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Karel C. Berkhoff. *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. 407 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-04924-6.

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Karel C. Berkhoff's *Motherland in Danger* tackles a subject that has been largely neglected in the historiography on the Soviet Union: its massive campaign to mobilize the public during World War II. Drawing on a wide array of materials ranging from archival documents, newspapers, memoirs, and autobiographies, Berkhoff's book describes and interprets the content of Soviet propaganda during the "Great Patriotic War," offering an in-depth analysis of how the Soviet leadership attempted to mobilize the public to fight for the continued survival of Communism in a period when its very existence was under threat.

Motherland in Danger is arranged thematically, examining a number of areas and themes within Soviet press coverage. After an opening chapter that outlines the structure of Soviet mass media and its functioning in a period of shortages, the book is structured as a content analysis of Soviet wartime newspapers (though other sources are sometimes discussed). Chapter 2 examines press coverage of the progress of the war. It shows that figures within the regime, especially Joseph Stalin, were reluctant to provide accurate information of military defeats, and cautious about accidentally disseminating sensitive military information–policies that were sometimes resisted by those who wrote and edited the press. Chapter 3 discusses coverage of labor issues, pointing to how the press attempted to promote total labor discipline in support of the war effort, while chapter 4 examines the ever-declining food supply, rationing, and the press's attempts to promote food growing among the general public to compensate for shortages. Chapter 5 shows how the Soviet authorities allowed extensive and detailed coverage of Nazi atrocities on Soviet territory, in an attempt to mobilize the population. However, as chapter 6 illustrates, the targeting of Jews was only fitfully discussed, possibly, as Berkhoff contends, because anti-Semitic attitudes within the Soviet population meant that coverage of these crimes actually met with public support. Nevertheless, Berkhoff maintains that, in contrast to what many scholars have asserted, not *all* references to the Nazi genocide against Jews were extinguished, and that "Soviet readers and radio listeners who *wanted* to know were able to find references to that Nazi campaign" (p. 166).

Chapter 7, one of the book's most compelling parts, looks at the way Soviet propaganda attempted to sow the seeds of hatred among Soviet citizens. Berkhoff suggests that propaganda tried to erase the distinction between Nazis and Germans, but also suggests that Stalin vacillated between promoting hatred of Germans and merely promoting enmity against "German-fascist invaders" (p. 199). As evidence, Berkhoff analyzes the work of the leading Soviet journalist and writer, Il'ia Erenburg. Berkhoff argues that Erenburg's rhetoric went further than most others by describing Germans as "not human beings" and "awful parasites" who "must be destroyed" (p. 184). Such expressions of hatred worried even the head of Agitprop, who criticized Erenburg for the virulence of his writing. While there is insufficient evidence to prove the point, Berkhoff cites sources who suggested that such "hate speech" provided a dehumanization of the enemy that may have partially motivated the invading Soviet army's atrocities in Germany in 1945.

Chapter 8 examines the treatment of nationality, showing that a strong Russocentric focus was only partially balanced by coverage of other Slavic peoples; non-Slavic nationalities were almost entirely omitted from the record. Chapter 9 looks at coverage of the territories that fell under enemy rule, and demonstrates that a narrative of resistance was put forward, which suggested that surrender was potentially treasonous. Finally, chapter 10 discusses coverage of the Soviet Union's allies. Berkhoff argues that the party's desire to take full credit for wartime victories was somewhat balanced by the need to retain its partners' confidence by publicizing its assistance.

Motherland in Danger is the most comprehensive

treatment of the content of the World War II press yet written. Berkhoff's use of archival sources in three different countries is especially impressive, and few scholars will be able to match his use of primary sources from Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and the United States and secondary sources from several more countries. The book therefore expands significantly on previous scholarship, such as Jeffrey Brooks's *Thank You Comrade Stalin*, which eschewed archival sources and other primary source literature.[1] The book will be most valuable for scholars studying the Stalin era. By examining in detail the changing ways in which newspapers represented the heroism (and treachery) of its own people and its interpretations of the world outside the Soviet Union, *Motherland in Danger* will improve understanding of shifting notions of citizenship in the Soviet Union, and allow for a much improved understanding of the ambiguities of Stalin's nationalities policy.

At the same time, the book's contribution would have been far greater had it engaged more fully with current scholarly debates: though passing reference is made to the scholarship, one might, for example, have expected more of a comparison between Soviet print propaganda and the content of films, posters, and newsreels. Moreover, greater precision in the choice of terminology is warranted. Berkhoff's perfunctory discussion of the term "propaganda," for instance, is inadequate for a book that employs the term so frequently. And a more sophisticated level of comparison with wartime propaganda in other nations would have strengthened the work considerably: as it stands, Berkhoff makes only passing reference to Nazi propaganda, while discussion of Western propaganda is even briefer.

Nevertheless, *Motherland in Danger* represents a key work for those working on Soviet media. Berkhoff's focus on the production context of Soviet newspapers is especially welcome; the book's detailed examination of documents from the archives of the main Soviet news agency, TASS, the censor "Glavlit," and the main department directing propaganda, "Agitprop," greatly improves our understanding of the ways in which Soviet newspapers were put together in the trying circumstances of wartime.[2] Berkhoff shows that the creation of wartime propaganda was a highly centralized operation, with content often edited and approved by Stalin himself. In this regard, he challenges the prevailing view that World War II saw a loosening of controls over Soviet mass media.[3] At the same time, Berkhoff illustrates how the content of Soviet newspapers often evaded strictures from the center, sometimes due to intransigence on the part of editors and journalists, but aided by inconsistencies in how press regulation and censorship was carried out in individual instances, and confusion of the actual content of Soviet propaganda at a given time. In this sense, Berkhoff's book challenges the prevailing view that every word that appeared in Soviet newspapers reflected a monolithic "Party line." In fact, both confusion and professional ethics provided a source of heterogeneity–something that the book might have illustrated more clearly had it made more use of editorial documents from leading newspapers like *Izvestiia*, *Trud*, or *Komsomol'skaia pravda* or the memoirs of frontline correspondents and editors published in the Soviet Union from the 1960s onward.[4] Such sources might have revealed a more nuanced picture of the workings of Soviet mass media by suggesting that what Berkhoff characterizes as Soviet "propaganda" was in fact peopled by editors and journalists who were bound by professional interests that did not entirely coincide with the propaganda needs of the Soviet leadership.[5]

Thus, criticisms notwithstanding, *Motherland in Danger* is an impressive monograph that makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Soviet home front during World War II and the ways in which the Soviet elite attempted to promote their aims to the country's population. Berkhoff's account of the workings of Soviet news media remains the most detailed description we have of the Soviet press during World War II and is a valuable service to historians. It will provide a platform for future research on the Soviet press during World War II.

Notes

[1]. Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 159-194. See also Ulrike Preuss, *Stalin und die Kirchen: Eine Bündnis für den Sieg. Eine Analyse der sowjetischen Presse während des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (Münster: Lit, 2004). On Soviet culture and mass media more widely, see Richard Stites, ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[2]. The most complete picture of the functioning of Soviet propaganda during World War II remains the biblical A. Ia. Livshin and I. V. Orlov, comps., *Sovetskaia propaganda v godyVelikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: Kommunikatsiia, ubezhdeniia i mobilizatsionnye mekhanizmy* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007).

[3]. Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin*, xxx.

[4]. The *Izvestiia* and *Trud* archives are contained in the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow, while the archive of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* is in the

youth section of the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, also in Moscow. For memoirs, see, for example, the five-volume *Soldaty slova* collection, in which a number of journalists recount their WWII experiences. A. A. Mandrugin and V. A. Miakushkov, eds., *Soldaty slova: Rasskazyvai'u't veterany sovetskoĭ zhurnalistiki*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976-85).See also the many reports published by the official organ of the Union of Journalists, *Sovetskaia pechat'* and *Zhurnalist.* On frontline correspondents, see Louise McReynolds, "Dateline Stalingrad: Newspaper Correspondents at the Front," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, 28-43.

[5]. On the workings of the Soviet press before WWII, see Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Julie Kay Mueller, "A New Kind of Newspaper: The Origins and Development of a Soviet Institution, 1921-1928" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1992).

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