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SHAPING OF THE OFFICIAL MODEL OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY ABOUT THE WORLD WAR II AS A MEANS OF INFORMATION-PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCE (ON THE MATERIALS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

The Russian Federation's unleashing of full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine was preceded by information-psychological influence on the Russian public to ensure a positive perception of the fact of future violence. An essential aspect of this influence is the formation by the Russian state propaganda institutions of an official model of collective memory of the World War II (WWII). The purpose of the proposed study is to reveal the peculiarities of using the USSR's propaganda narrative about WWII in the anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign, as well as its adaptation to the geopolitical realities of the early 21st cent., and the use by the aggressor country of the mythologies of the Soviet model of collective memory about the events of WWII to justify war crimes and crimes against humanity. The study of the features of the formation and dissemination of militaristic discourse through the purposeful shaping of the Russian society's collective memory about WWII has proved that the collective memory of the Russian population was divided into several interconnected but unequally interdependent segments. Subjective memories of war veterans and children of war gave way to state-sanctioned memories. The political elite of the Russian Federation, with the support of the academic community of Russian historians, has formed and actualized an aggressive, exclusive model of collective memory of WWII.

Keywords: information war, collective memory, mnemonic war, propaganda, World War II, Russian Federation's aggression, Immortal Regiment, glorification, Victory Day, full-scale armed aggression.

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ФОРМУВАННЯ ОФІЦІЙНОЇ МОДЕЛІ КОЛЕКТИВНОЇ ПАМ'ЯТІ ПРО ДРУГУ СВІТОВУ ВІЙНУ ЯК ЗАСОБУ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОГО ВПЛИВУ (НА МАТЕРІАЛАХ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ФЕДЕРАЦІЇ)

Анотація. Протягом розгортання російсько-української війни 2014-2024 років увагу наукової та широкої громадськості привернув феномен радикальної мілітаризації суспільних настроїв росіян. Аналіз причин успішності інформаційно-психологічного впливу медіапростору Росії на соціальну поведінку її громадян може допомогти організації протидії інвазивному впливу держави-агресора у світовому інформаційному просторі. Предметом пропонованого дослідження є шляхи формування

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російської офіційної моделі колективної пам'яті про Другу світову війну як засобу виховання мілітаристського світогляду потенційного електорально-мобілізаційного ресурсу. Вивчення засобів імплементації в масову свідомість російського суспільства ідей, уявлень і переконань доводить, що стрижневою ідеєю російської пропаганди стало ототожнення збройної експансії Росії у Північній, Східній і Центральній Європі у ХХІ ст. з боротьбою СРСР проти нацистської Німеччини. Важливою складовою роботи органів пропаганди держави-агресора стало активне залучення до співпраці російського академічної спільноти, в першу чергу дослідників історії. Зокрема співробітники Інституту російської історії Російської академії наук брали участь у роботі Комісії з протидії спробам фальсифікації історії на шкоду Росії. Російське військово-історичне товариство (PBIO) під час повномасштабного вторгнення російських збройних сил в Україну розгорнуло широкомасштабну агітаційну компанію спрямовану на дискредитацію національно-визвольної боротьби українців. Особливо активно РВІО діяло на тимчасово окупованих територіях України, у проросійському терористичному псевдодержавному утворенні під назвою Донецька народна республіка. Саме тут співробітники РВІО займалися комеморативними практиками пов'язаними з увічненням пам'яті бійців місцевих незаконних збройних формувань, які загинули у боях проти Збройних сил України. Автори дослідження також висвітлюють особливості використання в Росії засобів меморіалізації подій Другої світової війни для формування мілітаристського світогляду в учнівської та студентської молоді. Науковці приходять до висновку про те, що чинному в Росії політичному режиму вдалося створити ексклюзивну модель колективної пам'яті про Другу світову війну, що орієнтована на виправдання її агресивної зовнішньої політики.

Ключові слова: інформаційна війна, колективна пам'ять, мнемонічна війна, пропаганда, Друга світова війна, агресія Російської Федерації, Безсмертний полк, героїзація, День Перемоги, повномасштабна збройна агресія.

Formulation of Scientific Problem and its Significance. The Russian large-scale campaign in the media space aimed to support its troops' invasion into Ukraine has caused increased academic interest in the study of the means of information-psychological impact on society. A significant component of this influence is the formation by the Russian state propaganda establishments of an official model of collective memory of WWII.

Analysis of recent research. The study of the peculiarities of the use of WWII narrative by Russian propaganda in the information-psychological operations on the territory of Ukraine in 2014–2022 is reflected in the works of I. Boginska¹, O. Hrytsenko², P. Dolganov³, I. Kovalska-Pavelko⁴, V. Masnenko⁵, Y. Prymachenko⁶, N. Tarasova⁷, V. Telvak⁸, L. Yakubova⁹. In general, scholars agree with the statement that in the late 20th and early 21st centuries there was a struggle between supporters of the Eurocentric and Russian-Soviet models of historical memory. However, the issue of organizing the subordination of the communicative, historical and cultural memory of the population to the state historical policy in order to form an image of the past favourable to the Russian ruling regime remains insufficiently covered.

Purpose of the study. The aim of this paper is to examine the formation of the Russian official model of collective memory of WWII as a means of fostering a militaristic worldview in the Russian public.

The materials of the research. The post-Soviet version of the Russian official model of collective memory about WWII has inherited much from its predecessor, created by the joint efforts of Soviet propaganda, censorship and academic historical science. The role of the main systemic element of the Soviet official model of collective memory was played by a single-party political system and state structures endowed with extraordinary powers of control over information and the means of its transmission. Similar trends in the development of the political-information environment manifested themselves in Russia at the beginning of the 21st cent. With the «United Russia» party coming to power (it won 50% of seats in the Duma in 2003 and 70% in 2007), out of the 200 parties that existed in Russia at the end of the 20th cent., only seven remained in the early 2000s. From 2000–2005, the country's administrative apparatus was reinforced by representatives of the security apparatus (representing 32% of all state employees). The Kremlin has taken control of television: the three main state channels (Channel One, Russia One, and NTV) reach 95% of the Russian television audience¹⁰.

According to the current Constitution, there is no official censorship in the Russian Federation, but in practice, the state has repeatedly hindered the free exchange of information in the field of cultural and historical memory. In 2009–2012, the Presidential Commission for Countering Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia was active for this purpose. It was headed by N. Sakharov, Director of the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The Commission was composed of high-ranking officials and members of the Russian State Duma. In 2014, Article 354.1 was added to the Russian Criminal Code, threatening punishment for «disseminating knowingly false information about the activities of the USSR during WWII». On 12 March 2014, the Interdepartmental Commission for the Protection of State Secrets of the Russian Federation decided to prolong the secrecy of the archives of the All-Russian Emergency Commission – People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs – State Security Committee (VCK–NKVD–KGB) 1917–1991 until 2044¹¹. In June 2021, the State Duma accepted a law that prohibited the identification of the role of the USSR and Germany in WWII, and denied the decisive role of the Soviet people in the victory over fascism.

The main retransmitter of the militarist and revanchist discourse in contemporary Russian academic science is the Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS), founded in 2012 by V. Putin's decree. Doctor of History V. Medinsky headed it. In 2010, V. Medinsky became a member of the Commission for Counteracting Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia, and from 2012 to 2020 he worked as Minister of Culture. According to the intention of its founders, RMHS was to serve as a state historical and propaganda organization designed for information war. RMHS received solid financial support from the Russian government. Until 2022, the organization has spent 3.5 billion rubbles, paid from the budget of Russia through grants and national projects¹². RMHS is engaged in creating memorials, developing school textbooks, organizing military history festivals and patriotic excursions for schoolchildren (the Roads of Victory project). An important part of RMHS's work is informational support of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine. In their works, RMHS employees identify the so-called «special military operation» in Ukraine with the German-Soviet war of 1941–1945, repeating Kremlin narratives about the need to «denazify Ukraine». For example, members of the Scientific Council of RMHS, doctors of history V. Kiknadze and Y. Rubtsov, draw readers' attention to the contraversity of official models of historical memory about the events of WWII in Ukraine and Russia. They argue that the official Ukrainian version of the events of 1939–1945 provoked anti-Russian sentiment among the Ukrainian population and prepared them to resist Russian intervention in the internal affairs of Ukraine. According to members of RMHS, Russia's current war against Ukraine is an attempt to defeat the Ukrainian nationalist underground that partially survived WWII and came to power in Kyiv¹³. RMHS staff note that an important component of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the reformatting of the mass consciousness of Ukrainian society in the occupied territories by combating the policy of decommunization and derusification. To this end, RMHS actively assisted the Russian Ministry of Defence in the restoration of the largest Soviet military memorial complex Saur-Grave on the territory of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). In order to promote the Russian version of the collective memory of the events of WWII and legitimize the war against Ukraine, the occupiers added new pylons to the memorial dedicated to the illegal military formations of the DPR who fought against the Ukrainian Armed Forces in 2014. Doctor of Philosophy, a member of the Scientific Council of RMHS O. Belkov in his work suggested by using the experience of the Soviet occupation of Germany in 1945–1949 to liquidate Ukraine as a state and Ukrainians as a nation. One of the consequences of the occupation of Ukraine, according to the author, should be the destruction of the Ukrainian system of historical education in order to form a «new Ukrainian identity» loyal to the reception of the official model of Russian collective memory of WWII¹⁴.

In the early 2000s, the official model of collective memory of WWII became an important part of the Russian Federation's foreign policy. In 2019, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Russian Institute for Foreign Policy Studies and Initiatives, marked the 80th anniversary of the start of WWII. The institutions organized an international information campaign aimed at proving that the Soviet Union was not preparing for war, but was forced to start fighting against Poland in September 1939 to save Ukrainians as a «brotherly Slavic nation» abandoned to their fate by the authorities of the Second Rzeczpospolita. In the context of this myth, Russian propaganda popularized the thesis of the progressive significance of the seizure of Ukrainian ethnic territories by the Soviet Union¹⁵. Consequently, in the national memory of the citizens of the Russian Federation, the perception of the lack of historical subjectivity of the Ukrainian people was reinforced. In the mass consciousness of the Russians, the image of Ukrainians without their own state in the territory chosen by Germany and the Soviet Union to protect their

geopolitical interests was enshrined. On March 31, 2023, Putin signed an updated Foreign Policy Concept, which proclaimed Russia's exclusive rights in international relations «given its decisive contribution to the victory in WWII»¹⁶. In addition, the Foreign Policy Concept declared Russia's intention to discourage attempts by other states to criticize the Russian authorities' officially recognized version of the events of WWII.

The justification of war as the main instrument of foreign policy is reflected in the selective use by contemporary Russian propaganda of the ideological narrative of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union concerning the history of their confrontation with Western European states. In this context, the use of the verbal cliché «the Great Patriotic War» in Russian historical discourse remains indicative. The propaganda campaign made this phrase popular due to the speeches of V. Molotov on June 22, 1941, and J. Stalin on July 3, 1941¹⁷. The cliché «the Great Patriotic War» contained an allusion, prompting the listener to actualise his/her historical knowledge of Russia's war against France in 1812, which in Russian historiography symbolised a nationwide defensive war. It should be noted that in 1914–1916 the events of the World War I (WWI) in the Russian Empire were also referred to as «the Patriotic War», «the Great Patriotic War» or «the Second Patriotic War» ¹⁸. The perception of war as an opportunity to restore historical justice was also embedded in the construct of collective memory in September 1945, when J. Stalin proclaimed the Soviet victory over Japan as an act of just revenge for the Russian Empire's humiliating defeat in the war of 1904–1905¹⁹. As a reminder of the potential Far Eastern theatre of warfare, the Russian Federal Assembly established a Day of Military Glory in April 2020, «September 3 – WWII End Day». Japan's intransigence on the issue of recognizing the Kuril Islands as Russian territory has periodically provoked Russian authorities into propaganda actions. In June 2022, for example, a proposal was submitted to the State Duma to rename September 3 to the Day of Victory over Militaristic Japan and the End of WWII. Theoretical justification for this initiative was provided by the Russian Military Historical Society stating that the violation of the Neutrality Pact with Japan by the USSR on April 13, 1941 was due to «the need to liberate territories occupied by the Japanese army in China and Korea as well as South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands previously belonging to the Russian Empire»²⁰. Liberation from the two geopolitical rivals, Germany and Japan, was thus perceived by Russian society as the outcome of WWII and the fulfilment of a mission that the Russian Empire had begun but not completed during the Russo-Japanese War and WWI.

An important method of inculcating to the Russian population a militaristic consciousness was the cult of the Victory Day on May 9 (Day of National Solemnity – Victory Day proclaimed by the decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on May 8, 1945). The accompanying military parades were intended to symbolize the strength of the authorities and their ability to resolve any foreign policy issues by force. In post-Soviet Russia, the first military parade was held in Moscow on May 9, 1995. As conceived by the Russian political elite, the militarized show was meant to boost the morale of the army and society in the face of the heavy losses suffered by the Russian army in the first Chechen war of 1994–1996. In this way, the state was sending the Russian people an important message: be brave, hard trials are ahead, but victory will surely come. This time the government was not deceived – the second Chechen war lasted from 1999 to 2009. The tradition of holding a military parade on May 9 in the Russian Federation has been an annual one since 1995 (an exception was made in 2020 because of the COVID 2019 pandemic).

The mass nature of public actions is a necessary feature of Russian commemorative practices related to the commemoration of the events of WWII. The number of participants should, according to the organisers of the actions, demonstrate the people's support of the existing authorities and symbolise the success of the system of civic-patriotic education. One of the largest was the Immortal Regiment project. In 2011–2023 the Interregional Historical and Patriotic Public Movement Immortal Regiment, which declared as its main task the preservation of the family memory about the victims of WWII, received the state informational and financial support. Marches of the supporters of the campaign with portraits of participants and contemporaries of WWII take place on May 9 in almost all regions of the Russian Federation. In 2015–2019 and in 2022, V. Putin personally took part in the Immortal Regiment marches. The organisation of numerous actions in Russian citizens and belief in the correctness of political religion, designed to support collective unity of Russian citizens and belief in the correctness of political decisions taken by the Kremlin. Thus, in 2022 the number of participants in the Immortal Regiment in Moscow and St. Petersburg exceeded 1 mln people²¹. The Immortal Regiment actions were used as a tool of information-psychological influence not only on the Russian population, but also on the Russian diaspora in the near and far abroad

countries. The use of television and web technologies ensured the interactivity of this social movement on an international scale, including the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia. In the DPR, around 15,000 people joined the campaign in 2022. In the so-called Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), a page «Immortal Regiment of the war in Donbass», representing the heroic obituaries of participants of the anti-Ukrainian separatist movement, was created on the website of the regional organization Immortal Regiment.

Military-patriotic education of the younger generation is an integral part of the propaganda of militarism in Russian society. In 2022, an all-Russian pro-governmental public movement of children and young people Movement of the First was created (5 mln people within the Russian Federation), whose organizations have also been opened in the occupied territories of Ukraine²². Since 2023, the Movement of the First» is taking part in the project «Keepers of Time», aimed at studying and preserving the history of memory sites of WWII. Russian young people are also getting the skills of warfare through large-scale military-historical reconstructions. In 2017, for example, the Ministry of Defence built a replica of the Reichstag in the Patriot Park of Culture and Recreation of the Russian Armed Forces near Moscow for war games of the children and youth's organisation Yunarmiya. The opening of this facility was accompanied by a large-scale military show Storm of Berlin, which was attended by 1,400 re-enactors from 125 military history clubs²³. From April to August 2023, a nationwide sports game Zarnitsa 2.0 (10,000 participants) simulating modern warfare is scheduled to take place in the Russian Federation. At the same time, children and adolescents are taking part in the project «We are Together. Children», which task is to organize volunteer help to the Russian aggressors in Ukraine²⁴.

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, attempts to sacralise the militarist component of official political discourse intensified in the Russian Federation. In 1994, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church decided to commemorate every year on May 9 the military and civilians of the Soviet Union who died during WWII²⁵. An obligatory ritual for the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church was the laying of wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Alexandrovsky Garden in Moscow. Orthodox churches such as the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Malaya Okhta in St. Petersburg, the Church of All Saints on Mamaev Barrow in Volgograd and the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Kubinka were part of the Russian memorial complexes dedicated to WWII. The Church of the Great Martyr George the Victorious on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow was given the status of the main military temple. It was there that an attempt was made in 2020 to visualise the glorification of the Stalinist and Putinist regimes. The interior of the main temple of the Russian Ministry of Defence was originally planned to be decorated with a monumental mosaic panel depicting V. Putin and Russian Defence Minister S. Shoigu against the background of the events of the 2014 Russian Spring in Crimea. A mural depicting J. Stalin was dedicated to the Victory Parade on June 24, 1945²⁶. However, a mixed reaction among the Russian clergy forced the Russian leadership to abandon such blatant methods of political promotion of totalitarianism and aggression against Ukraine. The mosaics and frescoes were partially altered by removing the faces of contemporary Russian political figures and J. Stalin.

The holding of mass events to commemorate Victory Day is facilitated by the extensive memorial infrastructure created during the Soviet era, covering not only Russia, but also countries near and far abroad. It is worth noting that in the early post-war years, the USSR was even more active in creating memorial sites abroad than on its own territory. The first Soviet war memorials were created in Eastern and Central Europe in 1945 (Memorial at Schwarzenberger Square in Vienna, Tiergarten in Berlin). Placing a Soviet memorial on the territory of a particular state turned into a marker of the ruling regime's loyalty to the USSR. Within the Soviet Union, a special place in the memorialisation of WWII space was given to Ukraine. The programme of commemorating fallen Soviet soldiers took place at the same time as the destruction of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army formations and the repression of the civilian population that had supported them. The information-psychological impact of «monumental propaganda» was aimed at pushing unsanctioned memories out of the collective memory in order to guarantee the dominance of the official ideology in the mass consciousness of Ukrainians. Up to 1947, there had been 31,688 common graves and 64,670 individual graves of Soviet soldiers in the USSR; 2,613 monuments and 9,861 tombstones were erected and 52,549 grave markers were erected²⁷. Kiev became the first national capital, where on November 6, 1957 a large-scale memorial area (the Park of Eternal Glory, with an obelisk; the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; and an Eternal Flame) was created. In 1958, a memorial to the liberation of Kiev from the Nazi invaders was opened.

At the present stage, Russia continues to use memorial sites related to the history of WWII as a means of representing its official model of collective memory abroad. The protection of memorials to Soviet soldiers is used by Russia as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring states. The task of supervising the war graves of the Russian army on the territory of eight foreign countries was assigned to the Directorate of the Ministry of Defence for the Commemoration of Victims of the Fatherland's Defence. Understanding the importance of using memorial spaces abroad as central points for the Russian diaspora, the Directorate created the information internet service «Memory of the People» as well as web databanks «Memorial» and «People's Feat» where information about the graves of Soviet army soldiers is stored in a digitised form²⁸.

Conclusions. Thus, at the beginning of the 21st cent., the political elite of the Russian Federation, with the support of the academic community of Russian historians, formed and actualized an aggressive exclusive model of collective memory of WWII. This version of the past is popularized by the state mass media in the information space monopolized by them. The re-broadcasting of the proposed model of national memory is mandatory for the patriotic work in the system of education. The core idea of the official model of Russian collective memory is the formation of the population's psychological readiness to approve the armed expansion of their state. The history of WWII is used by Russian propaganda agencies as an illustration of the thesis about the effectiveness of the use of force in resolving international conflicts. Problems arising in contemporary Russia's relations with other states in the post-Soviet space are explained by insufficient consistency of the USSR's leadership in destroying national liberation movements in 1939–1945. The discrediting of Russia's modern opponents is done by identifying them as enemies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Russian propaganda uses mass interactive commemorative actions, military parades, gamification of military patriotic education, sacralisation of commemorative dates of the German-Soviet war and key figures of Soviet and Russian politics, supplementing memory sites of the Soviet army with images associated with the aggressive foreign policy of contemporary Russia as methods to form a militaristic worldview among the population under its control. It should be recognised that the model of official collective memory used in Russia frees Russian society from the need for objective reconsideration of the outcome of WWII and creates comfortable conditions for the militarisation of its mass consciousness.

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 $^{^2}$ О. Гриценко, Декомунізація в Україні як державна політика і як соціокультурне явище [Decommunization in Ukraine as a State Policy and as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon], Київ, 2019, 320 с.

³ П. Долганов, *Конкуруючі наративи: пам'ять про Другу світову війну в меморіальному просторі м. Рівне* [Competing Narratives: Memory of the World War II in the Memorial Space of Rivne], in «Проблеми історії Голокосту: український вимір», 2020, вип. 11, с. 61–85.

⁴ І. Ковальська-Павелко, *«Війни пам'яті» як ключовий чинник формування державної політики пам'яті в сучасній Україні* [The «Wars of Memory» as a Key Factor of Formation of the State Policy of Memory in Modern Ukraine], in «Krakowskie Studia Małopolskie», 2022, вип. 3 (35), с. 7–26.

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⁶ Я. Примаченко, *Війни пам'яті: історія ОУН і УПА в сучасному соціокультурному контексті українського історіописання* [Memory Wars: the History of the OUN and UPA in the Modern Socio-cultural Context of Ukrainian Historiography], іп «Проблеми історії України: факти, судження пошуки», 2013, вип. 22, с. 18–30.

⁷ Н. *Тарасова, Комеморативні засади національної* ідентифікаці [Commemorative Principles of National Identification], in «Актуальні проблеми філософії та соціології», 2017, вип. 20, с. 140–143.

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