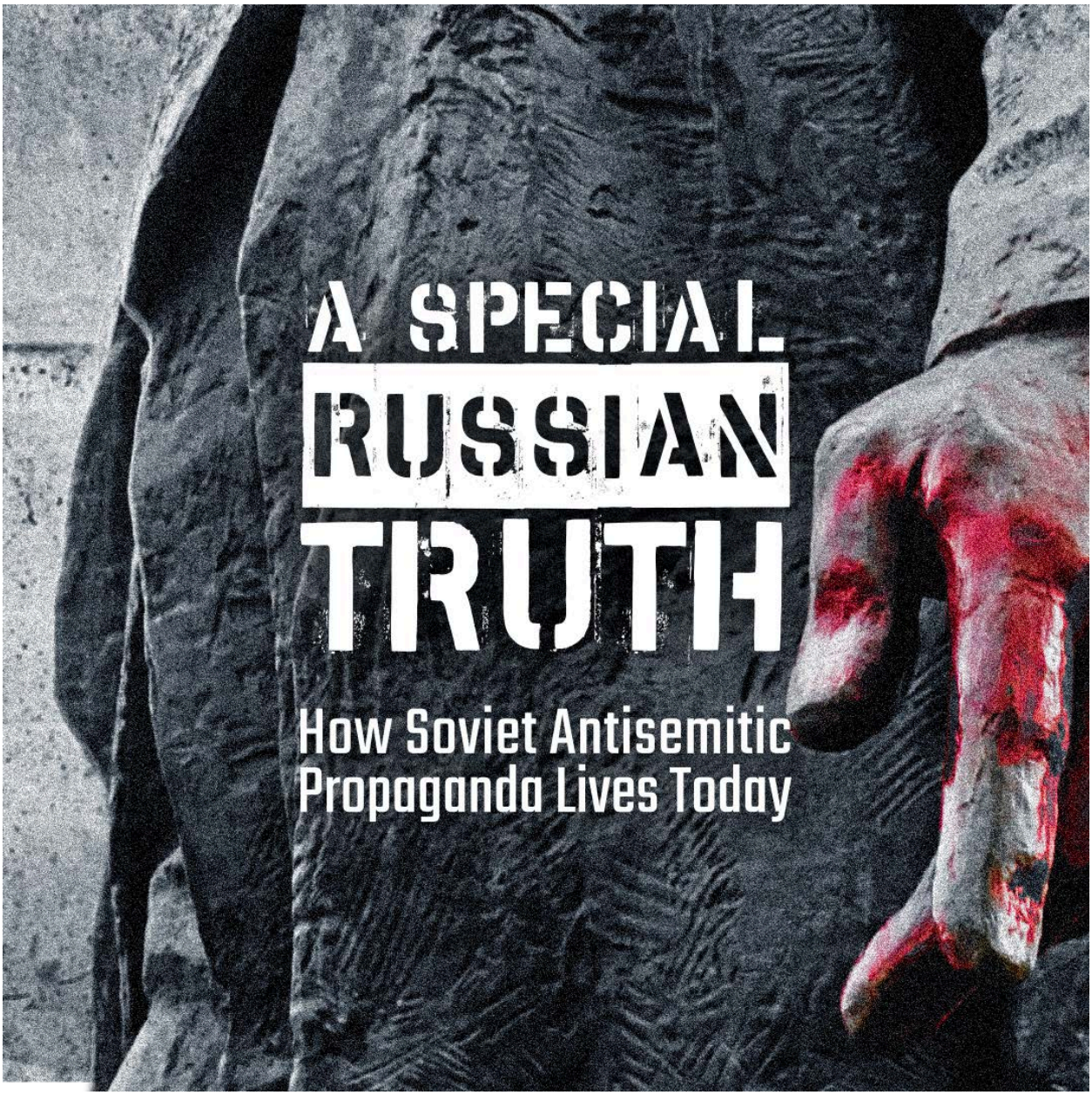


aSpecialRussianTruth.com

Viewing Guide

NoVaChai Foundation
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A SPECIAL RUSSIAN TRUTH

How Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda Lives Today

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Part 1: How to Use This Guide

This viewing guide provides a flexible framework for screening “A Special Russian Truth.” It includes discussion tools, reflection prompts, and exercises suitable for a wide range of audiences. Facilitators may adapt the materials as needed.

Note for Facilitators: This guide is intentionally comprehensive. Different groups need different tools, so please use what feels right for your community. You do not need to

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use every activity. Think of this guide as a flexible toolkit. Choose one or two exercises or explore more deeply depending on your time, goals, and group comfort level.

Facilitator Guide

This guide includes a full suite of engagement tools to provide flexibility for instructors to meet different groups' needs and create customized pathways into conversation. Facilitators can pick and choose the exercises that best fit their community's needs, time, and emotional comfort level. The exercises are by no means prescriptive or assumptive to how an instructor would lead an exercise, and only intended to provide ready resources.

Items	**60 Minutes**	**90 Minutes**	**120 Minutes**
Welcome: Read Letter to Viewers and Community Agreement (5 minutes)	✔	✔	✔
Before Viewing Exercise (5 minutes)	✔	✔	✔
Film (25 minutes)	✔	✔	✔
After Viewing Exercise (10 minutes each)		✔ Pick 1	✔✔ Pick 2-3
Closing and Action Exercise (10 minutes each)	✔ Pick 1	✔✔ Pick 2	✔✔ Pick 2-3
Audience Assessment (distribute and collect)	✔	✔	✔

Part III: Exercises

To make this guide easier to navigate, the exercises are grouped into before, during, and after viewing pathways. Facilitators may choose one exercise, several, or build a full sequence.

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Before Viewing

Anticipating Themes

Description: *Anticipation guide and pre-viewing activity designed to help participants reflect on core themes explored in "A Special Russian Truth."*

Purpose: To help consider your beliefs about propaganda, misinformation, narratives, and critical thinking. After the film, revisit your responses to see how your understanding evolved.

How to Use This Thinking Routine: Read each statement carefully. Mark whether you **agree** or **disagree**. Be ready to explore one idea more deeply in a discussion.

Agree	Statement	Disagree
☐	1. Disinformation is most dangerous when it contains a small amount of truth.	☐
☐	2. Propaganda can shape public attitudes for generations, long after the original source has disappeared.	☐
☐	3. Understanding history is essential to recognizing modern antisemitism.	☐
☐	4. Foreign governments continue to influence U.S. public opinion through media, activism, and political messaging.	☐
☐	5. People are more vulnerable to misinformation when they feel fearful, isolated, or emotionally overwhelmed.	☐
☐	6. Antisemitism today often appears disguised as political critique or activism.	☐
☐	7. Media literacy is a key form of resilience against psychological manipulation.	☐

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After Viewing

Clarifying Key Ideas

Description: *A guided reflection activity that explains the film's key concepts.*

Purpose: To deepen your understanding of the documentary's themes and strengthen your ability to identify misinformation, bias, and propaganda in everyday life.

Step 1: Pick a term to reflect upon.

- ☐ **Agitprop –** A Soviet term for "agitation and propaganda," describing a Soviet department that produced ideological content and the method used to influence public opinion.
- ☐ **Antisemitism** – Discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group.
- ☐ **Anti-Zionism** – Opposition to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, often presented as political critique but frequently used to disguise or rationalize antisemitism.
- ☐ **Confirmation bias** – The tendency to favor information that confirms existing beliefs.
- ☐ **Disinformation** – False information created and spread deliberately to deceive.
- ☐ **Ideological warfare** – Conflict waged through culture, media, and education to influence public consciousness.
- ☐ **Information laundering** – Moving a false narrative through multiple channels until it appears credible.
- ☐ **Media literacy** – The ability to critically evaluate media messages across formats.
- ☐ **Misinformation** – False or misleading information.
- ☐ **Moral equivalence** – Portrays vastly different actions as equal to blur moral clarity.
- ☐ **Propaganda** – Systematic communication intended to shape perception and behavior.
- ☐ **Psychological operations (psyops)** – Coordinated efforts by governments or groups to influence emotions, motives, and reasoning.
- ☐ **Whataboutism** – A rhetorical device deflecting criticism by pointing to another issue, e.g., "What about …?"
- ☐ **Zionism** – A movement supporting Israel as a Jewish state.

Step 2 — Connect the Term to Something You've Seen

Think of and describe an experience, headline, social media, that relates to the term you reflected on.

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After Viewing

Exploring the Voices in the Film

Description: *A guided activity inviting participants to explore how different types of voices in the film contribute distinct insights into propaganda.*

Purpose: To help viewers recognize how scholars, dissidents, journalists, researchers, and archival sources each illuminate different dimensions of disinformation, deepening your ability to understand how propaganda works and how it echoes in today's world.

Step 1 — Choose a Participant Category from the Documentary (check one box):

- ☐ **Researcher** – Guides viewers through historical and archival evidence, linking Cold War propaganda to present-day narratives.
- ☐ **Historians and Analysts** – Scholars specializing in Soviet history, information warfare, and antisemitism studies who contextualize events within global politics.
- ☐ **Former Dissidents** – Individuals once targeted by Soviet censorship or antisemitic campaigns who testify to how lies reshaped public life.
- ☐ **Journalists** – Reporters tracing the afterlives of Soviet disinformation in the Middle East, Europe, and online platforms.
- ☐ **Archival Voices** – Excerpts from declassified intelligence, speeches, and state media illustrating propaganda as it was broadcast.

Step 2 – Reflect

What unique insight does this participant type contribute to the documentary's understanding of propaganda?

Step 3 – Connect to Self

"One thing this participant type helped me understand about propaganda is…"

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After Viewing

Understanding Diverse Perspectives

Description: *A guided activity in which participants analyze one voice from the film—scholars, analysts, propagandists, or witnesses—to understand how your background shapes your message and what it reveals about the mechanics of propaganda.*

Purpose: To help you critically evaluate how the film's subjects—including those who diagnose propaganda and those who produce or spread it—use language, emotion, and narrative, and to strengthen your ability to recognize manipulation across ideological lines.

Part 1 — Choose a Subject and a Quote (in order of appearance)

Name	Bio	Quote
Propaganda Cycle Actors		
Aleksandr Dugin, Pro-Russian Author 	Dugin represents the ideological through-line between Soviet and modern propaganda. His appearance anchors the film's exploration of moral relativism in authoritarian messaging.	"Every so-called truth is the matter of belief."
Kellyanne Conway, Political Consultant 	Her phrase "alternative facts" serves as a modern echo of Soviet linguistic manipulation, illustrating propaganda's persistence through language.	"Our press secretary gave alternative facts."

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Vladimir Putin, President of Russia 	Putin expresses a rhetoric that exemplifies continuity between Soviet and modern propaganda, framing enemies as existential threats to justify repression.	“The illegitimate regime in Kiev, which once seized power, is gradually turning into a terrorist organization.”
Vadym Novinsky, Ukrainian Politician and Businessman 	Novinsky’s remarks on state repression echo those of Putin and Dugin	“Rights are restricted. Courts are not working. All of these are indications of a dictatorship.”
Tucker Carlson, U.S. Political Commentator 	Carlson’s soundbite demonstrates how Cold War-era framing persists in populist discourse.	“In American terms, you would call Ukraine a tyranny. Ukraine is a corrupt country and it's a laundromat of America.’
Candace Owens, U.S. Political Commentator 	Owens’s viral statement exemplifies how Cold War disinformation mutates across ideological lines in digital culture.	“Ukraine is a corrupt country and it’s a laundromat of America.”

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Joseph Massad, Jordanian Academic 	Massad's lecture excerpt exemplifies how academic discourse can perpetuate inherited ideological frames.	"The idea that European Jews are direct descendants of the ancient Hebrews is of course a bogus claim. This is all a game of archaeology, and we know archaeology, of course, as a part of colonialism."
Historians and Experts		
Izabella Tabarovsky, Soviet Historian, Author, Senior Fellow at Z3 Institute 	A central analytical voice, Tabarovsky traces the evolution of antisemitism and the collapse of shared reality in a "post-factual world."	"It is often said that Jews are a canary in a coal mine. That once a society adopts anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, it is on the way to being fractured and it is on the way to becoming more oppressive."
Vladislav Khaykin, Executive Vice President, Simon Wiesenthal Center 	Khaykin defines propaganda as both ancient art and modern science, showing how emotional engineering can destabilize societies.	"Propaganda is any communication that is intended to persuade an audience to adopt a particular worldview or to pursue a set of actions or policies…Propaganda is tapping into our passions, our anger, our sense of disenfranchisement, dislocation, disempowerment."
Yuri Bezmenov, Soviet Journalist and Defector 	Bezmenov's decades-old warning about psychological subversion forms the film's moral backbone on ideological decay.	"Despite…the abundance of information, no one is able to come to sensible conclusions."

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Dalia Ziada, Egyptian Writer, Social Reformer 	Ziada provides a unique self application of critical thinking and honest inquiry within a propaganda controlled environment	"When I say, 'Question everything,' that includes questioning the things that I'm saying now. Every claim that's being said by someone, question this. Question everything."
Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr., Civil Rights Leader, NoLabels Chairman 	Chavis relates how Soviet propaganda was employed geopolitically in Middle East and North Africa	The Soviet Union planted seeds of anti-Semitism in Africa, where Israel was portrayed as an apartheid regime, where Israel was portrayed as an oppressive regime.
Dumasani Washington, U.S. Pastor/Educator 	Washington illustrates how the KGB embedded itself within civil-rights and student movements to co-opt their efforts into Soviet interests.	"When the PLO put student groups on the college campuses to demonize Zionism, those student groups had no credibility until they stood next to the Black Student Union."
Eden Yadegar, Columbia University Student 	Yadegar reflects on witnessing ideological conformity firsthand, linking historical indoctrination to contemporary educational spaces.	"It was just chilling to see firsthand how this indoctrination, and it is indoctrination, goes down in classrooms."
Marat Grinberg, Refugee, Journalist, Reed College Professor 	Grinberg contextualizes Soviet propaganda's afterlife in Western academic and activist spaces.	"...the anti-Zionist language that is used today, it just sounds eerily similar to the type of messages that were put out by the Soviet regime and really by the KGB."

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Lenny Fukshansky: Soviet Refugee, Claremont McKenna College Professor 	As a "refusenik," Fukshansky embodies the personal cost of totalitarian propaganda and the human yearning for freedom.	"It's a difficult time to be a Jewish student on an American campus now."
Tessa Veksler, University of California, Santa Barbara Graduate 	Veksler brings the firsthand perspective of a young American Jew confronting unprecedented antisemitism for the first time in her generation.	"I think that this is the first time that the young Jewish generation in America has experienced anti-Semitism like this, where it's so in your face and young people are going through it on a daily basis."
Lara Burns, Former FBI Special Agent, George Washington University Center for Extremism 	Burns brings the voice of a national-security analyst who emphasizes that today's antisemitic narratives cannot be understood without tracing their lineage to earlier eras of state-driven propaganda.	"In order to understand what is happening, you have to understand the history."

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Part 2 — Reflect on the Subject (answer in 1 sentence each)

1. **How does this person's background shape their view of truth or propaganda?**

2. **What is the main insight or warning in their quote?**

3. **Why might people with different worldviews all be concerned about propaganda?**

Part 3 — Your Takeaway

What is one thing this subject helped you understand about how misinformation works?

Part 4 — Pattern Spotting

List any patterns or themes you noticed across the voices in the film:

☐ emotional manipulation
☐ distortion of history
☐ collapse of shared reality
☐ exaggerated threats
☐ misuse of language
☐ fear
☐ identity
☐ other: _____

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Deeper Engagement

Connecting Themes to the World Today

Description: *A guided reflection activity where participants choose one core theme from the documentary and connect it to a real-world example you've seen or experienced.*

Purpose: To help viewers deepen your understanding of the film's five central themes by linking historical insights to contemporary events, personal observations, and everyday media—without overwhelming them.

Step 1 — Pick One Key Issue

Choose **one** theme from the list below that stood out to you during the documentary:

- ☐ **Weaponization of Antisemitism**: How Soviet policy recast traditional antisemitism into state ideology, turning "Zionism" into a coded enemy of socialism.
- ☐ **Propaganda as State Craft:** The institutional machinery of "agitprop" — film studios, press agencies, youth organizations — used to mold public perception.
- ☐ **Global Export of Narratives:** How the USSR spread antisemitic frames through allied liberation movements, the Non-Aligned Bloc, and U.N. diplomacy.
- ☐ **Echoes in Modern Media**: Continuities between Cold War disinformation methods and digital virality, meme warfare, and influencer amplification.
- ☐ **Resilience and Counter-Narratives:** Education, investigative journalism, and intercultural dialogue as antidotes to ideological manipulation.

Step 2 — Connect the Theme to the World Today

Think of one real-world example — news, social media, a public speech, a conversation — where you've seen this issue appear. My real-world example:

Step 3 — Share Out

Share your key theme, your example, and your reflection with a partner or small group.

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Deeper Engagement

Mapping Propaganda Across the Decades

Description: *A simple reflection activity based on the film's structure*

Purpose: To help viewers understand how disinformation evolves over time — from Stalin's USSR to the modern digital world — and to reflect on how each era shapes the next.

Step 1 –The Seeds of Disinformation

After the Second World War, Stalin's regime intensified its use of ideological control. Jewish intellectuals and war veterans once celebrated for fighting fascism became targets of suspicion. Archival narration recounts the "anti-cosmopolitan campaigns," purges of Jewish artists, and fabricated "Zionist plots" designed to redirect public anger from domestic failures toward an invisible enemy.

The film traces how early Soviet information departments perfected emotional storytelling—using film, theater, and literature to fuse Marxist vocabulary with older European conspiracies. Quotes from Communist Party archives reveal the deliberate strategy: "Control the story, and you control the enemy."

This act ends with the chilling observation that propaganda doesn't need believers—only repeaters.

Question: What is one way the Soviet Union used storytelling to turn ordinary people into "repeaters" of propaganda?

Your Response:

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Step 2 – The Cold War Campaign

As superpower rivalry deepened, antisemitic propaganda evolved into an international tool. The film shows how KGB psychological operations packaged fabricated documents—like the notorious "Zionist World Congress Memorandum"—and seeded them through sympathetic presses in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Voice-over excerpts highlight coordination between state media and cultural diplomacy: exhibitions, peace congresses, and youth festivals all carrying the slogan "Zionism = Racism." By the 1970s this formula reached the United Nations, culminating in Resolution 3379.

Analysts in the documentary explain how Soviet operatives exploited genuine anti-colonial sentiment to recast Jews and Israel as imperial villains—creating ideological links that persist today.

Question: How did the USSR export its antisemitic narratives beyond its borders? Name one tactic or example from the film.

Your Response:

Step 3 – The Digital Revival

After 1991, the Soviet archives opened briefly—but the logic of propaganda survived. Former KGB methods migrated into new digital ecosystems.

The film parallels Cold War rumor mills with algorithmic amplification: repetition, emotional triggers, and claims of moral superiority.

Contemporary experts in the documentary describe how antisemitic tropes resurfaced across political spectra—from far-right forums to activist hashtags—often recycled

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verbatim from Soviet texts. As one commentator notes, “The medium changed; the message metastasized.”
The act concludes by challenging viewers to treat truth as civic infrastructure—fragile, requiring maintenance.

Question: What is one way Cold War propaganda techniques show up in today’s digital media (meme culture, influencers, algorithms, recycled narratives)?

Your Response:

Step 4 – Connecting the Three Steps

Question: Across Steps I–III, what stays the same about propaganda? What changes?

Your Response:

Step 5 — Personal Reflection

Question: What is one thing *you* can do to help keep truth strong as a form of civic infrastructure?

Your Response:

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Deeper Engagement

Understanding Cognitive Behaviors

Description: *Examination of the human decision making processes and behaviors that can be exploited by well crafted propaganda*

Purpose: To help viewers understand the imperfections of human decision making and how to create moments of critical thinking to examine new ideas

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Step 1 - Types of Cognitive Behaviors {instructure may choose to focus on a subset of the following}

- **Anchoring Bias:** Disproportionately using early information about a topic when evaluating subsequent information.
- **Ascription Bias:** Viewing the self as variable in behavior, and mood while viewing others as more predictable.
- **Authority Bias:** The tendency to value information in proportion to the opinion of someone who is seen as an authority on the topic.
- **Availability bias:** Relying on information that is readily available, rather than that most representative.
- **Bandwagon Effect:** The tendency to do or believe things because many other people do or believe the same.
- **Confirmation Bias:** The tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories.
- **Clustering Illusion:** The tendency to see patterns where actually none exist.
- **Herd Instinct:** Common tendency to adopt the opinions and follow the behaviors of the majority to feel safer and to avoid conflict.
- **Ingroup Bias:** The tendency for people to give preferential treatment to others they perceive to be members of their own groups.

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- **Negativity Bias:** Paying disproportionately more attention to negative images.
- **Projection Bias:** The tendency to unconsciously assume that others share the same or similar thoughts, beliefs, values, or positions.
- **Semmelweis Reflex:** The tendency to reject new evidence that contradicts an established paradigm.

Step 2 - Give some examples of campaigns (eg product marketing, social media, etc) that seem to target one of the above behaviors

Step 3 - Suggest possible situations where the behavior you identified may be evident in the behaviors represented in the movie

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Closing and Action

Deepening the Conversation

Description: *A facilitated conversation using questions to help participants explore the film's ideas, emotions, and contemporary relevance in a structured, accessible way.*

Purpose: To connect the documentary's themes to your experiences while strengthening critical thinking, media literacy, and reflection skills.

Starting the Conversation
Reflect on these questions:

- What moments or phrases in the film stayed with you?
- Which emotions—shock, recognition, skepticism—surfaced as you watched?

Theme 1: Power and Perception

- What did the film reveal about how governments use narrative for power?
- How does repetition transform a falsehood into a "fact"?
- What parallels can you identify between Soviet agitprop and social media?

Theme 2: The Mechanics of Lies

- Which agitprop techniques—emotion, scapegoating, pseudo-logic–did you see?
- How did imagery and sound design reinforce the message?
- What role does humor or satire play in exposing and spreading propaganda?

Theme 3: The Legacy of Antisemitism

- How did the film trace old antisemitic myths into modern "anti-Zionist" rhetoric?
- What damage does conflating Jews with global power cause to civic trust?
- How might education interrupt this inheritance of suspicion?

Theme 4: Digital Echoes

- How does algorithmic design reward outrage or misinformation?
- What responsibilities do tech companies and users share?
- Can transparency or verification systems realistically compete with virality?

Theme 5: Personal Agency and Resilience

- When have you encountered propaganda in daily life? How did you respond?
- What skills—fact-checking, empathy, historical knowledge—resist manipulation?
- How can communities foster "information hygiene" as collective care?

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Closing and Action

Reflecting and Taking Action

Description: *A reflection activity that invites participants to translate insights from the film into personal commitments and collective strategies for countering misinformation.*

Purpose: To help viewers internalize the documentary's lessons, identify practical actions you can take in your own communities, and leave the screening with clarity, agency, and shared responsibility for strengthening truth.

Reflective Writing

Discuss or write briefly on one of the following thoughts:

- ☐ "One idea I will question differently after seeing "A Special Russian Truth" is…"
- ☐ "One concrete step I can take to strengthen truth in my community is…"

Action Mapping

- ☐ On a shared board, list examples of misinformation seen locally.
- ☐ As a group, brainstorm credible ways to respond—letters to the editor, classroom projects, social-media corrections, art installations, etc.

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Dedication

"**A Special Russian Truth**" opens with a tribute that personalizes the abstract cost of propaganda. Karen Diamond, Sarah Milgrim, Yaron Lischinsky, all lost their lives in targeted attacks where the perpetrators employed slogans and artifacts commonly found in antiZionist protest.




(l-r) Karen Diamond, Sarah Milgrim, Yaron Lischinsky. Sources: Boulder University Women's Club, Embassy of Israel to the U.S.

- **Karen Diamond (1942–2025) –** An 82-year-old community advocate in Boulder, Colorado, murdered on June 1, 2025, in an antisemitic terrorist attack while participating in a rally supporting Israeli hostages.
- **Sarah Milgrim (1998–2025) –** A 26-year-old American diplomat and humanitarian dedicated to Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, murdered on May 21, 2025, in a targeted shooting in Washington, D.C.
- **Yaron Lischinsky (1994–2025) –** A 30-year-old Israeli Embassy staff member and researcher, murdered with Milgrim, at a multifaith event exploring humanitarian diplomacy and response to humanitarian crises throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

The loss of these three lives represent the loss of millions more throughout human history. Hate inspired propaganda is not abstract. It is purposely designed and procured to leverage human emotion to disrupt logic and reason, sometimes leading into violent acts.

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A SPECIAL RUSSIAN TRUTH

How Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda Lives Today

Thank You and Contact

Film Credits

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Executive Producer: Jim Rose

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aSpecialRussianTruth.com

Contact us to share, promote, and host screenings of “A Special Russian Truth.”

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