

The Politics of Memory at the Turn of the XXth - XXIst Centuries: The Main Trends Against the Backdrop of Digitalization of the Information Space

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ABSTRACT

The article based on materials from military anniversaries of the late XX - early XXI centuries reveals the main trends in the politics of memory in relation to the history of wars of the XIX - XX centuries against the backdrop of digitalization of the information space. The 50th anniversary of the end of World War II (1995) and the events related to the 80th anniversary of the beginning of this war (2019), as well as the 250th anniversary of the birth of Napoleon (2019) are taken as milestone events. As a result of the study, the author identified two trends. Firstly, a trend of a transnational and transcultural nature, focused mainly on general humanistic values. Secondly, the tendency towards a nationally-oriented and politically biased policy, which became prevailing from 2004-2005. The second trend has become characteristic, first of all, for most countries of the post-Soviet space, including the countries of Central and Southeast Europe and Russia. Judging by the fact that a number of Asian countries (primarily China and Japan) have come to the forefront of anniversary events related to World War II, the tendency to decisively revise the transnational and transcultural vectors in the politics of memory in these countries has also become dominant. Western countries also, regardless of attempts to maintain a commitment to tolerance and transnationalism, were caught up in “memory wars” and, as a rule, in connection with the events of military history. The activation of the “memory wars” is largely associated with fundamental changes in the information environment, primarily in connection with the processes of its digitalization.

The author believes that the prevalence of the second trend was predetermined by the end of the modernist revolution, which by the end of the twentieth century ended as the dominant world process that determined main parameters of the historical process in the second half of the twentieth century. The consequence of this from the turn of the century has been an increase in the fragmentation of the world and an explosion of thirst for identity. In this regard, historical memory and its twin-antipode, historical politics, have become the main tools (and often creators) of this identity - national, state, religious, ethnic, group and any other form of identity.

Keywords: *historical memory, politics of memory, memory struggle, military anniversaries*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1989, the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, a powerful wave of historical commemorations swept the world. The events of the military past took a special and, of course, leading place in this 35-year stream of anniversary dates. Starting from the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II (1995) and ending with the 80th anniversary of the beginning of this war and the 250th anniversary of the birth of Napoleon (2019).

During this quarter century, which occurred at the turn of two centuries and two millennia, gigantic shifts have occurred in the alignment of world forces, in the

movement of economic, social and political processes, in the field of education, which has been affected by digitalization, and also in those areas related to a phenomenon of historical memory and historical politics.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Our task will be to identify key changes in the evolution of commemorative culture based on the material of military anniversaries associated with the epochs of the Napoleonic Wars, the First and Second World Wars.

The remarkable philosopher and literary critic György Lukács once remarked that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars “first made history a massive experience, affecting all of Europe” (Koposov, 2011, 48).

In turn, the First World War, according to the famous historian J. Winter, launched the “complex of fears and perceptions with which we live up to our days” (Winter, 2016, 6). But this is what Winter said about the Western man. For Russians, and, in general, for the post-Soviet space, this more likely refers to the Second World War (to be more precise, to the Great Patriotic War as part of the Second World War).

In fact, in relation to the military anniversaries of the turn of the 20th - 21st centuries. it should be about the anniversaries of the events of three eras - the Napoleonic Wars, the First World War and the Second World War. It was from the Napoleonic wars that the process of modernization led from the predominance of “natural” memory to the predominance of “artificial” memory created through the politics of memory.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key issues are: 1. What are the main trends in the development of memory policy at the turn of the century. 2. What are the characteristics of these main trends. 3. What are the regions and circumstances of the appearance of a trend in the politics of memory. 4. What is the role of the impact of digitalization, primarily in the field of education, on memory policy processes.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to identify the relationship between trends in the evolution of memory policy with global processes of a global nature.

5. RESEARCH METHODS

The proposed study is based on a wide range of methods used in the study of historical memory and the politics of memory by a number of authors (M. Halbwax, P. Ricoeur, A. Assman, J. Assman, J. Winter, A. Miller, N. Koposov, G. Kasyanov, P. Finney and others).

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ongoing memory wars are a natural result of the processes that began a decade and a half ago. In 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II was celebrated. Russia and Western countries considered it necessary to hold the main celebrations not at the beginning of September, when the Second World War actually ended, but on May 8 and 9. The USA did the same. In those days, memorial ceremonies were held at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, at the Konzerthaus in Berlin ... Memorial events were especially widespread in Russia, especially in Moscow. A parade of veterans was held on Red Square, and a parade of troops and military equipment on Poklonnaya Hill. It is

important to note that the parade of veterans was observed by the heads of 56 foreign states, including US President B. Clinton, Prime Minister of Great Britain J. Major, and President of China Jiang Zemin. There was also UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Both in Moscow and in the capitals of other states, in which the 50th anniversary of the May victory was celebrated, there was a desire to overcome the mutual alienation and confrontation that pervaded international relations not only during the Second World War, but also in the years of the Cold War that followed . In those days, French President F. Mitterrand called the French and Germans “fraternal peoples who took more than a thousand years to unite.” Not far from the German capital was opened the German-Russian Museum “Berlin - Karlshorst”. Japanese Prime Minister Murayama Tamiichi expressed regret and remorse over the aggressive actions of Japan and its “colonial rule” during the war.

June 2004 marked the 60th anniversary of D-Day, the landing of the allied Anglo-American forces in Normandy. Honoring veterans, a wide-scale dramatization of the event on June 6, 1944, many commemorative ceremonies with the participation of representatives of almost all European countries participating in the Second World War, including the leaders of the FRG and Russia - all this was to demonstrate drawing a line under the antagonisms of the Cold War era. However, at the same time, in the speeches of the speakers, the events of Day “D” were recalled through the prism of national identity and the then, 2004, political imperatives. Russia in those days was faced with the fact of EU enlargement by including in it the countries of Eastern Europe, formerly in the sphere of influence of the USSR. Against the background of such EU enlargement, on May 9, 2005, a grand parade was held in Moscow with the invitation of more than 50 world leaders, which was to demonstrate the decisive role of the USSR’s contribution to the outcome of World War II. On September 1, 2009, representatives of 20 states, including Germany and Russia, gathered in Gdansk for a funeral ceremony. On the eve of this event, and especially during it, there was a serious discord in the perception and interpretation of the causes of the war and the degree of responsibility for the outbreak of certain countries. While the Prime Minister of Russia V.V. Putin drew attention to the fact that the causes of the war should be understood by specialists, having in mind, first of all, historians, and suggested that the background of the war should be seen “in all its diversity”, the Prime Minister of Poland D. Tusk focused his statements on the role of the Soviet-German war pact in the outbreak of war and the events in Katyn. Polish President L. Kaczynski, for his part, further strengthened Tusk’s theses by describing the Red Army crossing the Polish border on September 17, 1939 as a “stab in the back” from “Bolshevik Russia”. He compared Katyn to the Holocaust. In a conciliatory tone, a statement was made by A. Merkel, who pointed out the need to build “friendly relations with Poland,” but in some way responding to the rhetoric of Polish leaders, she announced her readiness to open a center in Berlin in memory of refugees and displaced persons, having mind

the expulsion after World War II from the former German territories of 12 million Germans.

2015 - the year of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II - brought a kind of "memorial sensation". If the 70th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe was celebrated quite traditionally (with a small parade and laying of wreaths at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, a wreath at the cenotaph at the obelisk, erected in memory of those killed in two world wars at the White Hall in London, etc.), the absence on the Red Square in Moscow during the large-scale parade on May 9 of the heads of several states, not only the USA, Britain, France, Germany, but even Belarus, could not help catching the eye. At the same time, President Xi Jinping was present. Against this background, the speech of the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was somewhat unexpected. "Japan repeatedly," he said, "expressed feelings of deep remorse and apologized for the acts committed during the war," but people who did not participate in the conflict should not be held responsible for it. "We must not allow our children, grandchildren and future generations to be doomed to apologize."

However, not the nuances of the statement of the Japanese prime minister constituted a true sensation of the memorial months of 2015. The event, which, although it did not provoke extensive comments from the leaders of leading countries, attracted universal attention and forced to think about changing the vectors of world development, was a grandiose parade at Beijing on September 3 to mark the end of World War II. 500 units of military equipment, 200 helicopters, about 12 thousand military personnel should not only recall China's contribution to the victory over Japan during the Second World War, but, above all, demonstrate the ever-increasing claims of the Celestial Empire on world leadership. Among the leaders of the major powers who were invited and honored the Beijing parade, was only Russian President V.V. Putin

The continuation of the memorial battles that fought around the Second World War, was the 80th anniversary of its beginning. While in Prague they announced the demolition of the monument to Marshal I.S. Konev, in Warsaw, they continued to aggravate the intrigue around who of the leaders of various countries would be invited and would attend events dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. It was decided to hold these events not in Gdansk, as it was before, but in Warsaw on the Y. Pilsudski Square. The main question that the media discussed was whether an invitation would be sent to President V.V. Putin and, if sent, will he accept it. In the end, the invitation was never sent. But the leaders of Western countries were invited, including the heads of state of Central and Eastern European countries. In the end, representatives of the EU, NATO and Eastern Partnership countries arrived at the events. But there was neither British Prime Minister B. Johnson, nor French President E. Macron, nor Chancellor (A. Merkel), nor German President F.-V. Steinmeier, and even the President of the European Union D. Tusk. American President D. Trump, referring to the hurricane, sent Vice President M. Pence in his place. The events did not go as

expected by the Polish leadership, who was trying to use the 80th anniversary of the tragic date as an election PR on the eve of the elections to the Seim in October 2019.

By August 2019, in connection with the "anniversary" of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the outbreak of World War II, the media in the West, but especially in Central and Eastern Europe, began to actively promote materials that focused on the role of the USSR in unleashing this war. Since September 19, when the European Parliament adopted a resolution "On the Importance of Preserving Historical Memory for the Future of Europe," the struggle flared up with renewed vigor. This document condemned the non-aggression treaty of August 23 and the friendship and border treaty of September 28, 1939 between the USSR and Germany, which, as noted, "divided Europe and the territories of independent states between the two totalitarian regimes," which predetermined the beginning of World War II. This resolution was adopted at the initiative of Polish deputies belonging to the Law and Justice Party. The fundamental difference between the document adopted by the European Parliament on September 19 from all previously adopted similar documents was that before, as A.I. Miller supposes, a similar agenda was promoted mainly by Poland and the Baltic countries, while this time there was a "consensus vote". This circumstance, apparently, became decisive in bringing the issue from the leadership of Russia to the highest level of discussion.

December 11, 2019 at the meeting of the Victory Organizing Committee, which is preparing the organization of celebrations on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, V.V. Putin declared the inadmissibility of putting the Nazi aggressors and the Soviet Union on the same level. "We must remember" he noted, "who attacked Poland on September 1, 1939 and the Soviet Union on June 22 in 1941."

At a large annual press conference on December 19, Vladimir Putin developed this topic. "One can anathematize both Stalinism and totalitarianism as a whole, and in some ways they will be well-deserved reproaches, certainly< ... >. But to equate the Soviet Union or to put the Soviet Union and fascist Germany on the same level is the top of cynicism," he said.

In the most expanded form, the Russian president outlined his position the next day, December 20, during an informal summit of the CIS leaders in St. Petersburg. Having quoted excerpts from 17 historical documents, V.V. Putin proposed the following points: the treaty between the USSR and Germany was the last of those signed by other European countries; future USSR allies in the anti-Hitler coalition successively surrendered Czechoslovakia to Germany; Poland, which claimed part of Czechoslovakia, could not have done this without the support of Nazi Germany; the peak of the betrayal of peace by the "Western democracies" was the Munich conspiracy; W. Churchill directly admitted that Munich was a defeat for Britain and France; Hitler in Munich was the actual lawyer of the Polish authorities; the actions of the West were based on "pathological Russophobia"; in modern Europe, the obvious fact of betrayal by the

“Western democracies” is deliberately hushed up; monuments to soldiers-liberators in the countries of modern Europe are systematically demolished; it is unacceptable to forget about the exploit of Soviet soldiers. What happened over a quarter century in the theory of memorial culture of military anniversaries? First of all, the fact of rivalry is obvious, and in some cases of the mutual interweaving of two main trends. One of them, which prevailed during the 90s. XX century and the first years of the 21st century, it is quite possible to characterize it as a trend of a transnational and transcultural character. Its main features at one time a number of Western researchers tried to characterize (J. Winter, P. Finney and others). They drew attention to the following points. Firstly, the changes in narratives about the war, the main characters of which were not soldiers, but civilian victims of the war — women and children; the war was transferred from the theater of military operations into the space of civilian life; the memory of the war combined family history and world history. Secondly, traumatic memory began to play an increasing role, the victims of which were “witnesses” of a special kind, trapped in the “past”, for whom smell, warmth, sound, and, in fact, anything could trigger a terrible memory mechanism; the so-called dark tourism, i.e. visiting places related to death and tragedy. Thirdly, the transnational memory of the war noticeably squeezed the national-centrist approaches, being oriented, first of all, to collective memory outside the national and state frameworks. Fourth, regardless of territorial and social movements, a wide exchange of “memory” has begun between the individual and all elements of what is commonly called “collective memory”; the memory of the war became “traveling memory”. Fifth, in addition to traditional sources of memory - novels, political speeches, etc. - the movement of military historical reconstruction (re-enactment) and video games, thanks to which emotional and somatic reactions began to play no less role than vegetative reflexes, acquired no less importance; in essence, an “artificial memory” appeared, which began to merge with the mnemonic landscape, and with this, what is now called post-memory, formed by “relations from the imaginary,” received special development. Finally, sixthly, the emergence of multidirectional memory, which was the result of the fact that the memory (memories) of a different past overlap each other; for example, the cycle connected with the 70th anniversary of the beginning and the anniversary of the end of World War II covered (overlapped) and intersected with the anniversaries of the First World War, and this, in turn, led to the interweaving and even replacement (substitution) of the memory of one war by the memory of another war; the memory of one injury triggered the memory of the injury of another time. In the subsequent after the initial years of the XXI century, the tendency toward transnationalization and transculturality of the memory of wars has persisted, but along with it a trend of a different nature has emerged, which speaks of the return to the center of the memorial discourse of both the nation state and related political landmarks, which markedly supplanted the general

humanistic landmarks. At first glance, such a trend owes its origin to the region of Central and Eastern Europe, including, without a doubt, the Balkans. In this regard, it has become even possible by empirical observations to determine when and where exactly the revival occurred (not the appearance, but the revival, a kind of “defrosting of history”) of this trend. Much suggests that this happened in the Balkans during the collapse of Yugoslavia.

The time frame for the transition from the predominance of the first (transnational and transcultural) tendency to the second (nationally oriented and politically biased) can be defined as 2004-2005, a symbol of which was a kind of contrast between a number of anniversaries - the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy (on celebration of which the leaders of Russia and Germany were present) and the end of the war in Europe, marked in Moscow by a grand parade with the invitation of the leaders of 50 countries of the world. These anniversaries seemed to overlap with other dates and other non-jubilee events - the 60th anniversary of the destruction of Dresden in February 1945, the dynamic expansion of the European Union to the east (May 1, 2005) and the defiantly sharp reaction of the Baltic leaders to May 2005 holidays in Moscow, announced the change in 1944-1945 of “one occupation” (Nazi) by “another” (Soviet). Then, on May 8, US President George W. Bush declared that the establishment of the Soviet empire in Europe as a result of the war was “one of the greatest wrongs in history” (Finney, 2011, 2).

What are the characteristics of the second trend? First, at the center of military historiography is the state; in fact, it is also a central element of the mechanism for regulating historical politics. In other words, the state initiates a narration about itself. If a person appears in this narrative, then only as a person of the system, a person whose highest value is the state. Secondly, instead of a model of the future, a model of the past is proposed, and a model speculatively constructed idealizing this past. Thirdly, there is an invasion of politics in professional historiography; there is a forced or voluntary inclusion of historians in manipulations with the past; a myth is constructed, based (glued) on artificially created images of the military past. Fourth, the historical memory of the military past becomes a kind of substitute for religion; at the same time, participation in the military anniversary should demonstrate loyalty to the event, and therefore to those who organize the anniversary. Fifth, there is an attempt (not always successful) to reorient new forms that have arisen in the framework of transnational and transcultural approaches (dark tourism, re-enactment, videogames ...), in order to form artificial (deferred) memory, transcultural memory and even multi-level memory oriented exclusively to the creation of state-national memory. This is not always possible, and therefore one has to resort to “traditional” methods and forms of memory policy.

In fact, the features of a nationally and state-oriented memory policy outlined by us have become characteristic, first of all, of most countries of the post-Soviet space,

including the countries of Central and Southeast Europe (examples are the 2006 state law that established the attitude to the Holodomor as genocide and the law of May 2015, prohibiting a demonstration of public disrespect for the Ukrainian rebel army in Ukraine; “bronze night” in Estonia in April 2007, the demolition and transfer of monuments to Soviet soldiers in most countries of Eastern Europe, the statement of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2019 before the opening of the Russian exhibition in Bulgaria, dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the liberation from the Nazis, etc.), but also Russia. In fact, as the Ukrainian historian G. Kasyanov correctly noted, if for the countries of Eastern Europe the dominant tendency is an attempt to create an ethno-national basis of identity with a historical narrative, then in Russia the state historical narrative is an occasion for reintegration claims (Kasyanov, 2019). We believe that Kasyanov is still not entirely accurate: for Russia, as well as for Ukraine, turning to the military past is also an important means of achieving a semblance of political and ethnonational homogeneity.

Judging by the fact that a number of Asian countries (primarily China and Japan) have come to the forefront of anniversary events related to World War II, the tendency

to decisively revise the transnational and transcultural vectors in the politics of memory in these countries has also become dominant. National-centrist approaches to the perception of World War II become the ideological basis for great power claims in China, and for Japan a means of insurance against uncertainty in the Western world, of which the Land of the Rising Sun became a part of the 1945 defeat.

We believe that the West, regardless of its attempts to maintain a commitment to tolerance and transnationalism, has also been captured by the “war of memory” and, as a rule, in connection with the events of military history. In the United States of America, there is a struggle for monuments (demolition or preservation) of the Confederates. Active efforts continue to belittle the role of Russia and the Soviet Union in the outcome of the First and Second World Wars. In Spain, clashes took place around the reburial of the ashes of F. Franco, which indicates the vitality of the ghosts of the Civil War of 1936-1939. An important element in the process of Britain’s exit from the EU also became the figures of fighters for the “national independence” of Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

7. CONCLUSION

We believe that all those processes that most clearly manifested themselves during the years and days of military anniversaries are associated not only with the “retrotopia” about which Zygmunt Bauman wrote, or with the epidemic of nostalgia in the interpretation of Svetlana Boym. It should be about the end of the modernist revolution, which by the end of the twentieth century ended as the dominant world process, which until recently determined the main parameters of the historical movement. Today we are witnessing an increase in the

fragmentation of the world and global processes, an explosion of thirst for identity. In this regard, historical memory and its kind of twin-antipode - historical politics have become the main tools (and often creators) of this identity - national, state, religious, ethnic, group, family, individual. The activation of the “memory wars” is largely associated with radical changes in the information environment in connection with the processes of its digitalization, primarily in the field of education.

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