

THE USE OF THE TOPICS AND VOCABULARY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT 2014–2020 (ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN HISTORIOGRAPHY)

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ABSTRACT

The object of research is the latest English literature of scientists and analysts in Western Europe and America, devoted to the problems of the information war waged by the Kremlin authorities against Ukraine. It is the problems, events of the Second World War, in the Russian-speaking academic space and the media that are still referred to only as the Great Patriotic War that became the leitmotif of these actions. Moreover, the history of the war is used precisely speculatively, that is, a careful selection of facts and conclusions is carried out, which are adjusted to certain conceptual foundations.

Investigated problem. As a result of a critical analysis of the works of Western authors, the problem posed in this work is solved: to show the objectivity and evidence of the narratives of foreign authors on the biased presentation of the topics and vocabulary of World War II about the events in the East of Ukraine in 2014–2020.

Main scientific results. The main scientific result of the study is the conclusion that Western scientists are deeply immersed in the vicissitudes of the conflict, debunking the biased evidence of Russian experts, fascist tendencies are imposed on the basis of false accusations of Ukraine, although such processes have not been recorded by any foreign analysts and observers. One of the stereotypes of Russian propaganda is the reproach for the massive “banderization” of the consciousness of citizens, but at the same time the face and activities of the leader of the OUN (b) are deliberately distorted. Modern studios of historians, diplomats, analysts of Western Europe, the USA, Canada are convincingly criticizing the political and ideological measures of Moscow aimed at discrediting the Ukrainian people. It is emphasized that the process of “nationalization” of history in Ukraine, especially during the Second World War by the Russian establishment, was used in a fraudulent way to tarnish the past of Ukraine. It was noted that, despite all the efforts of the Russian information and propaganda machine, Moscow fails to achieve the desire for results.

Scope of practical application. The research results, which are innovative in nature, can be used in both cognitive and educational values.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The object of research

The object of research is the public of the latest scientific literature in English, belongs to the authorship of scientists from Western Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Germany. They high-

light the problem of the Kremlin's use of plots and vocabulary of the Second World War by the Kremlin authorities, superimposing them on the events of the Russian-Ukrainian undeclared war in Donbas.

1. 2. Problem description

In the works of some domestic researchers, this problem is present indirectly. So, in the collection of articles 2020, edited by V. Kulik, it is mentioned that in the information war against Ukraine, a certain historical frame of the conflict in Donbas is used. Most often it is associated precisely with the events of the Second World War [1]. The analysis by the authors of this collection of the contents of 22 English-language journals from seven countries showed a certain diversity of views regarding the development of events in Ukraine after the fall of 2013. At the same time, it was stated that the Russian media used the theme of the Second World War with an emphasis on a certain "repetition" of subjects in the XXI century P. Khai-Nizhnik and L. Chupriy emphasized that Moscow refers to the assessment of the term "occupation" as such that it would part of Donbas, which is part of Ukraine [2]. At the same time, the idea of the asymmetry of the memory of the World War II among the population, even the polarity of opinions in the East and South of Ukraine in comparison with its western part, is being persistently carried out. The article by V. Levitsky indicates that there is no consensus among the scientific community regarding the qualifications of the events in Donbas, including due to the impossibility of clearly distinguishing the parameters of the military events of 1941–1945 and the modern context [3].

1. 3. Proposed solution to the problem

Yu. Matsievsky wrote about the attempts of the Kremlin propaganda to use the plot of the World War II when explaining the confrontation in the Donbas. However, there is no comprehensive study of this problem.

The aim of research. To prove that all the efforts of the information and propaganda apparatus of modern Russia aimed at discrediting Ukraine have been fully reasonably criticized by Western analysts in their works.

2. Materials and Methods

An array of historiographic sources was analyzed, which belongs to scientists from Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, devoted to the problem of the speculative use of the events and vocabulary of World War II by the propaganda structure of Putin's Russia. From the point of view of comparative studies, the directions of ideological and political bias of the topic of war are investigated, they aim to unite society around the government program. As a rule, a selective method is used, as well as deliberate exaggeration of opponents' mistakes.

3. Result

The available latest Western literature devoted to the problem under study makes it possible to analyze the entire set of information activities in Moscow in order to prove the artificial nature of accusations of Ukraine and its government circles of "fascization". Using the methods of comparativeness, axiology, historical comparability, it was proved that all attempts of the ideologues of Russia to present the world with an inaccurate characterization of Ukrainian politics and domestic life proved to be a failure. Although the Russian mass media, starting from the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, tirelessly produced all sorts of ideological labels on Ukraine. Servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were called punishers, fascists, neo-Nazis, Banderites. Komsomolskaya Pravda and other newspapers claimed that there were many criminals, drug addicts, rapists among them, and that chaos reigned in the Ukrainian army, as at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Television news, the Russian press were full of such terms as genocide, terrorists, the Kyiv junta, Russophobia, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, fascism. The term "national traitor" (Nationalverräter) [4] was borrowed from the lexicon of the Hitlerite Reich. The Slovak and Czech professors A. Potochniak and M. Mares noted that it is inexpedient to ignore the influence of Russian propaganda in the society of other states. After all, its adherents skillfully use the tragic history of World War II, manipulating facts and rigged conclusions. That is why up to 2000 foreigners from 54 countries of the world took part in the war in Donbas. Most of them were Russian-speaking or

ethnic Russians. Some of them supported the Armed Forces of Ukraine, others – the separatists of the DPR and LPR. For example, the soldiers of the Georgian National Legion fought for Ukraine, others for the separatists [5]. University of Maryland employee E. E. Murauskaite emphasizes that significantly more foreigners participated in hostilities in Iraq and Syria – up to 20 thousand. There is a clear correlation between the motives of participation in the battles and the historical context. For example, for 300 Serbs, they supported the DPR and LPR, 40 residents of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, the motivation was the role of Russia for their states both during the Second World War and in the 90s of XX century. At the same time, the financial and material side, if it had a certain value, is still not paramount (foreign citizens of Ukraine paid 300 USD, DNR and LNR – 1 thousand USD each). Fighters of foreign origin were in 6 military units of Ukraine and in 11 units of separatist enclaves. Probably the most historically conditioned in their actions were the Chechens and Georgians through the well-known actions of the Russian leadership against their peoples. Although some of them fought against Ukraine [6]. In fact, the main factor that stipulated foreign support for one side or another was ideological and historical. Let's say it is clear why Serbia did not introduce anti-Russian sanctions in 2019, which means that Serbian volunteers could fight for Ukraine. On the other hand, some of the Belarusians were in the battalions "Azov" and "Aydar", but much more of them joined the DPR and LPR units. It was the same with the French, Italians, and the Spaniard A. Davila-Rivas had tattoo-profiles of V. Lenin and I. Stalin, his fellow countrymen explained: the USSR helped the republican Spain in the 30s, therefore we must thank [7]. In 2014–2018, some political forces in Ukraine planned to create a Foreign Legion from supporters of right-wing movements. In particular, the US political scientist M. Kollarier claims that A. Semenyaka, the international secretary of the National Corps, has established ties with right-wing groups in Germany, Italy, and Croatia. It was the former Croatian officer B. Zorich who could help in the creation of the Foreign Legion for Ukraine in 2018. This is how they reacted to the prohibition of the Ukrainian government to include foreign mercenaries in the Azov battalions. One of the American analysts in March 2019 characterized this military unit as follows: a critical node in the interethnic grid of right-wing extremists, violence is not ruled out. For the leaders of the right-wing bloc in Croatia, which received 8.5 % of the vote in the elections in May 2019, there is a struggle in the world about the white European race, its culture and history. Although in modern Croatia it is very reluctant to remember that during the Second World War it supported the Reich until the last day [8].

It is known that in 2014 Serbia banned its citizens from fighting for the interests of other states, and for violation of this decision, a punishment of 6 months to 5 years in prison was established. In 2019 alone, 29 Serbs who fought in Ukraine were tried, but one of them – from Milosevic, who received the "Defender of Novorossiia" medal, said: the Serbian and Russian peoples fought together against the Nazis, and now we continue this tradition [9].

M. Lupion (Harvard University) correctly noted that the Russian Internet space is saturated with the most military terminology, especially during the period 1941–1945. [10]. Australian researcher S. Meger points out that the information war waged by the Kremlin does not remain without impact on a part of society. Even in Australia, far from Russia, society is split into supporters and opponents of Ukraine, some US residents see in the events in Ukraine a struggle between normal people and fascists [11]. Polish scientist K. Rękawek distinguishes the following types of foreign mercenaries who were in Ukraine in different years: adventurers, disillusioned idealists, veterans with historical complaints, representatives of right-wing movements. According to K. Rękawek, in 2015, 268 foreigners fought for Ukraine, including 100 people each from Georgia and Belarus. After all, one must not forget that in 10 European countries certain penalties have been introduced for the recruitment of mercenaries, and in France, Austria, Italy, Poland, it is considered a criminal offense [12].

Professor of the University of Suffolk J. McGlynn emphasizes that in modern Russia the politics of memory is actualized on the similarity of modern events in Ukraine and during the Great Patriotic War. The media and the government are channeling memory structures as an imaginary bulwark against threats to Russian national identity and historical heritage. Thus, cultural memory combines respect for the past with a commitment to government policy [13].

The German scientist from the University of Tübingen M. Kranich pointed out: the prevailing myth about the Great Patriotic War, which was used by Russian propaganda, became an

integral part of the assertions about the Bandera-fascist Ukraine. At the same time, the activities of the OUN (b) were viewed as exclusively collaborators, although its temporary cooperation with the Reich was explained solely by attempts to create an independent Ukraine. In the same vein, representatives of the Party of Regions spoke in 2004 about the danger of fascism in Western Ukraine, and such propaganda was especially active in the territory of Donbas. On Russian television, the tragic events in Odesa on May 2, 2014 were shown against the background of the pogrom in Lviv on July 1, 1941; the annexation of Crimea was explained by the need to protect the inhabitants of the peninsula from mythical “fascists”. In fact, hatred flared up, which gave rise to calls for violence: it is necessary to destroy the fascists, as our grandfathers did. The line of radical division did not follow the ethnic principle “Ukrainians-Russians”, but diametrically different: Soviet fighters and “fascists”. In Putin’s Russia, the Great Patriotic War became a symbol, a myth, a complex, an integral part of an internally perceiving culture, an interpretation of a common history among certain groups of society. Elements of this complex make up emotionally charged myths. The political and other elite of Russia is spreading such myths and symbols, guided by the opportunities provided by the state. It is it that mobilizes the population to support the narrative it needs about the events of World War II. A certain “frame” of the narrative is created, to which the events of the past are selectively attracted, profitable problems are emphasized, a moral assessment is given, that is, a scheme is needed. From November 2013 to May 2014, the mass media and the political elite of Russia, using elements of the Great Patriotic War, described the protesters on the Maidan as “fascists”, “others” who threatened the peaceful life of the citizens of Eastern Ukraine. According to the separatist leaders in Donbas, they considered it necessary to use methods of violence against the asocial members of these “fascist” groups [14].

A. Matveeva from the London School of Economics does not accidentally draw attention to an indisputable fact: historical myths created in Russia have stimulated separatist ideas in Donbas. In turn, the glorification of Bandera and the OUN (b) exacerbated the situation. At the beginning of the events on the Maidan, the majority of the Donbas population was neutral and apolitical. The polarization of views during the events of 2013–2014 did not happen along ethnic lines, it had a “civilizational” character. In Donbas, some of the most active figures did not share the views of the Kyiv authorities, not only in history, language, but also in religion, customs, and institutions.

Historians of the West note: the political history of Donbas, the system of values and political ideological views of the inhabitants contributed to the activities of the separatist leaders. And Russia began to use this regional political culture in its own interests [15].

Producer of political science at Rutgers University J. Kubik at the beginning of the XXI century distributed all the post-communist states into several groups in terms of the characteristics of historical memory, but did not include Ukraine in one of them, considering it a special case. For J. Hrytsak, historical memory is not history, but distortions of history [16].

M. Domanska “Center for Oriental Studies in Warsaw” noted that the mythology of war and the great-power ambitions of Russia continue to resonate with the broad masses of the population. The myth of “brotherhood in arms” has little impact on other post-Soviet states because, especially since 2014, they have moved away from Moscow’s neo-imperialist historical narrative. The use of historical myths as a form of soft power has less resonance in the West. However, the weak sensitivity of Western European societies in Russian historical propaganda does not diminish the seriousness of the challenge to Russia in the information and psychological war, when it makes extensive use of historical lies and plausible analogies between the current international situation and the political and military tension of the 1930s. Formed during the third presidential term of V. Putin 2012–2018, Russian political memory sees the myth of the Great Patriotic War as a tool for legitimizing claims to the role of a great power that saved Europe from Nazism. The narrative of war is not casually framed in religious terms, so any attempt to question the “canonical” version of the events of 1939–1945 marked with shame as “blasphemy”. For “deliberate falsification” of information about the role of the Soviet Union during the World War II, even up to 5 years’ imprisonment is provided. [17].

As J. Carroll (Brown University in the USA) pointed out, it was on the basis of the distortion of history that legends about female snipers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine appeared. In addition to the portrait of the modern Ukrainian, it was about sexy, militant “female banderites” who are effective on the battlefield [18].

Undoubtedly, Russian propaganda affects part of the population, as evidenced by specific facts of behavior and reactions to the events in Kyiv. So, on May 9, 2014, a group of armed men came to the Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Donetsk and demanded that they give them weapons of the period 1941–1945. They said that they woke up to fight her the way Soviet soldiers did during the war against Nazism and its collaborators. Members of the armed formations of the DPR and LPR, “volunteers” from Russia often claim we are fighting for Stalin’s cause, against Hitler’s henchmen. Others claim to defend the Orthodox Church, even the values of the former Russian Empire. [19]

Since 2009, the Canadian historian of Ukrainian origin T. Kuzio wrote, the romance of the 1941–1945 war. It was one of the reasons for the creation of military camps in the Donbas by future separatists, where young people learned to shoot from machine guns, offensive tactics or defense [20]. The militarization of society has gained serious momentum in modern Russia: since 2011, in Rostov, for example, a parade of “children’s troops” is held annually. Often, pro-Russian politicians organize a march of “war veterans” in Ukraine (of course, not from the period of 1939–1945, since more than 95 % of them died), and then nationalists inspire attacks on them. The population is indoctrinated with the idea that radical nationalists are in power in Kyiv, who use violence, aggression, and wreak havoc. Therefore, only representatives of the Kremlin can bring real order in the state [21].

H. Coynash in May 2020, having analyzed the content of the information attacks of the Russian media, came to the conclusion that in March 2019, up to 71 % of adult Russians had a positive idea of Stalin’s activities, as regards the geo-identification of the events of World War II, then after the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Donbas it became simply pathological [22].

4. Discussion

Scientific analytical works of researchers in Western Europe and North America demonstrate their increased attention to the events of World War II and the attempts of the Kremlin propaganda machine to connect them with modernity. At the same time, foreign scientists, with extreme scrupulousness, study the intricacies of the Russian information war, debunking false conclusions about the nature of power in Ukraine and the historical politics of Kyiv. According to such Western experts as T. McCloskey, D. Arel, J. McGlynn and others, since 2012, the themes and vocabulary of World War II are increasingly used in the Kremlin’s policy. It constantly resonates with modern events in Crimea and Donbas, because Kremlin ideologists see in the actions of the Kyiv authorities’ elements of a departure from the principles of the Soviet interpretation of past events, which were revived by Moscow. It is emphasized that the works of Western scientists are reasonably enough and objectively debunk the speculative conclusions of Russian propagandists.

The results obtained in the study fully prove the legitimacy of criticism by Western scientists of the main postulates of the information war against Ukraine. Launched in the Russian media and distributed in other states. The volume of work does not allow to reveal all areas of analysis that exist in foreign historiography. It is not a pity, outside of it the rest of the historiographic sources that directly relate to this issue. Therefore, other scientists are opening a certain circle of studies that will help to shed more light on this problem.

5. Conclusions

1. The annexation of Crimea to Russia, the undeclared war in Donbas, combined with the deterioration of Russia’s relations with Western Europe and the United States, created an atmosphere that almost adequately resembles the years of the Cold War.

2. In a tense atmosphere, the deterioration of Ukrainian-Russian relations takes a key place from the point of view of history during the Second World War, in Russia it is still called the “Great Patriotic War”.

3. Due to the specific mentality of the Donbas population, Western researchers point out, it more than in the rest of Ukraine perceives information “outbursts” of Moscow propaganda.

4. Because the audience covered by the Russian mass media is quite wide, in many European countries there is a certain stratum of citizens who believe the Kremlin’s arguments are quite correct. This factor explains the participation of foreign citizens in the armed formations of the DPR and LPR.

5. Western scholars emphasize that the constant reminder by Russian information institutions of the existence of “pro- and fascist” forces in Ukraine contradicts the European principles of good-neighborliness, reconciliation and harmony.

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