

Spring 5-22-2020

**PROPAGANDA: USSR AND US - COMPARING PROPAGANDA  
FROM THE US AND USSR PRODUCED FOR THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF PUBLIC APPROVAL FOR HYDRO-PROJECTS IN THE 1930S**

Wendolyn Judith Martinez  
wmartinez1@eagles.ewu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw\\_2020\\_posters](https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw_2020_posters)



Part of the [Comparative Politics Commons](#), [Infrastructure Commons](#), and the [International Relations Commons](#)

---

**Recommended Citation**

Martinez, Wendolyn Judith, "PROPAGANDA: USSR AND US - COMPARING PROPAGANDA FROM THE US AND USSR PRODUCED FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC APPROVAL FOR HYDRO-PROJECTS IN THE 1930S" (2020). *2020 Symposium Posters*. 54.

[https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw\\_2020\\_posters/54](https://dc.ewu.edu/srcw_2020_posters/54)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the 2020 Symposium at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2020 Symposium Posters by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jotto@ewu.edu](mailto:jotto@ewu.edu).

## ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union (USSR) came into power in the late 1910s tearing down the tsar regime in Eastern Europe. Known for its massive propaganda scheme and anti-United States (US) rhetoric, Soviet propaganda was engrained in history books throughout the western world. The United States continually denounced the massive use of propaganda in the Soviet Union through the regimes lifespan, from its beginning to its collapse. Unknown to the public of this era is that the United States contributed in similar practices of states sponsor artwork, photographs, music, and publications rebranded as promotional work instead of propaganda. For example, when building the Grand Coulee Dam in the state of Washington the US produced music and commissioned photographers in order to inspire hope during the great depression. Similarly, the USSR had a state sponsored magazine The USSR in Construction to document and show the public, and foreign nations, the monumental works the government was building in order to modernize the state. This project focuses on 4 separate case studies of public work projects from both states and the propaganda affiliated with each work. With a goal of identifying similarities and differences in each actors use of propaganda during the interwar period. Furthermore, this project will bring awareness to American audiences about its influences and use of propaganda on its public during the interwar period which duplicate USSR strategies and may be seen today.

Keywords: United State of America, U. S propaganda, Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, USSR propaganda, Propaganda, anti-west rhetoric, anti-Soviet rhetoric, hydro-projects, interwar period.

## OVERALL QUESTIONS AND GAP

Can the United States be implicated for producing propaganda like the Soviet union?

How can the propaganda of this era be defined? What was the goal of this propaganda?

## METHODS

Studied and gathered various primary and secondary sources such as documents, media, paintings, songs, and newsreels

## BACKGROUND

Propaganda is often associated with the mainstream term 'Big Brother' and may be defined as acts of influence to reach an over-arching political or social goal. The word and acts of propaganda usually take on a sinister connotation due to its more recent diverse history. Most of what we refer to today is a product of Cold War rhetoric where the public was led to believe frightful messages from the American and Soviet governments.

The ties to propaganda in Russia can be traced back to the rise of the Soviet Union and its infamous 'propaganda state,' a term created to define the use of influence and manipulation in order to hold political authority over the country's masses, which rose during the Soviets first decade of power. Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin (2011) highlights the journey of the Soviet Union propaganda machine and focuses on the difficulties they faced when attempting to establish "a mass indoctrinational system" (Brandenberger). With such an emphasis applied on propaganda during this time and continued through the fall of the Soviet Union, it is not a surprise that the current regime of Russia still employs these tactics on their public and even on the international stage.

Like the Soviet Union, the United States participated in propaganda use before the Cold War as seen in the promotion of various projects. Dr. Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted of Eastern Washington University introduced the notion that during this era propaganda was meant to inspire and gather support from the public and representatives in order to construct large public works projects in her book Rivers, Memory and Nation-Building. She touches briefly on the Tennessee Valley Authority, highlighting the use of pamphlets and rhetoric centered around the project by supports in order to gain congressional and public support to construct similar public works projects to aid the people of the United States (2015). This was popular during the era of the Great Depression in order to gain public support for New Deal projects and depict a sense of stability within the United States to the international community

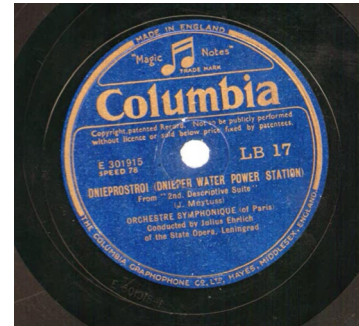
# PROPAGANDA: USSR AND US

COMPARING PROPAGANDA FROM THE US AND USSR PRODUCED FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PUBLIC APPROVAL FOR HYDRO-PROJECTS IN THE 1930S

WENDOLYN MARTINEZ, MCNAIR SCHOLAR – POLITICAL SCIENCE

Faculty Mentor: Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted, Ph.D.

Eastern Washington University Department of Political Science & International Affairs Program



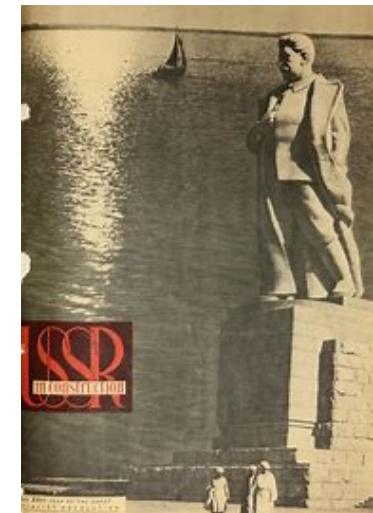
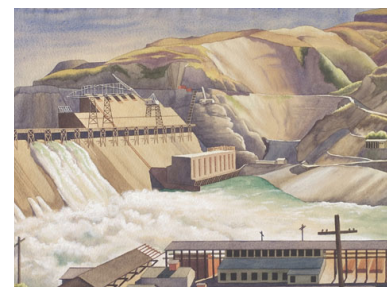
## DNIPER HYDROELECTRIC STATION

Produced by Columbia records in London, England the song "Dnieper Waterpower Station" is a powerful instrumental. The production of the song is said to be related to Soviet Socialist Realism, the practice of Socialist Realism in a Soviet style found in a variety of artwork and productions (Reid, 2001) which can be found in various propaganda dependent countries such as Mao-era China. The song can be categorized under the musical genre of futurism as it displays the vastness of the project and the ability of what the project was able to bring to the country.

Music is not the only tool the Soviets used, a newsreel named Men work to construct Lenin dam across the Dnieper River in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic released in 1930 highlights the construction of the dam. The rhetoric and media which was produced about and around this project only heightened the feeling of pride in the people providing a sense of being a part of something greater which would improve lives for generations beyond them. By exposing their citizens, and the world, to these growths the Soviet Union was achieving its goal of catching up to Western powers.

## MOSCOW VOLGA CANAL

In order to promote the rapid modernization in the Soviet Union and show case its monumental structures being constructed the government began publishing a propaganda magazine called The USSR in Construction. The magazine consisted of several publications depicting the construction, creation, or emphasis on several projects of parts of Soviet life. These issues consisted of the Moscow-Volga Canal, Soviet Cinema, Kiev, and the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station (Komarovskiy, USSR in Construction, 1930-1941). Grand gestures to modernizations and monumentalism can also be seen during the opening ceremony of the Moscow-Volga Canal in 1937 as the Soviet Union completed its second 5-year plan.



## GRAND COULEE DAM

Artist: Vanessa Helder  
Paintings commissioned by US Government

Helder's paintings were used to gain public interest in not only the construction of the Grand Coulee but for other major hydro-projects brought into the country by president Roosevelt's New Deal. She painted a total of twenty-two paintings with different subjects and landscapes. Her paintings highlight the relationship between people, their environment, and now technology which was brought in by the construction of the dam (Grieve, 2013)

## TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

In order to combat the criticism being received about the TVA, pamphlets were produced in order to display the improvement of life in the region which it was targeted towards. One of the pamphlets was named Towards an Electrified America which was created by the Electric Home and Farm Authority, an agency at the time that was under the United States government. The pamphlet contains a slogan seen on the back of the pamphlet, which reads "Electricity for All". It furthers the idea of electricity changing the lives of residents. One of the pages dives into the details about how electricity leads to healthier food and healthier, happier lifestyles because of the use of refrigerators brought on by the electricity brought by the TVA (Electric Home and Farm Authority, 1934).



## CONCLUSION

Regardless of a country's ideology, and whether they are considered allies, there often is strategies being used to influence their population. It maybe to get votes for representatives, or support for bills, acts, or budgets most times nothing will get done with the support of the people. Unbeknownst to the public this can be considered propaganda due to its intent to influence by the propagandist – their own government. Currently, the public is incredibly aware to even a single influence felt by an outside force, we can place blame on that due to massive propaganda schemes during the Cold War or even just shady representatives and mistrust of media outlets. Both which can be also tied to Cold War distrust and propaganda. The thing is, propaganda has surrounded us and will always surround us in a multitude of different forms. It's not only made to create distrust or malicious influence over a population, it's made for support and anything in that realm is propaganda.

This project focused on public works projects and it was seen in abundance. In the Soviet Union the state sponsored and publish most of the work which was coming out relate to the greatness of their projects and how it would change lives. In the United States, the government and private companies commissioned artist and musicians to promote their work to the public while simultaneously publishing work in order to gain congressional support to create more projects of this style. The public must realize, and be aware, of propaganda which romanticizes projects whether it be from the 1930s or today with modern state projects currently in construction to

## REFERENCES

- Brandenberger, D. (2012). The Propaganda State's First Decade. Cambridge: Yale University Press.
- Electric Home and Farm Authority. (1934). Towards an Electrified America. Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- Grieve, V. (2013). Celebrating "Progress": Art, Ambivalence, and Vanessa Helder's Grand Coulee. Western Historical Quarterly, 245-270.
- Meitus, Y., & Mosolov, A. (1934). Steel Foundry/ Dnieprostroi [Recorded by O. S. Paris]. London, England.
- Men work to construct Lenin dam across the Dnieper River in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (1930). [Motion Picture].
- Reid, S. (2001). Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The Industry of Socialism Art Exhibition, 1935-41. The Russian Review, 153-184.
- U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. (1933, May). Tennessee Valley Authority Act. Retrieved from Our Documents: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=65>
- Zeisler-Vralsted, D. (2015). Rivers, Memory and Nation-Building. New York: Bregghahn.