

Persuasive way of communicational propaganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines communication fundamentals of propaganda. Using meta-analytical method shows that propaganda is one of the main forms of persuasive communication. Propaganda as persuasion of the ability to express an opinion appears in the 20th Century as consequence of the formation of nations and urban concentrations and of the appearance of a new technique, which lead to spreading the prints, the word and the image. Contemporary propaganda is characterised by improving the old types of propaganda and the emergence of new types.

Keywords: persuasive communication; persuasion; manipulation; propaganda

1. INTRODUCTION

J.-M. Domenach sees in propaganda a "new technique", which is added to social means used to make a cause triumph, means which are related to rhetoric, poetry, music, of all traditional forms of fine arts. This "technique" uses means which are "made available to it by science" (Domenach, J.-M., 2004, p. 19), "in order to convince and lead the masses". It represents a "coherent, coherent technique, which can be systematised to a certain point". According to Domenach, propaganda "is like advertising", by the fact that it also tries "to create a form to confirm the opinions" (Domenach, 2004, p. 20). Moreover, it uses part of the means which this has provided to it. They would be distinguished by the fact that propaganda must have a political goal, and advertising a commercial goal; the needs or preferences aroused by publicity would target a particular product, while propaganda "suggests and imposes believes" and reflexes that often change the psychism, behaviour and even religious or philosophical beliefs. Propaganda influences the fundamental attitude of the human being. According to Domenach (Domenach, 2004, p. 20), political propaganda "is not actually a science that could be concentrated into formulas". One of its characteristics is that it uses the physiological, psychic and unconsciousness mechanisms, of which many are little known. Another one is that its principles originate both in empiricism and in science: advice from experience, general indications. A negative characteristic would be that in the absence of the ideas, talent or audience, this approach is no longer "propaganda, but literature" (Domenach, 2004, p. 2).

In other words, authentic propaganda is more than just literature. Failure of propaganda leads to pure literature. On the other hand, it borrows major elements of modern science, for directing the soul. Domenach (Domenach, 2004, p. 21) concludes that "propaganda is a way of persuasion of the masses, the style of which changes depending on the situation". It is "and undertaking organised to influence and guide the opinion" (Domenach, 2004, p. 23). According to Ch. U. Larson (Larson, 2003, p. 55), "propaganda is a campaign of mass persuasion".

Although he considers propaganda a way of persuasion, Domenach does not take the distinction all the way to the end, because according to him, the true propagandist is an "individual who wants to convince" (Domenach, 2004, p. 64). As a way of persuasion, there is no way for propaganda to also be a way of conviction (Popa, 2010; Arsith & Draganescu, 2011; Hintea, 2013). As examples of confusion concerning propaganda, we name other two ones. Jowett and O'Donnell (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992, p. 3) consider that propaganda would be "the same as information, a subcategory of persuasion". Propaganda is a subcategory of persuasion, but information is not! Deirdre Johnson (Larson, Ch. U., 2003, p. 398) says that there would be three crucial elements in propaganda: "keeping the secret, manipulating and short-circuiting the logical judgement by using emotional arguments and suggestion": Manipulation is not an element of propaganda, it is a form of persuasion, just as propaganda is!

2. ROOTS AND EVOLUTION OF PROPAGANDA

The belief of Domenach is that "propaganda exists since there is political rivalry, meaning since the beginning of the world" (Domenach, 2004, p. 18). A sort of propaganda campaign leads Demosthenes against Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander Macedon). Propaganda action may be called the recursive effort of Cicero, having Catiline as object.

We need to say it tersely: symbols, slogans, images and key-ideas of propaganda are systematically used over history without a propagandistic consciousness. In his *Histoire de la Propagande*, Jacques Ellul concludes that "in the political universe, there have been phenomena comparable (or identical) to what we nowadays call propaganda" (Ellul, 1962, p. 5). Among the components of it we would say the proto-propaganda, beautification of books is part thereof. Related to dictatorships, the rhetoric of monuments is not always and strictly related to propaganda, although in some cases, such as Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin and Mao, the rhetoric of monuments is propagandistic undertaking. Another element of the propagandistic potency is the ancient folk celebrations, the current national holidays. Life as a feast, propagandistic life between bread and circuses is specific to Ancient Rome. Here, along with the continuity of the collective life, the germs of propaganda directed outwards, propaganda directed inwards and political propaganda are reinforced. Romans particularly appeal to propaganda directed inwards as propaganda for integration. In this sense, they operate with myths (Vlăduțescu, 2006; Vlăduțescu, 2013; Iorgulescu, 2014). The myths of integration which are now substantiated are: myth of Rome, myth on founding of Rome, myth of founding the historical signification of Rome, myth of the republic, myth of the army as guarantor of Rome.

The further increase of the Roman Empire shall provide force to these myths and shall also have among the supports the propaganda of imposing the myth of Rome and myth of the Roman. The myth of Rome has a perimeter delimited by the following points: the divine origin of Rome, the invincible character of Rome (justification of the defeat for the defeated),

the democratic feature of Rome, liberating vocation of Rome (Rome frees the nations from tyrannies). The constitutive features of the Roman myth are: the cult of the country, courage, virtuosity, devotion, concern for the public wellbeing. The Roman myth is configured and propagated especially by Augustus, Vergilius and Titus Livius (Ellul, 1962, p. 24). On the other hand, the myths for integration found their dissemination via leaflets which circulated in Rome and the celebrations "bread and circuses" where the power of Rome was glorified. So far, lacking the impact allowed to it by the means of communication, propaganda is partial and discontinuous. Propaganda can satisfy its desiderate of continuity and media coverage only along with the effervescence of the French Revolution of 1789 and with that of the reign of Napoleon.

The Middle Ages of the proto-propaganda (we say) is presided by the papacy. No propaganda is still directed inwards. With Gregory XV, the concept of propaganda is established and propaganda directed outwards is imposed. It may be said that propaganda is imposed as a propaganda to the outward. The propaganda to the inward also remains particularly powerful. Propaganda makes now its first victims. The inquisition relies in "*Propaganda Fide*" on the absence of witnesses, on the abrogation of a right of defence and the obligation of proving the innocence. The inquisition shall be an introduction to the work of Hitler and Stalin. J. Ellul names this inquisitorial procedure of conviction without evidence a propaganda of terror. It is acquired both by the judgement itself, and by the popularisation of the execution: an infamous cross isolates the convicted, follows an auto-da-fé with an aura of legend, accompanied by confessing the guilt, as well as by the public retraction of what the inquisitor required. "And yet it moves" is an anti-propagandistic regret.

The first theorist of propaganda is Niccolò Machiavelli. In "The Prince", a few of the techniques of propaganda are exposed: reliance on appearances ("you must take care of the appearances, because the people judge by appearance"), installation of beliefs ("to govern means to make people believe") and maintaining a good image.

With Louis XIV (the Sun King) propaganda of prestige is typologically imposed. Now, Versailles is the centre of the world, it is here that the label is established. The celebrations, feasts, dazzling luxury come to be propagandistic, for they speak about the greatness and glory of the King of France.

The form of the propaganda of prestige that is directed outwards is called by J. Ellul a sociological propaganda. This is made visible by exporting the prestige (Borowski, 2013; Borowski, 2014). The type of propaganda is "the assembly of manifestations by means of which a society tries to integrate therein a maximum number of individuals, to unify the behaviour of its members according to a model, to diffuse their own life-style to the outside and thus to impose themselves to other groups" (Ellul, 1962, p. 76). The sociological propaganda expresses the entire group, and its influence is located rather at the level of the life-style than at the level of the opinion, and one or several political propagandas may be expressed therein.

During the French Revolution and to Napoleon, based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people and national sentiment, propaganda becomes continuous, organised and sustainable. The need for propaganda now appears, and in virtue thereof, the propagandistic approach reaches all areas and tend to form and modify all that is opinion. New myths shape the public space: the myth of the republic, the myth of people's sovereignty, the myth of the citizen and country exaltation.

With Napoleon, the object of propaganda is no longer a doctrine, but a man. Now, by benefiting from the progresses of the pattern, the cult of personality is established. Napoleon

not only he was not alien to propaganda, he used a military propaganda. He was fully aware of the Organon by means of which leaders endear themselves. He understood well how statesmen are admired. He knew the propagandistic ins and outs by which any government is required to acquire the consent of the public opinion in order to keep the power. As Napoleon showed, it is not enough to do the good to be right, "the ruled still need to be convinced." He also emphasised that force is based on consent, meaning that governing is nothing without people's consent (Apud Domenach, 2004, p. 18). The Napoleonic propaganda starts from the army and arrives in school, church, it covers the public market. The press reflects the ceremonies, luxury, architecture and movements of the enemies of France: Napoleon is always at the centre. This is the model of the state propaganda. Hitler, Stalin, Mao were to take a step forward enthralling – or joining – the propaganda for a doctrine with the propaganda for a man. It may be noticed that by means of propaganda, especially the statesmen, dictators, politicians have tried to win and maintain others' attachment to their person and to their system of domination and governance.

In the history of propaganda, several eras may be delimited: Ancient Era, the Middle Ages, Modern Era (1789 – 1914) and the contemporary period (after the First World War). The historical evolution of propaganda is accompanied by a typological evolution.

Albert Thibaudet said that in literature, the 20th Century begins in 1914. Regarding the propaganda, the 20th Century begins in 1917, with Lenin. Due to the expansion of the media, in this century propaganda become total, meaning it draws all means into the propagandistic activity, it aims all environments and moves towards the entire geographical area of the world. No segment of the public remains outside the intentions to influence.

Propaganda had a merit in the establishment of Bolshevism and in Hitler's ascent to power. It was decisive in China's transition to communism, where it had a more important role than even Mao's troops.

The Leninist propaganda is ideologically deeply anchored. With Lenin, the communist ideology makes its propaganda, as with Hitler, where the Nazi ideology makes its propaganda. Politics, ideology and propaganda become one. Propaganda engages the press fully, shapes the cultural industry, impregnates the school, the army, the church, the architecture, the entire public opinion (Seceleanu, 2008; Cojocaru, 2010; Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2011). Culture and civilisation are conquered by propaganda: propaganda is total, propaganda becomes a policy. This total propaganda is political propaganda.

J.-M. Domenach considers that political propaganda is one of the dominating phenomena of the 20th Century and that the great troubles of the era, the communist revolution and Bolshevism could not be imagined without it. Due to propaganda, Lenin was able to establish the Bolshevism, and Hitler was able to take the power and achieve in wars the victories which led him straight to the heart of the U.S.S.R. The two have been "two geniuses of propaganda and both of them proclaimed the supremacy of this modern army" (Domenach, 2004, p. 17).

The Bolshevik propagandistic approach is based on the axiom that "the essential is the agitation and propaganda in all social categories". The Bolsheviks shall create the concept of agitator. Agitators shall be the spearhead of propaganda, road openers for propagandists. Lenin wrote – did not write a page in the history of disinformation: this is debatable. Instead, he has thoroughly inscribed the history of propaganda. In his case, we encounter devices which come into the content of what we call the message principle of frontal non-contradiction: "Tell them what they want to hear" (Apud Volkoff, 1997, p. 71) and "We shall sell them the rope with which they can hang themselves". Propaganda is afraid of the truth. It advances a truth lacking courage. When it seduces, mythicises, when it lies or fantasises, it

does all this with the fear of truth. Even accidentally it does not want to bring the public on a path of truth. Lenin considered that “telling the truth is a bourgeois prejudice”. As such, the truth should not be sought, the objective must be justice. In Russian, “truth” is designated by two terms: “istina” is the truth considered in the contrariety relation with the lie, and *pravda* is the truth with the meaning of justice. *Pravda*, the newspaper founded by Lenin did not claim to tell the truth, but that it established the justice. The Leninist sophism of justice is to capitalise the more pronounced relativism of justice to the detriment of the relativism of truth. There may be absolute truth (e.g. mathematical truths), but there is no absolute justice. In the dialogue *Euthyphron*, Plato showed that in what concerns the justice and rightfulness, there is no unit of measurement. Lenin thought that since people naively become attached to heavy words such as truth and justice, they must be used to please them (“to hear what they want to hear”). He considers that, taking into account the fact that the class fight is continuous, the propaganda must also be continuous (Siminică & Traistaru, 2013; Traistaru & Avram, 2014). The goal of propaganda must be the permanent indoctrination of the masses. The actors of propaganda were the agitators.

The Hitlerite propagandistic undertaking is established based on the conviction that propaganda brings the power and makes world domination possible. If Lenin and Stalin illustrate a model of a peacetime propaganda, Goebbels is the prince of war propaganda. Vladimir Volkoff characterises the latter as a “great tribune of the word and skilful user of the radio”, “a propagandist whom constantly and cynically used the lie” (Volkoff, 1997, p. 63).

Goebbels (“the little doctor”) is assigned with the apothegm “Propaganda has nothing in common with the truth anymore”, because “a lie repeated a thousand times remains a lie, a lie repeated a million times becomes truth” (Apud Volkoff, 1997, p. 63). Let us notice here the consciousness of applying the principle of repetition in propaganda. After he notices the role of the lie at Goebbels, Volkoff draws the conclusion that in reality, it was not the lie that prevailed in his program, but the eruption of volcanic passions, instigation of anger explosions. Above all, “the little doctor” relied on cold seduction. By capitalising the emotional side, the masses were set in motion, their hatred and desperation were organised with a cold calculation. According to Goebbels, the purpose of propaganda was not to be intelligent, but to ensure the success, because the message transmitted to the masses generally does not matter within the type of persuasion, it does not import the transmitted theory, but something beyond it, adhesion of the masses. In order to get the consent of the masses, the most efficient means are those based on appearance, not on truth. The propagandistic adhesion is mainly obtained by operations of seduction and appeal to myths (let us recall here the Nazi myth of the Aryan being, the myth of the Roman, the myth of the French revolutionary citizen in 1789), and in the subsidiary, by lie and fiction. In any case, in propaganda, the lie serves the seduction and fiction serves the myth. “The essence of propaganda, shows Goebbels, is to gain the beings for an idea, in an intimate and alive way, so that they would end up giving themselves in to it and not being able to give it up anymore” (Apud Volkoff, 1997, p. 63).

We should note that Hitlerite propaganda had two stages: uprooting and replanting. Uprooting was done by operations of seduction and establishment in the environment of the myth of Germany and Aryanism, and replanting was done by means of the lie and fiction, implanting the new ideas of fighter. The uprooting arsenal consisted of parades, flags, drums, torches, Hitlerite salute, shouts of *Sieg Heil* chanted out loud. The implantation toolkit consisted of providing social axioms: ethnic cleansing, fight to the end for a Great Germany, the sacrifice for the glory of the Reich.

3. CONCLUSION

In contemporary, propaganda's specificity is the Globalisation of sending its message through media-type communications. Horizontal propaganda is characterised by dimming the contrast between propagandist and target-group. One may say it is based on the equality of group members. Every individual makes propaganda and is object of propaganda, within a global process of influence, support, promotion and exposure to the actions of others.

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