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**KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY AS A WAY OF
COUNTERACTING WAR PROPAGANDA AND PROTECTING
STATE SOVEREIGNTY**

- Abstract -

The article analyses how effective is the knowledge of history to counteract war propaganda produced by the external aggressor (in the context of the conflict from Donbas). Measures to overcome the destructive effects of the Russian propaganda are also discussed.

Keywords: knowledge, history, war propaganda, sovereignty, Ukraine, Donbas.

In critical times, the historical experience and knowledge become real and the historical memory of the people intensifies. Policy carried by the state in the humanitarian sphere determines not only the formation of historical consciousness of the people but also the country's territorial integrity. Is everything being done to educate nationally conscious citizens who, using the historical experience of his people, his native language and culture, is able to take a fateful decision and act to protect national interests? Are there deliberate distortions of historical facts, omissions, concealments of facts about the people's spiritual rise that can instill a sense of national inferiority in the people, to sow doubts about the sovereignty of their own state? The answers to these questions and appropriate measures from authorities, scientists and society to current challenges, including humanitarian development, will minimize negative effects.

Learning his or her culture, history, values and traditions is an essential attribute of the humanitarian progress of every member of the society.

Due to the multitude of cases where ignorance of history, manipulation of facts and events of the past gave a pretext for external aggression and occupation, it

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should be noted the need to combine efforts by scientists, scholars, teachers, media, publishers, charity foundations and social organizations for the purpose of diffusing knowledge among the public at large. In the educational law, scientific and information work should be enshrined in legislation as one of the leading activities of scientific and educational institutions of Ukraine.

Funds creating to support for educational projects, including popular-scientific literature publications both in Ukrainian and Russian, development of popular internet resources, the organization of popular lectures by domestic and international researchers, and the encouragement of talented young scientists can be among the actions that can improve the situation. The popularization of scientifically substantiated historical knowledge among the Donbas population will contribute to belie historical myths, form interest for the historical past and a critical view toward any form of military propaganda among young people.

Researchers I. Dziuba, Yu. Zerniy, A. Konyk, R. Tkachuk, V. Scherbyn and others dedicated their academic works to the issue of worldview and value orientations in the Ukrainian society and special aspects of the state policy in the field of humanitarian development. Despite a considerable number of scientific articles that analyze the state policy in the field of humanitarian development of Ukraine, influence of external determinant, with the Russian propaganda, remains to be investigated. As long as pro-Russian NGOs and media control cultural and educational development in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, there will be a direct threat to the stability and security of Ukraine.

Our goal is to reveal how knowledge of history counters external aggressor military propaganda (in the context of Donbass).

Events of 2014-2015 have exposed many gaps in public policy aimed at protecting national interests and the national security of Ukraine against threats. Under article 7 of the Law of Ukraine dated 19 June 2003 #964-IV On National Security, the separate paragraph spells out threats in information sphere in particular “intention to manipulate public opinion, including dissemination of false, incorrect or selective information”. Through delay by specialized state agencies in matters of humanitarian sphere, external actions and influences, in the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Soviet ideological model was “mothballed”. Then and there the situation faced by Donbas residents is not only result of influence of the pro-Russian public organization and media.

In the sphere of humanitarian policy there were also a number of errors:

- the importance of own culture, history, values and traditions were underestimated;
- theoretical and practical foundations for transformation of science, education and culture in the light of prospect development of Ukraine

as sovereign, democratic, constitutional and legal state were not developed;

- approval of the national humanitarian policy concept, development of scientific and analytical methods to promote humanitarian and educational activities in Ukraine on the basis of Ukrainian studies were not ensured;
- package of measures aimed at spreading knowledge of national symbols of the Ukrainian state, popularization of scientifically substantiated historical knowledge, mythologies debunking and formation of a critical view toward any form of military propaganda.

Without doubt, education and training primarily influence the worldview formation. The education system should be focused on the following components of the ideological model of the society: historical knowledge, language(s) of communication, national culture, and religious confession. Knowledge of history is an important part to form a world-view of every member of society. Lack of a national component in worldview attitude of a person can cause a human identity crisis¹. Events in Donetsk and Luhansk regions show that rejection of national symbols, values and history intensifies contradictions within society, assimilating it into the cultural space of another country. In science, the low rate of scholar's remuneration, fall in professional prestige, and intellectual property rights exposure make scholars change profession or seek permanent residence abroad by leaving Ukraine. However, educational and research institutions cannot resolve the existing problems on their own and need the state to participate in the creation of an effective policy for intellectual potential development.

The historian should be on the frontline of the information front. During the presentation of educational learning material "Revolution of Dignity and aggression of Russia against Ukraine", P. Poliansky noted that "If we do not write it, an aggressor and invader will do as he has done in study guides for teachers of temporarily occupied Crimea and Russia. In that study guide the Russian aggression against the sovereign state of Ukraine is justified and is shown as almost an aid project and missionary task."

Starting from the first quarter of the XXth century, in the context of the industrialization of Ukraine, the education sector of Ukraine has undergone significant changes resulting in humanitarian knowledge reduction². However, the

¹ Tkachuk R.F., *Humanitarian development of Ukraine in the context of crisis processes of culture*, Public Administration: Theory and Practice, <http://www.academy.gov.ua/ej/ej15/index.htm>.

² Scherbyn V.K., *Humanitarian research in Academies of Science of CIS countries: its role and place in the humanitarization of science and education in post-Soviet area*, Humanitarization of Science and Education in Transition Period. Minsk, 2000, p. 31.

XXth century is characterized by emergence of the “industry of memory” as no other period displays such number of museums, archives and memorials opening³. Once Soviet power was established, all historical fields became policy-driven. The Soviet historiography denied the need for the formation of Ukrainian historical memory which caused the deformation of historical consciousness of the society and distorted the picture of the historical past⁴. In particular, the Cossacks history of Donbas region was ignored.

With the establishment of independent Ukraine in 1991, some steps were taken so that residents of Donetsk and Luhansk regions started to think about their historical roots⁵. Pursuant to Decree of the President of Ukraine 1123/2005 pp dated 19.06.2005 “On marking 500th anniversary of Ukrainian Kossack settlements in the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions” a variety of events supported it. In particular, pupils and students took part in a historical contest for best knowledge regarding the place and role of the Ukrainian Kossacks in the past of the region. In the city of Mariupol, excavations were carried out during which the remains of Ukrainian settlements and household items were discovered at the place of former site Kalmiuska Sloboda. Memorials were established in the town of Selidove, Donetsk region, on the place of which there was zymivnyk of Zaporizhya Sich Kalmiu’s palanka (winter camp of military-administrative and economical district)⁶.

The analysis of L. Kuchma and V. Yuschenko presidents turns has shown “the polarity of the policy of memory”. President Kuchma initiated the 350th anniversary of the Pereyaslav Rada celebration, as Russia was a main point in the foreign policy during his term. He also supported the Moscow proposal to form a working group for the revision of history textbooks written after the collapse of the Soviet Union. President Yuschenko initiated a rebirth of Baturyn as hetman’s capital. He also urged the international community to recognize the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people⁷. In this regard, the policy of the president Yanukovich was aimed at destruction of Ukrainian national memory, in particular the Holodomor as genocide was denied. Moreover, he

³ Konyk Anastasia, *Historical Memory and the Policy of Memory in a Media Culture Epoch*, Lviv University Revue, Series Journalism, 2009. Is. 32. p. 161.

⁴ Udod A.A., *Historical Memory in Ukrainian Mentality*, IV International Congress of Ukrainian Studies, Reports and Messages, History, 2 part, Odessa, 1999, P. 2, p. 119-124.

⁵ Chukhlib Taras, *Donechchyna and Luhanshchyna – Cossacks Lands of Ukraine 16th – 17th century*, Kyiv, 2014, p. 97-98

⁶ *A celebration of the 500th anniversary of the emergence of Ukrainian Cossacks settlement present territory of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions*. Official site of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 181, President of Ukraine; Order from 19.07.2005 №1123/2005-pp., <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/main/tt4006y2005/page4>

⁷ Konyk Anastasia, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

accepted the proposal of Moscow to write a common history textbook and changed the Navy Day to have it the same day with Russia.

President Poroshenko signed a decree 228/2015 dated 21.04.2015 “On measures to commemorate Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukrainski Sichovi Striltsi) and 100th anniversary of their victory in the battle for Makivka mount”⁸. The goal was to promote national memory recovery, the dissemination of objective information about national military forces, the strengthening of patriotism spirit in the society, and the military patriotic education of youth.

The optimal model of human development should include the following key elements: innovation activities to prevent recurrence of negative experience; culture of national symbols, values, tradition and respect for history; intelligence as a basic resource of the state to create a consolidated informational and educational space.

For decades, pro-Russian leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, using administrative resources and Russian media influence, implanted imperial myths and ideology in people’s minds. An example of local authorities’ position regarding measures dedicated to acute social problems was blocking the “Donbas-tour” campaign on 5-7 April 2011 during which the presentation of Sergiy Zhadan’s novel “Voroshylovgrad” was planned in Donetsk, Luhansk and Starobilsk.

The media space is capable of popularizing historical knowledge, generate interest in the historical past, and debunk historical myths. European experience shows that TV and radio programs should include qualitative information on significant events and leading figures in the history of Ukraine, memorial places and events (places of memory). But Ukrainian media market is dominated by Russia which deliberately introduces inexpensive editions, movies, documentaries and TV series, causing an erosion of Ukrainian identity.

Lack of adequate measures in humanitarian policy, outdated educational methods and irrational use of funds negate efforts of enthusiastic-teachers, writers and some public activist aimed at popularization of historical knowledge in Donbas.

Internet website of cultural and socio-political magazine Otechestvo (journal-otechestvo.ru) is a striking example of Russian propaganda. The site states that the magazine was created “to strengthen and revive patriotism and love for the multinational Motherland. And it is also seeks to ensure effective cooperation between the people and authorities”. The thematic content of the category “History

⁸ *On measures to commemorate Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (Ukrainski Sichovi Striltsi) and 100th anniversary of their victory in the battle for Makivka mount*, Official website of the President of Ukraine; decree from 21.04.2015 №1123/2005, <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2282015-18870>

of Russia” clearly shows the orientation of the magazine, where the vast majority of information is about Ukraine. Manipulative approach is seen with the naked eye from the following headlines “Europe and Ukraine”, “History of Ukrainian language. How history is rewritten”, “Bismark invented Ukraine” and others.

In his speeches and articles T. Snyder⁹ points out the contradictory statement of Russian propaganda “We have heard from them that there is no Ukrainian state and at the same time the Ukrainian state is oppressive. There is no Ukrainian nation, but all Ukrainians are nationalists. There is no Ukrainian language but Russian speakers in Donbas have to speak Ukrainian...»¹⁰. Initiated by the Duliby publishing house with support from the Research institute of Ukrainian Studies and under the patronage of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, charity tour was held in June 22 - 27, 2015 in terms of which Russian-language publication of the worldwide bestseller *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* was presented in Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv with the participation of the author, Timothy Snyder, a Yale university professor. The goal of this project was to spread information among Russian-speaking readers that mass destruction of people in 1939-1945 was a result of cooperation of two totalitarian regimes. Absolute proof of regimes cooperation is German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. In this regard, in his recent speeches T. Snyder comments Putin’s statement about importance of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and expresses concern about rising threat to divide Eastern Europe between West and Russia.

K. Galushko, a well known historian was fair to say that “the purpose of information war is not only to misrepresent and distort facts of current political events taking place in Ukraine, but also to undermine the historical foundation of the Ukrainian identity. The Russian propaganda machine presents Ukraine as an artificial formation, historical accident, the country and the state that has never existed before 1991 and never proved its viability”. The historian is convinced that “such approach gives an idea of the inevitability of the collapse of Ukraine or its disappearance from the political map, a moribund effort to support modern patriotism by historical background of traditions, experience and achievements of Ukrainians for previous centuries”¹¹. Russian propaganda emphasizes the randomness of modern Ukraine territorial boundaries, that are “the gift from Lenin,

⁹ Timothy Snyder, *Not to turn into Russia – is not enough for Ukraine*, <http://zbruc.eu/node/27280>; Timothy Snyder, *Ukraine: From Propaganda to Reality*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKF0bB6_naw

¹⁰ Timothy Snyder, *How the Kremlin manages to lie about the war in Ukraine*, <http://nv.ua/opinion/snyder/kak-kremlyu-udaetsya-lgat-zapadu-o-voyne-v-ukraine-23199.html>

¹¹ *Ukraine opens historical front*, Official site of Ukrainian Institute of National Memory, <http://www.memory.gov.ua/news/ukraina-vidkrivae-istorichnii-front-istorichni-fakti-proti-rosiiskoi-propagandi-u-novomu-intern>

Stalin and Khrushchev” and half of Ukraine is not Ukraine but “New Russia” (Novorossiia).

Today, as never before in Ukrainian society, there is a growing interest in various formats of historical lectures. “Istorychna Pravda” (Historical Truth) is a social, political and science online project. Its goal is to popularize historical knowledge from ancient times till the present days. Emphasis is placed on political history of 20th century: struggle for national identity, totalitarian projects and human fates.

International Open Seminar “The Seduction of Propaganda: Mass Violence in Ukraine in the 20th and 21st Centuries” (Kyiv, June 2 – 3, 2015; Lviv, June 5, 2015)¹². According to its organizers and participants, in a context of threat to the state sovereignty and integrity and when the people are fighting for their political independence, knowledge of history is one of the elements to protect the nation. The Donbas example proves that Russian propaganda is a direct threat to the stability and security of Ukraine.

T. Chukhlib is convinced that Donetsk and Luhansk regions “have always been, are and will be an integral part of Ukraine. It is clearly confirmed by historical facts and numerous documentary sources. And if history sounds very convincingly the Lord God will help the Ukrainian people to defend their newest independence and territorial integrity as a heiress to glorious Cossack traditions¹³.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, it is expedient gradual transfer according to the content of education to get historical knowledge that forms ideological and value orientation as well as national identity. A teacher of history should not just give a specific knowledge set but combine them into an integral system emphasizing the links between historical facts and phenomena. Implementation of Ukrainian study programs into educational process will promote formation of self – identification and rational interpretation of such relations.

State institutions for scientific, educational and informational policy should be responsible for historical knowledge to be spread among the public at large. In the period of humanitarian crisis, scientists, professors, mass media, publishers, charity foundations, all should combine their efforts to popularize historical knowledge. The system of education is to codify scientific and information work as one of the main activities of scientific and educational institutions in Ukraine.

To popularize historical knowledge makes sense: the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Science and Education, together with the National Academy of Science is to initiate the foundation of non-

¹² Program of the International Open Seminar “*The Seduction of Propaganda: Mass Violence in Ukraine in the 20th and 21st Centuries*” (Kyiv, June 2 – 3, 2015; Lviv, June 5, 2015). – 8 p.

¹³ Chukhlib Taras, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

commercial funds with financial support from Ukrainian and foreign private benefactors. These funds will support educational projects, including editing of popular-science literature, both in Ukrainian and Russian, development of popular-science Internet resources, open lecturing with participation of well-known Ukrainian and foreign researchers, stimulating talented young scientists.

Within the frame of the program of providing schools and higher education institution with textbooks and manuals to develop state support for popular scientific books and periodical editions supplying them to school and public libraries. The State Committee for television and broadcasting of Ukraine at the implementation of "The program of socially important editions" should provide publication of actual popular scientific books.

Together with publishing houses it should start electronic versions of popular scientific editions followed by publication in electronic Internet libraries with open access; to organize All-Ukrainian contest to determine the best Ukrainian popular scientific books, publications in the media, television and radio programs, Internet publications and the like.

To mark the best popularizers of historical knowledge (scientists, teachers, journalists, public persons).

Popularization of scientific grounded historical knowledge among the population of Donbass, will help to debunk historical myths, foster interest in historical past among youth and a critical attitude to any forms of war propaganda.