Mediji, propaganda i cenzura u Sovjetskom Savez

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MEDIA, PROPAGANDA AND CENSORSHIP IN THE SOVIET UNION

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Abstract

The Soviet Union or Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) was a former state that existed from 1922 to 1991 and whose infamous rulers were Lenin and Stalin. It is best known for its totalitarian regime that existed over a very long period of time with the help of media propaganda, which is the focus of this thesis. In addition, this thesis will examine theories of media, propaganda, and censorship in the Soviet Union and give examples of people who suffered from the real consequences. The main goal is to provide answers to how those in charge used these media, how propaganda affected other aspects of life, and how the people who lived in this system reacted to this type of oppression.

Keywords: *censorship, media, propaganda, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.)*

Sažetak

Sovjetski Savez ili Savez Sovjetskih Socijalističkih Republika (SSSR) bivša je država koja je postojala od 1922. do 1991. i čiji su zloglasni vođe bili Lenjin i Staljin. Najpoznatija je po svojem sovjetskom režimu koji je vrlo dugo egzistirao uz pomoć medijske propagande, što je i fokus ovog rada. Osim toga, cilj ovog rada je ispitati teorije medija, propagande i cenzure u Sovjetskom Savezu i dati primjere ljudi koji su zbog toga pretrpjeli stvarne posljedice. Glavni cilj je dati odgovore na to kako su nadležni koristili ove medije, kako je propaganda utjecala na druge aspekte života i kako su ljudi koji su živjeli u ovom sistemu reagirali na ovakvu vrstu opresije.

Ključne riječi: *cenzura, mediji, propaganda, Savez Sovjetskih Socijalističkih Republika (SSSR)*

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

On the one hand, the 20th century was the age of rapid technological developments: radio, television, Internet, as well as the first studies of communication. On the other hand, it was the time of the two world wars, which had a significant impact on the lives of many citizens. Of course, these things overlapped. In other words, the progress depended on the political and economic circumstances of each country. For example, researchers such as Horkheimer and Adorno were a part of the Frankfurt School, which is responsible for the Critical theory, while some Europeans, such as Simmel, immigrated to the United States of America and constructed their research under the Chicago School. Media preceded the formation of these institutions and was one of their primary interests. A Russian example is the publication of the official newspaper of the Communist Party *Pravda* in 1912 (Ralph, 2013). Political leaders saw the opportunity to use new media to spread their messages, and researchers analysed them and their impact on people. The topic of this paper is just that – focusing on context, people, everyday life, propaganda and its channels, an overview of media, propaganda and censorship in the Soviet Union is provided.

To further illustrate the topic, posters and some other works of art will be mentioned and, even though this thesis will not be an analysis of the works themselves, it will explore the way they were used to (help) create a certain agenda. Because the authority had artists sign prewritten articles and statements as if they wrote them (Anderson, 2015), their quotes, due to their questionable legitimacy, will not be presented in this paper. Additionally, political historical overview is of high importance for the context, but it is not the focal point of the thesis itself.

Finally, one thing is crucial when talking about such a highly saturated topic, and that is we are trying to point out the truth, when that was one of the last things people in charge wanted to be known. Therefore, even official sources of the post-Stalin period should not be mistaken for truth (Arendt, 2017). Moreover, references include personal statements, which cannot be purely objective but are used as a bottom-up way to present the regime.

2. THE SOVIET UNION OR UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

The context of the topic is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Therefore, it is crucial not only to look at how media was utilised but also what was happening in the political sphere, which ended up controlling the media output.

2.1. From Empire to Federation

Formed in 1922, as a successor to the Russian Empire, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, for a better understanding later in the text referenced as Soviet Union or USSR, consisted of four republics established after the 1917 Revolution: the Russian and Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republics and the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republics (McCauley et al., 2023). As time progressed more republics joined the Union. In terms of politics, the main, and often the only choice in elections, was Communist Party of the Soviet Union, from 1925 until 1952 All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). The economy was based on socialist ownership and, after Stalin abandoned the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1928, five-year production plans (McCauley et al., 2023; Hingley, 2023). The first leader of this Union, the leader of the 1917 Revolution, as well as the founder of the Communist Party, was Vladimir Ilich Lenin (Resis, 2023). Lenin's successor was Joseph Stalin, the leader until he died in 1953 (Hingley, 2023). He promoted a cult of the deceased leader, as well as his own "cult of personality" (Hingley, 2023; McCauley et al., 2023). Suspicious of many, with his Great Purge he managed to destroy the competence and the development acquired after the October Revolution (Arendt, 2017). He planned another purge, this time against the Jews, but died before it could be done (Arend, 2017; Anderson, 2015). After his death, the streets named after him were renamed, and his monuments were taken away (Yurchak, 2005).

Late Socialism is the era 30 years before Perestroika, from 1950s to 1980s (Yurchak, 2003). Two important things marked the beginning stages of this era, Stalin's death and the "de-Stalinization" politics of his successor Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (Gibney; 2023). This political reform condemned Stalin's crimes, therefore ruining his "image as an infallible leader, and promised a return to so-called socialist legality and Leninist principles of party rule" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). The end of not only Late Socialism but a significant contribution to the end of Communism as a whole, was marked by Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* (Maranzani, 2019). Both of these terms represented a

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significant change in Soviet politics. Firstly, as noted Waxman (2022), *perestroika* ("restructuring") was oriented on political economy, while *glasnost* ("openness") on international politics. Secondly, both, in their spheres, argued for a more open, democratic approach (Waxman, 2022). Even more so, Gorbachev allowed a multi-party election system and was the first (and last) president of the Union (The Office of the Historian, n. d.). Gorbachev himself said he thinks *perestroika* was one of the three most significant events in Soviet history, the others being the 1917 Revolution and the victory in the Second World War (Donnelly, 2006).

2.2. Ideology

Crucial to the understanding of this topic is defining the political and media systems in which all of the events later discussed took place. Totalitarianism is "the ideology of state control of every aspect of the individual's life" (Moorhouse, n. d.). The totalitarian regime, founded in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the beginning of the 1920s, spreads the desired image by using its media, therefore, making the (idea of) freedom of the press irrelevant (Bertrand, 1997/2007). Socialism is a phenomenon where fear, control and alienation are mixed with creativity, ideals and care for the future (Yurchak, 2005). For example, one important thing was education, as Lenin believed that an individual "could not become truly liberated spontaneously; that person had to be educated and cultivated" (Yurchak, 2005: 12). So, dealing with a high number of illiterate people, one of their primary goals was to raise the literacy levels, which would also open up "the population to more communist propaganda, as well as to help loosen the hold of religion and superstition among the rural population" (Mcevoy, 2019).

As Yurchak (2005) explains the basis of the Union:

> Soviet authoritative discourse was ˈquiltedˈ into a unified field of knowledge around three master signifiers – Lenin, the Party, and Communism. […] The method for describing and improving reality was Marxism-Leninism (Lenin); the agent who used this scientific method to describe and improve reality was the Party; and the goal toward which this improvement was directed was Communism. (Yurchak, 2005: 73)

Before it was abandoned at the end of the 20th century, it spread to Eastern Europe and China (Bertrand, 1997/2007). Finally, "the clearest sign that the Soviet Union can no longer be called totalitarian […] is the […] recovery of the arts during the last decade" (Arendt, 2017: 35). All

in all, at the start of the century it was the Russian Empire, then the Soviet Union, and finally the Russian Federation. By December 1991 countries were being recognised as independent, and the Union had ceased to exist (McCauley et al., 2023). On June 12th 1990 the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic was adopted, and Boris Yeltsin became Russia's first president on June 12th 1991. On December 25th 1991, as the successor of the Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States was formed, and the same day marked the change of flag over the Kremlin – from the Soviet hammer and sickle to the Russian tricolour (The Office of the Historian, n. d.). Therefore, during the 20th century, Russia went through many political, social and economic changes, which are analysed in the following section.

3. MEDIA, PROPAGANDA AND CENSORSHIP IN THE SOVIET UNION

The last century is characterised by media development, be it radio, television or the Internet. All of these played a crucial role in the political aspect of the Soviet Union. However, a media that preceded all the aforementioned and was also important for the Soviet government was the newspaper. All together these created the media system, parts of which were analysed from different perspectives throughout the century. Therefore, combining the theoretical framework and examples, the topic of exploration is which media were present in the Union, how was it used, how much propaganda was utilised, and what other techniques helped those in charge in creating their desired state.

3.1. Media system

The 20th century was the time when the media we know today was developed. Thus, through the lens of development, in a way, the history of media overlapped with the history of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Alongside that, media became a research interest and as "media systems are shaped by the wider context of political history, structure, and culture" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 46) it is necessary to provide the macro perspective, as well as define the main theories and terms. The leaders had more media than ever to use in whatever way they liked, so, how did the governments use it (to their advantage)?

The foundation of the theoretical framework is in the theories of media and media systems, as well as the four theories of press. As Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) note, the Authoritarian theory was developed shortly after the invention of printing, it "functioned from the top down. The rulers of the time used the press to inform the people of what the rulers thought they should know and the policies the rulers thought they should support" (Siebert et al., 1963: 2, 3). However, the growth of religious freedom and political democracy created the need and the environment for the development of the Libertarian theory, whose focus was the "search for truth", and the press was seen "as a partner in the search" (Siebert et al., 1963: 3). The 20th century brought the Social Responsibility theory, which highlights the responsibilities the press has to a society due to its freedom and privileged position, as well as speaks of a self-regulated press. Another "newer" theory, developed from the Authoritarian theory, is the Soviet Communist Theory of the Press. According to this theory, the press is state-owned, therefore removing the possible business influence, and it is a tool used by the state "for the accomplishment of its objectives" (Siebert, 1963: 28). Finally, it is important to note the historical context of media development for which reason by "press" the authors are also

referring to "all the media of mass communication" (Siebert, 1963: 1). To summarise, the Authoritarian theory and the Soviet Communist Theory of the Press differentiate from others by the state's involvement and control in the process of obtaining the truth.

Partly inspired by this theory and the need for further progress in the field of communications, Hallin and Mancini (2004) researched the relationship between the media and the political systems in 18 pluralist, democratic countries in Western Europe and North America, based on four dimensions: "(1) the development of media markets […], (2) political parallelism […], (3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and (4) the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 21). They came to three models: the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model. The Mediterranean (Spain, France) is characterised by a close relationship between media and political institutions, with the state actively interfering in the media, but also "unequal consumption of public information, with a fairly sharp division between the politically active population that heavily consumes political commentary in the press, and a politically inactive population that consumes little political information" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 298). The North/Central European (Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany, Austria) emphasises the free flow of information, with the state being obliged to promote that flow, as well as the role of social groups and a "heavy consumption of information about public affairs" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 298). The North Atlantic Model elevates "special interests" over the "common good", it sees its public as "citizen-consumers", and with the media having a *watchdog* function over the government the model minimises state involvement. However, they noted that, even though many media systems are mixed cases of the aforementioned models to start with, further comparative research on media content is needed, the differences among the systems are diminishing, and for future reference the models will need to be modified or used as an inspiration for the creation of new models (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Even though their research is not directly linked to the Soviet Union, it provides a basis for comparative analysis.

Finally, "censorship is the process of suppressing the circulation of information or opinions offensive to the values of those representing the censor" (Cull et al., 2003: 70). During the war it affects the supply of news, while in peacetime it impacts the expression of opinion (Cull et al., 2003).

In 1973 Gerbner "tried to prove that the image of reality shapes (cultivates) the conception of real reality for the audience" (Volčič, 2001: 53), therefore creating the Cultivation theory. Even though he based his theory on an analysis of violence on television, it is still applicable to this topic. Lastly, the basis is Lasswell's model of communication: "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect" (Kunczik & Ziepfel, 2006: 5). Therefore, in line with the idea of educating people and providing the independence of creativity, "all forms of cultural production were to be fully supervised by the party" (Yurchak, 2005: 12). Furthermore, "the Soviet media have grown so as to reflect the Soviet official ideology, the Soviet state, and the Soviet ˈideal personalityˈ" (Schramm, 1963: 116). "They did not care about the techniques of propaganda because they saw it as part of something bigger: education" (Berkhoff, 2012: 4).

3.2. Media and culture

"Raymond Williams defined culture as a particular way of life shaped by values, traditions, beliefs, material objects, and territory" (Volčič, 2001: 57). Most of these can be influenced by media. "Traditional media use a broadcast, or monologic, model of one-to-many communication" (McIntosh & Pavlik, 2017: 193). The audience of mass media (television, radio, press) is wide, heterogeneous, and dispersed (Trowler, 2002). Likewise, the media of mass communication are "technical instruments or devices by means of which statements are transmitted publicly, indirectly and unilaterally to a dispersive audience" (Maletzke, 1963: 76, as cited in Kunczik & Ziepfel, 2006: 28). However, with the advent of the Internet, messages can be better suited to the target audience(s), as well as the communication becoming two-way. As Marshall McLuhan emphasized, the discoveries in the field of communications, from the invention of the printing machine to the development of electronic media, influenced changes in the sphere of society as a whole (Trowler, 2002).

Three levels of analyses, which will all be mentioned as a way to provide a clearer picture, include macro (structures, politics, culture), mezzo (organisations and institutions), and micro (media usage and effects) (Kunczik & Ziepfel, 2006). In that sense, media fulfils certain functions, which are illustrated throughout the remainder of the thesis.

3.2.1. Radio, television and newspapers

The most important thing when talking about media and journalism is truth. However, what other functions were set aside to make the system flourish?

An important institution in this section is TASS - Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union - which was "the central information agency of the country", and "enjoyed ˙exclusive right to gather and distribute information outside the Soviet Union, as well as the right to distribute foreign and domestic information within the Soviet Union, and manage the news agencies of the Soviet republics˙" (ITAR-TASS News Agency, n. d.). "On June 24, 1941, the Soviet Information Bureau was founded with the explicit aim of monopolizing all information about internal, international, and military affairs" (Berkhoff, 2012: 13). Additionally, its artists produced "colorful and often satirical wall posters with topical texts, a revived genre now called *TASS Windows*" (Berkhoff, 2012: 14), which "which were to raise the spirits of citizens after Hitler's invasion of the USSR" (ITAR-TASS News Agency, 2014).

The idea of "freedom" is also presented within this topic: "it [the press] is free to speak the ˙truth˙ as the Party sees the truth" (Siebert et al., 1963: 5). The official organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1918 to 1991 was newspaper Pravda ("Truth"). It is notable that during the mid-1920s it "devoted nearly two-thirds of its editorials to international relations and foreign countries, with the rise of Stalin a steady decline began that one decade later approached zero" (Berkhoff, 2012: 9). Additionally, "the NKVD [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs] also published papers for its Gulag prisoners. [...] Beginning in 1943 there were thirty-six newspaper titles for Gulag camps and work sites" (Berkhoff, 2012: 15).

Radio was the primary medium of mass communication in the 1930s, and was used as a mass persuasion and propaganda tool since the World War I (Cull et al., 2003). "For the Soviet Union radio offered both a means of communicating with the masses worldwide and a way of associating the Bolshevik cause with the technology of the future" (Cull et al., 2003: 332). During war, radio was often inaudible or completely failed to reach certain villages due to poor signal (Berkhoff, 2012). Yet, in Leningrad for instance, the radio stations kept broadcasting, but: "No one had much strength, so for many hours of the day, they broadcast only the ticking of the metronome" (Anderson, 2015, Kindle Locations 3683-3684). Later, by providing the citizens with "the chance to hear uncensored news about their own country" (Cull et al., 2003: 333), it aided the collapse of Communism.

However, "the Central Committee stated openly that the press was far more effective than ˙oral propaganda˙ because it reached all people at once, as if radio (or cinema) did not enter into the equation" (Berkhoff, 2012: 20). In 1936 the term "motherland" was prescribed by Stalin to be used in May Day slogans, and the same year a fiction film "The Motherland Is Calling"

portrayed a surprise invasion by Nazi Germany (Berkhoff, 2012). Post Second World War the control reinvigorated, and: "Documentary film, newsreel, and later TV programs presented a fantasy world where all was well in the Soviet bloc and where working classes in the rest of the world craved the same utopian lifestyle" (Cull et al., 2003: 362). Television was introduced in the Union in 1945, but the usage of it as light entertainment prevailed the political propaganda usage due to people's preferences towards "the non-political side of the medium", as well as availability of multiple channels and "the poor quality of most political broadcasts" (Powell, 1975: 300).

3.3. Techniques of the Soviet Propaganda

Stalin's photo was often carried in parades held on streets and squares named after him, and none of these were a coincidence, but planned actions to influence people's opinions and to bring them together. Starting with the definition of propaganda, the topic deepens by looking at the usage of rituals and symbols in different contexts, all while having in mind the idea of those in charge trying to create a desired agenda.

3.3.1. Propaganda

"Throughout history those who govern have always attempted to influence the way in which the governed viewed the world" (Cull et al., 2003: xv).

"Propaganda is a deliberate and planned action to change and control attitudes in order to create predispositions for a certain way of behaviour" (Šiber, 1992: 6). It's "persuasive appeal can be direct or oblique and typically assumes one of two modes, emphasizing either rational argumentation or the rallying of sympathy through a variety of emotional registers" (Brandenberger, 2011). However, the term originally meant an information (Chomsky, 2003) and later got its negative connotation. Šiber (1992) states the tendency for control is nothing new, but the technological development does provide more opportunities for its use. With that, propaganda was used in Egypt and Rome, where monumental buildings were built and the Roman rulers were using triumphs as a way of creating their own images of immense importance and success, and communication to influence the mass (Tomić, 2012). By establishing *Congregatio de propaganda fide*, Church used propaganda and censorship to strengthen its position in the 17th century (Tomić, 2016; Cull et al., 2003).

Political propaganda is not good or bad by nature, the judgement is based on its goals and usage (Šiber, 1992). With that in mind, we differentiate black, white and grey propaganda. Black propaganda manipulates the facts and does not care about the weapon used to achieve its goal(s). White propaganda is based on truth and wants to convey the usefulness of the ideas and actions it is trying to implement. Grey propaganda can be presented as "adjusted truth" (Šiber, 1992).

To reach its "full potential" propaganda works alongside other crucial media theories and effects. Firstly, agenda setting, priming and framing; as a way to set a certain goal (agenda setting), prepare the public to accept (priming) and to portray the topic in the preferred way (framing) (Kunczik & Zipfel, 2006). Secondly, censorship, which exists "since the material of a civilization dominated by the papyrus roll had to be recopied into the parchment codex" (Innis, 1949: 467).

Propaganda was central to the life and politics in Russia (Cull et al., 2003), which "is often referred to as the world's first propaganda state" (Brandenberger, 2011). From the 1920s they differentiated agitation and propaganda – "agitation being the approach used to reach the masses and propaganda being the more rarefied ideological indoctrination of the individual" (Cull et al., 2003: 362). Alongside Roman Catholics, Communists were the only group to proudly admit they produced propaganda (Berkhoff, 2012). *Agitprop* was the Central Committee Directorate of Agitation and Propaganda (Brandenberger, 2011). Additionally, during the 1930s they transformed individual workers into national celebrities or "Stakhanovs", named after the "hero coal miner" Aleksei Stakhanov, and in the final stages they again turned to ordinary people as a way to emphasise the myth of the Great Patriotic War and soldiers' sacrifices (Cull et al., 2003; Berkhoff, 2012). However, propaganda failed to be fully effective, as "whole regions and social groups remained excluded from its influence at various times, and the propaganda that it did manage to transmit was sometimes communicated in a distorted form" (Davies, 1997: 183).

3.3.2. Symbolism

Symbols hold a lot of contextualised information and meaning (Cadmus, n. d.). The latter "is produced, not simply reflected or communicated" (Voloshinov, 1986: 86, as cited in Yurchak, 2005: 18). It is important to note: "We understand symbols from their context, but symbols are also capable of creating the context in which they are understood" (Cadmus, n. d.).

A sign associated with the Soviet Union is the hammer and sickle, located on the red flag, as well as a single red five-pointed star. As Russia Beyond (2021) writes, colour red "symbolized the blood of the people who fought for freedom", the star "the protection of the peaceful labor of workers and peasants" and the hammer and sickle "the union of the working class and peasantry" (Russia Beyond, 2021).

„Language was a foundation of the old regime. The old Communist Party controlled language absolutely (banning writers, creating the Newspeak of official doctrine and media) and, like God almighty, gave everything its name" (Remnick, 1998: 9). Furthermore, the rhythm, phraseology and sound of speech can also influence the audience, even when it does not understand the portrayed message, therefore, the question of how something is said became more crucial than what is said (Yurchak, 2005).

Additionally, in the 1940s the Stalin prize, which "played a central role in the promotion of political and ideological agendas" (Johnson, 2011: 819), was established. "The prize carries the name Stalin. This bears witness to the great significance our committee places on the awards as a means to educate the masses through the medium of art" (Fadeev, 1949, as cited in Johnson, 2011: 819).

3.3.3. Rituals

People do something because they want to or feel the need they have to. The same is with parades which, explains Yurchak (2005), existed as a unifying event and as a way to show the unity. Here we come to the constative and performative dimension, or in other words, a "gap [...] between performance and belief" (Wedeen, 1999, as cited in Yurchak, 2005: 17). Another example is voting in which the two dimension come together, constative as stating an opinion and performative as an act of "voting", which "did not describe reality […]; instead it produced effects and created facts in that reality" (Yurchak, 2005: 76). All in all, "*how* the discourse represented became more important than *what* it represented" (Yurchak, 2005: 60). Additionally, for the participants the parades were more fun events rather than ideological, especially for children who got to carry balloons and flags (Yurchak, 2005).

Here we could apply Noelle-Neumann's (1974) Spiral of Silence theory that states fear of isolation is greater to an individual than his own judgement. Therefore, the presented majority opinion is not necessarily the opinion of the majority. One way to break the Spiral is by not caring about the consequences and stating one's opinion, but in the context of high stakes and little freedom of speech it is more likely that the second way ‐ supporters of the majority

opinion with time become unable to argue and give valid arguments because they do not come in contact with a different opinion - was the way. Additionally, because of the idea of the prevailing opinion being the future one as well (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), this may be why the fall of the Union was unexpected.

3.4. The arts and Socialist Realism

"All art is subject to political manipulation, except for that which speaks the language of this manipulation" (Laibach, n. d., ac cited in Yurchak, 2005: 77).

The system is a paradox of sorts, it wanted to liberate by controlling, and it wanted to enlighten its people as individuals but also have them be committed to the party and collectivism (Yurchak, 2005). This is especially evident in art, which is why it is a crucial part of this thesis, as the system supported art, but the art which is by its own standards. In other words, art was under politics, but had to be free enough to bring innovation for a better future (Egbert, 1967: 343–46, as cited in Yurchak, 2005: 11). Even though this thesis will not be an analysis of the works themselves, it will explore the way they were used to (help) create a certain agenda, and the way music, novels and writing diaries gave people hope (Anderson, 2015).

Related to Stalin's own belief "that art should be used to project a positive image of life in the Soviet Union to its inhabitants" (Newman, 2021), a writer Maxim Gorky created Socialist Realism. Its four guidelines are: „Art should be relevant to the workers and understandable to them, it should present scenes of everyday life, its representations should be realistic, and it should be partisan and supportive of the aims of the State and Party" (Newman, 2021). It is worth mentioning again that realism depicted in art is not necessarily realistic (Anderson, 2015).

3.4.1. Music

Alexander Mosolov was sentenced to Gulag, Gavriil Popov's First symphony was banned, Shostakovich had to postpone the premier of his Fourth symphony, Prokofievˈs phone was wiretapped, and the police, "the executive branch of this particular government" (Arendt, 2017: 32), did not try to hide their surveillance (Anderson, 2015).

Shostakovich's Seventh symphony, also known as the "Leningrad Symphony", is a mark of what was happening, but also "of the Russians' heroic resistance" (Life, n. d., as cited in

Anderson, 2015: Kindle Location 4101). Not only was it important to people who saw themselves and their struggles in it, it was used by the government to help increase aid from the Allies, as well as by Russian War Relief to help fund Russian Red Cross and Red Crescent (Anderson, 2015).

Besides what was already stated, the "Leningrad Symphony" was important enough to be performed that orchestra players were pulled from the war fronts, and a diversionary attack "Operation Squall" was launched on the day of the Leningrad premier (Anderson, 2015).

However, in 1948 Shostakovich and Prokofiev were attacked by Minister of Culture Andrei Zhdanov "for writing music that was too experimental, ˈunharmoniousˈ, and ˈunmelodiousˈ and that violated ˈthe fundamental physiology of normal human hearingˈ" (Yurchak, 2005: 46). The situation, in which Shostakovich was at times a hero, and at times an enemy of people, is a good showcase of the changeability within the system of what is "right" and what is "wrong" (Anderson, 2015).

Moving on from classical music, an important mark of a country, and insight into the system, is the anthem. *Internatsional* was adopted in 1918 and replaced in 1944 by *Gimn Sovetskogo Soyuza* (The Hymn of the Soviet Union, previously the "Song of Stalin") (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013). Other popular songs during war included "Katyusha", "The Sacred War", "Dark Night", "My Moscow", "In the Dugout", "Victory Day" (Polyudova, 2016).

Likewise, in the final years of the Union artists and bends such as Pink Floyd, Scorpions, Alice Cooper, Sex Pistols, Iron Maiden, Ramones and Talking Heads were banned due to their "ideologically harmful compositions" (Yurchak, 2005: 215).

3.4.2. Posters

"As with other arts of the Soviet era, poster art was not frozen in time, reflecting the changing realities of the Soviet nation" (Massey, 2019). Thus, after discussing the ways propaganda was used to achieve a desired agenda, posters, a widespread propaganda tool distributed in the Union and to the Allies (Fritz, 2019), are shown as a visual testimony of the aforementioned.

Figure 1. Hecimovic, A. (2014). Seven decades of Soviet propaganda – in pictures. The Guardian.

This poster celebrates mechanisation in agriculture, and it shows both men and women working in the sector. It was used as a signifier of the importance of work, stating: "You live in the village, master the technology".

Figure 2. Hecimovic, A. (2014). Seven decades of Soviet propaganda – in pictures. The Guardian.

Education and raising the literacy was an important goal in the U.S.S.R., and this poster from 1932 praises Leningrad as being 100% literate (Hecimovic, 2014).

Figure 3. Epatko, L. (2017). These Soviet propaganda posters once evoked heroism, pride and anxiety. PBS.
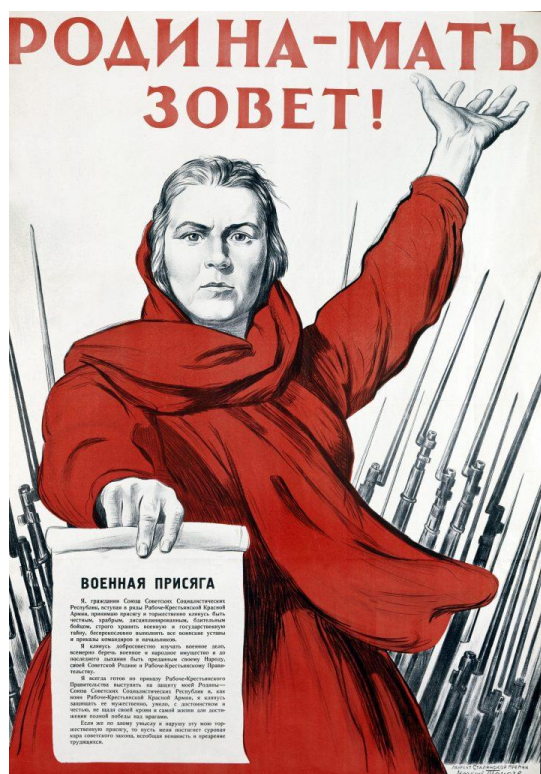
When Hitler attacked, thousands volunteered to fight, not to serve Stalin, but to protect "Mother Russia", and with that their families (Anderson, 2015). The continuation of the war era meant a call for volunteers. This particular poster by Irakly Toidze from 1941 shows "Mother Russia" holding out the Red Army Oath of Allegiance, and above her are the words: "The Motherland Is Calling" (Epatko, 2017). Additional evidence of patriotism is the fact the Eastern Front was known as the Great Patriotic War.

Figure 4. Artist Unknown. (1959). Soviet Vintage Posters. International Poster Gallery.

Coming back to the idea of Lenin being one of the three master signifiers of the Union, the poster depicts Lenin with a quote by Mayakovsky: "The flag of Lenin is everywhere we go and in everything we do" (International Poster Gallery, 1959).

To conclude, posters are characterised by simple messages and strong images, which is also important when taken the literacy and education levels previously elaborated into consideration. However, even though the propaganda was all around them, "elements of visual propaganda have grown invisible: they are present in the urban space materially, but they do not penetrate people's consciousness" (Chebotarev 1987, as cited in Yurchak, 2005: 293). Still, main subjects of portrayal are education and importance of work, both of which can be connected to the wanted "cult of personality" and its strengthening.

3.4.3. Other arts

Another important figure is poet Olga Berggolets, whose role in poetry some compare to Dmitri's in music – both of them had the same struggles and experiences as people reading/listening to their works (Anderson, 2015). It might seem illogical to put so much energy into art (Anderson, 2015), but orchestras existed even in concentration camps in Nazi Germany, proving the necessity of art for people's morale and, therefore, survival (DW Documentary, 2022). Other writers that were denounced include Anna Akhmanova and Mikhail Zoshchenko (Anderson, 2015). On the other hand, it is notable that children's books in the 1920s and 1930s included "the varied tapestry of peoples, with their distinctive lifestyles and customs, living within the borders of the USSR" (Roberts, 2011).

One of the most well-known examples of literature that "is a political allegory about [Russian] revolution and power" (Somers, 2019) is George Orwell's "Animal Farm", first published in 1945. On the surface a story of a farm overthrown by its animals, and on a deeper level an exploration "of totalitarianism, the corruption of ideals, and the power of language" (Somers, 2019).

As Belyk (2012) writes, a book "full of scepticism towards Communism and Socialist Realism, subtly written in through satire and criticism" is Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita", published in 1967. While it, alongside his other works, "was banned or left unpublished during his lifetime" (Belyk, 2012), "Animal Farm" was banned until the collapse of the Union.

In this sphere *Glavlit*, the Main Directorate for Artistic and Literary Affairs, as Brandenberger (2011) writes, was responsible for prepublication editing, as well as "post-hoc censorship". Therefore, by distributing the list of banned authors and books every ten days, *Glavlit* became the U.S.S.R.'s chief watchdog. Furthermore, books were constantly checked by secret

investigators and could be banned even for having a photograph in which "Stalin's sleeve had a fold in it that could be interpreted as a swastika" (Brandenberger, 2011: 149).

To better convey the extent of censorship, numbers state:

> between 1938 and 1940 *Glavlit* enjoyed jurisdiction over an average of 7,635 separate newspapers (a figure that does not include military publications), 1,665 journals, and 40,753 new book titles (totaling about 577 million books) per year. *Glavlit* also supervised the activities of about 1,500 radio stations, 4,500 presses, and 70,000 libraries. In 1937 and 1938, the censor added 1,860 names to its list of politically unacceptable authors and withdrew 16,453 titles from circulation, all-in-all totaling about 24 million books. Figures for 1939 and 1940 are incomplete, but include approximately 600 more authors and upwards of 20 million more books. As high as these figures are, it bears repeating that they include only those authors and titles officially condemned by *Glavlit* between 1937 and 1940 and thus exclude not only those officially banned between early 1935 and late 1936, but all those that were chaotically removed by local *Glavlit* censors and library administrators on an *ad hoc* basis over the course of this entire period (Brandenberger, 2011: 222)
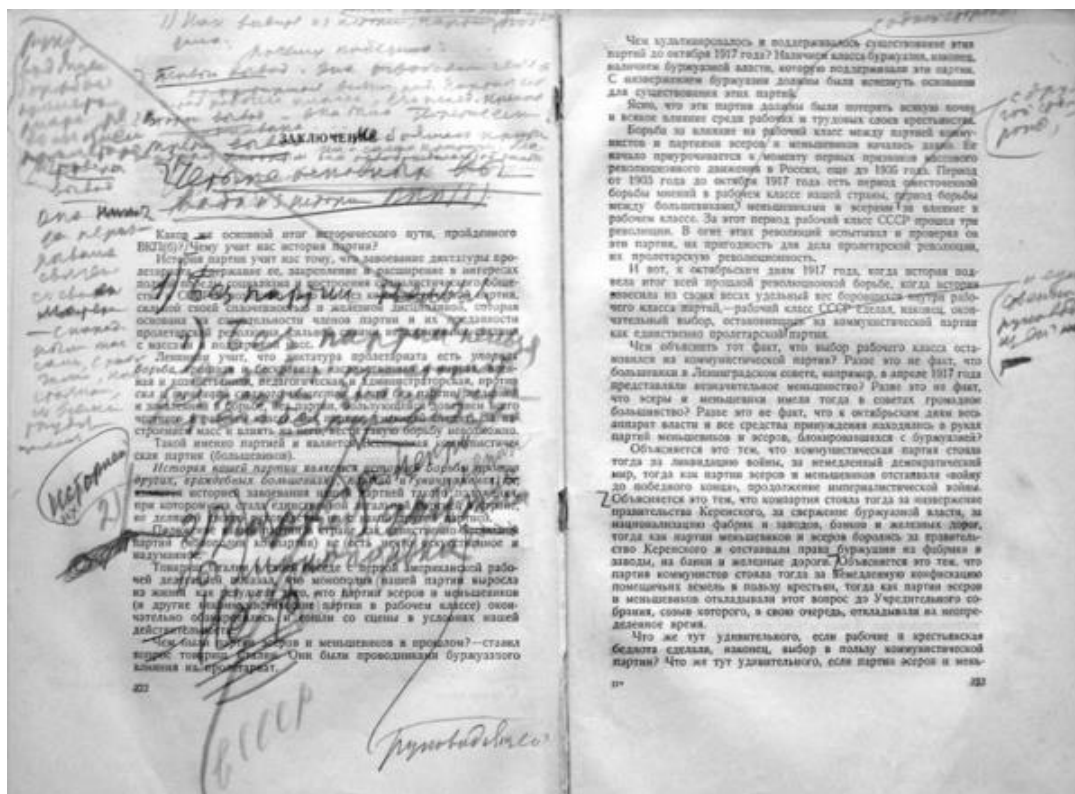

Figure 5. Brandenberger, D. (2011). Propaganda state in crisis: Soviet ideology, indoctrination, and terror under Stalin, 1927–1941 (pp. 203). Yale University Press.

As Brandenberger (2011) demonstrates, Stalin thoroughly, as can be seen in *Figure 5*, checked the "Short Course", "an officially endorsed interpretation of Stalin's service to party and state" (Brandenberger, 2011: 211). Officially a textbook introduced in 1938 and denounced in 1956, by 1953 it was printed in around 40 million copies in 67 languages. It was "a sign of loyalty and status, and studying its contents was considered to be a solemn act" (Brandenberger, 2011: 217). However, taken into consideration the education level of even the party administrators, many struggled to understand it (Brandenberger, 2011).

Another censorship example is Gerasimov's painting of lilacs, which was originally a group of political leaders, but: "While Gerasimov was painting it at the height of the Great Terror he kept receiving calls from the Party's Central Committee, announcing that 'unfortunately, comrade X has also turned out to be an enemy of the people'" (Brandenberger, 2011: 173). Therefore, artists, until 1939, either drew "Stalin and his immediate entourage or return[ed] to the stock images of anonymous workers, Red Army soldiers, and peasants that had dominated propaganda art at the end of the 1920s" (Brandenberger, 2011: 174).

3.5. Other usages

Besides the aforementioned, propaganda can regulate collective memory "through erecting public monuments and naming streets and town squares" (Blanuša & Kulenović, 2018: 176). Or, even cities – such example is the "Great Name Debate" of Leningrad, today's Saint Petersburg.

Formerly known as "Sankt-Peterburg", and returned to it in 1991, the name was changed to "Petrograd" in 1914 "because its original name sounded too German", and in 1924, after Lenin's death, to "Leningrad" (Schmemann, 1991). Another example of naming the city after a person is "Stalingrad" (1925-1961), formerly "Tsaritsyn" and now "Volgograd" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023c). In fact, Stalin used this as a way to promote his "cult of personality" (Hingley, 2023).

4. LIFE IN THE SOVIET UNION

As was already stated, propaganda is a tool used to influence behaviour and/or opinions. Therefore, another important subtopic to research is how did it feel to live in this system to "average" people, those without political power. This was touched upon lightly in the section about art and its artists, but it requires a deeper look into as it will provide a better image of what was and how was it day-to-day.

Firstly, at the beginning of the century people took part in three revolutions and one world war. In other words, twenty years predeceasing the Soviet Union were filled with times of uncertainty and blood. Similar to the Nazi Germany, the nation longed for peace and a ruler who could make the situation, and with that their lives, easier and better.

However, even though in some parts the economy was flourishing, the oppression was becoming stronger and stronger, until it reached its peak during the Second World War. Millions were innocent, but were liquidated as "the ʼobjective enemyʼ", which proved to be "as disastrous for the economic and social well-being of the country as it was effective in strengthening the totalitarian ruler (Arend, 2015: 32). Additionally, to prevent themselves dying from hunger, people had no choice but to eat their dogs or cats and live with their deceased as a way to get their food rations (Anderson, 2015). On the topic of press availability, "all papers officially remained inexpensive; in 1943 […] most cost just 20 kopecks. A monthly subscription to *Pravda* cost six rubles, and to *Izvestiia* and *Trud* […] five. There were twenty-two central papers in 1942 and twenty-three in early 1945" (Berkhoff, 2012: 17).

An example that resonated with people is Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich", a book about a fictional prisoner's day in a Gulag (Rosenberg, 2012). Again, a story that shined light on the sufferings during Stalin's rule, and one that sparked others to share their experiences – this output of information eventually destroyed the Union (Rosenberg, 2012). Likewise, even though they could get reported, people were interested in forbidden books, "in finding out how life was before, why this or that person was arrested, and they tried to compare what was written yesterday with what was written today and they attempted to find reasons for the differences" (Brandenberger, 2011: 224).

In addition, the context of approval changed throughout the years as, in the later stages, "Western cultural influences were both criticized for bourgeois values and celebrated for

internationalism, circulated through unauthorized networks and official state channels, transported from abroad and invented locally" (Yurchak, 2005: 162).

In communications context can influence the meaning of the message. Even in highly controlled surroundings, different people can interpret the same media output completely differently. But, the tricky thing is, as can be analysed from the previously written, when the official perception changes.

On the topic of day-to-day in the Late Socialism stages of the Union:

> Rent, food, transportation, clothes, books, theater, cinema, and museums were all very cheap; medical care and education were free. In addition, the socialist state in fact subsidized these occupations. Therefore, a vibrant culture of artistic and philosophical milieus came about through the support of the state, pursuing many forms of knowledge that the state had never anticipated (Yurchak, 2005: 154)

With the system loosening and media developing, American and German films introduced new styles of music, language and behaviour to the Soviet nation (Yurchak, 2005). McIntosh and Pavlik would in the later years write about this idea of cultural exchange closely related to globalisation within their theory of cultural convergence (McIntosh & Pavlik, 2017).

After the system was going for several decades, Yurchak (2005) explains Soviet citizens believed it is a forever – until it started collapsing, and then it did not seem unsurprising. People noticed publications they knew could not be published in the press in the earlier stages, they could talk with friends about what they read in the journals or what they saw on live television broadcasts, they had this "obsession" which led to new topics, language, ideas, and changes in the discourse. Even though the Soviet system caused immense suffering, lack of freedom and fear, "crash of Communism" was the crash of hope many grew up with (Vilenskii, 1995, as cited in Yurchak, 2005: 9).

On that note, Soldak (2017) shares her story of growing up in the System in the 1980s describing her memories as a maze "so multi-layered and infused with propaganda that it's difficult to find my way out again". For example, she recognises the outside influence which made them "feel blessed to be born in a magnificent country, with leaders that were of the finest quality […], a patriot, a proponent of The Party and a worshipper of Lenin" (Soldak, 2017).

And to conclude with an example of the influence on non-Russians, Ukraine artist Kazimir Malevich's painting, or to be more precise a graphite, "Where there's a hammer and sickle, there is death and famine", named after a quote from a 1920s/30s folk song, "shows three figures whose facial features are replaced with a sickle, hammer, cross and coffin" (Neplii, 2023).

5. DISCUSSION

Why is the press as it is, how does it serve different purposes and many other questions were the intrigue which influenced Schramm, Siebert, Hallin, Mancini and others to research media and media communications. The point of this thesis being an overview from the communication and media perspective, it is important to note that the field of communication studies was developing throughout the 20th century but was formally founded in 1963 by Wilbur Schramm. And, not only were main media theories primarily founded in Europe or North America, a lot of research or portrayal about the Soviet (media) system came from non-Russians. This does not mean it is not applicable or useful, rather it shines light on the possibility of two directions – portraying a certain agenda or being more objective.

Even though some research focuses on the art of the period, it is mainly sporadic. Nonetheless, it provided a look into the system from an "inside" and an "outside" perspective, both of which were censored in the Union. Besides this medium, mass media was utilised for propaganda purposes. Hallin and Mancini's models showed that the Soviet government was not the only one regulating media and using the aforementioned methods. In that sense, especially important subjects for Stalin and his dictatorship were Hitler, the infamous totalitarian German ruler, as well as Mussolini, the Italian totalitarian ruler.

Propaganda and censorship, for example antisemitism, were a part of German politics way before Hitler came to power. Significant similarities between Stalin and Hitler include importance of art, art being controlled by the state, "cult of personality" ("cult of the *Führer*") and the youth organization (Siebert., 1963: 35; Jones, 2020). Additional form of censorship were burnings of "un-German" books. On May 10th 1933, over 20 thousand books were burned, and around 40 thousand people gathered in Berlin alone (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Washington DC, n. d.). The event was orchestrated by Joseph Goebbels, Reich Propaganda Leader of the Nazi Party from 1929 and Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in Nazi Germany from 1933 until his death by suicide in 1945 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Washington DC, 2019). He "pioneered the use of radio and film for propaganda purposes" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Washington DC, 2019). Another difference between the systems includes there being "no Soviet theorist fascinated by propaganda techniques" (Berkhoff, 2012: 4). This point is further evident in most of the mentioned theorist not being Russian. Moreover, Stalin died before he could attack Jews, but generally Soviets promoted their values and goals and did not go against a particular group

of people, as did Hitler with Jews and "Aryans". During war Germany produced numerous escapist films as a way to entertain the masses (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Washington DC, 2019), and the Soviets utilised film for propaganda. While Soviet control diminished over several decades after the Second World War, "Nazi control of public information ended with Goebbels' suicide and the collapse of the regime in May 1945" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum & Washington DC, 2019). Finally, one difference between the Soviet and Nazi regime, evident in today's world, is the prohibited usage or private possession of Nazi symbols (Jones, 2020).

Coming back to the topic of media in the Union, a good basis being Lasswell's formula, the research is often scattered. A valuable overview is provided in Brandenberger's "Propaganda state in crisis: Soviet ideology, indoctrination, and terror under Stalin, 1927–1941", as well as Berkhoff's "Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II". Although, as can be concluded from the titles, these only cover a portion of the Soviet Union history. Another valuable source, for speakers of Russian, is the Soviet and Russian Television Monitoring collection, which "contains 3,874 videos produced in Russian and eight other languages by Soviet Central Television (1985-1991) and Ostankino Television (1992-1994)" (Open Society Archives, 1985-1994). However, this is already the later, freer time of the Union. Durham (1965) also focused on the Television and Radio in the Soviet Union, and his work is based on, at the time recent, research on mass communications media. But, this thesis tried to go further by also providing additional examples, including topics such as music and city names. Still, it is all only the "tip of the iceberg".

Finally, people who endured the system shared their experiences when the circumstances allowed, be it during the Union or in recent years. But, many died before they could (openly) talk about the oppression they experienced, and parts of the system remain pure memories told by parents and/or grandparents to younger generation(s). On that note, memories are subjective and can be influenced, but are needed for the bottom-up approach to this and similar topics. Furthermore, Stalin's image is still present on Victory Day parades and numerous souvenirs such as mugs and t-shirts (Pisch, 2016). In addition to this, the tradition of Soviet Union continues with Young Pioneers, a youth organisation active during the U.S.S.R., that in 2022 got approved as "a new, modern-day youth movement in the style of the Soviet-era organization" (Sandurskaya, 2023). Besides this, Communist parties are active in European countries such as Italy, France and the Czech Republic (Cadmus, n. d.).

6. CONCLUSION

Analysing numerous articles and books, some written during the Union and others years after its collapse, the Soviet Union proves as a complex topic saturated with propaganda that still holds space for further research and new findings.

The Soviet Union put its people at the centre, while also repressing them. They wanted the nation to be educated, as well as obedient. They realised the power of media, and with that art, to promote their agendas through propaganda, one of the symbols of the Union. Therefore, Schramm formed the Soviet Communist Theory of the Press to theorise the specifics of media being not only state owned but also a tool for the government to direct their agendas to media audience(s), which is also a symbol of the Totalitarian regime present for most of the Soviet Union history. Additionally, the press was not a watchdog. Hidden meanings are still discussed, as is the example of Shostakovich's symphony, because the system did not allow "true" freedom of speech. Likewise, it is hard to confidently say what did people think, as for example they subconsciously knew it was expected of them to read "Short Course", go to parades, vote, be loyal to the system et cetera. And for those born into it, they knew nothing else, especially within the context of media control that did not allow anything unwanted to be found out, including official statistics. As was analysed, propaganda and censorship can be recognised in literature, rituals, media, symbols, music, city names, posters, and people's narratives. The government controlled every aspect of human life, even having special newspapers for its Gulag prisoners. Besides newspapers, main propaganda tool was radio, both of which shaped citizens' perception of the Union and international countries. Out of the 70-ish years of the system, most research focused on war propaganda, with many papers and/or books written in the Gorbachev period when the censorship was somewhat looser. Furthermore, it is important to note who wrote the article or book, as every country had its own agenda. But, it is also necessary to have the outside look at the system, be it through the works of art or mass media (theories). With that in mind, there is so much more material and its usage to explore and to go deeper into this topic, not only from the media (usage) perspective, but other areas such as psychology, politics or musicology as well.

The thesis started by a political overview as a way to provide social context of the topic, which is crucial for its understanding, and continued by providing examples and looking deeper into the usage of media. Therefore, as is evident, art played a central role in the affirmation of the Soviet agenda, and with that creation of Stalin's "cult of personality". It proved to be a powerful

tool both for raising morale and propaganda. An example of this is the case of Dmitri Shostakovich's "Leningrad Symphony", which was crucial to the people of the Soviet Union, as well as utilised by the Soviet government for their own goals. Another important tool were posters which affirmed and highlighted the Union's core values and wishes – workers, education, „Mother Russia", and progress (towards Communism). An overview of Hitler's way of ruling showed their totalitarian similarities, such as the "cult of personality" and usage of art and media, and differences, primarily Hitler's focus on a particular group(s) of people against whom he arranged all his actions. Finally, affirming the Spiral of Silence Theory, the Union became so formative it collapsed. Therefore, bringing forth Russia, but when we look at its current situation – it still holds fragments of its Union stage, such as the tradition of Young Pioneers.

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