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THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR IN THE HISTORICAL MEMORY OF STUDENTS

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Abstract

The Great Patriotic War is one of the central events in the history of the Soviet period for the population of the Russian Federation, regardless of age, education, residence or nationality. The research subject is the student youth's memory of the war. The article presents the results of a survey conducted in the largest universities of Vladimir region: Vladimir State University and Vladimir branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. 360 people enrolled in humanitarian, economic, legal, technical and natural science specialties were surveyed. Much attention is paid to channels of information about the Great Patriotic War. The assessment of the main events and phenomena of the war is analyzed. The target audience has an important feature in comparison with older age groups. Witnesses of the historical events of the military era did not participate in socialization of modern students. The results show that most of the students perceive the war as a heroic feat. On the other hand, a significant part of students does not exclude the loss of interest in these events in the future. The readiness to take part in perpetuating the memory of dead soldiers is at a low level. The main source of information about the Great Patriotic War is school and university programs, and the Internet. The education system is responsible for historical memory formation.

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Keywords: Historical memory, student youth, the Great Patriotic War, case study.



1. Introduction

Historical memory is an ability of society to transmit information about main stages of development, events and heroes of the previous eras from generation to generation. Historical memory is closely related to social or collective memory. Being an obligatory element of the socio-cultural continuity of generations, historical memory becomes an important factor forming civic identity.

2. Problem Statement

At present, emotional perception of the Great Patriotic War is weakening due to a decreasing number of citizens who witnessed those events. As a result, the main sources of information about the events of the Great Patriotic War are changing.

3. Research Questions

The research subject is the process of formation of the historical memory of the events of the Great Patriotic in students. The historical memory is formed through the experience of family members, the education system, books and movies

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim is to identify the state of historical memory of the Great Patriotic War in the student youth environment.

5. Research Methods

The main research method is a sociological survey. 360 university students of Vladimir were surveyed. The respondents were full-time students of Vladimir State University and Vladimir Branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. These two educational institutions account for over 95% of all full-time students in the region. The representativeness of the sampling is ensured by inclusion representatives of different departments, genders, and places of birth.

6. Findings

The Great Patriotic War remains the most important event in the national and world history of the twentieth century. 87% of respondents answered positively, and 12.8% showed an indifferent attitude to the question “Are you interested in the events of the Great Patriotic War?”. Survey materials show that the main factors that have the greatest influence on the formation of historical memory of the war in the young generation are educational institutions, family, Internet resources, and cinema.

There are official and personal or familial historical memory (Hirsch, 2012). Personal memory is formed in the process of socialization through communication with parents and relatives. This usually exists in the form of oral stories about ancestors who took part in the war. This information is supported by letters, documents, photographs, and personal items (Polozhentseva & Kashchenko, 2014). Only 11.1% of students

answered the question about the source of knowledge about the Great Patriotic War and said that they learn about it from parents and relatives. Just over half of the youth surveyed (57.8%) keep the memory of the war in the form of things, mostly photos of the wartime period. Photos are the main family rarities, family history artifacts. At the same time, it's alarming that 42% of young people admit that no military relics are kept in their families. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of respondents (85.8%) still had great-grandfathers who participated in the war. Thus, the results demonstrate the weakening of student's personal memory of the war which is caused by a natural decline in the number of older people who survived the war, or poor knowledge of the national history or lack of interest in it. It is noteworthy that 9% of students know nothing about the participation of their ancestors in the war.

Students are different from older age groups. The closest environment who took an active part in their primary socialization is represented by people who did not witness the war events and are not "children of the war". A person is usually more emotionally aware of those historical events that he experienced, or his close relatives witnessed. Researchers draw attention to the problem of reduced communication between children and older generations as a result of over-employment of the working population (Oakley, 2018). Life experience and knowledge are not transferred from generation to generation. This is a rather dangerous phenomenon since historical memory is a solid basis for the civic identity (Ilyinova, Kukva, & Makeev, 2017).

At present, collective memory is more important. At this level, there is a general idea of the main stages of historical development (Polozhentseva & Kashchenko, 2014). The degree of formation of this knowledge is an indicator of the overall level of intellectual development. The results of the study demonstrate that the most important social institution for forming collective historical memory of the war is the education system. Almost half of the students (42%) answered that they learned about the war events during school and university classes. The significance of this source of historical memory is due to two characteristics: in school students acquire the greatest amount of knowledge of history; this knowledge is accurate (Shumilina-Pavlova, 2014).

A natural trend in the development of modern society is transformation of information channels; the Internet becomes more and more important. The number of information channels is increasing, and information becomes chaotic (Krasnoborov, 2017). This trend is characteristic of almost all age groups, but it is more prominent in the younger generation. About 20% of students receive information about the Great Patriotic War from the Internet. This indicates that in the information society, the mechanisms of transmission of historical memory and ways of its perception are changing. The impact of the Internet can be twofold; it can play both a positive and a negative role in the formation of collective memory (Emelianenko, Vetoshko, & Malashenko, 2017). 8% of respondents recognize the war after watching feature films. Indeed, today a good film is able to change public consciousness. This indicates a high degree of responsibility of the cinema for the formation of historical consciousness in young people. Less widespread channels of information are fiction, TV programs and communication with teachers. Over the past decades, reading formats have been transformed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The models of perception and information processing are changing (Greenfield, 2009), the linear model is gradually being replaced by the network model which is based on visual images (Chen & Oathes, 2013).

The role of the Western allies is rising, and sometimes the decisive role in the defeat of Hitler is attributed to them (Vilkov, 2015). 95% of the students answered that the role of the USSR in the Second World War was decisive. 53.7% of respondents admitted that assistance of the allies had helped to win; only 20% of students believe that their role was decisive in the victory. The share of those who do not recognize the significance of the Lend-Lease is very significant (26%). All these answers speak for stability and continuity of historical ideas about the decisive contribution of the USSR to the victory, despite various attempts to reconstruct military events.

In modern science and journalism, there are attempts to share the blame for the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union. When asked about the causes of the Second World War, 54.4% of the respondents answered that the war was caused by compromising policies of Western countries in relation to Nazi Germany; 41.5% - by objective world processes. Some respondents accuse the USSR of the outbreak of the war (3.8%).

The main idea of the war formed in modern youth has a pronounced technocratic nature. First of all, these are tanks (Prokazin, Dorokhova, & Khatnyuk, 2017). When asked whether T-34 is the best tank, the majority (76%) answered positively; 8.9% gave negative answers; 15% found it difficult to answer. The main factor influencing the formation of these ideas is prevalence of modern computer games.

Unreadiness of the country for the war was identified as the main cause of failures of the USSR (56%). 14% of the respondents believe that the cause is power of the German army. 72.7% believe that the struggle of partisans and underground fighters paralyzed the German armed forces at the eastern front; 16.1% of the respondents believe that partisans did not influence the results of the war.

One of the reasons influencing ambiguous perception of the war is the media. The examples are "positive" assessments of those who fought against the USSR. 59.9% of the respondents said that General A.A. Vlasov was a traitor who left the army and helped the enemy. 35% of the students called him a fighter against the Stalinist regime.

The fact of victory is emotionally perceived by students. For most of the respondents, this is a feat of the people. However, for every tenth student, this is just one of the historical events of the twentieth century. Not all young people participate in the Victory Parade; 42.8% of the respondents do it. 17.5% of the respondents participated once, 19.7% of the respondents rarely take part in the Victory Parade. Every fifth Vladimir student has never been to a parade. Participation is not a mandatory attribute in the life of modern society. Many students watch the Parade on TV or via the Internet.

One more important issue is participation of students in perpetuating the memory of those who died during the Great Patriotic War. Only a quarter of the respondents are ready to participate in the search movement, 42% of the respondents admitted that they are not ready for such sacrifices. 32.6% of the respondents found it difficult to answer. This group might include those who have poor knowledge of the national history, do not have information about search teams.

Participation in the search movement is not the only way to repay the debt to our fellow citizens who defended the independence of the state in the 1940s. Other forms of involvement are participation in patriotic actions (31.4% of respondents), studies of historical literature on the Great Patriotic War (25.1%), restoration of the family history during the Great Patriotic War (11.6 %). 28.6% of the respondents admit they do nothing for it.

Commemoration depends on the younger generation. Their attitude to commemoration of of great interest. Rather pessimistic conclusions can be drawn from the survey analysis. 43.6% of respondents believe that memory of the war will gradually fade. Preserving family post-memory is one of the main tasks, since the Great Patriotic War has a great importance on the formation of collective civil identity (Krasnoborov, 2018). Formation of identity is a problematic issue for the Russian and Western European societies (Lorrain & White, 1971). In order to preserve collective memory and national identity, unified vision of the world is important (White, 2008). Due to intensive migration processes, transmission of historical memory to new citizens is one more important issue (Bauman, 2011).

7. Conclusion

The study showed a number of positive points: the students perceived the Great Patriotic War as a special event evoking pride. On the other hand, the new youth generation has not been socialized in the environment of those people who witnessed the events of the Great Patriotic War. As a result, there is a change in perception of the military events, the main sources of information are modified. The main channel for dissemination of knowledge is no longer the family, but the school and university programs on history and the Internet. In this situation, responsibility of the education system for accurate knowledge increases. One of the main difficulties is reduction of the Great Patriotic War to one of the ordinary events in the general outline of the historical development of our country. Federal educational and youth policies should be aimed at maintaining memory of the events of the Great Patriotic War not only during anniversaries.

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