THE BOLSHEVIKS’ POLICY TOWARDS THE PRESS IN RUSSIA: 1917-1920

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Introduction

The peculiarities of the Bolsheviks' policy in the first years of the Soviet power have long drawn the attention of numerous scholars (Arendt, Brooks, Pipes, Shlapentokh, Tarschys et al). This can be explained by their considerable impact that dramatically affected millions of people living in post-revolutionary Russia. It changed the political values of Russia, and to some extent, other governments in Europe. The Bolshevik’s policy laid the foundations of the totalitarian authority which is worthy of studying for its universal background.

If the political principles of the Soviet power have hitherto been profoundly researched, then far less attention was focused on the influence of the Bolsheviks Party's propaganda through mass media. The ideological framework existing in society, however, significantly affected the establishment of a well-organized and far-flung network of the mass media, including newspapers, magazines, bulletins, newsreels, posters, etc. From the very beginning the media aimed to operate in the capacity as a special kind of liaison between the power and the masses, and thereby was established as a strong and effective propaganda tool.

Dependence of the media policy on propaganda, in fact, seems always to be universal no matter what kind of political regime is under examination. A totalitarian system is traditionally based on political and economic uniformity, which makes these relationships more transparent and evident. It goes without saying that mass media acting under dictatorial and totalitarian governments play a completely different role than those with a fully functioning civic society. This does not necessarily mean that the content of the media acting in a democratic society does not contain elements of propaganda. Very often they get realized during presidential campaigns when one candidate tends to attack another by all possible, albeit legitimate, means. Yet a totalitarian power itself is much more eager to exercise a monopoly over information and thereby to subordinate the world view of society to definite politically-oriented priorities. (Jackall, Pratkanis, Aronson, Kenez).

It was a similar (if not the same) case in Russia immediately after the October 1917 Revolution. The diversified media production being distributed throughout the country created the framework to maintain the existence of the Bolshevik’s power and simultaneously helped to secure approval of the communist system from most workers and peasants. This came into practice due to the propaganda mechanism, which was diligently elaborated by the Bolsheviks through the media.
Propaganda was developed together with extremely restrictive measures against traditional Russian media institutions that were established long before the October 1917 Revolution, in XVIII century. In fact, having taken over power, Lenin and his adherents through the so-called «new media» were delivering the idea of abolishing the previous, «old-fashioned», state institutions. The Soviet power considered them as totally inappropriate under the new social conditions. At the same time, a demand to set up a system of the press being structured under entirely new structural principles was proclaimed.

This system needed to be circulated in two ways. First was the specific content which had to be understandable for poorly educated and ‘beggar’ readers who were becoming the «prop of the revolution». Second was mass circulation of the press. It also had to be distributed in millions of copies every day following the appearance of attractively designed popular publications bearing the idea of communism expressed in different forms and genres in every newspaper issue).

The appearance of such journalism as a new phenomenon in world journalistic practice symbolized simultaneously a turning point in Russia's political and cultural traditions and, in turn, gave birth to specific political education in the country. Tens of thousands of people, being led by the Party's slogans, were actively engaged in this work as journalists, newspaper printers and raboche-krest'janskie korrespondenti or rabsel'kori (workers and peasants' correspondents) who voluntarily contributed to the press with their news-items and articles.¹

This paper intends to investigate the Party's basic priorities which were developed in the media during those years. It is going to provide a better understanding of the principles of the Bolsheviks' propaganda and all-round influence of the Communist Party’s media. The topic is regarded not only historically oriented point of view, but looks relevant for studying modern Russian journalism. Although the media system promoted by the Bolsheviks seems to be extinct nowadays, its repercussions are still being felt. Contemporary media practice in Russia is marked with irreconcilability of political positions and imperious tone originating in some way by earlier journalistic priorities. In order to successfully establish the basis of civic society Russian journalism has to get rid of this legacy. This is a priority for the profession.

The Abolition of the Opposition Press in 1917-1918

In elaborating the media policy, the Bolsheviks were not original. Long before 1917, European history demonstrated numerous examples of suppression of the press. One of them, for example took place in the XVIII century, in the period of the Great French Revolution. Having stressed in the Declaration of Rights of a Man and Citizen remarkable words about free transmission of opinions and ideas as «one of the most significant of human rights», leaders of the Revolution (Marat, Danton, Robespierre and others) were appealing to provide

¹ Rabsel'kori was the term initiated by Lenin himself long before the Bolshevik’s 1917 revolution and later picked up by his adherents. The party leadership considered necessary to unite all non-staff correspondents around party newspapers. The latter were inherited by right to proclaim the ideas on behalf of workers and poor peasants and thereby to represent themselves as objective sources of information.
severe censorship of all «inconsistent» editions and sending to the gallows many editors who opposed the revolution.

Lenin diligently studied the experience of the French Revolution in undermining hostile journalism. Besides, his strategy towards the media was worked out on the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. The activities of the Commune's leaders who, unlike Robespierre and the others, did not undertake tough measures against the opposition press, did not escape Lenin's attention, either. As early as in 1905, while in exile, he studied a book by the first Chief of the Presidium of the Commune, H. Lefrance, Study of the Communist Movement in Paris: 1871 («L'Etude sur le movement communiste a' Paris en 1871»). In his diaries Lenin remarked on the inconsistency with which the Communards had tried to deal with the unfriendly press. At first they closed down newspapers which, from their viewpoint, were conspiratorial but later abandoned their decision. At the time when the Tier Government was ousted from Paris to Versailles, was trying to promote alarmist propaganda against the Commune, leaders of the latter could not elaborate a universal policy against the opposition press. Finally, on April 18, only four newspapers being «sympathetic to the interests of enemy troops» were closed down. Real changes occurred only in May when the Communards prohibited the circulation of 23 hostile publications. Yet they failed entirely at the time with their own counter-propaganda which was one of their many irreparable failures that had led to the Commune's defeat.

Later, in 1908, in his article The Lessons of the Commune Lenin noticed that the main fault of the Paris proletariat was its generosity and regarded leaders of the Commune as placing too much faith in conciliation and too little in force. Instead of exterminating its foes, he argued, the proletariat

tried to morally affect them..., lost time and permitted the Versailles government to assemble its dark forces and prepare for a bloody May week.2

Thus, Lenin envisaged the closure of alien publications as a priority for his party after seizing power. This was essential, in Lenin's view, to prevent a repetition of the situation which led to the collapse of the Paris Commune.

Development of the real political situation in Russia made the relationship between «verkhami» (the «uppers») and «nizami» (the «lowers») more strained. The years of 1905-1906 and those that followed afterwards were marked by the establishment of military courts in the field which were involved in mass executions. The situation was getting tenser with many pogroms towards the non-Russian population (Jews, Tatars, Armenians, etc.). Chauvinistic emotions were stirring via the legal Czarist press. It is not surprising that the Bolsheviks denounced the press itself as being openly hostile and protecting the «rotten» regime of Nicolas II.

Lenin’s utterance to destroy the bourgeois press confirms that he always considered it as a priority issue. He chose a unique method of dealing with the opposition press: its total abolition after his party come to power.

In his work *Gratitude to Prince Lvov* (written in July of 1917) Lenin noted:

> The proletariat will never resort to libel. It will close down newspapers of bourgeoisie, openly and lawfully declaring, on behalf of the government, that the capitalists and their defenders have become enemies of people.³

In terms of forcing «freedom for the rich» and «venality» of private non-Bolshevik media Lenin viewed the Communist press as the only guarantor of truthfulness and honesty. He therefore strongly denied that impetuous abolition of the previous media system could seriously be figured out as undermining freedom of the press. The next of Lenin’s articles *How to Guarantee Success of the Constituent Assembly* (written in September of 1917) this point was expressed in the following way:

> The Capitalists... mean by «freedom of the press» a situation under which censorship is abolished and all parties are free in printing their newspapers. In fact, it is not freedom of the press but freedom of cheating the deprived and exploited masses of the people by the rich, the bourgeoisie.⁴

The last of Lenin's works quoted has been and remains extremely important for understanding the entire strategy of the Bolsheviks. Lenin noted there that the closure of the media was not the only measure to deal with editorial staff.

> Why should «revolutionary» democracy tolerate such a thing as enrichment on private advertisements of the rich, the supporters of Kornilov, distributors of libel and slander against the Soviets?⁵

Putting on the agenda this rhetoric question, Lenin suggested confiscation of printing and paper enterprises from the capitalists.

> The Soviets as a state power take into their possession all printing houses and the paper, and distribute it fairly to serve the interests of the majority of people..., particularly of the poor, especially of the majority of peasants.⁶

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⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
In Lenin’s view, major and smaller parties and any group of people are authorized to have financial resources for printing newspapers. However, he never specified what money sources for those parties and citizens are in terms of the state owning the means of production.

Restriction of pluralism in the press was intertwined with the idea of suppressing the counterrevolution. In fact, a system of «organized violence» was set up to promote dictatorship of the proletariat and the personal authority of Lenin’s supporters. According to the detailed plan worked out by the Bolsheviks prior to the revolution, measures against the opposition media were an inalienable part of activity of this system, along with the seizure of property, resettlement, publication of lists of enemies, etc.

To return to journalism, it is worth drawing attention again to Lenin's three main methods of abolishing the hostile press (as anticipated from his pre-revolutionary works): its liquidation, the limitation of press revenues through prohibition of advertising and the confiscation of material and technical resources for the benefit of the state. Immediately after taking power, the Bolsheviks started to put in practice the above-mentioned program. They were not eager to delay.

Two days after the victory of the proletarian revolution, on October 27, 1917, Lenin as Chief of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), signed the Decree of the Press which became the first legislative act enacted by the new government. The new power thereby confirmed its entire strategy towards the opposition press which obviously became a matter of great importance. The next day the document was published in Pravda. Organs of the press, «appealing for the open rejection or insubordination to the new authority, sowing discord by means of libellous distortion of facts as well as appealing for acts of criminal activity» were ordered to be closed.

Prior to adoption of the document, the Military-Revolutionary Committee (Voenno-revolutsiionnii komitet) in Petrograd had sealed the offices of the principal opposition newspapers. Some days later the Committee adopted documents concerning the bourgeois press. For instance, Prescription of the Central commandant's office of the Red Army urged delivery of 120 Red Army men at the command of Press Commissar «for making arrests... of all newspapers being closed for printing the Appeal of the former Provisional Government». There was also a strong demand to arrest editors and leading journalists of the above newspapers. On special orders of Sovnarkom, guilty newspapers were closed, and leading editors and journalists were arrested. As a sign of protest, no opposition or liberal newspaper was published on October 29 but it did not prove to be helpful.

The above Decree of the Press was promised to be a temporary measure and to be cancelled after normal social conditions are restored. Did Lenin, while signing the document, understand that these conditions were unlikely to reappear and that the flush of success would encourage the Bolsheviks to bring greater pressure on his political opponents? Historians can only guess but in his later works Lenin was diligently avoiding the contents of the Decree.
The document became a watershed for many people. The poets D. Merezhkovsky and Z. Gippius, revolutionaries V. Zasulich and G. Plekhanov and many other distinguished people in Russia could never approve of the Bolshevik's measures towards the opposition press. A writer Vladimir Nabokov, for example, openly rejected the «contemptible and disgusting terror and any other crazy reprisal established by Lenin».

Even among those closest to Lenin, there was no unanimity of views. It was displayed obviously at the meeting of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (the VTSIK) on November 4, 1917, when the media issue was being discussed. The Essers proposed to suspend the Decree of the Press and to convene a special Tribunal which would fairly and legitimately arbitrate cases of media abolitions. These suggestions were also actively approved by Left Socialist Revolutionaries A. Kolegaev, V. Karelin and B. Malkin who appealed for «proletarian magnanimity» towards the non-Bolshevik's press. On behalf of the Bolsheviks, the VTSIK Secretary V. Avanesov suggested a totally different version of the resolution. He put it:

Reestablishment of the so-called «freedom of the press», i.e. ordinary return of printing houses and paper to the capitalists... would be an inadmissible submission in front of the will of capital and the surrender of one of the important advantages of the proletarian revolution (Protocols of VTSIK, 1918: 23).

Lenin asked for the floor too and said the following:

What freedom do these [bourgeois] newspapers need? Is it not freedom to buy plenty of paper and hire lots of scribbles? We should step back from this freedom of the press depending on capital... [and] relate to bourgeois newspapers in the same way as we related to those of the Black-Hundreds in February and March (Lenin, Speech on the Press Issue. P. 54-55).

Most VTSIK members elected by the Second Congress of the Soviets immediately after the victory of the October Revolution were the Bolsheviks. Other parties included the Leftist Socialist Revolutionaries (LSRs), the Mensheviks and the Anarchists, receiving in total only 40 per cent of mandates. It was resulted in supporting the Bolshevik's resolution. Following it, the Socialist Revolutionaries refused to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. Along with them, a group of People's Commissars (Ministers) including V. Nogin, A. Rykov, V. Miliytin and I. Teodorovich also disagreed with the position of the majority of the VTSIK. They appealed for the «socialist government of all parties» and more loyalty towards the press of different political organizations.

Lenin, however, was not keen to step down from the declared principles. Almost two months later he signed a **Decree on State Monopoly of Advertising**. Trying to destroy the private press financially, the Bolsheviks imposed a ban on printing advertising. It became a «monopoly of the state», and the stuff classified so could be published only in the media of
the Provisional Working-class and Peasants' Government and those of local Soviets. Those, who dared to breach the order, were to be prosecuted. The same punishment was imposed upon editorial staff for publishing disguised advertising looking like reports and articles.

It is worth saying that before the Revolution many newspapers and magazines, particularly those printed in Saint-Petersburg and Moscow, greatly benefited from advertising. For example, the annual revenue of the Moscow newspaper «Russkoje slovo» («Russian Word») was estimated to be about two million roubles (a great sum of money in those times). The impact was therefore a very considerable economic blow; very soon tens of newspapers ceased to exist in different cities.

At the same time, political pressure has not been reduced, either. In December of 1917 Lenin and some other members of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) signed a Warrant to Arrest and Bring I.G. Tsereteli, V.M. Chernov, F.M. Dan and others to Trial by the Revolutionary Tribunal for publishing with a provocative purpose a slanderous newspaper «The Revolutionary Alarm» N 4 from December 2, deliberately circulating falsehoods against the Soviet Power about the «selling of Russia to Chancellor Wilgelm», «Salvation of Nikolas Romanov» and so on. The document did not indicate what the Bolsheviks meant by «so on» neither did it clarify the individual guilt of each of the accused. For the Bolsheviks following the principle of class approach was much safer to abolish a «disloyal» newspaper than to enter into a dispute with it.

The Revolutionary Tribunal, mentioned above, appeared in December 1917 on the decision of People's Commissariat of Justice. It happened almost at the same time when the Press Commissariat was set up. Both organizations presumably should have acted hand in hand. In fact, the Commissariat's priority was to figure out an opportunity for one or another publication to exist; the Tribunal, in turn, was to take disciplinary measures against «guilty» media. Yet between them there was no unity of action. The Commissariat preferred to put into practice tough measures (mostly calling for closure of newspapers). Its Chief, N. Kuzmin, urged for «total abolishment» of all conciliating newspapers as extremely venomous and harmful in the period of the Civil War. He was also in favour of «merciless and consistent pressure on the hostile press with fines, closures and arrests». The Revolutionary Tribunal, for its part, was much less restrictive. Its sentences were being frequently exchanged for more gentle punishments such as rebukes and censures. It often happened on initiative of the above Commissariat of Justice which was against «excessive severity». In fact, the Tribunal was unable to even formally view all the matters concerning the press as their number grew rapidly and some cases were simply put aside.

Striving to change the situation, the Council of People's Commissars in February 1918 adopted the Decree about the Revolutionary Press Tribunal. Hence, the Press Tribunal was to pass verdicts relating to «crimes and public delinquencies leading by the press». Of those «crimes» the document mentioned «any falsified and distorted news about social events since they provoked infringement of rights and freedoms of the working class». Taking into account the stratification of the then society, by «opponents of the working class» one could mean thousands of people and most of the media. For preliminary investigations and preparation of show trials a special Committee of Inquiry attached to the
above Press Tribunal was set up. The Committee was to examine media questions, to hold show trials and to deprive culprits of all political rights. Its appearance proved to be effective for the power. In most cases, the Tribunal acted in extremely repressive way, in trying with a «punitive sword» to get rid of disagreeable editors and journalists.

In April and May, 1918, there were more than ten newspapers that had been brought to trial by Petrograd's Revolutionary Tribunal. Those were the Esser Party's newspapers: «Zemlia and «Volia» («Land and Will»), «Narodnoe slovo» («People's Word») and «Delo naroda» (People's Affair»). Some media attempted to come out under different titles, however, the authorities tended to suppress those attempts. Already in 1918 over 200 newspapers of bourgeois and socialist parties including the Mensheviks, the Essers and others, ceased to exist throughout the country. Frequently, decisions towards these newspapers and magazines were taken on the plea of counterrevolutionary centres allegedly existing in editorial staff and preparing plots. Meanwhile, the closure of most newspapers was so impetuous that the powers were not able to conduct thorough investigations concerning political priorities of the press.

In the provinces the situation regarding the press was much more difficult for the Bolsheviks. For instance, in Moscow the Military Revolutionary Committee (MVC) acted very hesitantly while closing the press. On the second day after the victory of the Bolshevik's coup-d'état, the MVC urged to stop distribution of two Moscow publications: «Utro Rossii» («Russia's Morning») and «Russkoje slovo» («Russian Word»). A wave of resentment immediately broke out around the city. Those were very readable newspapers; for example, a daily circulation of the latter numbered six thousand copies. Abolishment of both media was regarded by the Muscovites as a challenge to public opinion.

Following strong protests, the MVC gave permission to print these newspapers. In turn, the Moscow Press Commissariat wired an irate note to the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet: with the demand to take urgent measures. Yet, the Moscow Soviet strictly opposed tough sanctions. The situation continued for several more months. In March 1918, the Russian Government moved to Moscow and already at the first session Lenin raised a question about hesitancy of the local Soviet. By the end of the year over 150 bourgeois and petty-bourgeois newspapers having a circulation of more than two million copies a day, ceased to come out. Of all the pre-Revolutionary press only special and professional magazines having a very small circulation, continued to release. The «make-up» of the Moscow journalism had become entirely different when compared with the year before.

It is remarkable that at first sight the Bolshevik's activity towards the opposition press entirely contrasted to the ideas Lenin expressed as early as in 1905 in his work titled *The Party Organization and Party Literature*. He wrote in particular:
We are far from the idea to advocate whatever a single system or a solution of a task by some decisions. No, sketchiness least of all can be appropriate to this.  

Meanwhile, Lenin himself, as it was pointed out above, has never been a revolutionary romanticist and regarded the entire press as part and parcel of the Bolsheviks' Party. He was an initiator of putting forward the concept of the «communist freedom of the press» under which pluralism was strictly undermined by the principles and purposes of the Party itself.

Freedom of bourgeois writer, painter, actress is disguised (or hypocritically disguised) dependence on a money sack, on bribery and on contents.  

Following this, the task of journalism first of all was to defend revolutionary priorities, and the press freedom itself was a part of the ideology. The media opposing this idea were seen as opponents of the Bolsheviks' political interests. It strongly affected a practical policy towards journalism after 1917. It is worth alluding to statistics. By 1913 there have been 575 printing houses, 1351 magazines and 916 newspapers (a third of the media released were published in other languages of the peoples of Russia). The press was a reflection of not only different political but also of cultural and social interests of Russia's multinational population. By the time of the Bolsheviks' revolution, all political parties printed and distributed their media products independently of the government politically and financially. In the early Soviet time almost all of them disappeared, and formal democracy was cancelled.

Setting up New Journalism as a Part of Propaganda Work

Along with restrictive measures towards the opposition media, the Bolsheviks aimed to create the press which would support the new power and serve as a source of socialist upbringing and enlightenment of the people. The main goal in the field of journalism was, in Lenin's thoughts, an explanation of advantages of the new political system. The state used the media to transmit what they expected from society, by reinforcing or discouraging certain kinds of behaviour. In 1919, Lenin considered the future role of the press. “We must set to work systematically to create a press that will not entertain and fool the people with political sensation and trivialities, but will submit the questions of everyday economic life to the people’s judgment and assist in the serious study of these questions.”

The press was used to publicise ‘good news’, which was meant to have a positive effect on the morale of the masses. By giving people a goal to emulate or better. The desired end goal was the creation and maintenance of a strong Soviet state.

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8 Ibid.
The appearance of a big network of periodicals greatly helped to assist this task. In early 1918 the Bolsheviks were distributing 884 newspapers and 753 magazines which consistently substituted the pre-revolutionary media. A year later a number of new publications already numbered a thousand titles. It occurred despite serious financial problems and a severe shortage of skilful journalists able to cover the information in accordance with the desired professional standards of writing. A distinctive trait was not only setting up of a big number of the media but a creation of the well structured system of the press. This system was a reflection of structural peculiarities within the Party itself and, following this, journalism became politically affiliated with Party committees both in the centre and the provinces.

In Lenin's mind, it was impossible to lead a revolutionary work without having a Party newspaper. Long before the October Revolution he viewed a party newspaper as a bastion of political activity. Lenin stressed for the Party to have a «network of agents», i.e. the people contributing to a newspaper. Lenin put it in 1901 in his work *S chego nachat’* («Where to begin»):

> A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator but also a collective organizer…. In the last respect [a newspaper] can be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organized labor. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organization will naturally take shape. (Lenin, 1961: 21-22)

These ideas became a motto for Soviet journalism for many years to come. Journalism, as Lenin considered, could not be priority for few people but it had to be «a part of the whole proletarian work». Newspapers, he stressed, should have become organs of local party organizations. It centred his views towards the position of a party journalist who had to be a social-democrat only and never work in a bourgeois newspaper. True, these ideas were strongly affected by the political situation in pre-revolutionary Russia and the illegal position of the Party itself. Meanwhile, Lenin's attitude to journalistic freedom, to a great extent, was determined by his personal views on political needs of the press. Thus, intolerance of the future Soviet media originated long before the October Revolution of 1917.

There were four founding principles given by Lenin to guide those that worked in the media. These principles being: (i) *Partinost* - belonging to and expressing ideology of the CPSU, (ii) *Obyektivnost* - objectivity, (iii) *Narodnost* - linkage with the masses and (iv) *Glasnost* - openness. No Soviet leader from Stalin to Gorbachev ever rejected these ideals publicly.¹⁰ In reading Lenin's works about the media role under socialism, one can see certain principles of their functioning:

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1. The principle of Party spirit.
It was defined by the political position of the Party media and by a particular social role of media personnel. Lenin saw «the Party without a [press] organ and an organ without the Party» as being totally impossible. Long before the Revolution, the Bolsheviks intended to set up on the territory of Russia the network of the Party's media and succeeded better than in many other parties.

2. The principle of class character.
It was based on the Lenin's idea of the proletarian dictatorship according to which the working class becomes the main motivating power of the revolution. Therefore, the Party press had to be a chronicler of its life. Following this, there have been defined the most important themes for the press such as the chronicle of working life, accusation of the capitalist system, etc.

3. The principle of ideological content.
A newspaper has a right to exist only if it could lead propaganda of Marxist ideas. Simultaneously, it had to repulse any «liberal» sentiments and to fight for influence among the proletarian masses, working and soldiers' deputies. Along with it, a newspaper had to be filled up with a diverse content, far from purely theoretical, and essays, verses, etc. being in line with the party directives should be published.

Immediately after having come to power, the Bolsheviks set up a full-scale propaganda mechanism in using their media and the Information Agency. On their initiative, there have been structured a peculiar contents model of a Party's newspaper which, along with the above topics, comprised different themes, i.e. agriculture, economics, life of the Soviets, etc. Brooks indicates its nature:

«First and most important were leaders' own words in editorials, speeches, articles, and official announcements, together with signed commentaries by authoritative journalists who had a special role as trusted government spokesmen. (Brooks, 1995: 157)

Everyday letters from readers also have been considered as an extremely important element for the media's «make-up». «Columns such as «Worker's Life» or «Party Life», «which sometimes began with instructions from above, contained signed commentaries from semi-official worker, peasant or soldier correspondents, as well as other activists and participants in the construction of Soviet society» (Brooks, 1995: 157). In such popular national newspapers as Bednota («The Poor»), Izvestia («News») and some others released hundreds of thousands of copies a day, about 30-50 letters appeared in every issue. It is remarkable that the main duty for each journalist was not only writing of articles but also permanent training of non-staff correspondents at professional schools working under the auspices of almost every editorial staff. Those journalists who ignored a party assignment to educate could be reprimanded or even fired from their position for non-professionalism.

It is worth emphasizing that the press content of 1917-1920 followed the outlines of the political system existing under the new terms. Controlled by the central power, a broad
network of differently oriented media was consistently developed. Such variety was considered by the Central Committee as expedient in order to draw attention to the press from different strata. There were four principal groups of the media:

1. Newspapers of the Central and regional party committees;
2. The press of the Soviets;
3. Youth media;
4. Trade union editions.

The above press, however, did not absorb the entire diversity of the media which occurred in those years. By the mid-1918, every single group of readers had an access to its media (according to particular social and professional interests). In fact, it was one more peculiarity of Soviet journalism at that particular time due to the Bolsheviks promoting their influence within society. Of the new groups of the press being established shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, it is worth noting:

1. Peasant's media;
2. Military newspapers and magazines;
3. Economic periodicals;
4. Media in national languages;
5. Women's media;
6. Literary and satirical editions favouring the Soviet power.

All this enables people to value the press system as notable for different strata and puts aside assumptions about superficial interests of the Bolsheviks towards the media. True, comments on politics and working life occurring in each newspaper were very similar accentuating instructions from above. However, the media regardless of their adherence to a particular topical involvement were eager to make the content as diverse as possible, and treated it very carefully. On the one hand the media was regarded as a bulwark of the ideological system, on the other hand, they entirely satisfied the demands of most of the population in a particular type of information it needed.

This negates the idea that the press itself was very primitive and scanty in content. Moreover, many print media were filled up with cartoons and humorous pictures, satirical verses as well as human and didactical stories about hardships of everyday life. It is also worth remembering that under the Soviet power over 50 nationalities living in Russia received their first publications in their native languages which became a real breakthrough in printing business and provided massive trust in the Communists. In 1918 Soviet newspapers were published in some twenty languages.\footnote{11} It confirms once again that the Bolshevik’s intrusion into life was not scholastic but based on clear comprehension of priorities. Along with quick delivery of the media to very remote places of Russia the Bolsheviks were organizing izbi-chital’ni (reading houses) for illiterate people wishing to listen to the latest news.\footnote{12}

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\textsuperscript{12} Izbi-chital’ni appeared in Russia long before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and were promoted by narodniki (representatives of intelligentsia who in the 1860s aimed to “join the folk” in the countryside. Narodniki were opening village schools and gathered people together for reading books and periodicals to
Thus, the well elaborated propaganda mechanism was disguised with attractive forms suggested by editorial staff. Nevertheless, it did not change the propaganda’s “make up”. Its activity, to some extent, was strengthened by establishment in 1918 of the Russian News Agency (Rossisskoje telegraphnoje agentstsvvo or ROSTa)\(^\text{13}\). In 1919 a specific form of the media appeared: poster journalism *Windows of the ROSTa*. These posters were edited and published by some political structures such as VTSIK and the Revolutionary Council of the Republic (Revvoensovet). On the ROSTa initiative, a weekly bulletin started publishing its instructions for local editorial staff on how to make up the content of newspapers. Also under the patronage of ROSTa, the magazine *Krassnaja pechat’* («The Red Press») has appeared for the help of journalists.

The network of the Party's media had been stimulated by nationalization of all private printing houses: by late 1917 more than 30 enterprises came to be owned by the new power. A year later their number was estimated at 90. In 1919 Gosudarstvennoje izdatelstvo (the United State Publishing House) or GIZ was founded. For the stable release and distribution of newspapers and magazines, within the Chief Press Industry Department, a special Printing Division, («Tsentropechat’») was set up together with its branches in the provinces. Their activity aimed to hold media exhibitions in shop-windows

The main political center for «distributing» the party ideology throughout the country was Agitpropotdel — the Department of Agitation and Propaganda to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks' Party. It was mainly involved in making up instructions for editors. Almost immediately Agitpropotdel initiated the appearance of the Press Section for «political management» of provincial newspapers. The section comprised three divisions: instructive, printing and distributive. Within it, there was also a press-bureau sending special instructions regarding the contents of local newspapers. The political standard of the press was under control of instructors who were engaged in preparing and disseminating reviews destined to improve the content and layout of the press. Besides, the Agitpropotdel held regular «round tables» with leading Moscow journalists and editors of professional journalistic magazines *Krassnaja pechat’* («Red Press») and *Pomosh’ gazete* («Assistance to a Newspaper») which, in turn, promoted ideas, being heard in these meetings, for local news reporters.

In developing ideas about the press contents, the Bolsheviks carefully regarded the problems of editorial staff. By then many experienced journalists refused to cooperate with the new power, and the Party Central Committee thought thoroughly of the personnel policy towards the press. These problems were discussed in the First and the Second Congresses of Soviet journalists which were held in Moscow in 1918 and 1919. The congresses promoted an idea of filling up editorial staff with experienced executives. The party viewed the upbringing of them. These initiatives were contradictorily treated by the people themselves many of whom opposed this “intrusion”. The Bolsheviks were more successful in this activity of helping people to learn their ABCs.\(^\text{14}\)
journalists as an extremely important part of its everyday work. In the shortest time professional education of journalists was put in practice. With this purpose the Russian News Agency, ROSTa, initiated six week courses for journalists. A year later, the Petrograd's Bureau of ROSTa opened the first Soviet Institute of Journalism. Similar institutes were immediately founded in Smolensk, Kazan, Odessa and some other cities in Russia for educating staff of local newspapers.

In those years party membership became obligatory for journalists. Five years later, of 72 journalists working in central newspapers and ROSTa 50 were Communists; in turn, of 1570 people being engaged in the editorial job in the provinces, 527 also had party cards. It actively facilitated to the development of political principles proclaimed by the Bolsheviks and made journalists themselves strongly dependent on political priorities (Sharapov, 1990: 51).

Thus, in the period 1917-1920 a completely new system of journalism was set up. The Bolsheviks concept was initially leading to many contradictions in the area of information such as a lack of journalistic culture, frequent infringement of ethics and so on. All this, in turn, has influenced the standard of media stories which could never criticize the political system but touched only current shortcomings. In the meantime, the audience was entirely dependent on the party's political priorities and failed to express any views different from an «official line».

Promoting its journalistic strategy, the Party consciously neglected pluralism from politics and spiritual life of society, and thereby making the development of the country slower. Glavlit which appeared in 1922 as the Chief Directorate on censorship of literature and publishers became part and parcel within the suppressive ideological system. It is necessary to say that censorship exists in any society regardless of its level of democracy, and is considered to be an important element for defending political and economic interests of the state. However, the cultural development of Russian society, from the very beginning, was switched to specific «power interests» which, in fact, were being understood very narrowly, in favour of particular political priorities.

Conclusion

1917-1920 have become the years which not only laid down the media structure but defined the basic principles of propaganda throughout the press and some other sources of information. Due to well elaborated media system as an effective means of influence the Communist Party managed to affect millions of people and to create support for its policies. Involvement of the power in all issues regarding journalism including professional training of editorial staff and non-staff correspondents enabled it to attain great effects. A big circulation of most national newspapers is a confirmation of this endeavour. The media were fulfilling the role of a political agitator, propagandist and organizer according to the Party standards. Despite their active eagerness to attract the audience, the media could not come out beyond the limits proclaimed by the power, and it entirely defined the content of journalism and its adherence to particular political purposes.
Many prohibitions in the field of culture, which journalism is a part of, being affected by the so-called «objective» reasons strengthened alienation of Russia from other European countries and set up spiritual vacuum within it. True, it did not happen in a moment. If one figures out the contents of newspapers and magazines in the 1920s, then they will see there are a great number of discussions on different matters. Those occurred partly because of quite high cultural level of censors many of whom were pretty well educated. Nevertheless, the political basis that was laid down by the Bolsheviks shortly after their victory totally undermined pre-revolutionary moral principles within society and established the press as a tough promoter of the Bolsheviks' interests. It became a furious ideological weapon implacable to any political opponents of the regime. The media tried to draw attention to information thanks to different forms of its reproduction and initiation of discussions between people on different topics. However the main goal turned out to be unchangeable due to pivotal propaganda encompassing the entire content of the media.

The nature of journalism was altered dramatically during the period under discussion in this paper. Its goal came to be the ability to reach out to and affect the masses. This was done via a number of mechanisms, such as; letters to the editor, the discussion of events that affect ‘everyday’ people and the publication of news media in different languages. In finding a bond with the ‘common’ citizen, the Bolsheviks hoped to not only gain the support of these groups, but also to affect their behaviour, a task in which was met with some success.

Media censorship driven by political dictatorship was affected by the ruling party's world view. The principles determined by the Bolsheviks, decreased, to great extent, a level of pluralism and democracy in Russia and, in turn, made economic development of society slower in the future. The party media consistently favouring it has done its best for maintaining the existing political power for many years ahead.
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