

New Propaganda: Remnants of Soviet Mass Media in Pro-Kremlin Popular Culture

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Abstract

Russia has had a long history of propaganda produced by governmental bodies. The Soviet Union controlled entire sectors of media and used it to try to control the ideology and actions of their populace. After the fall of the USSR in 1991, Russian society was thrust into the wild west of capitalism. Once state-controlled industries, such as television, were purchased by private players in the system who wanted a say in the formation of the new Russia. However, when Putin was elected in 2000, the landscape of Russian popular culture began to change. Para-governmental and non-governmentally affiliated groups took over the task of producing pro-kremlin propaganda. Furthermore, the propaganda that these groups produce exhibits many of the same features and motifs of Soviet Propaganda. The goals of this thesis are twofold. The first is to trace the rise of these para-governmental groups and show the role they have in post-Soviet Russia. The second is to show that these new movements in propaganda are reflections of similar Soviet schools of propaganda, but are changed in form and effectiveness by the modern world. This thesis focuses on four categories of society: the cult of personality, youth groups, television, and mass media in the public sphere.

Introduction

New Propaganda for the New Russia

Every few years, some interesting piece of foreign media will drift into the American pop-culture sphere. In 2002, this happened with the music video for the catchy electronic song “*Takogo kak Putin*”¹, whose title translates into “One Just Like Putin”. The video to this song features scantily clad women all extolling the greatness of President Vladimir Putin and wishing that they had a man that was like him. It includes such lines as “One like Putin, full of strength,” and “With one like him it’s easy to be at home and abroad.” This fascinated and amused American audiences who posted it all over the Internet. In the mindset of the average American, musicians were making songs that were essentially propaganda for a ruling leader. However, this reflects a greater trend around the world. Many Americans forgot that there was a similar song entitled “I Got a Crush on Obama” by Obama Girl that went viral during the 2008 presidential campaign. It was similarly catchy and caught fire on the Internet.² It also sexualized the head of state, just as “*Takogo kak Putin*” did several years earlier. The major difference between these two is in the reception by the campaigns themselves. While “I Got a Crush on Obama” was popular on the Internet, it was never really taken seriously. Its Russian counterpart was embraced by the campaign itself, being played at rallies and political events around Russia.³

Examples like this show us an international trend in the manipulation of mass consciousness. As consumers of information have become more skeptical of government

¹ Poyoushchiye Vmyestye, (2002). *Takogo kak putin* [Web]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OFOPd6pgjI

² Jake Tapper, (2007, June 13). “Music video has a 'crush on obama',” June 13, 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=3275802&page=1>

³ Victoria Gamburg and Alexis Bloom, “A Man Like Putin,” PBS, accessed February 11, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/soundtracks/stories/putin/>

produced propaganda, para-governmental and non-government affiliated groups have risen to fill what was once a state task. Perhaps the most striking example of this is in Russia, where, from the Stalin era into the late Soviet period, the state took on the main responsibility for producing and spreading propaganda. In this thesis I will examine the rise of para- governmental, pro-Putin propaganda in contemporary Russia. I will compare this modern movement in propaganda with parallel forms that existed during the Soviet period in order to discover why and how this movement emerged. Eventually, I will come to the conclusion that this propaganda is not a phenomenon disconnected from history, but modern para-governmental is a reflection of Soviet propaganda, and exhibits many of the same traits.

Defining Propaganda

Propaganda is generally understood by the layman as the spreading of ideas, true or manufactured, in order to manipulate the ideology of a wider community. Edward Bernays⁴ writes, “Whatever of social importance is done today, whether in politics, finance, manufacture, agriculture, charity, education, or other fields, must be done with the help of propaganda. Propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government.” He goes on to write, citing an article in *Scientific American*, that the meaning of propaganda has been sadly distorted to give it a negative connotation; however, propaganda is not inherently good or evil, but its value depends on “the merit of the cause urged, and the correctness of the information published.” Bernays believed that propaganda was necessary in any democracy to give order to chaos and help the common man make decisions. Of course Bernays failed to recognize that propaganda could be used to destroy and corrupt democracy just as well as it could help it, as is evidenced by the Nazis and by Fascist use of it in the years preceding and during the Second World War.

⁴Edward Bernays. *Propaganda*. (New York: H. Liveright. 1928)

On the other hand, Stanley Cunningham calls propaganda an “inherently profoundly unethical state of affairs.” Framing it as a primarily philosophical issue, Cunningham believes that because propaganda skews and corrupts truth for the aims of manipulating opinion, it cannot be considered good. He goes on to define the nebulous concept of propaganda not as the control and manipulation of beliefs, though that is undoubtedly what propaganda involves, but as an “array of epistemic defects.” He writes that the term “propaganda” is merely a marker for the complex interplay of the manipulation of our biases and beliefs, the withholding and selective representation of proof, and the devaluing of the higher intellectual exercises such as analysis and reflection.⁵ To date this is considered one of the most complete definitions of propaganda.

Both of these definitions come from a markedly Western viewpoint. One needs a Russia-based definition to truly understand the utilization and concepts behind Russian propaganda. Peter Kenez⁶ writes that in order to sensibly discuss the matter of propaganda we must, “Abandon all hope” of finding a precise definition of propaganda. The definition he offers is (in an admittedly broad interpretation of the subject) this: “Propaganda is nothing more than the attempt to transmit social and political values in the hope of affecting people’s thinking, emotion, and thereby behavior.” According to Kenez there was idealism to Bolshevik propaganda, comparing it to the Catholic Church instead of another political movement such as the Fascists. They did not hide that they were propagandizing, like other groups, but proudly admitted to producing propaganda. Every member believed it was his right and duty to spread the ideology of the revolution. Thus, one must not look at Russian propaganda as necessarily ill intentioned, as Cunningham would suggest. Instead, one must look at Russian propaganda as an integral tool

⁵ Stanley Cunningham. *The idea of propaganda: a reconstruction*. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2002) 98, 125

⁶ Peter Kenez, *The birth of the propaganda state: Soviet methods of mass mobilization 1917-1929*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

in the Soviet political structure. Kenez writes, “We should deplore dishonesty and cheating— though we must be aware that often there are extenuating circumstances— but to rail against propaganda is useless, for it is an integral part of the modern world.” Thus, this thesis will take a neutral view of propaganda, for it is not my intent to establish whether this new movement in propaganda is moral or immoral, but to show its roots in history.

Russian Propaganda: the Shift

From the early days of the USSR, government had a monopoly over information. In theory, when Russia shifted from communism to a democracy, there should have been a shift from centralized propagation of information to many competing ideas in an information marketplace. Directly after the fall of the Soviet Union, things went as would be expected. Glasnost and perestroika had already significantly weakened government control of media, and the end of the Soviet period was another blow to overt control of mass consciousness. The Russian constitution established the Russian Federation as a democracy, guaranteed its citizenry certain rights and protections, and established Russia as an open society, banning censorship and insuring the freedom of mass communication.⁷ Many opposing viewpoints circulated in the 1990’s, and there was a chaotic drive of privatization of all formerly government controlled industries, including information. The Putin presidency changed that. Beginning in the early 2000’s, Vladimir Putin once again began pulling media under the heel of the government, choking out opposition viewpoints, and fostering a closed society. However, the rise of Putin came with less noticeable trend -- that is, the rise of grassroots groups that seek to promote Putin and the goals of his government. In modern Russia the production of pro-Kremlin propaganda is now far more dispersed among a variety of non-government or para-governmental organizations.

⁷ “Konstitutsiya Rossiskoy Federatsii,” December 12, 1993, accessed April 21, 2014, <http://constitution.kremlin.ru/>

Pro-kremlin messages are now disseminated through structures that are supposed to be protected from manipulation, such as the democratic system, private youth groups and television, as well as viral internet videos. Interestingly enough, these modern phenomena in propaganda in the, at least nominally, open Russian society reflect similar structures in the closed Soviet society

Vladimir Putin has been under constant scrutiny due to what has been considered by opposition groups and many international observers an attempt to manipulate history, media, and the arts. Some people in politics and the media have blamed him for attempting to cultivate a cult of personality. Putin has even become internationally infamous among laymen for his attempts to cultivate a masculine image, using photo shoots to show him engaged in manly activities. The term cult of personality, or *kul't lichnosti*, was first coined by Khrushchev in his famed “Secret Speech” in 1956 and refers to a leader’s efforts to manipulate media and history in order to strengthen his own self-image. Every victory of the state is attributed to the leader, but every failure is due to amorphous enemies of the people.⁸ Putin’s regime has been blamed for everything from altering history in textbooks⁹ to using portraits of himself in the metro station Park Kultury in order to strengthen his image.¹⁰ This thesis will not focus on the Kremlin’s attempts to manipulate its image; however, it will focus on those groups that are unaffiliated with the government, but still produce material that is meant to alter people’s perceptions of the Putin regime in a positive way. This new emergence, having been seen in almost every sphere of

⁸ Khrushchev, N. (1956, February 25). Modern History Sourcebook: The Secret Speech - On the Cult of Personality, 1956. Retrieved February 4, 2013, from Fordham.edu: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>

⁹ Liñán, M. “History as a propaganda tool in Putin’s Russia,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43(2), 2010 167-178,

¹⁰ “Private enterprise meets personality cult.” BBC News, June 15, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/not_in_website/syndication/monitoring/media_reports/1390283.stm

media, begs the following questions: How effective is para-governmental propaganda? And what insight does this give us into Putin's effectiveness as a politician?

This new movement in propaganda is not unfounded in history. In fact, almost every modern effort to affect ideology can be traced back to a similar attempt by the government to affect mass consciousness. Essentially, para-governmental propaganda in the Russian Federation is in the same spirit as state propaganda in the late USSR, but has simply adopted different forms as technology has improved. This thesis will specifically examine the spheres of the democratically elected, constitutional government, youth-groups, visual media in public space, and television. It will seek to measure the success of new propaganda in each sphere, and attempt to put them in historical context. A serious study has yet to be done on the topic of non-governmental attempts to produce propaganda in Russia. This thesis will be an important step in understanding modern propaganda efforts, as well as an interesting look into how the Soviet period influences life in Russia even today.

Literature Review

Very little has been published on post-Soviet propaganda. In the general vein of the study of propaganda, one could look at Stanley Cunningham's *The Idea of Propaganda*, which, as established before, puts a negative connotation on the concept. Peter Kenez's *Birth of the Propaganda State* conceptualizes Russian propaganda as it relates to the Soviet State, but does not reach into modernity.

Most existing literature analyzes the wealth of information currently available on the Soviet period. Two books that have been written about propaganda in the Stalinist period are *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* by Kevin Platt and

David Brandenberger as well as *Stalin: a new History* by Sarah Davies and James Harris. In *Epic Revisionism*, nine different authors focus on the Stalinist interpretation of nine different Russian historical characters, helping one understand how Stalin manipulated history to benefit his own ideological goals. This book shows the emphasis on historical figures through past and modern propaganda attempts. *Stalin: a New History*, uses recently declassified archives to characterize Stalin, and give the reader a more accurate and complete view of this man. A chapter of this book: “Stalin as Symbol: A Case Study of the Personality Cult”, helps give a full picture of what a cult of personality is. Unfortunately, these books fail to make a connection to the modern age.

In the broader vein of Soviet propaganda, is the book *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* by Martin Ebon. This covers a wide collection of information about propaganda techniques, from journalistic manipulation in *Pravda* to the use of fliers, and it even covers Socialist realism. This work is important because it examines a wider timeline, rather than just focusing on one period. It argues that Soviet propaganda was both effective and wide-reaching. This book gives general information about propaganda movements in the post-Stalin Soviet period. The generalities presented by this book can be reinforced by more specific works, such as *On Socialist Realism* by Andrei Sinyavsky.

The work most closely related to the information presented in my thesis is Richard Stites’s *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*. This book analyzes the different pop-culture movements in twentieth century Russia. Since propaganda permeated Russian life so totally, this is a very comprehensive look at how media was affected by the Soviet regime. It analyzes the content of major movements in Russian culture. However, this book does not cover the post-Soviet age.

In the modern era, Aleksandr Belousov has written about propaganda in Putin's regime from 2000 to 2007 in a journal article entitled "Political Propaganda in Contemporary Russia," published in *Russian Politics & Law*. It focuses on governmental efforts to disseminate propaganda. He separates the Putin propaganda machine into an inner and an outer circle. The inner circle consists of those who create the idea the government wishes to disseminate and the outer one encompasses those who interpret the signal given by the inner circle and disseminate the ideas. This work is the closest, topically, to what my thesis will argue. Though mine will encompass this same time period, it will not focus on official propaganda channels, but on the creation and dissemination of propaganda by non-government affiliated groups. There has yet to be any scholarly work on this topic.

Methodology and Organization

In each of the following chapters, I will, first, overview the specific movement. Background and context within Russian culture are both integral not only to understanding the nature of the propaganda, but also to establishing if the trend is propaganda in the first place. I will analyze these movements in para-governmental propaganda and explain how they attempt to manipulate the opinions of those who they are aimed to. Knowledge of history is required to a through comparison between the two eras, so I will then describe and analyze their Soviet-era counterparts to explain why the Soviet government felt that these efforts were important and effective. Next, I will draw parallels between past and present propaganda and show similarities and differences between the two.

In the first chapter of my thesis I will focus specifically on the cult of personality in Russia. I will explain the network of propagandists within the Putin administration who have

been tasked with the cultivation of his image, as well as the allies Putin has collected to further bolster Support among the Russian populace. In comparison, I will focus on the Stalinist and Leninist cults of personality, as well as methods both Soviet leaders used to secure their power and insure a favorable perception. The chapter will furthermore focus on the historical underpinning of the cult of personality, as it relates to Khrushchev's secret speech, seeking to settle the question of if Putin's regime has attempted to cultivate a cult of personality. It will then seek to answer the question of why this new, para-governmental propaganda movement has emerged.

Second, I will look at the modern far-right Russian political youth group, *Nashi*. I will compare it to the obvious predecessor of them all, the *Kosmonol*. Since this group has recently closed, I will also write about the government's growing relationship with the Cossacks. The repairing of relationships with this group raises the question of whether they will once again be used as political foot soldiers. I will compare the groups' ideologies, as well as their practices across the board.

In the next chapter, I will compare modern Russian television with the state controlled television in the USSR. I will trace the history of the Putin administration gaining control of the entire television system, and see how and if modern Russian television compares with USSR central television. Using clips from Russian television, this chapter will analyze how television in the Russian Federation portrays Putin in regards to how he wants to be perceived by Russians. I will also look at the biases of Russian news channels and use viewership numbers to see if the Russian populace accepts the manipulation of their news.

Finally, I will move on to an analysis of Russian visual media, such as revolutionary propaganda posters, and compare them to the new visual form of quick communication – the YouTube video and social media. I will show how the Internet effects the new Russian political scene and how pro-Putin forces have manifested themselves on social media.

In conclusion, I will use my findings to answer the question whether or not modern Russian Propaganda is effective as a tool of ideological control. I will show that it is not a totally novel occurrence, but has roots in Russian History.

Chapter 1

The Cult of Personality: Creating and Protecting the Brand “Putin”

In 2000, Vladimir Putin was elected president of one of the most powerful countries in the world. Pulled out of near obscurity into the position of Prime Minister in 1999,¹¹ Putin has profited from approval rates unrivaled by most other democratically elected officials. According to the Russian Polling center, *Levada*, his approval rates have not once dropped below 60%.¹² As a point of contrast, the average approval rating for all U.S. presidents is 53%.¹³ *Levada*'s data reveal something interesting, however. While Putin's approval soars, more often than not, more Russians disapprove of the actions of the government than approve of them.¹⁴ This seems to suggest that Vladimir Putin is immune from the failings and faults of his government, but how is this accomplished by a democratically elected leader in a society that claims to be open? One possible answer to this would be that Putin has accomplished a disconnect from the actions of the government he leads by creating a cult of personality, by which the successes of his government are attributed to him, but the failures are not.

Western journalists are quick to use the phrase “cult of personality”¹⁵ to describe Putin as if its current existence is something that has already been accepted and agreed upon; however, there is a good deal of disagreement as to whether or not, or to what extent, it exists. Some analysts, such as Olga Kryshantovskaya of the Russian academy of Sciences, claim that Putin's

¹¹ Masha Gessen, *The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), 18-22

¹² “Indeksy Odobreniya Deyatel'nosti Vladimira Putina” *Levada-Tsentr*, last updated March 2014, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.levada.ru/indeksy>

¹³ “Barack Obama's Presidential Job Approval Ratings – Historical Comparison,” *Gallup*, last updated April 2014, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>

¹⁴ “Indeksy Odobreniya Deyatel'nosti Pravitel'stva,” *Levada* Last updated March 2014, Accessed April 18, 2014

¹⁵ Leon Aron, “Beware the Rise of Putin the Terrible,” *L.A. Times*, March 27, 2014, <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/mar/27/opinion/la-oe-aron-putin-nuclear-weapons-20140328>

approval numbers can be explained by the fact that he reflects the viewpoints of the “average Ivan” in Russia. “Everything Putin says is very understandable to us, but not very understandable to you – and vice versa,” Kryshatanovskaya said in an interview with CNN. In her opinion, Putin’s approval ratings and image in Russia can be explained by the fact that Putin reflects the average Russian, a strong, traditional respectable man.¹⁶ Russian opposition politicians vehemently disagree. Gary Kasparov, former chess champion and current opposition politician, went so far as to claim that the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi were comparable to the 1936 Summer Olympics held in Berlin under Adolph Hitler. In the days leading up to the games in February, Kasparov said, “Moscow and Beijing were games that authoritarian systems established to generate propaganda for their country and for themselves, the ruling party,” he added. “Sochi, as Berlin, stands under a different sign: these are games which revolve entirely around a single man. In Berlin, it was Hitler. In Sochi, it was Putin. It’s about a personality cult.”¹⁷ It is clear that there are widely varying opinions on Putin, but perhaps it is most important to look at the opinions of the average Russian citizen, instead of the elite. At first glance, data seem to support the view that the average Russian doesn’t believe Putin has a cult of personality. In a 2011 poll only 28% of people polled could vividly see signs of Putin’s cult of personality, while 33% denied that there was any cult of personality at all.¹⁸ However, it is important to note that these numbers are almost double what they were when the poll was first taken in 2006, when only 10% could vividly see signs of a cult of personality and 57% denied its

¹⁶ Jill Dougherty, “Inside the Mind of Vladimir Putin,” *CNN*, September 21, 2013, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/21/inside-the-mind-of-vladimir-putin/>

¹⁷ Boris Reitschuster, “Sochi is to Putin what Berlin in 1936 was to Hitler, says Garry Kasparov,” *The Guardian*, February 7, 2014, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2014/feb/07/sochi-vladimir-putin-hitler-berlin-garry-kasparov>

¹⁸ “Kult lichnosti Vladimira Putina?” *Levada Tsenter*, July 9, 2010, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010070904.html>

existence.¹⁹ The existence and cultivation of a personality cult around Putin is clearly contested; therefore, it is important to look carefully at what a personality cult is defined as, what Putin and his administration have done, and how or if Putin's actions are consistent with a cult of personality.

Defining Cult of Personality

Perhaps one of the reasons it is difficult to determine whether or not a leader is creating a personality cult is because it was created to define the actions of one particular man, Stalin. In the 1956 Secret Speech given by Khrushchev to the Central Committee of the communist party, where the term was created, a cult of personality is defined as the elevation of a single person, “(transforming) him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics, akin to those of a god. Such a man supposedly knows everything, sees everything, thinks for everyone, can do anything, and is infallible in his behavior.”²⁰ Though this definition undoubtedly drums up both the images of Stalin and Lenin in the mind of anyone familiar with Russian history, there are a few important characteristics Khrushchev laid out that distinguished Stalin's leadership as a cult of personality, but Lenin's as not. One is the use of the term “enemy of the people”, which made it unnecessary to prove ideological inconsistency between the accused and the party. Another is the use of violence and repression that Stalin opted for over education that was preferred by Lenin. A final factor in what defined the cult of personality as specifically Stalinist lay in the fact that Stalin ignored the wishes of the collective party, doing what profited himself instead. All

¹⁹ William Mauldin, “Perceptions Grow of Putin Personality Cult,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2011, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/emergingurope/2011/11/16/perceptions-grow-of-putin-personality-cult/>

²⁰ Nikita Khrushchev, “The Secret Speech - On the Cult of Personality” *Modern History Sourcebook*, 1956. Retrieved February 4, 2013, from Fordham.edu: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khrushchev-secret1.html>

²⁰ Liñán, M. (2010)

this lead to the accumulation of power into the hands of Stalin, and was, in Khrushchev's opinion, a violation of party legality.

This specific of a definition for a cult of personality is not useful in describing current or even other historic trends. Including these qualifiers in the definition would include Hitler and Stalin in the cult of personality club, but exclude figures such as Lenin and Putin. In fact, in an interview on French television, Putin used this very definition to deny a cult of personality surrounding his image. Commenting on the impossibility of the return of a cult of personality to Russia, Putin said, "if we talk about a cult of personality, I think our citizens know and the Western spectator and listener must have heard, that a cult of personality doesn't just involve a focus on one person but also mass breaches of law, connected with repression."²¹ Putting what Putin claims aside, there are definite incidences of repression in Russia; however, it would be incorrect to label Putin as violently repressive as this gets in the way of describing a fascinating trend that has reemerged around Putin: the glorification of the individual in a quasi-open society. Therefore, for the sake of comparison between a closed soviet and quasi-open society, I use the broad definition of the cult of personality as a phenomenon wherein the individual is glorified as a super human figure through sometimes coercive methods, including the elimination of the opposition.

Putin is a student of history. He has taken notes from the Soviet era to prop up his own image, but also shows creativity in dealing with the challenges of the modern world. His methods include control of the media, cultivating his own image as the right leader of Russia, and silencing opponents and potential rivals alike that challenge his future in Russian Politics.

²¹ Alexei Druzhinin, "Putin says cult of personality cannot happen in Russia again," *RIA Novosti*, June 9, 2010, accessed April 18, 2014

However, as capitalism moved into Russia, Putin has also cultivated his image as a masculine. He sells his image as one would a product. In return, Private actors use the image that Putin has cultivated for their own market gain. Putin is effectively a combination of Soviet and capitalist Russia.

Creating the Man, Putin: Out With the Old in With the New

Much attention has already been given in regards to Putin's meteoric rise; however, little attention has been given to the power structure that existed before Putin entered the Presidency. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, several powerful public figures associated with Yeltsin's administration became immensely rich by gaining control of formerly public institutions. These seven men controlled 50% of Russia's economy during the 1990's and had an immense influence on the country's politics, becoming known around the world as the Russian oligarchs.²² One of these men, Boris Berezovsky claims responsibility for bringing Putin into high Russian politics. Characterizing Putin as a protégé, Berezovsky claims that he spoke Yeltsin's Chief of Staff about securing Putin a position as head of the FSB. Furthermore, Berezovsky says that it was he who brought Putin in as Yeltsin's new Prime minister in 1999.²³ The Yeltsin power apparatus, referred to as The Family, saw in Putin a savior in the hard upcoming election, and Berezovsky, used his television channel to secure both his, and Putin's political future in Russia, showing Putin as the young, virile new face of Russian politics in comparison to the bloated, helpless figure of Yeltsin.²⁴

²² Luke Harding, "The richer they come...," *The Guardian*, July 1, 2007, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jul/02/russia.lukeharding1>

²³ Gessen, "The Man Without a Face," pp. 18-21

²⁴ Gessen, "The Man Without a Face," pp.29-30

Whatever their relationship was in the 1990's, Putin and Berezovsky's relationship soon deteriorated. In 2000, Putin started cracking down on the oligarchs who had too much political power, and were too varied in loyalties for his liking. Many fled the country, seeking asylum in more sympathetic countries, such as London. However, those that stayed went through political persecution that would reveal a great deal about the way that Putin would assure his political power²⁵.

The dismantling of the oligarchs is one of the main things that points to Putin's cult of personality. Putin went after these men who used their money for legislative and political power. The creators of NTV and TV-6 were a clear threat. Berezovsky and fellow oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky operated the only national independent television station, offering opposition and liberal viewpoints. Both men were implicated in a wide-reaching scandal and they fled the country, leaving NTV to be taken over by the government controlled gas company Gazprom. Khodorkovsky began funding opposition parties, so he was slapped with tax fraud charges (many of which were suspicious at best in the eyes of the West) and was thrown in prison in 2003,²⁶ where he remained until Putin pardoned him in 2013. Thereafter, Khodorkovsky went into exile, a theme common in the story of Russian oligarchs.²⁷ After dismantling the power of the oligarchs and demonstrating what would happen to the few that remained in Russia if they stepped out of line, Putin began constructing his own network of supporters in the political, business and even religious world.

²⁵ Owen Matthews, "How Boris Berezovsky Made Vladimir Putin, and Putin Unmade Berezovsky," *The Daily Beast*, March 23, 2013, accessed April 23, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/24/how-boris-berezovsky-made-vladimir-putin-and-putin-unmade-berezovsky.html>

²⁶ "Oligarchs: The First Russian Capitalists," *Thomas White International*, May 2010, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.thomaswhite.com/global-perspectives/oligarchs-the-first-russian-capitalists/>

²⁷ Mayra Cuevas, "Russian dissident Mikhail Khodorkovsky arrives in Switzerland," CNN, January 5, 2014, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/05/world/europe/russian-dissident-switzerland/>

Often times, Putin's political and business allies are connected. If one supports Putin with his economic power it is very likely that Putin will reward the will political power, and vice-versa. There are many examples of this, but a very interesting dimension of this is shown with Roman Abramovich. Abramovich was one of the oligarchs who could have been prosecuted in the early 2000's. In fact, he was a co-owner of the oil company Sibneft with Berezovsky. However, when Putin came into power Abramovich kept quiet instead of opposing Putin. He has, thus, been rewarded not only with Berezovsky's share of Sibneft, but has also been given governorship of Chukotka.²⁸ This sends the message to Russia's rich that if you keep your head down, not only will you be allowed to continue to operate, but you will also benefit politically.

Igor Sechin, nicknamed "Putin's Shadow" is another operator in Putin's power network. Sechin has had close ties with Putin since the very beginning of Putin's career, working for him in St. Petersburg beginning in 1991, and following him to Moscow in 1996. After the 2000 election, he was given the post of deputy head of the executive office where he served until 2008. When Putin became prime minister in 2008, Sechin was appointed deputy prime minister, furthering his role as Putin's right hand.²⁹ Sechin's role hasn't only been in the cleaner realm of Politics. He is the de-facto leader of the *siloviki*, or "people of force", which consists of former security agents.³⁰ The *siloviki* have been blamed for many things, from using black PR to smear oppositionists, to purging more liberal "technocrats", such as those brought into to the Medvedev administration, from office. These men are often characterized as rabid Putin supporters, and it is

²⁸ Linnette Lopez, "How Russia's Billionaire Oligarchs Got So Very Rich," *Business Insider*, March 24, 2013, accessed April 23, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-a-russian-oligarch-2013-3>

²⁹ "A look at Igor Sechin, Putin's man behind the rise of Rosneft to heights of oil industry," *Associated Press*, October 22, 2012, accessed on April 23, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/10/22/look-at-igor-sechin-putin-man-behind-rise-rosneft-to-heights-oil-industry/>

³⁰ Vladimir Milov, "Igor Sechin," *TIME*, April 18, 2013, accessed April 24, 2014, <http://time100.time.com/2013/04/18/time-100/slide/all/>

no surprise that Sechin is part of the group.³¹ Putin has rewarded him for his loyal service. In 2004, Sechin was named chairman of the government oil company, Rosneft which took over most of Khodorkovsky's oil company, Yukos, in 2007. He served in that position until 2011, when then president Medvedev passed a decree saying that government ministers could no longer serve in state-owned businesses. In 2012, when Putin won his third presidential term, Sechin retired from politics in the best possible way, by becoming president of Rosneft.³² This loyal Putin supporter is now one of the most influential men in the world, having been named one of the "Time 100" in 2013³³.

Putin has also been sure to secure allies within the powerful Russian Orthodox Church. Since he assumed the presidency, he has signed a law returning all property that had been confiscated during the Soviet era back to the Church, and has been instrumental in the reconstruction of some 23,000 churches that had been destroyed or had fallen into disarray. Once considered mildly socially liberal, Putin has also taken the stance of the church on issues such as abortion and LGBT Rights. The church has returned the favor with wide support for Putin as a leader. Patriarch Kirill has publically declared that Putin's presidency was a miracle, and has come out as a staunch opponent of the opposition, saying after Putin's 2012 victory that "Liberalism will lead to legal collapse and then the apocalypse".³⁴ Though some might think that the opinions of a religious leader wouldn't matter in Russia, a country that was famously secular throughout the Soviet era, they ignore an important trend. Since the fall of the USSR in 1991, Russia has gone through a new religious surge. In 1991, only 31% of adults identified as

³¹ Sean Guillory, "Another Medvedev 'Liberal' Purged," Sean's Russia Blog, May 29, 2013, accessed April 24, 2014, <http://seansrussiablog.org/2013/05/29/another-medvedev-liberal-purged/>

³² "A look at Igor Sechin, Putin's man behind the rise of Rosneft to heights of oil industry," *Associated Press*

³³ Vladimir Milov, "Igor Sechin," *TIME*

³⁴ Mark MacKinnon, "How Vladimir Putin helped resurrect the Russian Orthodox Church," *The Globe and Mail*, January 16, 2014, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/how-vladimir-putin-helped-resurrect-the-russian-orthodox-church/article16361650/>

Orthodox Christians; however, by 2008, 72% claimed Russian Orthodoxy as their religion.³⁵

Clearly, Putin is paying attention to and taking advantage of trends in the Russian population.

Kirill has not gone without thanks from the presidency for his support. In 2011, rumors circulated that the Patriarch was building an expensive summer home not far from Putin's own summer home. The Patriarchy was quick to rebrand the mansion as a spiritual center, but many Russian bloggers and opposition journalists are skeptical of this claim and see it as a reward from the state to Kirill.³⁶ Not only does the Orthodox Church brand Putin's leadership as god given, but some in his administration brand Putin similarly. The Kremlin's chief strategist before 2012, Vladislav Surkov claimed on state run Chechen TV, "I honestly believe that Putin is a person who was sent to Russia by fate and by the Lord at a difficult time for Russia."³⁷ Here one sees an obvious circle, Putin supports the Russian Orthodox Church, the church supports Putin, and Putin's administration makes the link that Putin has a divine connection with which to lead Russia.

All of these men politically support Putin and operate in the sphere he has created, and are rewarded with immense economic holdings. I call this structure the new oligarchy. A main differentiation between the men in the two eras is that power and wealth are distributed between many different men all dependent on Putin. Thus, Putin has no trouble removing them from the equation when they either fail to do what Putin has asked of them, or amass too much power for their own good. Loyalty is not a two way street in Russian politics. Putin is quick to turn on his allies whom he sees gaining too much power. Vladislav Surkov, the man whom many considered

³⁵ "Russians Return to Religion, but Not to Church," Pew Forum, February 10, 2014, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/02/10/russians-return-to-religion-but-not-to-church/>

³⁶ Alexandra Odyonova, "'Patriarch's Dacha' Is Rumored by Activists," *The Moscow Times*, February 22, 2011, accessed March 22, 2014

³⁷ Tom Washington, "God sent Putin to Russia, claims Surkov," *The Moscow News*, November 7, 2011, <http://www.themoscownews.com/politics/20110711/188830057.html>

to be the main propagandist within the Putin administration, was replaced by the nationalist Vyacheslav Volodin after protests jeopardized the 2012 presidential election. Surkov was moved to Prime Minister Medvedev's department and subsequently removed from the administration entirely.³⁸ However, some believe that Surkov's departure was due to the fact he was becoming too powerful for the Medvedev-Putin "tandemocracy" that the administration had become so comfortable with.³⁹ If this is true, this is a clear example of how the Putin administration mitigates threats to Putin's power within its own government. If anything, it's a warning by Putin that if a figure's political aspirations exceed what he has planned; Putin will oust them with no thought to what they have contributed.

This is a clear, if less extreme, parallel to the political terror under Stalin. The intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie and those within Stalin's own ruling class were persecuted if they posed a threat to Stalin's status quo. In the historical case, those who posed a threat were either executed outright or sent to labor camps. In a way, Putin has more power due precisely to the fact that he doesn't have to do this. Putin's administration can easily drum up charges that, in the oligarchs' case, can easily be supported by at least semi-true facts. The presidency under Yeltsin essentially gave the state-owned business to these men, so it could just as easily, under Putin, take them away. If you become a threat within the Putin administration, there doesn't need to be a firing squad or a deportation to a labor camp. This works similarly in the case of Putin's allies. If you support Putin, you will be rewarded handsomely, but don't step out of line. Many of

³⁸ "An ideologue's exit" *The Economist*, May 11, 2013, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21577421-what-departure-vladislav-surkov-means-government-ideologues-exit>

³⁹ Timothy Heritage, "Russia's Putin ousts former grey cardinal, blow to Medvedev," Reuters.com, May 8, 2013, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/08/us-russia-surkov-idUSBRE9470CF20130508>

Putin's aides were raised up personally by Putin and have no political clout on their own. So, Putin can essentially wave any future competitors away before they become a serious threat.

Putin as a Product: Selling the Masculine Father Figure

It is clear that Putin has, like many leaders in the democratic world, attempted to manipulate his image with photo shoots and other press releases. However, it has gone above and beyond what is normal, into the realm of an almost mythical, heroic portrayal of Putin beyond that of a man. He has been photographed diving and finding artifacts, in surprisingly good condition, at the bottom of the black sea⁴⁰ as well as saving a film crew from an angry Amur tiger by shooting it with a tranquilizer gun in the nick of time.⁴¹ Putin is famous for this masculine, powerful public image that he props up with regular photos of himself riding horses, shooting guns and fishing. Though this is the extent of what people tend to see in the West, his public relations machine does not stop with the masculine, but also emphasizes his role as a caregiver and conservationist. In 2006, headline news in Russia was focused on Putin kissing a little boy on the stomach after a meeting with graduates of Moscow military schools. Putin claims that the boy was independent like a little kitten, so he bent down and kissed him on the stomach.⁴² This shows a side to Putin that is tender and fatherly.

Putin insures also insures his leadership is by connecting himself deeply in Russian history. In his first major speech after his 2012 presidential victory, Putin called on Russia not to

⁴⁰ Daily Mail Reporter, "'Of course Putin's Black Sea treasure find was a stunt,' chief spokesman admits," *The Daily Mail*, October 6, 2011, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2045848/Vladimir-Putins-Black-Sea-scuba-diving-treasure-stunt.html>

⁴¹ The Telegraph Foreign Staff, "Vladimir Putin the hero 'saves TV crew from tiger attack'," *The Telegraph*, August 31, 2008, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/2658077/Vladimir-Putin-the-hero-saves-TV-crew-from-tiger-attack.html>

⁴² "Putin Obnyasnal, Pochemy on Potseloval Malchika Nickity v Zhivot," *Korrespondent.net*, June 6, 2006, <http://korrespondent.net/strange/158070-putin-obnyasnil-pochemu-on-poceloval-malchika-nikitu-v-zhivot>

lose itself as a nation, but rather to look to history and tradition as a guide for Russia's future.⁴³ Putin has often resisted what many in the West would consider societal progress by calling it un-Russian or not part of Russia's traditions. By resisting change as un-Russian, Putin sets himself up as the interpreter of Russian history and links himself to Russia's past.

What makes Putin's administration unique is the involvement of capitalist forces in the development of his image. In the new capitalist Russia, businesses, artists, and independent actors have just as much to gain, in the sense of their wallets, as the Putin administration does by the inflation of the cult of personality. When Putin took office in 2000, many private institutions capitalized on his popularity. Vendors sold portraits of Putin on the streets and musical groups made songs about him. Movies have been made around election years, such as *1612*, that warns viewers about Western incursion into Russian society and claim the need for a return to Russian history and a strong, central leader.⁴⁴ Though some would call these examples organized propaganda on the government's part, one must remember that of these things capitalize on Putin's image and the conflict surrounding it. In the end, all of these make money for those who produce it, and even in a controlled capitalism, one of the most powerful forces will always be money. The Internet and the West even unwittingly adds to Putin's image by distributing, albeit sometimes ironically, the masculine pictures that the Kremlin has so carefully produced. Asking your average young Internet user in America what they think of Putin, one will no doubt receive the answers "manly" or "strong". Any time Putin does some masculine feat, it is almost immediately circulated for young Westerners amusement at the strangeness and wonder of Russia's manly president.

⁴³ Ellen Barry, "Russia's History Should Guide Its Future, Putin Says," *The New York Times*, December 12, 2012, accessed March 21, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/13/world/europe/putin-tells-russia-to-look-for-clues-from-its-past.html?_r=0

⁴⁴ Vladimir Khotinenko, *1612*, November 1, 2007

When something happens that makes Putin seem human, the press reacts almost aghast. In 2012, after winning his third presidential term, Putin was overcome with emotion and shed some tears as his voice cracked. Instantly, newspapers around the world noted that this man whose administration had worked so hard to make manly would do something as weak as cry at his acceptance speech.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Putin keeps his personal life extremely private and behind the scenes. Other world leaders, such as Barack Obama, put their wives in prominent places in their administration's missions and take center stage in many publicity photographs. However, Putin's wife, Lyudmila Putina, had a shadowy presence. There were rumors that she had been put away in a monastery, and people around the world wondered what had happened to her.⁴⁶ She was nearly invisible to the public. That is, she was invisible to the public until the pair announced their divorce in June of 2013.⁴⁷ Once again, Putin was exposed as a man rather than a hero.

Conclusion

Putin clearly uses an intricate power structure to ensure his role in Russian politics. As in the Stalin-era, Putin is willing and able to remove both long-term enemies and allies that threaten his leadership. However, Putin's persecution is economic rather than corporeal. This is another example of how the capitalist system has changed Russia. It gives an alternate way to rid oneself of enemies. In most cases, as with Gusinsky and Berezovsky, the mere threat of prosecution is enough to get rid of them, and in cases where that fails, such as Khodorkovsky's, Putin merely

⁴⁵ Post Staff Report "Putin Cries as he claims Russian election victory" *The New York Post*, March 5, 2012, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://nypost.com/2012/03/05/putin-cries-as-he-claims-russian-election-victory/>

⁴⁶ Anna Nemtsova, "Where is Russia's First Lady?" *The Daily Beast*, January 13, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/13/vladimir-putin-s-wife-lyudmila-has-all-but-vanished-and-russians-don-t-seem-to-care.html>

⁴⁷ "Vladimir Putin Razvelis s Zhenoj," *Korrespondent.net*, June 6, 2013, accessed March 19, 2013, <http://korrespondent.net/world/1567864-vladimir-putin-razvelsya-s-zhenoj-intervyu-prezidenta-rossii-i-ego-zheny-o-razvode-telekanalu-rossiya-2>

has to put them in prison. He doesn't need removal or mass executions. Furthermore, since his allies often have no political foundation by themselves, Putin can get rid of challengers and potential threats within his own administration by removing them from office. Unless he brings them back, as with Surkov, they often have no way of getting political office.

Though Putin does use many of the methods that are inherent in the Soviet system to cultivate his cult of personality, the involvement of the market makes it wholly unique and, perhaps, stronger. In many ways, capitalism makes the system self-perpetuating. As long as Putin is popular, market force will use his image and strength to make money. Furthermore, capitalizing on Putin's popularity only makes him more of a cultural icon and inflates his cult of personality. So, the market will continue to capitalize on it and so on and so on. Only time will tell if the Russian people can be convinced by the convergence of these two powerful forces or if some event in the future will break this chain.

Chapter 2

Pro-Kremlin Youth Movements: The Rise and Fall of *Nashi*

On April 7, 2012, the head of the Russian Federation's Youth Agency announced that the Russian youth group, the Young Democratic Antifascist Movement "Ours" (heretofore referred to in its shortened Russian name as, *Nashi*, for our guys) would close down after several years of rumored demise.⁴⁸ This does not necessarily herald its demise, as many anticipate that the group will re-invent itself in the coming years and come back more finely tuned to the needs of the current Russian administration.⁴⁹ The group itself has gained infamy over the years for its rabid support of Vladimir Putin and his policies. *Nashi*, though it has denied official connections to the Kremlin, has funneled future leaders and politicians into Putin's party, United Russia, scheduled meetings with and speeches from Putin and Medvedev for its members, and benefits financially from businesses due to its closeness to the Kremlin.⁵⁰ The movement's creator and former leader, Vasilii Yakemenko, was even raised to the position of The Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, becoming a part of the administration itself. Since Yakemenko reached the position, journalists alleged that government grants to *Nashi* totaled over \$6 million, and this claim has yet to be refuted.⁵¹

The financial as well as ideological connections that high officials in the administration had with the group point to the special relationship it had with the Putin administration. Of course, very few modern democracies have youth group that are so deeply connected, not just to

⁴⁸ Olga Kuzmenkova and Ekaterina Vinokurova, "'Nashikh' Zakrivayut," *Gazyeta*, April 4, 2012, accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2012/04/06_a_4151693.shtml

⁴⁹ Sean Guillory, "*Nashi* is Dead! Long Live...?," April 7, 2012, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://seansrussiablog.org/2012/04/07/nashi-is-dead-long-live/>

⁵⁰ Maya Atwal and Edwin Bacon, "The Youth Movement *Nashi*: Contentious Politics, Civil Society, and Party Politics," *East European Politics* 28, no. 3 (September 2012): 256-257

⁵¹ Ilya Azar, "Poka ne zagoryatsya zdaniya. Interv'yū s glavou Rosmolodezhi Vasiliem Yakemenko," *Lenta.Ru*, January 17, 2012, <http://lenta.ru/articles/2012/01/17/jakemenko/>

the government, but to the ruling party. It is this connection that makes the group unique to Russia and important in a discussion of modern Russian propaganda. I argue that *Nashi* was used by the Putin administration in a similar way that the Komsomol' was used in the Soviet-era: to create youth that supported the status-quo and were actively involved in politics, in some cases acting as foot soldiers to drum up Pro-kremlin sentiment among Russia's youth. To prove or disprove this connection, further analyses of the two groups are necessary. There are several points that must be touched on: the reasons behind the groups' creations, the operating systems of the groups, the stated goals of the groups, and the mechanisms behind the groups.

Nashi as a Counter Revolutionary Movement

Nashi arose as the Kremlin's counter-revolutionary youth movement. In the mid-2000's Eastern Europe went through a series of "color" revolutions. Perhaps the most jarring of these for the Russian Federation was the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Election fraud in favor of the sitting, pro-Russian Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich mobilized the youth. Yanukovich's administration was blamed for manipulation of the media, persecuting opposition members, and even poisoning the other candidate – a charge that was later proven. On the day of the election, Yanukovich was declared the winner by 2.5%. However, exit polls placed the victory in the hands of the challenger, Yushchenko. Over 17 days, millions of Ukrainians protested nationwide, chanting in the streets and holding signs high. In the end, this mobilized Ukrainian voters, and Yushchenko won by a margin of 800,000 votes.⁵² This youth movement united together and was able to reach its goal of a leader with the goal of a more open, fair, and independent Ukraine instead of one who tampered with elections and was in Putin's pocket.

⁵² Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2005, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60620/adrian-karatnycky/ukraines-orange-revolution>

The Russian administration suspected Western involvement of stirring up the dissent that upset Ukraine's pro-Russian ruling class, and feared that what happened among the youth in Ukraine could happen in Russia. Though the power structure was fairly cemented at this point in time, with Putin's polling numbers at an all-time high, the fear of external and internal pressure on the Russian political elite was enough to mobilize pro-Putin politicians to do something.⁵³ In 2005, Vasily Yakemenko saw a perfect opportunity to fill this need. Yakemenko, at that time, was the head of the youth group "Walking Together" (*Idushchie Vmestye*), but that group had been part of a scandal involving the distribution of pornography. In order to preserve the group, Yakemenko worked with Putin's deputy chief of staff Vladislav Surkov to re-tool it as a highly structured movement with the goals of fighting "fascism".⁵⁴ Of course, to party men like Putin, Yakemenko, and Surkov, "fascists" could be anyone from actual radical oppositionists to liberal politicians working within the confines of the system. Thus, *Nashi* became the face of radical pro-Putinism in Russia, and to many around the world, an indicator of wrongdoing within the administration.

Nashi's Tactics

Nashi group is one of the main propagators of Putin's cult of personality. However, the tactics they use are not to convince others to support Putin, though that might be what they state. Rather, *Nashi's* methods are brazen and brash. There is no subtlety like one sees in modern state-produced propaganda. To convince outsiders to believe your message in propaganda through media, priming is required. The propagandist must present and manipulate logic and facts in a

⁵³ Tatiana Stanovaya, "The Fate of the 'Nashi' Movement," *Institute of Modern Russia*, March 26, 2013, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://imrussia.org/en/politics/420-the-fate-of-the-nashi-movement-where-will-the-kremlins-youth-go>

⁵⁴ Dimitry Kamyshev, "Obyknovennyi 'Nashism'", *Kommersant*, February, 21, 2005, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/549170>

way that proves their point, but neither the inherent bias nor the priming can be detected by the audience. If detected, the propaganda is highly ineffective.⁵⁵ *Nashi* makes absolutely no attempt to hide their manipulation of framing issues nor their unerring support of Putin, therefore, it must be inferred that they are not producing propaganda to convince others, but rather that the leaders of the group and those connected to *Nashi* in Putin's administration are using the group's actions to radicalize members of the group itself and produce lifelong supporters of the administration. *Nashi* not only cultivates Putin's cult of personality, but also creates a cult to Putin



Nashi members gather for a picture and bonfire at their summer camp in Seliger. Retrieved from seansrussiablog.com

One of the ways that *Nashi* propagates Putin's cult of personality is through imagery.

Often times around elections, Putin or Medvedev's faces have been shown on banners, posters or even clothing during rallies and demonstrations.



Nashi members celebrate Putin's victory. Retrieved from: nytimes.com

All who attended wore capes with Putin's face emblazoned across the back. The picture is accompanied by the words "Our Victory"

⁵⁵ Fritz Strack, Norbert Schwarz, Herbert Bless, Almut Kilbler, and Michaela Wianke, "Awareness of the Influence as a Determinant of Assimilation versus Contrast," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 23, no. 1 (January 1993): 59

with the group's logo and name in small words at the bottom. By wearing the image of Putin, it elevates him to the status of either a celebrity or a religious figure. The members clearly identify themselves as supporters of Putin not only to the cameras and those who surround them but also to themselves individually. Furthermore, the association of Putin's face with the words "our victory" further make Putin integral as an individual in the future of his country. They do not say anything about his policies or his views being important or good. Rather, because the man is the victory, anything he decides must also make the country victorious. As they wear Putin's image, they wave Russian flags high, personally linking Putin with the fate of the nation. To each of those wearing the capes, Putin becomes a national hero, extricated from any decisions he made.

During the communist era, the communist state-sponsored youth group, the Komsomol, similarly displayed Soviet leaders' images during rallies and parades. However, this is to be expected in an authoritarian communist state whose leaders cultivated a thriving cult of personality. One of the official images of the Komsomol, in fact, was the head of Lenin in front of a red flag, with the letters "ВЛКСМ", standing for the full name of the organization, "The All-Union Leninist Young Communist League". Members of the Komsomol wore this symbol to display that they were part of the organization.⁵⁶ Wearing his image is one of the ways that Lenin's cult of personality manifested itself in youth movements. By doing the same, *Nashi* has elevated Putin to the level of a defining leader like Lenin, thereby cultivating a cult of personality.



Komsomol membership badge.
Retrieved from
Sovietbadges.kenning.co.nz

⁵⁶ Sima Vasliver, "The Komsomol," *Boston University*, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://blogs.bu.edu/guidedhistory/russia-and-its-empires/sigalit-vasliver/>

Another way that *Nashi* propagates Putin is by making him, not only a hero to its members, but a relatable father figure and friend. Putin is a regular speaker and guest at *Nashi*'s summer retreat in Seliger, where he does usual things that a head of state visiting a youth camp would do, such as speak, but also participates in some of the same events as *Nashi* members. Before Putin announced his candidacy for the 2011 election, he visited the



Putin arm wrestles *Nashi* member. Retrieved from theatlantic.com

summer camp and participated in a strong-man like feats of strength, attempting to crush a metal frying pan with his own two hands. Later that same day, then Prime Minister Putin participated in an arm wrestling tournament⁵⁷ and climbed a rock wall. This clearly cultivates an image of



Putin attempts to bend a metal pan. Retrieved from theatlantic.com

Putin as an action hero and a man of physical strength. Not only does this endear the members to him and cause them to identify with him, but also allows a place for the media to come with him and spread this image to Russia and the rest of the world. Even young people around in the West see Putin as a tough-guy and an action hero, almost to the point of caricature. However, since Putin is seen as hyper-masculine in

⁵⁷ Alan Taylor, "Vladimir Putin, action man," *The Atlantic*, September 13, 2011, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2011/09/vladimir-putin-action-man/100147/>

Russia, many, especially those like *Nashi* members believe that his personal strength and heroism will somehow transfer into a strengthening of the nation and a return of Russia's high position in world politics.

Something like this would never happen in the Soviet era. It was seen as undignified and political suicide to put a leader on the level of a young person. Stalin worked very hard during his political career to show himself as relating to and a little piteous of the plight of the common man, but never to be one of them. A leader could address and meet with the leaders and members of the Komsomol, but never act like or participate in anything that could be seen as childish. These feats of strength do two things. First, they feed into Putin's cult of masculinity. He portrays himself as a *muzhik* (real man) who does things like arm wrestle, not some sexless politician who sits in an office all day. Furthermore, these feats of strength make Putin relatable to the common Russian. Through them, he is more like the man in a village having to haul wood, than someone from the city who operates in boardrooms and meetings. This endears him both to Russians who live in rural areas, and to the Russian men who feel like their masculinity was stripped from them in Soviet era. Fitting into the new, hyper-masculine values system that rose after the 90's,⁵⁸ Putin has a connection with Russia's youth that would have been simply impossible during Communism. He is seen as a strong, active adventurous man, not only in Russia, but in the world. This is one of the greatest ways that Putin is able to use *Nashi* to cultivate his personality and reach out to a demographic that tends toward liberals and opposition politicians over him.

⁵⁸ Oleg Riabov and Tatiana Riabova, "The Remasculinization of Russia? Gender, Nationalism, and the Legitimization of Power," *Problems of Post Communism*, Vol. 51, no. 2, March-April 2014, pp. 23-35

Nashi also internally propagates Putin through their rhetoric. Their own literature names the group the “Putin Generation”, and the National spokeswoman of *Nashi* says that this is because, “He brought stability and the opportunity for modernization and development of the country... these eight years were the longest part of my conscious life when we were growing up, and the country was changing with us.” Clearly the group places all the glory for the economic recovery of Russia onto Putin, without bringing up the unrest and wars in Chechnya or Georgia that Putin started. Putin’s former chief of staff, Surkov, even wrote the *Nashi* manifesto.⁵⁹ The manifesto itself contains rhetoric and a set of goals that read like they are straight out of one of Putin’s speeches. *Nashi* decries the involvement and interference of the West in their region, links liberals and opposition groups to the West as agents of destruction, and claim that many of these politicians want to hold Russia back from the main goal of modernization. Of course, *Nashi* links the situation in Russia then to what it was like before the modernizations of Peter I, Alexander I, Alexander III and the Soviet era up to the 70’s. In their manifesto, *Nashi* declared that, as with all these times, Russia cannot modernize without firm leadership. This directly links the solution of the country’s problems to Putin’s leadership.⁶⁰ Drawn to its logical conclusion, their manifesto makes modernization and the Success of Russia as a modern country reliant Putin being in power.

Nashi does with Putin what the Komsomol did with the Communist party. They frame every issue in a way that makes the only solution the person whom they want to rule. The Komsomol trained young Russians to accept the status quo and support those in power without question for the supposed good of the nation. Furthermore, *Nashi* sought to create a path into the

⁵⁹ Steven Lee Myers, “Youth Groups Created by Putin Serve Putin’s Cause,” *The New York Times*, July 8 2007, accessed March 18, 2014,

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/08/world/europe/08moscow.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

⁶⁰ “Manifest,” *Nashi*, April 15, 2005, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.nashi.su/manifest>

government for new leaders whose ideals and values had been directly shaped and influenced by the organization, and, by extension, Putin's government. Surkov, the man behind *Nashi's* manifesto, was, for many years, the main ideologue and propagandist for the Putin administration. Nicknamed the Grey Cardinal, he was considered by many to be Putin's right hand man before being ousted for political reasons. He once stated that Putin was "sent by God to save Russia from a hostile takeover".⁶¹ With men like this behind *Nashi's* ideology, it is clear that the group wanted to enforce the idea that Putin rules almost by divine right. Teaching ideals like this to young people obviously creates a generation that believes they are wholly reliant on the current status quo and will do anything they can to protect it.

A way that *Nashi* indirectly propped up Putin's image is by attacking any real or



Nashi destroy the "Shame of Russia". Retrieved from lenta.ru

ideological opponents. Among the most famous of *Nashi's* actions against opponents of the Putin administration was a March in Moscow at the statue of Taras Shevchenko. *Nashi* and other nationalist youth groups, totaling 20 thousand young people, held signs with pictures of drug dealers and casino

owners as well as opposition leaders, ideologues, and human rights activists with the title "The Shame of Russia" at the top. Another group marched holding pictures of WWII veterans, national heroes and other pro-Putin figures under the banner "Russia's Pride"⁶². At the end of the

⁶¹ Jana Lapikova, "'Grey Cardinal' Surkov returns to Kremlin as Presidential Aide" *RIANovosti*, September 20, 2013, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20130920/183616980/Gray-Cardinal-Surkov-Returns-to-Kremlin-as-Presidential-Aide.html>

⁶² Olga Petrova, "'Nashisti' na 'Russkom Marshye' Shestvoval s Plakatim 'Pozor Rossii'," *Novii Region*, November 4, 2010, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.nr2.ru/moskow/307662.html>

march the members threw down the signs with the pictures of the people they consider harmful to Russia's future, stomped on them or hit them against the sidewalk and broke them. The first goal that a march like this attains is associating prominent pro-Putin figures with national heroes such as veterans and separating those who disagree with Putin into a group detrimental to society such as drug dealers and criminals. It encourages an atmosphere of "either you're with us, or you're against the health of the nation". If one were to support the opposition, they'd be anti-Russia, in the minds of an ideologically true *Nashist*. The actions at the end of the march encourage violence against those who disagree with Putin. Smashing their pictures is symbolic, but embodies a psychological violence that is dangerous to see in young people.

This method of shaming was very common in *Nashi*. One year at camp Seliger, the group set up huge posters of opposition politicians cross-dressed in skimpy lingerie in a sort of "red light district. Among those mocked were opposition politician Gary Kasparov and former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov who were deemed by *Nashi* political prostitutes for their beliefs.⁶³ Having events and displays such as these



Kasparov and Kasyanov as political prostitutes. Retrieved from [npr.org](http://www.npr.org)

shames the opposition. One of the obvious goals is to make them retreat from the public sphere because of the mockery. However, the juxtaposition of Putin who is propped up as a hyper-masculine, dignified man, with the image of his opponents, shamed and in drag, has an obvious

⁶³ Gregory Feifer, "Russian Youth Flock to Pro-Kremlin Summer Camp," *NPR*, July 27, 2007, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12277079>

effect on *Nashi* members. Putin is seen as cool and popular to support, while the opposition politicians are strange, weird and social outcasts. Therefore, as young people without a real grasp of policy, *Nashi* will automatically accept Putin.

During the Soviet Era, the Komsomol was similarly involved in shaming those who did not follow the social guidelines established by the Party for young people. However, they did not venture to shame those in politics. That was the job of the government itself. Instead they shamed other young people and those who did not adhere to Komsomol social values as “Hooligans”. *Nashi* had a good strategy when they decided to go about shaming opposition leaders. It is hard to pull someone personally known to the front of a group and publically shame them and put them down. They are a part of the community and are seen every day. However, it is easy to take someone who is only a face and a name and attach negative to them, whether that be that they are Russia’s shame or political prostitutes. These men and women don’t have a chance to personally disprove it, so these young people will walk around and vote, possibly for the rest of their lives with the assumptions they gained from one day in a *Nashi* summer camp.

Conclusion

In the end, *Nashi* was not as effective as the Putin administration might have hoped. Membership flagged for the last few years of the organization, and it had to rebrand its message into social improvement projects, such as improving health in the community and stopping traffic violations. However, in 2012 Yakemenko announced that *Nashi* in its current form was at an end.⁶⁴ The group outlived its usefulness, and the “orange threat” it was created to combat was no more. With *Nashi*, unorganized nationalist youth groups, such as the skinheads, began to

⁶⁴ Olga Kuzmenkova and Ekaterina Vinokurova, “*Nashikh’ Zakrivayut*,”

disappear as well.⁶⁵ Some theorize that the fall of *Nashi* was due in part to Vladislav Surkov's fall from grace, as he was one of the main forces in keeping the group alive and well financed.⁶⁶ However, as the threat of horizontal youth movements reared its ugly head again in 2013 and 2014 with the protests in Kiev and Maidan and the eventual deposition of Yanukovich. At the end of 2013, Surkov was brought back into the Kremlin as one of Putin's top aides,⁶⁷ and the future may see a new nationalist youth group rise; however, current signs point to the fact that the Kremlin doesn't believe they need a formal youth group.

While *Nashi* may not have been as effective and long-lasting as its leaders hoped, it definitely stood as an example of how a country that claims to be democratic can use a para-governmental group to organize young people in favor of the status quo, and leads to questions of exactly how democratic Russia is when its government encourages and endorses these types of behaviors from the youth it wants to bring in to politics. *Nashi* exhibited many of the same characteristics of the Komsomol, though it did not have the widespread support nor the means to be that big as the state-wide communist group had. Clearly, we see obvious reminders of the Soviet era within this youth group. *Nashi* shows that Putin's administration used youth groups to support their policies, embarrass the opposition and cultivate a blatant cult of personality, but it also shows that post-Soviet society has not moved so far in the 20 years that it has existed.

⁶⁵ "The Decline of Russian Skinheads," *Da Russophile*, February 9, 2013, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://darussophile.com/2013/02/the-decline-of-russian-skinheads>

⁶⁶ Sean Guillory, "*Nashi* is Dead! Long Live...?,"

⁶⁷ Steve Gutterman, "Russia's Putin brings 'grey cardinal' Surkov back to Kremlin", *Reuters*, September 20, 2013, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/20/us-russia-surkov-idUSBRE98J0VK20130920>

Chapter 3

Television in Today's Russia

In the years after Vladimir Putin was elected, the Russian Federation went through many changes. A young, hardly known politician would take over what was once one of the most powerful countries in the world.⁶⁸ Where Boris Yeltsin failed, Putin shocked the Russian economy and, under his leadership, Russia went from being the 22nd largest economy in 1999⁶⁹ to the 7th in 2013.⁷⁰ In some ways, democracy has improved under the leadership of Putin; however, his administration's continual quest to cultivate the Putin image and control what issues are spoken about among the Russian populace has undoubtedly contributed to international watch-groups labelling Russia "not free". Freedom House ranked Russia 176th in its 2013 Freedom of Press Report, below Sudan and Rwanda.⁷¹ To put it frankly, since the Putin attained the presidency, his administration shut down or neutered any widely distributed or highly regarded television channel that has dared oppose his policies or support opposition candidates. This sphere of Russian mass culture is important because of the extent of people who watch television in Russia and use it as their main source of news. I argue that Putin has brought television once again under state control through para-governmental groups and state-sponsored media. However, there are further questions that must be addressed: to what extent does Putin use the Russian television to control his image and the image of his political competitors?; also, if Putin has gained a monopoly on television media, how effectively does he

⁶⁸ Ruben Enikolopov, Maria Petrova, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, "Media and Political Persuasion : Evidence from Russia ," *Eurasian Economic Review*, no. 101, December (2011): 3253

⁶⁹ Katya Malofeeva and Tim Breton, "Putin's Economy – Eight Years On," *Business News Europe*, August 15, 2007., accessed February 27, 2014, <http://russiaprofile.org/politics/a1187177738.html>

⁷⁰ CIA, "Russia: Economy – Overview," *CIA World Factbook*, accessed February 28, 2014, last updated February 28, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

⁷¹ Freedom House, "Global and Regional Rankings," *2013 Freedom of Press Report*, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Global%20and%20regional%20tables.pdf>

use this advantage? To begin to answer these questions, one must first understand the true landscape of the television market in Russia

The Ideological Takeover of Russian Television

Directly before Putin's presidency, diverse viewpoints were represented on television. The government-owned channels of ORT (Now Channel 1) and RTR (now Russia1), as one would expect, tended to present news in a light that benefited Putin and his allies. These two channels did not really stand on their own outside of the Soviet television complex, but were merely modernized and Westernized iterations of the old system. They even chose to name their news programs after the USSR programs that preceded them.⁷² In 1993, two privately owned opposition channels chose to enter the Russian media mix: NTV and TV-6. Both were silenced within a decade.

NTV was the first channel to immediately be recognized and take the mantle of the journalistic opposition to the established leadership. Founded by Vladimir Gusinsky, the channel's hard hitting investigative style stood in stark contrast to both government channels and attracted the some of the best journalists and the freshest minds. The channel was harshly critical of the First and Second Chechen wars, going so far as to have interviews with a Chechen rebels widow; however, even NTV was not immune from the pressures of politics. The channel, though not forced by the government, chose to support Yeltsin during his 1996⁷³ re-election campaign due in large part to the radical, nationalist, and some would say fascist nature of the next leading opposition candidate. This did not hurt the channel's ratings or growth, though. In 1998, NTV

⁷² Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, *Media and Political Persuasion*, 3258

⁷³ Steven Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova, *Television and Culture in Putin's Russia*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9

became a national channel and its audience increased to 75% of the Russian population.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, they were quick to make enemies with the Putin administration in the 2000's. Directly before the presidential elections, NTV interviewed both FSB members and bystanders who were present during the Ryazan apartment bombings of 1999, an event that led to the Second Chechen War. During the interviews it was implied that Russian Security services might have been involved in the bombing.⁷⁵ The next month they were raided by tax police, and by April of the next year, NTV had been taken over by the pro-government oil company, Gazprom and its creator, Gusnitsky had fled Russia.⁷⁶

The fate of TV-6 is a little more complicated, started as a purely entertainment-based channel, it did not broadcast any news until 1996. Corresponding with the rise of Putin and the Fall of Yeltsin in 1999, oligarch Boris Berezovsky bought a controlling interest in the channel and oriented it towards political journalism. Business was immediately troubled when Lukoil, a partially government-owned oil company and owner of 15% interest in the channel, tried successfully to force a file for bankruptcy in January 2002.⁷⁷ The channel was able to revive itself as TVS, but it was never able to fully recover. Even though TVS drew many of the journalists who once worked for NTV and attempted to carry on the legacy of liberal journalistic integrity, poorly managed financials and a low advertising revenue caused the channel to be scheduled to shut down June 23; however, the Ministry of press shut down the channel 24 hours early "for the viewers' benefit".⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, *Media and Political Persuasion*, 3260

⁷⁵ David Satter, "The Shadow of Ryazan" *National Review Online*, May 1, 2002, accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.hudson.org/research/2089-the-shadow-of-ryazan>

⁷⁶ Hutchings and Rulyova, *Television and Culture in Putin's Russia*, 9

⁷⁷ Ellen Mickiewicz, *Television, Power, and The Public*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 48-50

⁷⁸ Hutchings and Rulyova, *Television and Culture in Putin's Russia*, 9

Once again, the pro-liberal journalists were bounced to another station, REN. This is the last surviving non-governmentally owned major news broadcasting channel; however, there is some question as to what extent this channel is free. Until 2005, the channel was owned by Irina Lesnevskaya, a former assistant director of children's television programming in the Soviet-era, and her son.⁷⁹ However, in 2005, the channel was split among Western European mass media and oil and natural gas companies.⁸⁰ Coincidentally, the main liberal journalist working for REN's telecast, Olga Romanovna, was fired for what she felt were political reasons and censorship. Several of her liberal colleagues agreed and quit in solidarity.⁸¹ She was replaced with a similarly styled liberal journalist Marianna Maksimovskaya in the 24 hour news spot. In 2006, one of Putin's former deputy envoys took over the chairmanship of the board, and one of his close personal friends bought a large part of interest in the company. As of 2013, National Media group, the same company who also owns a portion of the governmentally owned and operated Channel 1, has 68% of the stock in REN.⁸²

As one can see, there is very little diversity in the ownership of Russian TV channels and, increasingly, any dissenting channels are being brought closer and closer to the government through strategic purchases. As of now, the only three nationally broadcast channels (defined as reaching at least 96% of the populace in Russia) are Channel 1, *Rossiya1*, and NTV, all state-owned.⁸³ This means that the only view that's nationally broadcast is the Russian government's.

⁷⁹ "Irena Lesnevskaya – Biography," RIN, accessed on April 17, 2014, <http://persona.rin.ru/eng/view/f/11329/lesnevskaya-irena-stefanovna>

⁸⁰ Dennis Maternovsky "UES Set to Sell Ren-TV," *The Moscow Times*, April 22, 2005, accessed on March 1, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/reports-ues-set-to-sell-ren-tv/223702.html>

⁸¹ Nick Holdsworth, "Russian TV anchor Challenges Firing," *Hollywood Reporter*, November 29, 2005, <http://business.highbeam.com/2012/article-1G1-139966389/russian-tv-anchor-challenges-firing>

⁸² "O Holdingye," *Natsionalnaya Media Gruppya*, accessed March 1, 2014, <http://nm-g.ru/#/about/>

⁸³ Henry E. Hale. and Timothy J. Colton, "Russians and the Putin-Medvedev 'Tandemocracy.'" *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 3–20. Accessed January 31, 2014. <http://mesharpe.metapress.com/openurl.asp?genre=article&id=doi:10.2753/PPC1075-8216570201>.

Of course, it is dangerous for any democratic country to only have one view broadcast across the country. Because of this, Russia's freedom of the press is considered at the same level of most developing countries. Obviously, having only one viewpoint across the country makes it easy for the government to manipulate people. Putin can intensely cultivate not only his literal image, but also how people talk about him and what they know about him and his government. Are Russian citizens gullible enough to believe what they see on television without question? How much can television really shape the political actions of the populace?

The Effects of an Information Monopoly

The answers to these questions have been the topics of many different studies, but all were conducted before the fall of private media in Russia. The sociologist Ellen Mickiewicz has written extensively on both Russian Television before and after the fall of the USSR, but her more recent studies have been done on how television audiences in Russia respond to what is being shown to them. Her studies point to the fact that audiences are more impacted by their own personal beliefs than what television tells them and are highly skeptical of Russian news programs because they are aware that they are being fed untruths and half-truths.⁸⁴ Furthermore, they are able to point out possible benefits and consequences to government actions that are presented to them on television.⁸⁵ At their base, the studies show that Russian television is highly ineffective in terms of its power as a propaganda medium because of its poor priming ability. Priming is defined in this context as being able to manipulate or set the basis of opinion to what one particular group wants a person to think. Since Russians are aware that the news is

⁸⁴Ellen Mickiewicz, "The Election News Story on Russian Television : A World Apart from Viewers," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 1 (2006): 1–23.

⁸⁵ Ellen Mickiewicz, "Excavating Concealed Tradeoffs: How Russians Watch the News." *Political Communication* 22, no. 3 (July 2005): 355–380. Accessed February 26, 2014. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10584600591006636>.

attempting to manipulate them, however, the priming is highly ineffective and can in fact be disastrous to what the propagandist wants to do. The participants in her study on elections were polled on elections in a region they didn't live in, and they had no personal investment in the outcome. However, since we are interested in Putin's image in particular, and, thus, a national election, one must also look at how effective television is in situations where a vested interest is present in the subjects.

A study of the 1999 parliamentary election, among the last with a large diversity of viewpoints in broadcast journalism, shows that having an opposition channel available significantly changed the voting norms. Russians who watched NTV during the election, even when one controls their voting preferences one month before the election, were more likely to vote for opposition parties over the government-supported party *Edinstvo*. Overall, this study showed that the presence of an independent TV station like NTV decreased vote for *Unity* by 8.9%, increase the combined vote for major opposition groups by 6.3%, and decreased overall turnout by 3.8% points.⁸⁶ As one can see diversity of viewpoints can drastically affect an election and the course of a nation.

These two studies, when taken together, imply something unique about Russian viewers. While they see the bias in television reporting and offer new perspectives when presented with only one, they are still significantly affected by what they see on television when offered opposing viewpoints. Given more than just party-line news, people will make different voting decisions and, over time, might change the political landscape in Russia from what it has been for so long. However, since the government has ousted any alternate viewpoints in broadcast journalism, nothing is likely to change.

⁸⁶ Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, *Media and Political Persuasion*, 3253

Polished Techniques in Mirrored Universes

One might be tempted to compare the modern situation with that of Soviet Russia's. In the 1960's the television started becoming a regular feature in the homes of many citizens of the USSR. This was revolutionary in the production of propaganda. Though the USSR had already been using film as a major tool in propaganda, the television brought the State's message into the home with much less effort and cost than producing a feature-length film. It allowed for little every-day biases in information instead of the large, dramatic, obvious propaganda in cinema. Though both eras display biases in information and a monopoly in what is shown to the viewer, there are differences between the two eras. Putin is much more effective at using television media than his Soviet Predecessors.

Many of the advantages of modern television lie in the changing nature of Russian politics. Putin is much more effective at presenting the image of a powerful yet relatable leader, than Soviet Leaders. Modern Russian leadership has embraced television to present their views and, furthermore, understands what their viewers and their audience wants to see. In 2005,



Putin with *Nashi* members in Zavidovo - retrieved from: TheMoscowTimes.com

Vladimir Putin invited leaders of the youth group *Nashi* to his home in Zavidovo. Broadcast by Channel 1, this meeting showed Putin sitting outside on a folding chair surrounded by these young leaders.⁸⁷ He is not in any positional advantage compared to the others, but sits on their same level without even a desk or a podium between him and

⁸⁷ Stephen Boykewich "Putin Plays host to 56 *Nashi* Youth," *The Moscow Times*, July 27, 2005, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/putin-plays-host-to-56-nashi-youth/211009.html>

the *Nashi* members. The dropping of formalities and push to show Putin as relatable to the average Russian is further evidenced by his dress. Instead of wearing the expensive, tailored suits he tends to appear in for official events and formal interviews, he chooses to talk with the young people in a casual striped, short-sleeved button up and slacks. This, of course, is a huge departure from Soviet television's depiction of its leaders. Putin speaks openly and freely, taking questions from the youths. Also, instead of sitting behind a desk in an official capacity, he chooses to be outside and casual with these young people. Through this choice of relaxing the official image, Putin is seen as both modern and understanding.

Television further portrays Putin as a man with an answer. On April 18, 2014, a question and answer session was held on live television with president Putin. The show brought recorded questions from around the country to ask some important and some not so important questions of the president about himself and Russia. Americans were surprised to see the whistle-blower who leaked secrets about the United States' surveillance practices, Edward Snowden, put forward a question to Putin. He asked what some American journalists considered to be a ridiculous question: "Does Russia intercept, store or analyze, in any way, the communications of millions of individuals?". The question, of course, had to be chosen for the program, and it was for a very specific reason. To show that Putin was stronger than other world politicians and able to answer the "hard questions". The first thing that Putin did in his answer is discredit Snowden by naming him a former American agent and a spy, identifying for Russian audiences that this man is not blameless in the situation he is currently in. Furthermore, Putin propped up his own country's practices as superior to the U.S.'s by saying that the laws and society strictly regulate Russian

security practices⁸⁸. By allowing this question to be asked and setting up the opportunity for such a response, Putin sets up a double headed arrow. He embarrasses Snowden by not backing down from the question and telling viewers exactly what he wants them to think. The greater goal this accomplishes is that it embarrasses the American government. Putin, a man who was a former KGB agent and has, in fact, created a vast method for mass communication surveillance,⁸⁹ was able to deal with a man who has proven to be a thorn in the side of the American intelligence community by essentially saying, “No, we don’t do that here”. This portrays Putin as a man stronger than American because he is able to face down a potential foe and win. Putin had an answer for the opposition and through that shows himself as strong, ready, and a great leader.

Television also shows Putin as a soft, tender, but ever masculine, man. Putin is also



Putin as the brave, tender conservationist, Retrieved from: dailymail.co.uk

regularly pictured in nature conservatories, preserving Russia’s natural species. Before the 2014 Sochi winter Olympic games, Putin visited a preserve for Persian leopards, a protected species in Russia. Channel 1, had a special broadcast of the event, going to the control center of the preserve and interviewing the conservationists about the leopards themselves. Putin soon arrived and entered the habitat with a young leopard. One of the camera men who accompanied the president, was bit by the leopard, his jeans torn. However, minutes later, Putin was

⁸⁸ “Edvard Snouden zadal Vladimiru Putinu Vopros o proslushkye grazhdan,” Pervii Kanal, April 17, 2014, accessed April 21, 2014, <http://www.1tv.ru/news/polit/256730>

⁸⁹ James Andrew Lewis, “Reference Note on Russian Communications Surveillance,” The Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 18, 2014, accessed April 21, 2014, <http://csis.org/publication/reference-note-russian-communications-surveillance>

photographed cuddling with the leopard.⁹⁰ Here, we see several features of Putin's cultivated image. First, he is the protector of Russia and its wildlife. He cares deeply for the creatures of Russia and he is tender toward them. However, this is a case which has much more opportunity than when Putin appeared guiding a flock of migratory birds who had been born in captivity⁹¹. Rather, Putin enters the habitat of a carnivorous predator. Even more, one who had just injured a photographer. When questioned about the event, Putin further shows his bravery and tenderness for animals by stating that the leopard was just scared of the camera. Through reports like these Russian news is able to create an image of Putin as brave, but tender and caring for Russia and her creatures.

Soviet television propaganda was hardly a success. It wasn't embraced by the Soviet leadership, who preferred organized events where one could count those in attendance and see whether they were receptive or not.

Russian politicians and academics did not know how to adopt the television personality, choosing instead to read off of a piece of paper and often covering their faces and hunching out of the frame.⁹² They declared television ineffective because they were ineffective



Brezhnev's 1979 address to Russia's youth. An example of ineffective television use by Soviet leadership- retrieved from: youtube.com

⁹⁰ "Putin i Leopard" Gazeta.ru, February 4, 2014, accessed March 21, 2014,

http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/video/vladimir_putin_zashel_v_kletku_k_leopardu_i_pogladil_ego.shtml

⁹¹ Andrew E. Kramer, "Putin Pulls Off Latest Feat: Flying With the Birds," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2012, accessed April 21, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/06/world/europe/putin-pulls-off-his-latest-feat-flying-with-migratory-birds.html?_r=0

⁹² Mickiewicz, *Moscow Prime Time*, 195

at presenting themselves to their populace. It's easy for a politician to make himself palatable to his people when he has the power to completely control how one perceives him, as in posters and paintings, but it's much harder when someone can actually see them and all their flaws. Possibly one of the best examples of this is Leonid Brezhnev's 1979 New Year's address to the young people of Russia. By '79, Brezhnev had suffered from a series of strokes and suffered from a partial paralysis of the face. His speech is slow and slurred as he attempts to speak to Russia's youth in a drab office and official clothing while hardly ever glancing at the cameras, choosing instead to look at a booklet in his hands. A presentation like that couldn't help but be ineffective at appealing to viewers' tastes. Brezhnev looks more like someone's ailing grandfather than the leader of a country attempting to be a major world power.⁹³ During the Soviet era, leaders would avoid live broadcasts and television altogether. They did this in part because they did not believe wholeheartedly in the medium, but also because they did not want to embarrass themselves.⁹⁴ This only further separated Soviet leadership from its people and caused them to be un-relatable. This lies in direct contrast to the erudite presentation and manipulation of Putin in modern Russian broadcast journalism. In contrast to Brezhnev's bumbling, Putin is able to put forth to the populace on all television channels that he is a strong, tender and relatable man, but also an adept politician. Though this, Putin shows that he knows how to effectively use television to feed his cult of personality.

A further divergence from the Socialist-era, the big four channels have begun to shift their focus more and more to the news. This is another way that Putin has shown himself superior in the use of television than his predecessors. When news was first broadcast on Soviet

⁹³ Leonid Brezhnev, "Pozdraveniye s Novim Godom – 1979 (Bes Kyupor)," *Imedia CCCP*, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbRQuLj9VOs#t=440>

⁹⁴ Mickiewicz, *Moscow Prime Time*, 192

television, it consisted of short news vignettes several times a day.⁹⁵ During the Lapin Era, that shifted to the single show, *Vremya*, which had a 30 minute timeslot in the afternoon and showed on all channels of the Soviet Union broadcast network. Even the regional channels were required to broadcast it in its designated timeslot.⁹⁶ When the system was privatized, the channels that would become Channel 1 and Rossiya1 dominated the news marketplace, but when NTV was created, it competed and offered a competing viewpoint and began to rival the government channels.⁹⁷ News spread across these channels and, instead of broadcasting once a night, they began having short news segments throughout the day. The main news broadcasts in the afternoon have now reached an hour long and feature big personalities that the show's advertising campaigns are based on. This is another example of the Westernization of Russian television. Style and technology are paid attention to. Since the channels no longer compete on message, as they, for the most part, follow the government line. They compete on presentation. Any of the broadcasts one sees today in Russian news could pass as a Western news program, in great contrast to the news broadcasts of the USSR.

One of the main instruments behind this shift in style is that Russian television has begun to pay attention to viewer preferences. In the Soviet period, viewership numbers and opinions were not taken into consideration when planning programming. The audience research division of *Gosteleradio* was underfunded and undervalued. Instead of listening to surveys and general research about viewing habits, administrators relied on mail sent in by the audience. More letters meant more viewers. Furthermore, there was an ideological issue in canvassing the audience for what they wanted to see. Russian television officials did not see themselves as servants to the

⁹⁵ Mickiewicz, *Moscow Prime Time*, 261

⁹⁶ Mickiewicz, *Moscow Prime Time*, 274

⁹⁷ Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, *Media and Political Persuasion*, 3258

audience's tastes, but the creator of it. The officials were to set the cultural agenda, not the viewers.⁹⁸ That is not the case now. In modern fashion, Russian channels rely on private media research groups such as TNS, to inform them about what their viewers want to see.⁹⁹ Of course these channels also have inside analysts to help them assess and edit their own programs as well.

Viewer Reactions to an Information Monopoly

According to these inside analysts the focus on news in the major networks has helped to an extent. Channel 1 ranks its news show “*Vremya*” as the number one show in their broadcast program.¹⁰⁰ According to Russian PR group Brand Media, Channel 1 is also currently number one in the average daily share of TV with 13.42%, followed closely by Russia 1 and NTV that are both hovering around 12%. Interestingly enough, the channel considered to be the one opposition mouthpiece, REN, is seventh in average daily share behind the entertainment channels TNT, CTC, and Channel 5.¹⁰¹ However, if one looks at the reported viewership of the main marketable audience they get a completely different view of the Russian television landscape. CTC’s investment report for the third quarter and nine months of 2013 states that TNT is first in the “most commercially appealing demographic” (10-45). CTC is in a close second with Channel 1, NTV and Russia1 trailing.¹⁰² Furthermore, this report to investor’s shows that the Three government-owned channels are falling in popularity in this demographic while the privately controlled tier 1 channels (CTC, TNT, and REN) are on the rise.¹⁰³ It seems that the

⁹⁸ Mickiewicz, *Moscow Prime Time*, 268-273

⁹⁹ “TNS O Kompanii,” TNS, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.tns-global.ru/about/>

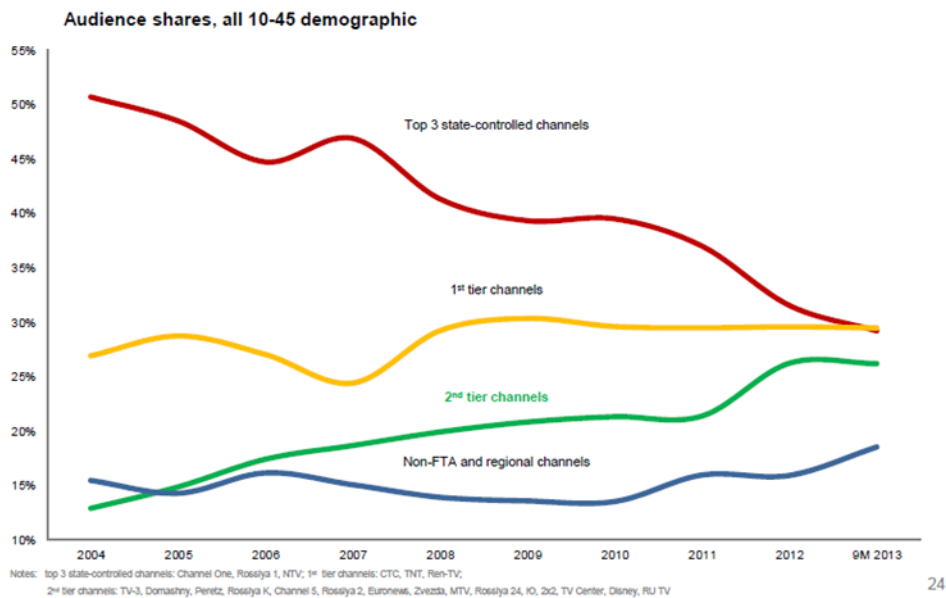
¹⁰⁰ “*Bolshinstvo Telezritelei Pervogo Kanala Vybirayet dlya Posmotra Informatsionuyu Programu Vremya*,” *Pervii Kanal*, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.1tv.ru/news/rating/253954>

¹⁰¹ “*Media Plan Besplatno*” Brand Media Inc., accessed March 8, 2014, http://www.brandmedia.ru/serv__idP_51_idP1_68_idP2_2425.html

¹⁰² CTC Media Inc., “*Presentatsiya dlya Investorov (3 Kvartal 2013)*” accessed on March 2, 2014, retrieved from: http://ctcmedia.ru/rus/business/broadcast_Russia/ctc/, 13

¹⁰³ CTC Media Inc., “*Presentatsiya*,” 25

majorities of young and middle-aged Russian viewers have shifted their attention away from news and prefer entertainment channels and programs. Admittedly, these numbers are apt to change due to the nature of Television viewership, but if this trend continues, it could mean that the state-controlled channels will have to shift their focus away from news programs and on to sitcoms, reality shows, and other entertainment –based programming.



The fall of government-controlled media, versus the rise of the rest. Daily audience share over time (10-45), separated into tiers 2004-2013, Retrieved from CTC Media Inc.

This shift seems to indicate that the Russian government has lost its audience among the youth, perhaps due to that fact that Russians see that the state is controlling what is presented on the news. If Channel 1 is losing viewers in the 10-45 demographic and their top show among viewers is their evening news report, it seems to indicate that young viewers are not interested in the news they are presenting. Previous research shows that Russians do sense a bias within their news, so perhaps they are losing interest in even watching to see what the government wants to report. It is unlikely that they will loosen their tight grip on news broadcast and begin to allow other views in order to increase their audience. With the trajectory of government news takeover

on television and continuing efforts to censor broadcasts and sue those who don't follow the government agenda. It is more feasible that the government-owned channels will simply begin producing more entertainment programming. There are certainly other places where Russians can get the news.

Alternatives to Television: the Rise of the Internet

Television is not the only way that people are exposed to news and politics. The newspaper has been around for much longer than the television, and is much more respected as a journalistic medium around the world. While there are no dedicated opposition television channels in Russia and only 4 main channels that include the news as part of their daily programming, there are over 400 daily newspapers in Russia that represent a plethora of different viewpoints.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, print is much harder to use as a propaganda tool, as one can carry the words around with them and do their own research on the topic. In broadcast, once the words are said, it is much more difficult to fact check what the viewer hears. The reliability of print journalism is not reflected in what people depend on for their information, however. During the 1999 election, a national survey found that while 89% of the adult population named television as their basic source of information about political events, only 3% said the same of newspapers.¹⁰⁵ So, obviously, though the people say they don't trust television and the viewpoints reflected therein, they continue to rely on it heavily for information.

This only matters, however, if people are watching television in the first place. From 2004 to 2008, due mostly the increase of Internet access in all parts of Russia, television viewership has dropped from 75% to 73%. This trend continues as Internet use grows. In 2012,

¹⁰⁴ "The Press in Russia," *BBC News*, May 16, 2008, accessed May 10, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4315129.stm>

¹⁰⁵ Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya, *Media and Political Persuasion*, 3258

Russia surpassed Germany as the country with the most Internet users in Europe with 68 million users.¹⁰⁶ According to the World Bank, 53.3% of the Russian population now uses the Internet.¹⁰⁷ By 2015, CTC media research estimates that the average Russian will use the Internet for about 3 hours a day.¹⁰⁸ Add on to that the increasing prevalence of smartphones in Russia, and one sees that the monopoly of the television as the place to consume media is at risk. Internet access bypasses the government news agenda. Now, Russians can read perspectives from all over the world as well as from opposition. Without blanket censorship, such as that which is present in China, there is no way that the Putin administration can control what is spoken about. Social media, such as Facebook and VKontakye, allow people to instantly share their views and any news articles they want with all of their friends. So, while free press was certainly threatened in Russia, and is now almost non-existent on Television, the Internet offers the promise of free viewpoints, especially as disseminated among the youth. The growth of Internet in Russia certainly shows promise, and without an adaptation of state-controlled Russian news broadcast, the difference between what is presented on television and what is reported on the Internet will certainly undermine what the Putin administration is trying to do to media in Russia

Conclusion

One sees that though the Russian federal government has attempted to control news broadcast in Russia and has done much to insure that the opposition does not have a voice, this cannot be called a return to the days of the Soviet Union. The Russian leadership is much better than that of the USSR at presenting itself as relatable and strong; however, the nature of modern

¹⁰⁶ CTC Media Inc., “*Presentatsiya*”, 21

¹⁰⁷ “Internet Users Per 100 People,” *The World Bank*, accessed May 8, 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>

¹⁰⁸ CTC Media Inc., “*Presentatsiya*”, 21

Russia undermines what benefits this could have. Market forces, as in any capitalist economy, will always have a huge effect on media. The Westernization of news broadcast, as well as the widening focus on entertainment programming over news programming shows us that, once the Soviet Union fell, there could never be a return to the type or format of Russian programming again. Gone are the days of ballets and lectures, and here are the days of sitcoms and reality shows. Furthermore, since channels and content creators are now researching audiences and paying attention to their preferences, the government cannot just put whatever programming it wants on television and expect that to be accepted. Instead they must listen and answer to the desires of the consumer. Finally, the increase in Internet use and different high tech and instant ways of disseminating information means that the government will never have a monopoly on information as they had in the Soviet era. When they report something obviously biased on the television, it only takes an instant to verify it or see what others are saying about it. If anything, the efforts of the government to control television now undermine its authority. They cannot do it in secret, and instantly, news of their reactionary measures can be spread across Russia and the world. In the end, the landscape of modern Russia makes it impossible for the government to maintain control of the media like the Party did in the USSR.

Chapter 4

From Agit-prop to Pop Music: Visual Culture and the Soviet Legacy in Putin's Russia

As concluded in the last chapter, the Russian populace is moving towards the Internet as a medium of disseminating information.¹⁰⁹ Businesses and advertising firms around the world have taken cues from this and are going to the people, using social media to communicate with their target group. Russia is, in fact, one of the fastest growing markets for internet marketing. From 2011 to 2012, Russia's online advertising market increased 55.5%,¹¹⁰ and the Internet will soon account for one-third of all money spent on marketing.¹¹¹ Of course, as businesses have realized the value of the Internet, so have politicians and social groups. Almost every politician in the developed world has a Twitter or a Facebook account. This "webification" is not only happening with heads of state such as presidents Vladimir Putin and Barak Obama. A University of Nottingham study showed that 40% of the governors from Russia's 83 regions maintain an active Twitter account.¹¹²

In a country as broad as Russia, the trend of using the Internet and social media to connect has taken hold. This is not only true of the politicians themselves, but the people who support them. In both the 2008 and 2012 Russian presidential elections opposition groups and Putin supporters took to the web using sites like the Russian social media website VKontakte, Facebook, and YouTube to connect send their messages to the Russian voting populace. Many of

¹⁰⁹ CTC Media Inc., "*Presentatsiya*", 21

¹¹⁰ "Russian Online Advertising Market is the Most Fast-Growing," Begin Group, last updated May 2012, accessed April 22, 2014, http://begingroup.com/en/top/news/market_news/1445

¹¹¹ Kseniya Bloetskaya, "Internet Skoro Budet Zajmet Bolshe treti Reklamogo Rinka Rossii," *Vedmosti*, March 21, 2013, accessed April 22, 2014, http://www.vedomosti.ru/tech/news/10274611/set_vmesto_yaschika

¹¹² Bettina Renz and Jonathan Sullivan, "Why and How are Russia's Regional Governors using Twitter," University of Nottingham, last updated May 21, 2013, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://nottspolitics.org/2013/05/21/russias-regional-governors-using-twitter/>

these were extreme and some were level-headed; however, some truly bizarre para-governmental campaign ads arose among the pro-Putin camp. It is important to look at this trend in the dissemination of propaganda precisely because it is new. As more people move towards the internet around the world, we should expect to see political groups following them and disseminating their viewpoints.

The nature of these political productions in social media is also important. The nature of being totally accessible to anyone who has an internet connection, the aesthetic and visual nature of the productions, as well as the anonymity behind the videos all make them unique. Unique as YouTube videos are, there was another form of public media that had similar features. *Plakati*, or propaganda posters, also have anonymity of the artist behind them, aesthetic and visual values that can be interpreted, and were publically available for anyone who wanted to view them. In this chapter I argue that is it the case that people and political groups are modernizing and using YouTube and video-sharing sites to support their viewpoints. I also argue that these new productions have features that can be compared with the Soviet method of public mass communication: *Plakati*.

Plakati: Propaganda Themes from Modernism to Socialist Realism

Plakati, or posters, are by far the most famous propaganda method of the Soviet era. When one hears the word propaganda, the average American immediately thinks of one of the thousands of posters created by the axis and the allies during World War II; however, the history and use of posters to disseminate government doctrine during the twentieth century is much deeper and much more complex than many think. The Russian revolutionaries might be the first to truly utilize propaganda posters, perhaps more from necessity than from a desire to do so.

These were integral in spreading the message of the Communist Party in a time when literacy was extremely low. In the first and last census of the Russian Empire before the October Revolution, taken in 1897, only 37.9% of men were literate, while 12.5% of women were literate.¹¹³ The Bolshevik's literacy campaigns quickly increased that number, especially among young people; however, throughout World War II and Stalinism the main tool of the Russian propaganda machine continued to be striking images with short, memorable slogans.

Though one would expect to see a united, stylistic front across Soviet Russia during the civil war, two visions competed for what would become the future face of Russian visual media in the public sphere. The first, modernism, was a total rejection of high culture at the time. Despising the commercialism and the formalized nature of Russian Culture in the early 20th century, modernists strove to make all areas of Russian culture, from poetry to art and dance, revolutionary in the same way that the Communist party strove to revolutionize the world.¹¹⁴ The modernist propaganda artists during the revolutionary period were not simply agents of the propaganda machine, but acted as revolutionaries in their own right. There are two important features to modernist *plakati*: they are visually simple, and they are easy to understand.

¹¹³ Н. А. Тройницкий, "Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г." (Российской Империи, 1905), Президентской Библиотека, accessed Feb. 2, 2014, http://www.prilib.ru/elfapps/pageturner2d/viewer.aspx?orderdate=28.01.2014&DocUNC_ID=4952&Token=KqGBueaQBXdng7Se9Gykw==&lang=ru-RU,

¹¹⁴ Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and society since 1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39-40; 53-54

Some modernist artists embraced *lubok*, the ancient Russian style of unrefined drawings with short text, sometimes even using ancient instead of modern Russian to caption their posters. Artists saw this as a way to easily connect themselves with the uneducated proletariat and call up the idea of the communists being part of the everyday common people. An example of this feature of modernist style is Mayakovski's multi-



Figure 1, *Lubok Plakati* Retrieved From:

windowed posters illustrated with rough, almost unfinished caricatures (fig. 1). This particular poster, made in 1919 reads, “every stroll is the joy of the enemy, but a hero of labor is a kick to the bourgeoisie”. There are two messages that we can take from the imagery of this poster that fit into broader Soviet ideology. The first is the idea of us versus them. This poster is clearly divided into halves – the proletariat on the left and the bourgeoisie on the right. Even the style in which the proletariat is drawn is supposed to encourage one equate ourselves with him, since he has no discernable features. However, the bourgeoisie man is round and swollen with squinting eyes and wears Western clothes. Clearly, he is drawn this way so that the audience immediately identifies him as part of the out group, uniting people to the cause of the Reds. A second message we can take from this poster is the importance of individual labor to the group. There is only one man portrayed in this poster, and when that individual isn't working for the cause, it makes the enemy happy. However, the drawing style also emphasizes that the group is more important than the individual due again to the fact that he is all red and has no discernable features. He is the every-man, but the fact that he is on the side of the Soviets is the most important feature to his identity.

In contrast to *lubok*, other artists tended towards the futurist side of artistic modernism, using impactful shapes instead of figures and choosing sharp and distinct images over realistic ones. Perhaps some of the most unique and impactful images from the revolutionary period were created by El Lissitzki, who seamlessly integrated modern art with propaganda (fig. 2, 1919). Figure 2 is, without a doubt, Lissitzki's most iconic poster. It reads "Beat the Whites with



Figure 2. An example of futurist *Plakati* Retrieved from: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/>

the Red wedge" relying completely on shapes to convey the message, this work stands in contrast to almost all of the posters of the time which featured people and discernable objects, as well as revolutionary symbols. Instead, Lissitzski simply uses a red triangle on a white background and a white circle on a black background to show how the reds will penetrate the lines of and defeat the whites. This also illustrates both the simple and easy to understand aspects of modernist *plakati* and the rejection of pre-revolutionary artistic style.

The victory of the Reds over the Whites in the Russian civil war in 1922 marked a change in style. The soviet elite rejected modernism and embraced socialist realism. The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers termed socialist realism as, "... [demanding] of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development..." and that this representation, "must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism."¹¹⁵ Under all the grandiose description, socialist realism is supposed to glorify the triumph of Communism using realistic, but aggrandized images. It is in the *Plakati* of socialist realism that we see the first visual

¹¹⁵ Andrei Sinyavsky, *On Socialist Realism* (University of California Press 1982) 148

representations of the cults of Personality of Stalin and Lenin. Through them, we can gain a better understanding of the methods used by Putin supporters in their modern productions of propaganda.

While the posters of the USSR all focused on the issues of the time, whether that be the October Revolution in the late 1910's, World War II or even the atomic bomb in the 70's and 80's, an interesting feature of visual propaganda made in the style of socialist realism that did not survive past the thaw is its portrayal of the current leader as a symbol of the country itself. Though revolutionary propaganda often featured Lenin as a hero, it did not go so far as to equate him to, essentially, the god of



Figure 3, retrieved from: Sovietposters.com

the revolution. Later, during World War II and post-war Stalinism, Lenin and later Stalin were portrayed as not only important figures of Soviet Russia, but symbols of the entire government. Figure 3 is a striking example of posters from the Stalinist era propping up the cult of personality around Lenin. This poster from the 1940's reads, "The Party and Lenin are twin brothers, who is more valuable to mother history? We say -Lenin and mean Party. We say Party and mean Lenin". This is just one of hundreds of posters praising the personality of Lenin. Position is a very important feature of this poster. Prominently displayed is the figure of Lenin, in front of everything else in the poster. He reverentially and respectfully holds his vest in a proud pose. Behind him are all the people of the Soviet Union, flying red flags and raising red banners. Of course, they represent the party. An interesting juxtaposition is the

size of the flags and banners to the people. The people are simply a faceless mass. Dominating them are the flags and banners, symbols of the party itself. Obviously, though the Party and Lenin are one, the people are not as important as the Party itself.



Figure 4, Retrieved from: theblaze.com

Throughout his leadership, Stalin attempted to link himself to Soviet history. Hundreds of posters (Fig. 4, 1947) attempted to unite Stalin with Lenin's legacy. This poster reads "In the name of Lenin, under the Leadership of Stalin, Forward to the victory of communism". As seen before, Lenin was already inextricably associated with the Party and, in the USSR, the Communist Party was the state. So, through the transitive property posters such as these unite Stalin with the USSR itself. This legitimized Stalin's decisions even though his view of the future of the USSR differed greatly from Lenin's. Once again, position is very important when analyzing this poster. Stalin and Lenin are both on the same pedestal, along with the red flag; however, Stalin stands in front of Lenin. This indicates that while Lenin is the great figure of Communism, Stalin now leads in front with the support and memory of Lenin behind him. Interestingly enough, Lenin is portrayed as grey and is the most featureless of all the figures on the posters, more a stature than a living being. This evokes and supports the idea that Lenin is a memory while Stalin is the living leader and head. Furthermore, the people are also grey, though they have more detail than Lenin does. Only Stalin is adorned with any color – the red of his party, and the gold of his honor.

As time passed, propaganda posters became less and less important. The country was modernizing. More and more Russians were literate, and thus read newspapers for the events of the day instead of relying on posters to find out what was happening in the world. Furthermore, the television was spreading across the USSR and found a stronghold in cities like Leningrad and Moscow. However, one cannot call modern television the direct descendant of the propaganda poster. There is some anonymity to propaganda posters. The name of the creator is usually not listed on the poster, while on television one knows from the channel who is trying to sell the idea to us. Moreover, a poster essentially has free access. One must simply walk past the spot to see the message of the creator. In the case of television, one must often pay to access content which has a low international distribution rate. Finally, posters need not lift themselves up as intellectual like television is expected to. As one can see from the Mayakovski example propaganda posters were often unrefined and simple. They did not purport themselves as unbiased or reliable as people expect their television news to be. The nature of *plakati* makes them comparable to videos one sees on social media sites such as YouTube. Similarly, YouTube videos are totally free to access, have anonymity, and are produced, often, without intellectual framework, but for aesthetics and entertainment.

Modern Media in the Public Sphere: Putin's Image on YouTube

Among the many political sites one can find on the internet, I focus on YouTube. One might ask what is so special about this one website in a sea of others. YouTube has 1 billion unique visitors per month.¹¹⁶ To put these numbers in perspective, this means that a person posting a video on YouTube has a potential audience that rivals global news outlets such as

¹¹⁶ "Statistics: Viewership," YouTube, last updated January 2, 2014, accessed on February 9, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>

CNN¹¹⁷ and the BBC World Service.¹¹⁸ The only barriers are YouTube's Terms of Service, which ban socially-unacceptable, illegal and copyright-infringing content, and require an Internet connection.¹¹⁹ This differs incredibly from the costs to put content on TV, where a 30 second primetime ad can cost over half a million dollars.¹²⁰ In addition, to get content on television one must pass harsher sensors, pay high production costs, and try to appeal to people who, for the most part, are already against your message because they hate commercials. On the other side of the fence, videos on YouTube already have a receptive audience because viewers are there specifically to watch user-made content. So, YouTube is one of the most cost effective ways for even the common man to find a receptive audience. For these reasons, we have seen several interesting and sometimes bizarre iterations of propaganda on the internet. The three that this chapter focuses on is "One Like Putin", "VVP", "A Russia Without Putin", and the ad campaign "The First Time is Only For Love".

"One Like Putin": The Pop Song Fit for a President

One of the most famous Russian videos to be used during the 2008 presidential election was "Takogo Kak Putin" or "One Like Putin", sung by the pop group Poyushiye Vmeste, translated as "Singing together".¹²¹ The song's author, Alexander Yellin said in a 2012 interview with Public Radio International that the song was the product of a \$200 bet between him and a

¹¹⁷ "CNN Moves Past MSNBC...", CNN, last updated January 2, 2014, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/category/ratings/>

¹¹⁸ "Record Audience Figures... BBC Global News Services," BBC, last updated June 23, 2013, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2013/global-audience-estimate.html>

¹¹⁹ "YouTube Community Guidelines" YouTube, last updated January 2, 2014, accessed February 9, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines

¹²⁰ Wayne Freidman "Trad 30-Sec Spot Shines, Costs Up 5%," Media Daily News, last updated March 13, 2013, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/195725/trad-30-sec-spot-shines-costs-up-5.html>

¹²¹ Poyushchie Vmestye, "Takogo Kak Putin," YouTube, last updated September 26, 2008, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lopmp5g50g>

friend that Yellin could create a hit Russian song “on the cheap”. Little did he know that the song that he meant as a light satire would spread around the world, be translated into English, and be embraced by the people of Russia to the point that it would be played at party-sanctioned pro-Putin rallies. Alexander Yellin is without a doubt no big fan of Vladimir Putin, writing the song “Our Madhouse Votes for Putin” in 2011,¹²² so one might wonder how “One Like Putin” can be considered propaganda. In the case of visual media propaganda, since intent is not always evident from the piece itself, reception should be examined over the intention of its author.

There is no doubt that the Western media immediately accepted this song as pro-Putin propaganda. Since the song was released in 2002, there have been hundreds of American news articles written about this song with no reference to the fact that it might be satire. In 2002, soon after the song was created, *The New York Times* wrote that the song might be a propaganda piece,¹²³ and some newspapers, such as *The Baltimore Sun*, attempted to link the creation of the song to link the writing of the song to Nikolai Gastello,¹²⁴ the media secretary to the Russian Supreme court. Though it’s true that Gastello did work for the government in 2002, American news outlets mixed tried to make connections that were simply non-existent. Yellin came to Gastello who was moonlighting in the music business to help him produce the song Yellin wrote as satire.¹²⁵ “One Like Putin” was even the subject of a *PBS* documentary about the rise of new propaganda music in Russia. However, they fail to ask the important question: Is this a serious

¹²² Marco Werman, “Writing the Best Known Pro-Putin and Anti-Putin Songs,” Public Radio International, last updated February 3, 2013, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://www.pri.org/stories/2012-02-03/writing-best-known-pro-putin-and-anti-putin-songs>

¹²³ Steven Lee Myers, “The World; Singing the Praises of Mr. Personality” *The New York Times*, last updated September 1, 2002, accessed February, 10, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/01/weekinreview/the-world-singing-the-praises-of-mr-personality.html>

¹²⁴ Douglas Birch, “Putin’s popularity reaches a high note” *The Baltimore Sun*, last updated September 3, 2002, accessed February 10, 2014, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2002-09-03/news/0209030055_1_putin-vladimir-v-pop-song

¹²⁵ Gamburg and Bloom, “A Man Like Putin”

pro-putin song, or satire? The Western media totally missed the mark on the analysis of this song and helped it be marked as propaganda.

Russia also either missed the mark on the fact that this was a playful satire or simply didn't care. "One Like Putin" was capitalized on by the Putin administration, even as late as the 2012 election; the song was played at political rallies and government-sponsored youth events¹²⁶. When Putin was asked whether he had heard the song, he smiled and said "I'd like to meet the cute girls who sing it."¹²⁷ This song took off among the Russian populace as well. Only a few weeks after its release, the song hit the top of all of the Russian charts. Its overwhelming reception among the people of Russia as a song praising Putin and extolling his qualities allows us to consider it propaganda even though it was written disingenuously. However, though this song was not written as propaganda, it is important for analysis of Putin's image, as the point of satire is to reveal deeper truths about its object in an over-the-top way. Thus, analysis of the music video can help us understand much about Putin's image, and how Putin supporters glorify this man to the level of a national hero.

"One Like Putin's" popularity can be attributed not only to its catchy beat or its modern electronic sound. Its lyrics play a good part in its reception, including the chorus of, "I want a man like Putin, who's full of strength/ I want a man like Putin, who doesn't drink/ I want a man like Putin, who won't make me sad." A major contributor to the song's fame is the music video.¹²⁸ The video begins with film clips of a motorcade and Putin walking up some stairs. The camera then cuts to an overweight man in a brown shirt sitting in a leather chair, perhaps the

¹²⁶ Gamburg and Bloom, "A Man Like Putin"

¹²⁷ Gamburg and Bloom, "A Man Like Putin"

¹²⁸ Poyushchie Vmestyie, "Takogo Kak Putin," YouTube, last updated September 26, 2008, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lopmppe5g50g>

close Putin ally Sechin, apparently waiting for someone. Putin, actually a clever impersonator, enters the room and the man stands up, shakes Putin's hand, and they both sit down to watch a video. By now the music is at full blast and the song has begun. On the screen, two women dance in to the music in front of a gun-barrel background reminiscent of James Bond. The two watching men speak and Putin shoots an approving smile. One of the women begins to sing and the background between the two women changes between the gun barrel, where they are wearing professional outfits, and a scene in front of a waving Russian flag, in which they are wearing metallic silver futuristic outfits. Scenes of Putin the mystery man, and the two women are interspliced with actual video clips of Vladimir Putin as he does presidential duties, such as meeting with the Queen of England and addressing the nation, as well as exhibiting his personal strength at a Judo tournament. Interestingly enough, the girls of "Singing Together" are edited in to the background of almost all of these clips. At one point the camera zooms through a digital model of the Kremlin. At the end of the video, we see a clip of Putin walking through a crowd of people. In the meantime, our fake Putin and the mystery man are doing a complicated handshake. Finally, the two men leave the room and the video is over.

If we talk about this video as a piece of visual propaganda, it is obviously valuable to delve deeper into the use of imagery in the music video. Stylistically, the video is much like any euro-pop music video from the early 2000's, beautiful women dance and sing to upbeat music while doing costume changes. Within this modern framework, this video is, perhaps surprisingly, able to convey a message as convincing and embraced as the propaganda posters of the Revolution and Stalin era. The very first thing the video shows us is how in-control Putin is, and it continues to show is throughout the video. First, this man is waiting for Putin, who knows for how long. He drums his fingers as if to imply that he has been waiting on Putin for a while. This

shows us that Putin is powerful enough to make people wait for him. The film and the music only start completely when he is seated and ready. The second moment in the music video where we see the strength of Putin is when, in the middle of the meeting, he picks up the phone and calls President Bush. Not only does it show that he can interrupt a meeting to do what he wants, but it also implies that president Putin is so powerful he can get a hold of the President of the United States in his oval office from anywhere. Of course, the actual clips of president Putin interspersed throughout the film also show his power, much like the Soviet propaganda posters he is shown leading and addressing the people, but a unique moment of real Putinesque power is the video of him taking out an opponent in Judo. It shows that he not only has political or personal power, but physical power.

The music video also links Putin to the state itself. The girls dance in front of a Russian flag while singing about Putin throughout most of the video. This implies that an extreme love for Putin is patriotic, as if to say that Putin is almost if not as important as the state. Also, during one chorus the viewer zooms over the Kremlin. Of course this building has been around since ancient Russia, but it is one of the few institutions that links Imperial Russia, the USSR, and the Russian federation. Once again, this is an attempt to connect Putin to the state. This clip implies that Kremlin and Putin are one, a claim almost more extreme than that of the Revolutionary poster that connects Lenin to the Communist Party. Parties can change, but the Kremlin has been, and, barring catastrophe, will always be a central symbol to Russia itself.

The last main visual feature of the video is the attempt to make Putin look cool and modern. The first evidence we see of this is the bond reminiscent background that the girls are first dancing in front of. James Bond, of course, being one of the most masculine and suave figures in popular culture. By evoking the viewer's memory of him, it makes Vladimir Putin

seem like a modern, cool man. Another major way the video tries to make Putin seem cool is through the fact that the character Putin in the video obviously enjoys it. Who knows if Putin listens to electronic pop, but it is very doubtful that an older Russian politician who served in the KGB throughout the Cold War enjoys the same kind of music that teenagers and 20-somethings enjoy. Lastly, Putin is portrayed as cool at the end of the video when he does the complicated handshake with the mystery man. The real Putin, along with most adults of any country, would never do such a childish handshake, but it does make him seem young and hip.

As already stated, there are some similarities between this video and Soviet propaganda. Strength and ability to lead were two major points in the Stalinist era of propaganda. The equation of the leader and the state happened even before that with Lenin and the revolution. Taking this song one step further, one might consider this song not only a satire of Putin's popularity in the early 2000's, but also a satire of the conflation of the individual that took place in *plakati*. The ridiculous overstatement of Putin's qualities could just have easily have been made of Stalin's or Lenin's cult of personality. This modern piece of propaganda is different, however, in its appeal to the viewer to think of Putin as cool. That was never necessary before because there was never a need to do so. The desire for leaders to be seen as cool is a result of the late twentieth century. This was a slow progression within the politics of the West, but with the fall of the USSR in the beginning of this trend came and might go with Putin.

“VVP”: Hero Worship and a Link to History

Not all pieces of modern Russian visual propaganda are so well produced, well known in the West, or have such a rich history. The song “VVP”,¹²⁹ standing for Vladimir Vladimirovich

¹²⁹ Tolibdjhon Kurbankhanov, “BBП”, *SergeiRaevskii*, YouTube, last updated February 4, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcnQ9imDrWk>

Putin, seemed to come out of nowhere. The video was posted in February of 2012 by the YouTube user SergeiRaevskii. It features a previously unknown Tadjik singer, Tolbjon Kurbankhanov, driving around Russia praising Putin. In two short years, this video has gained almost 1.5 million views, has been subtitled in English, French, German, Chinese and Arabic, and has inspired its creator to post more music videos such as “Thank you, God, for Vladimir” and “Happy Anniversary, Mister President”.¹³⁰ The initial reaction among Russians and the world was mixed. Some viewed this song as one of the worst, most cloying tributes to president Putin that has ever been created, decrying it as an obvious piece of propaganda. Others saw it as a clever satire, reposting it as a satirical, sarcastic song, some calling it the best anti-Putin song ever created.¹³¹ However, nothing that Kurbankhanov has said in interviews with the press¹³² or in his other videos on YouTube¹³³ has ever given any reason to believe that this song is satirical, and the general consensus among the Russian media and Russian Internet users is that Kurbankhanov was genuinely praising president Putin. His later videos either show that he genuinely has a great deal of, almost obsessive, respect for Putin, or, after his first genuine video, he realized that he could gain fame off of his over-the-top love of Putin by focusing on him solely in his music.

The song itself is almost hyperbolic in its representation of what Putin has done for Russia. The lyrics translate to “VVP, saved the country/ VVP, he defends/ VVP, lifted Russia” and later, “VVP, savior of the people/ VVP, protects/ VVP, when he’s in power, secures

¹³⁰ SergeiRaevskii, “SergeiRaevskii’s Channel,” YouTube, last updated September 6, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/user/SergeiRaevskii?feature=watch>

¹³¹ Polina Chelpanova, “Толибджон Курбанханов,” Loudi, last updated February 11, 2013, accessed February 12, 2014, http://www.peoples.ru/art/music/pop/talibdjon_kurbanhanov/

¹³² REN TV, “Толибджон у Максимовской 25.02.12, РЕН ТВ,” *Gorandspb*, YouTube, last updated, February 25, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKV9CWxUsc0>

¹³³ Tolibdjhon Kurbankhanov, “Толибджон Курбанханов в Душанбе для GlobalStar.tv”, *SergeiRaevskii*, YouTube, last updated February 15, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdJLy4HSjaE>

stability”.¹³⁴ The verses enforce the idea that Putin is the savior of the country and the enforcer of its future in the world. Visually, this video is very simple. Kurbankhanov, in a suit and light jacket, sings to the camera in front of famous Russian landmarks like the Kremlin, the Duma Headquarters, The Cathedral of Christ the Savior, and the headquarters of Gazprom. He is also shown riding around Moscow in the back of a car looking serious. This is split up by pictures of the president performing his official duties, speaking with important people, and generally looking important and forceful. At the end of the music video, Kurbankhanov is joined on the bridge in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. With the Kremlin in the background, his two friends, playing an accordion and a balalaika, have a solo and are sent off while he sings the chorus one final time.

The visual aspect of this music video plays into the way we this piece works as propaganda in several ways. First, as Kurbankhanov travels around Moscow and sings about Putin in front of these landmarks, he connects them to his idealistic vision of Putin. Through this, we view the president not only as a great man but an integral part of the capital, and, therefore, Russia itself. He also shows Putin as a part of Russia itself through a perhaps looked over part of the video. At one point, a market flashes on the screen. The markets, of course, are an integral and unique part of Russia itself, so Putin is shown not only as a major part of Russia itself, but a people’s man, even if he is presented in the lyrics as “the savior of Russia” and “a godsend”. A final way that Putin is equated as Russia itself is through the choice of using traditional Russian instruments at the end. The viewer hears the accordion accompanying a balalaika in front of one of the most famous modern Russian churches. This allows the equation of the president with the ethnic history of Russia because Kurbankhanov uses instruments that are so uniquely Russian.

¹³⁴ Kurbankhanov, “ВВП”

This video also shows Putin as, not only strong and competent, but also one of the most special men in Russia history. His strength is shown by the photos interspersed in the video. Most are of Putin looking assertive, strong and threatening while doing his duties, often accompanied by the Russian flag on his desk. He is also shown laughing, smiling, and being likeable, like any good leader should with his people. Putting those two together, Kurbankhanov portrays Putin as a strong leader adored by his people. The final way Kurbankhanov shows Putin's strength and uniqueness is in the final scene. He sings about how Putin is the savior of Russia in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Though he seems a devout follower of God, and there is a good chance it wasn't done intentionally, this equates Putin as the Savior of the world, and maybe even the god of Russia.

This music video also has similar aspects as Soviet Russian Propaganda. Once again, we see the appeal to the strength of the leader, but also the equation of him to the state itself. The difference is in the production and the style. This music video is not artfully produced, nor is it stylistically well done. While the music is modern, the video is little more than Kurbankhanov singing in front of national land marks. Soviet propaganda producers were artists, and we can even consider the group "Singing Together" artists because of their use of style and presenting the topic in a novel way. Kurbankhanov is no artist, nor does he try to be. He is just a man who loves Putin.

"Russia Without Putin": Fear Mongering in Propaganda

Not all modern visual propaganda is music related, however. Some user-generated media can be very straight forward with little intended entertainment value. In 2011, a group was formed on the Russian Social media site VKontakte called "A Russia without Putin – a Russia

without a future”. This is an obvious reference to the opposition motto, “Russia without Putin”. The group,¹³⁵ having almost 34,000 members, opposed the anti-Putin camp because the opposition lacked any constructive ideas, and the group wanted stability in their country. A competition was held within the group to create a video that coincided with group’s manifesto.¹³⁶ A few videos were created in this competition, but perhaps the most bombastic and the one that has received the most attention, is “Russia without Putin – Apocalypse Tomorrow”.¹³⁷ In February of 2012, a day before “VVP” appeared, YouTube user Gernikh Ikov posted the video that would later receive almost 1 million views. The video begins “In Moscow the opposition chants ‘Russia without Putin’, but we want to explain to you what will happen if Putin was no more. What will happen to Russia without Putin?”. The video goes on to explain month by month what will happen without Putin, saying that government assets will be privatized into the hands of oligarchs, the nuclear arsenal will be handed over to the U.S., fascist groups will rise and the economy will crash. In the end, what little of the country that hasn’t been claimed by other countries is ruled by fascists, and Russia is thrust back into the dark ages. The video ends with the words “Russia without Putin, Vote”. All of these happenings are accompanied with their own image, sometimes with real historical video clips, sometimes with graphics, and sometimes with edited real photos.

A major message of the images in this video is Russia versus the West. The West, represented by presidents Merkel, Obama, and Sarkozy, first welcomes Russia as a modern democracy when Putin is not elected to the presidency. Then America takes away what could be

¹³⁵ Kirill Romashov, “Россия без Путина – Россия без будущего”, VKontakte, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://vk.com/club33995921>

¹³⁶ Kirill Romashov, “Конкурс в Группе”, VKontakte, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://vk.com/club33995921>

¹³⁷ Gernikh Ikov, “Россия без Путина – Апокалипсис Завтра,” YouTube, last updated February 3, 2012, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9-5NBaAEsl>

seen by slavophiles as Russia's one defense against the West and China, its nuclear missiles. As Russia devolves into a wasteland, the West refuses to involve itself and calls the situation in Russia a catastrophe. There are three factors within the argument against the West. One is the thought that they don't understand Russia fundamentally, shown by the congratulation about the democratic victory that later destroys the state. The second is that the West wants Russia to fail, shown by the US taking Russia's nuclear stockpile, and the final is that the West refuses to get involved in the trouble it causes, by standing back and letting the worst happen.

A second message in the images of this video is the fight against "Fake Russians". In the beginning of the video, the major players of the opposition are shown in direct contrast to Putin. They are portrayed as selfish, choosing power over the future of the country. They let Russia fall for their own benefit. The oligarchs are also seen as inherently selfish and un-Russian. Even though a sale of government assets to private owners is totally legal, they are seen as taking away the riches that belong to the Russian people for their own financial gain. Finally, the opposition politician Navalni is seen as a "Fake Russian" because he goes to the West and writes a book, profiting from the turmoil in Russia.

Finally, the underlying message of all of these images is the ultimate power of Putin. Without him, all of this bad stuff happens. What they are saying throughout the video is that Putin can stop fascists from taking over, stop the West from destroying the country, stop China and others from dividing Russia up, and stop the fake Russians from ruining everything. He is that strong and that powerful. He appears in the video only once, a picture of him speaking is used, and he is never characterized like everyone else in the video.

All of these aspects are also characteristics of Soviet propaganda. We see Russia versus the West throughout the revolution. The bourgeoisie is continually seen as attempting to tear apart Russia, and the bourgeoisie is a product of the West. The classic enemy of post-Stalin propaganda as the Cold War began was Russia against America and her allies. Fake Russians are also a classic feature of all Soviet propaganda. The whites were not true Russians, they were agents of the West. Any crime against the state was performed by someone who was not a true Russian. Finally, the strength and supremacy of the leader to stave off the threats of the modern world is a major part of any propaganda piece showing Stalin or Lenin. Without the great central leaders, disaster in Russia was and is shown as inevitable.

The First Time is Only For Love: Sexualization and Authority

User-generated propaganda does not have to be produced by an individual, nor does it have to be dark and serious. Once again, in February of 2012, three videos were posted on YouTube by user *perviirazpolubvi*¹³⁸ and an accompanying website was launched. Created by the PR firm Aldus Adv,¹³⁹ the ad campaign “*Pervii Raz tolko po Lubvi*”, translated as “the first time is only for love”, stated that its mission was to get more young people to vote.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, there is no evidence of Aldus Adv doing anything besides *Pervii Raz*. The creation of their website coincides with the publishing of the ads, and its deletion coincides with the end of the election. The only remnant of the agency is a VKontakte group with 2

¹³⁸ *Perviirazpolubvi*, “Канал пользователя *perviirazpolubvi*”, YouTube, last updated February 22, 2012, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/user/perviirazpolubvi>

¹³⁹ “Стиль”, *Первый Раз по Любви*, last updated May 10, 2012, accessed February 15, 2012, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120510004546/http://perviiraz.ru/style.html>

¹⁴⁰ “О проекте”, *Первый Раз по Любви*, last updated May 10, 2012, accessed February 15, 2012, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120510004546/http://perviiraz.ru/index.html>

followers,¹⁴¹ and a Twitter account that hasn't posted since March of 2012.¹⁴² The only hint of Aldus Adv's fate is a post on the Vkontakte page saying "What's the trouble? There would have been a budget." One can assume from this that Aldus Adv was a failed venture and not a government puppet.

Of course, getting young people to vote is an honorable goal that has been pursued in every democracy, but the reason the campaign received so much attention in 2012 is the racy nature of the ads. Known colloquially in the United States as "virgins love putin" each of the videos features a young woman worrying about her "first time". The titles show that the implication of the videos is sexual: "Innocent Girl Wants Her First Time",¹⁴³ "A Beautiful Woman Predicts her First Time",¹⁴⁴ and "A Girl's Revelation about her First Time".¹⁴⁵ Any of these titles could be found in a less reputable type of book and film store. The video further enforces the sexual implication. In each, a young girl speaks with an authority figure (a doctor, a therapist and a medium) and worries about her first time. The authority reassures her, saying that it is important to be safe, believe in, or to love the person. They reassure the girls, saying that it is good that their first time will be for love, and the camera pans to an image of Putin, whether it is on the cover of "Time Magazine", a tarot card, or a calendar. At the end of all the videos, the girl goes to a polling place and casts her vote. Finally an image of a smiling Vladimir Putin is shown, accompanied by the text "Vladimir Putin. The first time – only for love" and the videos end.

¹⁴¹ "Aldus Adv," Vkontakte, last updated October 29, 2012, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://vk.com/id187931866>

¹⁴² "Aldus Adv - @aldus_adv," Twitter, last updated March 12, 2012, accessed February 15, 2014, https://twitter.com/aldus_adv

¹⁴³ "Невинная девушка хочет первый раз," *perviirazpolubvi*, YouTube, last updated February 22, 2012, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxU-WUtza9c>

¹⁴⁴ "Красотка гадает на первый раз," *perviirazpolubvi*, YouTube, last updated February 22, 2012, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Noo0lzJILaM>

¹⁴⁵ "Откровения девушки про её первый раз," *perviirazpolubvi*, YouTube, last updated February 22, 2012, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mblzj21X0tU>

These videos are pretty simple visually. One is the authority figure. In all cases, we find a young inexperienced girl worrying about what to do and someone older and more experienced telling her what will and what should happen. They all direct her to the picture of Putin looking forceful and strong. The location further enforces the idea of an expert showing the young woman that Putin is the best choice for them. Two of the videos occur in a doctor's office, while the other happens in front of a crystal ball with magic cards. In the first two cases she can believe the men because they are professionals speaking in their professional places of work, while the girl can trust the medium because she has the unknown on her side.

The way the videos end is also visually important. Each ends with the girl going into a government building on Election Day looking totally reassured. Then the first thing the viewer sees is a picture of Vladimir Putin accompanied by his name. The words "The First Time – Only for Love" (love being represented by a heart). Of course, the heart is an attempt to reach young voters who tendily replace the word love for the symbol. However, it is not as simple as telling young people to vote. The implication here is that if you want to vote for someone you can love, vote for Putin.

The final feature is the idea of the virginal girl. Each of these girls is nervous, inexperienced and beautiful. This is meant to draw the viewers to the side of the young girl and to make them sympathize with them. From both their faces and their words, we can see that they are in love with whatever person they are talking about, he just happens to be president Putin. The transformation they undergo when they are reassured is also meant to convey the reliability of Putin. In the final scenes they are totally relaxed and have no qualms about voting for Putin, so we should not either.

There are huge differences between this video and what one would see in Soviet propaganda. Sex was never a selling point of Soviet era propaganda. Using sex to convince was considered Western and decadent. Furthermore, a mystic would have never been used in propaganda, as the USSR decried superstition and anything with roots in religion. Finally, doctors were hardly ever used as representatives of the people itself in propaganda posters. Soviet propaganda artists wanted to use laborers, soldiers and farmers to represent the people, not doctors. However, while they differed on these major points, there were a few similarities. The representation of young women as virginal and innocent was regular in all forms of media during the Soviet era. Also, reverence of a leader because he's dependable, can be believed in, and is strong and secure were themes of Soviet posters.

Conclusion

Though there is almost a century's difference between these two forms of media; however, one was created by a government agency that had clear aims in producing propaganda, while the other was created by unaffiliated groups, so there is a clear question of motive for this modern propaganda. In this case, the answer is clear: fame. In all of these cases, the artists used the popularity of Putin and the craze and confusion around his new cult of personality to gain views on the Internet or sales of their songs. The market is the definitive agent in the creation of new visual media propaganda. Though they have different styles and methods, there is clear overlap in imagery between the two eras of propaganda. Taking from methods honed in the twentieth century, the modern brand of propaganda has been able to take the foundation of the old and build on it in a way that appeals to the modern world. Young people in the modern world are seen as cynical and this outright, over the top propaganda makes them smile and laugh, but also keeps them talking, buying albums, and sending the message created to their friends all over

the world with the click of a button. While it is unclear whether this new form of propaganda is as effective as the old in changing minds, it is certainly more easily circulated among the populace. With social media, such as YouTube videos, one can see the rise and maybe even the next frontier in propaganda art.

Conclusion

The answers that can be gained from this thesis is that there are definite holdovers in every area of the Kremlin's new propaganda. However, each area is different in its adaptation of Soviet propaganda to fit the modern world. Furthermore, each area differs in its success.

In the first chapter, I posed the question of if the term cult of Personality can be applied to Putin. If we take a broader definition of a cult of personality, it certainly can. Putin has certainly manipulated the political sphere to a point where people face dire consequences if they disappoint or oppose him. Berezovsky faced years in exile, and Khodorkovsky spent years in jail and lost all of his assets. On the other hand, those who support Putin are handsomely rewarded. Patriarch Kirill has been handsomely rewarded for his support of Putin, as have pro-Putin politicians like Sechin. Furthermore, in this chapter we see how Putin creates his cult of masculinity. He has sold himself as a tender, masculine figure who has ties in Russian history. The special capitalist nature of his cult creates a ballooning figure that is even harder to dismantle. By using tried and true methods from the soviet era, and missing it with both new capitalist innovations and the nature of a market society, Putin has created a cult of personality that is stronger than ever.

The second chapter covered the pro-Kremlin youth group *Nashi*. It had major ties to Komsomol ideology and function, but outlived its function as a counter to the colored revolutions in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. In the end, it was unsuccessful in that it didn't create a long-lasting network of young people who could join as collaborators in Putin's Russia; however, its mere existence showed that the Putin administration could create a rabidly pro-Kremlin youth group in the Russian federation. Though *Nashi* failed, it is possible that the mere

ability of the group to operate in Russian society will inspire the Russian government to try again with another youth group.

Television was the most striking in the activity of the government to control the sphere. Government affiliated groups now control all of the main networks that produce news in Russia. This creates a situation similar to USSR television, in that only one viewpoint is being heard, but in some ways it is more dangerous. The saturation of news in Russia and the effectiveness with which they portray Putin is much more conducive to a cult of personality that television in the soviet era. What was a thorn in the side for USSR television producers, trying to portray their leaders as relatable, works in Putin's favor. He is easily shown as a strong but caring *muzhik*. However, the market still has a noticeable effect that might mitigate televised propaganda. More and more, Russian viewers are choosing entertainment channels over channels that constantly show news updates. Furthermore, more young Russians are going to the internet. Though the Putin administration has controlled television, viewers are finding a way to get around these controls.

Finally, political YouTube videos show the new frontier of Russian propaganda. The anonymity of the internet lends itself to the effectiveness of the propaganda, the low production costs and receptive audience are a further benefit of the medium. This form of propaganda shares these major features with *plakati*, and borrows features from them. However, they vary in effectiveness from video to video. Some become international phenomena, like "Takogo Kak Putin", but others are lost in the wide information gulf that is the Internet. Now that propaganda has found its way to YouTube, it is not likely to ever leave.

Despite the varying success of these spheres, they all share a deep connection and tradition with similar Soviet-era forms of propaganda. This aids, as they already have a framework in Russia with which to operate. What makes these cases even more exceptional is the way that the market has shaped them. Each one benefits from the new capitalist system, whether it helps it hide the true intentions of the author, create a self-perpetuating cycle, or adapt in ways that it couldn't in the Soviet sphere. One thing is for sure, propaganda is alive and well in Putin's Russia.

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