

## SOME ASPECTS OF ORGANISATION OF THE MILITARY-POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF IDEOLOGICAL WORK IN THE ARMED FORCES OF NAZI GERMANY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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**Abstract.** *The article analyses the process of organization of total military and political education in Hitler's Germany and a mechanism that ensures constant control over the political and moral condition of German servicemen and soldiers of the allied armies. Author discuss the consequences of the ideological influence of German propaganda on different target audiences and possible reasons for the non-perception of Nazi ideological values by representatives of other socioeconomic constructs. These original testimonies of German prisoners of war make it possible to assess the changes in the political and moral state of the servicemen of the Nazi army and of the allied armies in different periods of the war. The author highlights the motives and effects of the changes in the content of ideological activity among the personnel of the Hitlerite troops in 1943. The research is based on the materials of the funds hosted by the State Archives of Ukrainian Public Organizations.*

**Keywords:** *Military leadership, politics, ideology, armed forces, Hitler, Germany, Second World War, national-socialistic education, psychological influence.*

**Rezumat:** *Unele aspecte ale organizării coordonării militar-politice a activității ideologice în forțele armate ale Germaniei naziste în timpul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial. Articolul analizează procesul de organizare a educației militare și politice totale în Germania lui Hitler și a mecanismului care asigură un control constant asupra condiției politice și morale a militarilor germani și a soldaților armatelor aliate. Autoarea pune în discuție efectele influenței ideologice a propagandei germane asupra diferitelor categorii de public-țintă și posibilele motive pentru nereceptarea valorilor ideologice naziste de către reprezentanții altor construcții socio-economice. Aceste mărturii autentice ale prizonierilor de război germani fac posibilă evaluarea mutațiilor în starea politică și morală a militarilor germani și ai armatelor aliate în diferite perioade ale războiului. Autoarea scoate în evidență motivele și efectele schimbărilor intervenite în conținutul activității ideologice în rândul personalului trupelor hitleriste în anul 1943. Cercetarea se întemeiază pe materialele fondurilor găzduite de Arhiva de Stat a Organizațiilor Publice Ucrainene.*

**Résumé:** *Quelques aspects de l'organisation de la coordination militaro-politique du travail idéologique dans les forces armées de l'Allemagne nazie pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale.* L'article analyse le processus d'organisation de l'éducation militaire et politique totale dans l'Allemagne hitlérienne et du mécanisme qui assure un contrôle permanent sur le statut politique et morale des soldats allemands et des soldats des armées alliées. L'auteur discute des conséquences de l'influence idéologique de la propagande allemande sur différents publics cibles et des raisons possibles de la non-perception des valeurs idéologiques nazies par les représentants d'autres constructions socio-économiques. Ces témoignages authentiques de prisonniers de guerre allemands permettent d'apprécier l'évolution de l'état politique et moral des soldats de l'armée nazie et des armées alliées au cours des différentes périodes de la guerre. L'auteur met en lumière les motivations et les effets des modifications apportées au contenu de l'activité idéologique parmi le personnel des troupes hitlériennes en 1943. La recherche est basée sur les matériaux des fonds hébergés par les Archives de l'État des Organisations Publiques Ukrainiennes.

## INTRODUCTION

Modern researchers pay special attention to the processes of changing historical and personal paradigms. All combatants perceived war differently. Their testimonies provide an opportunity to restore the picture of the change in attitude towards the war and the experience of its horror as an ordinary person and a trained military man. The ideologically hardened soldiers were motivated to take actions that were contrary to the military oath. To some extent, this contributed to the emergence of grounds for changing the generally accepted paradigm on the role of non-military ways in achieving military-political goals. Changes in the mood in the troops through the prism of the perception of war by individual soldiers. In turn, the spread of collaborative infiltrations among the personnel of hostile forces influenced the change of social model in the new architecture of the post-war world.

The war is always suffering and grieving, significant human losses, as well as loss of material and cultural values. The Second World War features prominently in the history of mankind, as the largest and bloodiest war. 62 states and 80% of the world's population were involved in this global armed conflict. The figure of the total human losses of the former USSR amounts to almost 27 million people.<sup>1</sup> At first glance, the theme of World War II today is studied

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<sup>1</sup> Доклад заместителя руководителя Федерального архивного агентства В. П. Тарасова на международной конференции (г. Будапешт (Венгрия), 9-10 дека-

carefully and a large number of studies provide an opportunity to get information on any moment of the armed struggle of the past century. But over time, official history is focused on by a narrow circle of specialists. The public perception of the events of the Second World War is somewhat different. On the one hand, this state of affairs can be explained by the fact that inevitably this world is left to the participants and war victims who are the bearers of "historical memory". The events of the war, according to J. Fedor, S. Lewis and T. Zhurzhenko pass into the category of "communicative memory" and are increasingly valued from the standpoint of a modern person and the peculiarities of its communicative activity.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the previously secret archival materials are becoming available. Work with the original sources makes it possible to explore previously unknown facts about the events of the war. Moreover, taking into account the increasing informational component of modern military conflicts, researchers are increasingly interested in organizing the activities of ideological structures of the opposing sides and methods and ways of influencing the consciousness of a target audience during the Second World War.

This article deals with the organization of the activities of ideological structures in the German armed forces, aimed at maintaining the appropriate moral and psychological state of servicemen.

The authors of the article make full use of real evidence of combatants. Working in state archives with soviet documents - special reports to the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army was the basis for the study. The reports used the results of interrogation of prisoners of war. This information was the basis for the planning and conduct of political events in the Red Army and in the Wehrmacht. In addition, translations of captured documents were delivered to the Main Political Department of the Red Army. This information makes it possible to understand that, firstly, ideological measures were carefully studied in the opposing armies. Secondly, the basis for political work was real events on the fronts.

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бря 2011 г. [Report of V. P. Tarasov, the Deputy Head of the Federal Archival Agency at the international conference (Budapest, Hungary, December 9-10, 2011)], in <http://archives.ru/reporting/report-tarasov-2011-budapest.shtml> (Accessed on 20.03.2018).

<sup>2</sup> Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis, Tatiana Zhurzhenko, *Introduction: War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, in Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, Tatiana Zhurzhenko (eds), *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 3, in [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8\\_1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-66523-8_1) (Accessed on 20.03.2018).

## THEORETICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

The 1942-1943 years' transition of the strategic initiative to the Red Army, contributed to the strengthening of political and ideological work among the Nazi troops. The Nazis, to some extent, were forced to learn from the experience of the ideological structures of the Red Army.

It can be assumed that the military-political leadership of Germany drew attention to the experience of the work of Red Army ideologists. They were forced to take countermeasures. Also, it was ascertained whether the propaganda measures of the ideological structures of Hitler's Germany were effective in working with their own personnel and that caused the reformatting of this system in 1944.

Propaganda measures aimed at the soldiers of the German armed forces, the personnel of the armed forces and their people, remain relevant for representatives of various scientific fields. Historians, psychologists, and communications specialists turn to the experience of Nazi propaganda and as a technology of information and psychological influence on consciousness and as a phenomenon of an all-embracing nature, which became the basis for the upbringing of a generation of Nazi ideology disciples in pre-war Germany. Modern researchers pay a lot of attention to discovering the phenomenon of ideological motivation of German soldiers. When considering the history of the Second World War, attention is drawn to the perseverance with which the Germans continued to carry out an armed struggle until 1945. And this is despite the fact that they all understood during this period that the war was practically lost.

Hitler's Germany was a totalitarian state with a clearly defined general state control of all-important aspects of the life of citizens, including their way of thinking. The study of this issue should begin with a review of the system of Nazi ideological influence in the pre-war period. According to Ukrainian historians T. Vronskaya and O. Lysenko, "in order to capture the mass consciousness of such a people as German, the Führer had to offer something truly impressive. And he managed to capture the Germans with a fantastic project and personalize their expectations as a Messiah, able to bring the nation out of captivity to the humiliation of the Versailles System, socio-economic disadvantages, disbelief in the future".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Т. Вронська, О. Лисенко, *Феноменологія війн: природа і цивілізаційно-гуманітарний вимір* [Phenomenology of wars: nature and civilization-humanitarian dimension], in

Today there are two opposing views in the scientific environment regarding the effectiveness of the Third Reich's propaganda measures aimed at various target audiences. For example, the American historian Robert Herzstein stated that "Propaganda directed against hostile countries did not derive particular success. In his view Goebbels turned only to the Germans, moreover, in a command tone. (...) But when appealing to strangers, his treatment did not have any result".<sup>4</sup> Somewhat disagreeing with him Russian researcher of the Second World War Al. Gogun draws attention to the following: "...during the whole war, the Germans captured 5.75 million Red Army soldiers. It is clear that the act of transition to the side of the enemy is far from always the consequence of reading the leaflet or the heard radio. Someone could go to the Germans because of the fact that the Red Army threatened him with a tribunal, someone - because of hating the native power without any propaganda, someone - because of the arbitrariness and selflessness of the commanders (...), and hoped otherwise that in German captivity there was a chance to save life higher than fighting at the front (...) But it is obvious that if the masters of the Nazi propaganda were completely profane, then in such quantities Soviet soldiers would not have left the ranks of their own army".<sup>5</sup> However, for the authors of this article, there is a fundamental study of the change in the social behaviour of the Nazi troops' personnel and related processes is crucial.

Long before the Soviet invasion in Germany, a powerful system of ideological treatment of German soldiers and population was created. The nationalist feelings associated with defeat in the First World War and the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles were constantly stirred up. The growth of military production after the seizure of power by the Nazis contributed to a temporary reduction in unemployment and was fully used to strengthen the authority of Hitler. During this period, the Nazis actively promoted the ideas of racism in order to plant the hate of other peoples in the minds of the masses.<sup>6</sup>

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*Сторінки воєнної історії України. Збірник наукових статей, Випук 19, с. 13.*

<sup>4</sup> Р. Э. Герцштейн, *Война, которую выиграл Гитлер* [Robert Edwin Herzstein, *The War that Hitler won*], Смоленск, Русич, 1996, с. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Александр Гогун (ed.), *Черный PR Адольфа Гитлера. СССР в зеркале нацистской пропаганды* [Black PR Adolf Hitler. The USSR in the mirror of Nazi propaganda], Изд. 2-е, испр. и доп. Киев, «К.І.С.», 2016, с. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> М. И. Бурцев (ed.), *Политическая работа среди войск и населения противника в годы Великой Отечественной войны (1941-1945)* [Political work among the troops and the population of the enemy during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)], Москва, Воениздат, 1971, с. 10.

Anticommunism and attacks on the Soviet Union, as the focal point for the spread of communist views around the world, represented the cornerstone of the ideological treatment of soldiers and population. Thus, the military-political leadership of Hitler's Germany determined the task of propagating the idea of the German people that Bolshevism was their archenemy. In 1937, the Ministry of Propaganda of Hitler's Germany sent a document to all the upper imperial branches of government, which stated that the struggle against world Bolshevism was the general line of German politics. The task of propaganda is to prove to the German people that Bolshevism is its archenemy.<sup>7</sup>

Anti-Soviet propaganda became even more widespread in the subsequent years. In 1938, all editors of the German newspapers and radio were asked to use false information about the Soviet Union on a continuous basis.<sup>8</sup> Using all means of mass communication, the German military tip embellished the idea of the continued superiority of the Aryan nation as much as possible. Outstanding Soviet aircraft designer A. S. Yakovlev, who visited Germany at the end of 1939, told that all his interlocutors - from designer to carrier - "felt the perceived incomparable superiority over all others. This was felt in everything and it was the result of fascist propaganda (...) The Hitlerites brought up in the German people the spirit of hatred and contempt for other nations and did not hesitate to emphasize it."<sup>9</sup>

Particular attention was paid to work on military patriotic education. The main areas were physical training, the ability to survive the pain and not to despair in critical situations, and ideas of national-socialist ideology in the consciousness of the younger generation. A secret seminar on political processing of the personnel of the German Army took place in 1937.<sup>10</sup> Obergebietsführer Stellrecht, the representative of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, made a loud statement in this event that the military education of young people should begin at the age of ten. Above all, children had to be taught the ability to win pain. Along with military training, the need for political work with young people was emphasized in order to fit the ideas in the minds of young people forever. Even if the faith in people would have been broken and the "honour codes" inefficient, "training, the iron habit of silently

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> А. С. Яковлев, *Цель жизни*. (The purpose of life), Москва, Политиздат, 1968, с. 186, 188 in <http://militera.lib.ru/memo/russian/yakovlev-as/13.html> (Accessed on 20.03.2018)

<sup>10</sup> М. И. Бурцев (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

obey and silently perform service under the orders of another” could become the last pillar of combat readiness.<sup>11</sup>

At this seminar, one of the leaders of the Nazi Party, Rudolf Hess, demanded from the personnel of the armed forces unconditional loyalty to the Fuhrer and the ideas of National Socialism. He said that such a soldier was supposed to be not only an example of service. He had to understand the “driving force” of fascism, see the “goal of the war” and “obsessively stick to it, striving for the final victory of Germany.”<sup>12</sup> It can be said that the task of creating an army of trained soldiers for automation was formed, which even at critical moments worked on algorithms. But self-sacrifice had to act as a readiness for a certain perfect behaviour for ideological reasons. Almost all the personnel of the Nazi Germany armed forces underwent a course of national-socialist training of soldiers. This course was designed for 16 lessons on the following subjects: “the German people”, “the German Empire”, “German Lebensraum” and “national-socialism”.<sup>13</sup>

These companies of propaganda also helped organize an entertainment program. In 1938, a network of corps (army) company of propaganda was created, the functions of which included the collection of front materials (broadcast, photo, newsreel). It was necessary to collect materials about the heroic acts of German soldiers in order to use these facts in the creation of a thematic information product. These corporate propaganda companies also helped organize an entertaining program for the soldiers and worked among the population of the front-line territory and enemy troops. The roots were subordinated to the intelligence units of the headquarters of the general troops, armies and navy.<sup>14</sup>

The main purpose of propaganda among the troops was to maintain readiness for self-sacrifice and determination in the war, to overcome anxiety and unrest in critical situations. In order to guide this propaganda activity, in April 1939, a military propaganda department of the Supreme Command of the German Army was created. This department developed plans for “propagandist support” of the large-scale military operations. Plans were approved personally by A. Hitler. At that time, there were departments of propaganda among the population of the regions of the USSR created, which were foreseen in future military operations for occupation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Military-political leadership paid considerable attention to the constant informing of the personnel. The main sources for obtaining information were periodicals with defined release dates and overlays. The magazine "Wehrmacht" was calculated for each company, as well as ten newspapers, including "Völkischer Beobachter". In Leipzig, serial mass literature was published for a "soldier's arm" ("Tornisterschrift").<sup>16</sup>

In addition to setting up a systematic publication of printed matter, a considerable attention was paid to the military-political leadership of Hitler's Germany and to the distribution of publications among certain categories of information consumers. Thus, there was a propaganda officer appointed in each battalion who distributed the press among the personnel. In addition to familiarizing the soldiers with information from the print media, they constantly participated in collective discussions on the topics of socio-political situation planned by the leadership. Regular conversations about current political events were held in each company. In the future, this measure was improved and the information hours began to be conducted in accordance with the guidelines approved by the leadership. Since April 1940, commanders of the company systematically received methodical instructions. These were the instructive bulletins - "Messages to the troops."<sup>17</sup>

For the senior command staff (from commanders of the regiments and above) the classified "News from Supreme Command" were also issued which hosted information about the military and political situation. In addition to the aforementioned edition, the newsletter "Messages for the officer corps" and the series of brochures "What moves us. Questions of the world view, politics, history and culture" were published. Representatives of the military clergy were also involved in the organization of measures to improve the morale of German soldiers.<sup>18</sup>

Printed editions that covered the causes and objectives of the war in the West until June 1941 gradually accustomed the soldiers to the idea of a possible military clash with the USSR in the future. Information on the victorious military actions of the German army was perceived as expected events. They were reformatted in an objective event with an indication of the victory of the Nazi Army in restoring lost justice. By June 1941, the victorious move of the German armed forces in the countries of Europe only supported the myth of invincibility

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

and the sacred content of the material problems of the German population has not become obvious yet. Families of the soldiers were quite well equipped. There was, therefore, virtually no reason to doubt the victorious mission of the German armed forces to the electorate of Hitler's Germany.

In the spring of 1941, in one of the regular bulletins of the "Message to the Army", the following was said: "Wherever the German sword will be hit, it will serve as the ultimate guarantee of the security of our homeland."<sup>19</sup>

The bulletin obliged commanders to remind the soldiers the need to "keep an absolute secret of all plans" and "keep silent". In the early days of June, the following slogan "We Expect an Order" was widespread. And on June 21, 1941, Hitler's appeal to the East Front soldiers was announced in all the battalions in connection with an attack on the USSR. Before the attack on the USSR, the German command issued a "Memo on the peculiarities of the Russian method of warfare," in which it was noted that the Red Army would be destroyed by modern adversaries that are the Germans. This meaningful installation was fitted to each serviceman.<sup>20</sup> Of the war against the Soviet Union, Hitler said in 1941, "It is a fight with the great opponent of our Weltanschauung, a struggle for life and death in which each soldier must feel like a political fighter and act accordingly. The German officer and soldier is far too deeply rooted in the conceptions of an antiquated era. It is impossible ever to overcome Bolshevism with these principles of a chivalrous, purely military conduct of war."<sup>21</sup> This complex of measures contributed to the formation of a high level of combat readiness. It is well-known that the first echelon divisions were marked by a high offensive spirit.

### **ISSUES AND SOURCES**

Today, in the generally accepted scientific thought, there is a rather sufficient point of view according to the alignment of the Nazi armed forces and their advantages over the Red Army before the attack on the USSR. For years, Soviet propaganda mythology supported the idea of the defeat of Soviet troops in the first months of the war as unwillingness to withstand, and the lack of concentration of forces and troops at the border, and thus unwillingness to act in defence on their own territory.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Apud P. M. Baldwin, *Clausewitz in Nazi Germany*, in "Journal of Contemporary History", Vol. 16, 1981, No. 1, p. 12.

Ukrainian researchers use the facts to review this issue and to justify a completely different picture of the balance of power. Thus, in his work "Strategic and Front Operations of the Great Patriotic War on the territory of Ukraine" Ukrainian historian V. Hrytsiuk proves that there were not the advantages of the forces on the German side. The Red Army significantly dominated the Wehrmacht in personnel, weapons and military equipment. However, Hitler's armed forces succeeded in offensive operations on the territory of the USSR. The researcher concludes that the military-political leadership of the USSR was unable to conduct successful leadership in the first period of the war.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the German soldiers had already a successful military experience of the military companies in Europe, and their actions were subordinated to the sole purpose that A. Hitler defined as follows: "...to stop the eternal aspiration of moving Germany to the south and west of Europe, and definitely point your finger toward the territories located in the east (...) we deliberately move on to the policy of conquering new lands in Europe."<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the success in offensive actions and the rapid move deep into the territory of the USSR supported the idea of the unsurpassed presence of the German armed forces and their victorious mission. And this circumstance served as a powerful ground for the adequate perception of the German soldiers and the personnel of the Allied troops of the social-nationalist ideas of official propaganda.

The education of the military within the framework of a well-formulated system of ideological values was determined by the military-political leadership of Hitler's Germany before the Second World War. A. Hitler spoke about the ideological component in resolving the fate of the German people: "... achieving a complete unanimity between the leadership of the state and the officer corps, not only in the purely military area, but first of all in relation to ideology."<sup>24</sup>

A special role in the military-political leadership of Germany was allocated to the officer corps. Representatives of the military elite were carriers of social-

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<sup>22</sup> Валерій Грицюк, *Стратегічні та фронтові операції Великої Вітчизняної війни на території України* [Strategic and Front Operations of the Great Patriotic War on the territory of Ukraine], Київ, Інститут історії України, 2010, 150 с.; Idem, *Стратегічні та фронтові операції Великої Вітчизняної війни на теренах України* [Strategic and Front Operations of the Great Patriotic War on the terrain of Ukraine], in В. А. Смолій (ed.), *Україна в Другій світовій війні: погляд з XXI століття. Історичні нариси* [Ukraine in the Second World War: A View from the XXI Century. Historical Essays]. У 2 кн. *Книга перша*, Київ, Наукова думка, 2010, сс. 208-302.

<sup>23</sup> Александр Гогун (ed.), *op. cit.*, с. 87.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

nationalist values. The commanders put forward requirements for both military leaders and political tutors. According to A. Hitler: "An officer who is unable to educate and direct his people in political terms has no place in this struggle, just as an officer who is not able to exercise tactical leadership. Precious forces would be left to miserable abandonment if the moral combat capability of the troops was based only on blind subordination without conscious determination within which the soldier understood «why?»"<sup>25</sup>

Hitler put the control over the organization of the activities of the ideological direction exactly on the commanders. Moreover, the leader of fascist Germany paid a lot of attention to the personnel training system and to ensuring a high level of ideological training of soldiers. In his opinion, "An officer must be an advanced fighter on an ideological front. In the spirit of the national-socialist outlook, to educate from their soldiers convinced and invincible fighters for our great Germany. Commanders should take care if this political training has a corresponding level of military training, as well as at the front. Commanders must monitor the execution of my order."<sup>26</sup>

Analysing the archival documents with the interrogations of captured Nazis in 1944, there are various points of view. For example, Alexander Frantz's spare field company's grenadier testified that: "Recently, we were well-equipped with food, tobacco products, received letters in time, musical instruments - lipstick accordions, accordions were highlighted in our company. After a good rest, the fighting spirit of the soldier was high. Among the treasury there are rumours that it seems that the spring will be offensive on the eastern front. German propaganda reports about it all the time. This propaganda suggests that the USSR seems to be striking from the last forces. And today, the main thing for Germany is to withstand this blow, and then go on the offensive. "When it came to the proper level of security and observance of the German armed forces regime in the traditions of the first years of the offensive on the USSR, the propaganda measures found to work for their target audience and readiness to act in accordance with propaganda calls were high.

On the other hand, in most cases, the situation prevailed, when, according to the Joseph Novak, Ober-Grenadier from the 1<sup>st</sup> Grenadier-division, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> company, 669<sup>th</sup> regiment of 371<sup>st</sup> Division: "The mood of the soldiers of 669

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Центральний державний архів громадських об'єднань України [Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine. Hereinafter: **ЦДАГО України**], Фонд 1, Опись 23, Дело 973, с. 15.

Regiment is bad, they have not been given food for 4 days. Most of them would have been ready to be captured if they were sure that the Russians would not kill the prisoners". In such an impoverished situation, the agitation calls for direct action were no longer susceptible. Eric Tcoche, a Pole by nationality, a soldier of 5<sup>th</sup> company, 2<sup>th</sup> battalion, 287<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment of 96<sup>th</sup> infantry division stated: "Recently, German aircraft dropped over the arrangement of our part of the postcard to German soldiers. It was said in them that the main thing now is to stand, not to lose heart. The state of affairs is not so bad as it may seem and we will overcome all the difficulties. Soldiers read these postcards, and then threw them and cursed".<sup>27</sup>

In our opinion, the effectiveness of the Nazi system of military-political education was based on the victorious actions of the armed forces of Hitler's Germany, as long as the strategic initiative was on the side of the German command. So, the format of military-political education of the personnel of Hitler's Germany had been unchanged practically until 1943. It was after the Battle of Stalingrad that the turning point in the war came to a halt, and the Red Army took over a strategic initiative. Defeat of the German troops and the need to switch to defensive operations influenced the morally-psychological state of the soldiers. Reinforced measures of Soviet propaganda and the systematic work of the ideological structures with the personnel of the armed forces of Germany and the Allied Army influenced the readiness of servicemen to stop armed struggle and surrender to captivity.

It was about this in March 1944 that Rudolf Altenkirchen, the prisoner-of-war captain of the 6<sup>th</sup> Company of the 28<sup>th</sup> Motor regeneration Regiment, said: "... tanks and artillery were relocated from our area to the north. And the Soviet troops advocated us with tanks. The situation was critical. Only two platoons and group commander Major Wilhelm were at the battlefield at the command post of the battalion in the village of Melusha. Reigning panic. Commander of the Battalion, Captain Gosling, together with the headquarters, collapsed. 18 other soldiers and me were in the battalion headquarters. We were hiding in the cellar. There were 10 seriously wounded fighters and a captain of the sanitary service there. Major Wilhelm threatened us with a revolver from above. He drove us out of the cellar and demanded that we repel the Russians' attacks. But this did not work out. There were Russian tanks. Major Wilhelm and the captain of the sanitary service shot dead. Other soldiers and me were taken prisoner."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 21.

Helplessness before the onset of Soviet technology, a sense of fear and hopelessness contributed to the emergence of panic mood. This is evidenced by Oberfeldwebel Adolfi from the 6<sup>th</sup> reconnaissance detachment of the 6<sup>th</sup> tank division, the initiator of the surrender of 4 German soldiers: "On March 3 under Yampil we were surrounded with Russian tanks. A mess began. At a critical moment, we did not even have fuel. We had to undermine our military equipment and get out of the surroundings on foot. Our officers flee first, not even warned about the direction in which to go."<sup>29</sup>

According to Soviet researchers, the German army, despite its many military training, good equipment with weapons and equipment, also had weaknesses and vulnerabilities in constructing a motivational component in the struggle for the idea of national-socialism. So, the reflection of class contradictions in the country was a deep abyss, which distinguishes the soldier's mass from the generals and the officer corps. The command failed despite all efforts to overcome the inequality among immigrants from different parts of the country. In the troops, there was an outright hostility between parts of the SS, which were in a privileged state and other infantry formations. The mass of soldiers frankly disliked the veterans, scribes and members of the Nazi party.<sup>30</sup>

Edmund Korenz, who was taken captive on March 3, 1944, spoke on an ongoing account of the squadron's reserve squad member Langemarck: "Even in elite parts with a special regime and supply, a hierarchy and decadent mood amongst the rank and file were felt. Serving the highest ranks and subordination were no longer synonymous."<sup>31</sup>

During this period, the military-political leadership of Germany had an opinion on the insufficient level of political training of troops. The efforts of the commanders for political education and maintaining a high moral and political level were already insufficient. It was in 1943, in accordance with the order of A. Hitler from November 22, 1943, for all functions that until now were determined by the general notion of "military-political education", the concept of "national-socialist education" was announced.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the term "Officers for National Socialist Education" was introduced. In 1944, by orders of the Fuhrer, a textbook "For what We Struggle" was published. In the text part he was forced to state the fact of the weakening of the moral stability of Hitler's soldiers. Among

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, c. 28.

<sup>30</sup> М. И. Бурцев (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> ЦДАГО України, Фонд 1, Опись 23, Дело 973, с. 29.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Дело 974, с. 50.

the German soldiers there was a growing mood towards the end of the armed struggle. This fact was related to the category of mobilized soldiers who did not support national-socialist ideas, politically motivated, those who had previously served sentences for political reasons. So, Reinhard Neher, a soldier of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company, 465<sup>th</sup> battalion of 154<sup>th</sup> reserve troops captured on March 10 in the Zbarazh area, during an interrogation, testified: "There are many soldiers in the division, which were previously considered politically non-charitable. I personally from the Sudeten region, I was a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from 1930 to 1937. I spent two years in a concentration camp, after which I was taken to the army. There are lots like me in the division."<sup>33</sup> Another German prisoner of war, Helmut Stubner, Corporal of Company of Lublin, captured on March 9, 1944 during the interrogation, said that: "The arrival of the replenishment in the overwhelming majority consists of soldiers with limited fitness. They were underdeveloped and were called up by the army in 1943 for total mobilization. The regiment has a large number of contradictions between the emigrants from Alsace, Lorraine and Austria on the one hand and the Germans on the other hand. This reduces the combat capability of the regiment. The French are, in most cases, forcibly mobilized and have no desire to fight for us. They rejoice at each of our defeats."<sup>34</sup>

A. Hitler understood this situation and declared: "In the fifth year of the war, political and ideological leadership and education of troops should be strengthened. Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, in coordination with the Party Office, are to take all necessary measures for this and take care of a unified behaviour for all. In the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, the headquarters for national-socialist education were set up. The head of the staff of the National Socialist Education Department carries out his activities directly from my (AG) name. Chief of Staff for the National Socialist Education of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces appointed head of the military-political administration".<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Hitler determined the level of political and moral education that the troops needed. This was a stimulant for the activation of the actions of the troops. And for this he used fundamental political and ideological ideas along with auxiliary means. We see an attempt to create a structure of a similar system of political managements in the Red Army. Special agencies of the German armed

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Дело 973, с. 28.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Дело 974, с. 48.

forces conducted a thorough study of the methods of activity of the political units of the Red Army, aimed at the enemy army. Doubts about the need to continue the war increasingly covered Hitler's soldiers, although the level of combat readiness in general was quite high. In 1944, the leader of Nazi Germany progressively emphasizes the ideological component in his discourses. He has advanced the idea of the need for decisive action.

In his opinion, during this period, the size and equipment of the troops play their decisive role in defeating the enemy. Hitler's warriors were supposed to be fanatics of the ideological struggle. National Socialist education was defined as a tool for this. A. Hitler recognized that, contrary to his expectations, this war was prolonged and turned into a war of ideologies, where the winner could become more ideologically motivated personnel. "In this war of worldviews, which is conducted with all the inherent martial arts of cruelty, the destiny of our people is put on the map. Wars of such a scale are not solved by numerical or other advantages (...) It is precisely in this war, that world forces are a decisive weapon, an idea for which there is a struggle. The mobilization of these moral values in order to achieve victory envisaged an increase in the activity of the soldier until he turns him into a fanatic for the struggle for national socialism through political education. The longer this war lasted, the more exacerbated the ideological fronts on both sides."<sup>36</sup>

A. Hitler again drew attention to the role of an officer as responsible for carrying out this type of ideological work. At the same time, the officer should have been a commander who automatically, without any doubt, performs all the tasks, and on the other hand the officer motivates subordinates to succeed: "He leads his unit into battle, so correct education of his people is a predictable condition of success (...) There should be no contradictions between his willingness to fight as a soldier and his political conviction. In this fierce confrontation an officer is not enough to be only loyal to national-socialism. It is indisputable that the officer of the National Socialist Army expressly and strongly opposes any criticism. It is during the crisis that faith and confidence in victory must be spread by an officer to his people and made them strong. The officer must use every opportunity to influence his people."<sup>37</sup>

That is, returning in 1943-1944 to his symbolic ideas about the ideological monolith of every German soldier at the beginning of the war, A. Hitler duplicated his opinion that it is the commander who is directly responsible for the level of

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

moral stability of each soldier. But the strict reality forces him to pay attention to additional measures to maintain the high morale of their soldiers. In fact, the situation in 1944 was completely different, as evidenced by the interrogations of the prisoners. On March 9, in the south-eastern direction from Starokonstantiniv, a group of soldiers of 8 people of 196<sup>th</sup> spare battalion appeared to be captured. The organizer of the capture of Matias Walt said: "When the Russian offensive began, our battalion was surrounded by tanks. The battalion consisted of unprepared but well-armed people. The first officers fled. Before that, they offered us to choose what we can do depending on circumstances."<sup>38</sup> Franz Götzer, chief executive officer of the same unit, stated: "Due to the constant retreat, the mood of the soldiers is very bad. Most of them believe that the war will end with the defeat of Germany. The reason is lack of sufficient strength to resist. Many warriors say that the culprit of war is Hitler. He unleashed the war, without calculating his capabilities. Soldiers say that in 1941 the officers were experienced people who enjoyed trust among the personnel. And now the officers become young gymnasts who do not have military experience. And these officers are often the first to flee the battlefield."<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, lieutenant Fritz Dingeldein, commander of a 1<sup>th</sup> platoon, 5<sup>th</sup> company, 695<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment of 340<sup>th</sup> infantry division, who was captured in March 1944, said that he was ready to carry out military duties, but was forced to obey strictly: "On March 7, we were attacked by Russian tanks and infantry. During the attack all three companies of our battalion retreated without an order. I, as a young officer, tried to manifest myself and decided to stand to the end. But soon we were surrounded. Part of the soldiers of my platoon ran away, and I, with the division of the non-commissioned officer Mayer, was compelled to surrender. It was my first military baptism as the commander of the platoon. I graduated from the Infantry School in February 1944. On February 8, a group of young lieutenants of 14 people arrived to replenish 340 infantry divisions."<sup>40</sup>

## RESULTS

While studying the trophy documents of the Nazi command on this topic, it is noteworthy that A. Hitler, understanding the change of circumstances and taking into account the experience of the Red Army, had tried to save the situation

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Дело 973, с. 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

and creates a system and introduces officers of national-socialist education. In the guiding documents of the military-political leadership of Hitler's Germany in 1944, a new system of ideological structures and functional duties of an officer on national-socialist education was clearly defined:

“1. For the uniform exercise in the army of national-socialist education at the General Staff to establish a headquarters for national-socialist education. The Chief of Staff of national-socialist education is the Chief of Military and Political Administration.

2. Headquarters of military units should create (departments) national-socialist education at their headquarters. In all command instances, to divisions and similar units, inclusive, the full-time officers for national-socialist education are entered in the below-mentioned headquarters. The headquarters of the battalion included functions of national-socialist education. Classes are conducted by one of the officers of the staff on the part-time basis.

3. The leader of the national-socialist education in the army. The commander of the unit remains the leader of the national-socialist education in the army. He alone is responsible for the politic-ideological leadership and upbringing of the unit. To accomplish these tasks, commanders and commanders of the units are now subordinated to the national socialist education officers as instructors.

4. In accordance with the Führer's order the decisive factor in the successful increase of political activity is the choice of the officer for the headquarters. During this choice it should be remembered that this political and ideological upbringing has a decisive influence on the course of the war. Without a doubt, officers who meet the following requirements should be appointed to this post:

absolutely-convicted national socialist;  
special personal qualities;  
prominent behaviour at the front;  
experience and practical skills in terms of politico-ideological leadership in educational work.<sup>41</sup>

The head of the headquarters of national-socialist education at the General Staff is at my disposal, directly subordinated and carries out my activities on my behalf.

The head of the staff of National Socialist Education works in close cooperation with the Chief of the General Staff and with the Chief of Personnel of the Army. He informs them about all the important issues of his activity. It

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Дело 974, с. 49.

operates both in the reserve army and in the military industry of the land forces.

The head of the staff of the national-socialist education of the land forces must provide moral and political education and increase the activity of the troops at the expense of a unified political and ideological leadership in the world of my order of 22.XII.43. For this he has the right to check the state of national-socialist education in parts and institutions of the active and reserve armies. He issues the orders necessary for these tasks from my name."<sup>42</sup>

In the system of providing the German Armed Forces with national-socialist education, A. Hitler took into account all aspects of the possible activities of all headquarters for national-socialist education. The system developed for it is designed both for the active and for the reserve army. The main role was assigned to ideologically hardened officers who were able to motivate the personnel for appropriate actions.

The ideas of national-socialism in pre-war Germany have gained popularity, primarily against the backdrop of economic recovery. The constructed system of promoting the ideology of National Socialism was associated with economic success, increasing living standards and restoring Germany's past greatness, which it lost under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. A new paradigm was created on the unrivalledness of the German race, the need for its cleanliness and the creation of infrastructure within the framework of international influence.

Military-political education of the population of Germany provided a Hitler war machine motivated soldiers. All spheres of life of the country were subordinated to the expansionist purpose, skilfully camouflaged under the liberation motives and guiding the world order in accordance with the standards worked out by the ideologues of National Socialism. The military-political leadership of Hitler's Germany focused on the education of the future invincible army. Military successes during the first years of the war and political manoeuvring allowed maintaining the high moral and political status of Hitler's soldiers and the motivation for further warfare. The propaganda activities aimed at various target audiences were successful, since they relied on concrete successes in the conduct of aggressive wars. With the change of military-political situation in the leadership of Hitler's Germany there was a need to reformat the system of information and psychological influence on the consciousness of the soldiers.

The creation of a new structure in the German military armed forces, and the precise definition of the role and place of officers of national-socialist education in 1943-1944, became a sign of the need to strengthen ideological work

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

among Hitler's soldiers. Propaganda activity of the 1945 model was no longer effective, as the rhetoric of victory changed with calls and persuasions to withstand and resume offensive actions. There was a strict need to force Hitler's soldiers not to pay attention to reality, but to continue to act in accordance with official propaganda. The extremely unsatisfactory level of mobilization, the reduction of the number of well-trained and motivated soldiers, the powerful actions of the Soviet propaganda machine and the simple tiredness of the war led to the refusal to continue the armed struggle and seek salvation from death. The harsh reality forced people to change their ideological system and artificially created format for perceiving the role of Germany in world history. Thus, any kind of system of ideological measures aimed at changing the perceptions of the target audience about the world order will succeed if the planted or suggested conclusions are consistent with real events.

Taking into account the conclusions of Ukrainian historians regarding the equal opportunities of the German armed forces and the Red Army before the beginning of hostilities in the territory of the Soviet Union, the success of the Nazis can be explained by the experience gained in successful military companies in Europe and a high level of motivation. Since the success in offensive actions corresponded to the ideological foundations of national-socialism, the Nazi warriors had a high level of political and moral status.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The actions of the Nazis are condemned and recognized as a crime against humanity. The propaganda myths and the system of their propaganda served as a justification of national-socialist ideas as an ideological platform for racism, which included both Hitler's Germany and the USSR, provide an opportunity to analyse common features and understand the patterns of the formation of an appropriate information background.

In the conditions of modern socio-political conflicts and the domination of the information component in the construction of a new architectonics of world order, the role of ideological aspects is constantly increasing. Today, the media space and humanitarian societies cover all areas of life. A thorough study of the experience of using propaganda measures in the Second World War, their further development in low-intensity military conflicts from the second half of the last century, makes it possible to use the technologies of information influence in any sphere of social and political life. A new assessment of some aspects of the Second World War events is gradually changing the memory of mankind, in which the old

ideas, which were propagated for a long time, were blocked. The generations that survived the horrors of the war years were different from the modern generations of perceptions of vital values.

Turning to facts, we doing research not only the events but also the conditions in which they occurred. Studying the testimony of prisoners of war, which are set out in the reporting documents of the Red Army, the following should be taken into account. During the interrogations there was always an influence on the part of Soviet propagandists; the captives could, for the sake of them, say what they expected of them to smile at. Therefore, the data set forth in the interpretation of Soviet ideologists can be politically biased.

The formation of a modern personal paradigm depends on the extent to which its carrier is involved in military events. Relatives, friends, friends, victims of war, photos in family albums ... are the closest private indicators of measuring such phenomena as World War II. They can coincide, or enter into contradictions with social paradigms that are formed from the state, public level, and may also serve as a tool for reformatting consciousness.