., Moscow State University, 1972); Mikhail Revutskii, “Frontovaia pechat’ sibirskikh diviziĭ v bitve za Leningrad (dekabr’ 1941 g. – avgust 1944 g.)” (PhD diss., Tomsk State University, 1973); Galina Peregontseva, “Rol’ frontovoï pechat’i v rabote partii po organizatsiĭ razgroma nemetsko-fashistskikh voĭsk pod Kurskom (na opyte raboty frontovykh i armeïskikh gazet)” (PhD diss., Institute of National Economy, 1974).

⁶ Nikolaï Popov and Nikolaï Gorokhov, *Sovetskaia voennaia pechat’ v gody Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïny* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1981).

⁷ Ivan Antipenkov, “K probleme istoriografii otechestvennoï pechatnoï propagandy v dovoennyĭ period i vo vremia Vtoroï mirovoï voïny,” *Vestnik arkhivista*, last modified August 27, 2022, <https://www.vestarchive.ru/istoriografiia/1998-k-probleme-istoriografii-otechestvennoi-pechatnoi-propagandy-v-dovoennyi-period-i-vo-vremia-vtoroi-m.pdf>; Antipenkov, “Sovetskaia pograničnaia pechat’ v usloviiakh Vtoroï mirovoï voïny 1939–1945 gg.: Istoricheskiĭ opyt i uroki” (PhD diss., Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia, 2014).

⁸ Vitaliĭ Nilov, *Oruzhiem slova (krasnoarmeïskaia pechat’ Karel’skogo fronta)* (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodsk State University Press, 2021).

documents that have only recently become available to historians would be fully used. Moreover, in the last decade, there has been an obvious tendency to emphasize the effectiveness of the work of the apparatus of political workers who brought the content of newspapers to the soldiers. However, the question of the perception of propaganda by the Red Army soldiers remains outside the framework.

A particular group includes works on the Soviet central press during the war. A complete interpretation of the content of the Soviet press during the Second World War was given by the Dutch historian Karel Berkhoff in his work ‘Motherland in Danger’,⁹ which goes much further than previous studies. The book analyzes the process of production and distribution, content and perception of Soviet print media reports.¹⁰ The author casts doubt on the thesis that Soviet citizens formed their inner selves regarding official discourse. Instead, he sees official propaganda as ineffective and citizens more dependent on what they have learned through oral and informal communication.

To determine the specifics of the Soviet military press, we turned to the history of **Allied military newspapers**. Cindy Elmore,¹¹ reviewing the publication Stars and Stripes notes that the military authorities periodically exercised control and interference in the newspaper’s editorial policy. Elmore provides exciting information about how staff journalists and even the officers who supervised the newspaper vigorously fought against interference from above. They ignored incoming instructions, passed information about censorship attempts to other newspapers to make it public, threatened to stop publication, and massively asked for reassignment. We can say that censorship and control problems were common

⁹ Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*.

¹⁰ As Ewan Maudsley rightly emphasizes, Berkhoff deals with only one specific target 'audience' of wartime propaganda – the civilian population of the unoccupied territories of the USSR. The author does not cover propaganda aimed at Red Army soldiers, residents of occupied territories, German troops and their allies, the population of countries occupied by Nazi Germany, or countries allied to the anti-Hitler coalition. See Mawdsley, Ewan, review of *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II*, by Karel C. Berkhoff. *Slavonica* 19, no. 1 (2013): 75–76.

¹¹ Cindy Elmore, “Stars and stripes. A Unique American Newspaper’s Historical Struggle against Military Interference and Control,” *Media History* 16, no. 3 (2010): 301–317.

in Soviet and Allied military periodicals. However, we cannot imagine such a ‘revolt’ against the supervising bodies in the Soviet press.

In turn, Simon Mackenzie researched British military newspapers.¹² The historian points out that army newspapers reflected, rather than formed, the army’s opinion, which was fundamentally different from Soviet military newspapers. In addition, the authorities themselves were afraid of turning newspapers into ‘bureaucratic transcripts’. Otherwise, ‘the troops would not have read them’, Mackenzie said.¹³ Unlike American and British newspapers, the editorial offices of Soviet publications had much less freedom and less concern about how readers perceived them.

An important historiographic direction is represented by **works on the history of the Red Army’s campaign in Europe** from March 1944 to May 1945. The central focus of these studies is the topic of revenge. The researchers discuss several key points: the scale of violence; the number of rape victims; the comparison of ‘civilization’ and ‘barbarism’; ‘East’ and ‘West’ in the discourse of sexual violence during and after the war; and the comparison of the experience of sexual violence on the Eastern Front with the history of sexual violence in Germany.¹⁴ This

¹² Simon MacKenzie, “Vox Populi: British Army Newspapers in the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 4 (1989): 665–681.

¹³ MacKenzie, 679.

¹⁴ Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Anita Grossmann, “A Question of Silence. The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers,” *October*, no. 72 (1995): 43–63; Elizabeth Heineman, “The Hour of the Women: Memories of Germany’s ‘Crisis Year’ and West German National Identity,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (1996): 354–395; Catherine Merridale, *Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Picador, 2006); Oleg Budnitskii, “The Intelligentsia Meets the Enemy: Educated Soviet Officers in Defeated Germany, 1945,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 3 (2009): 629–682; Jeffrey Burds, “Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939–1945,” *Politics & Society* 37, no. 1 (2009): 35–73; Anita Grossmann, “The ‘Big Rape’: Sex and Sexual Violence, War, and Occupation in Post-World War II Memory and Imagination,” in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Filip Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany: Hunger, Mass Violence and the Struggle for Peace, 1945–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Mark Edele, “Soviet Liberations and Occupations, 1939–1949,” in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War. Vol. 2: Politics and Ideology*, eds. Richard Bosworth and Joseph Maiolo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Miriam Gebkhardt, *Kogda prishli*

discussion still does not consider the military periodicals of the political organs of the Red Army.

A particular group should include works dealing with the **problems of ‘Sovietness’ and ‘Soviet man’**.¹⁵ The Soviet military press made great efforts to preserve the ‘Sovietism’ of the Red Army men abroad. Researchers differ in their assessments of how deeply Soviet society was Sovietized by the beginning of the war. Some believe that Sovietization was extremely superficial; others – insist that Soviet citizens deeply assimilated the new ideology, language, and ways of behavior. In any case, the leadership of the military press considered it necessary to make great efforts to maintain ‘Sovietness’ in the army.

In general, the problems of functioning of the Soviet military periodical press during the European campaign of the Red Army are not sufficiently presented in historiography and require further study. The main emphasis in the available literature is made on analyzing the structure of editorial offices, the staff of journalists, and war correspondents. However, these issues also need to be clarified and re-evaluated due to the availability of many previously classified documents. It should be emphasized that while the problem of central printing is rather deeply studied, the specifics of the formation and management of the front-line, army, and divisional printing remain poorly understood.

soldaty. Iznasilovanie nemetskikh zhenshchin v kontse Vtoroi mirovoi voiny (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2018).

¹⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995,); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Yinghong Cheng, *Creating the 'New Man'. From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); David Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialist, 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin, 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

The object of the study is a set of documents of the central, front-line, army, and divisional political departments of the Red Army concerning the military press, sources of personal origin, as well as materials of front-line, army, and divisional periodicals during the Red Army's conduct of combat operations on the territory of European countries (March 1944 – May 1945).

The subject of the dissertation is the structure and activity of the Soviet military periodical press during the European campaign of the Red Army from March 1944 to May 1945.

The purpose of the study is to identify the features of the Soviet military periodical press system, including its organizational and propaganda practices during the Red Army's European campaign from March 1944 to May 1945.

To achieve this goal, we need to solve the following **research tasks**:

First, consider the specifics of the political and censorship management of the military press.

Secondly, to analyze editorial offices' working conditions and determine the personnel composition of employees of the military press.

Third, to determine the nature and degree of intensity of ideological and propaganda campaigns, to identify the leading topics in the content of the military press during the Red Army's stay in Europe (March 1944 – May 1945).¹⁶

Fourth, to identify the factors that shaped the attitude of the Red Army to propaganda in military newspapers.

¹⁶The countries where military operations were conducted from March 1944 to May 1945 are divided into two blocks in this study: 1) European states liberated by the Red Army from Nazi occupation (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria); 2) The Third Reich and its allies (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary).

This study does not consider Finland, since there were no military operations with the participation of Red Army troops on its territory in 1944.

The Novelty of the Research

The Soviet military periodical press is insufficiently researched. Despite the existence of essential publications, such as documents on the history of Soviet propaganda and studies on the political management of military newspapers, the structure of editorial offices, and aspects of the work of war correspondents, there is still no comprehensive review of the functioning of the Soviet military periodical press during the war, in our case during the Red Army's European campaign from March 1944 to May 1945.

The USSR was a closed society in which the government could tell citizens almost anything in any way convenient for it. However, during the campaign of the Red Army in Europe, for the first time, there was a situation when millions of Soviet citizens found themselves abroad and could see life outside the country with their own eyes. In this regard, some questions arise: how did the press react to this? How did she try to explain the realities abroad, different from the Soviet ones? How did readers react to the printed propaganda? Given this, the organs of the military press face new challenges. Also, the target audience of military newspapers could compare the propaganda narrative promoted in the press and reality.

The dissertation work is mainly based on archival materials that are being introduced into scientific circulation for the first time: documents of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, political departments of fronts, and political departments of armies, stored in the funds of the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defence, the declassification process of which began ten years ago and continues to this day. Considering this problem will contribute to the general study of Soviet propaganda during the war period. However, it will also expand our knowledge of how the military periodical press functioned.

Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research

The dissertation's theoretical value is expressed by applying a new perspective when considering the history of the Soviet military periodical press from 1944–1945. This paper attempts to move away from the traditional view of the military periodical press as primarily an instrument of mobilization. The study paints a more complex picture, which includes various ideological propaganda techniques designed, among other things, to preserve the 'Sovietness' of the Red Army soldiers during their stay in Europe.

For practical purposes, the materials of the dissertation and its conclusions can be used in the preparation of lectures, seminars, and teaching aids devoted to the history of Soviet propaganda during the Second World War.

The source base of the research includes a wide range of sources. The first and prominent group of sources is represented by Chief of PDRA documents (some of which were published¹⁷), which were deposited in the corresponding fund of the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defence (TsAMO RF)¹⁸. These documents make it possible to analyze newspaper management's decision-making process comprehensively. The political departments carried out the management of army and divisional periodicals of the fronts and the political departments of the armies¹⁹. In terms of their content, these documents most fully reveal the mechanisms of control, forms, and methods of managing the military press by the political departments of the Red Army.

The second group consists of documents in the Fund of the Union of Writers of the USSR in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)²⁰. During the work preparation, the materials of the Military Commission of the Writers'

¹⁷ See Viacheslav Zimonin, ed., *Russkiy arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia. T. 17(6). Glavnye politicheskie organy Vooruzhennykh sil SSSR v Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïne, 1941–1945 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: TERRA, 1996).

¹⁸ TsAMO RF. F. 32. Op. 11302.

¹⁹ TsAMO RF. F. 233. Op. 2374; F. 236. Op. 2675; F. 237. Op. 2414; F. 240. Op. 2772; F. 241. Op. 2656; F. 243. Op. 2914; F. 244. Op. 900247; F. 401. Op. 9533; F. 421. Op. 6570.

²⁰ RGALI. F. 631. Op. 16.

Union were studied. This structure coordinated the work of writers in the front-line, army, and central military newspapers.

The third group is a complex of front-line and army newspapers stored in the funds of the Russian State Library. The collection of military printing includes about 500 titles of newspapers that were published in the field military printing houses.²¹ Newspapers of fronts and armies were published 26 times a month, divisions – 15. All frontline, army, and divisional formations had their military periodicals, which were distributed in the area of operation of a particular military unit. Since newspapers were published regularly, they allow us to trace the changing content of the Soviet military press and how it reacted to specific developments on the fronts.

The functioning of the Soviet military periodical press was also reflected in sources of personal origin. During this study, several diaries and memoirs of military journalists were analyzed.²² Most of them belong to literary staff and special correspondents of the editorial offices of military newspapers. They cover the composition of editorial offices, the existing journalistic practices, the conditions of printing work, the relationship between editorial staff, and relations with higher political departments.

The fifth group of sources is a collection of oral memoirs, which is publicly available on the project ‘I Remember’ platform and contains more than 2,500 interviews with Soviet veterans of World War II.²³ The collection features various voices – from heroes of the Soviet Union, such as test pilot Stepan Mikoian, son of one of Stalin’s closest associates, Anastas Mikoian, to former camp prisoners; from dedicated Communists to the ideologically insecure and all those in between.²⁴ In

²¹ See Il’ia Baushev, “Sovetskaia voennaia literatura i frontovaia pechat’ perioda Velikoï Otechestvennoï voïny (1941–1945) v fondakh RGB kak istochnik patrioticheskogo vospitaniia grazhdan Rossiyskoï Federatsii” in *Rumiantsevskie chteniia – 2015: materialy mezhdunarodnoï nauchnoï konferentsii*, ed. Elena Ivanova (Moscow: Pashkov dom, 2015).

²² We have analyzed 28 sources of personal origin, the authors of which are military journalists.

²³ “I Remember,” last modified August 27, 2022, <https://iremember.ru/>.

²⁴ Mark Edele and Iva Glisic, “The Memory Revolution Meets the Digital Age,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45, no. 1 (2019): 99.

their interviews, veterans discuss the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda, in particular its print component. A unique feature of this corpus of sources is that respondents belong to the category of front-line soldiers, which makes it possible to compare their individual and collective experience of perception of military periodicals.

Methodology of the Research

As the methodological basis of the study, *an institutional approach* is used, which allows presenting the military periodical press as an institution with its own organizational and social structure, is regulated by certain norms, and distributes information, primarily propaganda. Within the framework of this approach, the rules and norms governing the interaction of the political departments of the Red Army with the editorial offices of military newspapers on the functioning of editorial teams and the content of military periodicals are studied. This approach also makes it possible to analyze the forms of interaction between editorial offices and war correspondents.

Using the *content analysis method* is practical to understand the technology of conducting propaganda campaigns. It allows us to identify and analyze information about the degree of intensity of a particular propaganda campaign based on such properties as the stability and repeatability of individual elements. The content analysis methodology defines categories – key concepts according to which content elements are sorted. In order to identify the specific weight of the topic, that is, the ratio of the number of newspaper materials where key concepts are mentioned to the total number, one newspaper publication was chosen as the text unit, regardless of its size or literary form.

A sample of all newspapers stored in the collections of the Russian State Library was used to process military print texts. Newspapers were selected according to several criteria for studying campaigns. First, the printed publications

of those formations involved in combat operations within each specific campaign were selected. In particular, as part of the propaganda campaign conducted in connection with the entry of Soviet troops into Romania, five armies and one front-line newspaper were selected, that is, the print organs of those formations that were involved in the battles on the territory of Romania. Second, the continuity of campaign coverage played a crucial role in the selection of newspapers. In the case of the Czechoslovakia campaign, the newspapers of the 1st Guards, 18th, and 38th armies were selected. These units took part in the liberation of Czechoslovakia, and only these three armies were permanently stationed on the Czechoslovak territory from September 1944 to May 1945.

According to the standard quantitative research method, a single list of topics was formed to assess the role of individual topics in each campaign. It contains vital thematic blocks. It should be noted that we select each block based on the content of the newspaper publications viewed. The following thematic blocks are defined: 1). Publications of official materials; 2). Interaction with the civilian population; 3). Revenge propaganda; 4). Propaganda to counteract the capital influence on Red Army service members.

Statements for Defense:

- Even though the political organs of the Red Army exercised daily control over the military seal with the help of specific instructions, a particular ‘space of freedom’ was preserved when instructions from political departments were delayed or not received. The editors were guided by their interpretation of the materials of the central press. According to the editors, they were extracting the installations necessary for military newspapers.
- According to the plan of political departments, newspapers were supposed to be the ‘voice’ of the army, based on the materials of letters from the

servicemen themselves. The lion's share of texts was written by editorial staff. The practice of self-filling newspapers has become widespread.

- One of the central places in the military press was occupied by the propaganda of revenge, which has undergone a specific evolution. It emerged as the main propaganda line in August 1941 but culminated in the second half of 1944, when the Red Army approached the German border. At the same time, in February 1945, revenge attitudes were adjusted. The preservation of seized property, the rejection of arson, and the cessation of looting and looting were promoted. In April 1945, even more radical changes in the political line were taking place: military personnel were ordered to treat the Germans humanely, both prisoners of war and civilians. Accordingly, the attitudes of political departments and newspapers have changed.

- The attitude towards the civilian population in European countries in the military press varied depending on the country's participation or non-participation in the war with the USSR, as well as on the time of its withdrawal from the war and transition to the side of the allies.

- Anti-capitalist propaganda included the main narrative about the division of capitalist society into a wealthy minority and a poor, exploited majority. The propaganda did not deny the higher standard of living in European countries but considered it in the context of exploiting workers, peasants, and intellectuals. At the same time, the USSR was portrayed as a country of advanced industry and prosperous collective farm life.

- The attitude of the Red Army soldiers to printed propaganda depended on several factors. On the one hand, its efficiency was facilitated by the efforts of the political apparatus, which promoted propaganda, as well as the publications of Soviet writers. On the other hand, the efforts of the military press weakened: the inconsistency of the propaganda narrative with reality;

frequent absence of copies of newspapers in the units; the non-participation of political workers in the combat actions.

The Research Approbation

The reliability degree of the dissertation is based on an extensive set of analyzed historical sources relevant to the goals and objectives set, as well as the methods used in work.

Some of the provisions of this study were tested at three international conferences. Articles on dissertation issues are published in journals indexed in the Scopus citation databases and included in the list of recommended HSE journals.

Structure and Outline of the Work

This study consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of sources and literature, as well as a list of illustrations.

In the first chapter, ‘Mechanisms of management of the military periodical press’, various forms of control over military newspapers by political departments are considered. *The first paragraph*, ‘Material conditions for the creation and distribution of military periodicals’, analyzes the policy of political departments regarding the production and distribution of printed periodicals in the Red Army. During the analyzed period, there was a problem of paper shortage in the USSR, resulting in the circulation of newspapers constantly changing depending on the availability of paper. Military newspapers were distributed in the respective military units. As a rule, on the front line, a rifle company received up to 50 copies of newspapers – 5 central, 10 frontline, 15 army, 20 divisional. Various forms of political workers brought the content of military press materials to the Red Army: readings, group conversations, political information, rallies, soldiers’ meetings, and visual agitation.

In the second paragraph, ‘Political management of the military periodical press’, a description of the management of political departments of the Red Army by the military press is given. The Chief of PDRA carried out control over front-line publications. Military councils, political departments of fronts, and armies were engaged in newspapers of armies and divisions. In this section of the dissertation, we express the thesis that the leadership of political departments of newspapers was not always distinguished by efficiency, which forced editors to improvise. Therefore, the editors turned to the central press. From its content, they extracted the appropriate guidelines for their newspapers. In this case, the editors had a space of freedom for their interpretations.

The third paragraph, ‘Censorship of the military periodical press’, examines one of the activities aimed at monitoring and restricting information – military censorship in the military press. Until December 1943, the Red Army had a ‘Regulation on the organization of military censorship’ from 1935. However, it did not meet the requirements of wartime. Namely, the procedure for appointing censors in districts and armies was not defined; the rights of censorship workers remained uncertain; the criteria for prohibiting disclosed information remained unclear. The situation was corrected by a new ‘Regulation...’, which defined the procedure for appointing censors, their rights and official duties, and the objects of the ban. The censor was appointed the most trained officer from the headquarters of the corresponding compound. Their activities were regulated by the ‘Rules for the preservation of military secrets in the press of the Red Army’. The course of military operations directly impacted changing and supplementing the composition of information that was a military secret. The object of censorship was to prevent the disclosure of military secrets, political errors, and undesirable information for publication. Despite strict censorship, banned information was periodically released to the press. However, given the large amounts of information that were censored, the percentage of violations detected was not critical, and the censors coped with the tasks assigned to them.

The second chapter, ‘Structure of editorial offices and personnel’, describes the structure of editorial teams and features of work in the editorial offices of military newspapers. *The first paragraph* ‘Structure of editorial offices of military periodicals’ shows that the editorial offices of military newspapers consisted of two departments and a group of information. The staff included military personnel and civilian employees. At the same time, some of the employees were professional newspaper cadres who worked in the party-Soviet press in the pre-war period. In another part, the civilian staff was recruited directly next to the deployment of editorial offices ‘on the ground’. However, the fact that military journalists belonged to the party and political apparatus could not protect them from suspicion of loyalty to the Soviet government. Regular security checks were conducted.

The second paragraph ‘Journalistic training practices’ is devoted to training military journalists, which consisted of courses on improving newspaper workers in the rear and training at the front. Temporary advanced training courses for newspaper workers in military and political training were organized at the Military-Political School in Ivanovo, as well as one-year training and retraining courses for political staff at the Military-Political Academy of the Red Army. In the army, the training of journalistic personnel consisted of three elements: classes inside editorial office; training in the system of command training together with employees of political departments; conducting front-line and army seminars, meetings of military press workers, at which the practical development of military journalists’ skills was carried out.

The third section, ‘War correspondents’ analyzes the specifics of the work of war correspondents. The primary tool for obtaining newspaper material was the editorial offices’ staff correspondents. They were sent to the front line with instructions from the editor, who received instructions from the political department regarding the content of the newspaper’s next issue. Newspapers wrote the heroic narrative of the war: the most vivid combat episodes were selected. The heroes of the notes were often distinguished servicemen. An indicator of the effective work of

the editorial office was the involvement of authors from the non-editorial asset-military correspondents. According to political departments, the military newspaper was supposed to be a platform for publications of military personnel, thereby embodying the idea of a 'Red Army newspaper' for Red Army soldiers. Nevertheless, this idea was not realized, since letters from military correspondents, usually not distinguished by depth and literature, 'settled' in the editorial offices and were not published in newspapers. As a result, the materials of the journalists themselves were filled in. Attempts by political departments to strengthen work with military correspondents were like point, one-time instructions to individual editors. As a result, the practice of self-filling newspapers flourished throughout the study period.

In the fourth paragraph, 'Writers in the military periodical press system', it is shown that the creative activity of writers was coordinated by the military commission of the Presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers together with Chief of PDRA. The main task of the writers was the ideological and educational impact on military readers through publications designed in the form of short materials. The efficiency of material submission was of fundamental importance. There are several testimonies in which dissatisfaction with the existing working framework on the part of writers is recorded. On the one hand, high-quality literary material was required from writers. On the other – they lacked creative freedom. They had to 'sacrifice' great literary ideas for the sake of momentary, operational publications.

The third chapter, 'Ideological and propaganda campaigns in 1944–1945. The period of the Red Army's campaign in Europe: structure and content', examines ideological and propaganda campaigns concerning European countries where Red Army units were fighting. In particular, *the first paragraph* describes the intensity of various campaigns. It identifies standard thematic blocks, such as the publication of official materials, interaction with the civilian population, revenge propaganda, and anti-capitalist propaganda.

The second paragraph demonstrates the specifics of the publication of official materials-Sovinformburo reports, orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, TASS reports-in military newspapers. Quantitative analysis showed their dominant position in the content of the military press. If other publications were subject to various abbreviations, the official part was continuously published in full on the pages of military periodicals, sometimes occupying all newspaper pages, which caused the dissatisfaction of editorial staff and military correspondents.

The third paragraph, 'Revenge propaganda', an analysis of propaganda materials containing rhetoric of revenge and hatred against the enemy is carried out. The regimes, allies of Germany, were exposed as traitors to the interests of their peoples and became the subject of 'vindictive' articles. At the same time, there was a clear separation between the governments – 'Hitler's henchmen' – and the civilian population of these countries, notably Romania and Bulgaria. The exception is Hungary. The distinction – about which Hungarians revenge was allowed and to which it was not – at least during the fighting in 1944, is not found in the analyzed newspapers. Germany was at the center of revenge propaganda. However, in February 1945, political departments began to emphasize the harmfulness of revenge. The solution was to redefine its policy – it was prescribed to preserve captured property, not to set fire to German cities, and to stop looting and hoarding. Finally, changes in political departments and newspapers' political and ideological work were fixed in April 1945. Newspapers began to call for a correct and humane attitude towards the German civilian population and prisoners of war.

The fourth paragraph, 'Guidelines on interaction with the civilian population', examines military newspapers' content regarding contacts with the European civilian population. Military newspapers declared their wealth from the plundering of the USSR and the occupied countries of Europe. In this regard, the propaganda was replete with positive examples of meetings with the local population. Meanwhile, an analysis of the texts of newspapers whose armies participated in the fighting in Hungary demonstrates references to Hungarians

through negative, hostile connotations. The Germans, who were represented in the press as beneficiaries of Nazi crimes, and who got rich from plundering the USSR and the occupied countries of Europe, also appear negatively.

The fifth paragraph, ‘Anti-capitalist propaganda’, analyzes the anti-bourgeois rhetoric in the context of military newspapers. The press exposed capitalist reality with mass poverty and individual wealth, emphasizing the contradictions between the city and the countryside. The image of capitalist inequality in the press was contrasted with materials about the USSR, depicting the power of the Soviet country – its great socialist conquests in comparison with the ‘backward’ European countries in agrarian and industrial relations.

The fourth chapter, ‘The attitude of Red Army soldiers to propaganda in military newspapers’, introduces us, on the one hand, to the factors that contributed to the effectiveness of propaganda; on the other, weakened or even nullified the propaganda efforts of military newspapers. *The first paragraph*, ‘Factors of propaganda effectiveness in military newspapers’, examines the factors that contributed to the positive perception of propaganda by military personnel, i.e. its effectiveness. The analysis of oral memoirs and sources of personal origin showed that the positive perception of propaganda materials was promoted by the ‘emotional’, fascinating in form publications of Soviet writers in the military press. The works of Il’ia Erenburg and Alexandr Tvardovskiĭ were prevalent. Some front-line soldiers note the importance of pre-war propaganda campaigns, mentioning that wartime propaganda was perceived as understandable and familiar. The subjective factor played an essential role in the communication of propaganda. If a political worker shared all the risks of military operations on an equal footing with soldiers and enjoyed authority, then his information enjoyed the attention.

The second paragraph, ‘Factors that hindered the effectiveness of propaganda in military newspapers’, examines the circumstances that did not contribute to the perception of printed propaganda by the Red Army soldiers. Among them was the inconsistency of the propaganda narrative of reality in newspaper

materials. In this regard, the embellished image of front-line realities is most often mentioned, as well as the contradiction between the picture claimed by propaganda and the reality, which was especially manifested abroad. Among other factors, the lack of copies of newspapers in the units is noted, as the lack of demand for hate propaganda since many soldiers witnessed German crimes and did not need additional agitation. A significant role was also played by the distrustful attitude of soldiers towards representatives of the political apparatus, who appeared on the front line during periods of calm and then went back to the rear without accompanying soldiers in battles. Such behavior undermined their authority in the eyes of the Red Army soldiers, and consequently, propaganda efforts did not achieve the desired effect.

Conclusion

During the Second World War, the military press was managed by the Chief of PDRA, which worked as a military department of the Central Committee of the All-Union communist party. The responsibility of this structure was the daily control of frontline publications. Meanwhile, the political departments of the fronts and the armies were engaged in newspapers of armies and divisions. It is generally assumed that the heads of political departments led the editorial offices of newspapers. However, this did not always correspond to actual practices. The studied sources of personal origin give grounds to assert that the instructions emanating from political departments did not always arrive on time or did not arrive at all. Therefore, the editors turned to the central press. They extracted the appropriate guidelines for their newspapers from the central press content. In this case, the editors had some space of freedom for their interpretations.

An indicator of the effective work of the editorial office was considered to be the involvement of authors from non-operational editorial assets – military correspondents. The studied documents show that there was practically no interaction between the editorial offices and military officers. Journalists ignored the

letters of military enlistment officers, who ‘settled’ in the editorial offices and were not published in newspapers. As a result, the newspapers were filled with the journalists’ materials.

In total, during the period under review, eight major ideological and propaganda campaigns were conducted in the military press, touching on the topic of a European campaign. As the content analysis shows, the newspapers of the formations that participated in the fighting actively published information and propaganda materials about the countries whose territories were battled (see fig. 1).

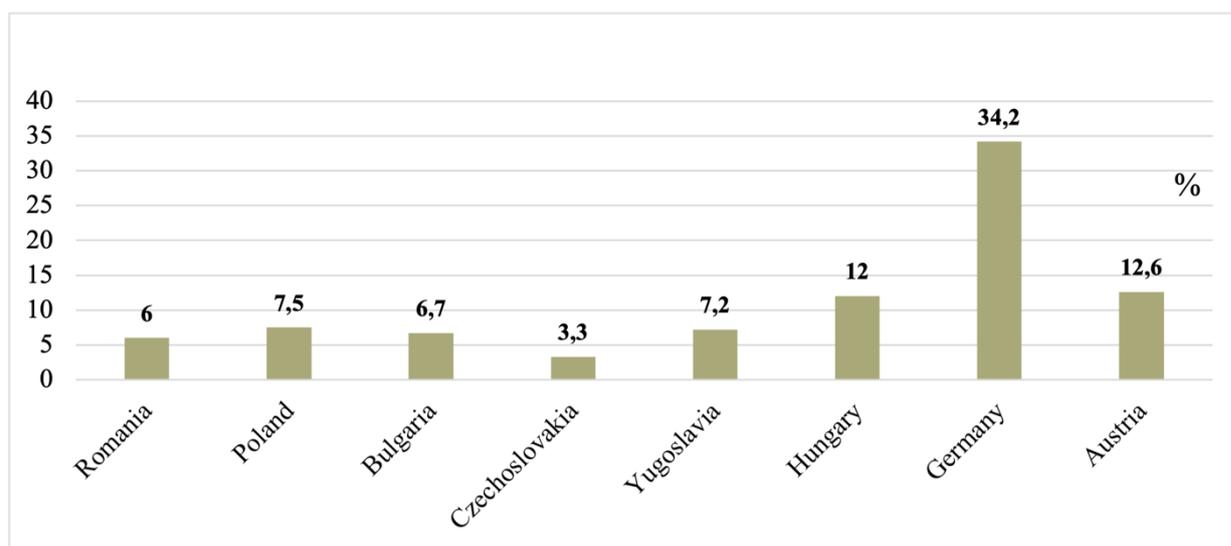


Figure 1. Percentage of propaganda materials on specific countries in relation to the total number of published materials in newspapers of formations that participated in combat actions on the territory of these countries (March 1944 – May 1945).

In the course of the study, four thematic areas of military press materials were identified. These are publications of official materials, texts on interaction with the civilian population, revenge propaganda, and anti-capitalist propaganda. When analyzing the Soviet military periodical press, the question arises of the efficacy of printed propaganda. The literature has general ideas about its limited influence on military personnel. The sources analyzed in our work do not allow us to draw an unambiguous conclusion about the propaganda efficiency. Nevertheless, the work identifies factors that contributed to the positive perception of propaganda and those that prevented it. In general, from the analysis of the functioning of the Soviet military press system during the European campaign of the Red Army, it is clear that

it was an apparatus where the fulfillment of the requirements and broadcasting of the ideological attitudes of higher political departments were put forward in the first place. Despite attempts to attract ordinary military personnel to work as military correspondents, military newspapers remained primarily a mouthpiece of propaganda and never became the ‘voice’ of the army.

The List of Published Papers on the Topic of the Dissertation

Publications in journals included in the Higher School of Economics’ list of recommended journals, and in journals indexed in the Scopus:

1. Alemzhan Arinov, “Soviet Military Periodical Press during the Red Army’s Campaign in Europe (March 1944 – May 1945): Structure, Norms, and Personnel,” *Perm University Herald. History* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 2020): 100–108.
2. Alemzhan Arinov, “Participation of Women in Combat Actions on the Fronts of the Great Patriotic War (As Reflected by the Soviet Military Periodical Press),” *Woman in Russian Society*, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 136–148.
3. Alemzhan Arinov, “To Seek Vengeance or Not? How the Evolution of Revenge Propaganda Occurred in the Soviet Military Periodical Press,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 2021): 384–402.