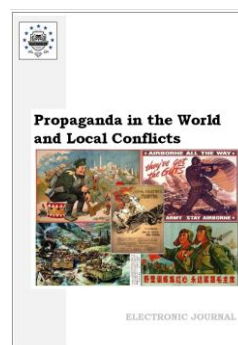


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Published in the USA  
 Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts  
 Issued since 2014.  
 E-ISSN: 2500-3712  
 2023. 10(1): 31-36

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2023.1.31  
<https://pwlc.cherkasgu.press>



## The Elements of Military Propaganda and Myth-Making in the Synopsis of the Sarapul – Tchaikovsky Boat Tour

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### Abstract

The paper publishes and analyzes the manuscript of the synopsis of the boat tour on the route “Sarapul – Tchaikovsky”, compiled around 1972. The document is in the funds of the Department of archives of the administration of the city of Sarapul. The external and internal criticism of the source was made. Since the information about the events in the Kama region in 1918–1919 is of the greatest interest, this fragment is analyzed from the point of view of military propaganda. It is concluded that the synopsis is a typical product of Soviet propaganda of the early 1970s. In addition to advertising the achievements of the Soviet power, it represents a range of techniques that have found wide application in propaganda, such as: the active use of myth-making in describing the “slippery” moments of Soviet history, which is clearly seen on the example of the Golyanskaya barge of death (the exception of unwanted moments that can discredit the Soviet government, and replacing them with frankly mythical facts, which, nevertheless, fit well into the mainstream of Soviet propaganda).

**Keywords:** military propaganda, myth-making, Prikamye, civil war, assessment of events.

### 1. Introduction

In the funds of the Department of archives of the administration of the city of Sarapul (Sarapul, Russian Federation) there is a case “The documents on the cruise of the agit-steamer “VTsIK “Krasnaya Zvezda” and lectures, excursions on ships on the topic “Lenin and Kama” (SGA. F. R-689. Op. 1. D. 39). It contains a synopsis of an excursion on a motor ship following the Sarapul – Tchaikovsky route among the newspaper clippings of the second half of the 1960s – the first half of the 1970s (SGA. F. R-689. Op. 1. D. 39. L. 4-14). Due to the mentioning in the text that 55 years have passed since the events of 1918, this makes it possible to date the synopsis to 1973. This date is also indirectly confirmed by information on the construction of the city of Tchaikovsky, where there is not a single mention of events older than this date. The fragments of the excursion are of the greatest interest concerning the events of the Civil War period, as an element of Soviet myth-making that penetrated into the propaganda of that time.

It is unlikely that anyone purposely tried to distort the original events. Most likely, we may be talking about an incorrect interpretation of the existing facts, which turned out to be very useful to the existing propaganda machine, as facts that meet its needs well.

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### **External source criticism**

The analyzed document is a typewritten manuscript printed on standard sheets of record paper of 11 format (current A4). The paper is thin enough so that text of the next sheet shines through it. The preservation of the document is mainly good, there are traces of scuffing and torn edges. The last sheet is very worn out, torn in many places. It allows to assert that the manuscript was kept folded for a long time, and the last sheet was out, which is why it was worn out a lot. The penultimate sheet has strong bruises, which also confirms this assumption. From this we can make another assumption that these sheets were working material and, most likely, were actually used during excursions.

The manuscript sheets have double numbering. One of them from the number “1”, which is missing on the title page, to “11”, is printed in the same font as the main text. The second numbering is done in the upper right corner with a pencil, and, obviously, it has already been done when stitching the case before or after the transferring it to the archive. Most likely, after the numbering, the additional newspaper clippings were added to the case, which is why the actual number of pages does not match the numbering.

The manuscript sheet with handwritten number 3 (the typewritten digit “1” is missing) is a heading printed in the middle of an empty sheet: “Travel information on the ship on the route Sarapul – Tchaikovsky. Sarapul excursion bureau”.

The text itself contains numerous spelling and punctuation errors, some of which have been corrected with a fountain pen with black paste. On page 4 there is a record with the same fountain pen “The Urengoy – Uzhgorod gas pipeline”, obviously suggesting the subsequent insertion of a text that is missing in the manuscript.

### **2. The publication of source**

Comrade tourists! We are going on a trip along the Kama River to the Tchaikovsky city. We will traverse this way in 5 hours. We will stay in Tchaikovsky for about 3 hours, see the floodgates of the hydroelectric power station, visit the museum in Tchaikovsky city and in the branch of the Perm art gallery, the art gallery of the Tchaikovsky city, look at the city and hear the story about it.

Now we are sailing from the Sarapul harbor up the Kama River, along the Sarapul–Tchaikovsky excursion route...

2 km from Sarapul – the Dulesovo village. Sometimes, passing here, you can see a two-deck steamer parked near the shore, on the sides of which is written “Krasnaya Zvezda”, one of the important stages of the struggle for the consolidation of Soviet power in the Volga and Prikamye is connected with this steamer. In the summer of 1919, the Red Army completed the liberation of the Prikamye from Kolchakists. The local population suffered a lot of deprivation and suffering from the White Guards. In this environment, the Central Committee of the Party [and] VTsIK (All-Russian Central Executive Committee) decided, at the suggestion of V.I. Lenin, to send a special steamship on an agitation travel along the Volga and Kama. Among the responsible persons who traveled on this steamer was N.K. Krupskaya, at that time a member of the Board of the People's Commissariat for Education. The brigade was tasked with following in the footsteps of the Whites, explaining the policies of the party and the Soviet government, and mobilizing workers to fight against the enemies of the revolution. Along the Kama the agit-steamer ascended to Perm, making stops in all settlements. Although almost half a century has passed since then, there is still an agitation travel “Krasnaya Zvezda” in Prikamye. For a long time, the historic steamer served as a floating rest home.

Comrade tourists! In front of you on the right bank is the Nechkino village. Above the village in the depths of the coast, there is a hill covered with forest. This pic is the highest point of the area. Therein there was an observation post earlier. And closer to Kama there are two ancient settlements – the archaeological monuments. The pamphlets and leaflets were sent to this village during the first Russian Revolution from Sarapul. They were worn by the Olyshev brothers. In 1918, there were battles between the Reds and whites near this village, the last battles before the arrival of the White Guards in Sarapul. Now the central estate of the state farm “Nechkinsky” of the Sarapulsky district is in the Nechkino village. To the right on the shore, the buildings of the Gol'yany village were marked. This district has served as a place of settlement of people from time immemorial, as evidenced by their finds. The remains of an ancient burial site have been found

near the shore of the Kama River. Gol'yany was a busy transportation point at that time. For more than a century and a half, they served as a transshipment base of the Izhevsk plant, when the enterprise was not yet connected with the railway. The barges with metal came to the Gol'yany, which were then transported from the harbor to Izhevsk on carts, the finished products of the plant went back: to the Gol'yany by carts, then by barges along the river...

The civil war left the unforgettable traces here. The granite obelisk installed on the bank of the Kama River reminds of this. The words in golden letters are inscribed on it that here in October 1918 the heroic Red flotilla under the leadership of Fedor Fedorovich Raskol'nikov freed 432 fighters for the power of the Soviets from the "barge of death".

This is how it was.

The human history includes millions of various events, but none of them can be compared with the Great October Socialist Revolution, which opened the era of communism.

It took the genius of V.I. Lenin, the titanic work of the Communist Party, the inexhaustible strength of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry of Russia to overthrow the power of capital and defend the conquest of October in the throes of the hardest armed struggle.

One of the fronts of the struggle for the power of the Soviets was Prikamye. It was sweltering August days of 1918. A White Guard-Kulak mutiny broke out in the Prikamye. On the morning of August 7, the leaders of the "Union of front-line soldiers" in Izhevsk organized a rally, ordering workers to arm themselves. With threats, blackmail, provocations, they caught an unstable part of the workers, and on August 8, a White Guard-Socialist-Revolutionary clique rose to power in Izhevsk.

On August 15, the White Guards captured the Gol'yany. Having reached the Coma, they intended to connect with parts of the Czechoslovaks near Kazan.

The mutines began their rule with the butchery of the population, which sympathized with the Soviet government.

Dozens and hundreds of arrested persons arrived in prison casemates every day, they filled basements, stables, merchant warehouses, and special barges installed on the Kama were built for them.

Factories and plants were again returned to their former owners, a 14-hour working day was introduced, the last crumbs of food were taken from the working peasants. The best part of the working class and peasantry of Udmurtia, at the call of party organizations, went to the partisans. Everyone was waiting for the liberation, the arrival of the Red Army. On September 10, Kazan was liberated. Following her release, a campaign begins in the Prikamye. It was led by the Second Army, the vanguard force, which was the II Consolidated Division under the command of Vladimir Martynovich Azin and part of the Volga-Kama flotilla consisting of 3 destroyers, 3 gunboats, a floating battery, 3 armed boats, led by flotilla commander Fedor Fedorovich Raskol'nikov.

The whites retreated, took the arrested with them or dealt with them on the spot. On the morning of October 3, some of the prisoners of the Sarapul prison were brought under heavy escort to a damp, cold barge on the Kama River, and at night a tugboat took it under the railway bridge. The executioners expected to blow up the stone bridge and sink the arrested under its debris, but they were alarmed by the violent protest of the Sarapul workers, on the morning of October 4, a tugboat pulled a barge up the river. The barge stood in the middle of the river opposite the Gol'yany village. On October 5, after a short battle, the Azinsky division captured the city of Sarapul. Sarapul residents met the liberators with a red flag, with tears of joy and grief. They told the soldiers that their husbands, sons and brothers languish in Gol'yany, but the Gol'yany is behind the front line. Three destroyers took off their anchors and carefully moved away from the pier up the Kama River to rescue a barge with prisoners. On the lead destroyer "Prytkii" was the commander of the Volga military flotilla F.F. Raskolnikov with a military staff.

More than 600 prisoners of the floating prison were sitting in a barge, the hatches were constantly closed, water splashed under the payol. Once a day, prisoners were brought soup and an "os'mushka" (eighth part) of bread. There was hunger, dank damp air, measurement, exhaustion of people. Others from weakness lay in the corners, such were pulled up, pinned with bayonets and dumped into the water of the Kama. So the member of the Central Working Committee, the old communist Shevelev, the technical secretary of the Sarapul Council Zylev and many others died. The prisoners were shot every day. In several places, the prisoners pushed aside the inner skin of the barge, pierced small eyes and watched the shore by them.

On October 5, something incomprehensible was happening there: the White Guards were fussing, hurriedly transporting some boxes beyond the Kama River, and steamers were standing at the harbor ready to sail.

It means that ours are close, the Red Army is advancing. In the morning, a squad of punishers landed on the barge, brought another empty barge, the prisoners were driven through the ranks, pushed into the hold of a neighboring barge, searched the old barge (looking for bread and weapons) and, finding nothing, drove the workers to the old prison barge. Only 432 out of 600 people got into the hold.

Meanwhile, the destroyers were approaching the Gol'yany. And three [of them] decided to go to the whites, posing as Admiral Stark's White Guard flotilla, which the founders were waiting for to help. There was a White Guard tugboat "Rassvet" at the harbor. Our officer from the destroyer Alboprinov transmits his orders to the captain: "In the name of the flotilla commander Admiral Stark, I order you to approach the barge with prisoners, take it in tow and follow us across the Belaya River to Ufa".

Accustomed by the whites to unquestioning obedience, the captain of the "Rassvet" immediately executes the order: he approaches the barge and takes it in tow. The destroyer, followed by a tugboat with a barge, begin to depart to Sarapul.

Thus, the barge was taken behind the front line to the Dulesovo village. A detachment of sailors disarmed a White Guard convoy on a barge, prisoners in the barge, Soviet and party workers, people sympathetic to the Soviet government, were released. Half-naked, barefoot, with sunken cheeks and haggard faces, with matting on their shoulders, supporting each other, people came out of the hold. They hugged, kissed the sailors, cried – no one was ashamed of tears. Then they sang softly, uncertainly: "Boldly, comrades, in step". The voices were breaking down. They didn't even sing, but pronounced the words, and the further they went, the clearer, more courageous they became:

"They kept us in chains for a long time,  
Hunger tormented us for a long time,  
The dark days are over  
The hour of redemption has struck".

The lights of Sarapul seemed to be far away. Members of the Revolutionary committee were already waiting at the harbor, who had been brought back to life. So 432 prisoners of the "barge of death" were rescued.

In 1928, on the bank of the Kama River, opposite the place where the "barge of death" once stood, a monument was erected – a granite obelisk in honor of the liberation of Soviet people from White Guard captivity.

Slowly, majestically, as 55 years ago, the beautiful Kama carries its clear waters.

The days and nights of the river are filled with a different, not combat, not military, but laborious, creative life, another life blooms on its banks. For this new happy life, full of creative aspirations, the fathers and grandfathers of those who today lead by Kama swift snow-white swanships, hardworking tugboats, cruise "missiles", who cultivate collective farm fields, erect factory buildings, city blocks fought.

Songs are sung about their exploits and sacrifices, legends are told, monuments testify. The bright memory of the first fighters for national happiness will forever remain in our hearts.

Sailing past the Gol'yany, remember 1918, and if you have to go there, bare your head in front of the obelisk, on which the words are inscribed: "Bargers, fighters for the Soviets, brutally tortured by counter-revolutionaries-founders in October 1918. Workers and peasants of the Kama region". The signature carved in gold on the granite obelisk perpetuated this memorable episode of the civil War forever.

Now only local vessels stick to the Gol'yany. The transit ships pass by. Now the central estate of the state farm "Kama" of the Zavyalovsky district, Udm. ASSR is in the Gol'yany village. The Kama shores above and below the Gol'yany are very picturesque. The right bank is high and steep, the left bank is low, floodplain, forest grows on one, meadows stretch on the other.

The Tchaikovsky city is ahead. The lights of the erected power plant shine far away. Its energy feeds the districts of the Perm region, as well as the Udmurt and Bashkir Autonomous Republics. The station building, as you can see, was built separately, and not built into a spillway dam, as, for example, at the Kama hydroelectric power station.

The government supported the initiative of the builders, and they launched the work. Here are the most important stages of construction: on November 5, 1957, the first cubic meter of concrete was laid in the body of the dam; in October 1961, the riverbed was blocked; two months later, in December, the first two units were put into operation; at the end of 1963, the last 10 units were put under industrial load and the station started working with full load. The hydraulic builders have performed a huge amount of work. 46 million cubic meters of soil alone have been moved. 1 million 250 thousand cubic meters of hydraulic concrete were laid. Almost 50 thousand tons of equipment and metal structures have been installed. The reinforced concrete dam of the Votkinsk hydroelectric complex raised the water level in this area by 23 meters. The total area of the water mirror is 1125 sq. km. The water backup has spread for 360 km – almost to Perm. The Tchaikovsky city, which grew up next to the waterworks, is becoming increasingly famous in the Prikamye. The data of the old directory are interesting, according to which it is possible to determine what this area was like half a century ago.

In the ancient Saigatka village, near which the Tchaikovsky city stands now, there were 229 courtyards before the revolution, in which over 1,000 residents lived, engaged exclusively in agriculture. In the village there was an Orthodox church, a zemstvo school, a library, six retail shops, among them a state-owned wine shop. Now let's see what this area has become after the construction of the waterworks. In 1956, the first houses began to lay, four years later the village became a city, which is now a major industrial and cultural center. You see beautiful multi-storey houses, wide asphalt streets, heavy traffic of cars. The hydroelectric power station was the beginning of the city. At the same time, other enterprises began to be built. The repair and maintenance base of the fleet – a large production plant with a slip (a special ship-lifting facility) has entered into operation. A mechanized transshipment port has started operating. On the bank of the Kama River [stands] the original building of the river station, made of concrete and glass. The young city is connected to the outside world not only by water. A railway line has also been laid here. The station is called Saigatka, after the name of the settlement from which the beginning of urban construction was laid. The street names reflect the Soviet novelty, the features of the young city. There are signs hanging on corner houses: Vysokovolt'naya, Shlyuzovaya, Mira, Primorsky Boulevard. More than thirty shops, canteens, cafes are open in the city. Every third city resident studies. In Tchaikovsky there are: a construction college, a college of light industry, a medical school, a music school, several primary and secondary schools. There are 13 educational institutions in total...

### **Internal source criticism**

The historical material selected for the tour as a whole fully corresponds to the ideological attitudes that existed at that time. It was necessary to show the heaviness of life under the tsarist regime and the successes of socialist construction. All these materials are available.

The source base for agit-steamers, and for the “Krasnaya Zvezda” in particular, is much richer and includes both scientific, local history and memoir literature. The excursion materials very well avoided the most “hot-button” issue of the appearance of such a representative delegation on the “Krasnaya Zvezda” steamer, including N.K. Krupskaya, V.M. Molotov and other top officials of the state. The problem was that the region actively supported both the rebels in 1918 and the Kolchakists in 1919. This is what determined the main goals and objectives of the travel. Although by the early 1970s there were still living witnesses in the region, they had already accepted the official point of view on the events.

The history with the Golyanskaya barge is almost three pages, or a quarter of the entire document. And the drafters of the document simply could not bypass several “sick” moments. A lot of works have been devoted to the study of various aspects related to the barge of death. As of 2017, A.V. Korobeinikov discovered 52 versions of memoir plots about the Golyanskaya barge of death, differing from each other in many important details (Korobeinikov, 2017: 143). For example, he tried to find out the exact number of prisoners of the barge according to the works of the Soviet period – this figure ranges from 430 to 522 people (Korobeinikov, 2012: 142-143). In late historiography, the figure of 432 people was established, according to this author, this is the number that remained after the filtration by red the rescued bargers.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of ideological cliches about the “barges of death”, launched, obviously, in the 1930s and 1940s, when the mythology of this issue was finally formed. Since this

matter is also directly or indirectly addressed in fiction (novels and films), it should be illustrated in more detail. The rebels certainly had no goals to destroy all the bargers. Therefore, the phrases like “the executioners expected to blow up the stone bridge and drown the arrested under its debris” just belong to the elements of myth-making. The thing is that it is much easier to organize the protection of prisoners who are on ships in the middle of the water area than in traditional arrest rooms. And, besides this, the number of guards is reduced to a minimum. Moreover, this is not a Soviet innovation, as it has often been shown in the opposition literature, but rather a global trend. So it was on the ships of the Spanish fleet that the anarchist prisoners of Barcelona were kept, since at any moment the anarchists who were at large could organize a pogrom of the prison in order to free the prisoners. Regarding the Izhevsk uprising, it was personnel difficulties that came first. The rebels were fighting with many times numerically superior enemy, so they simply could not afford large security detachments.

As for the inhuman conditions of detention, according to the research of A.V. Korobeinikov, the prisoners themselves are largely to blame for this. Some of the prisoners, primarily women and criminals, were safely escorted back from the barge to the Sarapul prison, relatives were allowed to give them a transfer (Korobeinikov, 2012: 13).

The people in the barge, although they carefully watched the events taking place, did not hear the order through the loud hailer transmitted from the destroyers. The guards on the barge did not hear about the order either (Korobeinikov, 2017: 159). In addition, it should be noted that there was originally a mention of Raskolnikov on the monument to the bargers in Gol'yany, which was later removed. Therefore, the synopsis refers to an inscription that existed in the early 1970s.

This highlights that by the time of writing the tour synopsis, the mythological history of the Golyanskaya barge of death has already been finally formed. Basically, it was not aimed at an objective description of events, but was almost a complete ideological stamp.

### 3. Conclusion

The synopsis of the Sarapul-Tchaikovsky boat tour is a typical product of Soviet propaganda of the early 1970s. In addition to advertising the achievements of the Soviet power, it represents a range of techniques that have found wide application in propaganda, such as: the active use of myth-making in describing the “slippery” moments of Soviet history, which is clearly seen on the example of the Golyanskaya barge of death.

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