

A Culture in the Captivity of Propaganda

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Levchenyuk, Yevheniia and Ruslana Atashkadeh (2023) A Culture in the Captivity of Propaganda. *Future Human Image*, Volume 19, 51-57. <https://doi.org/10.29202/fhi/19/7>

In the article, it is claimed that culture and art at the current stage of society's development are means of propaganda. The propaganda itself has several semantic loads, which has both a neutral and a negative context. It is essentially a neutral phenomenon, a social and psychological phenomenon. It is not a crime under international criminal law. However, the use of propaganda as a powerful means of influence to manipulate public consciousness has a negative connotation, as it tries to deliberately create images and views that distort or replace information and facts, which in turn form the desired public opinion, attitude towards a certain segment of the population, representatives of an ethnic group, nation, religion, etc. Propaganda uses such techniques as dehumanization, generalization, stereotyping, suggestion, substitution of facts, etc. At the present stage of development, propaganda has reached unprecedented levels of distribution. Today, this has become possible due to informatization, technologization of all spheres of society, active use of communication means, and social networks.

Keywords: war; culture, cinema, art, propaganda

Received: 23 April 2023 / Accepted: 29 May 2023 / Published: 5 August 2023

Introduction

Culture has always played and continues to play a significant role in shaping both the individual and society as a whole. It does not exist on its own, but is a creation of people, as people create culture and culture creates people. Accordingly, culture is a relationship to time, space, and each other. Today, the forms of relations are diverse and embodied in all spheres of

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human life. Culture is never innate, good or bad; it is always created, and thus, people create order out of chaos. With the help of culture, people find ways and opportunities to subordinate time, authority, and relationships, structure their lives, and follow established social rules and norms together. In other words, people are not born with culture, but create it together with other people.

Methodology

The research used both general scientific approaches, principles, methods (analysis, synthesis), and philosophical ones, in particular, the method of historicism, hermeneutics, etc.

Results

Culture is constantly changing, both under the pressure of new conditions and circumstances: globalization, technologization, informatization, massification, innovations, and the emergence of new people who profess new values that correspond to the spirit of the times. Therefore, the modern stage of cultural development can be defined as the development of information, cyberculture, visual practices, etc. “Culture may be invisible, but it is very important. It not only guides our behavior and feelings, but also gives meaning to everyday actions and the world around us” (Braun & Kramer, 2019). In the period of formation, birth and decay of culture, propaganda is also formed. In other words, culture falls into its grip and can act as a powerful propaganda technique, especially when using the media, social networks, and various communication channels such as Viber, WhatsApp, etc. At the present stage of development, propaganda is a form of communication in which images and views are deliberately created by distorting or replacing information and facts, which in turn form the desired public opinion. In other words, the public consciousness is being manipulated. Therefore, the statement that “culture can be a weapon” is quite legitimate (Braun & Kramer, 2019). According to well-known contemporary Netherlands corporate anthropologists D. Brown and I. Kramer: “Culture is a source of power. Anyone can achieve power or influence if they follow cultural rules and embody cultural values. People who are able to play by the cultural rules often occupy a position of leadership” (Braun & Kramer, 2019). That is, those who are competent in cultural games eventually gain power. After all, power and status play an important role in any culture, but the attitude to them is different in each society. If we take the Netherlands as an example, there is a lot of attention paid to equality issues, and leaders remain leaders, but they do not demonstrate this at every step. They use subtle ways that are invisible to others. In Asia, introverted behavior the ability to restrain and control oneself are valued. The opposite type of behavior is observed in the United States. A leader must be an extrovert who gives life-affirming speeches that motivate other people. Thus, culture can be used to construct everyday reality through language, cultural rules, and values, and it can also serve as a means of propaganda that spreads unnoticed among the masses, takes over the image of reality, and is then perceived as familiar and true.

At the current stage of human development, the perception of reality has changed. It has become dependent on virtual images created by the mass media. The end of the 20th century was rightly called the century of cinema. It significantly changed the human worldview and subordinated it to the logic of its own forms of image construction. Cinema has created a special subject of communication. It is not an individual, but a mass-integrated consciousness. That is why cinema and music are now powerful tools of propaganda influence both in the

formation of an individual and society as a whole. The Russian-Ukrainian war demonstrates the effective use of cinema, music and theater as propaganda tools, using famous actors, singers, theater performers, and cultural and artistic figures who become opinion leaders and shape attitudes toward ukrainians and other peoples. For example, the actress of “o.bunina” broadcast a position that the victory in the so-called “great Patriotic war” belonged exclusively to russia, while in her speech she called the rest of the world russia’s enemies. That is, not only is the present being manipulated, but the past is being distorted and changed.

Indeed, cinema, music, art, advertising, leaflets, posters, television, and radio programs carry both an ideological and propaganda load. The time of loud political slogans and agitation is long gone. Now, it is time for hidden social and psychological manipulations. “Ideology in mass cinema is ineradicable. It is fuelled by external factors, new messages, literary works, scientific discoveries, sports victories. Every director is looking for information in the cultural space that will influence the viewer in a transformed form” (Korablova, 2012). The Soviet director S. Eisenstein claimed that the main purpose of the film is to manipulate the viewer in the desired direction, through the appropriate use of pre-calculated pressures on his psyche. After all, in his famous film “Battleship Potemkin”, the main idea was to create an image of the invincibility and greatness of the revolutionary masses. G. Deleuze claimed that “the only consciousness that operates in the cinema is the camera, it is sometimes similar to a person, sometimes unlike a person, sometimes similar to a superhuman” (Deleuze, 2001). So, the given examples show that cinema forms a new model of world perception, when a person already thinks in the categories of film images, perceiving the world not according to his own feelings, beliefs, or ideas, but through the mediation of existing multimedia means of communication.

Thanks to cinema, the materialization of the virtual takes place, when “the image no longer becomes the world, but the world becomes its own image” (Deleuze, 2001). Therefore, the films use propaganda techniques that can dehumanize the image of a representative of one or another layer of society, representatives of other ethnic groups, nations, professions, etc., or, on the contrary, heroize non-existent people. For example, the “28 Pamphilovs” who took part in the defense of moscow in 1941. However, this propagandistic literary fiction became a legend and was actively used by the soviet union. Or the “feat of Matrosov”, who covered the embrasure of a German pillbox. Today, historians and war researchers claim that such a person did not exist. But the image created by Soviet propaganda was widely used for quite a long time. It is possible not to go into history and give an example from our present. For example, the image that russian propaganda created for the Ukrainian people as a whole, that we are “Banderivetztes”, the “Azov” regiment, that they are Nazis and for a long time they were recognized as an extremist organization, which could not be disseminated on the Internet, which was as a direct result of russian propaganda. However, russians themselves would need to clarify the meaning of the concepts of nazism and nationalism. Thus, cinema creates a new concept of virtuality, which is not opposed to reality but becomes its expansion and deepening; cinema performs an ideological function. It is a tool of influence on the mass consciousness. It is no coincidence that the revolutionary orientation of cinema was already recognized by such political ideologues as Hitler, Goebbels, Churchill, Stalin and others. Cinema was used in the development and establishment of many totalitarian regimes, as it has a powerful power of imaginative plasticity and reaches a large audience. Cinema has become a vehicle for the newly emerging ideology of consumer society, as its images (and later television commercials and talk shows) encourage constant viewing, participation, and consumption. The life of a modern person cannot be imagined without the Internet, social media, the film industry,

advertising, music, etc., which, due to their large scale, one might say have obtained global popularity and are widespread used, significantly influence the formation of the worldview of a modern person. Therefore, they are emerging as new ideological and propaganda modes that both unite and divide humanity.

Despite the difficult circumstances, the Ukrainian media space today is being filled with new content, films, cartoons, and television projects that can be considered ideological, which, by necessity, are trying to assert national identity. Among these films are “Warriors of the Spirit”, “Unconquered”, “Guide”, “Cyborgs”, “Khaytarma”, “Rhino”, “Sniper: White Raven”; the animated film “Forest Warriors”; Jamala’s Eurovision Song Contest 2016 entry “1944”, etc. And after the war is over, we believe that there will be a large number of film products that will not just show this terrible war, but will reveal the real heroes who are fighting for our independence and self-sufficiency. Through the consumption of film industry products, an individual develops appropriate worldview guidelines that significantly affect the creation of a corresponding value system. It should be noted that the film industry contains many ideologies and ideologemes, rather than clearly formed ideological narratives, which, in turn, have both constructive and destructive effects on personal development. These films can be divided into several groups. The first group includes films that deal with the liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people. In particular, these are “The Unconquered” and “Warriors of the Forest”; the second group includes films that characterize the contemporary development of the Ukrainian state and thus form the national identity: “Warriors of the Spirit”, “Khaytarma”; protest against the only possible state ideology that “breaks” people’s destinies – “1944”, etc.; and the third group is our present, the Russian-Ukrainian war. The film “The Unconquered” illustrates the events of the 1950s, when the Ukrainian people’s active liberation struggle for independence was underway, and it was a struggle between unequal forces: on the one hand, groups of Ukrainian rebels, and on the other, battalions of red army soldiers who destroyed and burned down entire villages in search of independence fighters. Contemporary Ukrainians should watch this film with an open mind, as the processes of national identity formation are not a thing of the past, and the Russian-Ukrainian war did not happen in 2014 or in 2022 – it is a century-long struggle. The process of national identity formation is long, complex, and vital. It should also encourage us to know our own history without unnecessary interpretations and suggestions from the outside. Yes, our history is not simple, we have complicated relations with all our neighbours, but the present and knowledge of history allow us to accept it as it is, and not to turn history into a means of propaganda, as Russia does, for example. Our history has quite a number of “white” pages, due to its rewriting, destruction, and appropriation, in particular by Russia. For example, the name “Kyivan Rus” is removed from modern history textbooks, the word “Kyivan” is removed, and only “Rus” is left. The film “The Unconquered” does not claim to be historically accurate, although some of the facts from the lives of the protagonists did take place in history. The film should be viewed with curiosity, as it intertwines fascism, totalitarianism, and nationalism in a powerful way. That is, the main ideological narratives of the 20th century. It shows that we should not treat history as a process that constantly repeats itself, that is, when it is often said that history is cyclical, but in our opinion, history is the comprehension and awareness of lost opportunities in relation to the present.

Modern Ukraine is going through difficult, complex and tragic times and, at the same time, it is a period of great opportunity. These are external challenges and internal contradictions that, on the one hand, harden us as a nation, and, on the other hand, we should not succumb to the destructive consequences in order to withstand the “winds” of history. And the film

“Warriors of the Spirit” is such a powerful illustration of current events. The film’s authors, T. Kulakovska and A. Martynenko, do not call the defenders of Donetsk airport cyborgs on principle. In their opinion, they are not soulless mechanisms, but living people: someone’s sons, husbands, fathers, who are symbols of resilience and indestructibility. It is their example that encourages everyone to remain human and unbreakable in a fateful “borderline situation” under any circumstances. The echoes of the past have a powerful influence on the current historical development of the Ukrainian state. The ideology of totalitarianism changed the lives of many millions of people, and the events of the film “Khaytarma” take place during the Second World War, namely during the liberation of Crimea in 1944. At the same time, one of the crimes of the Soviet Union takes place – the deportation of the indigenous population of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars. The protagonist is a pilot, twice Hero of the Soviet Union Amet-Khan Sultan. After the liberation of Sevastopol in 1944, he goes on holiday to his native Alupka, where he witnesses the deportation of Crimean Tatars, including his family. It is worth noting that Soviet propaganda created an appropriate image of the Crimean Tatars, which was supported and consumed by the rest of the population of the Soviet Union for quite some time. Only in the late 1990s did Crimean Tatars begin to return to their homeland en masse, but no one was waiting for them there. The authorities refused to allow them to build their own homes, to register, etc. In the same context, Jamala’s world-famous song “1944” also highlights the events of deportation. The singer told the world the story of her own family, but this is the story of an entire people who were deprived of their homes, history, language, and the right to self-affirmation. It seemed that the times of totalitarianism were already in the past, but the current situation shows new forms of its existence.

So these are examples of quite high-quality ideological new Ukrainian cinema. It combines the fates of people who are unique and inimitable, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an ideological powerful machine that destroys these fates. Today, no one interprets the individual and sets the framework for presenting an idea to the director. The personality independently draws conclusions and forms his or her own attitude to certain events that are transferred to cinema. It acts as a mechanism and instrument of ideological and propaganda influence on both individual and mass consciousness.

Indeed, the film industry is a powerful mass art form that is popular enough to unite contemporary humanity, forming relevant ideological guidelines and values, as a result of its powerful ideological and propaganda influence, and, on the other hand, to divide and fragment humanity. “Cinema art... has ideological modes, which are assessed by both the public and film critics as inferior from an artistic point of view. Cinema is of necessity permeated with ideology: it creates a symbolic space that creates broadcasts and represents ideologies and ideologemes” (Korablova, 2014).

Thus, a rather important point in defining propaganda and its impact on public consciousness is the medium of propaganda and the means of its dissemination. And here difficulties arise in defining it. When, for example, on the one hand, it is delivered by “us”, then propaganda is education and information, and when it is delivered by “them”, then propaganda usually has a negative context. For example, Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell define the concept of “propaganda” as follows. According to them, “Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic attempt to change perceptions by manipulating cognition and, accordingly, to direct human and social behavior to achieve a reaction that ultimately leads to the desired intention of the propagandist” (Kamali & Goudarzi, 2022). In the context of our research, it is worth paying attention to R.A. Nelson’s definition of propaganda. He argues that “Propaganda is neutrally

defined and appears as a systematic form of deliberate persuasion that influences the emotions, attitudes, opinions and actions of a target audience for political, ideological or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages that may or may not be consistent with the facts” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2006).

Thus, propaganda is a means of manipulation in any sphere of human life (politics, economics, religion, etc.). The main task of propaganda is to change the way people understand a particular issue, situation, event, and these changes are usually directed in the desired direction of the interested group of people (political parties, leaders, rivals, enemies, etc.). Propaganda has its own peculiarities and differences from other forms of persuasion. It is based on lies and spontaneity. Propagandists usually know in advance that they are broadcasting false facts and information, i.e. they do it intentionally, consciously. That is why they should be held accountable on a par with those who order this manipulation. For example, the case that was one of the very first cases to be tried at the Nuremberg Tribunal. J. Streicher was the editor and owner of the anti-Semitic publication “Der Stürmer”. His propaganda statements were exclusively anti-Semitic and built around a single word: “Jew” and the adjective “Jewish”. He was convicted for the propaganda he spread in his publications and was punished for crimes against humanity. In 1946, he was sentenced to death. Another example that took place in the history of the former Yugoslavia. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is the case of Vojislav Šešelj, a political leader and head of the Serbian Radical Party. He had a PhD in law and was the author of 150 books. However, he was convicted for a single speech he delivered in May 1992 as part of a political campaign. In his speech, he included both hate speech and threats against the local non-Serb population, the Croats. V. Šešelj was convicted of crimes against humanity. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison, which he has already served in The Hague.

Conclusion

Thus, propaganda is a powerful weapon, especially in war. It is actively used to dehumanize and create a sense of hatred towards the enemy, both external and internal, by creating a false image in the minds of both individuals and society as a whole. This can be achieved by using derogatory, racist language, deliberately avoiding certain words, or by using unconfirmed statements, information about enemy atrocities, etc. The goal of propaganda is to create an image of reality that makes the population feel that the enemy has brought injustice, which can usually be imaginary or based on facts. The own population must believe that they are defending justice. For example, Russian and Belarusian propaganda convinced their own population that they are being attacked, that they have the second army in the world, and that bombing civilians is liberation, kidnapping children is about creating comfortable living conditions and convincing these children that their parents have abandoned them, that Ukraine does not need them, etc. So, in our opinion, in this case, propaganda turns into a crime against humanity.

That is, propaganda uses any means to spread ideas and guidelines among a wide range of people in order to convince them of the correct course of development to justify their actions and deeds. Culture and art can also be not just hostages of propaganda, but can also turn into it. Quite often, we hear the thesis “Art is out of politics”, but as the present day shows, art and culture, in general, are becoming powerful means of influencing the public consciousness. Quite often, actors, cultural and artistic figures today become politicians who use their popularity and recognition to implement a political project, and propaganda is a powerful means of disseminating ideas, views, and programs for further social development.

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