ON A LINGUIST’S MANDATE IN WRITING CONCLUSIONS REQUESTED BY THE LAW-ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES

The present paper addresses the issue of establishing the limits of competence of a linguist writing the studies upon request by the law-enforcement authorities. It tackles the issues of statuses of symbols that function in hate speech in conflict texts with the elements of verbal extremism.

The necessity in involving an expert in religious confessions also comes to mind when reading the text of a leaflet headed «Whom the “Fathers” of the Church are employed by?, which was submitted for a study by the same law-enforcement authority. In the given leaflet there is an utterance Hasidic sect Hasid, which may be classified as a judgemental opinion with practical reference or as a statement of fact depending on how an expert in religious confessions or political science would define a status of the Habad organization. A linguist, however, faces a challenging task: to define whether the word sect was used in a proper or a figurative meaning. When analysing this word we were guided by the New Dictionary of Russian Language by T.F. Yefremova, where one of the definitions gave a direct meaning ‘A religious community disentent from the established church’, the second was a figurative meaning and gave ‘A clannish group of persons retreated in their narrow group interests’. The latter meaning is labelled infmal (informal, colloquial) [4, p. 578]. Thus, if author of the leaflet used the word sect in its direct meaning, the utterance represents a statement of fact. If however, the word was used in the figurative meaning, the utterance becomes a judgemental opinion with practical reference, and stipulates the necessity of performing a linguistic study with respect to degree and nature of the negative connotation.

Materials of the magazine headed «WinterAttack zine #3 (Extreme right peri-
submitted for a study by the same law-enforcement authority, contain various onyms, the graphic presentation of which made us think of the necessity to perform not only a linguistic, but a semiological analysis as well, which would help understand the status of the symbols in question, and whether they are letters, abbreviations, symbols or whatever they represent.

Speaking of status of symbols, we would like to take the liberty of describing the two tendencies occurring in materials of the pro-fascist orientation. Today, the graffiti, leaflets and radical magazines show the growing intention of not using the fascist swastika as an individual element but rather as a paralinguistic tool serving as a graphic design to an utterance. This instance stipulates a transition of message from the swastika directly to the utterance itself (correspondingly, the significance of the utterance is amplified at both textual and subtextual levels) [3]. It should be noted however, that the revealed tendency does not imply that there is a total renouncing the swastika by the authors of pro-fascist texts.

This tendency is also revealed in the names of the extreme right music bands and in the common text design of the discussed magazine (see Fig. 1 and 2).

The second tendency appears in the graffiti and involves refusing (although not totally) to decorate the walls with popular Nazi swastika and going for parallel substitution with ancient pa-
gan symbols, some of which represent symbols (e.g. triskele), and other being symbols and letters put together side-by-side (e.g. the Elder Futhark runes). As such, Figure 3 shows a snapshot of the wall inscribed with exclamation GLORY TO RUS! and the Odal rune above it. The Russian Wikipedia has the «Odal» entry describing the use of the Odal rune (ancient German Öhila — «heritage», Anglo-Saxon Oþel) in Nazi symbolism [5]. The fact that today not everybody would be motivated to search the Web (not even on the extremely popular Wikipedia) for the meaning of ancient Scandinavian rune, gives the neo-Nazis an opportunity to use the rune as a cryptographic sign understandable only by “the insiders”.

It does not take to be a psychologist to understand that such tendency is determined by the intention of those writing on the walls and fences to escape responsibility (for vandalism, drawing the Nazi insignia etc.), while at the same time making a public statement on their viewpoints, and leaving a reminder for "the insiders" with the aim of supporting loyalty to their creed etc.

Although it is fairly easy to determine the causes of the second tendency, it seems very difficult for us to conclude on the conditions of occurrence of the first one. Yet, none of the relevant literature on the subject under study has provided us with any of possible origins of the first tendency, which we may have considered convincing.

The phrase and the symbol in Figure 4 demonstrate actualization of both tendencies in the graffiti. Notably, this graffiti is still there on the wall of a secondary school right next to the place where the author of this paper lives, although the Nazi inscriptions and hate speech have been viciously and thoroughly painted out (by school officials?) with grey paint (see Figure 4: a grey part of the building to the left of the word БЕГУЩИЕ (the running ones).

The word БЕГУЩИЕ (the running ones) serves as a substitute for the ancient triskele symbol and demonstrates actualization of the first tendency. Beside there is a swastika symbol enclosed in circle (in this case — the broken circle) resembling both Celtic and solar crosses, which is indicative of the second tendency actualization.

The studied word and the symbol were inscribed with the same handwriting by the same spray can as were the Nazi inscriptions and symbols, which had been straight away painted out with grey paint because of their barbarity and plainness to everyone. However, the word БЕГУЩИЕ (the running ones) and the cross-in-the-circle symbol were left untouched because of the function they fulfil (and not because the vandalism fighters ran out of paint!). Half-deciphered, inscribed with one word, and treated literally the triskele symbol, and the altered, simplified swastika started to function as cryptograms with two meanings: direct, literal and figurative (having a subtext only understandable among “the insiders”).

The story with inscriptions near the school has its sequel and relates to a linguistic study. The forensic linguistics shows a slow pace of development, while the number of disputable issues does not seem to decrease. Assuming the importance of their job, the experts, in the course of their analysing the utterances, are trying to give a professional opinion, which has to be as objective as possible; however, due to series of causes, such objectivity is very rarely to be achieved.

P.S. The materials mentioned above have been provided not only for a linguistic, but for a psychological study as well (apart from the text in Figure 4). Everything that was mentioned in the present paper has no concern with materials of any level of classification.

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