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Propaganda: USSR and US Comparing Propaganda from the USSR and US Produced for the Advancement of Public Approval for Hydro-Projects in the 1930s

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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 machine and anti-United States (US) rhetoric, Soviet propaganda was engrained in history books throughout the western world. The United States contributed to the regime 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 sponsoring artwork, photography, 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 photographs in order to inspire hope and pride. Similarly, the USSR had a state sponsored magazine The USSR in Construction to document and show the public, and foreign nations, the monumental work the government was building in order to modernize the state. This project focuses on a 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 will bring awareness to American audiences about its influences and use of propaganda. Furthermore, this project will bring awareness to American audiences about its influences and use of propaganda. 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-industrialization system” (Brandenburg). 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 supporters 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 in the 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 furthered 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).

Method

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 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-industrialization system” (Brandenburg). 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 supporters 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.

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