

WORD AND WORK OF THE NPA: SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN AFRICA DURING THE COLD WAR

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the analysis of the propagandistic and disinformative activities of the „Novosti” Press Agency (NPA) in the African countries in the 1960s-1980s. The research is based mainly on archival materials that reveal the strategy and tactics of the main Soviet tool of the information warfare, the close relationship of this „public” organization with the CC CPSU and KGB. The main tasks of the NPA in Africa were: the creation of the positive image of the USSR as of the expresser and protector of the former colonial countries’ interests, the informational support of the states of „socialist orientation”, anti-Western propaganda, the publication of the beneficial materials on behalf of the local authors in the African mass media. In conclusion, there is a finding that the NPA was an important element of the state party machine and executed the political order of its leadership not disdaining the methods that are more suitable for the state security services.*

Keywords: Press Agency „Novosti”, Africa, propaganda, counter-propaganda, disinformation, KGB.

For any state, the popularization of its foreign policy goals and intentions, domestic policy, lifestyle, cultural and scientific achievements is important and necessary. Every state performs its propagandistic function at the global and/or regional levels to the best of its ambitions and material resources. However, the activities of the Soviet Union in this area for all time of its existence is a phenomenon that goes beyond the generally accepted norms of the state self-promotion—the propaganda became the end in itself for it.

Confessing the materialistic and atheistic doctrine, Soviet communists at the same time were the absolute idealists that thought with help of the illusory images ideas and concepts. While rejecting the religion and fighting with it, they, consciously or unconsciously, were creating their own ideology in the image and likeness of the Christian faith and the organizational forms of the Communist cult were repeating the Church organization in many respects. It is not surprising because the Communists were not the space aliens that possessed the unique system of ideas; their mentality was formed within the framework of the Christian civilization. Besides, the Communist doctrine was to be perceived by „*the masses*” and therefore it had to correspond with their spiritual needs and stereotypes of the consciousness. It was necessary to replace the old religion with the new one, and that was done in the USSR.

The works by Marx became the „Holy Scripture” and Lenin became the prophet of the doctrine. The holy tradition was formed by the documents of Comintern, party congresses and plenums. Paradise was made mundane and replaced with the future communism, which being the ideal social system was the substitution of the Kingdom of God at the same time. The real hell was the world of capitalism, where the workers’ souls and bodies were subjected to tortures. However, for the real or imaginary domestic apostates from the faith, the hell existed in the more concrete form-in the form of the Gulag. The leader of the forces of evil, the enemy of the salvation of mankind, the source of all the ills and misfortunes was the new devil-imperialism.

The class struggle became the driving force of the historical development instead of the divine Providence; and the predetermination of the processes and events in the human society was determined by the firm law of the socio-economic formations’ change that established the fatalistic character of the Communist doctrine. Armageddon was interpreted as the last battle between socialism and capitalism in the form of the world war until N. S. Khrushchev shifted the emphasis from the military solution of the problem of good and evil to the peaceful competition between them with the known result. The crossed Hammer and Sickle became the symbol of faith instead of the Cross. The role of the saints was plaid by the prominent revolutionaries of different countries and epochs that especially pleased the liberation of the workers with their lives. Their numerous hagiographies were printed in the USSR and the book series „Life of Remarkable People” and „Ardent Revolutionaries” were specially created for this purpose.

Party secretaries and functionaries formed a special, hierarchically-organized corporation of ministers of the Communist faith; they possessed the special status and performed the cultic functions alike the Church clergy. The places of realization of the Communist cult were the Kremlin Palace of congresses, local houses of the political education, „Red corners” in factories, institutions and collective farms, „Lenin’s rooms” in the army units. In such places, the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, the members of the Politburo of the CC CPSU successfully replaced the icons.

The role of the Ecumenical councils was performed by the International meetings of Communist and workers’ parties, where the dogmatic, political and other problems were discussed, and heresies in the Communist movement were condemned. The Ideological department of the CC CPSU and the local party commissions that

conducted the investigation of the cases of apostates and held the party court became the „Holy Inquisition”. As the form of confession the self-criticism, during which the adherents had to admit their mistakes and misconceptions, was pronounced. The Communist organization had its own „Index librorum prohibitorum”-the list of the prohibited books, which included thousands of titles.

The Communist religion had its own Holy places that were connected with various events of the Communism history and the acts of the revolutionaries, its own memorabilia, holy relics (the bodies of Lenin and Stalin in Mausoleum) that were considered as the objects of worship, its own holidays etc.

A question occurs: what was the God in this idealistic system? It seems that the God was the Word. The Soviet communist civilization was mainly verbal; the faith in the almighty power of the word constituted its base. It was manifested in the sacralization of the texts of the „fathers” of Communism, ritualization of the party leaders’ speeches and their mandatory citation, mass belief in the magical power and the truth of the printed word, in the mystical fear of the words that negated the core values of Communism. The words were compounded in slogans that „decorated” the walls of the residential buildings, factories, institutions. Such slogans and appeals as „*Glory to the CPSU*”, „*The People and the Party United*”, „*Communism-the Future of Humanity*” were placed on the special huge structures, fences, poles, banners that were carried by the demonstrators during the Communist holidays. The words „*LENIN*” and „*CPSU*” flew in the sky formed by the military aircrafts.

The words said aptly and in time could raise a man to the top of the state and party government. Because of „*dangerous*” words one could lose his career, freedom and even life. Not for nothing Stalin was considered as a consummate linguist in addition to all his merits, and his work *Marxism and the Questions of Linguistics* was studied in obligatory order by the entire adult population. Verbal fetishism was typical for other party leaders and ideologists as well. The certain word order and word definitions in the party’s programmes and documents of the congresses meant a lot for the destiny of the country and of the whole world.

It seems that the economic basis of the Soviet civilization had no an independent character and was subordinated to the Word. All achievements in the field of the material production, real and imagined, turned into the words with the aim to prove the truth of the Idea to the citizens of the state and to the world.

In accordance with the party Synod's opinion, it was necessary to bring the True Word to the workers of all countries to accelerate the onset of universal communism. As the result, the desire for change that overcame all difficulties was supposed to appear and the perceived the Truth nations were supposed to destroy the abode of the imperialistic devil. It was the basic idea of the Communist proletarianism. It was aimed at the whole world, but the main objects were Africa, Asia and Latin America-the vulnerable periphery of the bourgeois world. Of course, not only idealism was the driving force behind the global propaganda campaign. During the years after the Second World War the engagement of the developing countries and their support of the Soviet foreign policy in the UN became the meaningful aspect. The same task was in front of the Western block. That is why the Cold War should be considered not only as the confrontation of the USSR and West, but as the planetary phenomenon, as the global Cold War as it was called by A. Westad.¹

The external propaganda, which was actively conducted by both sides, became the effective weapon in this war. There are numerous definitions of the phenomenon of propaganda. Stanley Cunningham defines propaganda as „*inherently profoundly unethical state of affairs*”. It distorts the truth to manipulate our minds, prejudices and beliefs; it provides evidences selectively and devalues such highest intellectual manifestations as reflexivity and analysis.² Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell understand propaganda as „*the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognition, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist*”.³ The emphasis on the fact of the manipulation of the people's consciousness in the interests of the certain groups is typical for all definitions of propaganda in Western political science. The Soviet understanding of propaganda was different. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* defined the Communist propaganda as „*a scientifically based system of spiritual activity developed by the Communist party. The distribution of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and policy with the goal of educating, nurturing and organizing the masses is implemented in the process of propaganda under the leadership of the Communist party*”.⁴ Hence, the Soviet propaganda, unlike the bourgeois one, does not manipulate the masses'

¹ A. Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

² S. Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction*, Westpoint, CT: Praeger Publishing, 2002, pp. 98 -125.

³ Garth S. Jowett, V. G. S. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Los Angeles, SAGE, 2015, p. 7.

⁴ *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Moscow, Soviet encyclopedia, V. 21, 1975, p. 273.

consciousness, but develops it to the understanding of the personal interests connected with the construction of communism. It was about the peoples of foreign countries as well.

Materials and methods of the research

The Soviet foreign policy propaganda was the complex and multidimensional phenomenon that included its visible part (distribution of printed materials, broadcasting in the foreign countries etc.) and secret part as well (covering of the secret intelligence operations, and so on). That is why the main research method is the work with the archival materials kept in the Storage Center for Contemporary Documentation (SCCD) that was formed in 1991 on the bases of the archival institutions of the CC CPSU. In 1992 the authorities of New Russia intended to hold the trial over the CPSU and submitted the secret documents relating to various aspects of the work of the state party institutions for the narrow a narrow circle of researchers. At that time the author had an opportunity to learn the interesting for him materials that were used in this article. In 1999 SCCD was renamed „Russian State Archive of Contemporary History” (RSACH) and the vast majority of the materials were removed from public access. The materials of the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (FPA RF) were also used for the study of the interaction Soviet embassies in African countries with the structures of the NPA.

The materials of the African press were used during the analysis of the Soviet propaganda. The accounts of the described events given by the eyewitness-former employees of the NPA and of the special services of the USSR and the USA-are of a certain value for the understanding of the specifics of the propaganda machine work. Propagandistic and disinformative activities of the Soviet Union naturally did not remain without attention of its main opponent in the Cold War. The reaction of the USA authorities and samples of documents on this subject are contained in the reports of the American government agencies.

The involvement of the wide range of sources, most of which is published for the first time, allows to understand the real character of the activities of the main propagandistic institution and the great role, which that was given by the Soviet ruling class to the foreign propaganda.

The results of the research

The think tank of propaganda abroad was the International department of the CC CPSU, where the strategy, tactics and concrete actions implemented by various organizations and institutions were developed. Novosti Press Agency (NPA) played one of the leading roles in the huge propaganda attack on the developing countries.

Until 1961, the foreign propaganda was pursued by Sovinformburo—a halfly closed and dubious for the foreigners organization. The NPA was created on the bases of it. A touch of respectability was given to the new organization because Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries became its founding members. However, its real founder was the Central Committee of the CPSU that, in its decision made 5 January 1961, entrusted the NPA with *„the preparation and distribution propaganda and counter-propaganda materials abroad through the foreign press, informational agencies, radio and television; publishing of magazines, newspapers, brochures, booklets and other literature abroad; gathering of information in the foreign countries”*.⁵ Thus, the tasks of the NPA included open propaganda as well as intelligence activity. The last one implied the presence of the officers of KGB in the Agency structures. Being the officer of KGB, Stanislav Levchenko worked undercover as a journalist in Japan.⁶ A former senior official of the NPA Valery Morozov reports that under the „cover” of the NPA the officers of KGB and GRU worked. *„And it was considered obvious and natural. War is war”*.⁷

The both sides used similar tools in this war. CIA veteran Victor Marchetti and a former employee of the US State Department John Marks attested that since its Foundation until the early 1970s the CIA spent more than 1 billion dollars for propaganda that was mainly at foreign countries, to promote the interests of the USA. *„Sometimes this means simply telling the truth to an audience (called „white” propaganda); others times a mixture of truth, half-truth, and slight distortions is used to slant the views of the audience („grey” propaganda); and, on occasion, outright lies („black” propaganda”) are used, although usually accompanied for credibility’s sake by some*

⁵ *Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RSACH)*, Fond 5, The apparatus of the CC CPSU (1935-1991), inventory 33, case 208, sheet 75.

⁶ R. Shultz, R. Godson, *Dezinformatsia, 1984. Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*, New York, Pergamon Brassey’s, 1984, p. 179.

⁷ V. Morozov, *From „Soviet information bureau” and the NPA via RIA „Novosti” to „Russia Today”*. www.valerymorozov.com, accessed on 06.06.2017.

truths and half-truths”.⁸ The soviet colleagues from the KGB and the NPA, as it seems, had a narrower range of colors at their disposal.

The responsible mission needed the appropriate executors. They were trained mainly in the Institute of Oriental Languages at Moscow State University (IOL MSU), which was renamed the Institute of Asia and Africa at MSU in the early 1970s. There the students received not only linguistic, but the cross-cultural training as well. „*The personnel selection was performed by the proper departments of the institutions, NPA, CC CPSU, KGB, etc. The students were guided from the first course evaluating and examining them. Any mistake in the student years, a little rottenness, a scandal closed the path in the NPA. And once in the NPA, you knew that you were in the elite. The understanding how lucky you are comes only after you have entered the NPA atmosphere and started to work*”,-reports the enthusiast of propaganda V. Morozov.⁹ Indeed, the specifics of the work implied the decent by Soviet standards salary, foreign trips behind the „iron curtain” and the purchase of Western goods for earned abroad currency „cheques” in the specialized stores „Berezka”.

Unlike the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) that was considered a governmental organization and forced to show some restraint in propaganda, the NPA was more freely the choice of the means and the themes. The decision of CC CPSU within the NPA in the end of 1961 created the Main Editorial of Special Materials for „*systematic work on the preparation of the instigated, disinformative and counter-propagandistic materials, introduced through the appropriate special channels*”.¹⁰ Though, NPA’s functions were not confined to the verbal interventions. It is confirmed by Yuri Bezmenov (Thomas Schuman), the officer of the KGB and the NPA that escaped to the West in 1970: „*On direct orders from KGB superiors or through the KGB senior staff within Novosti employers of APN may perform the following functions: the spread of disinformation among both Soviet and foreign media and diplomatic representatives; opinion probes and intelligence gathering among foreign diplomats and VIP’s; the screening of human material, to be recruited by KGB, among foreign delegations and guests of Novosti; character assessment of the same; surveillance of both domestic and foreign suspects and/or potential recruits; and reference and research of specific subjects related to foreign media, public and political life in certain countries*”.¹¹ Like many others workers of the „invisible front”, Y.

⁸ V. Marchetti, J. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, New York, Knopf, 1974, p. 145.

⁹ V. Morozov, *From „Soviet information bureau”*.

¹⁰ RSACH, F. 5, inv. 3, c. 208, sh. 47.

¹¹ T. Schuman, *World Thought Police*, Los Angeles, NATA ALMANAC, 1986, p. 16.

Bezmenov had no illusions about his mission. „*We seldom had illusions about the true nature of our activity: we could easily observe the horrible results of it. For this reason some of us would be burdened with guilt, and seek refuge in cynicism or in the accumulating of possession, or in sex, alcohol, and drugs*”.¹²

Recently appeared and determining their place in the world African states were considered the priority objects of the soviet propaganda. However, the difficulties caused by the lack of experience with the African audience appeared immediately. That is why in March 1963 CC decided to discuss specially the question of propaganda in Africa and instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had already accumulated some experience, to prepare the materials for the discussion. The disadvantages of the Soviet propaganda were pointed out in the Note by the Press Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Central Committee: the low availability for Africans, the lack of consideration of the countries' peculiarities (for instance, antimonarchist materials were sent in the Kingdom of Morocco), excess of comments and lack of the actual material. For its reinforcement Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested, among other things, „*to pay serious attention to the demonstration of the advantages of the non-capitalist way of development for the underdeveloped countries*”, „*to expose the bonded character of help*” of the Western countries, etc. Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoped to lull the cautious attitude of the authorities of many African countries with help of publication of books and brochures with the certain content in „*progressive publishing houses*” of Great Britain, France and Belgium.¹³ The NPA suggested its own but similar ideas of the intensification and increase of propaganda effectiveness.

CC CPSU agreed with the suggestions and adopted a resolution, in which the NPA was allowed to open its bureaus in a number of African countries with the aim to establish contacts with the local press agencies and newspapers, and also to collect various information including the data of intelligence character.¹⁴ 15 years later, the NPA conducted propaganda and intelligence work in 16 of its Africa bureaus. In other 19 countries of Africa the Agency conducted this activity through the channels of Soviet embassies.¹⁵

One of the directions of the NPA's activity was the publishing of its own periodicals for the African audience that reflected the successes

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹³ *RSACH*, F. 5, inv. 55, c. 54, sh. 36–40.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 58, c. 349, sh. 51.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 73, c. 324, sh. 79.

of the socialist construction in the USSR and the disastrous policies of the „*imperialist warmongers*”.¹⁶ In 1977, periodicals with the total circulation of 1 million 302 thousand copies, 20 press releases with the total circulation of 714 thousand copies, more than 1.5 million of brochures were released and distributed in Africa. In addition to it, the stream of „*special materials*” came to Africa in the form of books and brochures in foreign languages, the main recipients of which were „*revolutionary democratic parties*”. All this was financed from the party (i. e. state) budget. Each year the cost was about 150 thousand of so-called convertible rubles.¹⁷ (The official rate of such not existed in real life ruble was about 0.6 U.S. dollar.)

Work with the local press was an important direction of the NPA’s activity. At first, the distribution of the propagandistic materials ran into some difficulties, which were the result of ignorance of African journalism, which had a long history and the certain traditions in many countries. Sent from Moscow informational propagandistic materials did not cause the expected from the publishers enthusiasm and desire to print them quickly. Anxiety about the situation was expressed in 1962 in the trip to the countries of Africa of the deputy chairman of the NPA S. Beglov. In the report to CC about the trip he bitterly wrote: „*In some cases, the heads of the press services and newspapers frankly stated that the information from the Western agencies satisfied them to a greater extent, because this information was given in a more laconic form and could be printed almost without processing*”. But it was not only the form of the materials from Moscow that did not unsatisfied the African journalists, many of them were disturbed by the content. In the conversation with S. Beglov, the chief editor of the newspaper „Ethiopian Gerald” stated that the information of the Soviet agencies „*contains too much of open propaganda*”.¹⁸

Over time the tactics changed: open propaganda was more and more supplemented with the veiled one. The NPA, embassies and working under this cover security services began to conduct assertive work with African journalists, writers and public figures. Some of them guided by the sympathy to the socialist ideas, author’s vanity and the desire for additional earnings agreed to put their signatures under the propaganda articles made in Moscow for African newspapers and

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 5, inv. 33, c. 208, sh. 27-28; F. 5, inv. 73, c. 324, sh. 11.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, Card index. The minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat (CC CPSU). № 38 from 18.04.1972. Paragraph 8c; № 192 from 6.11.1975. Paragraph 28rc; № 230 from 30.09.1980. Paragraph 15rc.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 33, c. 181, sh. 106.

magazines. In the fact sheet about informational propagandistic work of the NPA developed because of XXIV congress of the CPSU, it was noted that the materials corresponding to even are actively printed in the press of Madagascar, Reunion, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Congo, Mali and other countries. The articles about the benefits of socialism and the ideas of the October revolution in the newspapers „Advance” (Nigeria), „Uganda Argus” and others were given as the examples.¹⁹

Preparation of the „backgrounds”, on the bases of which the local journalists wrote their articles, was also practiced. For instance, the NPA informed CC about the fact that in 1973 about 60 backgrounds on important political topics were produced: „*The CPSU its role and place in Soviet society*”, „*The Soviets in the USSR*”, „*About freedom of creativity*”, „*Anti-Sovietism-the bases of China policy*”, „*Jewish emigration from the USSR: fabrications and reality*” and others.²⁰ Then some materials were reprinted in Soviet and „friendly” foreign press and distributed through the channels of the controlled by Moscow international organizations that increased their propagandistic value.

The NPA found the able pupils in Africa and their success pleased the Soviet masters of propaganda. The chairman of the NPA board L. Tolkunov reported to the CC CPSU in October 1977: „*The practice of cooperation (with the local press) shows that African journalists are able to adopt and promote the materials of the NPA on the pages of newspapers and magazines, to prepare the manuscripts of the brochures after visiting the USSR subject to payment of their labor*”.²¹ The material incentive was a rather important point. In addition to the direct payments there was the practice of inviting the editors of the African newspapers and prominent journalists in the Soviet Union, where the unexpected for them grandiose meeting was organized, the gifts and the propagandistic materials for the future articles were given. „*It is beyond all doubt,-wrote the second Secretary of the USSR embassy in Ghana in May 1975,-that the sojourn of the editor of „Ghanaian Times” in the Soviet Union... will facilitate the promotion of the materials about the Soviet Union on the pages of Ghanaian Newspapers*”.²²

Sometimes, the African editors placed the materials of the Soviet propagandistic departments in their newspapers for the solution of the

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 62, c. 56, sh. 211, 220-221.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 67, c. 136, sh. 63-64.

²¹ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 73, c. 324, sh. 80.

²² *Archive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation* (AFP RF), F. 0573, inv. 19, folder (F) 24, c. 6, sh. 31.

problem of the material support of their publishing houses. For it they received paper, paint, fonts etc. In 1965, the USSR ambassador in Ghana reported to the Foreign Affairs Ministry that the chief editor of „Ghanaian Times” T. Baffo asked to present to the newspaper a van car „Volga”. Knowing the weakness of his counterparty, the editor stated that this gift would serve for the further strengthening of the Soviet-Ghanaian relations and inspire the employees of his newspaper in their struggle against imperialism for socialism building in Ghana.²³ Such arguments were hard to resist and the car was presented on behalf of the newspaper „Pravda”.

All these measures allowed to increase dramatically the number of the pro-Soviet materials in the African press. In 1977, more than 10 thousand of such materials were published and distributed in print and on the radio.²⁴

However, the work of the NPA bureau not always and not everywhere was uneventful. The unbridled nature of the Soviet propaganda often caused the rejection, and the excessive activity of the correspondents suggested that this „*public organization*” is connected with the intelligence services. It was manifested in the limitation and even in the periodical cessation of activity in the African countries (Ghana, Mali, Tunisia and others). Then the NPA bureaus worked under cover of press departments in the embassies.²⁵

In March 1963, the Congolese newspaper „Le Progres” wrote about the threat of ideological penetration into Republic of the Congo. In the editorial under the title „Attention, danger!” it was claimed that the scheduled opening of a NPA bureau „*is contrary to the national interests of Congo inasmuch its journalists will use their fictitious independence to penetrate everywhere (...) Under the cover of their mission they will inform the public about economical, scientific life, etc. (...) „Novosti” will be engaged in propaganda of communism*”.²⁶ The editor’s worry was not in vain. In August of the same year the first president of Congo Fulber Yulu was overthrown and the supporters of the socialism construction on the example of the USSR came to power. The head of the state Massamba-Debat proclaimed the „*scientific socialism*” as the official ideology, the one-party system was

²³ *Ibidem*, inv. 9, f. 15, c. 6, sh. 14.

²⁴ RSACH, F. 5, inv. 73, c. 224, sh. 79.

²⁵ RSACH, F. 5, inv. 55, c. 54, sh. 69.

²⁶ *Le Progres (Brazzaville)*, 12.03.1963.

introduced, the connections with the Soviet Union, China, North Korea and North Vietnam were established.²⁷

In 1963, a employee of the APN was deported from Kenya due to the inappropriate for his status activity; his name was not mentioned in the local press.²⁸ In the same year, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) deported a NPA correspondent B. Beknazar-Yuzbashev for espionage and subversive activities.²⁹ After the military coup in Ghana in 1966, which removed the president Kwame Nkrumah from power, an NPA correspondent Alexey Kazantsev was declared *persona non grata*. During the search of his apartment, the Ghana police found guidelines of the CC CPSU for the being abroad members of the NPA and considered them the spyware instructions.³⁰

From the early 1970s in connection with the apparent failures in the domestic and foreign policy of the USSR increasing emphasis in propaganda was put on „*the unmasking of imperialism*” and especially on its actions in the Third world. The articles about the machinations of the West in developing countries were regularly printed in the magazines published in foreign languages-„New Times”, „Asia and Africa Today”, „World Marxist Review” etc. The USA as the main ideological adversary became the major target. According to the CIA estimates, the budget of Soviet abroad propaganda ranged from 4 to 4.5 billion dollars in 1980s.³¹

At the direction of the Department of propaganda and agitation of the CC CPSU, the NPA decided to start a series of propagandistic campaigns dedicated to the upcoming „*black days of the US imperialism*”: the decade of the Peace Corps, the fifth anniversary of the loss of a hydrogen bomb by an aircraft of the US air force in Palomares (Spain), decade of the attempts of the armed intervention in Cuba, the third anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King. The press in the developing countries was supposed to be emphasized in these actions. For this purpose the materials for the articles, the photo illustrations, the samples of caricatures and other materials, which „*were sent to the proper countries long before the date with the indicating to arm with them the local authors as well as the editions of friendly ... publications, reminding to the last ones about the approaching of such date*”,³² were prepared beforehand. The sent by the

²⁷ K. Shillington, *Encyclopedia of African History*, CRC Press, 2005, p. 301.

²⁸ Shuman T., *No „Novosti” is Good News*, Los Angeles, ALMANAC, 1985, p. 1.

²⁹ J. Baron, *KGB. Readers Digest*, 1974, p. 513.

³⁰ *Evening News (Acra)*, 10.06.1977.

³¹ R. F. Staar, *Foreign Policies of the Soviet Union*, Hoover Press, 1991, p. 75.

³² *RSACH*, F. 5, inv. 62, c. 56, sh. 270-271.

NPA materials about the race discrimination in the USA were the most numerous, what was supposed to discredit the main enemy in the eyes of the African society. At the same times the articles about the happy life of the African students in the USSR were inspired, and the preference was given to the materials prepared by the students „*themselves*” with help of the NPA. The NPA leadership reported: „*Prepared by the NPA brochure „African in the Soviet Union” written by a graduate student of the Moscow State University Gili Osey is sold in Asia and Africa in large quantities*”.³³

From the middle of 1970s, the anti-American propaganda began to be called „*The Main Theme*” in the official correspondence of the informative propagandistic ministries. All NPA offices were ordered to neutralize to the maximum extent the increasing influence of the USA propaganda in the countries of location and to focus all efforts on the local media. Fulfilling the directive of the Centre, the head of the NPA bureau in Nigeria S. Kiselev reported that „*one of the local journalists at the request of the Bureau prepared on the bases of our materials operational, well-reasoned article of counter-propagandistic nature about the inappropriateness of President Carter’s attempts to intervene in the internal politics of the Soviet Union. The material was published in the newspaper Sunday Chronicle... As the material was represented as the local one, it was given the necessary ardor and suitable to this occasion sharpness*”.³⁴

The „*Main Theme*” reached its peak in the period 1976-1979 that was connected with the events in Angola and Ethiopia. In an effort to distract the world society attention from the dangerous involvement of the USSR in the regional conflicts, the propagandistic machine launched a broad anti-American campaign. The work of the NPA bureau activities for the promotion of the materials showing the USA as the main enemy in the liberation struggle of the African peoples was intensified. The typical titles of the magazines articles published for the foreign readers were: „*Subversion in Angola*”, „*Imperialism Against Africa*”, „*Neo-Colonial Stratagem in Africa*”, „*Imperialism. Design in the Horn of Africa*” etc.³⁵ The Soviet propaganda explained the USSR intervention in the affairs of Angola and Ethiopia by the desire to help „*victims of aggression*” of the USA.

The last large disinformation campaign of the KGB was started in 1985, in the very beginning of „*perestroika*”. Its aim consisted in the convincing of the world public opinion that the USA created the AIDS

³³ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 65, c. 58, sh. 100.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, F. 5, inv. 73, c. 324, sh. 11.

³⁵ *New Times*, no. 3, 1976; no.28, 1978; no.35, 1978; no.7, 1978.

virus and invented the „*ethnic bomb*” for the black people destruction. But the foundations of this KGB operation were laid in 1983, when a letter of a „*famous American scientist*”, which preferred not tell his name, was published in the Indian newspaper „Patriot”. He reported that the AIDS was developed in the secret laboratories of Pentagon. According to the statement of the former intelligence officer Ilya Dzhirkvelov, this newspaper was created by the KGB for the publication of the disinformation materials.³⁶ For two years few people paid attention to this sensational news printed in the little-known newspaper with a circulation of 35 thousand copies. But in 1985 the new start was given to the operation „Infection”. On 10 July the broadcasted to Africa Moscow Radio reported that the CIA helps the white South African authorities to develop a biological weapon that selectively destroys „*not whites*”.³⁷

During two years this theory, complemented with the suspicions of some foreign biologists, spread around the world with the speed of the AIDS; it was published in 80 countries and in more than 30 languages.³⁸ It was actively discussed on the pages of the Soviet press as well. But the main aim was the disinformation of Africa. The climax of the campaign took place on January-July 1987. With the active assistance of NPA the relevant conspiracy materials were published in many African countries (Uganda, „Weekly Topic” 14 and 21.01.1987; Ghana - „Ghanaian Times” 16.01.1987, „The Mirror” 04.04.1987; Sudan-„SUNA News Agency” 07.02.1987, „SUNA” 10.07.1987; Senegal-„Le Soleil”, 10.03.1987; Congo (Brazzaville)-„Mweti” 23.03.1987; Morocco-„Al Bayane” 02.04.1987; Mauritania-„Sunday Star” 04.04.1987; Zimbabwe-„Herald”. 14.04.1987; Kenya-„Sunday Times” 21.06.1987; Nigeria-„The Standard” 02 and 03. 1987 and others).³⁹

Washington was very concerned about the success of the operation „Infection” and the damage that it caused to the image of the USA. Secretary Of State George Shultz, who met with Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow on 27 October 1987, raised the question of the termination by the Soviet side of the „*active measures*” related to the theme of the USA involvement in the development of the „*ethnic weapons*”. At

³⁶ U. S. Department of State, „*Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda*”, Washington D. C., Bureau of Public Affairs, August 1987, p. 44.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

³⁸ U. S. Information Agency, „*Soviet Active Measures in the Era of Glasnost*”, Report to Congress, Washington D. C. March 1988, p. 10.

³⁹ U. S. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87*, Washington D. C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, August 1987, pp. 46-47.

that time the idea of „*new political thinking*” that implied constructive cooperation with the West appeared in the discourse of perestroika and the publications that connected the world AIDS epidemic with the CIA ceased. In July 1988 the President of the Russian Academy of medical science Vadim Pokrovsky said the following in an interview with the newspaper „Soviet Russia”: „*I can't no to tell about the damage, that was caused to all of us by the created by some soviet journalists charge without any foundation that the American researchers and state institutions produced and distribute the infection (AIDS). I declare with all responsibility that not a single Soviet scientist, not a single medical or scientific institution shared this position*”.⁴⁰ The story was closed by the head of the foreign intelligence Service of the Russian Federation Yevgeny Primakov in 1992. Speaking to the students and the teachers of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) he stated that the materials that revealed the „insidious” plan of the American scientists against humanity „*were invented in the KGB offices*”.⁴¹

During the years of „perestroika” the NPA was going to engage in propagandistic activities in Africa, but now it was given the task to explain to Africans the intricacies of „*acceleration*” (economical development of the USSR), „*new thinking*” in the international affairs, „*international publicity*”, however, it seems that there were no big success any more on this way and the way itself was short. On 27 July 1990, Gorbachev signed a decree on the elimination of the NPA and on the creation on its bases of the Information Agency „Novosti” (IAN). As it was said in the Decrees, it was done „*for the information support of the state domestic and foreign policy of the USSR and in the interests of the democratic media*”. However, the suppliers of the information and the customers remain the same and the meaningful structural changes did not follow.

After the „August coup” in 1991 and the fall of the Communist regime, „*the monster of the Cold War*” (as it was called by B. N. Yeltsin) was completely destroyed. The resolution of Council of Ministers of the RSFSR created Russian Information Agency „Novosti” (RIAN) on the bases of the IAN. That is how the thirty-year history of the probably most powerful machine of the informational war in the world was finished.

Over time RIAN became the modern media holding. As a part of the multimedia development strategy educational and social projects were created, expert platforms, international discussion clubs and forums were organized. But the changes in Russia's foreign policy after the

⁴⁰ *Sovetskaya Rossia*, no.169, 20 July 1988, p. 4

⁴¹ *Izvestia*, no. 66, 19 March 1992, p. 3.

Munich speech of V. Putin in February 2007 that outlined the anti-Western character of the rhetoric of the leadership of the state demanded radical changes in the information space. 9 December 2013 Russian President signed a decree „About some measures on increase of efficiency of activity of the state mass media”. The agency RIA Novosti was liquidated and the International information agency „Russia today” was created instead of it. This structure inherited many traditions and techniques of the NPA applying them creatively to modern conditions.

Conclusion

The NPA was created in the early 1960s as a mouthpiece of the Soviet propaganda on the foreign countries, that is why the International Department of the CC CPSU and the KGB became its organizers and curators. Pseudo-social character of this organization gave to it a certain freedom of action and judgments in the information war. Over time the NPA grown into a branched structure, which had its departments in many countries of the world. Africa was the most priority direction of the NPA activity and was considered by the Soviet leadership as an important field of struggle against the imperialist West. There were the majority of the countries that announced the choice of the „*non-capitalist*” way of development; the voices of the states of the continent were supposed to provide the support for the soviet initiatives in the UN and to block unwanted for the USSR decisions of the world community; African media was used to conceal the evidence of the involvement of Moscow in the emergence of disinformation materials.

It seems that the effectiveness of the NPA work was low in strategic terms in spite of the strong financial and material base. The reports to higher authorities were always optimistic, but the situations at the places rarely corresponded to the triumphant communiqués. The only exception was information support of the operation „Infection” that was carefully designed in the KGB, but this success was temporary. Frequently the pragmatic Africans used the NPA structures, as well as the Soviet economic assistance, in their own interests including mercantile ones. After the collapse of the USSR the ideas of the „*socialist orientation*” almost instantly disappeared from the political discourse of the African countries, and the successor of the Soviet Empire, the Russian Federation, left Africa as a noticeable factor for a long time.