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“Memory wars”: history, politics and special services of the Russian Federation

The problem outline

The notion of the “memory wars” are Russian equivalent of the Western notions of “the memory politics” and “the historical politics”. Their origins come from the late years of the Soviet Union, when the interest in “true” history could not be stopped or targeted by administrative measures. During the Yeltsin’s times it resulted in quite an amount of publications using declassified sources which were free from ideological arguments. The increase in historical topics was boosted by the efforts of politicians in new post-Soviet countries and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, that constructed their own remembrance projects, recalling the fact that they had been incorporated into the Russian empire and the Soviet Union by force.

The tendency was stopped after Vladimir Putin came into power. During his presidency the access to archives was limited again, the timeframe of document classifications from the Soviet period were prolonged and, above all, the historical discussions began to be kept under scrutiny. This changed the approach to the historical issues radically. Whilst in the end of the last century the approach focused on questions, with what traditions one can identify, how to reorganise symbolic space dominated by the black picture of the Tsar’s and Soviet past, in the present century set new questions, such as why the neighbours do not appreciate the civilisation-creating role of Russia in their history, why they held responsibility on Russia for historical events and, last but not least, they were ungrateful for the selfless sacrifice. The radical language of the discussions, accusations and generalisations full of emotions resulted in the self-defensive attitude towards the Soviet Union, the approach of glorification to its superpower policy and “memory wars” with the memory of societies in neighbouring countries.

Departmental historiographers are regarded as the precursors of the “memory wars”. In the mid-1990s they came out of the shadows trying to create a counter narration to the one which goes against the image of Soviet security organs. Additionally, they prepared the ground for the power held by President Vladimir Putin and the former KGB nomenclature, which is called “the Checkistocracy”. The rehabilitation of services, which originally was supposed to link the imperial legacy with the Soviet one, was fitted in a broader, long-term process of building new ideological patterns in Russia, subordinated to the strategic goals of its policy, including the maintenance of its superpower role. The historical argumentation has been put in the context of information and cultural wars. Currently, opinions contradictory to the official one, are discredited as anti-Russian, falsifying the history of Russia, and “defending

the memory of Russians” has become one of the mechanisms of its confrontation with the environment and the justification of Russian aggression.

Part 1. Russian historical projects: from falsifying the history to memory wars

Departmental historiography as forerunner of fight with falsifying the history of Russia

The role of Russian and Soviet security services has always been a subject of a particular attention of historians, especially that the access to sources on them was limited. Over the centuries the secret services determined Russia’s relations with the outside world, shaped the internal situation, influenced the fate of the society and of the nations forming the Russian and the Soviet empire. Numerous generations of its subjects and nationals were raised in the cult of the country’s security. This way the negative image of services (as a repressive apparatus) was blurred in the public awareness, their successes were stressed as well as their contribution to the state’s power.

At the moment the Soviet Union and the KGB’s end the cult of security was seriously undermined: many crimes of Stalin era and the ones committed by the NKVD were revealed, which made national self-confidence more radical because the society was seeking those who were responsible for the state of the country and led to the crisis of authorities. During a demonstration in August 1991 the monument of Felix Dzerzhinsky was removed from the public space. With the monument the image of the KGB also collapsed. Seeking new legitimisation, the services created – after the old ones had been dissolved, a new imperial legacy. The reconciliation with the Soviet legacy turned out a long-term process, uncompleted until these days. The process started already in the 1990s. One of its first symptoms was a conference of the security departments in 1994, under the slogan “Mighty Russia needs strong security services” and “The White Paper on the Russian special services” following the conference.¹

The rehabilitation of services in the form of “setting deformed image of the KGB straight” was to restore the social trust to them. According to a well known historiographer and a long-term lecturer of the history of security organs in the FSB Academy, Alexandr Zdanovich², the then “unprecedented falsification of history”

¹ *Белая книга российских спецслужб*, Moscow 1995.

² А.А. Зданович, „Исторические чтения на Лубянке” как общественно-научный феномен. *Всероссийскому форуму историков отечественных спецслужб — 20 лет* (<http://history.milportal.ru/2018/01/vserossijskomu-forumu-istorikov-otechestvennykh-specsluzhb-20-let/#more-11132>). General Alexandr Zdanovich was born in 1952 in Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. His grandfather was moved there from Brest in the times of Russian empire. Since 1972 he had served in military counterintelligence of the KGB. Since 1991 he had worked in the FSB Centre for Communication with Society. Since 1996 he had directed the Centre, then since 1999 until his retirement in 2002 he had been a chief of the FSB Directorate of Cooperation Programmes formed

has been caused by a turn of many factors: opening archives, including particularly the search of the KGB and the CPSU archives for the purposes of the announced CPSU trial³, the wide campaign of discreditation of security organs done by the international society Memorial within the scientific study on mass repressions 1937–1938, and the flood of the Western literature based on the testimonies of defectors from the KGB, like Oleg Gordievsky or Alexandr Mitrokhin, to show the activities of the KGB in a tendentious way.

As the first, according to Zdanovich, “operationally reacted” the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR), with the former Director Yevgeny Primakov. It started a monumental edition “Drafts from the history of Russian foreign intelligence”, its volume 1 described the history of pre-Bolshevik intelligence was edited in 1996, volume 6 was edited in 2006; reprinted a few times, last time between 2014–2017. The response of the counterintelligence was an annual conference entitled “Historical lectures in Lubyanka” organized since 1997 by the Association of researchers of the Russian special services. Since that time general Zdanovich, the former spokesman of the Federal Security Service (FSB), has been leading the association. As a retired man he devoted himself to the scientific and pedagogical work. Active members of the association are lecturers of departmental high schools (Oleg Khlobustov, Alexandr Plechanov, Andrei Plechanov, Yuriy Ovtsenko, Oleg Mozokhin, Vladlen Izmozik, Vasiliy Khristoforov and others), and their works are regularly published in a multivolume series “The works of the Association of Researchers of the national special services” and spread on specialized web portals (chekist.ru, lubyanka.org, a-lubyanka.org, lubyanka-shield.ru, fssb.su, kgb-inform.ru and so on), and in other accessible social media.

The ground prepared to “remove lies” from the history became at the same time a ground for political and ideological didactics to sustain in the society the cult of security, the cult of uniforms and the cult of victory. The SVR and the FSB veterans together with the veterans of other military services are currently active participants of the so called patriotic upbringing of the Russian youth, they organize lectures during the military preparations classes, museums of intelligence

on the basis of the centre. He started his scientific career late; his PhD thesis on counterintelligence between 1914 and 1920 was published in 2004; his postdoctoral thesis on military counterintelligence was issued in 2008. Recently gen. Zdanovich has been a lecturer on civilian high schools and an expert on the history of Russian special services. He is an expert on Polish issues, he comments and interprets in the public Polish events. He is an author of numerous articles on the politics of the II Republic of Poland. His work “Polish cross of the Soviet intelligence” [A.A. Зданович, *Польский крест советской контрразведки. Польская линия в работе ВЧК-НКВД. 1918–1938*, Moscow 2017] issued on the 100th anniversary of Russian counterintelligence, takes a critical view of the relations between the II Republic of Poland and the Soviet Union, reportedly dominated by competition between Polish and Soviet secret services.

³ It was supposed to be an ersatz of the decommunisation and the removal of the KGB remains. In reality the totalitarian background in Russia has never been cut. The Constitutional Tribunal of the Russian Federation cancelled an executive order by President Yeltsin on dissolving the CPSU and the commission of archivists led by a historian Dmitri Volkogonov, was also dissolved.

and counterintelligence, etc. The departmental historians strengthened the academic staffs by taking management positions (for example, the former spokesman of the Federal Protective Service, FSO, Sergey Devatov became a Professor of the History in 20th and 21st centuries at Lomonosov University in Moscow). The list of books and articles prepared by those historians seems quite impressive, although they mostly refer to the Soviet times⁴ as a *sui generis* continuation of the Soviet services' historiography. Reconciling this tradition with the Tsar tradition is done through the glorification of some figures, facts and events from the past of the Russian empire, which can be used pragmatically. The project of rehabilitation of services is fitted in a broader strategy of the Russian authorities' legitimization. During the presentation of the Association's work, Zdanovich did not hide that "the main criteria in his work are enhancing the state authority and legal order of the Russian Federation".⁵ The history of Russian services, seen through the lens of chosen events and heroes, is aimed at shaping the desired attitudes and behaviours.⁶

It resulted in getting back to "the roots of successes": there is no need to discuss our own failures too much in the Russian political culture. The historians of services prove invariably that their long-time reason is the weakness of the authority and/or the social anarchy on one hand, and on the other – the intrigues of outer forces, causing geopolitical catastrophes in the history of Russia. In consequence, we get the confrontational vision of the international relations and the confrontational foreign policy of the Russian Federation.⁷

Institutionalisation of the memory defence

The balanced assessment of the Soviet past was difficult because of the black and white image of the reality based on the dichotomic chaos and order (a metaphor of "the order" was supposed to symbolize Putin's rule in contrast to "the chaos" of the Yeltsin's times) and the constantly used myth of the USSR' victory in World War II. Stalin, as an architect of the victory, was assigned the mission of the state modernization. Stalin's repressive measures, presented as the necessary costs of the modernization, were relativized and minimalised. As a reaction to emerging

⁴ Cf. for example bibliography of works by Oleg Kholobustov's <http://www.hrono.ru/avtory/hronos/hlobustov.php>.

⁵ Cf. for example *В культурном центре ФСБ состоялась презентация Общества изучения истории отечественных спецслужб*, РИА Новости, 17.12.2001. The Association of Special Services Veterans stresses on their web page that the future of Russian services depends nowadays on "the proper understanding by functionaries their role in the mechanism of power, in the development of the Russian country and Russian society in different historical periods", <http://www.a-lubyanka.ru/page/article/100>.

⁶ More on the topic: J. Darczewska, *Obrońcy oblężonej twierdzy*, „Punkt Widzenia OSW”, No. 70, Warsaw 2018.

⁷ Cf. M. Domańska, *Uzależnieni od konfliktu. Wewnętrzne uwarunkowania antyzachodniej polityki Kremla*, „Punkt Widzenia OSW”, No. 67, Warsaw 2017.

critics in this context Dmitri Medvedev had declared at the beginning of his tenure (2008–2012) the so called “de-Stalinisation” of the historical memory. In practice it caused the changing of the public debate: the victory in WWII was presented as the effect of the common effort of Soviet nations⁸, which was supposed to create the Euro-Asian/Russian-speaking community as the counter-balance to the Western influences.

Medvedev’s tenure resulted also in attempts of institutionalisation of the memory politics which manifested in the activities of the Commission by the President to Counteract the History Falsification between 2009 and 2012.⁹ It was led by the former officer of the KGB, Sergey Naryshkin¹⁰, the then Head of the Administration of the President of Russia. The Commission’s task was to guarantee the “correct” interpretation of difficult moments in the Russian history: it organised monitoring of foreign publications and gave recommendations on the counter-reaction and neutralisation. In the public sphere its activities took form of the state historical propaganda: it corrected Russian and foreign articles allegedly hostile to the national interest. It played a propaganda role and it was a kind of a disciplinary measure for historians, requesting them to study desired from the perspective of the authorities contents and to play a role of patrons for such publications. Finally, it was stressed clearly in front pages as a *sui generis* recommendations for readers.¹¹

In consequence the works of the commission caused *inter alia* a division in the Russian historiography into the so called patriotic stream and the research and critical stream. The second stream did not break through to wider audience: the bookstores shelves were full of more ideological manifestos than study works. The defenders of history as a science noted then: (...) *in the last ten years the literature explaining the history of Russia through conspiracy theories has increased. Serious publications have been appreciated only in a narrow circle of experts.*¹²

The representatives of the patriotic stream convinced the society that Russia is exceptional in terms of civilization development. As a country that develops according to its own rules and its own values, it must be an alternative to the “rotting” West.

⁸ Kaczmarek M., Rogoża J., *Ewolucja rosyjskiej polityki historycznej*, „Tydzień na Wschodzie” 2010, No. 17, <http://osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2010-05-12> [access:8 XI 2010]

⁹ http://document.kremlin.ru/doc._asp?I-05 2421

¹⁰ A politician deriving from a Leningrad branch of the former KGB, chief of staff of the Russian government (2004–2008), Deputy Prime Minister of Russia (2007–2008), head of the Administration of the President of Russia (2008–2011), Chairman of the State Duma (2011–2016), since 2016 chief of the Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service.

¹¹ Cf. Г.Ф. Матвеев, В.С. Матвеева, *Польский плен. Военнослужащие Красной армии в плену у поляков в 1919–1921 годах*, Moscow 2011. Currently, according to S. Naryshkin, the logo of the Russian Historic Association is the historical paperwork mark of quality (cf. *История со знаком качества*, „Российская газета”, 3.07.2018). By the way: on the logo of the Russian Historic Association there is a writing “Established in 1866” and the picture of the monument of Minin and Pożarski, the leaders of the ad hoc militia in 1612 against “the Polish intervention”.

¹² Тепляков А., *Эпоха репрессий: Субъекты и объекты*, „Исторические исследования в России, III”, под ред. Г. А. Бордюгова. Moscow, 2011, pp. 1135–1169.

An invaluable ally in preaching the need for unity, peace and cooperation between the eastern nations creating “The Holy Russia” became the Russian Orthodox Church which criticized liberal civilization and praised the orthodox civilization, its moral values.

Historic and cultural standard as the new opening of “the fight with falsifying Russian history”

The instrumental use of history was also stimulated by analytics of the information war, identifying the notions “historical politics” and “memory politics” with the psychological war of interpretative history. They created the term: “historical weapon”: its presentation grew to a role of the common belief for journalists and publicists, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, cultural experts and above all military men, who put the defence of the Russian memory in the context of psychological diversion of the West.¹³ They disclosed the goals and motives of those Russia history forgers, they revealed the core of their activities, which was “creating destructive myths as foundations of anti-Russian propaganda”, they stigmatized (...) *politicization of history in the West, which was not only hidden from the society but declared on the official level. This is a worldwide tendency to formulate and realize “historic politics” and “memory history”, i.e. actions to shape a relevant picture of the past*¹⁴– wrote the pedagogue Yevgeniy Viazemsky. Their discrediting allowed to promote a notion of “historical memory of Russians” (Рус. россиян).¹⁵

The new opening started at the beginning of the Putin’s third term as President (2012–2018). The year 2012 was announced a Year of the History, which referred to ideologically important “great dates” (i.e. 1612 – expelling Poles from Kremlin and the end of the Great Smuta; 1812 – the victorious “Great Patriotic War” with Napoleon). In 2012 the Military Historical Association (WTH) and the Russian Historical Association (RTH) were reactivated. S. Naryshkin took the lead in RTH (he

¹³ It refers particularly to representatives of the Ministry of Defense, that intensified its efforts on the so called patriotic youth upbringing, which means de facto their indoctrination and militarization. During the annual conference “History of the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945: truth and lie” in the central museum of the IIWW in Poklonnaya Gora, Moscow on 24 January 2017 the Deputy Chief of the General Staff Academy gen. Sergey Czvarikov claimed: “Russia and its citizens are becoming the objects of open information and psychological war with leading Western countries, some of which influence the historical awareness of Russians, their historical memory, also by forging history”. According to the general the aim of such activities is to discredit Russia as the heir of the Soviet Union and to weaken the country from the inside by “negation of their historical values” https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12109259@egNews.

¹⁴ В.В. Вяземский, *Проблема фальсификации истории и общее историческое образование*, „Проблемы современного образования”, 2012, No. 1, www.pmedu.ru [access: 10 XII 2012].

¹⁵ The notion *russskij* and *rossijskij* in Russian bears two meanings: the ethnical notion and the adjective describing material and non-material artefacts of the Russian culture. The category *rossijanin* (Russian citizen) is the derivative of the adjective *rossijskij*, which describes notions connected with the state administration as well with the national symbols.

had a mechanical engineer background and had a PhD in economics). Naryshkin earned the nickname “the main historian of the country” during the work of the commission for counteracting history falsifications. Under the RTH *the Concept of a new educational and methodical complex of the national history*¹⁶ was prepared and popularized as historical and cultural standard (Russian: историко-культурный стандарт). The task of an obligatory standard sounded few times in President Putin’s speeches. He also accepted its final version during the meeting with the standard’s authors on 16 January 2014. The RTH commissioned also the expert report on the history books allowing only 3 for the use in schools in the school year 2014–2015.

This historical and cultural standard confirms the authorities of the Russian Federation strive for regulation of historical facts, their assessments and notions used. It introduces for example a new historic period called “the great Russian revolution”. The period embraces two revolutions of 1917, the so called February Revolution and the October Revolution and the time of the Soviet Russia (up to the USSR was created). After it comes the so called “Soviet way towards modernization”. It allowed to get rid of the notion of the Stalinism from history books. The events on the eastern front in the Second World War were raised to a civilization conflict; victory over the Third Reich proved that the Russian country is invincible and triumphed over totalitarianism.

The separated part of *the Concept* is a list of difficult topics problematic from the perspective of the Russian authorities (for example the reasons and effects of establishing and collapsing the USSR, which was followed by the present Russia, Stalinist repressions, single-party dictatorship, personality cult etc.). Experts supporting the official approach (the history is supposed to be a kind of a patch on “the haunted Russian soul”, it should heal by preserving the memory of victories, it should unite not divide) present it in the spirit of the Orwell’s dual-thinking. *Striving for a change of the civilisation template of Russians, the Western information opponents press Russian buttons of the historical memory. In reality they become such in a result of a purposeful falsification* – writes for example a Russian Academy of Science a philosopher, Vladimir Shevtshenko.¹⁷ The “aching points” of the history are mainly placed in the Soviet times. Already the foundation of the USSR was a manifestation of seeking an alternative to the Western way of development, and its collapse was *the result of psychological and historical war of Anglo-Saxon circles of the West*. From this point of view (...) *the victory of Russia/the USSR in the Great Patriotic War, although in the centre of falsification, means a lot to Russians in the context of preserving their own historical memory and also to defending their own sovereignty on the international arena and the right of choosing their own path of development*.

¹⁶ <http://rushistory.org/images/documents/kontsepsiya.final.pdf>

¹⁷ В.Н. Шевченко, *Информационная война Запада с исторической памятью россиян логико-исторический аспект*, „Философские науки”, No. 6, 2015.

Russian historians, like Vyacheslav Nikonov¹⁸, point out in this context the modest symbolical resources in Russian Federation: (...) *two-headed eagle coat of arms taken from Byzantium by Ivan III, three colours taken from the Netherlands by Peter I, Alexandrov's anthem from the Great Patriotic War time and the Victorious Standard as the symbol of Military Forces*. It is also worth noting that “the myth of the beginnings” raises negative reactions of Ukrainian historians, because Russians count the beginning of their country since the prince Vladimir who christianized the Kievan Rus. Additionally, there was a lack of freedom, human rights and equality tradition or lack of democratic tradition in Russia, as they were developed in the West, since the XVIII century. After the USSR collapsed the myth of the revolution was deconstructed as threatening to authorities.¹⁹ It shows a modest list of historical arguments and presents in reality constant set of undisputed axioms.

Memory wars as a confrontation mechanism neutralize such deficits. They are waged on different paths: in official discussions, including diplomatic talks, in the media, literature, movies, theatre and academic works. They became an element of shaping worldviews, i.e. patriotic child raising and patriotic and military programmes. They feature the use of state apparatus in culture, education, media, with a leading role of security and defence apparatus. It can be observed on several levels:

- Culture (making the proper construction of the world's picture in contrast to “the Russian Word” possible),
- Structure (as an instrument of creating conditions for effective performance of the state's politics), and
- Events (the level allows to proceed to offensive activities, narration and interpretation fight).

¹⁸ W. Nikonov, *Rosyjska tradycja historyczna*, https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska_pl/o-historii-rosji-i-stosunkow-ros...; in Russian *Росси́йская матр́ица*, (<http://dx.doi.org/10.15211/soveurope22015919>). Vyacheslav Nikonov – a grandson of Vyacheslav Molotov, PhD in history, a state figure, a canvasser, the head of the education commission in the State Duma, Dean at the Administration Faculty of the Lomonosov University and the chairman of the state foundation „Russkiy Mir”. He is an author of numerous historical work papers and books, *Rosyjska matryca* (2014), *Rosję należy zrozumieć rozumem* (2014), *Burzenie Rosji* (2015), *Kod cywilizacji* (2015), *Zrozumieć Rosję* (2016), *Mołotow* (2017), *Październik 1917* (2017) etc. As the leader of public opinion he attends journalistic programmes in the Russian state television.

¹⁹ It is significant in this context that the main USSR state holiday (The Day of The Great October Socialist Revolution) was replaced by The Day of the National Unity (celebrated on November 4th on the occasion of expelling Polish intervention in 1612). The Independence Day proclaimed by B. Yeltsin on June 12th, 2002 was replaced by Putin by the Day of Russia. The most important state holiday in the Russian Federation is the Victory Day celebrated since 1945.

Part 2. Russian special services as a subject and the subject of memory wars

“Cultural” approach of the departmental historiography

This historical and cultural approach puts special services in the centre of confrontation between the West and Russia: *Over the centuries – we can read in an FSB document – covert and overt forces reluctant to our motherland have manipulated historical events, and thus using them to strike the authority of the Russian state both within the country and outside. One of the main goals of the information war against Tsar’s Russia and Soviet Russia and present democratic Russia were and still will be the state security institutions.*²⁰ It is done to stress their uniqueness, for example modernization mission. *The historical feature of the Russian civilisation is higher role of the state comparing to the West, and, in consequence higher role of its security organs – writes a historian from Omsk, A. Sushko.*²¹ He claims that (...) *civilisation approach explains the role of Russian special services in necessary modernisation to give Russian civilisation the possibility of an adequate response to outside challenges and solving difficult internal problems.* In the given examples of modernisation role of services (in the times of Ivan the Terrible, Peter I and Josef Stalin) it seems as (...) *organised by the country response to threats to Russian orthodox civilisation.*

This departmental historiography is featured by a specific didacticism blurring borders between the past and the present. The thesis on ignoring the state security in Tsar Nikolai the Second’s times is supported by an opinion that it was the time of the mass influx of foreign terrorists, agents, revolutionaries, which resulted in the lack of spirit in the army and the failure during the First World War in the end. *The Russian society – laments V. Gashenko*²² – *was not united in the wake of revolutionary terrorist threat but they started to live according to the rules of the criminal world. They did not support the country but it’s enemies. It’s numerous representatives lost their lives for that terrible mistake, they became victims of the revolutionary chaos and lawlessness.*

The aim of the above statements is rehabilitation of the memory of Soviet security organs in the country on the one hand, and, on the other, to give present functionaries motivation. Official message names them as “heirs of many generations of the state defenders, generations of winners”. It is not hard to select the set of arguments constantly repeated in studied literature, like:

- The Cheka functionaries fought with corruption and fraud (the cult of the Cheka clean hands myth); post revolutionary civil war created exceptionally corrupt

²⁰ А. Калганов, *В поисках истины*, „ФСБ: за и против”, 2016, No. 3.

²¹ А.В. Сушко, *К вопросу об использовании цивилизационного подхода для изучения истории отечественных спецслужб*, <http://www.rummuseum.info/node/5804> [access: 28 VIII 2018]

²² В. Гашенко, *Борьба с фальсификацией истории органов безопасности России в современных условиях* (www.rummuseum.info/node/5781) [access: 28 VIII 2018].

situation: cleaning the country from criminal elements and socially harmful was the condition of its existence);

- The Cheka and its successors were only an obedient tool in the hands of authorities and the party's nomenclature; furthermore, it was an instrument played by the then Kremlin caucus (Trotskyists, Zinovievists, Bukharins and fractions in the army, like the so called red leaders and military experts);
- Repressions from the period of 1937 and 1938 were preventive strikes to clean the fore field before the fronts of WWII;
- “the purges” covered security functionaries as well;
- Specific way of leading investigations and out of court hearings (extending competences of security organs on judicial areas) was necessary because of difficulties in rebuilding and modernization processes in national economy;
- Stalin's fears about loyalty of the society, the country's managing staff, the army's managing staff were justified because of the scale of the country's infiltration by foreign agents.

Putting the historical reality, including ideology and type of documents into their paper works, the historians of services contribute to repeating the Stalin's narration. An FSB Academy professor, Alexandr Plehanov claims for example that in the 1920s and 1930s the activity of the VCzK-OGPU was targeted against the real “enemies of the nation”, Oleg Khlobustov gives statistics of economic crimes against the state, like “wrecking and diversion”. Professor Alexandr Zdanovich criticized in the past the purges in the Red Army in the “Spring” operation in the end of 1920s (more than 3,000 officers and generals of the Tsar's army were oppressed as the so called “former men”) and stressed that “in many cases the accusations were tricked or even forged. Some functionaries from the Cheka management rose against the operation, and soon after that they lost their positions by the USSR PolitBuro decision. They positions took those who were ready to fulfil any order given by the party. The way to the phenomenon called “The year 1937” was opened”.²³ In his most recent work²⁴ the same author charged the Polish intelligence for the “Spring” operation, claiming that it was the effect of disinformation of the Polish Second Division.

Manipulation techniques of the Russian services as “defence of history” measures

Declared by departmental historians objective rules collide with the narration on “class outsider elements, counter-revolutionary elements”, or “former men”. The applicable methodology favours this. Usually Russian texts do not have any references to the relevant foreign literature. The authors do not explain either historical

²³ А. А. Зданович, *Органы государственной безопасности и Красная армия*, Moscow 2009, pp. 130–131, <https://www.litmir.me/br/?b=271916>.

²⁴ А.А. Зданович, *Польский крест советской контрразведки*, op. cit., p. 297.

terms used in their texts, which may not be obvious for the society these days.²⁵ It is also hard to recognize as an analysis method the tactics of passing the facts over in silence or even deforming facts to justify one's theses.

The main point of the departmental historiography is a *sui generis* revision of statistics concerning repression of memorial historians. Statistics is a valued commodity for scientists and analysts because they allow to assess the scale of the phenomena. They are also a comfortable tool of disinformation and forging reality: the simplicity of a statistics lie is to simplify data indistinguishably. Distorted data assist in justifying any thesis, examples of which are show below.

Arseny Borisovich Roginsky, the former chief of the International Society Memorial, claimed that from 1921 to 1954 Soviet security organs had repressed 4,5 million people because of political reasons. Apart from that ca. 7 million people suffered in any other way by administrative decisions of different organs. At least 11,5–12,5 million people were repressed altogether. The numbers do not embrace peasants (“kulaks”) and victims of hunger from 1921 to 1922 (5 million people), from 1932 to 1933 (6–7 million) and from 1946 to 1947 (1,5–2 million).²⁶ Oleg Mozochin²⁷, who devoted many work papers to the statistics of repressions (presenting it from the departmental point of view), claims that: *I am inclined to agree with the Memorial's assessments about victims of Stalin's repressions which give the total number of ca. 5,5 million people.* “Giving it more precise” he claims that ca. 4 million people were persecuted for criminal offences because – according to the then departmental statistics – 70% of all crimes were corruption offences, economic offences, which were qualified as “malignancy against the country” since 1928.

Professor Zdanovich presented more complicated way of data manipulations.²⁸ Giving the statistics of the so called “Polish operation” victims 1937-1938 (ethnic cleansing of Polish nationals), he refers to an article by Nikita Petrov and Arseny Roginsky and enigmatic NKVD reports: *The results of “the Polish operation” were*

²⁵ For example, “anti-Soviet” elements that interested Stalinist security organs embraced a wide range of citizens: from the real opponents of the regime, via members of anti-Bolshevik movements and anti-Soviet organizations, “wreckers” in the economy and industry, “saboteurs” in public institutions, agents of foreign intelligence services, agents provocateurs, potential traitors, people unstable morally and politically, migrants and repatriated persons, citizens of foreign countries, persons having contacts with foreigners, non-working people, the so called “former people” – gentry and tsarist administration workers, both civilians and military men, “the White Guards fascist nationalistic elements”, “the servants of the cult” – the representatives of clergy of different religions, to “the enemies of the nation”, i.e. those who were judged for counter-revolutionary offences, members of their families, Masons, Esperantists and stamp collectors and the so called folk story tellers (gossipers and jokes tellers as people spreading anti-Soviet attitude).

²⁶ Cf. the interview with A. Roginsky on: <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/staliname/696621-echo/>, and extensive lecture on: www.urokiistorii.ru/article/54621.

²⁷ Cf. the interview with O. Mozochin for neo-Stalinism web page: (<http://inter-portal.org/%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B3-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%BE%D1%85%D0%B8%D0%BD-%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B2%D1%8C%D1%8E>)

²⁸ А.А. Зданович, *Польский крест советской контрразведки*, op. cit., pp. 311–313.

quoted in NKVD statistics. According to the above-mentioned authors more than 20,000 Poles were arrested and sentenced, almost 17,000 Belarusians, Ukrainians and representatives of other nationalities.

The professor's masterwork based on the fact that he replaced the statistic data of victims persecuted on the basis of the so called Jezhov's Polish order No. 00485 of 11 August 1937 (Poles extermination plan) with the statistical data of victims purged on the basis of the 00447 order of 30 July 1937, which referred to persecuting "traditional" anti-Soviet elements, including Poles.

Meanwhile, Petrov and Roginsky strictly separated the Polish operation from ethnic repressions under the 00447 order (*they involved a total of 105,032 people, including 21,258 Poles, 17,150 Germans, 15,684 Russians, 8,773 Ukrainians, 5,716 Belarusians*). In view of this the Polish operation – as they stress – in terms of the scale of extermination of Poles was incomparable. *Pursuant to the order number 00485 a total of 143,810 Poles were arrested, 139,835 people were sentenced, including 111,091 sentenced to death by shooting.*²⁹

It is worth adding that this departmental statistics is also a subject of manipulation. Alexandr Bortnikov, the head of the FSB, in an interview for a governmental newspaper on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Russian security organs³⁰ claims that (...) *between 1921 and 1953 for crimes against the state (i.e. counter revolution offences, banditry, espionage) 4 060 306 people were sentenced, including 642,980 people were sentenced to the capital punishment, 765,180 people were sentenced to deportations and more serious penalties*. Making reference to the FSB archive materials Bortnikov stated categorically that "all other data are questionable", and, somewhat casually, he added that (...) *also functionaries of the state organs were oppressed, which was put to the history judgment*.

Data similar to the ones given by Bortnikov can be found in a book *Расстрелянная разведка*.³¹ There one can find a document of 1 February 1954 for Nikita Khrushchev which informs that (...) *since 1921 up to now 3,777,380 people had been sentenced for counter revolutionary offences, including 642,980 sentenced to the capital punishment, 2,369,220 people sentenced to lager and 25 years imprisonment, 765,180 people sentenced to deportation*.

Next to some data forgery sometimes the whole documents were also forged. The most eminent example was a fake paper note of a party dignitary, R. Eych for Stalin, forged by Professor Yuri Zhukov³², in which he reportedly demanded extraordinary commissions, the so called troikas, to liquidate "counter revolutionary elements" acting in Siberia. This "document" was supposed to be a prove that repressions were caused reportedly by fears among the party members about the Stalin's planned reforms.

²⁹ Н.В. Петров, А.Б.Рогинский (НИПЦ «Мемориал»), «Польская операция» НКВД 1937–1938 гг., <http://old.memo.ru/history/Polacy/00485ART.htm>

³⁰ *ФСБ расставляет акценты*, <https://rg.ru/interviews/7242.html> [access: 13 IX 2018].

³¹ В.С. Антонов, В.Н. Карпов, *Расстрелянная разведка*, Москва 2008, p. 21.

³² Ю. Жуков, *Иной Сталин. Политические реформы в СССР в 1933–1937гг.*, Москва 2003.

The fake document can be a pro and against argument. The journalist Yelena Prudnikova³³, specializing in the history of secret services in Russia, ignored the Polish operation, which “was nothing extraordinary, because Stalin ordered numerous ethnic operations”. She claims that “there are serious suspicions that the order No. 00485 was a fake: because there is no archival file of it. In the 1990s – she explains – there were lots of fake information in literature and in the Internet, but also in archives”. The interest of Poles in this event she explains by “the exhaust of the Katyn topic”: “certain forces have to have a motive to sustain the anti-Soviet and anti-Russian attitude in the Polish society. The simplest way to heat them up is to make claims: so we can expect new claims for compensations and reparations.”

Techniques of “defending” history on a structural level

The publishing by Y. Prudnikova and other experts, historians and opinion leaders show *inter alia* that the key issue in the activities of the Russian services in the area is to create special communication channels between the Kremlin, state organs coordinating and carrying out information fight with historical arguments and different intermediaries. The concept and coordination centre for this fight, according to outside observers, remains in the administration of the Russian President. Falsifying history is the subject of constant interest by the information security unit in the Security Council of the Russian Federation.³⁴ Sets of difficult questions prepared by experts of the Council are to bring the attention of researchers, experts and politicians to anti-Russian potential of dates and anniversary events in countries neighbouring Russia. The President keeps reminding about the necessity of fighting with anti-Russian historical fake information during the annual meetings with heads of diplomatic posts, with the youth, parliamentarians, military staff, etc. Historical, cultural and spiritual security was raised to the level of an important area of the national security, which is reflected in the official documents: *Warfare doctrine* (2014), *Strategy of the state security* (2015) and *Strategy of the information security of the Russian Federation* (2016) etc.

The state broadens constantly the areas of influence, for example by coordination and consolidation of historians. During the annual meeting of the Russian Historical Association in 2016 its by-law was supplemented by a clause on individual and collective membership. This way it opened the door for military and civilian associations and foundations (like “The Knowledge Association” or “The Victory Association”, the Foundation of the Historical Perspective, etc.), history university faculties, museums, archives, etc. In practice channelling and multiplication of the desired historical message is easier this way. Projects of the Russian Historical Association are financed by the state institutions (for example the History

³³ Е. Прудникова, „Польский” приказ 80 лет спустя, spb.media/text/polskiy-prikaz-80-let-spustya [access: 28 VIII 2018]

³⁴ Cf. *О роли точности в истории*, Коммерсант, 31.10.2016.

of Homeland Foundation) as well as by private means. Known as the sponsor of information fight, oligarch Constantin Malofeyev, author of the orthodox media net, is one of the chiefs of the Association of the Development of the Russian Historical Education “Two-headed eagle” registered in 2017 (<https://rusorel>). Next to him in the management board of the Association are gen. Leonid Reshetnikov, former chief of the SVR Analysis Division and then Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies and prince Alexandr Trubeckoy, chief of the Russian and French Cultural Association. In 2018 “Two-headed eagle” realized a project “Legacy of my Motherland” co-financed by the Foundation of Presidential Grants. The project embraced *inter alia* 20 video lectures, 10 travel lectures, a competition for PhD students and young scientists on the topic “Shaping an objective historic reality as a factor of national stability of the country”, a conference on the same topic, and edition of manual entitled “Difficult topics of native history”. The new organization to create desired reality can be interpreted twofold. First, as a manifestation of strengthening historic front of information fight and second, as a symptom of neo-imperial stream existence in view of the clear domination of the neo-Stalinist historical narrative.

On a daily basis the entities organize lectures, conferences, provide the Internet with historical materials, finance paper works, organize contests on historical matters and monument contests. The main moderator of the modern historical debate is the Russian Historical Association with its 33 regional branches, including two in Crimea; it also plays a coordinating role in international cooperation of historians (international permanent commission, 12 bilateral commissions). In 2017 it co-chaired the General Assembly of the International Committee of Historical Sciences in Moscow.³⁵ It also organizes annual events, for example celebrated in 2017 the 100th anniversary of “the great Russian revolution”.³⁶ During its annual assembly in 2018 the key anniversaries and events important from the perspective of Russian historians in 2019 were discussed. Among the topics there were – *inter alia*, the liberation of the eastern Europe from the Nazi occupation. It was also announced that next part of documents from the Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defence concerning the liberation of Poland by the Red Army would be disclosed.³⁷ These dynamic activities of the Association are possible, as one may think, due to its form of the social association and political and institutional position of S. Naryshkin as its chief and leader.

An important link of the structural level are archives: access to them allows to manage the historical knowledge and the fight with remembrance projects of the Central and Eastern Europe, particularly that the significant part of their archives was transferred to the USSR during WWII and did not return. The system of Russian archives is a hierarchically organized mechanism. It is coordinated by the federal

³⁵ Cf. an interview with S. Naryshkin, *История со знаком качества*, op. cit.

³⁶ Cf. <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/53503>.

³⁷ *Общее собрание Российского исторического общества 2018*, <https://historyrussia.org/obshchestve/obshchee-sobranie/obshchee-sobranie-rossijskogo-istoricheskogo-obshchestva-2018.html> [access: 13 IX 2018].

Agency of Archives (Rosarchiw), which since 2016 has been a presidential institution. Before 2016 it was supervised by the Ministry of Culture. The rest of the state archives (the National Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian National Archive of the Social and Political History), and departmental archives (The Archive of the president of the Russian Federation, the Russian Military Archive, the Central Archive of the FSB, the Archive of the SVR, central archives of the MoD and MoFA) are independent and the tightly cooperate with each other in the field of declassifying documents. **And just the repeated tabooing of sensitive matters from the perspective of Russian services and selective declassifying documents accompanied by high-sounding informative actions became important tools in the memory wars.**

This can be traced on the basis of *The List of declassified documents 2005–2015*.³⁸ Key entities in the process of declassification are military departments, with the FSB in the front row, confirming its compatibility with the state secrecy provisions. Moreover, the service is the heir of unique resources. Their holders are departmental historians. The resources are not accessible for “civilian” historians. In March 2014 the Interdepartmental Commission for Security of State Secrecy prolonged the date of VCheKa – KGB documents from the period of 1917–1991 for the next 30 years. From the FSB archive come 33 sets of documents. To compare, from the SVR resources there came 3 editions: *Baltic states and geopolitics 1935–1945* (Moscow 2009), *Secrets of the Polish politics 1935–1945* (Moscow 2010) and *Aggression* (Moscow 2011). All three were prepared for the edition by gen. Lev Sockov. Information activities accompanying the issues were maintained in the atmosphere of stunt. In the same vein their digitalized version was promoted on the SVR web page “on the event of 100 anniversary of Russian security organs”.³⁹

The statistics of the FSB declassified documents show that they are addressed to internal recipients as well as to the outside world, where they are immediately put into a confrontation with other different narrations and historical memories. The role of those directed to the internal market is to whitewash the history of the Soviet country and its services, and history of the NKVD during WWII. In the title of five issues the SMERSH is mentioned, infamous military counter intelligence. Nine issues regards Stalin’s repressions, which were explained in the prefaces as necessary because of the ongoing history, criminal situation in the countryside, fight with corruption and pervasive espionage. Of particular significance is the monumental piece entitled *Top Secret. Lubyanka for Stalin* (already 10 volumes of documents have already been issued, mainly reports on the internal situation) and a 5-volume set of documents issued in the period of 2011 and 2015 entitled *The Great Patriotic War*. The rest sets of documents from the FSB Archive refer to difficult matters in relations between the Soviet Union and the colonised countries. The Russian vision of the relations was put in the titles of the miscellanies: *Latvia under Nazi yoke* (2006), *Tragedy*

³⁸ <http://www.rusarchives.ru/izdaniya-i-publikacii/sborniki-dokumentov> [access: 13 IX 2018].

³⁹ <http://www.svr.gov.ru/smi/2016/26122016.pdf> [access: 13 IX 2018].

of Lithuania (2006), Estonia. *Vicious Nazi trace* (2006), *NKVD and its fight with banditry and nationalist armed underground in Western Ukraine, Western Belarus and in Baltic countries* (2008), *Hungary events 1956 in the eyes of the KGB* (2009), *Winter war 1939-1940* (2009), *Soviet captives in Finland and Norway* (2009). There is also *The Warsaw Uprising 1944* on the list edited in cooperation of the FSB Archive and The Institute of National Remembrance (2007) and 4 other works issued with German partners: *17 June 1953 in the mirror of Soviet services* (2008), *To destroy Russia in the Spring of 1941* (2008), *Generals and officers of the Wehrmacht speak* (2009) and *Interrogations of German generals and officers 1945–1953* (2015).

The level of events

According to gen. Lev Sockov, the published documents are the answer for forging Russian history by, for example “presenting the liberating Red Army as an occupying power”. The key role of the archive work is also stressed by Andrey Artizov, the chief of the Rosarchive, who claims that declassifying documents is a mechanism of “an operational reaction to anti-Russian campaigns of historical forgeries”⁴⁰, that take the form of “unlawful assaults on the Russian memory and culture objects, and the form of defamation campaigns”. According to Artizov the role of archive work is to digitalize source documents, to organize virtual expositions and excursion to places of remembrance, to support historical films production, including documentaries, and above all to make source documents public, which he personally does. He was the editor of the miscellany issued in August 2016 *Soviet Union and the Polish political and armed underground. April 1943–December 1945*. It is a representative case study, it is dedicated to the fight with the Polish memory of the independent underground (the so called cursed soldiers), issued by the Democracy International Foundation and financed by the Centre for Russian and Polish Dialogue and Understanding Foundation. In the frames of its promotion, in the interview for a governmental newspaper “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” Artizov demonstrated a typical attitude of Russian historians that preserves a confrontational rhetoric to the outside world and an illusion of objectivity to internal recipients: *The historical memory war is not our choice. It was not us who started the war. Russians as the heirs of Victory are self-reliant. Also because we do not negotiate different – the so called unwelcome facts, and we realize how complicated the situation was in Poland and that the Polish nation had suffered from Nazis as the first, and in the result of the occupation by the Reich more than 4 million Poles died.*⁴¹ It is worth adding that the information on the issue and the cited interview under the stigmatising title “A shot in the back” appeared *inter*

⁴⁰ Cf. the Sockov’s declaration on <http://svr.gov.ru/smi/2009/izv20090820.htm>; A. Artizov’s declaration on: http://www.vestnik.mgimo.ru/sites/default/files/pdf/13istoriografiya_artizov.pdf

⁴¹ *Выстрел в спину. Кто воевал в тылу Красной армии, освобождавшей Европу от фашизма?*, Российская газета, 26.02.2015, <https://rg.ru/2015/02/26/dokumenti-site.html> [access: 28 VIII 2018].

alia on the web page of the sponsor the Centre for Russian and Polish Dialogue and Understanding, that constantly touts Russian remembrance counter-projects, including an anti-Katyn project.⁴²

Declassified documents, planned as a provocative strike in the other memory, are increasingly published on the individual departments' web pages, including the Rosarchive's. They show up usually in connection with particular dates: in 2014, the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising failure, the Rosarchiv posted on their website a set of documents entitled *How the Soviet Union helped the Warsaw insurgents*⁴³; the anniversary of Warsaw liberation was remembered by the Russian Ministry of Defence with documents on the liberation of Poland.⁴⁴ We can learn from them that the Polish society welcomed the Red Army, that Soviets provided material assistance to people on the spot, that Soviets protected Polish people from "the Ukrainian nationalists" and from "the gangs of white Poles".

The two anniversary editions issued in 2017 are supplemented with documents which were blatantly obvious that they had been prepared for the 100th anniversary of independence of the Republic of Poland.⁴⁵ They are, at the same time, an answer for the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) investigation of the Polish operation case and the study project concerning the case by the IPN and the PISM. Both anniversary editions on the Polish politics in the inter-war period, are linked by the strand of "annexation" goals of the politics, which reportedly led to a deal between the Republic of Poland and Hitler and rejecting proposals of cooperation with the Soviet Union. Most of the presented topics were known from the former Stalinist historiography; like in the past, they are used nowadays to undermine the credibility of Poland.

Part 3. Poland in a perspective of Russian departmental historiography

Confrontational vision of the relations with Poland

In contrast to former information campaigns with history in the background since 2012 a broader political idea can be observed in the Russian attitude. Its main recipient

⁴² <http://www.rospolcentr.ru/publikatsii/aktualnosti/drugaya-katyn/>; <http://www.rospolcentr.ru/publikatsii/aktualnosti/vystrel-v-spinu/> [access: 13 IX 2018].

⁴³ While commenting the documents Artizow lamented that "for insurgents and contemporary Poles the enemies were both the Wehrmacht and the red Army. For Russia, that lost 27 million victims in the fight with fascism, the idea of identification Nazism and Communism is profane". Cf. *Восстание втайне от Сталина*, Российская газета, 3.10.2014.

⁴⁴ <http://poland1944.mil.ru/> [access: 13 IX 2018].

⁴⁵ С.В. Морозов, «Варшавская мелодия» для Москвы и Праги: документы из личного архива И. В. Сталина, Службы внешней разведки Российской Федерации, II отдела Главного штаба Войска Польского и др. (1933–1939 гг.), Moscow 2017; А.А. Зданович, *Польский крест...*, op.cit. The book of Morozov was promoted in Czech Republic and in Slovakia in the form of information actions by Russian houses of culture and science in Prague and Bratislava.

is the international public. Russian propaganda takes the advantage of the international historical sensitivity to convince that Poland poses a threat for good neighbourliness in Central and Eastern Europe and between Russia and the West. At the same time its goal is to hinder active politics towards Russia, reduce the credibility of Poland before the EU and the NATO, and the neighbours of Poland. Activities are subordinated to historical events calendar on one hand, and on the other – to the current situation (for example problems with Ukrainian historical politics or problems with Polish de-communisation legislation are instrumentalized; the problem of dismantling Soviet monuments is constantly present and interpreted as anti-Russian activity). It makes the same arguments constantly repeated.

There is no doubt that the departmental historians have the most significant influence on the individual events perception in relations between Poland and Russia. It is up to them whether to declassify documents and to explain “competently” the documents’ meaning in accompanying information activities. What also draws the attention is the systemic approach to “memory wars”, explained by professor Zdanovich in an interview entitled *In 1939 the war was declared on us* in the following way: (...) *we should establish the positions very precisely and set up, as on a chessboard, all that Russian historians have in their arsenal.* “The positions” are difficult topics in Polish and Russian relations defined long time ago, like:

- The Dark Times and the year 1612 – Poles labelled as occupiers in the Kremlin,
- 100,000 Poles taking part in the Napoleon’s 1812 campaign,
- Ethnic politics of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union towards Poles,
- Partition politics; reasons and consequences of the partitions of Poland,
- Polish fight for independence in XIXth and XXth centuries,
- War of 1920, extended in the 1990s to Soviet captives,
- Polish operation (1937–1938),
- Annexation of Polish territories (Western Ukraine and Belarus) on 17 September 1939,
- Katyn crime (1940),
- The role of the USSR in the victory over fascism (the World War II reasons and consequences; Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact; the USSR as an author and guarantor of the Yalta Conference agreements),
- Elimination of the Polish independent underground during and after WWII, including imprisonment of 16 Polish opposition leaders.

Because there is a lack of arguments used by Russian historians and Polish-Russian arguments they usually take the form of accusations or axioms, like: Russophobia as the Poles’ national trait, Polish expansionism (since the time of Kiev Russia Poland has been reportedly oriented towards the East), ingratitude of Poland for Russia’s civilization mission to raise the prosperity of society in the Kingdom of Poland (by the industry development and culture and education development), and then ingratitude for liberating the country by the Red Army, and – last but not least – “longstanding” role of Poland as the tool of Western strategy to weaken

Russia (“Poland as the dog of the Triple Entente”, or more update version: “the Trojan Horse of the USA”).

Concentration of such allegations is facilitated by publishing sets of documents. Only from the one 2016 edition on the Polish armed underground we can “learn” the following: 1. The Home Army (Pol. Armia Krajowa, AK) acting under the government in London was practically not involved in the fight with Germans on the order of the same government in London; 2. It was activated only when the Soviet troops entered “the borders of the ethnic Poland” calling for the absurd Warsaw Uprising; 3. The reason for the NKVD operation between 1944 and 1946 was the AK’s diversion in the rear Red Army and the necessity of securing civilian Poles because “the AK banditry suppressed the people and pillaged their property”.

Consolidation and mobilization potential of the victory over fascism shaped main topics of historical arguments: they still concentrate on the thesis that Poland undermines the liberation mission of the Red Army, that can lead to different conclusions (revision of the Yalta conference results, equalizing Nazi and communist totalitarianisms, etc.). At the same time, after 2012 there have been more and more publications on the interwar period of the Polish-Soviet relations. Accusations against Józef Piłsudski’s politics seem sometimes to be absurd. It is, for example, stressed that “contrary to the facts” this extremely anti-Russian politician established the day 11 November as the Independence Day in Poland, while the legal basis for Polish independence was Lenin’s decree of August 1918 overturning the partition treaties as well as the proclamation of the Temporary Government of March 1917 on recognition of the Polish independence. The reasons of the Bolshevik war of 1920 according to Russian historians were on the Polish side, aggressive plans of the Second Republic of Poland were confirmed by “the offensive of White Poles in the alliance with the kulaks, Simon Petliura and Machnov sympathizers.⁴⁶ According to Russia the Second Republic of Poland led the brutal politics of colonization, suppressed Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian people. Because of that the annexation of Ukraine and Western Belarus on 17 September 1939 was a kind of historical justice. The analysis of the presented arguments proves that Polish and Russian historiography refer to mutually preclusive memories/traditions:

Table. Comparing the tradition of the Polish and the Russian historiography.

Polish Historiography	Russian Historiography
Partitions of Poland	Gathering the Russian lands
Annexed lands (Eastern Borderlands, the so called Kresy Wschodnie)	Regained lands

⁴⁶ Cf. Долгополов Ю.Б., *Особые отделы ВЧК и их деятельность в 1919–1920 годах*, <https://secrethistory.su/1388-osobyie-otdely-vchk-i-ih-deyatelnost-v-1919-1920-godah.html> [access: 6 XII 1918].

Bolshevik war against Poland (1920)	Raid of Polish Lords Muck on the USSR
Poland – fighter “For our and your freedom”	Poland – Judas of the Slavdom and author of the diversion against the empire
Polish democracy	Polish lawlessness and anarchy
Tsarist autocracy	Autocracy – order and stability
17 September 1939 – the fourth partition of Poland	Liberation of Ukraine and Western Belarus
Polish Military Organization and the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) – independent underground	Polish Military Organization and the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) as a tool of espionage and diversion against the Soviet Union
The Warsaw Uprising – the independence movement	The Warsaw Uprising as a manifestation of troublemaking and irresponsibility of the exiled government

Source: self-study.

Those events that are stigmatized in Polish history (Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact; 17 September 1939), in Russian narration become “a sacred tarnished by the opponent” and vice versa. Constant collision and opposing the two memories (“ours” and “theirs”) makes the two sides entrench on their permanent positions and the temperature of historical arguments is heated up. Memory wars focused on difficult matters are usually come down to:

- tabooing inconvenient topics and sources;
- changing the narration vectors (Polish metaphors regarded as “anti-Russian” are contrasted to Russian ones which have exactly contrary contents and anti-Polish overtone);
- seeking balance between fault and victims, also by falsifying facts (Katyn and anti-Katyn; the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the non-existing Piłsudski–Hitler protocol);
- denying obvious facts as shaping a false picture of the past or relativising the facts.

Case study: Polish intelligence as “the cross” of the Soviet counterintelligence

As the serious fault of the Russian historiography, Alexandr Zdanovich, as its doyen and a diligent reviewer of works on Polish matters, regarded the lack of a comprehensive work on competition between the Polish special services and the Soviet special services. To meet such needs, the professor brings the activities of the Polish intelligence and the Soviet counterintelligence closer by putting his paperwork “Polish cross

of the Soviet counterintelligence” in the literature of anti-Piłsudski nature. Regardless of the clearly negative image of the Second Division supervisor (as we can read “Piłsudski had been in charge of it until his death in 1935”), the author shows the extensive Polish activities, and we can admire their efficiency.⁴⁷ Polish intelligence, as the author points out, had been established long before the Cheka and long before Poland got its independence (“before the new country emerged on the map of Europe”). Already in 1904 it was famous by the “Evening” operation (“during the Russian and Japanese war Piłsudski proposed the Japanese breaking mobilization plans of the Tsar army and diversion actions in the rear of it”).⁴⁸ Within the operation there was an anti-war demonstration in Warsaw on 13 November 1904, “financed for Japanese money”⁴⁹).

Since 1906 – as we read further – “Piłsudski put Polish intelligence at the disposal of Austria-Hungary and Germany” and hoped for their potential conflict with Russia. In 1912 he created a powerful intelligence net “Konfident-R”, which was then taken over by a secret Polish Military Organization (POW) carrying out intelligence activities against the tsarist army. After the February Revolution the activities of the POW increased. In 1918 Piłsudski directed his best personnel to Ukraine and to Russia. Only in Ukraine there were almost 500 people involved in the activity. The underground groups of POW were financed by the Austria-Hungary and Germany.⁵⁰

The arrest of Piłsudski by Germans in 1917 was introduced in this negative context. According to Zdanovich the reason for arresting Piłsudski and placing him in Magdeburg was not the so called oath crisis but “choosing him in absentia as the chief of Polish military organizations serving in the Russian army”.⁵¹ Since the his call to Poles not to take an oath in German army or in Austro-Hungarian army could cause a contradiction in a unilateral “black” interpretation of his actions; this theoretical thesis was to whet the problem of Poles in Russia.

The Cheka was burdened by “The Polish cross” since it had been formed: “it came upon the Polish matters in the beginning of 1918, when the I Corps of Polish Legions kicked out against the Soviet authority”. “Over the whole interwar period Poland had been a potential number 1 opponent to the USSR with all its consequences”. Because of that “the authorities of the both countries focused their intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities on an uncompromising fight with the opponent”.⁵²

⁴⁷ In the opinion of the most Polish historians the personnel of the Second Division was limited, poorly financed and not well trained.

⁴⁸ A.A. Зданович, *Польский крест советской контрразведки...*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem. p. 23.

⁵¹ Ibidem. p. 19.

⁵² It was established within the Western Front of the Tsarist Army and was stationed on the town of Borysov. General J. Dowbor-Muśnicki was appointed its commander by the Temporary Government. After the October coup general “refused to fulfill the government’s resolutions on the army democratization, developer nationalist propaganda, made contact with Polish politicians

The reasons for increased operational attention of the Cheka – NKVD to Poland and Poles in the USSR Zdanovich sees in:

- “possessive” wars of the II Republic of Poland with Ukraine and Belarus, and in Polish intelligence activities,
- financial support for Polish intelligence by the UK and France on the one hand and, on the other, financial support to “the White Movement fascist organizations” by the II Division, i.e. Russian white émigré movement,
- biographies of the II Division members who “toughened up in a fight with the Cheka and the Soviet intelligence” (it is for example stressed that their chief, Igancy Matuszewski, himself served during the First World War in one of the Tsarist guards regiment. Since the beginning of his intelligence activity in Polish Military (1918) he “was in charge of a spying organization in the rear Red Army in the region around Minsk, then he was in charge of a post in Ukraine”),
- high number of Poles in leadership of Soviet security institutions and at the Red Army headquarters,
- attempts to establish by the II Republic of Poland an anti-Soviet coalition with Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Romania,
- Polish diversion via the Prometheus movement focusing *inter alia* on nationalist immigrants from Ukraine, Belarus, Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasia,
- triggering by the II Division secret mechanisms of “a small war” to create the excuse for a war with neighbouring countries, including the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

While considering the repressions against Poles between 1937 and 1938, as the author stresses, one cannot overlook those circumstances. “Mass repressive measures did, in fact, take place, also against functionaries of security and intelligence organs, however, one cannot claim that they were a natural consequence of the confrontational politics of the Soviet authorities towards Poland in the period 1920–1930, as a historian of the Memorial, Valdimir Khaustov claims”. Trying to prove that “both parties are at fault”, the author argues also with historians pointing out the incoherencies in Yezhov’s argumentation (they point out that the Polish Military Organization had not existed after 1918, so it could not have more than 100,000 spies in the Soviet Union in 1937). For Zdanovich the name Polish Military Organization is a general term for Polish spy structures carrying out diversionary activities in the USSR.⁵³

The Polish operation, in short, was presented here as an inevitable termination of “the Polish matter”, and disinformation regarding the Polish Military Organization occurs as an argument justifying the murder of Poles. Since the author lead the readers to a conclusion that the murder was justified. For Poles living in the Soviet Union

abroad who strived for an independent country. On 12(25) January 1918 Dowbor-Muśnicki started a rebellion against the Soviet authorities; the Legions’ members threatened the Supreme Commander in Mohylov” (А.А. Зданович, *Польский крест...*, op.cit., p. 25).

⁵³ А.А. Зданович, *Польский крест...*, p. 288.

were “a natural base for recruitment for Piłsudski’s intelligence”. In any case it refers not only to “spies and subversives”. But to all categories of the Polish minority listed in the 00485 order. For example, striking the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) is justified partly by provocations of Piłsudski’s agents, and partly by “the KPP’s May failure/mistake” (it supported The May Coup in 1926).

Theses and arguments by Zdanovich are nothing new. Presenting Polish-Russian relations in the way that the competition is stressed has a long history in Russia. In works of Russian historians Russia has always been an object of foreign aggression, never was it an aggressor itself. It was written also about the II Division that the topic was instrumentalized as a proof of “the imperial syndrome of Poland”, as a proof that Poland had inspired separatist movements in Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus, that Poland strived for division the Soviet Union into a number of smaller countries etc.

The novelty is the application of this historical and cultural standard in practice. It is used for defending their own historical memory not for establishing objective reasons of the history that is sometimes difficult (and that, unlike the memory, is one for all and as such it requires professional study methods). In Russian memory there is no place for Polish point of view, Poland is treated as enemy. Polish strives for independence and Piłsudski’s fights for eastern borders of Poland fail to be understood because they threaten the Russian state and interests. The book allows to see the cultural dimension of the departmental historiography. Zdanovich correlates this version with other “historically and culturally incorrect” versions. The departmental version is clear-cut: opponents are not right, Stalin, Dzerzhinsky etc. as victorious heroes embody the uniqueness of the Soviet nation wronged by foreigners and nation with no weaknesses. Looking for the weaknesses and whitewashing opponents is demoralizing and discreditable for Russian patriots.

As a consequence “setting the history of services straight” means defending Soviet myths and clichés as well as reproducing the schemes of Stalinist historiography. This can be seen in rhetoric layer, logical layer, persuasive layer and cultural layer. It seems that focusing on the genesis and assessment of the Polish operation the author should make reference to the situation that on Stalin’s order not only “Polish agents acting against the Soviet Union” were murdered (including numerous companions of Dzerzhinsky, like Jerzy Makowski, Kazimierz Barański, Bronisław Bortnowski, Henryk Brzozowski, Stanisław Gliński, Mieczysław Łoganowski, Jan Olski and others) but also “potential recruitment basis for Polish intelligence”, i.e. members of the non-existing POW’s net and the management of the Soviet intelligence with Artur Artuzov at the top of it. In the period 1937–1938 due to ethnic cleansing 275 persons out of 450 intelligence officers were victimized, i.e. more than a half.

Zdanovich indicated the problem giving no reasons nor the consequences of it. Apparently it would be very difficult to justify it by “the state interests” or “the historic justice”, like in Polish operation case. In the beginning of its narration on the Soviet special services he focused on the difficult circumstances of their activities during the Polish-Bolshevik war, and in Chapter II – on their “legendary” operations

(“Syndykat-2”, “Trust”). It allowed him to show the failure of the II Division and feature the Cheka successes. He completely omitted social and political circumstances of Stalinist services. Dramatic aspect of their history came out only in *The A. Ch. Artuzov’s Letter to the People’s Commissar of the USSR N. I. Yezhov of 22 March 1937*. It is an interesting testament of cultural circumstances, directing “the Chekist’s mentality”: Artuzov admitted not only his failure regarding Polish direction, but he also admitted that “he failed Comrade STALIN”, offering at the same time his knowledge and experience to untie “the Polish knot”.

“Memory wars”: historical politics, propaganda or extension of Russian services actions?

The nature of the described activities makes us think in more general terms. First, the scope of notions existing in the West does not reflect the essence of the problem, that is defined in Russia as “memory wars” and/or “defending the memory of Russians”. To Western notions of “historical politics” and “memory politics” are assigned as unilateral wars of history interpretations: the notion of “making historical politics” means here informative war of the West against Russia with historical arguments and has its own negative connotations. Such attitude comes from the propaganda and historical traditions of Russia; from this tradition there come also basic categories of difficult matters in the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and its interpretations.

Second, “memory wars” are not limited to the past and interest of historians. As a part of information war they are designed to political aims, to create convenient conditions for them. They are close to active measures: they create both alternative facts and alternative interpretations. In this context the works of departmental historians, whose declared aim is to defend Russian memory, concentrate on deconstruction of other people’s memory and values, discreditation of the opponent’s historical legacy and their image in the world. Based on disinformation, manipulation and other techniques of deforming the picture of events they have nothing to do with research work, as it is presented. On the internal market they enhance the cult of the state security and the identity of the Russian society, they fuel the faith in the hostility of the outside world, individuality of Russian traditions and values, and on the international scene – they are aimed at the foreign politics.

Thirdly, departmental historiography as “memory wars” precursor combines historical matters with the attempts to ideologize the Russian society again. The new ideology is eclectic, inconsistent and attempts to make it more consistent by introducing an obligatory historical and cultural standard leads to neo-imperial and neo-Stalinist resentments.

Lastly, it is worth noting that this historical and cultural dimension is not only stressing the individuality of Russian civilization form the Western one and permanent nature of the competition between them. It is also a choice of values (neo-Stalinist,

neo-imperial) and also criteria, based on which the assessment of bilateral relations is made (positive – not positive for the image) and methods of defending the image (by destroying the image of “the stranger”). It is for this very reason that the Polish-Russian relations seem so pointless: for the Russian side memory wars are only one of the confrontation mechanisms with Poland and the responsibility for tensions burdens exclusively the Polish side.⁵⁴

Abstract

“Memory wars” determine the topic described in the West as “historical politics” or “memory politics”. Historical arguments, put in Russian Federation into a context of information and cultural wars and identified with psychological war of history interpretation, are aimed to realize political goals in the country and outside: visions contradictory to the official one are discredited as anti-Russian and as falsifying Russian history. The text consists of three parts. First part describes the problem evolution in Russian public discussions after the USSR collapse with the particular consideration of the departmental historiography guiding the information fight with history in the background. The second part presents the role of Russian special services in the practical fight and their symptoms in cultural, structural areas. The third part presents a vision of historical Polish and Russian relations in view of the Russian historians. It is a confrontation vision, oriented towards building tensions. It is behind the so called Russian historical and cultural standard (a model of obligatory diagnosis, assessments and historical interpretations) and as such it should be regarded in tactical as well as in strategic dimensions.

⁵⁴ S. Andreev, *O sprawach trudnych historii rosyjsko-polskich stosunków. Tekst wystąpienia ambasadora Rosji w Polsce Sergeya Andreeva w Wyższej Szkole Handlowej w Radomiu 12 January 2016*, https://poland.mid.ru/web/polska_pl [access: 28 VIII 2018]