

## **Critical analysis (expert opinion)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Subject of the analysis**

This critical analysis addresses the results of analyzing the contents and focus of the “*Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia*” (“*Geheimsache Doping: Showdown für Russland*”) documentary of the German television channel ARD, aired by this television channel in the early hours of June 9, 2016 (hereinafter – documentary). The authors of the documentary are Hajo Seppelt, Florian Riesewieck and Felix Becker (00:55 – 00:57).

The scenes of this documentary and the remarks of its characters were recorded by the internal chronometric counter of the video recording playback software (the documentary’s video file). Thus, “12:12” means that the reference is made to the scene in the documentary or its character’s remark at the moment which approximately corresponds to 12 minutes and 12 seconds from the start of the documentary playback. At the same time, the difference by a few fractional seconds or 1–2 seconds from the shown time (readings of the internal chronometric counter) is possible, including, depending on the specific software used for video recording playback (video file).

The voice-over text for the documentary, translated into Russian (the translator was not mentioned), taken from the documentary subtitles, was used. The translated text was later proofread and corrected according to the audio recording of the documentary’s voice-over in German. It was also taken into account the English translation of the documentary under consideration<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Case file materials provided for analysis**

To analyze the documentary “*Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia*” (“*Geheimsache Doping: Showdown für Russland*”) of the German television channel ARD, 2 files were provided, audio and video recording of the documentary (a computer readable MP4 video file) and a subtitle file (computer readable SRT file).

#### **Information about the expert**

**Viktor I. Slobodtchikov**, Doctor of Psychology, Professor, Correspondent Member of the Russian Academy of Education, Chief Researcher of the Institute for the Study of childhood, family and education of the Russian Academy of Education (seniority in scientific activities – 47 years, record of expert activities – 27 years).

#### **The analysis was carried out within the scope of the following questions:**

1. What image of the Russian athletes and sports organizations is created by the “*Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia*” documentary? What are the validity and objectiveness of the documentary’s opinions, judgments, and conclusions? Are the well-

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<sup>1</sup> Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia // <<https://vimeo.com/170280671>>.

documented facts, which convincingly prove the author's statements (commentary), available in the film?

2. Are there any elements and specific features, confirming that manipulative 'tricks', aimed to influence the audience (viewer), are used in the "Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia" documentary?

The documentary was analyzed in terms of both issues, and the answers to both of these questions were given as part of the general analysis.

### **Methods used in the analysis and in preparing the expert opinion based on its results**

In performing the analysis and preparing this expert opinion based on its results, the psychological and linguistic analysis, psycho-semantic, content analysis and other research methods were used<sup>2</sup>. The research methods were not repeatedly emphasized in research descriptions within the scope of answers to the above questions.

### **MAIN FINDINGS. CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

The analyzed documentary starts with a message setting its main focus and psychological patterns of the way it should be perceived by the audience (viewer): [Voice-over narration:] "*The world's largest sporting event - the Olympics. Soon again, in August. More than 200 countries will compete in Rio. One nation, however, could be absent. Russia is facing exclusion from the Olympics. The charge - state system of doping use in the world's largest country*" (00:06 – 00:41).

The use of the word "charge" in this case aims to create the audience's (viewer's) belief that there actually exist the official charges (duly brought) against Russia that there is a state system of doping use and concealment, based on significant evidence, including actual facts. Using the lexical structure "*state system of doping use*" (that is, the system with a state status, support, and scale) is aimed to communicate the ideas-assertions about the existence of such criminal system in Russia with the direct involvement of the government, to inculcate these ideas and ensure their introjection<sup>3</sup> upon the audience (viewer). This perception is encouraged by the scale of the invectives made by the documentary authors towards the entire Russian athlete training system. Considering today's public perception and legal awareness of most Europeans, the audience's (viewer's) opinion is generated, that these grave public charges could not have been publicly brought without strong evidence, and, following this logic, if it is reported, that the charges were brought by somebody, there must be a reason for this.

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<sup>2</sup> The research methods are provided, in particular, in the following literature: *Petrenko V.F.* The Basics of Psychosemantics. 3-rd edition. Moscow: Eksmo, 2010. 480 p.; *Kudryavtsev I.A.* Comprehensive Forensic Physiological and Psychiatric Examination. Moscow, 1999; *Kochenov M.M.* Introduction to the Forensic Physiological Examination. Moscow, 1980; *F.S. Safuanov.* Forensic Physiological Examination in the Criminal Procedure. Moscow, 1998; etc.

<sup>3</sup> Introjection means including the outside views, motives and mindsets of other people by an individual into one's own inner world as one's own views, motives and mindsets (Contemporary foreign vocabulary dictionary. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk, 1999. p. 244).

[Voice-over narration:] “*December 2014. One of the biggest sports scandals in history comes to light, triggered by an ARD film about doping in Russia*” (01:01 – 01:15).

The fact that the film’s authors refer to themselves (to their previous films) as a reliable actual source, is an implementation of a notorious manipulative “trick”. The statement about the global scale of response to their own first film (earlier released) as “*one of the biggest sports scandals in history*”, apart from the obvious personal promotion, aims to attract (“pick up”) and heighten the audience’s (viewer’s) interest and attention, just as the following phrase: [Voice-over narration:] “*Russian whistleblowers come clean*”. *They provide shocking evidence*” (01:18 – 01:28).

The documentary’s analysis shows the lack of actual convincingly confirmed facts and significant evidence of the opinions and conclusions provided by the filmmakers. However, various manipulation techniques are used many times (absolutely inappropriate from the point of view of journalism ethics and universal moral principles). This will be confirmed in what follows.

A comment by the track-and-field athlete Yu. Stepanova “*In Russia I’ll become the enemy number one*” (01:35 – 01:38) is combined with the following offscreen commentary “*They live in fear. They flee from Russia*” (01:39 – 01:41). By this communicative message, building up psychological tension (this offscreen commentary is heard as Yu. Stepanova is shown on-screen holding a baby in her arms), the filmmakers create a positive image of Yu. Stepanova, and form a strong negative view of the audience (viewer) about the oppressive environment of continual fear, in which Russian athletes live (pronoun “they” is used), as an immanent characteristic of the current situation in the Russian sport. Using this technique is not only aimed at reaching the main goal of the analyzed documentary, but also to enhance the effect of invective statements made by various persons in the film. At the same time, such impact on the audience’s (viewer’s) emotions by showing the climate of fear and danger encourages the audience’s (viewer’s) mindset of uncritical perception of the following information, which helps the authors to more easily convince the viewers that the “state doping use system” is available in the Russian Federation, without using facts to prove these grave accusations.

Then the following statement is heard: [Voice-over narration:] “*Official investigations*” (01:46 – 01:47) as the front page of the Report compiled by the Commission headed by R. Pound dated 09.11.2015 is shown. This is followed by the footage showing one of the commission’s members at a press conference saying: “*Our recommendation is that the Russian Federation be suspended from international competitions*” (01:48 – 01:51). Inserting this statement, made by the commission’s member, between the voice-over narration, provides a transfer of the message “our recommendation” to the status of a conclusion made by the filmmakers themselves. Blending (mixing) of a separate tendentiously chosen remark by a member of an international sports organization commission with the filmmakers’ viewpoint, is also ensured. The statements and opinions of the authors of the analyzed documentary are merely their own subjective viewpoints, which do not have any references to the actual

facts, and are not confirmed by such in the film. The filmmakers cannot but understand this, and have to use manipulation techniques to ensure this mixing.

From the very beginning of the film, its authors use manipulative “tricks” to create the appropriate emotional attitude of the audience (viewer), encouraging uncritical perception of the reported messages. This is the purpose of the communicated two key ideas-assertions, creating the attitude and background for perception of all of the following information. Using these techniques, these ideas are inculcated upon the audience (viewer) and introjected by them:

1) there is a secret state system of doping use by the athletes and concealment of this doping use in Russia, which is confirmed by some “*official investigation*”;

2) this system is provided by the sporting officials and the repressive state apparatus (“secret service”) (02:02 – 02:03) to frighten and crackdown on those trying to publicly tell the truth about it ([Voice-over narration:] “*They live in fear. They flee from Russia*” (01:39 – 01:41)).

The status and legal effect of the “*official investigation*” (R. Pound’s commission), mentioned in the documentary, were out of this opinion’s scope. However, we would like to point out, that this film is presented by their authors as an independent journalistic investigation of the system of athlete doping use in Russia.

The next manipulative “trick” in the documentary is implemented by showing a kaleidoscopic number of video quotes from the news reports of various television channels from all around the world (for example, 02:04 – 02:06). These video quotes are tendentiously selected to support the filmmakers’ statements and create the audience’s (viewer’s) conviction in complete objectivity of the authors’ investigation. Here, an approach of transferring (transforming) the addressee (communication source) from the filmmakers group into an uncertain number of persons (authors of other materials about doping in Russia) is applied. That is, the audience’s (viewer’s) opinion is formed in a manipulative way, that the judgments and conclusions, presented in the documentary, are recognized by everybody in the civilized world, and, therefore, no additional evidence (which seem to be unavailable to the filmmakers) is required. As a result, the (viewer’s) opinion that the ideas, judgments and conclusions made by the documentary’s authors, are sufficiently convincing, is generated.

It is later said: [Voice-over narration:] “*Retrospective doping tests. Numerous Russians are found guilty. New suspicion – cover-ups with the help of the secret service*” (01:52 – 02:03).

We have already mentioned using the word “accusation” in the film as an implementation of the manipulative ‘trick’ of replacing fact with opinion. It is important to note, that no legally valid and well-founded charges against Russian sports organizations and government organizations that there is a state doping use system, supported and concealed by the government, were brought. There were only unsubstantiated invective statements by a number of persons about the Russian sport, athletes and sports organizations. Using the replacement technique (official accusation – individual statements) aims to confuse the audience (viewer).

At the same time, the above replacement technique is enhanced (and its results are confirmed) by applying the following manipulation technique, conventionally called

“labeling”: [Voice-over narration:] *“Russians, as usual, suspect a conspiracy of the West”* (02:07 – 02:10). This technique aims to discredit Russians by falsely imputing them with inappropriate perception, and devalue any counterarguments in defense and vindication of the Russian sport, athletes and sports organizations. In addition, this example clearly demonstrates negative and biased attitude of the filmmakers towards **all Russians as a nation**. All of them are imputed with inappropriate perception as a specific feature of the national mentality i.e. «*suspecting a conspiracy of the West*», *as usual*, which cannot be true. This is a gross violation of the journalism ethics. One of the reasons for it is, probably, a biased negative attitude of the documentary’s authors to Russians and the Russian state.

Then the filmmakers use this technique once again. [Voice-over narration:] *“For the first time in a long while I’m in Russia once again. The ARD reports about doping in Russia have not pleased many people in this country. Among them, the Russian government. I will meet the sports minister for the first time. On many occasions previously, I tried to get an interview with Vitaliy Mutko. Only a short time ago he had claimed that the doping allegations were a conspiracy of the West”* (02:32 – 03:12).

The film shows H. Seppelt interviewing the Russia's Sports Minister V. Mutko (03:20 – 03:56), where the minister talks about the measures undertaken by the Russian government on getting the doping misconducts under control.

Then it is said in the documentary that the statements made by V. Mutko in the interview will be checked (03:57 – 03:59). This “check” is of immediate interest to answer the question about objectivity and impartiality of the authors of the documentary, their “investigation” and the film itself.

[Voice-over narration:] *“A Russian, let’s refer to him as Sergey, is helping me with the research. He would like to remain incognito. “Sergey” already provided me with support on my last film in March. For example, in finding this man [a man in the sports stands in shown on-screen]. Yuriy Gordeev, **apparently**, a man pulling the strings among doping. At that time, I decided to check these **assumptions**”* (04:03 – 04:22).

Let us note, that the words “apparently” and “assumption” are used together in this one quote. We will come back to that later.

Then, a laptop screen with an interface of the IP-telephony software is shown. Two male voices are offscreen, some people are talking. It is impossible to hear what they are saying, identify their voices because of the narrator’s offscreen voice interrupting them.

[Voice-over narration:] *“Sergey” played the role of the decoy. He said: “We need oxandrolone and primobolan”. Gordeev replies: “That’s no problem”. “Have you also got pure testosterone?” – “Yes”. – “And have you everything in stock?” – “Yes, of course. But let’s really not talk about it on the phone”* (04:23 – 04:39).

Basically, a staged act is put on in front of the audience (viewer). It is extremely hard to imagine that the seller of the prohibited doping substances would confide to a stranger on the phone. It is impossible to verify the fact that this conversation took place, as well as its contents and the participation of the persons referred to in the film.

The audience (viewer) only hears the dialogue in German spoken by the off-screen announcers. We believe, that putting on this act is an easy job.

However, even if the above description of Yu. Gordeev as a doping seller is true, this has nothing to do with rebuttal or, on the contrary, confirmation of the information, given to H. Seppelt by the Russia's Sports Minister V. Mutko in his interview, about the measures taken by the government against using doping in sport. Moreover, the fact that a certain person exists in the country, who performs these illegal acts, and who has not yet been captured by the law enforcement agencies, does not prove, that this person acts with the knowledge and in association with the government authority representatives in sports.

The fact that this person, as pointed out in the documentary, is “*right in the grand stand of the Russian athletics championships*” (04:41–04:45) means nothing either. Half-empty stands are shown as the comment is made. The fact that the person, in respect of whom some person makes some allegations, is in a sports stand, only means that he is there, nothing more.

Let us note, that in this and number of other episodes it is very difficult (if at all possible) to verify the chronological correctness of sequencing and marking if the actions and events shown in the documentary. That is, it is impossible to be sure that the scenes described as happened “later” actually took place later. Multiple manipulations found in the documentary, do not allow trusting these statements made by its authors. In this case, according to the voice-over, the alleged doping seller is in the grand stand of the Russian athletics championships. However, it is impossible to check whether this statement is true.

Later in the documentary it is said that the statements made by the president of the Russian Athletics Federation Dmitry Shlyakhtin, that Yu. Gordeev has nothing to do with the Russian sport anymore, that he is suspended, will be “checked” (05:03 – 05:25).

“The check” is the following: [Voice-over narration:] “*But can it be believed? My Russian contact hits the road. “Sergey” travels to one of the central locations for the Olympic preparations of the Russian track and field athletes Kislovodsk, 1,500 kilometers south of Moscow, close to the border with Georgia. “Sergey” takes a look around him in part of the forest on the edge of the town with the camera concealed. Everywhere athletes are to be seen with their coaches, also athletes from the national team. **And then he finds HIM. The man with the blue pants is Yuriy Gordeev. As if it is simply a matter of course, he’s apparently still coaching Russian athletes. Gordeev appears to feel safe here. The doping dealer from the Russian Championships in February. And what is the situation now?***” (05:37 – 06:43).

A little earlier in the film it was mentioned that Yu. Gordeev’s involvement in doping dealing is only an assumption: [Voice-over narration:] “*Yuriy Gordeev, **apparently**, a man pulling the strings behind doping. At that time, I decided to check these **assumptions***” (04:16 – 04:19). While over a minute later the fact that Gordeev was selling “*doping at the Russian Championships in February*” (06:34 – 06:38) was presented with confidence. Yet this fact has not been stated earlier in the film, not to mention any substantial evidence. It should also be noted that such a technique

(presenting speculation as fact) is being used repeatedly by the filmmakers in their documentary.

While this as being said the camera shows a perfectly ordinary, average-looking park (or an urban forest with foot paths) that does not look like a sporting venue, in which park, as is evident, anyone can do sports or simply take a walk. It is being shown that Yu. Gordeev (or a person that looks like him) is standing alone in the middle of that park (06:13 – 06:38) which is being presented as one of the proofs that Yu. Gordeev is “*still coaching Russian athletes*” and “*feels safe here*” (06:19 – 06:28).

Then the voice-over reader makes a dramatic exclamation: “*And what is the situation now?*” (06:42–06:43).

It is not clear which situation is being referred to, - the one in which Yu. Gordeev is taking a walk in the park while a few athletes have been running past him? This episode, evidently, cannot prove that Yu. Gordeev continues to work in a sports organization, and continues to coach track and field athletes. There is no basis at all to interpret the shown footage as evidence of Yu. Gordeev performing any official functions.

On the evidence of this episode showing Mr. Gordeev taking a walk somewhere the filmmakers seek to form an opinion in the audience (viewer) that Yu. Gordeev continues to “coach athletes”, while the President of the All-Russia Athletic Federation is lying about Mr. Gordeev’s suspension. Yet such a conclusion evidently remains unsupported in the film.

It is to be supposed that lack of real compelling evidence induces the filmmakers to include perfectly shallow and speculative episodes in their film.

Continuing. [Voice-over narration:] “*Doping controls in the largest country in the world. Tens of thousands of athletes, many medal winning hopes. Yet only a few hundred tests in Olympic year*” (07:58 – 08:06).

This episode is designed to persuade the audience (viewer) that no more than a few per cent of athletes in Russia are fair and disciplined and submit the samples prescribed. On the other hand, the filmmakers completely ignore the well-known fact that samples should be submitted only by those athletes who are obliged to do so under the established rules in connection with their participation in official athletic competitions. No other persons are obliged to do so, neither in Germany, nor in Russia or anywhere in the world, apart from cases defined by the regulations. It is reasonable to compare the number of persons in a specific country who submit doping test samples before an international competition with the quantitative indicators of the persons submitting doping test samples in other countries whose athletes also participate in such competitions, but by no means to the overall number of athletes in a country. In this case a manipulative technique of the argument (point at issue) substitution has been used.

Special mention should be made of the storyline created to describe the attempt to take a doping test sample from an athlete in the closed administrative-territorial formation (ZATO) of “the city of Tryokhgornyy”, the entry to which is restricted under Russian Federal legislation.

[Voice-over narration:] “*And if foreign controllers want to test Russians they often find themselves faced with resistance. For instance, in Tryokhgorny, a restricted military area in the Urals with an atomic weapon research center. In this, of all places, Russia’s top athletes are training. In Cologne I meet a woman who wanted to control one of them in May. Angelika Wiesmann tells me that she had been turned away on the outskirts of the town. **Only hours later she managed to meet the athlete and make the doping test. However, there were many complications***”. (08:07 – 08:42).

[A. Wiesmann:] “*In about 10 minutes three persons of the Russian version of the KGB secret service, the FSB, arrived and demanded to see our papers and told us in no uncertain terms that we really had no business being here in this town*”. (08:43 – 08:59).

[H. Seppelt:] “*How did you feel in that situation?*” (08:59 – 09:00).

[A. Wiesmann:] “*For me it was a very **uncomfortable situation** because the people really were armed and pointed out specifically to me that I may never stay within 80 kilometers away from that town, otherwise they would deport me and cancel my visa.*” (09:00 – 09:19).

[H. Seppelt:] “*Didn’t they care that as an international doping controller you had tests to do?*” (09:19 – 09:24).

[A. Wiesmann:] “*No, not at all. I have never experienced anything like that in my career.*” (09:24 – 09:27).

[Voice-over narration:] “*Tryokhgorny, the restricted military zone, strict access limitations. Hardly anyone is allowed to enter. Doping controls scarcely possible. Why do athletes train in areas like this?*” (09:30 – 09:45).

Unreasonable and purposeless, perfectly hyperbolized dramatization of a single episode (“overcoloring, exaggeration”) is intended to persuade the audience (viewer) in the consistency of such cases when Russian athletes deliberately avoid international doping controls in some restricted areas where the secret services deny access to doping controllers, and that it is one of the schemes to cover-up the facts of the use of doping by Russian athletes.

This episode, by combining two manipulative techniques – argument substitution and replacing fact with opinion – much like the previous ones, does not prove anything as far as the existence of a state-run system of doping procurement and cover-up. Moreover, the conclusions of the commentator in the film are blatantly absurd. The security guards of the areas under state secret protection are always armed – be it in Germany, in the USA, or in other countries. It is sensible, logical and to be altogether expected and reasonable. Articulating the image of the Soviet KGB, which is presented as a source of fear, is one of the elements of the abovementioned manipulations, as the KGB had long ceased to exist and has absolutely nothing to do with the situation in hand. One is getting a well-founded impression that this conflict was planned and carried out by Angelika Wiesmann deliberately. Entry in the restricted area (ZATO) without official permission, thereby violating the legislation, is evidence of insufficient qualification on part of the doping controller or of a deliberate attempt at provocation. It should be emphasized, that the film deals with one single athlete for the purpose of obtaining a doping test sample from whom A. Wiesmann made an attempt to

enter the restricted area. Once again, there was no refusal to submit a test sample on the part of the athlete, and, as was admitted in the film, A. Wiesmann only had to wait a few hours. During this period it was impossible to interfere with the condition of the athlete, which is why, as far as the doping test results are concerned, this delay was highly insignificant.

The behavior of the security guards, on the other hand, was quite in line with what would be expected. A similar attempt to enter a restricted area protected under a state secret, or a military secret, in the USA could have led to criminal or administrative charges against A. Wiesmann. In this case, all her inconveniences amounted to a few hours' wait and hearing a warning from the FSB guards regarding the unacceptability of the violation of the Russian Federal legislation.

The dramatic exclamation: "*Why do athletes train in areas like this?*" – is pointless if it is reasonable to rephrase the question: Why does an athlete who was born, grew up and lives in this community have no right to train there, why should there be any areas prohibited for doing sports – solely because the filmmakers would think so? A. Wiesmann had the opportunity to obtain a doping test sample from an athlete, and, as we can see, a few hours' wait proved to be no substantial obstacle for doing so.

The film then goes on to show footage of short statements of the spouses Yuliya Stepanova and Vitaliy Stepanov (10:13 – 10:27; 10:53 – 11:07), whom the filmmakers call "*the star witnesses on the doping system in Russia*" (09:58 – 10:01)

[Voice-over narration:] "*These two believe that **there is a state system behind all this.***" (09:48 – 09:51)

Behind what, exactly, as defined by the word "this", according to Stepanov's statement, there is "a state system" is impossible to determine from the film as before this episode many other inconsequential and incomprehensible episodes, and numerous blatant manipulations have been used. Can it be believed, that there is a "state system" behind Yu. Gordeev taking a walk in the forest or Yu. Gordeev sitting on a grand stand? As there is absolutely nothing substantial or specific in the documentary to prove the key ideas presented by the filmmakers.

It was not within the scope of the present critical analysis to examine the statements of V. Stepanov (10:13 – 10:27) and Yu. Stepanova (10:53 – 11:07) with regard to the measure of reliability thereof. We should, however, note that they did not say anything specific, new and substantial to add up to the foregoing episodes of the documentary and its principal line of argument.

The following statement of V. Stepanov is characteristic: "*In our situation we had to go to a different country because there are thousands of messages in social networks and in media forums that just tell her: don't come back, you might be killed*" (10:15 – 10:27). On the other hand, no evidence is given in the film that such threats did take place, that those were caused specifically by the statements made by the Stepanovs regarding the doping in the Russian sports, and not by other reasons, that those threats were made by Russian citizens and not by citizens of different countries for different reasons. The filmmakers consider this line of argument (01:39 – 01:41; 10:15 – 10:27; 11:56 – 12:26) very important as it is designed to convey to the audience (viewer) the idea – and lead them to believe it – that anyone who dares to openly speak about the

alleged existence of a large-scale state system of doping distribution and doping abuse by the athletes in Russia has to flee from the country or dies under mysterious circumstances.

The same storyline incorporates the episode of the film which tells the story of Nikita Kamaev, former Director General of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA). This episode is intended to persuade the audience (viewer) of the existence of large-scale illegal activities of distributing and using the doping substances in the Russian sport, all this with the government involvement. This episode attempts to form in the audience (viewer) the opinion that N. Kamaev died suddenly under mysterious circumstances, which would suggest that he was killed to be stopped from writing and publishing some sensational book exposing the Russian sport:

[Voice-over narration:] *“In summer, 2014, I visited the Russian Anti-Doping Agency and met this man for the first time. The former chief executive Nikita Kamaev. In front of the camera he denied any form of manipulation”* (11:26 – 11:41). [N. Kamaev:] *“The fact that samples were swapped and that RUSADA selected the athletes arbitrarily or even accepted bribes for the conduct of tests, these stories are simply laughable for professionals”* (11:42 – 11:56).

[Voice-over narration:] *“Shortly afterwards, following the ARD revelations, Nikita Kamaev had to give up his job. Today Kamaev is dead [the film continues with the footage of the cemetery, the grave of N. Kamaev]. He died very suddenly in February, 2016. Official diagnosis: heart failure. **He’d been working on a highly explosive book, it is said. Whether his death also had anything to do with that is a topic for speculation**”* (11:56 – 12:26).

[V. Mutko, Russian Sports Minister:] *“That is absolutely absurd, these accusations or the references to it... If he had written any kind of book, then there would not have been any sensations in it”* (12:30 – 12:43).

[Voice-over narration:] *“Only a few months before his death, Kamaev contacted a Danish scientist. He wanted to reveal everything about doping in Russia. He writes: **“I have enough material for a book that should be controversial and shocking”**. The e-mail correspondence with the Danish doping researcher went on for weeks”* (12:46 – 13:13).

This text is accompanied not by the footage of N. Kamaev’s correspondence that could have been verified, but by stage footage of some person’s hands typing some text while being shot by a camera. If the correspondence between the mentioned persons had actually lasted for weeks, this could have been convincingly confirmed by the footage of the extracts thereof, but the film contains nothing like that.

[Voice-over narration:] *“Odense in Denmark. I want to meet the man with whom Kamaev had corresponded for so long and so confidentially. Professor Verner Møller reports to me that he had conducted long discussions with Kamaev via Skype. Also the written correspondence had become increasingly concrete. They wanted to meet soon”* (13:17 – 14:38).

This episode shows footage of a computer screen with the interface of an electronic postal service, and allegedly shows an e-mail from N. Kamaev to V. Møller, there is even an inscription *“Re[2]: Nikita Kamaev RUSADA”*, but N. Kamaev’s e-mail

address itself is not displayed on the screen, which makes it impossible to verify whether this e-mail had been sent from N. Kamaev's private or office e-mail address, and was not fabricated or simulated by a third party for some purpose or other.

[Caption:] “*Verner Møller, Doping researcher at the University of Aarhus*” (13:41).

[V. Møller:] “***He had a lot of information and he had evidence to back up this information that would shock the world. He had evidence of secret labs that worked for athletes to dope. And that was not only in Russia. He said he had evidence that this happened in other countries as well. And he wanted to give me all the massive information that he had when we met in person***” (13:39 – 14:03).

[Voice-over narration:] “*That is how the Danish scientist remembers it. **It should be a book that contained inside knowledge collected over decades. It could have been dangerous, not only for Russia. Kamaev had already even put together a table of contents. According to it, among other things, he wanted to make revelations about the transport of doping products, about the former pharmacological support of the USSR athletes and about what really happened at the Winter Games in Sochi***” (14:04 – 14:35). During the narrative of the table of contents allegedly put together by N. Kamaev for his future book we are shown the footage of a sheet of paper with a printed text that bears no identification marks and that cannot be used to identify its actual authorship – did N.Kamaev actually write this?

[V. Møller:] “*When I mentioned to **one of my colleagues** that I had had this conversation with Nikita, that I was considering, seriously considering starting the book project with him, he said: ‘Well, **this sounds absolutely fantastic! Interesting. But beware, it might also be dangerous**’. And I thought, I said to him: ‘Well, you may have seen too many spy films!’” (14:36 – 15:08).*

The episode described above is intended to persuade the audience (the viewer) that N.Kamaev was killed to stop him from revealing some facts which could have harmed those behind the extensive use of doping by athletes in Russia.

The statement that N.Kamaev planned to write a book about doping-related criminal activities in Russia is the allegations made in the documentary by the filmmakers and V. Møller that are not backed by anything as no convincing evidence to this point has been provided. Any statement at all can be attributed to a dead person, and it would be difficult indeed, if at all possible, to refute it. This is one of the well-known manipulative techniques. On the other hand, the technique of replacing fact with opinion has also been used here. That is, V. Møller's opinion that N.Kamaev's book which he was planning to write and publish would be intended to expose doping-related criminal activities in Russia is presented by the filmmakers as fact supporting their argument of the existence of the **state system** of procurement and cover-up of the use of doping in Russia. Moreover, V. Møller's words clearly imply that he himself never saw neither the actual project of N.Kamaev's book, nor any materials on which it was, or could have been, based (despite the fact, that “*the written correspondence had become increasingly concrete*” (13:33 – 13:34)). Such attempt to influence the audience (viewer) was supported by an evaluation of a third person (referred to as “one of his colleagues”) intended to support and strengthen the desired opinion by resorting to the emotional

aspect of his evaluation, but, above all, due to the fact that this person referred to by V. Møller as “one of his colleagues” is presented as some independent third party with whom it is easy for the audience (viewer) to identify themselves. To further increase the effect of this technique, a long sequence of scenes has additionally been designed to create an atmosphere of mystery, espionage semantics, etc., the accompanying footage – to convince the audience (viewer) of the truthfulness of the presented assumptions and their factual value. A certain appearance of truthfulness of this message is further enhanced by extending the statements of doping use to other unnamed countries (not only to Russia).

Towards the end of the episode under consideration the audience (viewer) already forgets the initial statement concerning N.Kamaev, that he “*he’d been working ... it is said*”, that “*there had been rumours*”. “*He’d **been working** on a highly explosive book, it is said*” (12:21–12:24). We believe that the filmmakers, knowing that they build their assumptions on the basis of rumours (which they inadvertently admit) and arbitrary speculations, tried to protect themselves with those disclaimers and go on to “pile up” more and more information on top of that, achieving, through the use of such manipulative techniques, to transfer this “rumour” into the “fact” status in the subjective perception of the audience (viewer): *It should be a book that contained inside knowledge collected over decades* (14:09 – 14:11). In less than a couple of minutes the filmmakers have traveled the whole distance from the rumours that N. Kamaev was going to write some book to the firm belief that it would be published. Yet the film provides no convincing evidence that N. Kamaev really planned to write any book, giving only rumours and speculations instead of evidence.

The connection between N. Kamaev’s death and his book is originally presented by the filmmakers merely as their own assumption: “*it is a topic for speculation*” (12:25 – 12:26). Towards the end of this episode the filmmakers manage – by using the abovementioned manipulation techniques – to transfer this “assumption” into the “fact” status in the subjective perception of the audience (viewer). Repeated footage of the cemetery and N. Kamaev’s grave (12:02 – 12:29; 15:08 – 15:14; that is, over half a minute in total!) is intended to boost the effect of this trick on the audience (viewer).

This is followed by an episode, focusing on the former head of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency Grigoriy Rodchenkov (15:22 – 20:28, etc.). Many arguments are presented, the evaluation of which lies beyond the scope of this opinion. It should be noted, that no evidence of the given statements is provided, everything remains merely an opinion.

However, the attempt to link G. Rodchenkov’s activity to the Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko is indicative: [Voice-over narration:] “*Grigoriy Rodchenkov’s tricks to cover-up cheats in sport. Is he the criminal super-brain for his own account, or does he act on instructions from above? On instructions from the Sports Minister?*” (18:14 – 18:27). The verbal influence is strengthened by the footage – presented here “for evidence” – of a photograph on which V. Mutko is captured with G. Rodchenkov (18:26 – 18:28).

[Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko:] *“How can I exert influence, then? What influence can we exercise on the personnel of the anti-doping organizations? The state has in any case already withdrawn from the playing field of sport.”* (18:29 – 18:42).

Due to the fact that the documentary’s episode reporting (quite convincingly) G. Rodchenkov’s unlawful activities is far more informative and of substantially larger duration than the footage of the Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko trying to give some explanations, V. Mutko is deliberately put in obviously disadvantageous polemical conditions. The information reported by V. Mutko in the interview to the ARD with regard to the government’s anti-doping measures, including those taken in relation to the revealed unlawful activities of the distribution of, and assistance in, the use of doping undertaken by G. Rodchenkov himself, is given in a disproportionately smaller amount and, therefore, does not contribute towards creating the audience’s (viewer’s) objective image of the government actions, but on the contrary – it encourages the audience (viewer) to accept the idea-assertion that there is a connection between V. Mutko and G. Rodchenkov as presented by the filmmakers in their documentary. This technique is further supported by directly accusing V. Mutko of lying by resorting to the use of derogatory vocabulary: [Voice-over narration:] *“No influence? That the **Russian Sports Minister had very probably lied to me on this day in Moscow I would find out in the course of this research.**”* (18:42 – 18:54). This statement relies on the manipulative ‘trick’ of replacing fact with opinion.

In support of the statements the documentary provides (18:57 – 19:46) footage of G. Rodchenkov’s detailed narrative (only the German translation is audible) about the actual or imaginary system of the distribution of the prohibited doping substances in sport and suppression of facts of their use, but his statements in the documentary remain only an opinion, no facts have been provided.

It should also be noted that it is doubtful whether the meanings of the statements (direct semantic, contextual, and/or connotative meanings) made by the persons involved on the Russian side have been interpreted adequately and accurately since in the majority of the episodes of the documentary their speech is not fully reproduced. When the playback of quite recognizable Russian speech of the film characters begins, the remarks made in the Russian language are not fully reproduced, in a few seconds the playback sound volume is lowered, and they are dampened by the voice-over narration (a comment or translation) in German. Therefore it is difficult, or almost impossible, to check the accuracy and reliability of the statements, attributed to the persons involved on the Russian side by the voice-over narration (translation) in German.

An announcement is being read: [Voice-over narration:] *“Pictures and sound of Rodchenkov are in the possession of the ARD in their original form ... A long time ago Grigory Rodchenkov had noted down precisely how this doping cover-up functioned, and who was involved. And all this confirmed with his signature.”* (19:49 – 19:53).

It should be noted, that in this episode the footage of a sheet of paper with a printed text – and a handwritten inscription «Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov» at the bottom of it is provided (20:15 – 20:21). There is a number of names of Russian and foreign citizens listed in the text, but this information is, again, no more than merely G. Rodchenkov’s own statement. No evidence has been provided unless one accepts

G.Rodchenkov's statements as independent and self-sufficient pieces of evidence, and G.Rodchenkov, as should be emphasized, has been portrayed by the filmmakers in an extremely negative way, since it is said in the documentary that G. Rodchenkov had been for many years involved in unlawful activities as the head of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory.

Then, according to the oral testimony provided by G. Rodchenkov, a number of invective evaluations is expressed towards the "anti-doping adviser to Russian Sports Minister" Natalia Zhelanova (20:22 – 21:09), in particular, she is imputed with bribery (20:54 – 21:02). This is followed by a manipulative technique: the created negative image of N. Zhelanova (examination of the adequacy and validity of N. Zhelanova's image pictured in the documentary was out of the scope of this analysis) is being artificially linked to the image of the Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko.

[Voice-over narration:] "*She and Mutko put pressure on the WADA president to hinder and destroy doping investigations*" (21:04 – 21:09).

The phrase "*to hinder and destroy doping investigations against Russia*" does not have a clear and distinct meaning of its own. The concept "to hinder" (concerning some kind of action or event) is colloquial and conspicuously subjective. This word can denote a wide range of actions, including any rightful attempts to defend oneself, any objections whatsoever. Nothing similar to what has been said in the documentary about N. Zhelanova is said about V. Mutko, but by means of mentioning those persons together in the statement about their cooperation in the abovementioned actions ("pressure"), which get a negative connotative coloring in the documentary, a shift (transfer) of the negative image – created in the documentary under consideration with regard to N. Zhelanova – to Minister V. Mutko is achieved. The effect of the actualization of this "trick" is secured by a conclusion expressed in the interrogative form: "*So, is the sports minister involved in all that?*" (21:10 – 21:12).

It should be emphasized, that the phrase used – "*in all that*" (in what the Sports Minister is "personally involved") – has a very vague meaning, content-wise, and if it were to be construed literally, it would appear that the filmmakers claim that the Sports Minister himself is personally involved, that is to say, he was a participant in the unlawful activities to facilitate the use of doping in Russia which were presented in the documentary.

The use of undue manipulations and arbitrary speculations, for lack of convincing evidence to support G.Rodchenkov's allegations in the documentary, is therefore intended to lay the foundation for the invectives articulated towards the Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko about his personal and direct involvement in everything that is shown in the documentary about the use of doping in Russia.

The film continues with an episode about V. Chegin, officially suspended, according to Russia's Sports Minister V. Mutko, from sports (the analysis of the adequacy and validity of V. Chegin's image as formed by the documentary was out of the scope of this analysis). This episode also contains unfounded invectives, not supported by evidence, and, on top of that, the filmmakers make yet another attempt to manipulatively create the image of the Russian Sports Minister as a liar.

The filmmakers' logic and objectives, however, are obvious: to prove that the Russian Sports Minister had repeatedly lied in minor issues, labeling him, in doing so, a "liar", and then go on to claim, that he also lies when speaking of the unjustified nature of the accusations of the Russian sport as a whole of the sheer use of doping substances by Russian athletes with direct government support, thus lending the appearance of truthfulness to the whole ARD documentary.

[Voice-over narration:] "*But throughout this period no sign whatsoever of Viktor Chegin. Am I on the wrong trail? **May be the Sports Minister did not lie?***" (24:15 – 24:26). In other words, it is claimed that the Russian Sports Minister V.Mutko always lies, and now it is hoped that this case would be the only one when he does not.

[Russian Sports Minister V.Mutko about V. Chegin:] "*Chegin is no longer working, neither as a coach, nor as a director. He no longer works in sport at all. Yes, he has no rights anymore, and I hope he will no longer work in the future.*" (24:29 – 24:42).

The "rebutter" of this statement of V.Mutko's is presented in the following manner: [Voice-over narration:] "*Shortly after this interview... I got a call from a female Russian athlete, with new evidence. Apparently, we were simply searching in the wrong place .... But I should take a look around at the Abkhazian border, near Sochi. Many Olympic competitions were held in the small town of Adler in 2014. Right now many Russian walkers train here. Top athletes, many former Chegin's protégées, whose doping suspensions have just expired... All claim that they do not work with Chegin today. It is the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. Suddenly, a gray bus appears. Sergey films it from a safe distance, observes, how a police car escorts the athletes. The bus is always directly alongside the athletes. **The side windows are dark. And, behind the driver, barely visible, a bright spot.** I must take a closer look. It's true. There is a man in the back of the car. Could it be that Viktor Chegin is hiding here, the coach suspended for life?*" (24:44 – 24:45; 24:54 – 25:03; 25:07 – 25:38; 26:09 – 27:12).

The final statement is accompanied by the footage of some computer-generated reconstruction of a half of the profile of a human face. Whether it is really the result of complicated computer processing of an image or an arbitrary graphic enhancement (fabrication), is impossible to make out from the documentary (such task was not within the scope of the author of this analysis). Let us note, though, that the fact of V. Chegin's car ride (if we assume that it is true) alongside the athletes does not automatically testify that V. Chegin continues his coaching or administrative activities in the field of sports and, still less, that it is done with the knowledge or permission from the Russian Sports Minister V. Mutko. It should be noted, that the filmmakers provide no conclusive evidence that the face in the said documentary episode is, indeed, the half-profile of V. Chegin's face (27:08 – 27:15).

The documentary continues with a number of scenes designed to confirm the statements about V. Chegin continuing to work in sports, yet all of them have little substance. For instance, we consider doubtful the shown manipulations of Friedrich Rösing, introduced as "*a renowned expert in facial recognition*" (27:48 – 27:56), who, as it is said, "*applies the strictest international standards*" (28:28 – 28:30). It is stated in the documentary (28:05 – 29:40), that F. Rösing had analyzed the said half-profile

contour and blurred facial features (if it was a face). But the very process of obtaining this image (the half-profile face contour attributed to V. Chegin in the documentary), as well as subsequent results of the computer techniques used by F. Rösing, raises questions and doubts. F. Rösing himself had described this process as follows: «*I have optimized the image of this shadowy figure*» (28:19). F. Rösing's comparison of the half-profile contour with contour rendering of an earlier hairstyle (!) on another – frontal – photograph, seems highly inappropriate; it reveals the fundamental imperfection of such method. The matching probability factor of the face on a clear photo and a hypothetical face in the shape of a blurred spot, as declared by F. Rösing, is also very impressive - up to 99 %, according to him (29:29 – 29:31). No comments.

The documentary continues with yet another attempt to create an image of the Russian Sports Minister V.Mutko as a liar: [Voice-over narration:] “*Is the minister credible? A man who, after all the known cases of doping in Russia, keeps saying:*” (30:05 – 30:13) [Russian Sports Minister V.Mutko:] “*Our success is not built on doping*” (30:13 – 30:15).

As proof of the statement, as presented in the documentary, that the Russian Sports Minister is lying, it is announced: “*Around 250 doping offenders officially since 2013*” (30:24 – 00:29). If the government itself caught on doping and disqualified the quantity of athletes specified over the period indicated, then this phrase can be also interpreted in the way that the government has been effectively fighting against doping in sport. And if those athletes were identified by WADA, it also hardly proves anything, since in other countries of the world the number of athletes, disqualified for illegal use of doping, is also very large. Therefore, the statement quoted in the documentary proves nothing with regard to the existence of the “*state system of doping use*”, but only reflects the fact that there were identified cases of illegal use of the prohibited doping substances by the athletes.

The statement quoted above is accompanied by the background music of the Russian song “Kalinka” while the footage of a whole gallery of images of athletes (presumably – Russian) is being shown, and, judging by the context, those athletes are being exposed as doping offenders (30:20 – 30:40).

A further statement follows: [Voice-over narration:] “*Actually, I believed this film was finished. But I could not get **the role of the Sports Minister Mutko** out of my head. Was he an innocent? Or a cover-up expert?*” (30:42 – 30:53). By means of this statement, taken in conjunction with the previous episodes of similar content, and backed by manipulative techniques, the following idea-assertion is transmitted and implanted into the audience (viewer): the Russian Sports Minister knows everything about organization of large-scale use of doping in Russia, covers it up and lies when answering questions about it.

### Conclusions

The undertaken critical analysis of H. Seppelt's documentary “*Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia*” («*Geheimsache Doping: Showdown für Russland*») of the German television channel ARD, including the analysis of the content and focus of specific scenes and episodes of the said documentary, and of the communicative

methods used in documentary to exert psychological impact on the audience (viewer), provided evidence for the following conclusion: the main communicative goal (originally set and achieved) of this documentary (as well as the main goal of producing and broadcasting this documentary publicly) is to form an extremely negative, dysphorically (with distinct intolerance and antipathy) and pejoratively (derogatory, mocking) denigrative (slandering) image of the Russian sports, Russian athletes and sports organizations, as well as to create a similar image of the activities of the Russian government in the field of illegal use of doping substances in sports. This goal was achieved by means of using a range of manipulative techniques in the documentary and by transmitting the following false ideas-assertions not supported by any convincing evidence in the documentary, their inculcation to the audience (viewer), and ensuring their introjection by the audience (viewer):

- that Russian athletes massively use prohibited doping substances;
- that the Russian state (as represented by the government authorities) blatantly ignored its duties concerning the assurance of the control of the use of doping in sports, further still – that it de facto created and supports a state system of facilitating the massive use of prohibited doping substances by Russian athletes, including the arrangements to cover-up such facts while the Russian Sports Minister V.Mutko conceals these unlawful activities of the respective individuals, which makes him an accomplice in such offenses;
- that Russian citizens, who criticize this system and try to publicly disclose any information available to them concerning the existence and functioning of such system, are exposed to the threat of physical violence and forced to flee from the country, since their lives are in real danger.

The validity and credibility of the opinions, judgments, and conclusions concerning the existence of the state system of doping use and concealment in Russia, as presented in the documentary, is extremely dubious or overtly insignificant. The film provides no documented facts which would constitute convincing evidence for the statements presented in the author's speech on the existence of state system of doping use and concealment in Russia.

The documentary under consideration reveals multiple pieces of evidence for the use of manipulative techniques directed at the audience (viewer).

Cases of manipulation, misrepresentation of information, arbitrary speculations and false information, identified in the documentary and listed above, are designed to conceal and disguise the absence of conclusive evidence for numerous invectives presented in the documentary, the most important of which is the unproven statement about the existence of the state system of doping use and concealment in Russia.

The comparison of H. Seppelt's documentary "*Doping - Top Secret: Showdown for Russia*" with H. Seppelt's other documentaries about Russian sports previously issued by the German television channel ARD allows one to conclude that those documentaries collectively pursue an orchestrated campaign to falsely discredit Russian athletes and sports organizations, the Russian sports, and Russia as a whole.

The process of selecting episodes (scenes), audio fragments, footage and text insertions for the production of H. Seppelt's documentary "*Doping - Top Secret:*

*Showdown for Russia*” was extremely biased. The following clearly pronounced guidelines observed by the filmmakers have been identified in the documentary: to create a false and extremely negative image of the Russian sports and representatives of the Russian government, involved in the field of sports; selection and interpretation of information was performed in such a way as to achieve this aim.

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