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CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR UNDER CONTROL OF MEMORIAL LEGISLATION

The article describes the interaction of contemporary Russian historiography with the Second World War and the government policy of memory. It is determined the alteration in perception of historical cognition tasks about the wartime, issues and methods of historical research. Russian conceptions are also outlined with their own interpretation of the Second World War events on a modern stage of historical science development. Mechanisms and means of historical memory as an essential socio and cultural attribute of national identity are defined. Particularly, we focus on the analysis of memorial legislation and its influence on historical science development.

Key words: contemporary Russian historiography, the Second World War, the German-Soviet War, memorial legislation, memorial law.

The interaction of historical science with the government policy of memory in Russia became the center of academic interest since an acute problem of reconsideration of the Soviet identity arose. Reviewing the Russian national history and Russification showed that, besides only the Second World War (especially the German-Soviet war), no other events, didn't associate positively and didn't arouse the necessity to preserve it in public memory. Therefore the Russian government at any cost decided to preserve a messianic vision of the German-Soviet war called the Great Patriotic War in Russia. Memorial laws appeared to be the most effective mechanism of preservation as it was a widespread practice in a modern law. Memorial laws, which are defined as regulations on the protection of historical and cultural heritage, include distinctive peculiarities and a long history in Russia, the culmination of which was the adoption of Federal Law on amendments to some legal acts of the Russian Federation. This law created new conditions for the research of the Second World War history and caused the controversial perception of the scientific community and political establishment.

The problem of interaction of contemporary Russian historiography and memorial law regarding the events of the Second World War is an actual and complicated topic in a contemporary historical science. Its influence on the development of historical science and importance in a social life stimulates foreign and domestic historians to actively discuss this problem in periodicals. The interaction of the contemporary Russian historiography and memory policy is researched by Yu. Afanasyev¹, B. Kamynin², M. Kopusov³, O. Makliuk⁴, M. Minc⁵, V. Nevezhin⁶, Yu. Nikiforov⁷,

¹ Афанасьев, Ю. (1996). *Другая война: история и память*. Москва.

² Камынин, В. (2003). Историческая память о Великой Отечественной войне как фактор формирования общественного сознания. *Проблемы образования, науки и культуры*, 1, 59- 65.

³ Копосов, Н. Государство защищает память. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Gosudarstvo-zaschischaet-pamyat>>; Копосов, Н. Политика памяти и мемориальные законы. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Politika-pamyati-i-memorial-nye-zakony>>; Копосов, Н. Память в законе.<<http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Pamyat-v-zakone>>.

⁴ Маклюк, О. (2012). Меморіальне законодавство в країнах Європи: проблема регулювання історичної пам'яті. *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*, XXXIII, 311-315.

⁵ Минц, М. (2011). *Начало Великой Отечественной войны: Современная историография: Сб. обзоров и реф.* Москва.

⁶ Небезин, В. (2007). СССР во Второй мировой войне: новейшая российская историография проблемы. *Україна-Росія: діалог історіографії*. Матеріали міжнародної конференції. Київ-Чернігів, 157-170.

⁷ Никифоров, Ю. Великая Отечественная война в зеркале «новой» историографии. <<http://www.russiaglobe.com/N75/Lulechnik.PravdaoZnameniiPobedu.htm/>>; Никифоров, Ю. Новейшая российская историография о причинах второй мировой войны и нападении Германии на Советский. <http://mggu-sh.ru/sites/default/files/prichiny_vtoroy_mirovoy.pdf>.

S. Solovyov¹, M. Feretti², I. Khesler³ and others. These authors define the development of historical researches regarding the events of the Second World War and reveal the influence of memorial legislation on this process. Yu. Nikiforov, M. Minc, V. Nevezhin, V. Kamynin attempt to determine a role of the Soviet Union in the Second World War analyzing the events in the light of the Soviet assessments and applying of new interpretations of foreign historians. Based on this analysis they consider the evolution of Russian historiography which gradually expands the problem field of historical research and apply new methodological approaches. S. Solovyov, M. Kopusov, M. Feretti emphasize on the formation of historical memory in Russia about the Second World War which represents the state of modern historical science; determine the influence of memorial legislation on process of creation of historical research and also design their interaction. Considering the principles of memorial legislation and its influence on the contemporary Russian historiography of the Second World War, historians develop only mechanisms and principles of the study confirming the absence of synthetic work.

The objective of the article is to define memorial legislation as a way to control power for the development of modern Russian historiography of the Second World War and identify means and mechanisms for its implementation, track the interaction between memorial legislation and historical researches in the formation of historical memory of the war events.

At the end of the XX – in the beginning of the XXI the Russian historiography changed the understanding of tasks and methods of historical researches connected with new possibilities to study wars after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A distinctive peculiarity on this stage of the Russian historiography development is that scientists started to actively search for new theoretical, conceptual and methodological principles to study history, in particular how to overcome a party-class approach and start to show the Russian history in the Second World War times in the light of the Russian nationalism and also in a holistic nation-context, on the basis of public idea, which became a reference point of a positive image of state building. The process of gradually implementation of humanistic and anthropocentric approaches to the study of the Second World War history where a human became the main object of the study indicated the modern historiography situation⁴. Anthropological turn and history humanization created a new phenomenon in a historical research in Russia, the central issue of which is the study of totalitarianism and Stalinism which were in the direct control of the government⁵.

Significant factors to influence the state, development and prospective of the modern historiography were an 'archive revolution' and withdrawal of a huge amount of archival documents from special storages, the access to foreign archival and historiographic sources, research activation of Second World War, conducted in the capital of the country as well as by local scientific research centers, institutes, schools and some historians. It should be noted that the 'archive revolution' evoked interest of Russian historians in archival documents as well as their foreign colleagues⁶.

Distinctive tendencies on the current stage of writing the history is enriching Russian historical science with the achievements of European and world historiography, and forming historiographic area of Russian scientists and Russian diaspora. Its manifestation became an organization of conferences and forums devoted to the most current issues of the Second World War⁷.

Outlined factors caused the extension of problematic area, source base and research organ in a contemporary Russian science that differs from Soviet historiography in methodological pluralism and attempts to synthesize achievements of Russian and foreign historiography. Thus, modern Russian historiography includes a research experience of Soviet historical science and modern approaches to

¹ Соловьёв, С. Комиссия и история. <http://scepis.net/library/id_2476.html>.

² Ферретти, М. (2002). Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм. <<http://www.polit.ru/article/2002/11/20/474876/print/>>.

³ Хёслер, И. (2005). Что значит "Проработка прошлого"? Об историографии Великой Отечественной войны в СССР и России. *Неприкосновенный запас*, 2-3.

⁴ Хёслер, И. (2005). Что значит "Проработка прошлого"? Об историографии Великой Отечественной войны в СССР и России. *Неприкосновенный запас*, 2-3.

⁵ Копосов, Н. Государство защищает память. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Gosudarstvo-zaschischaet-pamyat>>; Ферретти, М. (2002). Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм. <<http://www.polit.ru/article/2002/11/20/474876/print/>>.

⁶ Сидорова, Л. (2013). Современная историография России: тенденции развития. *Русский вопрос*, 2, 29-36.

⁷ Никифоров, Ю. Великая Отечественная война в зеркале «новой» историографии. <<http://www.russiaglobe.com/N75/Lulechnik.PravdaoZnameniiPobedu.htm/>>.

perception of global war.

Some Russian books by Victor Suvorov accelerated the modern Russian history development. Suvorov doubted a number of proved facts in Second World War history. He reconsidered the reasons for conflict, foreign policy of the USSR on the eve of the war, characterized military operations and detected a reason for why the soviet army was defeated. Russian historians expressed their opinions about his interpretation of the war history in periodicals resulted in politicized debates¹.

The modern stage of Russian history development distinguishes two conceptions in a war issue: liberal and state. Liberal and west liberal issues are represented by M. Solonin, B. Sokolov, O. Gogun, A. Gumbold, Yu. Curhanov. These historians used V. Suvorov's hypothesis about the preventative attack. The main thesis in it says that Y. Stalin intended to start a war with Nazi Germany that proved his concealed mobilization of Russian economy. To prove this thesis liberal concept supporters are building the Second World War history that covers a range of prewar and war history in the USSR (1929 -1945)².

The state conception is represented by S. Pereslegin, Yu. Mukhin, O. Martyrosyan, S. Brezkun, A. Isayev, O. Bol'nykh and others. These historians form the conception of how to perceive the events of Second World War, based on the Soviet historical canon. In a core of the state concept is allegedly Stalin's 'humane' position about war, his reluctance to take part in an armed conflict and consolidation of the idea he had a feeling of the German attack and by means of his foreign policy he attempted to protect the USSR. The state concept supporters think that it was reasonable of Stalin to sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with the Third Reich. The pact was a tough decision. He could reject Hitler's proposal and, consequently, accept the arrival of German troops to the USSR borders in case of imminent defeat of Poland in the war with Germany, or conclude an agreement that would allow the USSR to expand its borders far to the west to prevent the war³. In the center of a representative historiography image occurred to be a 'nation-winner'. Besides these historians emphasize Stalin's 'significant role' as an organizer and a uniting symbol during the struggle against invaders and hyperbolize the unity between the people and political system and its supreme representative. For this purpose the state concept supporters focus more on the events of the German-Soviet war, almost completely adapting Soviet version of the events⁴.

In the context of the study of Second World War Russian historians reveal different aspects of military confrontation. They focus more on the reasons and precondition of the war of The Third Reich with the USSR, the economic situation of the USSR during the war, the fighting during the specific battles won by the USSR, reasons for the defeat of the Third Reich in the war, guerilla warfare on occupied Soviet territories, fighting and labour valor of the 'Soviet people'. However, researchers try to avoid topics on the occupation regime (it is exclusively about the crimes of the occupiers against the local people), collaborationist movement, human and material losses of the USSR, the reasons for the defeat of the Red Army⁵.

New trends in the interpretation of the events of Second World War that appeared in the modern Russian historiography, alarmed public authorities who saw in these developments a threat to historical memory of Russians serving the most significant socio and cultural attribute of national identity. Problems of social consolidation, which appear in a multinational and undemocratic country, actualize the need for an effective policy regarding historical memory of Russians. The extremely politicized character of this segment of Russian social life makes the citizens need effective strategies of formal representation of the past and its implementation⁶.

Creating a positive image of the state history is an essential principle of foreign and domestic policy of Russia and no less powerful lever of influence on the public mood. The historical memory of the heroic and tragic pages of Second World War history engenders a number of stereotypes and myths in public life. Some historians' attempts to reconsider the events of Second World War in the Russian historiography

¹ Афанасьев, Ю. (1996). *Другая война : история и память*. Москва.

² Минц, М. (2011). *Начало Великой Отечественной войны: Современная историография: Сб. обзоров и реф.* Москва.

³ Никифоров, Ю. Новейшая российская историография о причинах второй мировой войны и нападении Германии на Советский. <http://mggu-sh.ru/sites/default/files/prichiny_vtoroy_mirovoy.pdf>.

⁴ Хёслер, И. (2005). Что значит "Проработка прошлого"? Об историографии Великой Отечественной войны в СССР и России. *Неприкосновенный запас*, 2-3.

⁵ Минц, М. (2011). *Начало Великой Отечественной войны: Современная историография: Сб. обзоров и реф.* Москва.

⁶ Камынин, В. (2003). Историческая память о Великой Отечественной войне как фактор формирования общественного сознания. *Проблемы образования, науки и культуры*, 1, 59-65.

doesn't violate the memory of the war in the national consciousness where scientists and politicians try to create a common collective memory and myths for national, social and political consolidation of the state. Collective memory, aimed at the study of group identity, ensures the unity of the Russian population and removes some facts from the history considered as a threat for its integrity¹.

Therefore the authorities constantly manipulate historical memory of the war time trying to put the 'Great Victory' for public service consolidation. Such position of the ruling political parties in modern Russia illustrates the tendency to restrict the access to archives by public authorities from the mid-1990s. It ceased 'archive revolution' and 'the golden age' for historians. Such restriction wasn't effective and the authorities partly restored the access to archival documents, numerous media sources regarding to discussions of the events of the German-Soviet war. The questions about prewar period of German-Soviet war were in the center of the discourse (1939-1941). Such questions were attempts to release from the influence of the Soviet historiography and its propaganda. Historians tried to describe the 'other war' in which Stalin was a provocateur².

The authorities constantly attempted to manipulate historical memory of Second World War, the culmination of which became the idea to adopt laws to protect historical memory of the Russians in law. It should be noted that the use of memorial laws is a popular international practice which doesn't restrict activities of historians since memorial laws regulate exclusively historical memory of the society and includes the liability for public distortion of historical facts³. However, Russian historian M. Kopusov considers the idea of memorial legislation a bit simplified and distinguishes two kinds of memorial laws: 1) declaratory judgments which demonstrate a formal assessment of the state or other historical events 2) laws including criminal liability for their public discussions and viewing back on the past⁴.

As a basis for memorial legislation the Russian authority took the second definition, taking into consideration historical memory of the German-Soviet war in the East European countries and Russian historiography of the post-soviet times, in which approaches and methods of the study of global war changed⁵. The approximate reason for adoption of memorial legislation in Russia was a transfer of a soldier-liberator monument from the center of Tallinn to the military cemetery in 2007. After this event the State Duma in Russia wanted to prohibit the 'Nazism rehabilitation' in law. The president of the Russian Federation D. Medvedev implemented this idea and issued the decree 'About the commission at the President of the Russian Federation to counteract attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russian interests' on 15th May 2009. It was headed by the director of the Institute of Russian history RAS A. Sakharov. The commission included top officials and politicians of the State Duma who often didn't have professional education or appropriate level of knowledge in history.

The tasks of the commission declared in the decree were 'to discuss and analyze information on falsification of historical facts and events, aimed at reducing international prestige of the Russian Federation⁶; consideration of proposals on countering attempts of falsification of historical facts and events to the detriment of Russia's interests; development of recommendations regarding the appropriate response to attempts to falsify historical facts and events and to neutralize their possible negative consequences'⁷. The commission authority was unclear and there weren't indicted neither facts considered as falsification nor criteria to determine the way to neutralize the consequences of such falsification. All these inaccuracies in the legislative document of this level became the foundation for professional historians'

¹ Копосов Н. Политика памяти и мемориальные законы. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Politika-pamyati-i-memorialnye-zakony>>; *О Комиссии при Президенте Российской Федерации по противодействию попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России 2009* (Указ Президента Российской Федерации). <<https://rg.ru/2009/05/20/komissia-dok.html>>.

² Афанасьев, Ю. (1996). *Другая война: история и память*. Москва.

³ Маклюк, О. (2012). Мемориальне законодавство в країнах Європи: проблема регулювання історичної пам'яті. *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*, XXXIII, 311; Магусевич, О. (2014). Мемориальное законодательство: генезис и противоречие. *Труды БТГУ. История, философия, филология*, 5, 117.

⁴ Копосов, Н. Память в законе. <<http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Pamyat-v-zakone>>.

⁵ Сидорова, Л. (2013). Современная историография России: тенденции развития. *Русский вопрос*, 2, 29-36.

⁶ Копосов, Н. Политика памяти и мемориальные законы. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Politika-pamyati-i-memorialnye-zakony>>.

⁷ *О Комиссии при Президенте Российской Федерации по противодействию попыткам фальсификации истории в ущерб интересам России 2009* (Указ Президента Российской Федерации). <<https://rg.ru/2009/05/20/komissia-dok.html>>.

speculation that the committee was established to supervise the activities of scientists and to censor their historical researches. Suspicions of the scientists weren't groundless, since the decree was the result of a criminal case against historians who have departed from the adapted Soviet myth about the "Great Patriotic War"¹.

The special commission of history falsification noted that historians reduced the scale mobilization of Hitler's leadership, the Wehrmacht and elite of the Third Reich in their works as well as their willingness to wage predatory and aggressive war to the complete destruction of the USSR. Commission members argued that some historians have overlooked the fact that Nazi plan to attack the Soviet Union was known in Moscow on December 1940 and Stalin behaved quite rationally, considering that Germany would not attack until it was waging the war with Great Britain. According to the Commission the fact that German had never seen the threat from the Soviet Union was ignored. An unsuccessful attempt of the Soviet leaders to strategize a preventive defense was represented as an intention to prepare a powerful attack to Germany. Some official sources, in particular Stalin's campaign speeches and Soviet military propaganda in the spring 1941 were overestimated and granted the status of major and crucial sources².

Many historians negatively perceived the activity of the Presidential Commission to counteract attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia's interest because of unconstructive criticism and comments of their historical researches and activity, resulted in an "open letter" of historians, which appealed the government to immediately stop the persecution of scientists and intervention in a historical research. The letter pointed out that "attempts of regulation and censorship of historical research are unacceptable in a free country and are contrary to the Constitution and the fundamental international human right standards. Thus, the scientific community does not need any authority control and bureaucratic instructions that will enable the possibility to express own points of view and unobstructed deal with archival documents. Academic institutions are claimed to be enough competent and independent to become qualified experts in scientific debates, which is only discredited by any "commissions to counteract history falsification." Moreover, historians noted that keeping all valuable archival documents closed and new attempts to invent myths of the recent past cause falsification. Because of the rejection the establishment of the Presidential Commission by the scientific community to counter attempts to falsify the history to the detriment of Russia's interests and its protest with the participation of opposition political establishment the government softened its attitude toward historical science. It was stated in the Presidential Decree № 183 of 14 February 2012, in which the decree № 549 of 15 May 2009 was repealed³.

The inefficiency of the commission activity and a wide public resonance did not prevent the adoption of new laws since the Russian government didn't abandon the idea of a memorial law which should protect the history of the Second World War from "rewriting". On November 2012 the Russian media reported that the Federation Council prepared "anti-Nazi" Law for Russia "About inadmissibility of any actions for the rehabilitation of Nazism, glorification of Nazi criminals and their allies". The law was initiated by Boris Spiegel, the founder of international Human Rights movement "The world without Nazism". The content of this law literally coincides with the memorial law in 2009, and therefore aroused strong criticism from the civil society organizations, the academic community and human rights movements resulted in his quitting the Federation Council, and the laws he suggested were rejected by the government. These circumstances made the authorities to postpone adoption of memorial laws to more favorable time. And this time came on May 2013. That time a real scandal aroused in public opinion on a L. Gozman's post in social media where he equated to citizens of the war there was a real scandal around the post of Russian politics L. Gozman social networks, which equated SMERSH (acronym of 'death to spies') to SS (Schutzstaffel). The post aroused a new debate in the Russian parliament about memorial laws. The government was impelled to adopt these laws only after another scandal regarding interpretations of the events of Second World War on the TV channel "Rain", which suggested its viewers to answer the question of whether it was worth to surrender Leningrad to Germans in order to save the life of its citizens. Therefore, on May 5, 2014 Putin signed the law "About amendments to some legislative acts of the Russian Federation", initiated by the representative of the State Duma I. Yarova. This law includes a criminal liability when the facts established by the Nuremberg Tribunal are denied and spread false testimony about the activities of the Soviet Union in Second World War. It should be noted that the law can be freely interpreted and, in fact, serves as a reason

¹ Копосов Н. Государство защищает память. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Gosudarstvo-zaschischaet-pamyat>>

² Соловьёв, С. Комиссия и история. <http://scepis.net/library/id_2476.html>.

³ Копосов, Н. Политика памяти и мемориальные законы. <<http://www.russ.ru/pole/Politika-pamyati-i-memorialnye-zakony>>.

for censorship, creating unfavorable condition for the activity of historians¹.

The consideration of major issues and some aspects of the history of the Second World War proves the presence of significant improvements in its research and demonstration, creation of scientific concepts, in which historians are trying to form an argumentative image of the role and importance of the Russian people in the war events and processes. However, analyzing the Russian historiography and its interaction with the public policy of memory, it should be noted that Second World War topic is under control of the state that restricts the full development of Russian historiography at the legislative level by adapting Soviet evaluation of military events to new realities. The most effective means of preserving Soviet models of historical memory of Second World War was adoption of memorial legislation in Russia that restricts the full development of Russian historiography and specializes science activity for historians by means of administrative and criminal penalties. Censorship and fear of punishment for the study of complex events of the Second World War negatively impact the development of modern Russian historiography, which is under the strict control of memorial laws.

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¹ Копосов, Н. Память в законе. <<http://www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Pamyat-v-zakone/>>.