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PROHIBITION AS A METHOD OF STRUGGLE AGAINST ANTI-UKRAINIAN FILMS

ABSTRACT

Purpose. This study aims to reveal the experience of Ukraine in banning as a method of struggle against Russian propagandist anti-Ukrainian films.

Methods. Deduction technique as a process of logical concluding based on the complex of analyzed facts as well as summarizing have been applied.

Results. Cinematographic informational aggression of Russia against Ukraine began in 2000 with the coming to power of V. Putin. Taking into consideration the fact, that it is television which is the most popular source of information for the absolute majority of Russians it can be claimed that Russian propagandistic films, which are very products of Putin's policy, played not the last role in inciting aggression among Russian population.

Discussion. Since 2000 Russian cinema production has started to actively focus on popularization of their own power structures and producing films propagating war, aiming at inciting of inter-ethnic, religious aggression, humiliation of Ukrainian nation, humiliation of an individual etc. the films have been heating up Russian's aggression against Ukrainians and preparing Russia's population for the war with Ukraine. These films possess great potential to form mythological thinking and stereotyping of viewers' views.

Practice has proved that introducing prohibitions as a method of struggle against anti-Ukrainian propagandist films is quite an effective method of defense.

KEYWORDS: *cinema, incitement to ethnic or racial hatred, movie character, propaganda, stereotype*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000 Russian cinema production has started to actively focus on popularization of their own power structures and producing films propagating war, aiming at inciting of inter-ethnic, religious aggression, humiliation of Ukrainian nation, humiliation of an individual etc. the films have been heating up Russian's aggression against Ukrainians and preparing Russia's population for the war with Ukraine. These films possess great potential to form mythological thinking and stereotyping of viewers' views.

THE IMAGE OF THE UKRAINIAN IN MODERN RUSSIAN FILMS

Vasily Rasevich, a researcher of the politics of historical memory in cinema, notes that in modern Russian films, positive heroes (of course, Russians) are traditionally portrayed with anthropologically correct facial features and Ukrainian characters – conversely. Physiognomy is a very important thing in modern Russian films and series. The names and surnames of the heroes also play an important role. If there is a completely negative character, he or she will be called Yushchenko, for example. Or the name of such an antihero will be consonant with a real character of Ukrainian history. Traitors in Russian films, as a rule, all have a surname with the suffix – enko (a suffix typical of Ukrainian surnames). These characters are perfectly spelled out and each has its own mission [*Yak fil'my manipulyuyut' svidomisty...* 2013; Stepanova 2020; Mayofis 2022].

It is also difficult to disagree with Vladimir Danylenko that current Russian cinema resembles the worst Soviet traditions: “In modern Russian cinema, the image of a Ukrainian is a projection of outdated Russian myths about Ukrainians, as inferior, artificial people, created by Western European countries hostile to Russia. And this artificial, laboratory-bred people, like

a dangerous virus, challenges the existence of Russian identity, so Russian cinema mobilizes the Russian nation to fight Ukrainian community. In Russian films, Ukrainians appear as traitors, people who are grounded, primitive, devoid of high noble impulses” [Danylenko 2013, 53].

For example, in the film *“Black Hunters 2”* [*Black Hunters 2*, 2010] it is shown that the fighters of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army [abbreviated UPA] shoot in Ukrainian civilians. Instead, scientific research proves that the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army should not be viewed so one-sidedly. Due to the inaccessibility of the KGB archives remaining on the territory of the Russian Federation and Russia’s concealment of the truth, a complete and truthful analysis and description of the events of that time remains impossible. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army has a complicated history, but its main declared task was the struggle for Ukraine’s independence – and first of all against the Soviet government. And the Soviet occupation authorities took various immoral and inhumane measures to suppress anti-Soviet formations.

Documents stored in the Archives of the Security Service of Ukraine show that after the Second World War, the Soviet authorities created special units of Chekists, who under the guise of troops of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, killed Ukrainian civilians in order to undermine public confidence: “The Ministry of State Security of the Ukrainian SSR and its Departments in the Western Regions of Ukraine, in order to identify the hostile, Ukrainian-nationalist underground, widely use the so-called special groups operating under the guise of bandits UPA... The bodies of the Ministry of State Security of the USSR, under the leadership of the party, are doing a great deal of work to uproot the remnants of the Ukrainian nationalist, bandit underground, in the fight against which any means and cunning and dexterity are needed” [*Dokladnaya zapiska...* 1949]. Which is why in modern Russian society the stereotype of a mean and cruel Ukrainian Bandera nationalist continues to be cultivated by various means.

Another favorite myth of Russian propaganda is that Ukrainian nationalists were allies of fascist troops in World War II, which is why the modern Russian media often use the term “Bandero-fascists”. However, the documents show completely opposite facts – in particular, the order to the Nazi task forces (Einsatzkommando) to destroy Bandera members as fighters for Ukraine’s

independence without trial. This document is stored in Volume 39 of the Complete Nuremberg Proceedings [Hromenko].

It can be assumed that if access to Russian KGB archives is opened, the demonization of Ukrainian nationalist forces by Soviet and Russian cinema may prove unproven and baseless.

Summarizing these trends in cinema and analyzing the Russian media space in general, we can say that stereotypes about the Ukrainian enemy are not limited to feature films – they are spread throughout the Russian-language information space [Sokolova 2017; Sokolova 2018; Sokolova 2019a; Sokolova 2019b; Sokolova 2021].

Analyzing the technique of creating hostility to Ukraine and Ukrainians, we agree with I. Pavlenko and V. Semenenko that the model of the enemy here has several semantic components:

- the main mechanism for creating a consolidated image of the enemy is the deprivation of his individual human traits. This uses the technology of assigning nicknames and labeling. In the case of the modern “feeding” of the Russian stereotype “a Ukrainian – an enemy”, the image of “fascism” created in Soviet times is used [Sokolova 2022];
- since the “enemy” must be a threat, a peculiar feature of the anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign was the creation of a stable link between Ukraine and the United States. Thus, the negative emotions and fears of Russians associated with the United States (as a stronger superpower than Russia) are automatically transferred to Ukraine with an additional context – accusing Ukrainians of “treason” and “betrayal”;
- denial of identity – is to popularize the Russian theory of the fictitiousness of the Ukrainian language and nation, which also develops accusations of “betrayal”;
- denial of statehood – questioning the legitimacy of the current authorities as well as the Ukrainian state in general, insisting on the failure of the Ukrainian state (failed state);
- creation of oppositional images of norms and pathologies, when Russian “noble heroes” (soldiers and volunteers) are opposed to Ukrainian “monsters”, “perverts” and “sadists” [Pavlenko, Semenenko 2017, 199].

PROHIBITION OF PROPAGANDA ANTI-UKRAINIAN FILMS IN UKRAINE

In 2014 the Ukrainian public spotted interconnection between Russian propaganda in its different kinds and activation of anti-Ukrainian manifestations in Ukraine – hence it started to apply to regulatory bodies regarding possibility to ban Russian films and serials which propagandize military aggression and force structures of Russian Federation. Therefore, aiming to defend informational television and radio space of Ukraine, The National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting has activated monitoring of Ukrainian television and radio companies regarding their compliance with the Laws of Ukraine “On Cinematography” [*Law of Ukraine “On Cinematography”* 1998] and “On amendments to some laws of Ukraine regarding the protection of the informational television and radio space of Ukraine” [*Law of Ukraine “On amendments to some laws... 2015*].

In accordance with Part 6 of Art. 70 of the Law of Ukraine “On Television and Radio Broadcasting” [*Law of Ukraine “On Television and Radio Broadcasting”* 1993], in case of detection of violations of the legislation on cinematography, The National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting appeals to the State Agency on Film Affairs of Ukraine which, according to Art. 15 and Art. 15-1 of the Law of Ukraine “On Cinematography” [*Law of Ukraine “On Cinematography”* 1998], annuls the state certificate on the right to distribute and show films and cancels the state registration of the film [*Report of the National Council... 2016, 11; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers... 1998*]. The National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting issues posts actual list of banned films on its website in section “Films that do not have a rental license”. As of 10/24/2018 the general list included 777 titles of films and serials banned due to many reasons provided by the law [*Expert List 2019*].

The following groups of films are subject to state certificate annulment and cancellation of registration:

Group 1. Films regardless the country of origin, produced after September 1st 1991, which contain popularization or propaganda of the governmental bodies of the aggressor state, as well as films produced by individuals or legal

entities of the aggressor state, produced (or made public for the first time) after 1st January 2014.

According to Art. 15-1 of the Law of Ukraine “On Cinematography” [*Law of Ukraine “On Cinematography”* 1998], film is considered to contain popularization or propaganda of state organs of the aggressor state as well as their particular actions which create positive image of the aggressor state workers image, soviet security agencies, justifies or recognizes occupation of Ukrainian territory if there is at least one of the following features in it:

- among the positive heroes of the film are employees (including former or freelance) of the bodies of the aggressor state, soviet security agencies;
- the plot of the film is directly or indirectly related to the activities of the governmental bodies of the aggressor state, the Soviet security agencies, and this activity is presented positively in the film;
- the plot of the film directly or indirectly denies or questions the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the occupation of the territory of Ukraine is justified or presented positively; acts of aggression by other states, unleashing of the war, exclusivity, inferiority of individuals on the basis of their religious beliefs, belonging to a certain nation or race, property status and social origin are propagandized.

Group 2. Films with participation of the individual, included the published in accordance to the procedure List of individuals who pose a threat to national security [*List of individuals posing a threat...*].

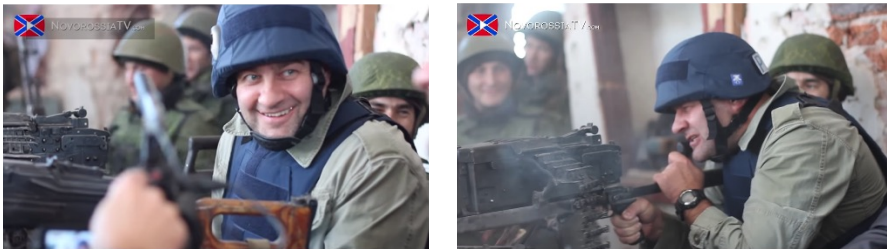
The list of individuals posing a threat to national security is made by the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine based on the appeals of National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Security Services of Ukraine, National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting. The reason for creating this list was individuals who signed the appeal of cultural figures of the Russian Federation to support the policy of Russia’s president V. Putin in Ukraine and the Crimea.

As of 10/18/2019 this list contained 150 individuals and it is being upgraded continuously [*Expert List* 2019]. They are mostly cultural figures – famous actors, directors, singers etc. – i.e., people who are ideals, idols for a certain

part of people. Almost every activity and statement of such figures are not left behind by the press attention and, accordingly, average supporters. That is why their words and actions are significant activators of an average citizen worldview deformation, particularly in stereotyping of thinking.

The list, for example, includes a widely known Russian actor Mikhail Porechenkov. On the YouTube channel “NOVOROSSIYA TV” 10/30/2014 a video „Porechenkov in Donetsk Airport” was made public. In this video the honored artist of Russia Mikhail Porechenkov wearing a helmet with the inscription “PRESS” fires a large-caliber machine gun in the direction of Ukrainian positions.

Photo 1. Porechenkov at the Airport of Donetsk is firing in the direction of Ukrainian positions.



Source: [Porechenkov in Donetsk Airport 2014].

So, Porechenkov as a popular Russian actor actually showed an example as to the very actions, in his opinion, are acceptable regarding the citizens of Ukraine. By his example he encouraged anti-Ukrainian aggression. Accompanying the shooting with an enthusiastic smile, the author has pointed that such actions are also exciting and fill a person with wonderful impressions. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security Service of Ukraine opened criminal proceedings for participating in the illegal military formations and his relation to Donetsk shootings of civilians in the ranks of the terrorist organization “DNR”. And his name is included in the list of persons who pose a threat to the national security of Ukraine.

Group 3. The films containing materials (expressions, action etc.), “propagating war, violence, cruelty, fascism and neofascism, aimed at liquidation of Ukraine’s independence, exasperating of inter-ethnic, racial, religious enmity,

humiliation of nation, disrespect for national and religious shrines, humiliation of an individual”. Lists of such films are created based on the conclusions of expert committee on films distribution and screening.

At the author’s (Sofia Sokolova) request to the State Agency on Cinema of Ukraine on statistics and grounds of prohibition of film production in Ukraine a letter about information provision No.124314-2/11-18 from 09/17/2018 has been received. The analyses of the obtained data shows that during Russian-Ukrainian war 176 films of Russian directors, who propagate violence and aimed at depreciation of the nation were banned [Chart 1].

Chart 1. Release of films banned in Ukraine due to propagating violence, aiming at the humiliation of the nation.



Source: own processing based on the data of the State agency of Ukraine on Cinema [Letter of the State Agency on Cinema of Ukraine... 2018; Expert List 2019].

CONCLUSIONS

The peak of film production in the analyzed direction falls on 2012. 2000 is the start growing point. Cinematographic informational aggression of Russia against Ukraine began precisely in 2000 with the coming to power of V. Putin. Taking into consideration the fact, that it is television which is the most popular source of information for the absolute majority of Russians it can be claimed that Russian propagandistic films, which are very products of Putin's policy, played not the last role in inciting aggression among Russian population.

In 2014 the Ukrainian public started to apply to regulatory bodies regarding possibility to ban Russian films and serials which propagandize military aggression and force structures of Russian Federation.

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