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STRATEGIES TO DISCREDIT OPPONENTS: RUSSIAN PRESENTATIONS OF EVENTS IN COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Discourse in this paper is represented by the totality of texts (Koller, 2004, p. 18) covering events in former Soviet republics such as Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltic countries. Over 100 texts have been collected from the most popular Russian newspapers, *Argumenty i Fakty* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, between 2004 and 2010 in order to compile a "discourse of Russian satellites." Even though the contemporary Russian press avoids the totalitarian habits of Soviet times such as monoglossia, dysphemisms (language of insults), sanctions and social commands, it still attempts to exercise control over the formation of readers' opinions. The Russian press tries to channel the reaction of their audience toward disapproval of independent nations. The objective of this article is to summarize those narrative techniques which generate negative responses toward sovereign countries of the former Soviet Union. These techniques, which are called "strategies for discrediting opponents," include sourcing favorable and unfavorable opinions, humorous framing, ironic statements and constructing a negative background. The means of control are subtle, but they are no less effective than through direct coercion.

Key words: appraisal theory, discourse strategies, negative perception, dialogic perspectives, humor, metaphor, Russian press

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate discourse strategies used by the contemporary Russian press for presenting events in former Soviet republics. The concept of discourse strategies has been deployed by different linguistic schools and for different purposes (see Gamperz, 1983; Kintch & van Dijk, 1983). In this paper, the term "strategies" has been applied to recurring activities in

print media production which are aimed at creating unfavorable impressions. It alludes to the Kintch and Van Dijk (1983) definition of strategies as goal-oriented actions. The general notion of “discourse strategies” can overlap with “writing techniques,” “means of persuasion” and “style of presentation.”

My initial interest was instigated by a perceived difference between Soviet and contemporary styles of Russian newspapers. Contemporary Russian public discourse represents a noticeable departure from the tradition of the Soviet past (see Inkeles, 1950; Zemtsov, 1984; Weiss, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), as the Soviet media was notorious for “its new, crude and repulsive ideological vocabulary with which to abuse their enemies” (Hudson, 1977, XV). The vocabulary of the Soviet times has been replaced by riddle-like expressions, a variety of tropes and means of indirect evaluation (A'Beckett, 2009b, p. 3). In the past, if they had to destroy the reputation of a public figure, Soviet newspapers used a range of dysphemisms, i.e. verbal resources for insulting opponents (Burridge, 2002, p. 221). For example, condemnations were often expressed through parallels to animals, insects, reptiles and trash: *vonyuchaia padal'* ‘stinking carrion/animal corpses’, *beshenye sobaki* ‘mad dogs’, *razdavit' poganuyu gadinu* ‘to squash repulsive reptiles/vermin’, *rasstreliat' kak poganuyh psov* ‘to shoot like vile/filthy dogs’ (A'Beckett, 2007, p. 218; see also Weiss, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Such dysphemisms functioned as irrevocable social verdicts on unacceptable events and characters. The intense negativity of condemnations was complemented by definitions of dangerous habits, e.g. *shatkoe mirovozzrenie* ‘shaky worldview’, *obshchestvennaia i lichnostnaia degradatsiia* ‘social and personal degradation’, *meshchanstvo* ‘philistinism’, *uzkii krugozor* ‘narrow-mindedness’, *otsutstvie duhovnosti* ‘absence of spirituality’ (A'Beckett, 2007, p. 219). These descriptions of hazardous behavior were associated with disapproval by “high authorities.” They conveyed warnings about possible expulsion from society, which could take the form of repression, imprisonment or forceful removal from the country. Objects of sympathy or contempt were clearly identified. Readers could arrive at transparent commands or sanctions: “Reject and shun!” or “Accept without questioning!” Journalists of the Soviet times were supposed to operate within the accumulated stock of epithets and abuse (see Weiss, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Budaev & Chudinov, 2006, 2009; Kostomarov & Burvikova, 2001; Zemtsov, 1984; Inkeles, 1950). These devices can be considered the quintessence of authoritarianism which rules out any plurality of opinions and delivers unequivocal social commands expressed in abuse or conventional praise. However, these totalitarian objectives can be achieved through the application of subtle techniques which are not perceived as the imposition of superior judgment and suppression of dissident voices.

Contemporary Russian public discourse represents political pluralism and displays a range of viewpoints. Understanding mass media texts and their evaluative stances requires “puzzle solving” skills (Kostomarov & Burvikova, 2001, p. 66). The messages are often cryptic, i.e. heroes and villains are not painted

in black and white. The soft persuasion technique or “velvet gloves” (Burrige 2004) is a distinctive feature of the contemporary Russian media. The velvet gloves technique creates a dichotomy with the “iron hand” method (Burrige, 2004, p. 71-74). The latter often stands for authoritatively imposed dogmas or an organized, concerted campaign to change the attitudes and actions of large social groups (see Inkeles, 1950, p. 3). Velvet gloves is a subtle form of control. It supports the illusion of the free flow of ideas and arguments but regulates the selection and presentation of information about a perceived source of danger to authority, i.e. the Russian government. For instance, accounts of the Orange Revolution given in the Russian mass media clashed with reports from Ukrainian and Western information agencies. The Russian press gave an overall negative perception of the situation in Ukraine, even though positively laden phrases were often in use. Hence, I analyzed some repetitive linguistic patterns and their interpretative input in the construction of events by some Russian media sources and juxtaposed these linguistic representations with observations made by political scientists.

Russian reports on Ukrainian matters prevail in this investigation. Russian representations of political events in the countries other than Ukraine were not analyzed with the same level of detail because, unlike in the case with Ukraine, I was unable to check Russian accounts against the popular interpretations of such matters in the regions.

Data

I have collected samples of the velvet glove technique from the two most popular Russian newspapers: *Argumenty i fakty* (*Arguments and Facts*, *AiF*) and *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (*Komsomol Truth*, *KP*)¹. The time span covers the period of government by the Orange coalition in Ukraine from 2004 to 2010. That was the time when the political forces in charge of Ukraine were considered to have become unfriendly toward Russia (see Horvath, 2011; Besemeres, 2010a, 2010b).

The totality of collected texts constitutes public discourse (Koller, 2004, p. 18) centered around relations between Russia and former Soviet republics. Since the genres of these collected texts vary and include articles, interviews, letters to the editor, jokes and readers' comments, they reproduce “the virtual conversation within and between communities” (Musolff, 2004, p. 5).

¹ There have been several recent assessments of the popularity of Russian media sources. One was run by the Gallup Media Group in 2008. Approximately at the same time, BBC Monitoring had an inventory of popular printed media sources in Russia (consider BBC Monitoring, 2008). By all accounts, *Argumenty i Fakty* and *Komsomol'skaia pravda* are the most popular newspapers. According to BBC Monitoring, *AiF* has a circulation of 2,750,000 copies. The Gallup Media Group assesses its circulation as 8,108,500 copies. It also reports on the growing popularity of *AiF*, with approximately 1,066,200 readers in the last quarter of 2008. *KP* has a circulation of 660,000 copies according to BBC Monitoring and 4,907,500 copies according to the Gallup Media Group.

The selected newspapers have a different profile and audience. *AiF* is viewed as a politically neutral newspaper which was not on the payroll of any of the notorious Russian oligarchs. The Russian organization Znanie (Knowledge) initiated its foundation in 1978. The purpose of the publication of this newspaper was to provide propagandists with factual information. *AiF* states on its website that in 1990 the newspaper had a print run of 33.5 million which was then the largest circulation newspaper in the world and was entered into the Guinness World Records. *AiF* is a weekly publication. BBC Monitoring (2008) comments on *AiF*'s standing:

[I]ts mix of political analysis and speculation, patriotic sentiment, high-profile interviews, regional supplements and consumer advice has ensured its prominence on Russia's news stands.

Hard copies of *AiF* in Russian can be purchased in many countries of the former Soviet Union as well as in Western countries.

KP was founded in 1925 and has always addressed youth as its main audience. The newspaper used to be relatively liberal in the Soviet era. During the Moscow Coup in August 1991, *KP* was prohibited from publishing. According to BBC Monitoring, the peak of *KP*'s popularity was in 1990, when it sold almost 22 million daily copies. Nowadays the newspaper functions as a daily tabloid. There are special editions of the newspaper in former Soviet republics and in the Russian regions. The newspaper's owners are reported to have close links with Gazprom, the biggest owner of Russian fuel resources and the largest Russian company with strong backing from the Russian government.

KP is regarded as a tabloid while *AiF* is most likely a borderline case between the quality press and the tabloids (see Bednarek, 2006, p. 13). The juxtaposition of the weekly "quality paper" *AiF* with the daily "tabloid" *KP* suggests that the demarcation line between tabloids and broadsheets is blurred and that the traditional contrast between the two is not always sufficiently informative. For instance, Bednarek (2006, p. 13) argues that "the quality papers are largely concerned with politics, economics and sports, the popular papers cover less politics and instead more human interest stories." Nevertheless, *KP* as a tabloid still has a considerable focus on political reviews, economics, cultural news, science and sports as well as gossip columns and sensational crime stories. Despite being a tabloid, *KP* is not free from government interference due to its ownership by Gazprom. The "quality paper" *AiF* is a step further away from the government, judging from the profile of its owner, Promsviaz' bank. However, information about the ownership is hard to check and can often mislead the public².

² My preference for dealing with *AiF* and *KP* has also been motivated by the powerful search engines that could be operated on the electronic sites of these newspapers. Unfortunately, *AiF* no longer has the powerful search engine that was previously available.

Approach

A comment by Littlemore and Low (2006, p. 119) regarding the nature of manipulation guided the current analysis of the collected patterns.

[M]anipulation centrally involves the writer asking the reader to construct an emotional stance or evaluation...The writer in this case can deny responsibility for the overtones thus generated... The link between manipulation and covert evaluation is thus a close one; indeed it lies at the very heart of propaganda.

The suggestion that propaganda operates through selection of evaluative techniques became the working hypothesis for this paper. Thompson and Hunston (2000), Bednarek (2006, p. 206); Bloor and Bloor (2007, p. 10) argue that in as far as evaluations are expressed in very subtle, indirect ways, or as given information, it is much more difficult for readers to recognize and challenge them. Evaluation represents the central category of this analysis. In simple terms, evaluation guides the reader/hearer along the axis 'good-bad' and subsequently 'important-unimportant'. Thomson and Hunston (2000, p. 5) define evaluation as the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or proposition that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values.

Indirect means of evaluation can be analyzed within various theoretical frameworks. The theory of politeness treats hidden evaluation as off-the-record statements. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 69), off-the-record statements represent instances where more than one unambiguously attributable intention is retrieved and the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent, such as an expression of evaluation. Within appraisal theory, off-the-record evaluation (Martin, 2000, Martin & White, 2004, pp. 66-67) is analyzed in terms of invoked and provoked appraisal. Invoked or invited appraisal is implicit but triggered by the selection of facts. Therefore, authorial intent goes beyond the mere representation of factual information. The provoked stance can be activated with the use of stereotypes and emotional leads. In this paper, the differences between the invoked and provoked attitudes have been disregarded. The two subcategories have been opposed to explicitly expressed attitudes. Following appraisal theory, I discuss patterns of indirect evaluation which include sourcing of opinions, humorous framing and the reversal of positively laden images.

The distribution of voices advocating positive and negative viewpoints has been explored within the framework of dialogic engagement introduced by Bakhtin (1981) and developed by Martin and White (2005, Chapter 3). The contemporary Russian press produces a heteroglossia, i.e. a variety of interlocutors and expressed opinions. However, the reader is not bereft of authorial guidance

amidst this ostensible diversity of viewpoints. Analysis of dialogic engagement in the discourse focuses on authorial efforts to win the audience over to a particular viewpoint. Through dialogistic techniques the readers are aligned with the community of shared values. The dialogic engagement includes: 1) attribution of opinions, e.g. authorial indications about the weight of power assigned to the interlocutors; 2) authorial choice of participants in the discussion; 3) formulations of authorial acceptance of and distancing from expressed views. Bednarek (2006), Hunston and Thomson (2000) used the term “responsibility for assertion” to define relations between expressed opinions and interlocutors in a text.

Authorial distancing from “irrelevant” opinions has often been achieved through humorous statements and belittling characters presented in discussions. Contemporary Russian texts exploit various figures of speech, e.g., puns, symbolic likening, allegories, irony and others (Sannikov, 2005; Kostomarov & Burvikova, 2001; Kostomarov, 2005). They can be considered as genres of humor. Semantic script theory of humor provides the following explanation of the phenomenon: “Humor is an opposition of scripts or schemes of knowledge” (Raskin, 1985; Attardo & Raskin, 1991). The incongruity of scripts or the mismatch between ideas conveyed in a message creates a humorous effect.

Authorial guidance of the audience also includes tacit dismissal of expressed values through the use of irony and controversial backgrounding of the assertion. According to Giora (2003, p. 72), irony is a form of negation that does not use an explicit negation marker.

The identified categories of analysis assist in revealing the authorial influence over the audience. Readers’ possible interpretations of events and characters in the analyzed texts were offered within the relevant linguistic frameworks, i.e. appraisal theory, semantic script theory of humor and discourse dynamic framework for metaphor (Cameron & Maslen, 2010). These linguistic frameworks offer a valuable insight into discourse processes permeating the Russian mass media.

Sourcing opinions

The biased selection of interlocutors supporting the Orange Revolution in the Russian press illustrates the technique of dishonoring opinions inconvenient to the Russian political elite (a.k.a. Putin’s regime). The Orange Revolution disrupted the revanchist plans of Vladimir Putin and his associates (Horvath, 2011). As a consequence, participants in the Revolution were portrayed as either thrill-seekers with a history of violence (1, 3), or as people lacking analytical skills (6, 4), or as pragmatists (2, 5). Example (5) in which the director of a market hails the government responsible for minimizing his profits can be interpreted as either a demonstration of naivety and impracticality or a revelation of some tacit calculations. In examples (1, 2, 3) holders of positive views about the Orange Revolution were introduced via characterizations associated with reprehensible habits.

- (1) *V. Orlov iz Shepetovki, byvshyi mekhanik-voditel' desantno-shturmovogo bataliona, sluzhivshiy pervyi srok v Afganistane (1979-1981 g.g.): "U menia vysshee stroitel'noe obrazovanie i medal' 'Za boevye zaslugi'. A zlosti vyshe kryshi"*
 'Orlov, V. [a participant in Orange protests held in the Ukrainian capital-L.A.] from Shepetovka [a provincial Ukrainian town-L.A.], former driver-mechanic in an air-assault battalion, served his first term in Afghanistan (in 1979-1981). He says "I have a tertiary degree in construction engineering and a medal "For merit in combat". But my anger has been growing beyond any tolerance."
- (2) *Na podpol'nom soveshchani nochnykh babochek Kreshchatika bylo priniato reshenie sdelat' 20-% skidku dlia "oranzhevyykh revolyutsionerov".*
 'An underground assembly of night sex workers from Kreshchatik [the main street in Kiev] decided to give a 20% discount to "Orange revolutionaries."
- (3) – *Esli nas spetsnaz ne pustit, znachit, my ego poprosim, – krichala ona [ukrainskaia Zhanna d'Ark – Tymoshenko].*
 – *Tochno poprosim! – likovali tineydzheri, potiraia kulachki.*
 '– If the Special Forces don't let us in, we will insist, – she [the Joan of Arc of Ukraine – Tymoshenko] cried out.'
 – Sure, we will! – the adolescents were exulted and rubbed their small fists.'

In examples (4, 5, 6), holders of sympathetic opinions about the leaders of the Orange Revolution, e.g. Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko have been portrayed to be either naive or pragmatic. The author of example (4) also tries to demonstrate that the comparison of Tymoshenko with Joan of Arc is ridiculous and dissociates himself/herself from this attribution.

- (4) *S Yu. Tymoshenko (na kotoruyu vnov' zavedeno ugovnoe delo) pered telekamerami marshiruyet staika starushek s plakatami "Yuliya! Ty nasha Zhanna d'Ark!"*
 'Yulia Tymoshenko (against whom criminal charges have again been raised) and a flock of old ladies are marching with placards [reading] "Yulia! You are our Joan of Arc!" in front of TV cameras.'
- (5) *Director "Bessarabskogo" rynka Anatolii Plakhotnyuk priznayet, chto miasa v prodazhe vsye men'she i men'she, no liniyu Tymoshenko podderzhivaet.*
 'Anatoly Plakhotnyuk, director of the Bessarabsky market, admits that the delivery of meat to the market for sale is constantly decreasing but he supports Tymoshenko's policy.'
- (6) *Nam obidno, chto rossiyskie SMI tak unizhayut nas—Ukrainu,—zaiavil Nikolai Feliksovich (molodoi pensioner iz derevni). Vchera, naprimer, po odnomu iz vashikh kanalov pokazyvayut ulybayushcheesia litso Dmitriya*

Medvedeva i tut zhe pokazyvayut sovsem khmuroe, ozabochnoe litso Viktora Yushchenko! Razve eto ne prinizhenie nashego natsional'nogo dostoinstva?

'Our pride has been offended since the Russian mass media belittle us, Ukrainians, so much', – stated Nikolai Feliksovich (a recently retired vil-lager). "For instance, yesterday they showed the smiling face of Dmitry Medvedev and simultaneously the very gloomy and preoccupied face of Viktor Yushchenko. Does it occur to you that this is a humiliation of our national dignity?"

Summarizing views that are sympathetic toward the Orange events, it can be stated that these opinions have been delegated to particular characters, e.g., to prostitutes (2), to former soldiers, decorated but with a history of violence (1), to belligerent adolescents (3), to old people with a lack of social awareness (4, 6) and to impractical or pragmatic salesmen (5).

In other publications, the following unflattering labels have been used to stress the reprehensible qualities: *buntovshchiki* "mutineers," *neo-trotskistskiy brend 'Che Guevara'* "the 'Che Guevara' brand of neo-Trotskyites," *agressivnoe men'shinstvo vo glave s Yushchenko* "the aggressive minority led by Yushchenko," *karnaval na maidane* "the carnival [the ironic labeling of peaceful protests] on the Maidan [the main square in the Ukrainian capital]." Thus, the opinions held by these public groups lack credibility.

The voice of reason has been assigned to pro-Kremlin political analysts delivering their judgments in sophisticated Russian argumentation. They discuss the events in Ukraine from the perspective of international relations and global power aspirations.

- (7) *Ibo, kak zaiavil Sergei Markov, politolog...: "Storonniki Yushchenko, da i sam on mne ochen' simpatichny – sovremennye, evropeyski orientirovannye lyudi. No oni obmanuty temi, kto stoit za ikh spinoi... Sozdateli etogo proekta – Z.Brzezinski, M. Albright,..i drugie predstaviteli vostochno-evropeyskikh diaspor v SSA...Ih tsel'–sdelat' Pol'shu etakim evroshefom nad Ukrainoi".*

'However, as Sergei Markov, a political commentator stated... "I am very sympathetic toward "Yushchenko's allies" and Yushchenko's personality. They are people of a modern and European mindset... But they are deceived by those who back them up...The creators of this project are Z. Brzezinski, M. Albright.., and other agents acting on behalf of Eastern Europe in the USA. Their objective is to make Poland a European mentor for Ukraine..."

- (8) *Ibo, kak zaiavil politolog Sergei Markov, vozmozhnyi uspekh Yushchenko neset v sebe mnozhestvo riskov.*

‘As Sergei Markov, a political analyst, claims, “Yushchenko’s prospective success is fraught with multiple risk factors.”’

- (9) *Podderzhka Yushchenko so storony SSHA imela v pervuiu ochered’ voenno-politicheskuiu podopleku, utverzhaet prezident fonda “Politika” V. Nikonov*. ‘According to V. Nikonov, the President of the Politics Foundation, the U.S. support of Yushchenko has a military and political underpinning.’

Mikhail Leontyev, another popular Russian analyst, argued on behalf of a large proportion of Ukrainians.

- (10) *Izbirateli vostoka i yuga nenavidiat Yushchenko.*

‘The electorate from the South and East [Russophone regions in Ukraine] hate Yushchenko.’

Such a selection of voices is an effective strategy of persuasion in Russian discourse. The voices leading the discussion countered and reversed the positive opinions and self-representation of the Orange supporters. They testified to the potential danger and manipulation on the side of the Orange coalition. The forthright dissident voices of Russian oppositionists, as a rule, were deprived of any chance to participate in the dialogue about Ukraine. The democratic Russian media channel Echo of Moscow often interviewed those who were ignored in the newspapers analyzed. These democratic politicians accentuated perspectives neglected or marginalized in the discourse of Russian satellites. Former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, a leader of the Russian oppositionist forces, could challenge the views of “authorities” such as Nikonov, Leontyev, Markov and others:

Yulia Vladimirovna [Tymoshenko] was one of the so-called mothers, creators of the Orange coalition which rightly moved Ukraine toward democratic development and the European Community as well as toward the acquisition of values of “European” conventional statehood.³

Sergei Kovalev, an experienced human rights activist, also suggests a missing perspective on events in Ukraine:

I openly envy the Ukrainian scenario, I envy the fact that the people of a neighboring country, a fraternal country, have stridently declared: “Enough! We are not cattle! Elections can’t be falsified!”⁴

³ The author’s translation of the transcript of the interview with Mikhail Kasyanov from Feb. 9, 2010 from the site *Ekho Moskvyy Programs*, which can be accessed at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/655017-echo/>, 2010.06.01.

⁴ ‘Novoe pokolenie dissidentov,’ *Ekho Moskvyy*, Dec. 22, 2004 from the site *Ekho Moskvyy Programs*, can be accessed at <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/exit/33637/>, 2011.10.01.

An unflattering perception of Russian deeds was delivered by Valeria Novodvorskaia, a Soviet dissident and the founder of the Democratic Unity party.

Russia is going for everything that is vulnerable. Through brainwashing or sometimes with the help of tanks. We have just observed the war between Russia and Georgia. If Ukraine does not take measures, it will become a protectorate⁵.

An analysis of the missing voices reveals that the equilibrium of evaluative power was artificially skewed toward a negative perception of the independent actions of former Soviet republics. I am by no means trying to suggest that politicians who pursued independent objectives in countries like Ukraine were free from error or controversy. However, actions and events which could be justified were usually misinterpreted through the imputation of wrongful motivations.

Humorous framing

In this section, I consider two genres of humor: jokes and wisecracks. Jokes are short funny stories which celebrate a “situational comedy” and “a moral point or a celebrity’s character” (Raskin, 1985). Russian newspapers published many jokes in response to complaints from neighboring nations about Russian dominance. The humorous anecdotes published often allude to Soviet ethnic humor in which each nation followed a certain humorous script serving to flesh out national peculiarities (Raskin, 1985). For instance, Ukrainians were often mocked as an immature nation in the Soviet past. A joke cited from Raskin (1985, p. 136) provides an illustration of the STUPIDITY script.

How many Ukrainians does it take to change a light bulb? Five. One to stand on the table and put the bulb in and four to turn the table.

The political underpinning of contemporary jokes about Ukrainians alludes to the NATIONAL STUPIDITY script as well. Compare the following example:

- (11) *Russkie i ukrainsy ochen' pokhozhi. Tol'ko russkie nakhodiat v iashchike iz-pod apel'sinoy Cheburashku, a ukrainsy – prezidenta.*
 ‘Russians and Ukrainians are alike. Only in a storage box for oranges, Russians find Cheburashka [a cartoon character with big ears, similar to Mickey Mouse] and Ukrainians – their President.’

⁵ From *Osoboe mnenie s Valeriey Novodvorskoi* (A special opinion with guest V. Novodvorskaia) on Feb. 11, 2010, *Ekho Moskvyy Programs*, can be accessed at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/655623-echo/>, 2010.06.01.

One understanding of this joke is that in Russia, the secondary function of orange containers is a surprise box for kids. In Ukraine, however, the child-like nation finds their President instead of toys in the surprise box. The storage box for oranges is an allusion to the Orange Revolution which was cast in the Russian press as a childish activity of an “immature nation”. Similar insinuations have been made in many other jokes, for example the following:

(12) *Nakonets-to Ukraina stala svobodnoi: ran'she rukovoditelia vybirali v Moskve, a teper' – v Washingtone.*

‘Finally, Ukraine has gained independence: the head of state used to be selected by Moscow, now it’s done by Washington.’

Georgians in Soviet humor were depicted as an entrepreneurial nation good at selling citrus fruits and negotiating prices. Raskin (1985, p. 238) reveals one of the ethnic scripts about Georgians in the following joke:

A hijacking is attempted on board a Soviet plane which is flying from Tbilisi to Moscow. The hijacker tries to divert the plane to Paris but a muscular Georgian overpowers him, and the plane lands in Moscow as scheduled. The authorities treat the Georgian as a hero and a great Soviet patriot. He is allowed to grant an interview to reporters.” Tell us, comrade,” he is asked, “what made you do this patriotic thing at such a grave risk to yourself and other passengers?” “I had a ton of oranges on board,” he replies. “What would I have done with them in Paris?”

The contemporary jokes that surfaced after the Russian-Georgian confrontation build upon the SALESMAN-ENTREPRENEUR script as well.

(13) *Gruzia priniala reshenie razorvat' diplomaticheskie otnosheniya s Moskvoi i otozvat' svoikh diplomatov so vsekh rynkov Rossii.*

‘Georgia decided to break diplomatic ties with Moscow and withdrew its diplomatic representatives from all Russian markets.’

The joke implies that Georgia will pay dearly for its disobedience, since Russia is one of the major buyers of Georgian citrus fruits and other commodities. The comic situation conceals neither the menace nor the intimidation. Contemporary jokes often reverse the roles of perpetrators and victims. Russian humor presents unfortunate events as the outcome of stupid decisions made by those so-called “foreign governments” which are within the Russian sphere of strategic interests. Two major directions of Russian foreign policy toward its former satellites have been represented by 1) an embargo on food imports from disobedient neighboring countries for “sanitary reasons” and 2) “gas wars” in which Russia dictated

punitive prices to its rebellious neighbors. An embargo on food imports from defiant neighbors was imposed through announcements of the non-conformity of the products with Russian hygiene standards (see 14 and 26). Such products include dairy and meat from Ukraine, wine from Georgia and Moldova and fish from the former Baltic republics. The forbidden products represent a long-term acclaimed specialization of the regions in question. However, Russian jokes ridiculing dodgy manufacturing processes hide possible political motivations.

- (14) *V otvet na otkaz Rossiii zakupat' moldavskie i gruzinskie vina Gruzia i Moldavia reshili ne zakupat' v Rossii khimicheskie aromatizatory i krasiteli, iz kotorykh eti vina delayusia.*

'Georgia and Moldova responded to the Russian refusal to buy Georgian and Moldovan wines with a decision to stop purchasing from Russia the chemical flavorings and colorings that are used in the production of those wines.'

The topic of trade wars between countries has become prominent in jokes and humorous narratives. However, prime position among jocular topics belongs to "the gas war" with Russia. Besemeres (2010a, p. 4) argues that the gas wars "had become almost an annual event during the Orange ascendancy." The next joke exemplifies this theme in Russian humor.

- (15) *M. Fradkov zakhodit v kabinet V. Putina.*
 – *Vladimir Vladimirovich, takoe delo. Narastaet napriazhennost'. Evropa bez gaza merznet. Chto budem delat'?*
 – *Vyshlite im dlia sogreva partiyu oranzhevykh sharfikov.*
 'M. Fradkov [former Russian Prime Minister] enters the office of V. Putin [President of Russia].
 – Vladimir Vladimirovich, we have an issue here. Tension is growing. Europe is freezing without our gas. What shall we do?
 – Send them a batch of orange scarves to keep warm.'

The punch line of the joke ends with the recommendation to acquire "orange scarves." Putin's suggestion clashes with common sense: scarves cannot replace the gas supply. However, the color of the scarves is the key to understanding the President's insinuations, as it was a hint to the West about their support of the "culprit" – Orange Ukraine. Russians assumed that Ukraine had stolen gas that was running through the pipelines over their territory. Putin's jest was aimed at both the West (Europe) and Ukraine. The joke also illuminates a secondary line of associations – the color orange is a reflection of a revolutionary "flame." In Putin's opinion, preserving the flame of the revolution and its attributes should be a sufficient means of bringing happiness and warmth. When they started the

Orange Revolution, Ukrainians were roused by their insurgent spirit and turned a blind eye to the fact that they were dependent on fuel supplied by Russia. The word “orange” is used as a cursory reference to Ukraine, the Orange Revolution and its leaders. At the same time, it has become an emblem of Putin’s evaluation of the Orange Revolution as a thoughtless inspiration. Numerous scripts clash in the joke.

Many other nations, similarly to Ukraine, have been subjected to painful negotiations with Russia over gas prices. Maples (2011) argues:

[T]he relationship with Russia has proved difficult for several of its neighbors, not just Ukraine. Belarus has had similar problems over gas prices, and the result has been the forthcoming takeover of its gas transit company Beltransgaz by Gazprom.

However, Russian political humor presents Russia solely as a victim of the circumstances.

(16) *Kogda Belorussiya dogovarivaetsia s Rossiey o postavkakh gaza, ona oplachivaet tol’ko mezhdunarodnyi telefonnyi razgovor.*

‘When Belarus negotiates the gas supply from Russia, it only pays for the international phone call.’

The joke suggests that Belarus receives gas for free because of Russia and Belarus’ unity and historical brotherhood. However, it conceals the fact that Russia aims to gain profitable assets in both Belarus and Ukraine (Besemeres, 2010b; Maples, 2011).

Wisecracks as much as jokes target the gas war between Russia and Ukraine, presenting Ukraine as a gas thief and an unreliable partner. A wisecrack is a clever remark which deals with a particular person or thing (Raskin, 1986, p. 29). They are sometimes incorporated into another narrative, creating a Chinese box effect. Wisecracks often appear in titles and headlines. Jokes, however, are independent story-like narratives and, as a rule, are not integrated into a broader textual organization. The humorous effect of wisecracks can derive from punning. A pun is defined as a foregrounded lexical ambiguity (Leech, 1969). A polysemous word or an idiomatic phrase can trigger a pun. In such instances, at least two senses and scripts [schemes of knowledge] are accessed by the reader. For instance, in the wisecrack below, the author elaborates on the ambiguity of the concept “smelly” which refers to the odor of a physical substance such as gas but which can be suggestive of dishonesty as well.

(17) *Gas s dushkom. V. Yushchenko, prezident Ukrainy: “Ja ne zanimalsia vashim vonyuchim gazom.” Komment: “Prirodnyi gas, kak izvestno, prakticheski ne imeet zapakha. S dushkom okazalas’ prezhniaia skhema ego postavok na Ukrainu.*

'Smelly gas. V. Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, "I have not been involved in distribution of your smelly gas". Comment: "Natural gas, as we know, has practically no smell. The smell comes from the schemes of its supply to Ukraine."

Similar insinuations about Ukrainian cheating with regard to Russian gas supplies can be found in other headlines.

(18) *Gaz zagnali v trubu. A zapashok ostalsia.*

'The gas has been contained in the pipes but the stench remains.'

(19) *Voprosy s gasovym dushkom.*

'Questions which smell of gas'

Contrary to the situation depicted in these wisecracks, Russia is said to bully its neighbors by means of its gas and fuel supplies. Besemeres (2010a, p. 4) argues:

Even accepting Russia's argument that its gas prices were merely raised to market level (although other customers have been paying much less...), the hikes were abrupt and particularly hard on Ukraine...

In a witty Russian comment, though, Russia was presented as a victim again.

(20) *Ukraintsy tyriat gaz i viniat v kovarstve nas [russkikh].*

'Ukrainians are stealing gas but blame us [Russians] for insidiousness.'

The ambiguities of other words have also been used. Color terms are frequently exploited humorous devices. For instance, the word *krasnet'* 'to turn red' can mean – in Russian and English – "to be ashamed of something, when one's face turns red" and "to become sympathetic to the ideals of the Bolsheviks", e.g. to adhere to principles of collectivization and expropriation. The parallel invoking "orange" and "red" is also linked to primary color associations. Orange is often regarded as a mixture of yellow and red and therefore *turning red* suggests the elimination of the yellow color or the adding of more red to the mixture.

(21) *Predsedatel' Komiteta Soveta Federatsii po mezhdunarodnym delam: "Oranzhevaia revoliutsiia stremitel'no krasneet."*

'The Chair of the Committee on International Affairs in the Russian Federation Council: 'The Orange Revolution is rapidly turning red'.'

This statement is a compact way of saying that the Orange Revolution, or rather the Orange Coalition, is doing something shameful and at the same time is very similar to the Bolshevik Revolution – allegedly, in its use of the crowd effect,

the violent storming of state buildings and expropriation of private property. It is also a description of the changing hues in the palette.

Jokes, puns and teases appear to mitigate the gravity of the discussed topics. According to Raskin (1985), humor has diverse functions: on the one hand, it can build solidarity between readers and writers as well as between victims and scoffers; on the other hand, it can manifest a hostile approach. It is possible to suggest that the “gas wars” between nations have been alleviated by the circulation of numerous jokes on both sides. However, scorn and derision expressed in relation to any independent decision of the former Soviet republics has strengthened the general negativity of the Russian public toward these nations and has reversed the roles of perpetrators and victims. The discussion blogs of the newspapers as well as the comments of so-called Russian patriots on Facebook reveal that a wrongful perception of the former Soviet republics has been entrenched among many readers of these newspapers. The following examples can be cited as evidence of the existing prejudice toward the former republics of the Soviet Union:

(22) *Evropa i SSHA sdelayut s Ukrainoi tozhe, chto i s Latviey--obvoruyut i vybrosiat na pomoiku.*

Europe and the U.S. will do to Ukraine the same thing they did to Latvia – trashing them after ripping them off.

(23) *Vse byvshie „bratia” kusayut ruku, s kotori ediat. A Rossiia, kak „dobraia mat”, idiet na povodu u neradivvykh dtei.*

All former “brothers” bite the hand which feeds them. Yet Russia is like a kind mother, indulging her ungrateful kids.

Comments from the discussion blogs exemplify the public beliefs about exaggerated misfortunes and the ungratefulness of the neighboring nations. When readers do not check alternative sources and accept the information uncritically, they receive a distorted picture of Russian foreign affairs.

Reversal of positive labels

If the Soviet media widely deployed abusive and insulting terms (Hudson, 1977, p. XV; Weiss, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), contemporary Russian media refrain from omnipresent name-calling. Ironically, they often use positive labels to denigrate opponents. One such word is the affectionate term “brother.” The frequent usage of “brother,” “sister,” “fraternal” and “brotherhood” can give the impression that Russian discourse promotes friendship, trust, solidarity, mutual assistance and cooperation between nations forming a large strong family. The metaphoric mapping accentuates fairness, cooperation and friendship among countries and business partners. It alludes to the slogan *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. However,

this idealistic perspective is seldom consistent with the metaphor's disparaging-contexts. A few linguistic patterns can be offered for consideration.

One of the means of ruining "fraternal" equality is the application of the semi-fixed expressions "younger/elder brothers." The difference in age deprives one of the brothers of "equal opportunity." As a rule, Russia takes the role of the elder brother or the big brother.

- (24) *Krome samikh Gruzii i Ukrainy, v novuyu organizatsiyu voidut, veroiatno, Pol'sha i strany Baltii. To est' gosudarstva, ne ispytyvayushchie v poslednee vremia oboi lyubvi k svoemu byvshemu „starshemu bratu”.*

'This new organization may include Poland and the Baltic republics, apart from the aforementioned Georgia and Ukraine. This means that it will comprise states that do not feel any special love toward their former "elder brother" nowadays.'

Another collocation which alters the idea of equality and which functions as abuse is *bratya po razumu* 'brothers in intelligence,' which in Russian commonly refers to aliens and extraterrestrial creatures.

- (25) *No prishel Yeltsyn. Razdal suverenitet vsem "bratiam po razumu". Otdal po kusku nashei rodiny im (do 1924 territoriya nyne iavliayushchaisia kazakhskoi, byla chastyu Omskoi gubernii). Eti bratia bystro nachali vymetat' russkikh i lozhit'sia pod amerikantsev.*

'Then Yeltsin arrived on the scene. He gave sovereignty to all "brothers in intelligence." He gave out pieces of our homeland (before 1924 the territory that belongs to the Kazakhs today, used to be a part of Russia's Omsk Province). These brothers quickly swept the Russians out and lay down under the Americans.'

Therefore, Russia is frequently presented as a responsible and long-suffering "elder brother" while other nations of the former Soviet Union are immature and hostile "younger brothers" and "brothers in intelligence."

The argumentative purposes of metaphor use can alter the original mapping as well. Musolff (2003, p. 113) defines argumentative purposes as "thematic dimensions/perspectives that have been introduced into the discourse by speakers to achieve specific argumentative objectives." The metaphor scenario of BROTHERS (Musolff, 2006) remains the same, e.g. relations between close relatives, but the thematic spin differs. The metaphor is often used to express reprimands, ironic observations as well as "fraternal" advice. Compare the following examples.

- (26) *Bros'te ego [Saakashvili], nashi bratia gruziny, s trona gruzinskogo skin'te kak musor.*

- ‘Throw him [Saakashvili] away, our Georgian brothers, dump him from the throne of Georgia like a piece of rubbish!’
- (27) *Nashi bratia-bolgary: My predali Rossiyu, no my yeyo lyubim! Ot musul'manskogo rabstva pravoslavnykh bratyev spasla Rossiya tsenoi zhizney pochti dvukhsot tysiach svoikh soldat.*
 ‘Our Bulgarian brothers: We betrayed Russia, but we love her! Russia rescued her Orthodox brothers from Muslim slavery at the price of almost two hundred thousand of her soldiers’ lives.’
- (28) *Vezti k nam miaso-molochnye produkty s Ukrainy Rossel'khoznadzor zapretil 20 ianvaria. Uslyshav o takikh drakonovskikh merakh po otnosheniyu k bratiam-slavianam, my tut zhe vzgrustnuli: kak zhe teper' budem bez zamechatel'nogo ukrainskogo sala?! ... V otvet bratia-slaviane uvelichili postavki glazirovannoi karameli da eshche i iziali u sebia na rynke iz svobodnoi torgovli rossiyskoe sladen'koe.*
 ‘The Russian Department of Inspection of Agricultural Products banned the import of Ukrainian dairy and meat products on January 20. We became depressed when we heard about the Draconian orders in relation to our Slavic brothers: how can we do without marvelous Ukrainian pork fat [salo]? ...In response the Slavic brothers increased deliveries of their glazed caramels to us and, moreover, removed Russian confectionery from free trade in their market.’
- (29) *Nado pomoch' bratiam-slavianam izbavit'sia ot "oranzhevoi chumy."*
 ‘We must help our Slavic brothers to get rid of the “orange plague”.⁶’
- (30) *Rossiya postavliaet neft' i gas po deshevke, a bat'ka [Lukashenko] razlagol'stvuet o slavianskom bratstve i edinom gosudarstve.*
 Russia supplies cheap oil and gas while the Father [Lukashenko – President of Belarus] gives lengthy speeches about Slavic brotherhood and common statehood.

These examples show that the positively laden concept “brother” masks an intrusion into the political affairs of Russian neighbors, namely the former republics of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The fraternal bond with Russia has been created either because of 1) the same ethnicity, e.g. Slavic brothers include Ukrainians and Belarusians as well as other subgroups of Slavs such as Poles and Bulgarians; 2) the same religion of Orthodox Christians which unites Russians with Georgians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Armenians as well as Ukrainians and Belarusians; 3) shared ideology such as communist aspirations which link the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. Other circumstances of the application of “brothers” are beyond the objectives of this paper (see more in A’Beckett, 2012).

⁶ The metaphor “Orange plague” is a common rhetorical device in Russian discourse which targets the Orange coalition in Ukraine and alludes to nationalism, anti-Russian sentiments, a change of regime, populism, gaining power by opposition, pseudo-democracy and riots.

It is interesting to note that the appearance of “brothers” is quite predictable in discussions on hot topics about Russian gas supply (30), the embargo on food imports to Russia for medical reasons (28), and the prospects of other countries joining the EU and NATO (23, 26, 27, 29). Therefore, nations are predictably honored with the title “brothers” when they try to pursue actions independent of Russia. The perception of an ideal family in which brothers care, support each other and respect each other’s autonomous decisions is at odds with the expressed communicative intentions and overarching themes accommodating “brothers.” A number of other positively laden terms acquire ironic and mocking overtones when they are incorporated within negative themes and statements of disapproval. Authorial tacit contextual disclaimers of positive properties reverse the evaluative orientation of flattering words. The reversal technique also aims to evoke guilt and the inadequacy of those who are described through such words. Other cases, including “Joan of Arc of Ukraine” (see example 4) and “heralds of liberation,” have been discussed in A’Beckett (2009a, 2009b).

Discussion and conclusions

The data presented reveal that authoritarian methods are compatible with ostensible heteroglossia, flattering terms and humorous narratives since these persuasive devices can take away the reader’s impartiality. Through careful selection of voices in discussions, tacit disclaimers, ridicule and the countering of values expressed by opponents, authors align readers with the community of shared values. Authors highlight negative factors in the independent policies of Soviet satellites. Messages of importance are delivered by figures of authority, while dissident opinions are attributed to persons lacking credibility. Ridicule and belittling of opponents’ actions in discourse consolidates the negative judgments expressed by recognized authorities. The active use of jokes and teases builds a bond between readers and writers since it is flattering to readers to assume that they can interpret subtle jocular hints. Compared to the previous solemnity and accusative gravity of Soviet style, humorous narratives are more persuasive (see Raskin, 1985; Ritchie, 2009). According to Braiker (2001, p. 151), “teasing, by definition, is hostile. Whenever a joke or tease is made at another’s expense some degree of anger and aggression are the undercurrents.” Therefore, jokes and teases are a convenient tool for creating a dichotomy between “us,” the people who understand what is right, and “them,” the “immature” people who thus invite mockery and derision.

In this paper I argue that flattering words are frequently used for evocation of disapproval. Some contextualizations of metaphors whose mapping convey positive ideas often results in unflattering parallels. The dialogic packaging of a positively laden metaphor can override its flattering associations (A’Beckett, 2012). The modified mappings and ideological implications often appear to be: a) the

result of collocational augmentation of the term; b) clashes of attitudes encoded in the metaphor scenario (Musolff, 2006) versus the argumentative purposes of the message; c) ironic statements. The topic of the betrayed good “brother/sister” Russia with outstanding cultural experience and generosity has permeated the context of the BROTHERS metaphor. Besemeres (2010a, p. 24) comments on the carrot and stick approach which has been used by Russian politicians toward its former partners:

“Provided [Russia] can restrain its frequent impulse to treat its prodigal little brothers with imperial arrogance, it should be able to make some solid headway [in reshaping the political influence within Eastern Europe – L.A.] over the next few years.”

Observations by political scientists, such as Besemeres (2010a), corroborate the validity and ubiquity of the discussed linguistic strategies for discrediting Russian opponents.

The discussed strategies for discrediting opponents are manifestations of invoked judgment (Martin & White, 2005, p. 67). Although the linguistic patterns of tacit evaluation have been defined within the framework of appraisal theory, other linguistic approaches have also been relevant for the analysis. These approaches include: a) dialogic perspectives of text (Bakhtin, 1981); b) semantic-script theory of verbal humor (Raskin, 1985; Attardo & Raskin, 1991); c) discourse dynamic framework for metaphor (chiefly in Cameron & Maslen, 2010). The latter deals with the communicative environment of metaphors. Instead of generalization of metaphor properties through identification of source and target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the discourse dynamic framework for metaphors focuses on themes, beliefs and attitudes represented by metaphors in a specific context.

Various explicit and implicit indicators of attitudes are taken into account when a reader computes an overall projection of positive and negative evaluation in a text. The frequency count of positively and negatively laden words could be misleading when it comes to authorial acceptance or disapproval of an event or a character.

The velvet gloves technique of the Russian press can be compared with the behavioral patterns of a manipulative person (see the typology of dominant people in Grant, 2001). As such, the smart “bully” often allows friends and colleagues to express their opinions. He/she indulges the perception of pluralism. However, nonconformist opinions are usually discarded since they are assessed as lacking persuasive power and as being too emotional and irrational. Through attacks on the emotional and “irrational” foundation of dissident viewpoints, the bully recruits more supporters to the cause, since ridicule and snubs evoke a fear of being seen as part of the victimized group. The manipulator does not

overtly abuse its prey. Instead, he or she creates an atmosphere of tolerance and sacrifice by giving his or her opponents a flattering honorific such as “brother/sister” and demonstrating personal attachment despite all odds. At the same time the bully provides suggestions which are in conflict with the victim’s interests. The pretense is often used that the victim, as an irrational and immature person, does not understand the benefits and disadvantages of the situation. The manipulator masks blackmail and pressure under the guise of friendly concern. Such is the behavioral underpinning of velvet gloves techniques, otherwise discussed as strategies of discrediting.

The events and characters portrayed in the provided samples reveal Moscow’s efforts to dominate in Eastern Europe and to regain its international superpower status. Horvath (2011), Besemeres (2010a, 2010b), Maples (2011) warn of Russian neo-imperial aspirations. Peters (2011, p. 10) comments on Russian “achievements”:

[Putin] returned Russia to great power status... His manipulation of Europe has given him virtually every pipeline agreement he wanted while sidelining NATO’s new members in the east and keeping Ukraine weak and disunited. He dismembered Georgia, but paid no price for it.

Russian newspaper readers, including Russophone groups in the former Soviet republics, have been the recipients of positive coverage of Russia’s “generous” and “protective” policy toward its former satellites. This coverage has cultivated the perception that independent politicians from the regions have been “inadequate” and “mean.” The press has often rushed to justify the Kremlin’s activities and recruit new supporters for the course it takes. Having said that, I do not want to discount the multiple efforts of many respected Russian journalists and independent media sources to provide different analyses of the considered events.

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Appendix

List of cited articles, discussion blogs of articles and transcripts of TV programs

KP = *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (*Comsomol Truth*); AiF = *Argumenty i fakty* (*Arguments and facts*)

1. *Anekdoty nedeli* 'Jokes of the week', AiF, No 32, 2008.
2. *Anekdoty nedeli* 'Jokes of the week', AiF, No 18, 2009.
3. *Anekdoty v nomer* (Jokes for this issue), KP, 5.04.2006.
4. *Brat'ia po razumu: Saakashvili poteshil Yushchenko* 'Brothers in intelligence: Saakashvili gave Yushchenko satisfaction', AiF, No. 33, 2005.
5. *Denezhnoe nedovol'stvo voennosluzhashchih* 'Monetary dissatisfaction of the military personnel', AiF, No. 8, 2005.
6. *Gaz s dushkom* 'Smelly gas', AiF, No 8, 2009.
7. *Gaz zagnali v trubu: No zapashok ostalsia* 'The gas has been contained in the pipes but the stench of gas remains', AiF, No 4, 2009.
8. *Evropa obespokoena sozdaniem Tamozhennogo soyuza Rossii, Belorussii i Kazakhstana* 'Europe expresses concerns about creation of Custom Union of Russia, Belorussia and Kazakhstan', KP, 14.11.2009.
9. *Krasnaia knopka Gazproma* 'The emergency red button of Gazprom', AiF, No. 52, 2005.
10. *Nezavisimost' po-ukrainski: nastupaesh' na odni i te zhe grabli, a russkie uzhe ni pri chem.* (Independence, Ukrainian style: stepping onto the same rake but without Russia's input), KP, 24.10.2008.
11. *M. Leontyev: "Stranu rvet..."* 'M. Leontyev: The country is torn...', AiF, No 48, 2004.
12. *M. Leontyev: "Yushchenko debiliziruet istoriyu Ukrainy"* M. Leontyev: Yushchenko's presentation of Ukrainian history is imbecile, KP, 25.03. 2008.
13. *Nashi bratia-bolgary: my predali Rossiyu, no my yeyo lyubim* 'Our Bulgarian brothers: We betrayed Russia but we love her', KP, 2.7.2005.
14. *"My syuda priehali ne v biryul'ki igrat"...* "We are not here to waste our time on trifles/ play spillikins"...', KP, 24.11.2004.
15. *Novoe pokolenie dissidentov* 'A new generation of dissidents' with Sergei Kovalev, Ekho Moskvyy, on 22.12.2004. Can be accessed at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/655623-echo/>, 01.06.2010.
16. *Oranzhevaia' Ukraina – netu miasa, net benzina!* 'The Orange Ukraine – it has no meat, it has no petrol!', KP, 18.06.2005.
17. *Osoboe mnenies Valeriey Novodvorskoii* 'A special opinion with guest V. Novodvorskaia' on 11.02.2010, Ekho Moskvyy Programs. The full text can be accessed at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/655623-echo/>, 1.06.2010.

18. Osoboe mnenie s Mikhailom Kasyanovym 'A special opinion with guest Mikhail Kasyanov', on 09.02.2010, Ekho Moskvyy Programs. The fulltext can be accessed at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/655623-echo/>, 1.06.2010.
19. "Saakashvili, zhalkiy i griaznyi, ty-- trus!" "Saakashvili, filthy and miserable, you are a coward!", KP, 13.08.2008.
20. *Salo i gorilka ob'ialeny v Rossii vne zakona* 'Salo/lard and gorilka [a Ukrainian vodka-L.A.] proclaimed illegal in Russia', KP, 30.01.2006.
21. SNG: *Slyet premyerov* 'CIS: Meeting of Prime Ministers', AiF, No. 23, 2005
22. *Sobytiya goda v anekdotakh* 'Important events of 2005 in jokes', KP, 29.12.2005.
23. *Soyuznomu gosudarstvu Rossiya i Belorussiya 10 let* 'The unification of Russia and Belorussia is now 10 years old', KP, 29.10.2009.
24. *Ukraina otmuchilas* 'Ukraine's suffering is over', AiF, No 52, 2004.
25. *Ukraina: Yushenko plod pol'skikh intrig?* 'Ukraine: Yushchenko- a product of Polish intrigues?', AiF, No 44, 2004.
26. *Ukraintsy tyriat gaz i viniat v kovarstve nas* 'Ukrainians steal the gas and accuse us [Russians] of insidiousness', KP, 26.01.2009.
27. *V kompanii s SNG ili bez nego? Byvshie respubliki SSSR ukhodiat iz-pod nashego vliyaniya: Kak ikh uderzhat' i nado li eto delat'?* 'In the company of CIS or without? Former Republics of the Soviet Union are eluding our influence: How to retain them and should we do this?' AiF, No 35, 2009.
28. *Voprosy s gazovym dushkom* 'Questions which smell of gas', AiF, No 51, 2005.