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Moscow, Russia Federation

“Our Propaganda in Central Asia Overlooked a Big Political Question”: Documents from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art on the Soviet Propaganda Shortcomings in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR, December 1941

## Abstract

The annotated document noting the shortcomings in organization and content of propaganda work in Central Asia in the initial period of the Great Patriotic War is published for the first time. Its author was Skosyrev P.G., a writer, literary critic and translator; in 1938–1948 chairman of the Commission on the literatures of the peoples of the USSR of the Union of the Soviet Writers; in 1942–1944 secretary of the Presidium of the Union of the Soviet Writers. His addressee was I.S. Braginsky, a renowned orientalist, researcher of Tajik and Persian literature; in 1941 chief of the department of work among enemy troops of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda for the Red Army. The letter offered a plan of necessary actions to strengthen the propaganda reaching out to all population groups of the Central Asian republics and underscored the need to study the response of adjacent states on the southern border of the USSR to Soviet propaganda. The published document noted the existing shortcomings in organization and content of the propaganda work. The author offered an extensive plan of necessary measures including reaching out to all population groups of the Central Asian republics and studying the response of adjacent states on the southern border of the USSR. He demonstrated his familiarity with enemy actions and plans of influencing the peoples of the Central Asia through Central Asian emigrants and local priests. Germany researched the prospects of using mullahs and jihad banners to establish a Nazi control over North Caucasus, Central Asia and Middle East. Toward that end the Nazi intelligence services contacted

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organizations of emigrants from Central Asia, Transcaucasia, North Caucasus and the Volga region. The letter took note of actions of the German intelligence and propaganda authorities and their overtures to the Muslims. To win the Muslims to their side the Nazis strived to present themselves as supporters of Islamic customs and mores and proponents of Islam. They used radio broadcasts and newspapers.



### Keywords

Source, Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, propaganda, active measures, Union of Soviet Writers, Central Asian republics of the USSR, the southern border of the USSR, I.S. Braginsky, P.G. Skosyrev.

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