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ALEXEI SHMELEV*

MANIPULATION IN RUSSIAN POLITICAL JOURNALISM

The present paper deals with manipulative ploys used in Russian political discourse of the 1990's. By manipulation is meant suggesting to the audience certain ideas in such a way that they cannot be challenged. Of particular assistance in this respect is the use of sentences where those ideas are hidden in the non-assertive components.

Keywords: Russian political discourse, linguistic manipulation, ideological language, reported speech.

Soviet ideological language

This paper is concerned with the techniques of political discourse for indirect action on the audience or the reader. With those techniques, the journalist does not spell out the ideas he or she intends to suggest to the public but instills those ideas indirectly, through the use of certain linguistic mechanisms.

The tools of indirect influence used in Soviet propaganda were limited in number. The most striking characteristic of Soviet ideological language was the use of two different sets of linguistic units according as the discourse reference was made to the «alien world» or to «Soviet allies and compatriots». The following comment on Soviet usage is relevant here: «... anyone, anywhere, who kills *for us* is a 'partisan,' whereas those who kill us are always 'bandits,' beginning with the Tambov peasants¹ in

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1921» (Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*). Hence utterances in Soviet ideological language communicated some message of how one should treat the facts rather than just describing these facts. Under these conditions, since the fact in question was evaluated totally as belonging either to the «alien world» or to «Soviet allies and compatriots», the lexical units applied to that fact came into «ideological agreement» of a sort. Essentially all terms used in Soviet political journalism fell into one of the two ideolinguistic subsystems, namely, words for the «alien world» and words for the world of «Soviet allies and compatriots». Needless to say, a certain number of neutral linguistic expressions occurred in Soviet propaganda, but the number of ideological words in Soviet political journalism as a whole was extraordinarily high. It was often the case that the sentence was made up almost entirely of such words. To take an illustration, the sentence *Opytnyj politik zaključil soglašenje s rukovoditeljami partizanskix otrjadov* – ‘The experienced politician concluded an agreement with the leaders of the rebel detachments’ –, which in Soviet ideological language described what belonged to the world of «Soviet allies and compatriots», had a counterpart that described an identical action in the «alien world», namely, *Materyj politikan vstupil v sgovor s glavaryami banditskix šaek* – ‘The unscrupulous pol made a deal with the ringleaders of the bandit gangs’ –. The two sentences had not a single word in common (apart from the preposition *s*), although they referred to the identical facts (Epstein 1991: 22).

Given that abundance of ideological terms in Soviet ideological language, it comes as no surprise that for many of them it is difficult to find an English-language equivalent. For example, the Soviet ideological words *ošel'movat'* and *zaklejmit'* had the same meaning: ‘to denounce’, ‘to disgrace’. However, the first of the two words, *ošel'movat'*, has a negative connotation (to disgrace unfairly in a contemptible manner); this being so, it was used with reference to actions of the enemies. The second word, *zaklejmit'*, expresses a positive relationship associated with this action (the writer agrees that someone was disgraced justifiably). We might read in Soviet newspapers: *Pinochet's clique is denouncing [šel'muet] all the honest freedom fighters in Chile, especially communists*. Or we might read: *The honest people of the entire world are denouncing [klejmjat] Pinochet for his bloody crimes against the communists*. In English, one can find numerous

¹ In 1920–1921, a major peasant uprising against the Soviet regime took place in Tambov Province under the leadership of Aleksandr Antonov, an adherent of the SR party.

equivalent words, which have a negative connotation (*to defame, to brand, to stigmatize*). However, there is no single word in American English that can convey a writer's approval of dishonor (Epstein 1991).

Of course, one can find ideological words in the English language as well, and it is the writer who chooses a designation so that the choice depends on his or her political purposes. S. Hirschberg (1990) illustrates the same point by comparing the English words an English-speaking country uses to refer to actions of the enemy with those English words it uses to describe its own identical activities:

<i>Actions of the enemy</i>	<i>The country's own identical activities</i>
Bombing	Air support
Spying	Intelligence gathering
Invasion	Pacification
Infiltration	Reinforcement
Retreat	Strategic withdrawal

However, it seems likely that no other language than Russian was equipped with comprehensive and non-intersecting subsystems of lexical units for designation of the entities that belong to the «alien world» and to the world of «Soviet allies and compatriots» (such lexical units may be called ideological expressions).

The necessity of choosing ideological words that unambiguously show whether the subject in question belongs to the «alien world» or to the world of «Soviet allies and compatriots» caused the Soviet journalists to use the so-called *de re* strategy in reporting others' speech.² In other words, they substituted ideological expressions for the expressions used by the original speaker even though the latter might not consider that substitution adequate. Here are examples of reporting utterances of this kind taken from a textbook on stylistics (Kljuev 1989):

- (1) S. President Ronald Reagan in his appearances in Idaho and Wisconsin went on rousing Americans' pseudo-patriotic [*psevdopatriotičeskie*] state of opinion in relation to piratical [*piratskie*] actions of the U. S. Air Force, namely, the interception of an Egyptian passenger aircraft.

² While with the *de dicto* strategy, the reporter means to convey the speaker's actual words (with only a minimum grammatical adjustment to fit the reporting frame), with the *de re* strategy the reporter means to convey the central message the reported utterance had to him or her. (For a more detailed discussion of the distinction in question see below.)

(2) The government led by Margaret Thatcher declared its intention to go on with its anti-national [*antinarnodnaja*] politics for the benefit of the rich, to the detriment of the general British public [*v uščerb širokim massam angličan*].

(3) Pakistan appealed to the United States with a proposal to make a deal [*sdelka*] for 1987–1993 in the military and economic area.

In his comments on the first of the above examples, E. Kljuev observes, «It is unlikely that Mr. Reagan, being (as everybody is well aware) an American, would impose ‘pseudo-patriotic state of opinion’ on Americans; in all likelihood, he would describe it as patriotic in accordance with his own frame of mind... It is not clear why he would expose himself to discredit by approving actions that he regards as piratical himself.» Likewise, it is not likely that Mrs. Thatcher would state her intentions as her wish to act «to the prejudice of the general British public» or that Pakistan referred to concluding military and economic agreement between the two countries as «making a deal». The point, however, is that ideological conventions of Soviet journalism did not allow the *de dicto* strategy (that is, the use of designations with positive evaluative meaning, which were reserved for the world of «Soviet allies and compatriots» only) in reports about the attitudes of ideological enemies.

At present, elements of Soviet ideological language are used far less frequently. Even if oppositions dating back to the Soviet ideological language are still in use, the trend has been toward giving the opposition in question factual meaning. It is striking that when Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo claimed that there were «terrorist acts and diversions» rather than «a guerrilla war» in Chechnya, the claim provoked the following objection by a Russian journalist (*Itogi*, 2000, n. 15): «But the terrorist activity going on every day is nothing else but a guerrilla war.» It is not clear indeed what is the difference between «a guerrilla war» and «terrorist acts and diversions» (the difference in evaluative components apart). However, the distinction between the two descriptions was given factual meaning at a later time. Let us quote the definition of the distinction in question given by deputy chief of staff Col. Gen. Valery Manilov. According to that definition, «a guerrilla war» takes place only if the militants enjoy the support of the residential population, and he holds that there is not a grain of evidence to suggest anything of the kind in Chechnya.

The true nature of linguistic manipulation may be observed now that in circumstances where the press is relatively free and administrative ac-

tion nonconformists is impossible, one has to resort to arch use of language in order to hold sway over minds. The very essence of «linguistic manipulation» is that what is said acts upon the addressee with cunning ploys rather than straightforwardly. Therefore, most useful for manipulation are the sentences with non-assertive components (such as presuppositions or conversational implicatures) carrying the proposition that the speaker or the writer intends to suggest to the addressee. In the present-day («post-perestroika») press, the following manipulative tricks are most popular.

Assertions in the guise of presuppositions

The trick in question takes advantage of the fact that most natural language sentences involve presuppositions, that is, propositions whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of the sentence and not asserted in a statement, questioned in a question, or ordered in an imperative (for example a person who uttered *It has stopped raining* would be understood as taking for granted 'It has been raining' rather than asserting it). Since the truth of presuppositions is taken for granted, they cannot be denied or otherwise challenged (objecting to the presupposition by simply denying it is not likely to meet any success) in contrast to the assertions, which are easily denied. As is well known, an important property of presuppositions is that they remain constant when the sentence is negated or questioned. An utterance of the negated sentence *It has not stopped raining* would have the same presupposition (namely, 'It has been raining') as an utterance of *It has stopped raining*. It is precisely this property of presuppositions that provides a means for manipulation.

The essence of the mechanism under consideration consists in camouflaging the idea suggested to the audience as presupposition. With the help of this mechanism the speaker (or the writer) can «smuggle in» information which the audience does not readily have opportunity to take a stand on. This trick has a wide use in advertising. When a sentence starts as «The reason why 'name of the product' is the most preferred 'so-and-so' in the world,» we are invited to think of possible reasons rather than challenge the statement presented as a presupposition and therefore taken for granted.

In politics, we deal with the same practice when opinion polls are used as an instrument for propaganda. Investigators do not make any claim at

all; so, it may go unnoticed that their questions involve presuppositions to be suggested to the audience. Usually the respondents are captivated and try to answer according to the premises implied by the investigator. Consider, e.g., a question such as «What is in your opinion the cause for the lowering of the standard of living in this country?» That the standard of living has come down is taken as presupposition, while the polled are invited to be concerned about plausible causes for the lowering of the standard of living. A study of the most recent opinion polls in Russia makes it apparent that more often than not investigators set themselves to manipulation rather than research so that the surveys serve not to research the public opinion but rather to act on it through presuppositions.

In the early 1990s, the use of that mechanism was quite undisguised. To take one example, let us cite a question in a questionnaire widely distributed in 1993:

When do you think your and your family's standard of living will essentially improve after V. I. Neverov is elected as the President of Russia?

- (a) By 1999
- (b) By 2003
- (c) After 2003
- (d) Other

One can find the following presuppositions implied by the question under consideration: 'V. I. Neverov will be elected as the President of Russia', 'as a result, the respondent's (as well as his or her family's) standard of living will essentially improve'.

At present, the technique is less straightforward, yet its essence has remained the same. No matter how the respondent answers, he or she is bound to take the presupposition for granted. Consider the wording of a referendum in Udmurt Republic:

... So far the Udmurts have a negative attitude to the plans of establishing presidency. Alexander Volkov found a good way out of the situation. He decided to carry out a referendum and to put the question as follows: «Should we establish the presidency or the post of Chief of Republic?»

(Kommersant-daily, n. 74, May 22, 1997)

The same method is in use with such phrases as *It is common knowledge that*, *As is well known*, etc. Since these phrases include epistemic factives,

the truth of the propositions represented by their object complements is a presupposition and cannot be challenged. Anyone who does not wish to accept it will have to eliminate him or herself as a well-informed person, but the truth of the proposition remains unshakable.

Again, what has been said does not mean that the phenomenon in question is unknown to political discourse in English. Consider the following example suggested by P. Henry (P. Henry 1971: 87). In the speech to Congress before the tax debate, President Johnson said something like «It is not the regular increase in administration charges that calls for an increase of income taxes, but the Vietnam War». As we can see Johnson did not invite discussion on whether or not the taxes should be increased. The tax increase was taken as given, while Congress was invited to discuss the different causes that necessitated the tax increase. However, it is in present-day Russian political journalism that this manipulative mechanism is especially typical.

Influencing by conversational implicatures

One further manipulative trick implies that the suggested proposition is not found in but is readily apparent from the text as an implicature. This enables the writer to «disown» the inferred proposition should the need arise, as the following example suggests. A fictional character being asked not to tell anybody about a certain event said, «A gentleman never tells.» Later, when it emerged that he had told nevertheless, he claimed, «I never said I was a gentleman.» However, the claim *A gentleman never tells* made as a response to the request not to tell about something is relevant only with the proviso that it is intended to be understood as a promise not to tell. In other words, it should be understood along the following lines: 'A gentleman never tells, I am a gentleman, so, I shall not tell' (the example is taken from Padučeva 1982: 312). As in the example cited immediately above, the method in question most often depends on the presumption of coherence, which means that the reader is faced with making inference, to fill in gaps and thereby restore the missing links.

The practice of action on minds through implicatures was in use as early as in the Soviet period (in the press under censorship) because of the need for 'Aesopian language'. Russian non-conformist publicists used it to conceal anti-régime sentiments suggested to the readers as implicatures of what has been said. It found wide application in the years of perestroï-

ka (for a detailed discussion of implicatures used in Russian nationalist press of the late 1980s see Shmelev 1991). It has become especially popular in recent times, partly because of the widespread practice of bringing libel actions against journalists. Presenting defamatory claims or allegations as implicatures, the journalist can easily evade prosecution. To take an illustration, consider the following title of an article in a Russian newspaper (*Vremya*, Apr. 26, 2000): «The money did not reach miners.» It was followed with the subtitle: «But the coal-mining bosses have luxurious mansions built for them.» The implicature here is quite clear, namely, that the coal-mining bosses stole the money allocated for the miners.

A certain variation of the method in question is involved with the formulae of «partial consent.» A variety of expressions of «partial consent» are available in the Russian language. *Soglasen* ‘I agree’, *ne sporju* ‘I have no objection’, *sporu net* ‘there is no denying’ may be cited as typical representatives of this group; the word *dejstvitel’no* ‘indeed’ is of frequent use in the same fashion. With the use of such formulae, the speaker or the writer seems to agree with the idea stated by an opponent but at once, he or she brings forward an argument that reduces to zero possible implications of that idea. In other words, the use of these formulae shows that the speaker or the writer while agreeing with some detail is going to make an objection against the main point.

In Russian political journalism, such expressions are sometimes used as a tool of manipulation. Since they by themselves suggest some objection, which would restrict or reduce to zero the «consent» conveyed by them, their use provides a way of bringing forward an objection without specifying its essence. In other words, by confining him or herself to an «expression of consent» with an idea, the writer leaves to the discretion of the readers’ inference of a possible objection against that idea, relying on their ability to find the most compelling one.

Contrasting «apparent» reality with «genuine» reality

Yet another method of manipulation in Russian political journalism consists in contrasting «appearance», or «apparent» reality (that is, directly observed facts), with «genuine» reality. The Russian language has special means for that, in particular the expression *na samom dele* ‘in actual fact’. The basis for the use of *na samom dele* is the idea of an «imaginary» or «apparent» reality that conceals «true» or «genuine» reality. In using it the

speaker or the writer appropriates the right of judgment on what is that «true reality» like.

Hence, the journalist who uses *na samom dele* claims as it were, «All evidence that could be used to make an objection against what I am saying is only an appearance that conceals true reality. You cannot challenge the claim made by the writer who used one of those expressions. Any evidence given in support of your claims would be dismissed: «It is merely an appearance, but in actual fact...»

The phrase had gained widespread acceptance in Soviet propaganda. Consider the following example: «It is merely an appearance that you have some ideals. *In actual fact*, all your ideals are nothing but disguised interests of the class to which you belong» (Bulygina and Shmelev 1995). Also, mention may be made of a sentence uttered by Mikhail Gorbachev in a conversation with the head of Cinematographers' Union Elem Klimov: «We want truth in art, but the whole truth rather than half-truth. One should present the country such as it is rather than such as one can see in Central Russia.» Let us cite the comment of a Russian journalist (*Moskovski Komsomolets*, July 11, 1996): «Of the formulations that humankind got from Mikhail Gorbachev, this is perhaps the most striking. *Such as it is rather than such as one can see*. The leading principle of the socialist realism is stated in one phrase.»

Variations on that theme are infinitely diversified. To take an example, «It is merely an *appearance* that you act of your own free will. *In actual fact*, you are a plaything in the hands of the leaders of a world-wide conspiracy.» When using the expression *na samom dele* in such a manner, the argumentation turns out to be unassailable and any possible objection is refuted in advance.

De re interpretation

In reports about speech (as well as about belief or any other propositional attitude), two different strategies known as *de dicto* and *de re* may be distinguished. With the *de dicto* strategy, reference is made to the speech forms that have been used and the assumption is that the reporter means to convey the speaker's actual words as accurately as possible even if in the reporter's view they do not wholly represent the facts. In particular, the reporter uses the same referring expressions that have been used in the reported utterance, without any commitment to their adequacy. So, with

the *de dicto* strategy, the journalist undertakes the job of an impartial reporter. With the *de re* strategy, reference is made to the referential content of those speech forms and the assumption is that the reporter means to interpret what has been said in accordance with «the actual state of affairs». In particular, the reporter is committed to (presuppose) the adequacy of the referring expressions used in the reporting utterance. So, with the *de re* strategy, the journalist undertakes the job of an expounder.

It is sometimes claimed that the *de re* strategy is more «objective» than the *de dicto* strategy (Lee 1993: 374–375). In that view, the *de dicto* strategy depends on the «source» of the quote or original thought, while the *de re* strategy is independent of the source's consciousness. However, it is well to bear in mind that while independent from the source's subjective vision of the world, the *de re* strategy depends on the reporter's subjective interpretation. Being less accurate as a reporting strategy, it is marked and is always chosen purposely. It should be recognized that the purpose of choosing the *de re* strategy is by no means restricted to politics. It can be used, for example, in fiction in reporting a fictional character's speech or thought. Thus in the first sentence of S. Becker's detective novel «A Covenant with Death», the *de re* strategy in reporting the choice taken by the character makes itself evident in the expression *the last afternoon of her life*:

Louise Talbot chose to spend the last afternoon of her life lounging in the shade of a leafy sycamore at the split-rail fence before her home. She was surpassingly alive and exuberantly feminine, and did not know that she was to die.

When taking her choice, Louise Talbot did not know that the coming afternoon would be *the last afternoon of her life* (since she «did not know that she was to die»). In reporting her choice with the *de dicto* strategy, one should use some other referring expression such as *the coming afternoon*. With the *de re* strategy, the writer tells the readers in an indirect way what the character did not know thus exciting their curiosity.

As we have seen in the discussion of Soviet political journalism, the choice of the *de re* strategy may result from the general principles of the ideological language. Through the choice of the *de re* strategy, a political journalist got the readers to gain a clear understanding of whether the reported event belonged to the «alien world» or to «Soviet allies and compatriots».

In the present-day political journalism, the *de re* strategy more often

than not, is chosen for purposes of manipulation. To cite one example,

Members of the Supreme Soviet do not criticize either offenses against the law and violations of human rights committed by the Congress and the Supreme Soviet or rude provocations of national-communists or boorishness of their leaders. (*Izvestia*, early 1990s)

It will be remembered that using the verb *criticize* (in *X criticized Y for doing Z*) involves a claim that *Z* is bad and a presupposition that (the criticizer thinks that) *Y* did or has done *Z*, in contrast to *accuse* (in *X accused Y of doing Z*) that involves attributing some act *Z* to *Y* and presupposing that (the accuser thinks that) *Z* is bad. Hence in accordance with the semantic structure of *criticize*, the above sentence is seemingly bound to mean that without questioning the presupposition (that is, that «offenses against the law and violations of human rights committed by the Congress and the Supreme Soviet», «rude provocations of national-communists», and «boorishness of the leaders of the Supreme Soviet» took place), the parliamentarians denied that these things were bad. The parliamentarians themselves would most likely disagree with that interpretation. It would appear reasonable that they did not approve such things as «offenses against the law» and «boorishness» but disagreed with the claim that these took place in actual practice. It is the interpreter's presupposition probably not shared by the subject of the reported attitude. In this manner the *de re* strategy makes it possible to kill two birds with one stone: to suggest the reporter's attitude under the guise of received fact (assertion in the guise of presupposition) and in doing so to show that the opponent's attitudes are inconsistent (those attitudes would appear inconsistent indeed on the assumption that the opponent shares the presupposition in question).

One comes up against this trick at all times. A journalist who writes, *Y does not criticize terrorism*, presents *Y*'s attitude as backing up terrorism, although it is not improbable that *Y* will not agree with the claim that the actions referred to can be classified as terrorism.

The advantage of the *de re* strategy increases still further when combined with the *de dicto* strategy. We shall cite as an example the following comment on some of statements made by the President of Byelorussia Lukashenko (the comment appeared in an influential Russian newspaper):

Two days later, in his live presentation on Russian State Television, the Byelorussian President accused Russia of unwillingness towards close integra-

tion, but at the same time declared that he did not want to accept *any honest competition* in the Byelorussian money-market and market of ideas. Mr. Lukashenko made no secret of the fact that he would like to protect his republic against the *harmful* influence of the democratic reforms in Russia (Kommersant-daily, n. 67, May 13, 1997).

The journalist used the expression *any honest competition* in accordance with the *de re* strategy (the Byelorussia President had spoken of «the harmful influence of the reforms in Russia»), but at the same time quoting Mr. Lukashenko's actual words in accordance with the *de dicto* strategy. In doing so, the journalist prevented accusations of misquoting Mr. Lukashenko and yet presented the latter's attitude as highly inconsistent — indeed, why an «honest competition» should be «harmful»?

Thus the *de re* strategy in interpretation of the other people's attitudes and utterances works very well as an instrument of manipulation. It is not surprising, then, that it is extensively used in political journalism.

New metaphors in political journalism

As is well known, a crucial conceptual and semantic mechanism in the production of political meanings is metaphor (Chilton and Schäffner 1997). Political metaphors are not merely figures of speech destined for flowery prose and figurative language, but cognitive devices for forming and communicating conceptualizations of reality. Metaphor works by appropriating one taken-for granted field of knowledge and applying it to another (that is, to politics).

In political journalism, one may cite two common metaphors: *society is an organism* (for example, 'health of society'), a metaphor that constitutes historical process as a natural growth; and *society is a mechanism* (for example, 'business fuels the state and permits it to continue functioning'), a metaphor that constitutes history as a pre-designed construction and re-construction of social institutions. Once chosen, the metaphorical view of society is taken as a ground on the basis of which metaphors can be developed without being challenged thus determining a particular view on the political life and the role of politicians.

In Soviet times, mechanistic metaphors were predominant in political journalism, which conformed to the idea of «building a new life». To cite an example, as is well known, Stalin called the Soviet citizens «screws for

the machinery of the State». It was more common to use organic metaphors when referring to the Western world and describing bourgeois society (*capitalist organism*) as incurably ill (consider, for example such clichés as *social ulcers*, *fetid ulcers (on the body) of capitalism*, etc.). As of now, organic metaphors are more common than mechanistic metaphors in referring to today's Russia (consider such expressions as *social ills*, *the sick society*, *shock therapy*, *surgical operation*, etc.).

Since metaphors shape the way we think and behave, they can be used as a powerful tool for linguistic manipulation. The mechanistic metaphors encourage the readers to think of people as material used in the construction of new social mechanisms and to regard social institutions as nothing more than instruments for political use. On the other hand, the organic metaphors suggest that some groups within society may be viewed as sources of disease.

Recent trends are toward increased use of political metaphors taken from a relatively new source, namely, from slang. Worthy of mention are three nouns commonly used in present-day political journalism, namely, *tusovka*, *razborka*, and *raskrutka*. Such metaphors provide general views of political activities.

Tusovka 'party; gathering' is derived from the verb *tusovat'sja* 'to get together just for fun' (both words belonging primarily to the slang of young people).³ The word is used in political journalism mainly as a constituent of the collocation *političeskaja tusovka* 'political *tusovka*' referring to a political group or an assembly. The metaphor suggests the view that political activity is performed for pleasure rather than for the benefit of the people.

Razborka 'sorting out, making out' is taken from thieves' slang where it is used with reference to deciding between adversaries. The word is extremely popular in present-day political journalism; it can refer to deciding a political dispute as well as to political debate as such (provided that a grave conflict between the parties underlies the debate). The metaphor suggests the view that political activities closely parallel criminal activities.

Raskrutka is a noun derived from the verb *raskrutit'*. The literal meaning of the latter word is something like 'to start up accelerated rotary motion'. As a metaphor, *raskrutit'* is primarily used in the slang of publicity

³ The *Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* gives two translations of *tusovka*, namely, *get-together* and *do* (noun).

agents, and it may refer to promoting a new brand or creating celebrity. The core idea of the metaphoric meaning consists in turning the previously unknown into the very popular. The metaphor suggests the view that success in politics is determined by investment in public relations.

Magic of words (emotional appeals used in political journalism)

The emotional appeals in political journalism function the same way they do in advertising (cf. Hirschberg 1996). The mere fact that the words used bear positive or negative charge does the job. The replacement of rational appeals with emotional ones shows the underlying contempt for the audience and is made in the hope that the addressee will not go carefully into the message.

Thus presenting the audience cheerful prospects of integration with former Soviet republics, the Byelorussian President Lukashenko enticed them with the following picture: «You will wear normal clothes sewn in Byelorussia from Uzbek cotton rather than rags from abroad.» Used here is the contrast between the phrase *normal clothes* with positive evaluative meaning and the colloquial expression *rags* (*šmotki*), which is normally ruled out for public speech. The audience is addressed as «you» thus employing their need to see themselves as part of a group and trying to evoke patriotic feelings so that they will derive the sense of participation in being part of the entire nation. Also the need to belong takes a form of offering a way to become part of a time in the past the audience may look back to with nostalgia.

This rhetoric supplies the audience with false memories of the Soviet past. Evaluation apart, that prospect should not be particularly attractive. The production of Byelorussia's sewing industry had never been regarded as an example of haute couture; on the contrary, Soviet consumers always gave preference to clothes from abroad. Going carefully into the message would undermine the validity of the opposition in question.

The other side of the same coin is the use of euphemisms if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. Consider for instance the comfortable English professor defending Soviet totalitarianism from an essay by George Orwell. The professor could not say outright, «I believe in killing off your opponents when you get good results by doing so.» Instead he would say, «While freely conceding that the Soviet régime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be in-

clined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigors which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement.»

Words that bear positive emotional charge are particularly attracting for use as euphemisms. This appears to be the reason for popularity of the word *začistka* used in present-day Russian political journalism with reference to the activities of the Russian troops in Chechnya. The point is that *začistka* has positive connotations unlike *čistka* ‘purge, cleansing’ (a noun with the same root as *začistka*), which is associated either with the Stalinist purges of 1930s or with ethnical cleansing. *Začistka* is sometimes translated as «purge»; however, the latter word does not give an adequate idea of the connotations of *začistka*. Perhaps, a better translation would be something like «smoothing out», «smoothing off (sharp edges)», or «filing (the roughness)» — especially as a typical collocation of this word is *mjagkaja začistka* ‘smooth *začistka*’.⁴

Worthy of mention is a newspaper article written by Alan Kachmazov (*Izvestia*, Apr. 20, 2000). The article is entitled «You may call it as you like» (*Ty kak xočeš’ eto nazovi*, a quote from a Soviet song popular in the early 1980s) and has the following subtitle: «The military call the mountain offensive a *začistka*». Although the word *offensive* does not have negative connotations, it suggests a big military operation, which may be attended with major losses. By contrast, the word *začistka* refers to routine procedure, which is not associated with casualties. The article states, «... In fact, the Russian troops have launched a new offensive in the southern mountains of the republic. The military, in the person of Russia’s Defense Minister Igor Sergejev, deny that reinforcements are being sent to Chechnya and that a troop buildup takes place in the southern mountains. Defense Minister Sergejev insisted that just regrouping in the context of a re-*začistka* of the terrain and a planned combing of the mountains was underway. The journalist draws the following conclusion: «One is entitled to say that in the southern mountains of Chechnya just a planned *začistka* is going on, but this is not to say that there is no large-scale military operation termed offensive in the military language.»

⁴ Irina Levontina came up with the idea that the core meaning of *začistka* is removing bad parts of an object rather than removing dirt or foreign substance as is the case with purge or cleansing (see her article in *Itogi*, 1999, n. 47).

One can see that the «magic of words» is shattered by the first attempt of going carefully into the message. Yet this does not detract in any way from its popularity as a manipulative tool. The point is that political manipulation, as such, is based on the audience's incapacity of critical thinking. Suggested ideas are presented as self-evident truth, which cannot be denied and even discussed.

Thus all the manipulative ploys discussed above have something in common. Manipulation in political discourse is designed to reduce the public's capacity for thinking clearly about important issues and for independent critical analysis and lead them to accept the writer's version of reality. Its primary task is to suppress the critical faculties of the audience. However, the use of manipulative ploys disguises the true intent of the persuader who manipulates language in order to manipulate people.

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