

Bromber, Katrin, *Imperiale Propaganda. Die Afrikanische Militärpresse im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Imperial Propaganda. The African Military Press in the Second World War) (=Studien, 28), Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin 2010, 408pp.

Recent historiography of the Second World War (1939-1945) acknowledges that this war not only devastated the lives of millions of people in the European and Asian theatres of war, but also victimised the populations in the so-called 'Third World'. This point is convincingly made by Katrin Bromber in her book which analyses military newspapers in Africa. More

than 320 000 men from East and Central Africa fought on the British side in the War. About half of them were sent to serve in North Africa, the Middle East, and Madagascar, and South Africans fought not only in Africa, but also in Europe. For the first time in its history, the British military employed propaganda on a large scale to legitimise the military deployment and discipline of indigenous soldiers. The British Army also made use of the media to propagate the war aims of the Allies, refining its use of propaganda through radio broadcasts and films at an unprecedented level. Apart from discussing radio broadcasts and films,

Bromber's study focuses more specifically on newspapers published by the military in African languages.

In her evaluation of these newspapers, which she accessed in various archives in Great Britain, Kenya and Malawi, the author analyses the propaganda structures and the European and African propaganda methodologies used in European and African military structures. Bromber explores the ways in which the military leadership and colonial governments sought to shape the discourse on the meaning of the war. Various techniques of war propaganda were used to influence African perceptions

BOOK REVIEWS

of the importance of defeating fascism, while, at the same time, holding out vague promises of reforming colonial rule in order to accommodate indigenous aspirations to national independence and democratisation.

The first chapter discusses the organisation and structure of the indigenous military units in East Africa. Here the evaluation of official military historical publications, socio-historical studies and, in particular, personal memoirs, diaries and letters together with military history publications, allows a reconstruction of the scope of the soldierly experience as reflected in particular articles from newspapers. The second chapter focuses on the structural aspects of the military propaganda, especially the psychological strategy, in the indigenous vernacular used in addressing the East African combatants. This is an under-researched field where most contributions have focussed on the policies implemented by the metropolitan bureaucracy or by the colo-

onial administration on the ground. In contrast to this Eurocentric approach, the author examines how the African recipients of wartime propaganda responded to and interacted with the then colonial present. In the next chapter the author analyses the conditions under which production and distribution of military newspapers was effected among African soldiers.

The fourth chapter of the book gives a detailed description of the Swahili print media, including the structure, relationship between text and images, headings and, of course, modification priorities, which circulated in the East African military units. Chapter 5 deals with the structural characteristics of the articles, including visual representations in them; this chapter is preoccupied with the qualitative part of the corpus analysis. Katrina Bromber concludes that the special propaganda for Africans was quite effective in the fight against their 'European enemies' from Germany and Italy.

In the concluding chapter, Bromber analyses discursive strategies which were employed in the Swahili military newspapers to justify the military intervention outside the East African jurisdiction and to regulate the individual demeanour of the personnel during the war. Here the indications of the 'correct' interpretation, their shifts, and alterations in the course of the war and in the immediate post-war time are under consideration. At first, the fight against Nazi Germany was at the centre of the propaganda; later, it was the need to sustain British colonial rule.

Although the author's opaque style and high level of abstraction makes for difficult reading, this book represents an important contribution not only to the history of the impact of the Second World War in Africa, but also to the history of journalism.

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