

**Exploration of Narrative Devices in Documentary Propaganda Across Different
Media Platforms**

Comparative Analysis of the USSR in the 1920s and Russia in the 2010s

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Summary

In this research paper, two periods in Russian and Soviet history are compared in order to identify the differences in narrative devices used in the 1920s and 2010s. These two cases were chosen to analyse due to, apart from the fact that today's Russia is a comparatively young direct successor of the USSR, that predictably causes some similarities in the people's identity and values, there are some similarities in historical and political context of these two periods that were revealed in this paper. For the analysis, in accordance with a definition of propaganda, three main aspects of comparison were identified: context, media and content. In each of two chapters, these aspects are explored and compared using existing academic resources and original analysis. The context and media analysis revealed the common grounds in propaganda development in both periods, such the transition period preceding both of the periods analysed and the establishment of new media, which resulted in experimental nature of propaganda and emergence of factography in the Soviet Union and bots and trolls in social media in Russia. The content analysis discovered that visual component is a crucial part of communication in both cases, and many similarities in the narrative devices used, such as framing, montage, contraposition, satire, symbolisation, and emotional expressiveness. However, regarding the complexity of the message, it was simplified in case of Russian propaganda. In general, online media, even though are not the key instrument for Russian propagandists at the moment, will be further developed as such.

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Abbreviations

Def. — definition

FSB — Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

Lef — Left Front of Arts

SR — Social Revolutionists

USSR — Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics

VK — VKontakte Social Network

Introduction

While talking about propaganda, first of all, it is important to provide a definition of it and understand what can be considered as propaganda. However, it might be not a very simple task, as Richard Taylor notices in his book “Film Propaganda. Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany” the word ‘propaganda’ often has negative connotations, as it is usually associated with something used by enemies, therefore narrowing down what can be considered as propaganda. Therefore, it is necessary to abstract from this and give it a “value-free definition” (Taylor, p. 7) while defining and assigning attributes to this term. This is what he is trying to do before introducing us to the analysis films that played an important role in the Soviet Union propaganda process. Taylor looks at several points of view on defining propaganda and tries to give his own definition, the most relevant to what the rest of his book is about — film propaganda in “two best documented examples of highly — and overtly — politicised societies that the world has ever seen” (Taylor, p. 3). But of course, propaganda did not end there. Robert Jackall, in the introduction to his book “Propaganda”, claims that “From the Great War through the Cold War, all major world powers competed, first and foremost, for the allegiance and good will of their own civilian population” (Jackall, p. 4). In the second chapter of this paper, we will see how the definition of a highly politicised society is also relevant for modern Russia, as well as how it engages with its citizens on highly politicised topics.

In his analysis, Taylor describes several important points related to the nature of propaganda in order to give it a definition. He answers the following questions: How to differentiate education and propaganda? Who is the propagandist and what is his role? How do they make people believe in it? Is the result important, or the process is crucial in defining propaganda? What about the context? In the end, he

gives the following definition of propaganda: “Propaganda is the attempt to influence the public opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values” (Taylor, p. 15). And this definition is very close to the one provided by Cate Hastle in her essay “The Machinery of Propaganda” as an excerpt from the UK 1918 document “The Organisation and Functions of the Ministry of Information”: “Propaganda is the task of creating and directing public opinion” (Jackall, p. 105). Suitability of Taylor’s is proved by Marlin, who after analysing 13 different definitions of propaganda proposes the following: “Propaganda = (def.) The organised attempt through communication to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual’s adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment” (Marlin, p. 22). Even though the definition seems to be extended in the second part, the first part is very similar again. Moreover, Taylor claims that, unlike education, that aims to teach people how to think, propaganda tells what to think, and this basically sums up the second part of Marlin’s definition. At the same time, he mentions “the possible conflict between its purpose and its effect”, emphasising that the propaganda is not always successful (see the words “attempt”, “task” in the definitions above), and the activity itself is a more important feature of propaganda than its results. Moreover, he states that the context is important in forming public opinions, that these opinions cannot be created out of nothing, and there is always something there. Marshall Soules calls this an ‘anchor’ — “an existing belief or attitude [...] that provide focus, motivation and salience for target audiences” (Soules, p. 3). In the first chapter, we will see how the events of February and October revolutions created this enabling background for propaganda and made it flourish, especially in film and photography.

As the research will discover, it did not happen by chance that film and photography in the USSR became the key propaganda tools. Both the government and the artists saw the potential in the new visual media: “between 1918 and 1945 the new media and new techniques of ‘communications’ were perceived as having a fundamentally important political role” (Pronay, p. 4); “the political importance of film propaganda in the twentieth century stems from the fact that visual imagery was a powerful, central force in political imagination” (J. E. Combs; S. T. Combs, p. 15). Unsurprisingly, from the today's perspective, it is fair to say that new media play a crucial role again in forming public opinions. However, in the last few decades, the technologies have been developing extremely fast, which of course has led to the change in the definition of “the new media and new techniques of communication.” Nancy Snow in her book “Propaganda in the Digital Age” made a very clear statement about the new technologies that has developed: “the explosion of what are termed information and communication technologies (ICT), such as global television, the spectacularly rapid growth of the Internet, and the decreasing size, increasing capability, and expanding mobility of personal information devices” (Snow, p. 9). These are the technologies that allowed the expansion of propaganda to the new media platforms in Russia in the 2010s that will be discovered in the second chapter of this paper¹.

¹ It is also important to distinguish internal and external propaganda. There is no clear line between these two types of propaganda, mainly because usually something produced for internal consumption may have success abroad and vice versa. And as the next chapter will discover is that usually, it was the case with film and photography produced in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Even though there is enough examples of Soviet and modern Russian propaganda produced for export abroad (in the latter case due to a significant number of Russian speakers in post-Soviet states — Potapova, p. 16), this study will mostly cover the internal propaganda in both countries, which is oriented towards their own citizens. However, it is important to mention here that often the approaches for internal and external propaganda are interconnected, the main achievements and successfully implemented approaches for internal propaganda were exported and developed, as well as some Soviet propagandist works that initially had been well-received abroad became acclaimed in the USSR. Therefore some cases of exported propaganda are due to be explored in this study.

The main purpose of this study, however, is to look at the documentary propaganda narrative devices of these two epochs of Russian history, when propaganda is considered to be an important mechanism of political influence in the country. Documentary genre is also chosen for a reason. As the research will make clear, for Soviet artists it became the primary genre for propagandist work, while Russia expectedly continues the tradition and actively uses this genre for propaganda as well, while as mentioned earlier the tools have changed. At the same time, exploration of narrative devices and identification of similarities and differences between the two epochs will shed light on the development of propaganda over time. Tracking these processes in different countries may become a basis for further researches on propaganda aiming to identify propaganda.

Obviously, the analysis of narrative devices requires a careful selection and analysis of the content of this study as they are the key elements of the propaganda content conveying the authors' ideas. According to Taylor's definition of propaganda, there are three components that are due to be investigated for this analysis: context, communication (media) environment for propagandists, and ideas and values communicated. At the same time, it is permissible to omit how successful or influential in terms of the results was propaganda in each case because propaganda, as Taylor states, is not always successful. Therefore, every analysis will start with a short description of the context in which propaganda was developing. It will clarify how the key events in history formed media environment in the country and the need for propaganda. In this way, the context will provide the reader with a short historical reference and additionally justify the period chosen for the analysis. Secondly, this study will explore prevailing media in propaganda in both cases. In order to identify the key media, the government's position and goals will generally be taken into account.

However, critical response or international awareness can also be considered as indicators that certain media are particularly important. And finally, the ideas and values, as well as the narrative devices used to deliver them will be identified. In the conclusion, the comparison of all the findings from the two chapters will help to perform a careful comparative analysis and answer the main question of this study about the development of narrative devices of documentary propaganda between the early Soviet Union and today's Russia.

Chapter 1. Soviet Documentary Propaganda in the 1920s

1.1. Identifying the Context – Post-Revolutionary State

Up until 1905 propaganda, in general, was not very common in Russia. However, after the events of 1905 including the loss in the Russian-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905 the use of propaganda was growing (Snyder, p. 3). Taylor claims that it was the period when Russian people “were curious to see what was happening” for the first time. However, the Russian government “was certainly not going to give them what they wanted” (Taylor, p. 22). At the same time propaganda issued by the government was mainly in form reading documents, which up until the Revolutions of 1917 did not have much popularity among the people. There were several reasons for that. First of all, the public sphere in Russian Empire was not developed enough, as well as the mass culture which remained within big cities only. Additionally, only 40 percent people were literate; therefore the press was not developed either (Medyakov, 2014). Even the propaganda dedicated to the First World War, even though was more diverse in terms of media used (posters, circus, theatre, etc) was not well prepared and therefore did not perform well which resulted in that Russian people “had a pretty clear idea against whom they were fighting in the war, but not for whom and for what” (Medyakov, 2014). Of course, this played not the last role in growing discontent with the current government that led to the February Revolution in 1917 that signified the collapse of the Imperial Government, and the October Revolution in the same year that established the power of Bolsheviks. Following it, Civil War between the revolutionists and anti-communist forces became a push for propaganda to flourish.

After the October Revolution, the main figures have changed, the history itself, how it was told is changed in order to satisfy the requirements of the new realm. Led

by Lenin, from the first year after the Revolution, in order to commemorate the key figures of revolution, the former statues of the Russian monarchs were being replaced by the communist leaders. The decree “On the Monuments of the Republic” was published on 14 April 1918 formally fixing this policy. Moreover, all the street names, heraldic symbols and emblems were due to be replaced to the revolutionary ones. At the same time, the opposition figures of the October Revolution were ridiculed by placing their temporary satirical figures in front of the Kremlin. Symbolic holidays were introduced with parades, performances and theatrical actions. An example of theatrical work can be “Mystery-Bouffe” (1918) by Mayakovsky, directed by Meyerhold and Malevich that depicted initial division of the characters into “pure” and “impure”, with the latter overcoming the former and “liberating mankind”; “Storming of the Winter Palace” and “The Fall of the Autocracy” performed by the Red Army theatre troupe were the other “mankind liberation” symbols in theatre. Examples of avant-garde graphic designs for revolutionary commemorative events by Malevich and Altman (figures 1 and 2) were other examples of art aligned with the needs of the Party.



Figure 1: Cover of a folder of materials of the Congress committees of the rural poor, Malevich, 1918

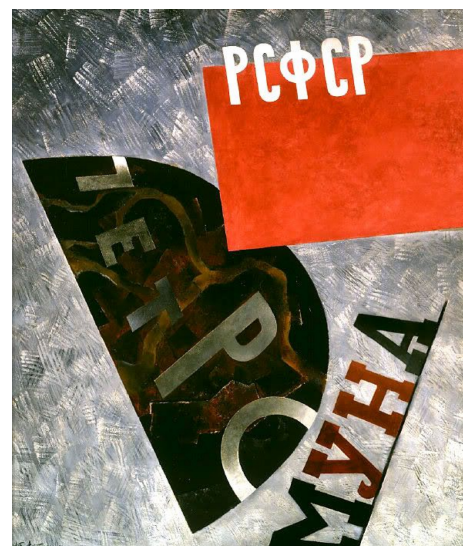


Figure 2: Patrolman, Altman, 1921

In this way, finally achieved in 1917, the power of proletarians, led by the Bolsheviks and Lenin, started the civil war that obviously required proper communication of the ideology of the struggling working class, initially to fight the White movement, and then to maintain the justification of the Revolution and support the spirit of the people to work for the glory of the new country. However, it did not form a common approach among the government and the artists, and the propagandists were free to experiment up until the later 1920s when and the party, as well as artists and critics in unison supported a unified approach.

1.2. Identifying the Key Media — Birth of Factography

In 1927 the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution was celebrated in the USSR. There were multiple events dedicated to this historical date. At the same time, several films were commissioned to be produced in order to celebrate the events that led to and resulted in the Great October Socialist Revolution and creation of the new country. The films were commissioned to the most admired filmmakers of that time: Eisenstein's "Strike", "Battleship Potemkin", "October"; Shub's "The Great Way", "The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty"; Pudovkin's "Revolution Trilogy": "Mother", "The End of St Petersburg", "Storm over Asia"; Barnet's "Moscow in October". However, the Party officially didn't support experimentalism anymore, which was implicitly mentioned in the 1925 Party Resolution on Literature (Dickerman, p. 136). Even though this directly concerned only literature, given only two years before the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution, it must have affected all the artists, including filmmakers, preparing to celebrate the anniversary. At the same time Lef journal ("Left Front of the Arts"), the main avant-garde artists' journal of the early Soviet Union that existed from 1923 until 1925, experienced rebirth in 1927 under the name "Novy Lef"

with Mayakovsky and Tretyakov as chief editors, that apart from the critical texts often published photography, especially those following the factographic approach. Critical response in this journal was the main “barometer” of how the cultural elite responded to the above-mentioned films, and some of them were not well received by the critics because they did not keep up with the objectives set up by the Party and the cultural elite. *Novy Lef* proclaimed factography as the ground for the new Soviet culture, especially in film and photography. In this way, this very influential journal for the Soviet cultural elite was an alliance of the Party. All this marked the rise of factography, the most significant period of Soviet documentary propaganda. Thus, photography and especially film were gaining momentum in massive usage in comparison to old media such as printed media (graphic posters, literature, papers), theatre, music, sculpture the beginning of XX century. There would be no exaggeration to say that documentary itself was reinvented due to the emergence of these media that are able to depict reality as it is without intervention and therefore can be highly trusted as a historical reference. However, these media indeed became a platform for the most skilful and elaborated propaganda. The development of the early post-revolutionary art in Soviet Russia can provide with the insights of how the enabling environment was created for factography, most importantly, in film and photography.

As Devin Fore writes in his introduction to the special issue on factography on “October” magazine, the term “factography” is a Soviet neologism, which literally means “inscription of facts”, may seem very similar to what documentary. In the Soviet Union, there were more than one names used to describe what is now called “documentary”: reportage, factism, documentary, along with factography. However, unlike documentary that ideally aims to represent reality as it is, factography, as stated by the Soviet culture elite figures like Sergey Tretyakov see the main objective for factog-

raphers “not to veridically reflect reality in his work, but to actively transform reality through it” (Fore, p. 4-5). In this way, factography is a term that was born in Soviet Russia to describe the emerging practice of documentary propaganda. While the documentary, according to Fore, is based on objectivism and the most correct reflection of reality, the factography takes the reality as a basis but then process it and transforms it, or intervenes it. However, factography did not emerge naturally at the same time with the October Revolution. It had to go through the period of formation towards the peak of its development at the time of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution.

Around 1920, Soviet avant-gardists were trying to develop a new utilitarian approach to art. The main reason to do it, as noticed by Buchloch in his article “From Factura to Factography”, was that even the most advanced works at that period were not getting enough development from “the modernist framework of bourgeois aesthetics” (Buchloch, p. 94). He states that the new forms of production and distribution of art were required. This is where a turn towards productivism, or art applied to industrial production, took its start. Started from Tatlin’s proposal for the “Monument to the Third International” (1919 - 1920), “a futuristic helix of steel and glass that would have been taller than the Eiffel Tower by one-third and the ultimate symbol of the technological future heralded by the Bolshevik revolution” (Prodger, p. 50), it led to protests by expressionists and suprematists headed by Kandinsky and Malevich correspondingly, who saw art as self sufficient, the latter joined the movement later though. Eventually the contradicting views between the artists on what art should be like brought to the break up of the Institute of Artistic Culture in 1921, when “it started to work under the banner of productivism [...] in order to engage immediately with the industrial revolution” (Buchloch, 1984: p. 95). It started from photomontage in adver-

tising and commercial photography, those areas where constructivist art could be useful for the industries. Even though up until 1922 neither of acclaimed masters of photomontage (Rodchenko, Lissitzky) produced any work in this style, after this year they stopped painting and switched to photographic arts instead (Buchloh, pp. 83-84, 95-96). Thus, seemingly abandoned usage of representational photographic imagery in art was rediscovered by the key Soviet artists, which directly led to the development of factography. Additionally, the death of Lenin in 1924 finally marked the approaching end of abstract art in the Soviet Union after it was sanctioned by Stalin (Prodger, p. 53). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, photography along with film was seen as main media for factography. Therefore, 1922 was another important milestone in the development of this movement, which led to Mayakovsky's official proposal for the creation of the official journal on the new leftist art in early 1923.

Lef (abbreviation for the Left Front of Arts) was proposed by Mayakovsky in order to review the left art ideology and agitate for acceptance of it among "art producers" (Mayakovsky, p. 204). In this way, its creation manifested the idea that the new Soviet art must serve the ideas of communism and act as propaganda. However, initially, Mayakovsky wanted it to be devoted to literary arts filling the journal with short stories and poetry. It was Osip Brik, co-editor of the journal, who decided to include visual arts into Lef. Nevertheless, the fact that Lef was more a literary journal led to "disputes about the proper character and direction of literature in the worker's state". However, by this time there were not many possible ways of development for any type of art, even for literature that proved to be comparatively resistant to Productivism (Kurchanova, p. 63-66). In the very first issue of Lef, Brik published his work on production art. As Devin Fore claims in "The Operative Word in Soviet Factography",

it was questionable if the literature can serve the ideas of productivists. The attempts to modernise writing this way led to appearance of new literary genres: “the members of Lef claimed that the realist novel was now only a dead letter that must be replaced by a variety of extra literary, utilitarian genres such as the ocherk, the memorandum, the travelogue, the newspaper, or the memoir” (Chuzhak; Fore; Greenfield, p. 79). Fore, therefore, concludes that “It is in the literature that factography’s innovation becomes most obvious because it was in the literature that this innovation was least likely” (Fore, p. 100). However, even though it was least expected, it was in literature where the first innovations appeared due to factography. Therefore, the proclamation of factography started from literature, and it was not until 1927 when the situation changed in favour of photographic media with the rebirth of Lef under the name *Novy Lef*, the renewed journal officially manifested factography as primary movement for Soviet artists.

Unlike the older version of the journal, *Novy Lef* was reoriented towards photographic imagery, placing it on the cover and making it a prominent part of the content (Kurchanova, 67). Leah Dickerman notices the growing significance of Rodchenko along with the photography itself (Dickerman, 133) as it was his photographs that were placed on the cover of journal most of the time. Tret’iakov, who had previously been not more than just an amateur in photography, successfully started working in this field and more importantly became the main editor of this photography oriented journal. Moreover, in 1928 Tret’iakov, according to Fore, “proclaimed his agreement with a statement by a Komsomol member that “one technician is much more necessary than ten bad poets”; Tret’iakov moreover added that “we would be agreeable even to omitting the word ‘bad’” from this statement” (Fore, p. 8). This redistribution of roles of different media by its significance for Soviet artists, at the same time, had

another critical reason for that. Both Fore and Dickerman argue that a crucial role in this played new technology: “it is indeed impossible to comprehend the factographic project without taking into account the concurrent explosion of new media technologies and their attending mass cultural formations” (Fore, 6); “the functional incarnation of an emergent media culture, made possible by improved technologies of reproduction that allowed for the broad dissemination of photographic material” (Dickerman, 134).

In this way, 1927 was a year when the vector of Soviet art had completely changed from pure art to socially useful and technically advanced art. And unsurprisingly, some artists (e.g. Klucis, Rodchenko, Lissitzky — Buchloh, 1984) who would previously have painted or written concentrated their efforts on the “factographic” media such as photography. And even though literature was chronologically the first medium for factographers, it was photography where the highest results were achieved. At the same time, the technological development not just became decisive for photography to become a main factographic media, but also pushed film makers and critics to consider film as a powerful propaganda tool accelerating this shift towards image, especially in 1927 when, apart from the relaunch of Lef as Novy Lef, the tenth anniversary of October Revolution was celebrated and made the request for production of this new propaganda art grew.

1.3. Ideas, Values, and Narrative Devices — Photography Propaganda

Before a further exploration of the propaganda practices in Soviet photography that experienced a shift to factography, as well as Soviet art in general experienced this shift from painting and writing to photography, it is important to note that in 1927 and even several years after there was no one certain common view existed among

the artists on how exactly it should all look like. This is one of the key points made by Margarita Tupitsina in “The Soviet Photograph 1924-1937.” She claims that every next work, exhibition or critical review of this period was shaping the whole movement pointing out even such important figures of Soviet photography as Rodchenko and Lissitsky repeatedly received opposing reviews from both fellow photographers and critics (Golan, p. 215). Therefore, factography in photography (and not only in photography) was in a state of constant evolution.

Even before the first factographic works, Rodchenko was known by his photographs, mainly due to his experiments with unusual angles and viewpoints. In the earlier issues of *Novy Lef* in 1927 Rodchenko published a series of photographs dedicated to the anniversary of the Revolution. These photographs were documentary and depicted the early years after the Revolution; all marked either “from the Lef archives” or “from the revolutionary archive of A.R.” Dickerman suggests that all the photographs were taken from photo-archive of Sovkino and therefore “Rodchenko presents not as an artist or photographer, but as an archivist”. Dickerman sees the importance of Rodchenko’s approach of representing the history through the archive of comparatively banal photographs. “Rodchenko’s archive hints at the way that revolution brings with it an intimation of loss — a gesture of reclamation from [...] the treat of historical amnesia, of “tendentious selection,” and of revision” (Dickerman, pp. 146-147). In this way, the archival nature of factography is discovered, where a historical event can be constructed by accumulating a number of simple archival images depicting specific moments in past.

Rodchenko’s next work (figures 3; 4), however, goes further than that. Now he used archive material again to make reproductions of series of posters dedicated to the history of the Party and the Revolution a year before, probably in preparation for



Figure 3: The Party in the Years of the Imperialist War, 1914–1916. From the series The History of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in Posters. Rodchenko, 1926

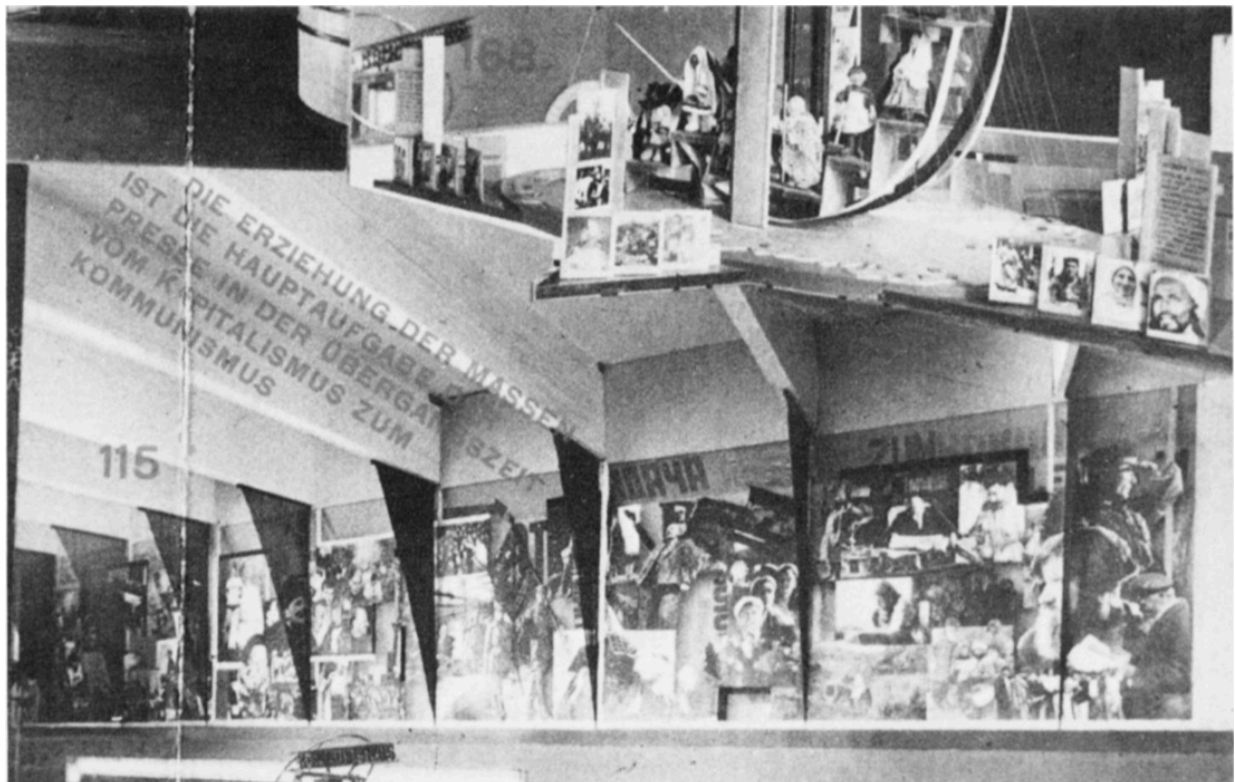


Figure 4: 1917. From February to October. From the series The History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in Posters. Rodchenko, 1926

the anniversary of the October Revolution, depicting the February Revolution of 1917, the period between the two Revolutions, and the leaders of the revolutionist parties during the World War I. One of the key differences in this work was that the overlaid text in forms of captions and quotations worked together with the images. They allowed the spectator to see the main themes propagated by the posters: “growing worker dissatisfaction with the power-sharing structure amid the increasing casualties of World War I, the panicky rule of the Provisional Government, the growing strength of the workers’ parties” (Dickerman, 150). However, the main distinctive feature of this work and probably even more effective than the captions was the way the images and other elements were positioned on the posters. Placing in front of each other the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the Provisional Government and the Sovi-



Figures 5 (top); 6 (bottom): Photofresco in Pressa exhibition. El Lissitzky (in collaboration with Sergei Senkin), 1928



ets, demonstrations of the Bolsheviks and shootings during the demonstrations with some emphasis on Lenin and Stalin. This juxtaposition pointed at the opposing forces during the October revolution while the whole composition aimed to provoke certain thoughts on the events depicted in the work.

While Rodchenko's early significant contribution in factography was his work with archive materials, one of the most important inputs in development of photomontage can be credited to El Lissitzky. As an important figure in Soviet art scene and a disciple of Malevich, he had been known by his graphic designs and propaganda posters before his first major photomontage work. While on the one hand, he, as well as other photomontage artists, wanted to keep what he achieved in his early modernist non photography work, the main requirement for photomontage work, published in Lef in 1924, supposedly by Rodchenko, was "documentary representation in order to reach new mass audiences" (Buchloh, p. 98). Lissitzky was the one to develop an approach that would allow both to coexist in "integration of the dramatic experience of theatrical/cinematographic space and the perceptual experience of static signs of graphic/photographic montage and typography" (Buchloh, p. 101). In other words, he introduced spacial complexity to a still photographic image. This approach was realised by Lissitzky in 1928 in Cologne for his first major project for the International Press Exhibition, the central object of the exhibition, a big-scale "photofresco" (the official title was "The Task of the Press Is the Education of the Masses, figures 5; 6) installed on the wall. This factographic work dedicated to the events and key characters in publishing history of the USSR depicted from different angles and viewpoints. This structure allowed the viewers to compare and contrast different aspects of the same subject creating a "consciously constructed of documentary factographic information". With additional help of textual information it re-

sulted in a call for “extensive reading and viewing” (Buchloh, p. 107) for a spectator. This work was positively acclaimed abroad. Another important measure of success as propaganda is that the project, as Buchloh mentions, was adapted by Italian Fascist government for their propaganda needs.



Figures 7 (left); 8 (right): A Day in the Life of a Moscow Working Class Family. Al'pert and Shaikhet, 1931

In 1931, Sergey Tretiakov published “From Photo-Series to Extended Photo-Observation” as a critical response to the photography work “A Day in the Life of a Moscow Working Family” (figures 7; 8), a photo series consisting of 44 separate pictures of Fillipovs family doing their daily routine. The photo series was made by Max Alpert and Arkadii Shaikhet and published in the same issue of “Proletarskoye foto” magazine with the Tretiakov’s article. Tretiakov highly acclaimed the work that pioneered the emerging photo-series and extended photo-observation genres. While referring to Alexander Rodchenko’s “Against the Scientific Portrait to the Snapshot”, Tretiakov claims that serial photography gives better feel of reality in comparison with a single photography. Though giving it generally positive feedback, appreciating its ability to “reestablish the connections between the individual and the social environment” (Tretiakov, p. 71), he sees a big propagandist potential in adding a temporal level to photography series, which at the time of the First Five-Year Plan was aimed to

show the progress: including a “single, integral process of development” would allow to see the “growth and change in their condition” (Tretiakov, p. 77). In other words, he suggested that the series would have bigger success if it was accompanied by another series, showing how their life changed in five years. Malitsky in “Ideologies in Fact”, however, in his analysis of the work, while also confirming that “the Fillipov’s” work lacks the historical/contextual specificity, “in A Day in the Life, the stability of the location of the family and the topic of the Filippovs themselves provides the legibility of the ground—a legibility unattainable through extended time” (Malitsky, p. 362). Additionally, he mentions that the composition of the photos strengthens the ground by “reinforcing the parallels between family members’ lives.” Malitsky also provides some captions for the images illustrating that they provide detailed contextual information on the events depicted in the photos. Even though he does not explicitly mention that, it becomes obvious from the example of a caption he provides that they aim to expose how good the life of this average Soviet family is: “Yesterday the three [father, Nikolai Fedotovitch, mother Anna Ivanovna, and eldest son Kostya] walked together to the ZRK to pick up the dress order that was ready, and they also bought Kostya a suit for 44 rubles. Thanks to the decent earnings of the family (over 500 rubles a month), and what they had put aside, there is quite enough to live on. Three of them have savings books. Comparatively the large payment for the apartment, lights, and gas (up to 45 rubles/month), they can easily handle it; it’s less than 10 percent of the budget. They’ve put 700 rubles aside in the state common fund” (Malitsky, 362). Another important thing to say about the “Day in the Life” photo series is that it was initially published in Austrian journal “Arbeiter Illustrete Zeitung” and only after it was well received there, it was published in Soviet Union. In this way, it becomes an-

other example showing the close relations of internal and external Soviet photography propaganda².

As factography required maximisation of realism, painting becomes secondary giving way to photography which suits more the definition of the “mirror of reality” (Dickerman, p. 139). This is when the factographic narrative tools grew in their significance, and, first of all, that archive materials became a valuable source of content in photography propaganda. Framing and positioning became the key devices used by the propagandists and led to the development of such techniques as juxtaposition and photomontage. Implementation of text captions became important element in helping the narrative along with the visual devices. Photo series were also praised by critics because it was a good tool to give historical perspective and to see the development of the Soviet state, while the other devices worked praising the Revolution and the ideas of communism, contrasting it to and showing in the negative light its enemies.

However, unlike it would be logical to assume, it was not photography that influenced film, even more technologically advanced medium. As two visual media, at

² But the most significant example of exported examples of photography propaganda, and probably the biggest source of it is “USSR in Construction”, the journal that existed between 1930 and 1941, was published in five languages, and became the last refuge for the Soviet avant-garde artists when Stalin came to power. In this way, Romy Golan in his review cites the quotation from Max Kozloff naming the journal “the apotheosis of Soviet photography”, which totally makes sense because soon after the journal appeared in the early 1930s, the “Great Purge” started by Stalin, and the photographers were “either working for the USSR in construction (El Lissitsky, Aleksandr Rodchenko) or dying in the gulag (Aleksei Gan, Gustav Klutis)” (Feldman, p. 689). The main purpose of the journal was, of course, first of all, to promote the utopian Soviet Union among international audiences. However, one of the languages the journal was published in was Russian and therefore, as Feldman states, this journal also aimed to help in the construction of this utopia, and therefore, can be considered as internal propaganda as well, though created for global consumption. Regarding the content, Feldman states that that “every month for a dozen years “The USSR in Construction” ran avant-garde propaganda” (Feldman, p. 692). It included the cutting-edge modernist techniques with dominating visual emphasis (textual content was limited), mixed the ideas of speed and progress, with Stalinism and Marxism-Leninism. Printed on high-quality paper with “the injection of colour and sepia tones, larger images and fold-outs; and particularly, the iconoclastic images [...] and the key aesthetic of Soviet artistic-political photomontage. This appears as nothing less than a fusion of total art with total politics” (Feldman, p. 693), it aimed to achieve the visualisation of this “paradise in construction.”

the time of the formation of factography, the tools used in both media were developing in parallel, influencing each other. Before starting to work on his factographic photography, Rodchenko actively worked with Vertov, one of the key documentarists in cinema (Roberts, 1999: p. 25), and apparently, it influenced his work, as well as the work of other factographers. Dickerman claims that “part of the impetus for factography [...] came from the work of Dziga Vertov” (Dickerman, p. 135), while Buchloh states that “it is very likely that in 1927-28 he [Lissitzky] was drawing [...] upon the cinematic montage techniques that Vertov had used in the first Kino-Pravda films” (Buchloh, p. 106), and also influenced his later works in “USSR in Construction” (p. 107). Evidently, it was Soviet film makers whose work was the cutting edge of both art and technology and it is the Soviet film that was and still is highly appreciated and critically acclaimed globally.

1.4. Ideas, Values, and Narrative Devices – Film Propaganda

There were several reasons for the successful development of film as a powerful propaganda tool in the Soviet Union. First of all, and this reason is shared with photography, is that cinema is a visual medium that unlike painting is precise in its representation. Another important feature of cinema as a visual medium is noticed by Taylor who describes cinema’s appeal as “universal, unlimited by considerations of language, literacy or culture” (Taylor, p. 16). This is the reason why both Soviet photography and film were popular abroad but more importantly within multinational and multicultural Soviet Union. Despite the fact that by the time of October Revolution film was a comparatively new medium, the cinema in the USSR was becoming more and more popular, especially in newsreel genre). Predictably, Bolsheviks saw big potential use of utilising cinema industry for propaganda purposes, which led to the birth and

fast development of the new revolutionary Soviet cinema; and “the key figure in the early development of Soviet newsreel, if not Soviet cinema as a whole, was a young experimenter [...] Dziga Vertov” (Roberts, 1999: p. 17).

At the beginning of his career as a cinematographer, he was working on documentaries structured around one narrative which resulted into his first three-hour length film “The History of the Civil War” (1922) based on the footage he filmed during the war. At the same time he started working on his new project named “Kino-Pravda” (or “Cine-Truth”, 1922) that expressed Vertov’s desire to work on something bigger, “structured around theme rather than narrative” (Roberts, 1999: p. 20) as well as his strong interest in development of non-fiction film. Among the stories covered by the series was the trial of SR (Socialist Revolutionaries), after which a multi-party system in USSR ceased to exist; the work of the Central Committee against famine, and many others (in total there were filmed 23 issues of “Cine-Pravda”). At the same time, in 1923 he publishes an article in Lef that marked the beginning of the movement pioneered by Vertov promoting the “life caught unawares” film making technique, which manifested pure, not staged everyday life documentaries and technological advancement in the film. In 1924, he issued “Kino-eye”, the cinematic version of his “campaign against the fictionalising tendency within Soviet cinema”, a filmed summary of his ideas, that became a model for most of his future work that begins with the following titles: “The first exploration of life caught unawares. The first non-artificial cinema object without a scenario, without actors or studio” (Roberts, 1999, p. 35). The trace of factography is evident in Vertov’s work. First of all, he actively argued for non-fictional film-making. Secondly, he used the first-person technique in his films, that was popular among factographers. However, even though his ideas on film-making were very innovative and influential, and seemed to be relevant to the developing

factography movement, some could find his approach “out of step with the contemporary moment” (Malitsky, p. 365) or lacking of “ideological consistency” (Kurchanova, p. 73) This was not least because of his “poetic tricks” he used to make his point clearer (Bittencourt, 2013). Turvey starts his article on Vertov claiming that one of the main distinctive features of his film is that it takes both from realist and anti-realist cinema, two opposing film theories. And he provides as an example his later work which probably represents most of the Vertov’s “tricks” “Man with a Movie Camera” (1929), which depicts life as it was in the Soviet Union of that time. Unsurprisingly, it caused a mixed critical response, because along with the elements proclaimed by factographers, Vertov also used special effects that did not help his work to look realistic. Where, for example, the usage of the subtitle “Excerpt from the Diary of a Cameraman” at the beginning of the film, according to Dickerman, “framed his cinematic enterprise in factographic terms” (Dickerman, p. 140), a split-screen technique, opposite, “creates a visual experience that does not exist in reality” (Turvey, p. 80-81). In table 1 the tools he used in the film divided into factographic and “poetic tricks.”

Factographic tools	“Poetic tricks”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Found footage montage - No intertitles (visual linkage) - High number of locations - No script - Firm structure: indications when each act finishes (equal to length of a reel) - No actors/costumes/sets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reverse motion - Odd camera angles - Rhythmic repetition - Double-exposure scenes - Contrast different types of framing - Split-screen technique

Table 1: Vertov’s narrative devices in “Man with a Movie Camera”

As Roberts rightly notices, Vertov in his movement “takes a purist view”, which means that those who did not support the “Kino-Eye”, were its enemies. And one of this enemies was Sergei Eisenstein, who in 1926 released one of his most significant films “The Battleship Potemkin,” that did not have a commercial success among the

Soviet audiences, that resulted into the debates on the artistic experimentation in film, that became another push for the flourishing of Soviet factography that, unsurprisingly, was supported by Vertov. There was always a controversy between Eisenstein and Vertov. In one of his articles in 1925, Eisenstein criticised Vertov and called for a “Kino-fist” instead of “Kino-eye” (Bordwell, p. 9), meaning his montage techniques that shock the spectators, attract their attention and, in this way, influence them. His first significant work “Strike” (1925) brought him recognition as a director among critics. However, unlike Vertov’s films, it was more theatrical. By dividing the characters into villains (presented in “comically grotesque terms” and workers (more realistic appearance), it reminded the Meyerhold’s theatrical works. Additionally, Eisenstein reminded the spectators that the film was staged by “the direct address of the plays in a final image of eyes staring at the camera and a hortatory title: “Proletarians, remember!” (Bordwell, p. 8). And in his next film he continued using this approach shocking the audience with the technique “montage of attractions”, the term he used in his earlier essay of the same name.

“Battleship Potemkin” (1925) became his, probably, most influential film. It depicted an event of the first Revolution in 1905, which, as well as the February and the October revolutions did not have much documented materials, that gave more freedom to Eisenstein in his recreation of “reality” not only in “Battleship Potemkin” but in his further films as well. Therefore, Eisenstein used the following approach in his revolutionary works: “recreation of the realities of Russian history, and [...] some elaboration on them” (Taylor, p. 64), “alienating the viewer into a state of raised consciousness” (Ging, p. 69) and “strike a hammer blow on the psyche of the viewer” (Antoine-Dunne, p. 6). Eisenstein himself describes in his essay “The Montage of Film Attractions” (1924) what he means under this term. For him an attraction is “any demon-

strable fact that is known and proven to exercise a definite effect on the attention and emotions of the audience” (Eisenstein, p. 40), while montage requires “a tendentious selection of, and comparison between, events, free from narrowly plot-related plans and moulding the audience in accordance with its purpose” (Eisenstein, p. 41). This is very similar to what Vertov propagated, which included experiments with montage techniques (e.g. framing and juxtaposition, the technique that was actively used by factographers), the main difference is that Vertov proclaimed the usage of a documentary footage, where Eisenstein recreated these facts in order to strengthen the effect at the audience.

Eisenstein calls “Battleship Potemkin” “the moral victor over the guns of tsarism” (Eisenstein, p. 67), which is the evident of what image he creates for the two opposing forces in this work. Analysing the film, Bordwell mentions “the rigorous architecture of “Potemkin” (Bordwell, p. 64). Even though the events in the film happen in only three days, in order to engage the audience, Eisenstein uses significant amount of montage techniques, as well as the “attractions” building up a picture of the “guns of Tsarism” and leading to the “moral victory” of the rebels and people in general (Bordwell, p. 61-70). The tools used by Eisenstein can be summarised in table 2.

	Element building image of “Moral Victory”	Elements building image of “Guns of Tsarism”
“Attractions” elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific types of people rather than professional actors - Collective protagonist — collective history-making - Spectators see only what the protagonist know and feel - Victorious ending that omitting the fact that the rebels were imprisoned afterwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Synthesis of different events of 1905 (e.g. the “steps” sequence fuses the location with an actual massacre in Baku) - Creating an image that all classes in Russia suffered from tsarism - Rise of intensity every part with dramatic notes ending each part

	Element building image of “Moral Victory”	Elements building image of “Guns of Tsarism”
“Montage” elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “harmonic montage” (e.g. gradually growing from different cinematic parameters sense of sadness: lowered sail, out-of-focus tent, bent posture of a man) - Emotional development by repeated gestures - “Heroic realism” with shot-to-shot organisation - Use of symbols for representation of emotions of the collective protagonist - Russian people (e.g. shots with lions in Odessa Steps) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing drama with organisation effects (e.g. structure of the ship (horizontal) and of the city (vertical)) - “Film language”: use of inter-titles in coordination with image (e.g. “one against all” - “all against one”, “suddenly” intertitle with cut-aways) - Accentuating an action by repeating it - Repeating of symbols (e.g. “single eye” as a symbol of power denying obvious truth) - Staging and cut-aways

Table 2: “Montage of Attractions” in “Battleship Potemkin”

Evidently, Eisenstein, relying mostly on montage and blurring the facts to create the “attractions”, differed from his contemporaries-factographers, that’s the reason why his film was criticised in the USSR, while abroad it was critically acclaimed. Taylor points out the “degree of political acclaim” reached by “Potemkin” (Taylor, p. 63-64), while Dickstein in his article “Battleship Potemkin and Beyond” claims that “In its own time “Potemkin” was considered so dangerous it was butchered or banned in many countries” (Dickstein, p. 93) and that “no film ever did more to pillory the repressions of a despotic regime” (Dickstein, p. 92). However, 1925 was still a year when factography as a movement was still setting up and reached its peak in the Soviet art in 1927, for the anniversary of the October Revolution, when Eisenstein’s next film dedicated to this event was released and unfortunately for him did not receive wide recognition among Soviet critics. Nevertheless, it was an important film because due to the lack of documentary material about the events of the October revolution, this “Eisenstein’s fictional re-creation of reality has, because of its verisimilitude, acquired the legitimacy of authentic documentary footage” (Taylor, p. 64).

Similarly, like in “Battleship Potemkin”, in “October” (1927) Eisenstein continues experimenting “widening his range of poetic editing devices” (Bordwell, p. 84).

Among them, Bordwell mentions rhythmic editing (including the presence of shots one-frame long), false eye-line matches and sound effects. Staying true to the “Montage of Attractions” he still plays with facts (for example, the scene in the Tsar’s wine cellar - the bottles were not destroyed by the sailors, they drank the wine); Bordwell names the film’s version of events “selective and exaggerated” (Bordwell, p. 80). However, this time, Eisenstein does not restrict the viewer from watching over the antagonists, which widens the perspective of knowledge for the spectator. Both protagonist and antagonist, like in “Potemkin” are collective in “October”: the provisional government (with Kerensky as the key figure) as a collective antagonist and people as the protagonist (led by Lenin). With this division, Eisenstein’s usage of contrasts also remains a very important tool in this film, especially for the collective enemies - Bolsheviks/people/Lenin and Mensheviks/Kerensky/Provisional Government. Additionally, Eisenstein increases the role of symbols, that was apparently one of the reasons for massive critique. Critics believed that there “will be little understood by masses” (Taylor, 66). The image of betrayal of the February revolution is created with the destruction of the Alexander III statue and its further restoration that symbolises that the February Revolution in fact restored bourgeoisie and that the February Revolution was only a first step towards the “real” October Revolution. Another significant symbol of God and its symbolisation was “a paradigm example of intellectual montage.” In the film, Eisenstein visually compares the concept of God and the idols in order to “draw anti-religious conclusions” (Taylor, p. 69). Visual comparisons are typical for “October” in general. For example, Kerensky is often compared to Napoleon.

With all the features mentioned above, Taylor notes “the enormous work and vast material contained in it” and claims that “October” was the most effective propaganda film ever made” (Taylor, p. 73). However, there was a lot of bad critical re-

sponse, and even an anti-Semitic caricature, which was also a result of that 1927 was a year when factography reached its apogee among Soviet artists and critics, and they, therefore, rejected Eisenstein's experimentalism. In his article "The Fixation of a Fact" published in *Novy Lef* in 1927, Osip Brik defines film as improved photography, thus designating the superiority of film as a "factographic" medium. Basically, this work became a manifesto for the concept of fact and factography (Dickerman, p. 144). There are several reasons why 1927 became a time when factography reached its apogee. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the visual media became the part of ordinary life (Fore, p. 6), but also it was the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, and the commemorative films were commissioned to the leading film makers in the Soviet Union. Therefore, by looking at these films more precisely one can see how factography influenced this media. One of the best examples of this is how the events of the October Revolution were depicted in film — dramatisation and distortion of the events. Apart from the above mentioned Eisenstein's "October", there were the other films that were supposed to commemorate this critical event in Soviet history. Some of them were not popular among the audience and critics (for example, Boris Barnet's "Moscow in October", 1927), while the others became very successful. One of the examples is Vsevolod Pudovkin's "The End of St Petersburg" (1927) with its famous scene of the battleship firing the Winter Palace, which in fact it was less dramatic than it was depicted by Pudovkin. However, probably the most significant work of the year that has a big success was Esfir Shub's debut work "The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty" (1927), which received very positive reviews from the Soviet critics and therefore proved that film was very efficient media for factographers, as well as vice-versa, factography had the big influence on Soviet film in late 1920s.

Even though Shub had worked with Meyerhold and Eisenstein before she started working on her first film and was, unlike Vertov, in friendly relationships with them, her work is very different. It might seem closer to Vertov's film with the fact that for the "The Fall" she did not use any staged material but without his "poetic tricks". However, the distinctive feature of her film was that no frame was filmed specially for it (excluding inter-titles), she used only existing footage from the private archive of Nikolai II. She had to work through thousands meters of footage in order to construct a "clear historical argument" (Roberts, 1997). So what did she do to make her contemporaries highly appreciated this film? First of all, and we could see it in both the Eisenstein's and Vertov's early films, as well as in photography work of factographers, was the firm structure that was achieved thorough shots selection and textual cues. The film consists of three parts: social inequality in Tsar's Russia, First World War, and the revolution. In each of them the effect of inevitable revolution was reached by the juxtaposition of shots revealing the contrasts of two different epochs: contrasting the hard work of the peasants with the self-entertaining lifestyle of Russian high class, she draws a parallel between social inequality and master-slave relations in the society (Sharp, 2008: 211); contraposition of "workers preparing death for their brothers" and Russian elite circles, the capitalists "those, to whom war was necessary" (intertitles from "The Fall").

Unsurprisingly, issued in the same year and dedicated to the same event, both Shub's "The Fall" and Eisenstein's "October" became a subject for comparison in Soviet art society, and the reviews were not in favour of the latter. Shub's film was praised as fully impersonal because it was constructed from the existing material, and therefore not distracting, truthful and convincing. With the Eisenstein's film, opposite, critics were afraid that the viewer might be "overwhelmed or distracted by the 'art' and

beauty of the shot compositions or by the excessive cleverness of the editing” (Stollery, 2002: 92). Another topic of discussion was the role of fiction and non-fiction film: while fiction film was supposed to work with the spectators’ emotions, the non-fiction film works with intellect, and therefore more persuasive as a propaganda tool (Roberts, 1991: 151-155).

As mentioned earlier, the key narrative devices and ideas communicated in the film were similar to photography propaganda works. Similarly, it actively involved the factographic tools such as usage of archive materials, visual linkage, framing, and contraposition. However, as it can be seen in Vertov’s and Eisenstein’s works, there was often too much “artistic” in their films. As this was exactly what made their works famous abroad, it was contrary to the objectives set by the government. How the Soviet government wanted to see propaganda in such an important new media as film can be inferred from the critical responses to the films produced: Vertov’s films were never really successful and “he was criticized for not being a real documentary filmmaker because he used so many “tricks” (Bittencourt, p. 20-23); he “was violating the factographic model” (Turvey, p. 83) even though influencing the factographers’ work; Eisenstein was criticised for “Battleship Potemkin” and especially “October” so much that his “career was never really recovered from the “failure” (Taylor, p. 73); while Shub did exactly what was needed by making the “enlightening” process more straightforward and trustworthy, and she indeed with “The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty” represented a perfect propagandist. This approach of being closer to people rather than art, as the second chapter will discover, is used by modern Russian propagandists. However, as the time passed, the way of communication obviously has changed in favour of new media platforms.

Chapter 2. Russian Documentary Propaganda in the 2010s

2.1. Identifying the Context – Transition to Putin’s Russia

After the Soviet Union collapsed, in the 1990s, Russia, as a direct successor of the USSR, continued the initiated by Gorbachev in 1985 transition towards the democratisation of the society led by its new president Boris Yeltsin. Democratisation of media, which were previously state-controlled up until 1990, was a parallel process that was happening mostly in the printed press. In 1991-1995 media were independent and worked as a “fourth estate”. It was happening at the same time with the television gaining the role of the key mass media with the biggest coverage (Zassoursky, pp.19-23). While criticising the authorities, most of the mass media remained on the president’s side until the First Chechen War (1994-1996) was launched by Yeltsin. It was happening at the same time with the presidential elections campaign when the current president’s ratings were on the lowest level of 6-10%. However, the active media campaign (with the TV playing a particularly crucial role) of 1996 managed to restore Yeltsin’s ratings and to bring him another victory. It was the first successful attempt in post-soviet Russia to manipulate public opinion through mass media³. Still, only with Putin mass media started serving government’s interests and experienced “serious development of the techniques for manipulating public opinions” (Zassoursky, pp. 57-63). The Second Chechen War (1999-2000) and especially its media coverage played a crucial role in growing public support during the Putin’s presidential campaign happening at the same period of time (Zassoursky, p. 123; Ross, p. 134). However, it was not until the 2000 tragedy with Kursk nuclear

³ The period of Yeltsin’s presidential campaign of 1996 could be an interesting case for a study on propaganda. However, for this research, the context of free media system makes it more difficult to draw parallels with the Soviet propaganda. Additionally, the documentary component, in this case, was less important, the whole period of the campaign and further attempts to manipulate public opinion “the society of spectacle”, that used “rules of drama and the logic of myth” (Zassoursky, p. 70). At the same time, this might be a good case study for another research on propaganda in societies with a free media system.

submarine, when the new president faced a big amount of criticism from mass media and started establishing the control over main media (Ross, p. 137; Zassoursky, p. 148). It was a continuous campaign against mass media freedom that included the amendments to the law on mass media and changes in the management of important TV channels (Ross, pp. 137-142), so from 2002 Putin have been enjoying all the big media to be free from criticism of his actions.

In this way, Putin established the media-political system that characterised by state-controlled media with only a few minor alternative media free from governmental control, rare interest in politics among the population and the “social dream of Great Russia”, but most importantly, by the Internet that started growing rapidly in 2000s (Zassoursky, pp. 20-23). This system worked perfectly well during the first two consequent Putin’s terms as the president and his position as the Prime-minister a term after until information coming from social media, blogs and online news editions about falsifications during the parliamentary elections of 2011 was widely spread among population which resulted in the massive protests and demonstrations in 2011-2013 (Sanovich, p. 11; Potapova, p. 9; Calabresi, p. 33). This required the government to look for the ways to deal with this situation, and the online media that did not experience that much control up until early 2010s, started experience the same pressure as the other media a decade before and most importantly, to pay particular attention to online media while looking for the ways to use it to influence people’s opinion (Velazquez-Linan, p. 83; Calabresi, p. 33). Propaganda along with the attempts to control online media in this period grew significantly and reached the peak of its activity in 2013-2014, during the Crimean crisis (Sanovich, p. 12; Sweet, p. 17).

Therefore, the analysis will be focused on this particular period of Russia's propaganda activities.

While comparing the context in Russia in the 2010s with the one in 1920s, at first sight, they may seem quite different considering the difference not just in almost a hundred years but also with a fact that basically, it was a completely different country. However, a closer look allows drawing some parallels between the two. First of all, just before the time frame analysed both countries experienced a transition period after a cardinal change in their vector of development. This did not allow the propaganda machine to establish itself in all the media so in these periods propaganda is rather experimental. From the analysis, it also became clear that in both cases the coverage of military and political conflicts has always been a crucial source for propaganda content, which is important as the content analysis is the main part of this research. And finally, as the analysis discovered so far, the role of new growing media is crucial for propagandists. It happened with cinema and photography in the USSR, the similar role was playing the fast-growing TV during Yeltsin's presidency (even though the media was not new) and, as the next chapter will demonstrate, is happening in the 2010s with online media.

2.2. Identifying the Key Propaganda Media – Digitalisation

Ivan Zassoursky concludes his book with the following statement: "Every new medium that is powerful enough to shape our lives provokes a great deal of disturbance while its popularity is spreading. For Russia in the nineties, television was such a medium" (Zassoursky, p. 229). Following this phrase, he questions the role of the Internet in the society of the XXI century. This chapter will try to answer this question

by tracking the development of online media in Russia in XXI century and their role in society and propaganda under the Putin's presidency, especially in the 2010s during the protests and the Crimean crisis.

As mentioned before, the end of XX century was marked by the elections of the second president of Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, a few days after the inauguration the biggest independent TV channel in Russia was invaded by the FSB, which marked the beginning of the campaign against free media, especially TV. The campaign against media freedom and establishment of the system where all the biggest media had a similar opinion was very fruitful. Apart from the fact that now TV media are almost entirely controlled by the government (Sweet, p. 18), TV news became a main source of information for 84% of Russians while only 1%-1,5% look for alternative media sources (Potapova, pp. 3; 6). Evidently, the content of news on TV plays important role in forming Russian opinions. However, the situation with digital media in Russia has been different from offline media during Putin's presidency, and there is a reason why it happened. First of all, the government simply did not see a reason for any restrictions because any political goal was achievable with traditional media, especially. It was proved by two consequence presidential elections: Yeltsin's in 1996 and Putin's 2000 (Zassoursky, p. 183). At the same time, it resulted in active development of Russian Internet segment, that characterised by the appearance and winning the dominance on the Russian market of the domestic social networks VK and Odnoklassniki, as well as Russian search engine Yandex, that, unlike in China won their shares on the open market competing with American giants like Facebook and Google. Additionally, LiveJournal, an originally American online blogging website, was owned by a Russian media company in 2009 (Sanovich, pp. 6-8). This all was happening during the fast growth of the Internet penetration in the country that reached

80% at the time of the Crimean crisis (Statista). But due to the TV dominance in Russian media system described above, there was no reason to establish control over the Internet. Up until the beginning of the current decade when the government faced first serious political competition online during the protests of 2011-2013. However, while the domestic companies like Yandex and VK can be simply bought out and controlled, which eventually happened, it is not possible with companies like Facebook or Twitter. Therefore, as Sanovich suggests that there were two ways for the government: either to shut them down completely or develop an approach and tools required for its realisation that would allow to take over the online media (Sanovich, p. 12). Luckily for them, these tools had already existed⁴, and, as Potapova claims, Facebook became a perfect environment for digital propaganda (Potapova, p. 8). Bots and trolls became the new tool that further appeared in other social media and comment sections of news websites. While bots do not produce any content, only spreading the existing one, they are not the subject of the study, which is paying attention to content only. At the same time, they distribute a big amount of content by taking it from certain sources and in this way can significantly influence the top themes that popular in certain social media or blogs.

Answering the question of this chapter, either online media has already become prevailing in Russia as propaganda tools; the answer is clearly negative. TV has still the greatest coverage among all the media channels. However, it is evident in the active usage, the government sees a great potential in this media. Similarly to how in the 1920s in USSR both artists and politicians saw the future of propaganda in factographic visual media, such as film and photography, even though as comparatively

⁴ Sanovich claims that bots and trolls use modified search engine optimisation (SEO) technology, that due to a fast growth of the local search engine by Yandex, got a boost to development. It also allows to measure the success of propaganda and therefore to improve the efficiency campaigns.

new media they were just growing, and probably they were inferior to the radio and literature in terms of coverage that were still important media to communicate with the audiences, in Russia digital space in the recent time became the most active tool for the Russia propagandists in both Russia and abroad and, as the following chapter will discover, often were used in conjunction with TV in order to spread the content similar or identical to the one distributed online.

2.3. Ideas, Values, and Narrative Devices – Synergy of Online and TV

As the previous chapter showing, TV is not just a media with the highest coverage but also the main source of information for Russians. Sanovich claims that TV while being a controlled media with no real opposition “descended into increasingly crude, evidence-free, often provocative political posturing” (Sanovich, p. 6). Therefore, the content for TV shows and news can easily be used identically to online propaganda. Moreover, as Potapova claims, visual TV content sometimes can be directly taken from online sources. Therefore, this chapter will focus on analysing the content of the new, online media, as well as an analysis of original documentary TV content will be provided in order to demonstrate the holistic approach on TV and Online in the similarity of communicated ideas and narrative devices. This analysis will also focus on the Crimean crisis of 2013-2014 rather than the protest period of 2011-2013 as it is more recent. As the basis for the study, a combination of existing analyses of digital and TV propaganda in Russia as well as original analysis will be used. But before talking about the content and narrative devices, it is important to define the ideas and values that are communicated by the propagandists.

Potapova in her research about the roots of Russian propaganda mentions three reasons why Russia developed favourable conditions for propaganda, which are

the closed environment of the country, the post-Soviet mentality (“adapting to a repressive state, and unwillingness to come out of their comfort zone and participate in political and civic life” — Potapova, p. 3) and the fact that even during the democratic Yeltsin’s presidency in 1990 the communication “was dominated by Soviet intellectuals who blamed Western democracy for the loss of their social benefits” (p. 5). Evidently, this helped in forming the general discourse in Russia, described by Miguel Vazquez-Linan. He called this discourse neoconservatism or neotraditionalism (Vazquez-Linan, pp. 78-81). They characterise this discourse by the following identity elements: Russian greatness, Russian traditions and glorious past in present-day Russia, that can be transformed into the objectives and approaches for communication listed in table 3.

Identity element	Glorious past	Russian greatness	High traditions
Objective	Create nostalgia for the past	Create anti-western attitude	Discredit social change as contrary to traditional values
Approach	Actively remind of the great past	Build image of the enemy	Expand religion and traditional spiritual values

Table 3: Russian neoconservative discourse

This identity has been actively building “on TV channels and in school history books” (Vazquez-Linan, p. 78) and “with patriotic education programmes” (Snyder, p. 4). However, in the recent years, same communication starts appearing online, and not just on the official online version of offline mass media and their accounts on social networks, but also in comment sections of these websites and groups in social media posted by the above-mentioned trolls and distributed further by bots.

Propaganda in social media was first actively used in 2011, in the period of massive protests in many cities in Russia as a response to the fact that the opposition

used social media to organise the protests (Calabresi, p. 33). Sanovich claims that they achieved these goals by “posting diversionary comments in the high-profile opposition blogs, plus retweeting and reposting pro-government blogs” (Sanovich, p. 9). However, it left unnoticed mainly because it did not spread abroad until 2014 when during the Crimean crisis the information campaign was required in Russia in order to “whitewash Russian actions on the west” but also in Ukraine “to brainwash the Ukrainian population” (Sanovich, p. 3). Tools used by the propagandists during the Crimean campaign are described in Szwed’s analysis of the visual content in Social Media (Facebook and VK). It is important to mention here that according to Szwed, not only Russian audience was under influence of this propaganda, but also the Russian-speaking audiences from Ukraine and some EU countries (Szwed, pp. 5-6).

As the key linguistic tools, Szwed mentions metaphors, idioms, neologism and stereotyping. However, he also states that online propaganda is “highly visualised” (Szwed, p. 8). He claims that the main reason for this is that the perception of images is way better than of texts, and they create a better emotional response (Szwed, p. 8; Rose, 2012; Barthes, 1987) and finally, “because of the trust we place in visual materials, they are an effective tool for creating false realities” (Szwed, p. 85). Linguistic tools are especially important in the Internet memes, another way of visualisation communicated values with an addition of textual information. Analysing the memes, he concludes that there are three “myths” communicated through both visual and textual components: “Myth of Great Russia”; “Myth of fighting for a new world order based on human-dimension values”; “Myth of combating lapsed traditional values in the west” (Szwed, p. 112). These “myths” effectively enhanced by the identity elements of Russian neoconservative discourse (see table 3). In his further analysis of visual materials, Szwed identifies two main narrative devices used by propagandists:



Figure 9: Russian Crimea. Facebook



Figure 10: Russian Crimea. Facebook



Figure 11: AntiMaidan. Facebook



Figure 12: "Straight path..." Meme



Figure 13: CrimeaReality. Facebook



Figure 14: Russian Embassy. Twitter

framing and photomontage. As the style tools, he mentions satire, symbolism (active usage of traditional symbols) and strong expressiveness. Figures 9 and 10 create the positive image of Russian army while figures 11 and 12 create the image of nationalists and murderers with their president leading them to the graveyard. The most interesting here are the meme from a pro-Russian Facebook group (figure 13) and a tweet by Embassy of Russia (figure 14) in the UK as they represent almost all narrative devices and depict all the aspects of Russian neoconservative discourse in one image used by propagandists online, even though target mostly international audiences and Russians living abroad. In this way, Russian propagandists build the image of Ukraine and EU as the enemies, refer the memories about the Great Patriotic War against fascism, point out Russia's high traditional values against the corrupted values of the "declining" and aggressive West. At the same time, however, Szwed notices that the effectiveness of online propaganda on its own is not very high when the audience has access to alternative sources (e.g. websites of international news companies or opposition groups on social media). In order to increase the efficiency of online propaganda, Russia implements a holistic approach, where offline media controlled by the government are used in combination with offline propaganda. This synergetic approach, according to Szwed, performs much better (p. 7).

First of all, holistic approach is visible in terms of communication. Potapova states that the Internet (blogs and social media) is a platform for initial distribution of the content, while then this content can be distributed further in the news and comedy and talk-shows on TV (Potapova, p. 8). For example, this is often a case in one of the analytical programs in Russia on the second biggest TV channel Vesti Nedeli (compare figure 15 with figure 17 and figure 16 with figure 11). Figure 16 is not the same as the photo from the anti-revolutionary pro-Russian Facebook community (fig-



Figure 15: “Falling down.” Vesti Nedeli



Figure 16: “Ukrainian fascism.” Vesti Nedeli



Figure 17: “It is impossible to save someone who is enjoying his death.” Meme

ure 11), but it uses the same symbols of representing Ukrainian revolutionaries as fascist, the similar image from the TV programme uses the direct textual information to communicate this idea it says “Ukrainian fascism.” At the same time, the meme (figure 17) and the TV screenshot (figure 15) show both identical images and similar textual cues directly stating the “falling” or “dying” of Ukraine with its current politics: “Falling down” and “It is impossible to save someone who is enjoying his death.”

This approach can also work another way — against the information spread on the Internet by opposition sources. For example, Julia Sweet mentions in her analysis that as a response to the information on the Internet about killed or detained during the operation on the East of Ukraine, “the structure of the TV coverage was modified

in order to overshadow controversial news” (Sweet, p. 20). In this analysis of TV propaganda during the Crimean crisis, she studies the massive TV campaign aiming to whitewash the actions of Russia on Crimean peninsula during the events of 2014. Among the main objective of this propaganda she mentions the following: “identify the enemy and the subverters of peace in the state; construct a strong association between Nazism and the revolt against the corrupted regime in Ukraine; weaken the protest potential within society and undermine public sympathy for the Russian opposition” (p. 17). Clearly, it matches with the objectives of Russian neoconservative discourse, as well as with the objective for the online propaganda. Analysing the amount of TV news, talk shows and documentaries during in 2013-2015, she makes it clear that there was a massive media campaign organised in order to work with these objectives (Sweet, p. 18). Sweet bases her analysis mainly on quantitative data with a little of content analysis. In order to define narrative devices, the content of the documentary films about the Crimean crisis as well as the protests are due to be analysed.

“Anatomy of the protest” (2012) is a documentary in two parts aiming to discredit the actions of Putin’s opposition, especially those who organised the protests in 2011-2012. While the first part is based on a series of interviews with experts claiming that the participants in the protests received money for it, the central part of the second is the footage from a hidden video camera. The film claims that people shown are the opposition leaders and they are discussing the international funding of the protests and plans for revolution with the further seizure of the power in the country. However, bad quality of the footage and the voiceover do not allow to understand the topic of discussion, while these claims are communicated through subtitles. Hence, the main objective of both films is to build the negative image of the opposition, lower

its popularity among people by discrediting their actions, in case of the second film, using the existing negative image of the US and the EU created by media. Narrative devices used in the films is framing and montage. In the second film, however, video content is rather supportive, while main ideas are communicated by text and audio. It is also important to note that there is no information about the creators of the film.

“Crimea — way back home” (2015) presents a big interview with Putin and some of the participants of the events during the Crimean crisis. The aim of this film is the same as for the online content analysed earlier. First of all, during the whole movie actions of the Crimean population Russian army are opposed to the actions of the Ukrainian revolutionists and its new government after the revolution. The film features mixed documentary and reconstructed cuts, although it is difficult to distinguish the real footage, mainly due to the film lacks providing sources, and there is a minimum of documentary footage used; therefore, framing and montage are the key tools used in the film. Appeal to emotions is evident with the highly emotional interviews (even with Putin, who rarely expresses emotions — Szwed, p. 93). A friendly and “non-military” image is created for Russian soldiers in the peninsula during the events of 2014 while Ukrainian forces’ image is built as aggressive. Mentioning of the EU and the US positions on the Crimean crisis as condemnatory helps in building the image of a collective enemy. At the same time, the terminology used in the film is crucial. Apart from the title of the film, the terminology such as “reunification” used to describe the events obviously aims to demonstrate Russia’s actions in a positive light. Sets play a very important role as well. For example, one of the interviews is filmed in the bus destroyed during a bus attack in Crimea. It is also important to note here that the “Crimea” is also available with subtitles on several European languages on one of the website of Russian news agency broadcasting internationally (Sputnik, 2015). Russian

TV propaganda, clearly, is also targeted at the international audiences, including Russian speakers abroad, as well as online propaganda.

Evidently, visual content retains its importance in Russian propaganda, and the main reason for this is how it is perceived by the audience. This also explains why Soviet propagandists saw visual media as important propaganda tools. However, the narrative devices used by Russian propagandists, unlike those used by factographers, do not pay that much attention to realism, appealing only to emotions without engaging a viewer into a thoughtful process, like works by Soviet photographers and film makers. The reason for this may be in lacking coherence in communicated ideas, as noticed by Potapova in her research. She claims that it is caused by the fact that Russian contemporary ideology lacks coherence and often is based on contradictory ideas (Potapova, p. 3-4). Indeed, the USSR paid particular attention in its propaganda to praise the Revolution and the future of the great country and opposing it to its past with the main enemies of the Revolution – imperialists and capitalists. Russia creates this image of the enemy as well, but the greatness of the country is being built on its past, where the position of the Soviet period is uncertain. The expansion of the traditional values based on the orthodox religion also is contrary to the Soviet past promoting atheism. However, this is exactly why Russian propaganda itself is required to be holistic in every media. Only by communication of the same ideas and values in all media, the negative effects of this lack of coherence can be neutralised. This also explains the ‘impersonification’ of Russian propaganda, when the content creators often remain anonymous and the content itself, unlike in the USSR, lacks ‘personal style’, and that is why Russian government pays particular attention to online propaganda in the media formerly comparatively free from control.

Conclusion

For a significant period in Russian history, propaganda has been a part of the country's media environment. For this research paper, two comparatively short periods from the last two centuries were analysed in order to explore and compare the narrative devices used in both periods: the 1920s and 2010s. Apart from the fact that today's Russia is a comparatively young direct successor of the USSR, that predictably causes some similarities in the people's identity and values, there are some similarities in historical and political context of these two periods that were revealed in this paper. For this comparative analysis, in accordance with a definition of propaganda, three main aspects for comparison were identified: context, media and content.

The context and media analysis revealed the common grounds in propaganda development in both periods. First of all, in both cases, the country was exiting the transition period after changing the vector of its development. Secondly, there were new media emerging and growing in both periods: cinema and photography in the USSR and digital media in Russia. As a result, the propaganda, especially in the emerging media, experienced the period of formation, and by the time of comparison was still experimental in nature. And finally, as the context analysis has shown, in both cases propaganda was very in demand. The differences, however, mainly related to the specific characteristics of the media environment in both countries. While in the USSR the birth of the "factographic" approach in art determined the key propaganda media in favour of the above mentioned visual media, in Russia, TV during the XXI century has never been overthrown from its position of the main propaganda tool and source of information for Russian people. The government started paying particular attention to online media only after it, left unattended, experienced fast growth as well

as the political opposition in it. This resulted in the development of new digital propaganda technology — bots and trolls, as well as the implementation of a holistic approach to the content on TV and online in order not just simply enter the digital territory but also to achieve the synergetic effect by communicating similar messages online and offline or even use the high TV coverage in order to spread online content.

Regarding the content, the analysis revealed that visual component remained crucial since the emergence of factography in the USSR, which defined one of the key devices used by propagandists in both periods — emotional expressiveness. Symbolisation and satire are the main narrative devices appealing to emotions. The role of the textual information in propaganda remains similarly important. While the image causes emotional engagement, the text aims to navigate the correct reading of the communication message. As for the documentary propaganda, existing material is commonly used in both cases, which leads to the popularity of montage and framing techniques by both Russian and Soviet propagandists. Contraposition is an actively used device due to the shared approach to the communication of building an image of the enemy in Russia and the USSR. At the same time, the other objective for propaganda in Russia is different; therefore these similarities in narrative devices used in both cases demonstrate that they do not depend on ideological component of the communicated message but rather efficient in its delivery, especially when the approaches in the national discourse lack coherence. At the same time, the analysis of the Soviet film propaganda discovered the main difference in the tools used by the propagandists in two cases. Soviet propagandists, especially Vertov and Eisenstein, created with their distinct style and narrative devices and often required the viewer's intellectual involvement. Russian government uses the opposite approach, implementing the minimum effective narrative devices in its propaganda. It pays more at-

tention to the massive coverage, keeping the message simple and emotional, and navigating the thinking process with text captions and subtitles. In this way, digital content, created and distributed by bots and trolls, is simple in production and easily distributed, including abroad, that makes digital territory very convenient for propaganda purposes and, evidently, will remain among the interests of the Russian government for further development and control.

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