

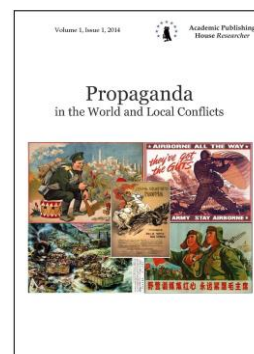
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Published in the Slovak Republic
Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
Has been issued since 2014.

E-ISSN 2500-3712
2020, 7(2): 20-23

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2020.2.20
www.ejournal47.com



Stalingrad Victory – 1943: US Propaganda and Public Opinion

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Abstract

The article dwells to the US media-coverage of the Soviet troops victory at Stalingrad battle. The battle itself was shown at the US media as a crucial disaster of Nazis at the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1943. It also confirmed power of the Red Army and its ability to fight the enemies – the believe, shook after the failed Kharkiv battle of the spring 1942. As the authors show, the USSR victories at the frontline and at the home front spread over the American mass-media by the US Office of War to shift the public opinion from the US and UK failures at the Atlantic, Southeast Asia and Northern Africa. The US Government itself made such a “image making” efforts, and former US secretary of war Patrick J. Hurley visit to Stalingrad shortly after the battle. His telegrams along with another personal recollections, brochures and movies, positive to the image of USSR and Joseph Stalin, were printed and mass disseminated. To our mind, it was made to reduce Americans’ awareness of the Axis success and show, the US is not alone, but has mighty Allies. It also should be noted, that there was a discussion over the USSR image at the Office of War Information. Its employees tried not to lie to Americans, but to concentrate their attention on Russian people achievements on the eve and at times of World War II.

Keywords: Patrick J. Hurley, US, USSR WWII, Great Patriotic War, Stalingrad battle, Office of War Information, propaganda.

1. Introduction

The American society entered 1943 at positive mood. Anglo-American troops defeated the German-Italian “Afrikakorps” at El Alamein on November 20, 1942 passing in 2 weeks 850 km to occupied Benghazi. The retreat of E. Rommel's troops became irreversible, and it was obvious: the liquidation of the Mediterranean theater of military operations was a matter of time. At the same time Red Army completed the landmark Battle of Stalingrad, which lasted more than six months in the distant Soviet Union. The American society received materials about the battle from the diplomatic channels, through the All-USSR Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, but the most massive circulation was the materials of Anglo-American journalists accredited in the USSR and information distributed with the support of the Office of Military Information. This department was established in April 1942 by a decree of U.S. President F. Roosevelt to inform American society, and in fact – to conduct “interventionist” propaganda. Among the materials distributed by American propagandists were personal impressions in the USSR about the host country, its people and leader, as well as Soviet documentary films.

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2. Materials and methods

Our main sources were personal recollections, published at the times of Stalingrad battle (July 17, 1942 – February 2, 1943). These are “Mission to Moscow”, the memories of the former US Ambassador at Moscow (January 25, 1937 – June 11, 1938) Joseph E. Davies and current US Naval representative at in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Axel Pearson book “Russian port adventures told”. The Davies memories were written at times of “Great Terror” at the USSR, and fully benevolent to the official version of the “purges”. That’s why some jigsaw called “The Submission to Moscow” the movie, based on Davies’ book. Besides that there were some telegrams by former US war secretary Partick J. Hurley, who was astonished by the courage of Soviet soldiers and talents of their commanders, and by the traces of Romanian, Hungarian, Italian and German troops epic defeat at Stalingrad. We trace publication and circulation of these personal reminiscences by the US Office of War information (OWI) that tried to make a mainstream of the US media. We also analyzed some “Russian events” publications of the US central press to understand the effectiveness of OWI efforts, and made final conclusion of US public opinion based on the Gallup surveys, published at the book by famous American historian H. Cantril. So our concept is that the US public opinion was formed by the OWI and some media holdings, which had some short-term alliances during WWII. We think that President Roosevelt’s interventionist foreign policy needed the necessary public support from the US citizens, so the OWI establishing was inevitable. It played a crucial role at mobilizing US mass opinion for resistance to Japanese aggression and to produce land-lease military equipment for UK and USSR. But, from the mid-1943 the US corporations became speaking on necessity to be “constant combat ready” even after the victory at WWII, which should save the nation from the “Great Depression” repeat. We suppose this to be an economic basement for the cold war.

3. Results

One of the landmark films of 1943 was "Mission to Moscow". The scope of the film was taken from the former US Ambassador at Moscow Joseph Davis book with the same title. Jack W. Warner, one of the founders of the company "Warner Brothers", gave such an idea to President F. Roosevelt, who ordered the State Treasury to give 2 million dollars. The film became, as critics from the State Department called it, a “Submission to Moscow”. The reason was it absolutely uncritical perception of J. Stalin and it justification of the “Great Purge” of 1937. On the contrary, the movie was about “firm but merciful "Uncle Joe"*, sipping a pipe, determined against the invaders. He led the happy collective farmers and merry workers to destroy the Hitlerites who invaded the Holy Russia” (Fleming, 2001: 294).

The attitude towards the Soviet leader differed even within the same publishing house. Thus, during the Second World War, the G. Lius Corporation published three magazines: "Fortune" (a monthly magazine for businessmen), the illustrated "Life" for the mass reader and "Time", which published analytical articles (including on domestic and foreign policy). The Soviet general secretary looked focused, but kind and pleasant at the pages of “Life” magazine. On the contrary, the "Time" characteristics of Stalin sound like "This is a tough man, quite earned his steel name <...> And if anyone was able to survive in the conditions of those historical trials in which he found himself now, he could (Alexander, 1989: 32) at September 1941. But in a year and a half the same magazine spoke about Stalin following "...impenetrable, practical, persistent Asian, spent at the desk for 16-18 hours a day ... He is still firmly in the hands of the reins of government; in addition, his ability as a statesman, albeit belatedly, was recognized outside Russia ... The flow of distinguished guests from other countries, rushing to Moscow in 1942, forced Stalin to leave his impenetrable "shell": under it was found a cordial host and a skilled player at the international "card table" (Time, January 4, 1943). It was the "Time", who made Stalin its man of 1942 (in 1938, a similar "title" there received Hitler). Interesting to note, that firstly Stalin appeared as the “Time”

* For the first time, "Uncle Joe" or "D.J." for Stalin's designation was heard in the correspondence W. Churchill and F. Roosevelt on July 16, 1943, but this address was heard in the press earlier. In particular, in the spring of 1942, this was the name given to the Soviet head photographer of "Life" magazine Margaret Bork-White, who was struck by his kind smile (see Alexander C.S. "Uncle Joe": images of Stalin during the period of the highest development of the anti-Hitler coalition, The American Yearbook, 1989. P. 31).

person of the year at 1939 as a ruthless despot. And in 1943 the same Stalin was shown as a fearless fighter against Nazism. A few months later, a photograph of the Soviet leader was placed on the front page of Life magazine.

Modesty and intellectual power of Stalin astonished Richard Parker, the "New York Times" journalist. He wrote about Stalin's innovative offerings. Parker described the Soviet leader as a revolutionary, a fighter for building a state "in which all citizens have political, economic, and cultural freedoms and rights <...> no private interests are allowed to prevent the development of natural wealth for the well-being of all" ([The New York Times, August 23, 1942](#)). John Dewey and Susanne Lafollet, the same contributors of the "New York Times", made the most extensive and objective critical film "Mission to Moscow" review.

With the support of the Office of Military Information, two landmark books were published in 1943. These were the diaries of the American naval representative in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, Axel Pearson, and the second edition of the memoirs of former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Joseph Davis "Mission to Moscow". Pearson draws a vivid image of Soviet people: "We were dropped bombs morning, day and night. We were worried about 14 bombings a day. I counted the raids for thirty-eight days: we were bombed 168 times, after that I gave up recording... My God, what kind of people are these Russians? They're harsh, but they're also friendly. They're kind and they look happy. They're pretty sure they'll win the war... Women, strong, big and tough, do men's work eleven hours a shift. They live hungry – on black bread and soup. They never complain, only express indignation at the Germans. I like the Russians. They know what they're fighting for..." ([Pearson, 1943: 5-6](#)).

The telegrams related to the visit to Stalingrad of Brigadier General (National Guard) Patrick Hurley were another important factor in shaping the Americans (including the political elite) opinion. He fought in France at the American expeditionary corps during the First World War, and with the beginning of the Second World War he was recalled from the military reserve and he performed a number of inspections in the location of the U.S. troops and their allies on behalf of the highest military command of the United States. P. Hurley visit and his entourage at Stalingrad during the counteroffensive of Soviet troops covered by Soviet state security agencies, were disclosed in the articles of Doctor of Law V.S. Khristoforov ([Khristoforov, 2013a: 24-28](#); [Khristoforov, 2013b: 135-156](#)). But about there were also remained telegrams of the second secretary of the American Embassy in Moscow L. Thompson, sent by him to Franklin Roosevelt about this visit (see ([Belov et al., 2014: 132-139](#))). In his reports on this mission, which also included American military and naval attachés, Thompson describes polite Soviet soldiers who helped the Americans (both business and information). At the Red Army headquarters, which were visited by Americans in the area of Serafimovich - Golubinskaya, they met with Generals I.M. Chistyakov, N.T. Tavartkeladze, P.I. Batov and N.F. Vatutin. They told about the precautions taken to prevent the breakthrough of the ring around the Paulus group, about the logistics of their troops. These conversations, along with the view of the military equipment thrown by the retreating enemy, made a great impression on the guests. Soviet commanders, described by Thompson, look like this: "At the moment, the Red Army is commanded by officers who went to the school of this war. We have been told that the quality of control has increased dramatically compared to the beginning of the war. Generals, for the most part, are young men who are good at learning new things in strategy and tactics. What we have seen allows us to assert that they meet the challenges that the Germans are facing them on the strategic and tactical levels. As can be seen from Thompson's telegrams to Washington, the refrain in all conversations with Soviet soldiers was their questions about the timing of the opening of a second front in Europe and the delivery of goods on the Lend-Lease. Americans were pleasantly surprised by the Soviet mobile repair shops for military equipment and tractors, which showed good mobility of the RKKA. In the end, an American diplomat concluded: "I am convinced that the Red Army has become a much more organized combat unit and is much better managed than it was at the beginning of the war. However, its supply and transport problems will become more acute. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the defeat of the Axis troops in Russia will increasingly depend on supply from the United States" ([Belov et al., 2014: 135, 138](#)).

4. Conclusion

As we can see, those Americans who were in the Soviet Union and directly communicated with Soviet people were very high opinion about their military allies. But the problem with the American media during World War II was that the opinion of the Office of War Information and its allies was not the only propaganda meaning at the United States. Shortly before the 1943 presidential campaign began, the former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Joseph Davies, described the situation in the media as follows: "Dog times are coming. We are on the eve of sharp political battles. There is ... a real collusion between 70 % of the so-called "newspaper chain", hostile to the president and constituting almost all the press. There are many signs that hostile newspapers articles press are implemented according to the plan and well coordinated... Just before the president last speech <on June 28, 1943> at least one radio channel broadcast a program against international cooperation and glorify the American flag ...» (Malkov, 1988: 267).

The presented examples show how selectively the American mass media covered the USSR. If sympathies for "Soviets" were leaking to ordinary Americans, these were positive assessments of ordinary Soviet citizens. Both the Department of Military Information and the editors of the central editions were careful not to appear sympathetic to the Soviet social and political order. And its leader, if he received positive assessments, only after a long series of negative epithets. Thus, playing by halftones, the leading American propaganda agency of the period of World War II (WVI) formed the position of the American public towards the USSR. But, to be fair, let us note that the Department was not the only one here, and Franklin Roosevelt's moderate "Sovietism" was opposed by powerful and cohesive political and media forces.

The most persuade propaganda is the one, based on real-life success. Soviet achievements against Hitler and Axis troops spoke for themselves. So, 1943 was the year of the highest Americans sympathy to Russia at 1930's – 1940's. At June 1943, nearly 81 per cent of Americans believed tin future equal cooperation between the US and USSR at war and after it (Public Opinion 1935–1946, 1951: 372).

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