


PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS MANIPULATION AS A FORM OF CENSORSHIP

E. Agapova, Ph.D. in Philosophy
 S. Agapova, Ph.D. in Philology
 L. Gushchina, Ph.D. in Philology
 Southern Federal University, Russia

Since the invention of telegraph, radio and television making the contacts with a large audience possible, the social impact of communication via the mass media has been a subject of intense research by political and social scientists. Thus the authors consider the nature of manipulation in modern political discourse using the complex phenomenon of censorship and its ambivalent role in the modern society as the basis. The solution of the research tasks is carried out on the basis of the complex methodological foundation defining the general orientation and principles of the research, as well as its scientific results. This foundation includes the general philosophical methodological concept of dialectic materialism, the principles of unity of form and content, cause and effect, as well as the general connection of the phenomena. In conclusion, the authors state that the abovementioned phenomena are serious and dangerous, being able to influence people's consciousness, depriving them of their critical thinking, and even dooming them to the passivity of life.

Keywords: political discourse, manipulation, censorship, mass media.

Conference participants,
 National championship in scientific analytics,
 Open European and Asian research analytics championship

 <http://dx.doi.org/10.18007/gisap:hp.v0i9.1366>

1. Introduction.

The relevance of the present article is based on the fact that the beginning of the XXI century is accompanied by creation of the global informational space and formation of new people's world outlook greatly influenced by all means of mass communication. Nowadays the relevance of the state control has increased due to the need to cover the informational space of the modern post-industrial society in conditions of transformation of several governmental institutes. It should be mentioned that information itself represents one of the most important instruments of social management and, therefore, cannot be made public completely. Some information is secret and confidential. In this case, the fact of its existence can be regarded as the objective basis for the censorship.

It is obvious that censorship as a form of the governmental control over the contents and distribution of information should be viewed through the prism of the political discourse. In the last hundred years certain evolution and improvement of governmental technologies and social management has taken place. Modern mass media has created new opportunities for this purpose, increasing the efficiency of the use of information. Real revolution has occurred in social and political management. The main focus of evolution of technologies used by authorities and the purpose of their alterations and improvement assume the smallest expenditures of resources in order to gain the maximum effect of impact on people, providing their

voluntary subordination. A. Toffler (1990) notes that the superior quality and the greatest efficiency of the modern power is based on the knowledge that allows, firstly, to achieve the required goals spending minimum resources; secondly, to persuade people that they have own personal interests in this goal; and, thirdly, to turn their opponents into allies.

2. Public consciousness manipulation as a form of censorship in the modern society.

Mass media play an important role in modern society, being a powerful resource used by politicians. They have contributed to creation of such phenomenon as political language, which represents a special sign system intended for political communication. It is not a prerogative of professional politicians or government officials, but a resource that is open for all members of the language community and connected with the specific use of public language as a mechanism of persuasion and control. Political language can be defined as a subsystem of a national language, intended for the political communication, including propaganda of certain ideas, emotive impact on citizens and their subsequent motivation to certain political actions, as well as development of public consensus. Political language is generally available, as it is situated between two poles: the functionally caused special language and the slang of a certain group with the ideology peculiar to it. It is deprived of the "secret

speech" property, containing no specific lexicon unknown and unfamiliar to some members of the society. Thus, language becomes political due to the contents of transmitted information and circumstances in which the distribution of information and functions takes place.

Political language is a political reality as language is not only a tool used to describe certain events, but also their part. It can strongly affect the formation of their value, contributing to the shaping of political roles recognized by politicians and the society in general.

According to A.P. Chudinov (2003), there are four types of political communication: 1) office (internal, bureaucratic) political communication, focused on interactions inside the governmental or public institutions; 2) political communication in the public political activity, oriented towards various segments of population, being a form of implementation of professional and public work of political leaders and activists; 3) political communication of journalists focused on the mass audience in the form of interviews, analytical reviews in newspapers, written by journalists, political scientists and/or politicians; 4) political speech activity of "ordinary" citizens (not professionals in the field of political communication), participating in meetings, demonstrations, etc.

Thus, it is clear that the distinctive feature of political communication is its mass character. It explains why political language is used in different types of influence: persuasion, control,

manipulation, and why the mass media becomes its direct mechanism of implementation and realization.

The mass media forms a specific social institution, i.e. it addresses the society in the course of mass informational support of its functioning. It creates a peculiar informational analogue of social institutional activity in all its manifestations. The initial function of mass media is information transfer. The analysis of information transmitted through the mass media makes it obvious that there are a few info senders and a large number of its recipients out there. Taking into account that any power needs more mediated forms and means of communication between its carriers, executors of will of authorities and citizens, it is possible to note that the mass media is the powerful regulator of public opinion, regulating it through the information transfer to its large audience.

Thus it is undoubtedly connected with the term of "manipulation". Different extensions of meanings of this term affect the modern figurative sense of the word "manipulation" as a dexterous treatment of people as with objects and/or things.

It should be mentioned that the word "manipulation" in the meaning of an act of influence on people, management or some things with dexterity, especially with some scornful implication, as the hidden control or affection, has substituted the previous term "Machiavellianism" in political dictionaries (the name of the Italian politician N. Machiavelli became nominal for designation of the moral position - "the purpose justifies any means"). Such state of affairs is caused, firstly, by the shift of the leading accent from the suppositional look to the technological one when treating the given phenomenon; and, secondly, by expansion of a circle of phenomena to which the term "manipulation" belongs. Today the problem of qualities of certain political leaders is turning into the problem of activity of the whole governmental institutions and organizations. Thus, the term "manipulation" is applied to the mass media and political actions, directed towards program opinions and/or aspirations of masses, their mental conditions, etc. The ultimate goal of such efforts is gaining over population, its

manageability and governability, as well as obedience.

Summarizing the information given above, we can suggest that the term "manipulation" has a disapproving coloring. Therefore, we consider a manipulative impact as such influence on the addressee's behavior that is about to bring some negative emotions to the addressee, and that, according to S. Karamurza (2004), will induce the addressee to make certain acts eventually turning the addressee into "a loser or even a fool".

Being a kind of the hidden impact on the addressee and a specific way of control over the addressee, manipulation is characterized by unseemliness of the manipulator's actions and intentions, contradicting the addressee's will and causing damage to him/her. In our opinion, the main signs of manipulation are the following: 1) spiritual and psychological influence without any physical abuse (in this case, the targets of manipulation are people's mental structures) in the form of some psychological force or playing on the addressee's weaknesses; 2) orientation of the manipulator's actions in a way that his/her ultimate goal and the fact of influence remain unnoticed by the object of manipulation (who will keep on fooling himself with an illusion of independent decision-making and actions), – i.e. hidden influence; 3) the influence demanding certain knowledge and considerable skills; 4) treatment of the objects of manipulation as if they were not people, but things – means to achieve the manipulator's own purposes; 5) the wish to receive one-sided prize; 6) motivation; 7) the manipulator's skills in realization of his/her manipulative actions.

Nowadays, the mass media becomes a peculiar filter that sifts out certain ideas, increasing the value of the some of them and depreciating others, polarizing the whole field of culture in this way. In order to achieve these purposes the mass media use certain methodical techniques, such as: falsification of facts or direct lies, special selection of events of reality for the messages, gray and black propaganda, psychoses, changing the meaning of words and concepts, simplification and stereotyping, statements and repetitions, etc.

A man of the mass is a special reality with no aspiration for any changes and movement. Reflections are replaced with the spontaneous manifestation of the unconscious, motives are changed into impulses, definiteness is exchanged for intolerance. The cultural and creative position loses its status and value. Its place is taken by the consumer's position, directed toward the material, outside world. The replacement of the cultural domestic production with the western third-rate production contributes to it as well. The last is aimed at the revision of former cultural ideas and values, traditional ways of life, which have been characterizing the life of nations from generation to generation. Thus, the illusory forms of life, propaganda of non-spirituality and the consumer's treatment of reality, are imposed on people. The ideas of criteria of truth, good and beauty are erased. They imprinted with the force and arrogance of the modern progress on the masses, but forgot about the spirit. People become mechanistic; they lose the integrity of their own nature and as a result lose their ability to build adequate relations with the changing world.

It is easy to control such society. The majority of people are not capable to analyze and adequately resist the manipulative techniques because they consider benefits as their only goals and the meaning of life. Manipulation is possible due to control over information and communications that dictate affirmations, ideas, rules and models of human behavior. In other words, manipulation is possible in the presence of rigid censorship.

3. Censorship: to Be or not to Be.

In the modern society, preliminary and retaliatory censorship does not seem to be effective, but the authorities cannot lose the control over the processes occurring in the society. In this way, manipulation plays a great role and fulfills the functions of censorship. It proves to be one of the means of social control, being based, first of all, on the rigid use of the information apparatus and the apparatus of formation of ideas.

Manipulation-censorship fulfills certain functions that were not used by the usual censorship: 1) the diagnostics function, i.e. the act of recognition

that confirms a certain identity; 2) the administrative function, which assumes a system of symbolization of norms affirming the human right to do something independently from his/her symbolical status; 3) the function of producing a certain point of view.

The strong basis for manipulation of the mimicking censorship in modern society is formed by incompetence and low level of mass education. Thus, the object of manipulation is the conducted majority which prefers simplified interpretation over knowledge and loses the systemic image of reality.

Manipulation-censorship turns the homo sapiens into the person-consumer whose meaning of life, thus, gets a purely utilitarian component where there is no ambition for the ideal, no place for feats and service to the Fatherland. All thoughts and actions are directed at achieving own benefits, satisfaction of own stomach, etc. The society is breaking into atoms, thirsting for its own benefits and the place in the sun. Such condition is close to the state of an animal. Such society does not give birth to great writers, artists, playwrights, scientists. It gives rise to dullness, impersonality and consumption. The culture of such society is directed to satisfaction of ignoble purposes, and adapts to the lowest samples (modern show-business, false mirrors, various factories and houses).

The modern ideology invents a certain type of intellectual-language schemes, stamps, clichés, images, generalizing examples and samples, etc. not as subsidiary means, but as the resulting and highest effects of knowledge, i.e. the ultimate truth. Ideological products are made and reproduced for different circles of consumers of the ideological food. Some are for the elites, others – for the rest of the society. The individual has to digest these “products” and view the life phenomena only through their prism.

Today the ideology claims to have the status of the only truth in new information realities. A. Zinovyev believes that there are separate elements in the ideology that imitate the truth, make impressions of it. There are even separate true statements. But on the whole and generally those taking individuals away from the reality and creating a picture of the unreal, fictional

world dominate in it. This picture is not a lie, because such concepts of truth and falsehood cannot be simply applied to it. It is a qualitatively different phenomenon (Zinovyev, 2006). The fictional world is created in such a way that it would resemble the real one, relieving it of the necessity to reflect, fluctuate and make up tough decisions. Rules of human behavior in certain situations are created without scientific understanding of these situations, so to speak, blindly and offhandedly. As A. Zinovyev fairly considers, the ideology is neither true nor false. It is even impossible to treat it from the point of view of the verity and falsity. In other words, it is similar to considering the pictures of Picasso, Kandinsky and some other artists of the XX century of the same movement from the point of view of adequacy of the allegedly represented reality (Zinoveyv, 2006).

Thus, the ideology perverts reality, but the purpose is rather clear: it is connected with suppression of the dissent and fulfillment of the main censorial function – a ban. At the same time, the ideology turns into propaganda as a normal result of natural-historical development of the ideological sphere due to its objective laws. Owing to the latest manipulative techniques used in the modern society, the laws of censorship and the very institution of censorship are useless in the form in which they have existed from the moment of emergence of the first state. But it does not mean that censorship stops its existence since the moment of its cancellation. It is impossible for any society and any state to exist without the total control over thoughts and ideas circulating in the society. Censorship functions in the information society are fulfilled by means of ideology, consciousness manipulation, where falsification of facts is not on the last place. Information is selected and combined in a way that each phrase separately can be true, but their set gives a perverted picture of reality. Thus, the forged picture is created more than once and forever; it will change if the new conditions, opportunities and requirements emerge. It proves that there is a profound technique of manipulation of people’s thoughts in the way chosen by manipulators.

It has led to the more polluted environment than the natural one. But this fact does not trigger the concern, being undoubtedly unnoticed. However, we have to admit the fact that earlier forms of censorship, forbidding any activity and imposing bans on certain sorts of literature, still have not emasculated the ability to think and assess the reality adequately. From the point of view of the modern existence, such censorship was ineffective for the state. The modern form of censorship (manipulation) is much more complicated. Its basis assumes prevention of any dissidence of the majority of people by means of falsification of information, mosaicity of knowledge, etc. Human life has become so pragmatic, that individuals are generally given only that space inside which they can be manipulated.

Censorship works in different ways. States can have articles in their constitutions about the freedom of expression, laws, welcoming freedom of information, but at the same time informal performers of censorship can exist there. The Internet is such an example, where information filtering and blocking are applied at the software level. Thus, high-quality changes in public life are followed by changes of forms of censorship, but they do not imply the disappearance of the phenomenon. Censorship is ontological; it is implanted in the foundations of the society. Today we can rather often come across some appeals to renewal of institutions of censorship and acceptable legislation in the mass media. The state must introduce censorship in order to provide the information safety of the person, society and state, not to allow the concentration of power in the hands of shadow forces and dictatorship of their own interests. Censorship is urged to provide the freedom of thought, ideological struggle between individuals, groups and social classes, reliably stopping the fight between the society and the state on the whole. A.S. Pushkin considered such censorship not as the enemy of freedom of press, but as its indispensable condition. However, in our opinion, such actions are senseless at the modern stage of the social development. Censorship did not provide freedom of thought and ideological struggle at any

stage of historical development of the society. It is explained by the fact that this activity was implemented by people, and a person is far from perfect, as stated by Aristotle. So it is not correct enough to raise a question of whether censorship is necessary or not in the society. It was, is and will be based on our desires. The concept of censorship is much broader than its understanding accepted to perceive this phenomenon. The society, state and any other structures exist only until the majority is under control. And this is possible due to many factors among which one can find bans, censorship and manipulative techniques of the modern stage, implying the phenomenon of the very censorship in fact.

It is curious that the word “census” has two meanings supplementing one another: 1) restrictive conditions of allowing the person to exercise any rights (property qualification, educational qualification, resident qualification), and 2) statistical census. The true content of the phenomenon of censorship is found in the borderland between these externally fetterless semantic fields; it is the desire to treat everyone alike in order to possess the formal right to forbid, and so – to order.

It was K. Jung who openly appealed to judiciousness of his colleagues, bending before the chimera of “scientific statistics”. He spoke about the virtuality of existence of the average size of sea pebble. Probably, among the myriads of pebbles on the whole beach one will hardly ever find a sea pebble with a length of 3,567 inches. But this illusory size


will make every existing pebble feel defective, i.e. guilty. Censorship as a system of implementation of the state supervision (providing the opportunity to preview) over the contents of printed editions, radio- and telecasts, theatrical performances, etc. actually becomes the instrument of protection of privileges of the mighty of this world. At a closer look, censorship represents the ordinary outrage, based on the stiffened worldview of the narrow-minded, painfully convinced in a “lawful” necessity “to hold but not let in”.

4. Conclusion.

Thus, it is possible to assume that the authors, who protect censorship and approve both its anti-naturalism and harm, are equally mistaken. Censorship as a phenomenon has a supernatural essence. It is impossible to apply the “good-bad” measurement scale to it. Any research has to take place in the framework of analysis of consequences of a certain form of censorship for the concrete society, culture on the whole and some subcultures in particular. Ideally, censorship has to keep the high cultural level, preventing it from penetration of the low-quality literature and information, which destroy public consciousness and lead to social degradation. However, the modern mimetic censorship – the censorship in the form of selection and filtration of information by mediocracy, is not obvious, but hidden and more effective due to the usage of manipulative techniques in order to achieve the control over information. In the modern society

it is a more serious and dangerous phenomenon as it influences the consciousness of individuals, making them stop thinking critically, and dooming them to the passivity of life.

References:

1. Zinoviyev, Alexander. 2006. Factor Ponimaniya [Factor of understanding]. - Moscow.
2. Kara-Murza, Sergey. 2004. Manipulyatsiya Soznaniyem [Consciousness manipulation]. - Moscow.
3. Chudinov, Anatoliy. 2003. Rossiya v Metaforicheskom Zerkale: Kognitivnoe Issledovanie Politicheskoi Metafory [Russia in the metaphorical mirror: cognitive research of the political metaphor] (1991-2000). - Yekaterinburg.
4. Toffler, Alvin. 1990. Powershift: Knowledge, Wealth, and Violence in the 21st Century. Plaza & Janes.  <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/ame.1991.4274755>

Information about authors:

1. Elena Agapova - Ph.D. in Philosophy, Southern Federal University; address: Russia, Rostov-on-don city; e-mail: e-agapova@yandex.ru
2. Sofia Agapova - Ph.D. in Philology, Southern Federal University; address: Russia, Rostov-on-don city; e-mail: e-s-agapova@mail.ru
3. Lyudmila Gushchina - Ph.D. in Philology, Southern Federal University; address: Russia, Rostov-on-don city; e-mail: e-milnekh@yandex.ru

