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**PROPAGANDA POSTERS IN THE SOVIET POLITICAL POST-WAR  
DISCOURSE**

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***Abstract***

At all times propaganda poster served as the most powerful weapon in the fight for political space. A propaganda poster is used as a basic method of the informatively-psychological affecting mass consciousness. This method of influence is characterized by vividness, expressiveness, knowableness of characters. The origin of propaganda posters as a genre came to the epoch of the establishment of the Soviet Union. In post-war years propaganda posters penetrated to all the spheres of people's life: work, rest, sport, medicine, space. Most posters are accompanied by appeals, slogans propulsive to the active actions. Soviet propaganda did support on the sense of justice and the ideal of equality of a soviet man. The literature on soviet posters and soviet propaganda is enormous. At the same time there has been no dedicated study on the research of the soviet life in posters in the post-war period. In our article we try to fill this lacuna. The real life of soviet people was reflected in the media. It was in the painting, monumental architecture, statuary, banners, and posters. It was lauded in poetry, theatre, cinema and songs. Transforming political leaders into a symbol which embodies an ideological vision is a key tactic in mobilising a population to identify as a cohesive whole, to strive for common goals and to behave in prescribed ways.

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**Keywords:** Propaganda poster, influence, manipulation, soviet space, political discourse, propaganda.



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## **1. Introduction**

It is not a secret that political activity is inextricably linked with language. These two constants are continuously correlated with each other. At the same time, the policy is based not only on language principles and postulates, but also on the principle of speech visualization. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the need for language (or cultural development of linguistic instinct) arose from the socialization of people, including the formation of coalitions, signaling the boundaries of groups and everything that implies these events, including the emergence of what is called mutual altruism (Reveley, 2015). This, of course, does not mean that language arises separately from these motives or functions (Eatwell, 2006).

### **1.1. A few words about the history of the poster.**

It is noted that at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union, the development of poster art was of great importance. In difficult times the revolutionary slogans of the posters defended the idea of the young state (Baburina, 1985). They became a powerful weapon and helped people in difficult circumstances. Generally accepted text and expressive image was enjoyed by people with great popularity, and the need for rapid transfer of personal information provided the speed of development of the Soviet poster (Ades & McClean, 2009). It became a reflection of time and changes in people's lives (D'Alleva, 2005). A popular poster by I. Toidze is still remained. It reveals the slogan "the Motherland calls!" with the image of a woman with an arm thrown forward. This image is highly used and known still at present (Bucci, Maskit, & Murphy, 2016).

The basic principles of visual presentation of information (color, pattern recognition, the minimum content of words with their external expressiveness, individuality of the font, clearly defined and expressed idea) – all they contribute to the rapid response of a person to the information received (Dziuba, 2015). The recipient immediately develops the necessary emotions, feelings. For this reason, most posters are accompanied by appeals, slogans, which in turn express a call for action.

### **1.2. The propaganda poster as a separate genre.**

A poster, taking the form of fine arts, realizes a specific narrowly applied aspect in solving certain social problems (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The main idea of the poster is formed through a clear and profitable context, understandable to every viewer (Alekseev, 2015). The conciseness of expressed information transmitted by the poster's figurative position, the need for rapid replication determine the peculiarities of the artistic decision and the choice of the style of execution: sharp contours, minimal black and white, limited plans and the number of colours (Jiang, 2010). Appeal to the emotional sphere, interests, viewer's memory allow people to achieve unity of artistic form and content of the poster (Rehberg, 2015). The popularity of propaganda posters as an independent genre was not spared by the Soviet era. As history shows, the active use of posters in this country falls on the periods of instability, crisis. The revolution of 1917 has led to the flourishing of the genre of a poster. There was an urgent necessary in the context of a full reassessment of the country's cultural and political values. The political elite had to transmit information as quickly and figuratively as possible.

If we turn to the main functions of the propaganda poster, it can be noted that a special role was to support the Soviet people, to raise the morale of the army (despite the fact that we are talking about the post-war period). In the analyzed period many posters were created. They reflected the era of the Soviet people.

At the same time, the posters touched the historical themes, depicting national heroes, heroes of the civil war. Among the most widespread subjects of the poster throughout all post-war period was the image of the woman who replaced the man who had gone to the front. Women were at the factories, on the fields.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Soviet posters are closely related to ideology and propaganda, despite the fact that the nature of this connection is not exactly established. In our article we will try to answer the question: «To what extent are Soviet propaganda posters of the postwar period related to propaganda and ideology?»

The use of propaganda can be seen at different times and in different types of society. The main goal was to spread and strengthen the ideology. For realization of this purpose in the country there were various tools. However, until the twentieth century propaganda was a by-product of ideological expansion. Consequently, this linguistic phenomenon did not exist independently. The emergence of propaganda provoked the expansion of forms of ideology, subject to the preservation of its forms and content. Soviet rulers perceived propaganda as a tool of ideology, used it as a driving force in the movement of the country forward. This was particularly acute in the post-war period, when there was a huge emphasis on the development and production of propaganda. At the same time, ideology played a less significant role. This led to a situation where the propaganda apparatus became more important than the ideology itself.

Ideology and doctrine became only auxiliary elements in the structure of the new propaganda. Their tasks were reduced to the greatest mobilization of people. Here, the campaign poster is a decisive and primary means for the implementation of the tasks. And the tasks, as we know, were fundamental and reduced to a single thought – the power of the party and the state. The government ought to be supported by the masses, the unity of the people. The posters synthesized ideology, Communist symbols and Marxist slogans. This newly created style of propaganda strengthened the effect produced by the Soviet propaganda posters. It is a well-known fact that the true function of propaganda was not the desire to expand the Communist ideology, but rather the strengthening of state power. In this regard, when ideology is an effective tool of propaganda, rather than motivating and controlling force, propaganda began to take all possible forms and perform a variety of functions. After all the political changes, propaganda has evolved and acquired new shapes and shades. This served as a maintenance and strengthening of the political situation in the Soviet era.

### **2.1. The spread of the ideology to the masses**

The Soviet government actively used brochures and party newspapers to spread its ideology, but this was not enough in the struggle for mass consciousness. It is the desire to convey their ideology to a large percentage of the population. It was a key moment in expanding the potential of the campaign poster.

## **2.2. From the newspaper to the campaign poster**

The Soviet Union had a great experience in print media. The problem was that not all the population of the country was intelligent and not everyone was able to read a newspaper article, to understand the leaflet. Ideological party works were all quite difficult for mass consciousness to understand. Thus, newspapers alone could not spread revolutionary fervor and build a new society. The response of the Bolsheviks to this dilemma was the propaganda poster. Despite the inconsistency of this statement, political posters, resembled to some extent traditional Russian Orthodox icons. They portrayed symbols in a simple and easily recognizable way. This path was the perfect way to reach the minds of barely literate peasants. Initially, at the stage of formation of the Soviet Union campaign posters pursued different goals. First, they spread the Marxist-Leninist ideas. At the same time, literacy has been spreading throughout the country.

## **3. Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to identify the linguistic features of the political discourse through the lens of the campaign poster.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of our work is to identify common patterns and national – specific features of the Soviet propaganda poster in the domestic media political discourse of the post-war period.

In accordance with the goal it was necessary to solve the following tasks:

- to study in detail the theoretical foundations and the existing experience of cognitive-discursive analysis of the propaganda poster as a way of representing the image of the country, as well as the methodology of such research;
- to reveal and systematize propaganda posters representing the image of the USSR in the Soviet media political discourse;
- to identify the dynamics of metaphorical representation of the image of the USSR in the designated historical period through the campaign poster;

## **5. Research Methods**

The following research methods were used: synthesis, analysis and classification of empirical material, metaphorical modeling, cognitive-discursive analysis, classification, contextual analysis, semantic description, statistical processing of the material. When generalizing, systematizing and interpreting observation results, a descriptive method was used. In addition, methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis of units were used. In the course of the study, a comparative analysis was applied taking into account the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the studied phenomena.

## **6. Findings**

Let's consider the peculiarities of the use of posters in the post-war years. What goals did they pursue? In what areas of life are used most often?



**Figure 01.** [Long live the Stalin aviation, 1947]

The central place was occupied by the theme of war, and the victory over fascism. The wounded country has just moved away from bombardment and endless shelling. People needed to feel confident about the future, care and protection of the state. The presented a poster (Fig. 01) aimed at the formation of patriotic feelings, strengthening the sense of pride for the country. It is noteworthy that the image of the enemy was not formed in the Soviet reader. Instead of marking, expressive shock tactics, the method of avoiding confrontation between good and evil was used, which was typical for the war period.

Massive famine, shortages and inefficiencies caused by Stalinism led to Khrushchev's thaw, a period of economic and social reform in 1955. During the reign of Khrushchev, the emphasis on heavy industry was shifted towards consumer goods. The leadership of the country emphasized the quality, not the quantity. Since that time, a policy of peaceful coexistence has begun to emerge, and the competition with the West has begun. In this regard, the art has got more freedom. Posters of this period differ from Stalin's posters in emphasis on abundance and happiness for the people, rather than the implementation of quotas and five-year plans for the glory of the state. They also return to the universal glorification of communism, reminiscent of the immediate aftermath of the revolution.



**Figure 02.** [Kind grandfather Voroshilov, 1959]

The feeling of care was transformed to the political leaders (Fig. 02). In the posters. The governors are endowed with positive qualities only. The words of grandfather, father, mother, love, family, unity, form a single metaphor of kinship. Politicians are not leaders, they are heads of one big Soviet family. The task of the party's leader is to control and help to protect the Soviet people. All manipulative techniques of the poster are reduced to one goal – to form an image of family happiness and prosperity.

This poster is another example of the cult of the personality of the country's leaders. All party leaders were portrayed as geniuses in their field, the creators of the Soviet happiness and success. Such posters are almost always dominated by the red colour, the colour of communism. Soviet leaders always look into the distance and make plans to ensure the future of the Soviet Union. Religious motives, which were present at the initial stage, are no longer visible in the propaganda posters of the post-war era. They were replaced by newly formed Soviet images: socialism replaced Orthodoxy as the moral basis of life, communism replaced heaven as an idealized future, and Lenin replaced God as an omniscient supplier.

We have an example of a Soviet poster, reminiscent of and idealizing the role of party leaders as founders of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Here we see another example of the personality cult of the leader. Implicitly, the Soviet state stands before the seeker as the defender of the whole world, and not the aggressor. By means of such posters, the Soviet history was visualized, and national identity was created to raise the collective consciousness. By means of simple images, a strong bond is established between the party and the people.

It should be said that post-war posters in the USSR didn't leave without attention other spheres of a Soviet person. According to the presented poster (Fig. 03), the government of the USSR in the post-war years sets before the people the task to put in order collective farmland, improve the land. In contextual terms, there is internal unification again, by the use of plural words: unite, build, grow, create. The main component of the material shown in figure 3, was the expression forever. It carries the hidden potential of futuristic forecasting. Such lexemes as forever, lend the represented information of global importance, the feeling of eternity and inviolability of constructed beliefs.



**Figure 03.** [We will make the land of the collective farm fruitful forever! 1949]

This poster traces a similar call to maintain the five-year plan, overfulfillment of norms. Well known images and image style are used. In such posters a model of a Soviet man, distinguished by idealization, is represented metaphorically. Looking to the future, there are no barriers on the way to success and prosperity. Collectivization and

industrialization of the country can be traced in every poster.

Soviet propaganda posters emphasized the importance of agriculture, food, and industry. As we have already mentioned, the woman had a special role. It was the Soviet posters that they revealed the image of an ideal Soviet woman. She is always portrayed as strong, determined, but at the same time kind, fair.

To avoid losses, Soviet posters called for peace. The Soviet Union appeared as a superpower, a defender of the whole world.

In addition to the personal level, the posters depicted international relations. Together with this, the imperialist line of the Soviet Union does not completely disappear. First of all, this concerns the countries of the third world, where the USSR established a sphere of influence. Everything is conditioned by the desire of the country of the Soviets to extend socialism not only within its own country, but throughout the world.

## 7. Conclusion

Soviet propaganda posters actually carried information for all people absolutely. They were not only ubiquitous, but comprehensive. The leader appeared as a father, husband, son, savior, the sun. In view of the fact that ideology in its pure form was of little interest to the common man, and often difficult to understand, the poster became a reliable instrument in the hands of the Communist Party. The accessibility of the perception of information through the visualization of the Bolshevik principles served as a lever in mobilizing the Soviet population and achieving the goals of the regime.

Studies of propaganda posters showed that principles and values are perceived as fully as possible if they are embodied in visualized images. The propaganda poster of the post-war period has become a kind of window in the new world of socialism. It can be assumed that the propaganda posters represented a parallel mass visual cult addressed to the Soviet people

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