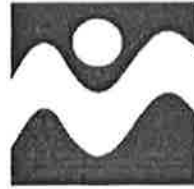


Example of successful fellowship application

NOTE:

The application format has changed. This example can provide general guidance in preparing your proposal. Grant applications are now submitted electronically through the Humanities Council website at www.wvhumanities.org

**West Virginia Humanities Council
Fellowship Grant Application Cover
Sheet**



Mail application to: WVHC 1310 Kanawha Blvd., East, Charleston, WV 25301
Phone: 304-346-8500 <http://www.wvhumanities.org>

For Council Use Only

Project No. 15000
Date Received 2-1-15
Decision Date 4-10-15
Date Notified _____
Funded YES NO

Project Title

Scorched Earth: The German Army Retreats, 1943-1944

Name

Jeff Rutherford 21309

Address

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_____ 24614

Applicant's Discipline

History

Signature

[Handwritten Signature]

Brief Description of Proposed Study

The scorched earth retreats carried out by the German Army in 1943-1944 are a topic that has been neglected by historians. My proposed project will examine this phenomenon and all of its components - the systematic destruction of Soviet industrial and agricultural infrastructure, the large-scale deportation of civilian populations, and the scarring of the Soviet landscape itself - and argue that this was the culmination of the German war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. My research during the summer of 2015 will focus on the twin retreats of early 1943 from the Rzhve and Demiansk Positions, respectively, with the goal of producing a peer-reviewed article.

WV House District 3

WV Senate District 1

Congressional District 1

Project Period: One year

Progress Report Due Date: September 1

Final Report Due Date: April 1 of the following year

Has the applicant received a fellowship previously?

YES

NO

If yes, please give the date: Summer 2009

Jeff Rutherford – WVHC Fellowship Statement

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Not only was this the largest invasion in world history, it also fundamentally differed from previous European conflicts. In addition to defeating the Red Army on the battlefield and seizing territory from the Soviet Union, the Third Reich desired the complete destruction of the Soviet state and its ruling Communist ideology, as well as the decimation of its population. This unprecedented war of annihilation included the mass shootings of Soviet Jews, which set the stage for the Holocaust, the mass death of millions of Soviet prisoners of war, the murder of Soviet commissars and other political functionaries, the starvation of a considerable number of urban civilians, and the implementation of anti-insurgency measures that terrorized the civilian population.

Historians have provided excellent coverage of the initial period of war and its extraordinary brutality. The evolution of the war of annihilation, however, has not received the same dedicated attention. This is especially true for the German policy of scorched earth retreats that emerged as the centerpiece of German practice in 1943 and continued to motivate the German Army's withdrawal policy through early 1944. During the retreat all along the front, from Leningrad in the north to Ukraine in the south, the Germans carried out a comprehensive and systematic scorched earth retreat, one in which all industrial facilities and shelters were destroyed, the civilian population was deported to the rear for forced labor, all foodstuffs were either shipped to the rear or destroyed, and even the soil and wells were poisoned. This policy was enacted to ensure that there was nothing left to support the advancing Red Army.

The implementation of scorched earth retreats neatly dovetailed with two other programs that drove German occupation policy in the east during the later years of the war. As German anti-partisan doctrine evolved over the course of the conflict, both police and army units carried

out increasingly ruthless large-scale operations designed to eradicate supplies and assistance for guerilla bands. To this end, the Germans confiscated all livestock and foodstuffs, deported the civilian population and destroyed everything that could not be moved from the area; in their own words, they created “dead zones.” The deportation of Soviet civilians from these regions not only eliminated them as potential partisans or prevented them from assisting such irregular resistance, but they also provided the necessary workers desperately needed by both German units at the front and in the Reich’s factories and farms. The labor shortage that plagued the Nazi state beginning in the 1930s only intensified during the war and this led to the naming of Fritz Sauckel as the General Plenipotentiary for the Mobilization of Labor in 1942. Sauckel was charged with conjuring up the necessary labor from across Europe and while he rounded up forced laborers from all corners of the continent, the overwhelming majority originated in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. This labor action both complemented and contradicted the actions of the *Wirtschaftsstab Ost* (Economic Staff East). Initially charged with securing food stuffs and ensuring that the Soviet economy produced goods for the advancing Wehrmacht, by 1943, the institution had become intimately involved in the destruction of Soviet economic infrastructure. So by 1943, German scorched earth policy proved to be the culmination of German occupation policies in the Soviet Union. The destruction of Soviet territory not only denied the use of materials and resources to the advancing Red Army but it complemented pre-existing anti-partisan doctrine in its creation of dead zones. The up-rooting of populations during scorched earth retreats created labor reserves for the Germans to exploit for their own needs. Thus, while the initial war of annihilation emphasized the murder of specific groups during the opening months of the war, by its conclusion, it targeted the entirety of the Soviet state, its society and

even its physical existence, in a generally less murderous but certainly more destructive all-encompassing policy.

Despite the importance of such a strategy to German operations in 1943 and 1944 and what these policies say about the Nazi state, the German Army and the individuals who carried out such measures at the ground level, the topic has been surprisingly neglected in the historical literature. Elements of this policy have been covered in piecemeal fashion by the various scholars listed in the bibliography, but little attempt has been made to put these isolated incidents into a larger context. My initial interest in this topic was sparked during the research for my first book in which I investigated the combat experiences and occupation policies of three German infantry divisions in the Soviet Union. The last chapter of my monograph dealt with their participation in scorched earth retreats, but this important topic deserves both a broader and more in depth analysis.

This project will culminate in a book-length manuscript. The book will begin with a general overview of scorched earth retreats throughout history, with a general focus on European armies and their motivations for carrying them out. The next chapter will examine the early versions of scorched earth retreats used by the Soviets and Germans in 1941 and look at their effect on later German strategy. The next three chapters will examine German policy on the Eastern Front in rough chronological order: the twin German retreats of February/March 1943 in the center of the front; the German retreat from Ukraine in 1943; and the scorched earth withdrawal from the Leningrad region in 1943/44. I then want to expand the analysis to the German Army's activities in France and Italy during 1943/44 and compare and contrast its policies against states located in western and southern Europe, respectively, with those against its "racial enemies" on the Eastern Front. Work on this project has already begun; I presented a

paper on this phenomenon at the conference 1944: Seventy Years On, held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, UK, in April 2014. An article-length manuscript on the development of German scorched earth practices, with an emphasis on the Leningrad region, is also currently under peer review by the academic journal *Global War Studies*. During summer 2015, I plan on concentrating on the twin German retreats of February/March 1943 from the Rzhev salient and Demiansk Pocket, respectively. These were the first large-scale and systematically prepared scorched earth retreats of the war.

In order to trace the evolution of scorched earth policy, I intend to utilize a dual approach. First, I will examine how the idea of scorched earth developed within the upper levels of the German military leadership. To this end, the German records located at the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA-MA) in Freiburg, Germany, are absolutely vital to my project. I worked in this archive for eight months in 2004-2005 and then for two months in 2006, so I am both comfortable working there and well-acquainted with its holdings. The BA-MA holds the records of the OKW (the German Armed Forces Command), the OKH (the Army High Command), as well as those of the Economic Staff East. Documents produced by these institutions will shed light on the development of scorched earth retreats as a major piece of Germany's strategy during the second half of the war.

The second, and primary, level of analysis will examine the field commands, from the army group down to the divisional level; once again, these records are held by the BA-MA. The primary analytical thrust will focus on the interaction of various German agencies and institutions at the local level and how their objectives both complemented and contradicted one another. The question of motivation is vitally important, as well: as one went further down the command chain, how was the necessity of this policy understood? Did the men who burned

villages, deported civilians and created dead zones attempt to rationalize their actions or were orders unthinkingly obeyed? If rationalized, was the legitimization provided by a ruthless understanding of military necessity or by ideological beliefs? Finally, as German units crossed the continent, did they bring their now routine practices from the occupied east with them? Did ideological motivation remain constant in the various theaters in which scorched earth was carried out?

The WHVC Fellowship that I received in 2009 proved invaluable to the completion of the volume *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide and Radicalization*, which I both contributed a chapter to and coedited with two of my colleagues. The book has received numerous excellent reviews in leading journals and I hope to build upon its reception, as well as that of my just published monograph *Combat and Genocide in the East: The German Infantry's War, 1941-1944*, with my latest research.

The ultimate goal of this project is to publish a book that will appeal both to specialists, as well as readers who are more generally interested in the Second World War; the primary objective for a WHVC Fellowship is to carry out research over the summer for an article-length manuscript. During the research and writing of my first book, I presented material at several academic conferences, as well as at the local public library as part of both its Lunch with Books program and its People's University adult education classes. I strongly believe that it is incumbent on historians to engage both with the historical profession and with the general public and any publications that emerge from this project will be presented to both groups. In conclusion, this proposed project would address a considerable gap in the literature concerning Nazi Germany's brutal and criminal war in the east and its interactions and effects on German military and occupation practices in western and southern Europe.

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II Corps: RH 24-2

X Corps: RH 24-10

30 Infantry Division: RH 26-30

32 Infantry Division: RH 26-32

290 Infantry Division: RH 26-290

For Rzhev: Ninth Army: RH 20-9

XXIII Corps: RH 24-23

110 Infantry Division: RH 26-110

86 Infantry Division: RH 26-86

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Nolzen, Armin, "‘Verbrannte Erde’: Der Rückzug der Wehrmacht aus den besetzten sowjetischen Gebieten, 1941/42-1944/45," in Kronenbitter, Günter, Markus Pöhlmann und Dierk Walter (eds.), *Besatzung. Funktion und Gestalt militärischer Fremdherrschaft von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 2006), pp. 161-175.

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Terry, Nicholas, *The German Army Group Centre and the Soviet Civilian Population, 1942-1944. Forced Labour, Hunger and Population Displacement on the Eastern Front* (King’s College Ph.D thesis, 2006).

Wegner, Bernd, "Die Aporie des Krieges," in Frieser, Karl-Heinz, (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. VIII, *Die Ostfront: Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten*, (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 246-274.

Jeff Rutherford

West Virginia

Professional Experience:

Associate Professor of History, Wheeling Jesuit University, 2014-

Assistant Professor of History, Wheeling Jesuit University, 2008-2014

Lecturer, Department of History, University of Texas at Austin, 2007-08

Assistant Instructor, Department of History, University of Texas at Austin, 2006-07

Education:

Ph.D. in Modern European History, University of Texas at Austin, May 2007

Concentrations: Modern German History, Soviet History

Dissertation Title: Soldiers into Nazis? The German Infantry's War in Northwest Russia, 1941-1944

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. David F. Crew

MA in Modern European History, State University of New York at Albany, May 1998

Concentration: Modern German History, Military History

BA in History, State University of New York at Binghamton, May 1996

Concentration: Modern European History

Grants, Fellowships and Awards:

Scholar-in-Residence, Wheeling Jesuit University, Spring 2015

Appalachian College Association Travel Grant, Spring 2014, \$500

Fulbright German Studies Seminar, "Berlin: Where Cultures Meet and Challenges Abound," June 2013

Father Edward Gannon Teacher of the Year, Wheeling Jesuit University, 2011-2012

Scholar-in-Residence, Wheeling Jesuit University, Spring 2010

West Virginia Humanities Council Fellowship, April 2009

The Estep, Lau, Noone and Van Cott Centennial Graduate Support Fund in History, Summer 2007

Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Grant, Summer 2006

Dora Bonham Travel Grant, University of Texas at Austin, 2006

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) – 10 Month Dissertation Research Grant, October 2004-August 2005

Foreign Language and Area Studies Dissertation Grant, August 2004-May 2005-declined

Peer-Reviewed Publications:

Combat and Genocide in the East: The German Infantry's War, 1941-1944 (Cambridge University Press, 2014), [Published in both cloth and paperback]

Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide and Radicalization, co-editor with Alex J. Kay and David Stahel, (University of Rochester Press, 2012 [paperback, January 2014])

“The Radicalization of German Occupation: *Wirtschaftsstab Ost* and the 121st Infantry Division in Pavlovsk, 1941,” in *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide and Radicalization*, eds. Alex J. Kay, Jeff Rutherford, David Stahel (University of Rochester Press, 2012)

“The German Army, 1871-1945,” in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Military History*, ed. Dennis Showalter (Oxford University Press, 2012 [updated August 2014])

“‘One senses danger from all sides, especially from fanatical civilians:’ The 121st Infantry Division and Partisan War, June 1941-April 1942” in *War in the Twilight World*, eds. Ben Shepherd and Juliette Pattinson (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010)

“Life and Death in the Demiansk Pocket: The 123rd Infantry Division in Combat and Occupation” in *Central European History*, Volume 41, Number 3, September 2008

Present Projects:

Article Manuscript “The Culmination of the *Vernichtungskrieg*: The German Infantry's War, 1943-1944,” under peer-review with *Global War Studies*

Manuscript on German scorched earth retreats, with an emphasis on the Eastern Front

Select Conference Papers:

“The Culmination of the *Vernichtungskrieg*: The German Infantry's War, 1943-1944,” at the conference “1944: Seventy Years On,” Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, United Kingdom, April 2014

“1943: Army Group North's Year of Decision,” German Studies Association, Louisville, September 2011

“‘The population...shouted that one would rather be shot instead of being left to starve’: Food and German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union,” Southern Historical Association, Louisville, September 2009

“‘Feeding is a Crime’: German Occupation Policy in Northwest Russia,” Centre for Second World War Studies and British Commission on Military History, Birmingham University, Great Britain, July 2009

“Crisis in Northwest Russia: Starvation Policies, German Soldiers and Soviet Civilians, Winter 1941-1942,” Rush Holt Conference, West Virginia University, April 2009

“The Implementation of Hungerpolitik on the Ground Level: The 121st ID and the Occupation of Pavlovsk, September 1941-April 1942” at the Society for Military History Conference, Weber State University, April 2008

“German Soldiers and Russian Civilians: A War of Ideology?” at the International Cluster, Roanoke College, March 2008

“The 123rd Infantry Division and the Battle for the Demiansk Pocket” at the Missouri Valley History Conference, University of Nebraska at Omaha, March 2008

“The German Infantry’s War in Northwest Russia, 1941-1942,” at the conference “Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in German-Occupied Europe, 1939-1945,” Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, Scotland, June 2007

Selected Published Reviews:

Review of Jörg Echternkamp (ed.), *German Wartime Society 1939-1945: Exploitation, Interpretations, Exclusion*, vol. IX/II, *Germany and the Second World War*, in *German History*, forthcoming winter 2014

Review of Waitman Beorn, *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus*, in *Michigan War Studies Review*, August 2014

Review of Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying. The Secret World War II Transcripts of German POWs*, in *Shofar*, summer 2014

Review of Frank Ellis, *The Stalingrad Cauldron: Inside the Encirclement and Destruction of the 6th Army*, in *Michigan War Studies Review*, January 2014

Professional Memberships:

German History Association

Arbeitskreis Militärgeschichte e. V.

Society for Military History