

Text linguistics, Discourse analysis. Typological linguistics (UDC 81'4)DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18454/RULB.12.22>**Битюцкая В.В.**

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НОВОСТИ ТАСС: ТЕХНОЛОГИИ РАБОТЫ С ТЕКСТОМ В XX ВЕКЕ**Аннотация**

В статье рассматривается специфика подготовки новостей советскими журналистами для Телеграфного агентства Советского Союза (ТАСС). Целью исследования стало изучение технологий работы с текстом советских журналистов в СССР и за рубежом. Показано, как отражались на работе журналистов идеологические ограничения, какие требования предъявлялись к профессиональному уровню сотрудников, какие технологии использовались в подготовке текстов. Исследование может быть интересно как практикующим журналистам и редакторам, так и тем, кто изучает особенности публицистических и медиатекстов.

Ключевые слова: ТАСС, информагентство, СССР, новостной текст, подготовка новостей, цензура, новостная заметка.

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TASS NEWS: TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH TEXT IN XX CENTURY**Abstract**

This article deals with the specifics of news production by TASS and studies techniques applied by Soviet journalists in the USSA and abroad. The research is based on a thorough analysis of archival documents and interviews with journalists who worked for TASS in the 70s and 80s. The results reveal ideological restrictions, professional requirements and news production techniques employed in the Soviet journalists' practice. The findings may be of interest for practicing journalists, editors and media researchers.

Keywords: TASS, news agency, USSR, publicistic text, news production, censorship, news.

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Introduction

News agencies have been a primary source of information for many media since the time they appeared. The approaches to the submission of publications, the speed and distribution channels, the style and structure of the news, its semantic and compositional features – all these aspects were manifested in different ways and modified by news agencies as time was passing while political and economic situation in the country was changing [8. P.26]. Continuous search for new solutions in the technological and journalistic work of the news agency is connected with the changing demands of the audience and, accordingly, with the necessity for the mass media to seek new methods in their struggle for the readership, viewership and listenership [7, p.368]. Do not forget that the emergence of news (telegraph) agencies in the XIX century was associated with the need for higher speed and freedom in journalism, which manifested itself in the structure and style of the author's news texts, in particular.

Research methods and principles

In order to understand the main principles of work with a text in the context of unofficially existing censorship and the canons of working with news texts that were formed in the Soviet media and differed from those of the Western presentation of the material, we analyzed archival documents and conducted several interviews with the journalists who had been working for the agency from 1970s to 1980s.

The analysis of the documents gave us an idea of the official requirements for the texts and a list of topics journalists were supposed to cover. Due to the study of orders and other normative documents, we got an idea about the editorial process in the agency. Unstructured interviews with the correspondents who worked for TASS in the second half of the 20th century helped us to make a more complete picture, reflecting real journalistic practice and approaches to work with news texts.

Discussion

News texts targeted at a wide range of readers were supposed to have a certain ideological effect. This was the goal of the party, and journalists acted as its assistants. Here is what V.I.Sapunov says on interaction or rather, interdependence of journalists and authorities both abroad and in the USSR. In his book "Foreign news agencies" (2006) [7] he considers, among other things, the political and economic aspect of the news agencies' emergence and work. According to the author, the whole history of journalism indicates that the media claimed objectivity but did not reach it, in fact.

A. Blum considers censorship in the second half of the twentieth century in detail and its influence on the quality of texts in his monograph "How It Was Done in Leningrad. Censorship during the Years of Thaw, Stagnation and Perestroika of 1953-1991" (2005) [1]. The author intentionally narrows the geography to a single city, referring in many respects to the fact that the level of the documents' preservation in the Leningrad General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR allows us to present the most complete and qualitative research. The book contains not only the documents of Glavlit, but also of various party bodies, mainly the ideological departments of the Leningrad Regional Committee of the CPSU. The author also draws attention to the fact that this system had not only prohibitive means, but also certain methods of "negative selection," such as the artificial and purposeful narrowing of the cultural space.

The technology of working with the information from TASS and the requirements for texts are described in detail in the monograph by N.G.Palgunov, who once headed the agency. The author focuses both on the technical side of the editorial process and on the position of TASS at the international arena and relations with other news agencies, while describing the situation in the Soviet media space (1955) [5].

Main results

In the second half of the 20th century, TASS held a unique position among the five world news agencies. The researchers call the period of 60-80s its "golden age." Due to modern technical facilities and qualified employees who were working for the agency during this period, TASS produced up to 2.5 million words a day. Most of the information came from messages that the agency's employees supplied to recipients both within the country and abroad, the smaller part was comprised of the publications from foreign correspondents and other agencies [7, p.282].

TASS was the primary source of information for most of the Soviet newspapers, radio and television in the Soviet Union. Especially in relation to the events abroad or official orders. High responsibility imposed certain duties on employees, dictated special approaches to the way information was presented and to the preparation of publications for Soviet and foreign readers. The analysis of sources, including biographical ones, showed that the list of requirements for TASS information included: Absolute accuracy and absolute grammatical correctness, maximum brevity of the form, and efficiency. At the same time, it was much easier to be quick within the Soviet Union than at the international arena. In addition to the need to coordinate news, journalists of TASS were obliged to "agituate with facts."

The correspondents had not only to select the most important facts, but also had to present information with the understanding of the policy of the USSR carrying out the tasks set by the party "by all the force and senses of their minds" [5, P.32].

At that, the note should have been interesting and understandable for Soviet and foreign readers without being overloaded with terms and clichés. As for internal information, emphasis was made on positive experience; criticism was a rare phenomenon in articles about the life of the country [9]. When it came to natural disasters and catastrophes, the agency used the so-called "figure of silence." The reporters in the republics and regions were often forbidden to convey "inconvenient" information to local authorities, although in the 1980s, the directors of TASS mentioned that they were fighting against this [3, P.13].

Journalists themselves faced very high demands in terms of education (priority was often given to the graduates of the language faculties of MGIMO university), style, responsibility and personal qualities. The authors were required to know the language of the country where they worked perfectly well; they had to understand its political processes, based on the knowledge of its history and economics. Journalists had to receive, handle and convey important political and social information no later than local correspondents. They had to read and know the local press without being limited to the content of the publication. A good foreign correspondent should know "who issued the newspaper, its party affiliation, who financed the paper, how it operated and if it had "political and financial autonomy." They should have also known which items formed its income and expenses. The journalist also had to know who was writing for this newspaper, the past of those people, their present and probable future" [5, P.43].

At the same time, they should avoid mentioning military facilities, a number of economic indicators and everything

that the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (Glavlit) could consider to be unsuitable for the publication. In the early 60's, Glavlit censors dealt with military and economic issues only, but by the end of the decade, the administration worked in conjunction with the ideological bodies of the Central Committee of the CPSU and influenced a rather wide range of topics [1, P.17].

Results of interview analysis

In order to have a more complete idea of the journalistic activities of the agency's employees, we interviewed the TASS journalists who were working for the agency during the period of 70s and 80s. The journalists, who were working abroad in those years, say that demands to the ideological part of the news and censorship restrictions in practice did not limit them in the selection of topics. If the information did not reach the media, it was published in one of the TASS bulletins for nomenclature or internal use in the agency's offices.

Those journalists who worked abroad had the opportunity to learn Western methods of presenting material, gaining access to foreign national and international press. Such a chance was also given to the TASS employees who worked in the Soviet branches in the 1960s. The TASS management provided journalists with the manual called "How to write for the Associated Press" [2, P.125], the authors of which were recommended not to overload the reader with the standard structure "What? Where? When?" but to turn to the reasonable selection of details and the use of casual conversational techniques [4, P.15].

Obviously, along with the other aspects, this played a positive role in the approach to the format and style of information in TASS. In the 1950s the issues of editorial volatility, monotony of the news style, their illegibility and lack of interesting details were often discussed at short meetings but after the 1960s, according to the journalists who were working for the agency at that time, they spoke mainly about journalistic successes and findings regarding the presentation of one fact or another, special techniques, experiments with style etc. [10].

Despite the canons and strict rules that even those who came to the news agency from the newspapers had to master, the preparation of publications was a rather creative process, which required responsibility and grammatical correctness, but allowed finding their own style and methods of working with news.

Conclusion

It should be noted that TASS was the only news agency of this level at the international arena, which, in fact, represented the countries of the entire socialist camp, and its ideology. Its achievements and recognition of its status as a reliable source of information, in spite of the criticism from the Western politicians who accused TASS of propaganda, political tendentiousness and, consequently, non-observance of the principles of freedom and independence of the press, were of high importance. However, the information presented by TASS was read, bought and published on the pages of the Western press. The agency was reckoned with, and in many respects this was the accomplishment of the journalists and their professionalism, including their irreproachable and accurate work with information texts.

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