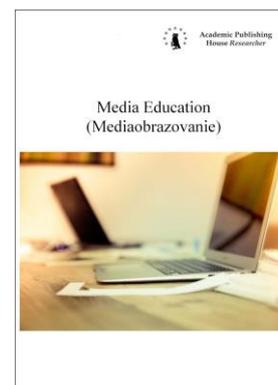




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Issues of Modern Media Culture and Media Literacy Education in the Context of Anti-Russian Propaganda: Interpretations of Leading Ukrainian Scientists' Works

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Abstract

In this article, propaganda issues are discussed and illustrated in such a way as to facilitate understanding of the context of the Ukrainian mass media, which is becoming increasingly ideological.

Since 2014 there is a steady increase in anti-Russian propaganda in the works of leading Ukrainian media experts and in textbooks on media education for schools and universities. In them different instruments and technologies of communication are used to negatively influence the perception of Russia, its politics and culture. Such manipulative tools include: 1) retention of the necessary topics, events, interpretations in the information space; 2) construction of information (assembling an event from fragments); 3) fragmentation of events; 4) paralipsis or understatement vs unwinding the topic; 5) pulling facts from the past, etc.

It is also shown that Ukrainian experts, as a whole, has become more aggressive, ideologically biased and overweighted in the process of media education. Especially since 2014 clear features of anti-Russian propaganda can be traced in many Ukrainian textbooks on media education. They are already based to a large extent on Western developments; there are almost no references to Russian research findings and practical experience. This is a response to the latest trends in Ukraine, which require changes in media education solely on the basis of Western experience. These new textbooks emphasize ideological confrontation and informational enmity with Russia. Particularly disturbing is the fact of massive anti-Russian agitation aimed primarily at such target groups and audiences as schoolchildren, students, young people, and school teachers. It is concluded that it is unacceptable to use media manipulative technologies to escalate hostility and hatred.

Keywords: media technologies, media manipulation, disinformation, anti-Russian propaganda.

1. Introduction

Anti-Russian propaganda in modern Ukraine is massive and very aggressive. In this article we try to shed light on the complexities of problems that Russian consumers of mass media may face and the contribution of media competency to the testing of media texts for understanding of their real meaning. With this purpose in mind we have presented instruments and technologies of communication which Ukrainian scientists use as anti-Russian propaganda. We consider that the ability to analyze and argue against false (or partially false) information in modern media texts is critically needed for both Russia and Ukrainian consumers.

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In this article the issues of propaganda are discussed and illustrated in ways to facilitate the comprehension of the Ukrainian mass media context which is becoming more and more ideological since 2014. Accordingly, many Ukrainian politicians and journalists have begun to argue that Russia is the main source of false and unverified information. They categorically call Russian press "Russia's lying propaganda" (Pocheptsov, 2019: 29). In this political environment, which is determined by the conditions of convergence with the West and confrontation with Russia, it is little wonder that front-line Ukrainian media educators and media researchers have turned to contrpropaganda against Russia, using the elements of information warfare: deception, falsification of facts, pretentious selection of materials, one-sided view and other similar destructive means and arsenal.

If media is to be used to full advantage of our two countries it is necessary to develop a climate in which both parties participating in the discussion should adhere to moral standards and values of academic and professional ethic. By this we mean that scientists should be honest, avoid double standards and use scientifically based data in their activity. But it is not the case with such Ukrainian authors as G. Pocheptsov, V. Ivanov, Y. Emets-Dobronosova, N. Koropatnyk, O. Voloshenyuk, O. Mokroguz and many others, who are the ideologists and supporters of the so-called "pro-European course" of the Ukrainian government. Most media texts of these authors give readers not information to form their own opinion on a problem, but ready-made solutions, which are not only too politicized, but mostly distorted. This is especially dangerous when disinformation is launched deliberately, massively and "industrially" (Pocheptsov, 2019: 28). And one cannot but agree with this Ukrainian media expert! But the problem is that many Ukrainian media pedagogues (as well as G. Pocheptsov) understand this kind of phenomenon (namely *using manipulative technologies and disinformation*) very one-sidedly. In their works, they argue that Russian propaganda is acting illegally, using methods of disinformation, and at the same time, they deliberately keep silent about similar facts in the works of Ukrainian, West European or American media.

The words of M. Koropatnyk who says that Ukraine only conducts non-systemic counter-propaganda work responding to "Russian aggression" (Koropatnyk, 2016: 172) are the case in point.

2. Materials and methods

In our study we rely on a research content approach, which includes identifying the content of the phenomenon under study, taking into account the totality of all its elements, the interaction between them, cited facts, analysis and synthesis of theoretical conclusions, etc. Our choice of research methods and their treatment have been guided by views of what media culture is, and how media education can serve the interests of the development of media culture in the context of anti-Russian propaganda in modern Ukraine.

Considerable attention is given to the analysis of monographs, books and articles on anti-Russian media propaganda written by Ukrainian experts after 2014.

One way or another, readers become involved as targets in some forms of propaganda. That's why we give particular emphasis to assessment and analysis of methods that readers themselves can implement to understand who and how manipulates their own consciousness by distorting genuine sources, historical events and documents.

I think that readers need to understand the nature of manipulation activities in the field of media and it is essential that the products of manipulation are to be properly comprehended and assessed by them.

Media competency involves more than readers' extracting and using knowledge produced by mass media. In many situations media consumers are in position to influence or even to requisition the information they want to receive. Consumership at this level always demands some knowledge of what writers can and cannot do for the target auditorium.

3. Discussion

The theme of Russian-Ukrainian relations has become very relevant in recent years after the referendum in Crimea and rise of instability in the Donbass and Luhansk regions on the border with the Russian Federation. However, even earlier many Russian philosophers and prominent figures of science and culture also raised the issue on the relationships between Russians and other representatives of the Slavic peoples.

For example, F. Dostoevsky paid great attention to the "Slavic question" in his journalistic works. This was due to the national liberation movement of the South Slavic peoples against the

Turkish yoke in the second half of the XIX century. In 1877, in his philosophical and literary journal *Diary of a Writer*, F. Dostoevsky published an article, which he called very eloquently: “One very special word about the Slavs that I have long wanted to say“ (Dostoevsky, 1877). In it, he gave a deep analysis of the situation and made a visionary forecast about the development of future relations between the Slavic peoples and Russia. Then it was mainly about the Slavic peoples of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, that gained independence from the Turkish Sultan thanks to the military intervention of the Russian Empire.

However, the opinion of the great Russian writer, expressed 150 years ago, can be successfully extrapolated to today’s relations between Ukraine and Russia. Dostoevsky wrote: “I know that we do not need to demand gratitude from the Slavs, we need to prepare for this ahead. After their liberation, they will begin their new life, I repeat, precisely with the fact that they will beg for themselves from Europe, from England and Germany, for example, the guarantee and protection of their freedom, and even though Russia will be in the concert of the European powers, but they will do it in defense against Russia. They will certainly begin by declaring to themselves, if not directly aloud, and convincing themselves that they do not owe the slightest gratitude to Russia, on the contrary, that they barely escaped from Russia’s love of power at the conclusion of peace by the intervention of the European concert, and if Europe had not intervened, Russia, having taken them from the Turks, would have swallowed them immediately... For a long time, oh, for a long time yet, they will not be able to recognize the unselfishness of Russia and the great, holy, unheard-of raising of the banner of the greatest idea in the world, of those ideas that man lives and without which humanity, if these ideas cease to live in him, stiffens, cripples and dies in ulcers and impotence... This cunning teaching ... will inevitably develop into a scientific and political axiom for them (Slavs). Moreover, they will even speak of the Turks with more respect than about Russia. Perhaps for a whole century, or even more, they will continuously tremble for their freedom and fear the love of power of Russia; they will ingratiate themselves with the European states, will slander Russia, gossip about it and intrigue against it” (Dostoevsky, 1877).

It is very difficult to comment on the words of F. Dostoevsky today. However, we need to emphasize the conclusion that Dostoevsky made: “If nations do not live by the highest, unselfish ideas and the highest goals of serving humanity, but only serve their own "interests", then these nations will undoubtedly perish, stiffen, become exhausted and die” (Dostoevsky, 1877).

But some modern Ukrainian politics and media experts are having a hard time accepting the whole value of these ideas about peaceful coexistence with Russia. Indeed, it is evidenced by numerous Ukrainian publications that have recently received coverage in Russian research studies of A. Fedorov, A. Levitskaya and some others (Fedorov, 2019; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020). For our research study we choose predominantly the last works of Ukrainian authors (G. Pocheptsov, V. Ivanov, etc) and are going to describe our findings about the state of anti-Russian propaganda through their analysis. Furthermore our findings are highlighted in more detail.

4. Results

Recently media research and media education in Ukraine have been developing in the bosom of a propaganda approach “with a tangible taste of anti-Russian orientation” (Fedorov, 2019). Although until 2014 in the positions of modern Ukrainian media researchers there was terminological and content mismatch within the framework of the ideological approach, now their positions are becoming more and more pro-Western and anti-Russian. We draw this conclusion basing on the analysis of the latest works written by Ukrainian media experts.

Examining publications of G. Pocheptsov for the first time one is immediately struck by the breadth of author’s knowledge relevant to media topics. Such knowledge covers a vast domain, including issues of communication and intercultural communication, disinformation and information wars, mechanisms of media influence on public opinion, media toolkits for cognitive transformation and many others.

Here are just a few chapter titles from G. Pocheptsov’s monograph “(Dis)information” published in 2019: “How the disinformation campaign works”, “Fakes and disinformation as manipulative tools”, “Disinformation and its friends”, “Strengthening the fight against disinformation” and others. He recommends to take into account that today “informational space increasingly breaks its ties with physical space, on the reflection of which it was previously built” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 108); “social media created the world of many truths. The danger of this condition is that in a polarized world everyone is ready to fight for their truth (Pocheptsov, 2019:

113); social media gave a new toolkit for it- post-truth and fakes (Pocheptsov, 2019: 114); so far they defeat the truthful information, because recognition of fakes requires a complex toolkit, which the average consumer does not have” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 50) and so on and so forth.

Considering the high level of author’s scientific qualification, one might conclude that he uses all knowledge that he has at his disposal in accordance with the principles of academic honesty. A closer look suggests otherwise. Knowing the laws and mechanisms of propaganda and disinformation, the author utilizes them very skillfully in order to manipulate the minds of readers. Particularly in recent years, at every opportunity the author cites examples solely of the “negative actions” of Russia and its “agents” from the secret services, etc. It means that G. Pocheptsov handles the information intentionally and deliberately. He contradicts himself and violates the laws that he promulgates.

As our analysis of G. Pocheptsov’s works shows the author has a thorough knowledge of the subject under consideration and freely operates with quotations from English-language sources. Understanding the underlying mechanisms of the formation and operation of the modern information space, he skillfully uses all the techniques known to him that can actively influence the change in the picture of the world in relation to Russia of a wide range of readers. G. Pocheptsov writes that readers are more likely to trust an expert who knows very well the topic under discussion. He is precisely such an expert. And he skillfully uses his authority in order to convince everyone of the destructiveness of the Russian mission in the world political arena.

It is interesting to analyze the content of G. Pocheptsov’s publications in accordance with his own classification of the methods for managing information perception. Analysis of G. Pocheptsov’s works allows us to systematize these manipulative methods as follows:

1. retention of the necessary topics, events, interpretations in the information space;
2. construction of information (assembling an event from fragments);
3. fragmentation of events;
4. paralipsis or understatement vs unwinding the topic;
5. pulling facts from the past, etc. (Pocheptsov, 2019).

As for the use of the method of retention of the necessary topics, events, interpretations in G. Pocheptsov’s works we may showcase many examples. He constantly repeats that:

“Russia is an aggressor”, “Russia applies methods of information war and wages cyber war against Ukraine” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 11);

“The Russian version of the information war is based precisely on misinformation (Pocheptsov, 2019: 13);

“Kremlin controls accounts in Twitter” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 16);

“Russian media are no longer a source of reliable news. They are returned in a certain sense to the Soviet version of perceiving them as propaganda” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 16);

“Russian troll factory intervenes in the US presidential campaign” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 22).

There are many others, similar examples of this kind. Such cases of “Russian media intervention” can be found throughout all recent articles of G. Pocheptsov.

G. Pocheptsov’s familiarity with techniques of assembling an event from fragments and his masterful use of construction of information can be seen in the following sample. G. Pocheptsov writes the chapter in the monograph under the title “Influence operations in the model of terrorism”. In doing so, he mentions an article “Propaganda of the deed 2008: Understanding the phenomenon” by Bolt and coauthors, who quoted M. Bakunin as the nineteenth century philosopher and ‘father of terrorism’. The reference to the words of M. Bakunin ‘we must spread our principles, not with words but with deeds’ is justified by the research logic of English-speaking authors. In the case of G. Pocheptsov’s article the question arises to the author’s logic: why does he mention Bakunin? The solution is quite simple: it turns out that Russia is the birthplace of terrorism and of its father – Bakunin. From our point of view, the emphasis on the Russian surname of Bakunin in the context of G. Pocheptsov’s article looks pretentious and strained. We dare to assume that G. Pocheptsov brings Bakunin to the fore for the sole purpose: to show that there is a Russian trace in terrorism! And even though Russia is actively fighting international terrorism, the reader will have an aftertaste of the Russian side effect! (Pocheptsov, 2019).

G. Pocheptsov explains how the mechanism of fragmentation works. “To describe the event, a new “alphabet” is created that satisfies the goals of the communicator. The event will be “cut” into such components so that the desired message can be composed from them. The journalist, the host of the program, the expert will repeat verbally what has already been done by cutting” (Pocheptsov,

2017). Accordingly he himself in his works uses this method exclusively for ideological and anti-Russian propaganda purposes.

Here is only one of the author's tenets: "Russia seeks to change the entire model of the world, both individual and mass consciousness". To prove this statement G. Pocheptsov sites the article of L.A. Way and A. Casey (Way, Casey, 2018) where scientists from Canada try to assess the impact of Russia on elections in the world since 1991. L.A. Way and A. Casey identified two waves of Russian meddling since the early 1990s and examined a data set of all 27 Russian electoral interventions since 1991. This is what G. Pocheptsov meticulously quotes in his monograph. We have found the whole text of Canadian writers and it turned out that they concluded: "However, an examination of both of these waves shows that Russia's efforts have made little difference. ... there are reasons to be skeptical of the claim that Russia swung the election for Trump. First, Russian information warriors produced far less fake news and polarizing rhetoric than did domestic and other international sources. Russia simply added to the already deafening cacophony of inflammatory rhetoric and misinformation" (Way, Casey, 2018). It is interesting that G. Pocheptsov doesn't mention this inference which Canadian experts made on the basis of scientific evidence and reasoning. This example vividly illustrates how G. Pocheptsov uses so called "fragmentation".

Another example of using manipulative methods by G. Pocheptsov (unwinding the topic) is as follows. He writes: "We live in a world full of erroneous information. But it's a completely different matter when such information is created deliberately, industrially, as was the case with the intervention of a Russian troll factory in the US presidential campaign. Industrial work is in stark contrast to chaotic work. Moreover, the "core" of this work was held by a huge number of trolls (different sources speak of the number working from 600 to 1000) and the amounts that the holding operated (1 million dollars per month)" (Pocheptsov, 2019: 24).

Since the author gives this information in one paragraph, the reader understands that this huge troll factory is Russian. At the same time he does not disclose the source of information. Perhaps it is reliable, perhaps not. But until now it has not been proven that it was Russia that was involved in the work of the mentioned troll factory. Further G. Pocheptsov writes that the same trolls attacked Macron's presidential campaign, Brexit, Catalan referendum, a series of elections in Eastern European countries, Ukraine, Georgia, Syria, etc. And again, the reader cannot help but guess that this is the malicious handiwork of Russia. From our point of view this is a prime example of how, "in the right hands", unverified information becomes disinformation since the author does not give any evidence and presents the doubtful information as reliable and already proven.

At the same time, completely different data is officially announced on this issue at a press conference after the summit of Russia and the United States presidents in Geneva (June, 2021). V. Putin unequivocally stated: "From American sources it follows that the largest number of cyber attacks in the world are carried out from the US cyberspace. In second place is Canada, followed by two Latin American countries and then Great Britain. Russia is not included in this list of countries from whose cyberspace the largest number of cyberattacks of various kinds is carried out. In 2020 the United States sent 14 requests to Russia for cyberattacks and in 2021 – 2 requests. To each of the requests the US received an exhaustive answer. But in 2021 alone, Russia sent 35 requests to the United States on cyber-attacks from the United States, and over the past two years there were about 80. And not a single Russian request was awarded a response" (Putin, 2021). The Russian president also stated that it must be admitted that the issue of cyber-attacks is very serious, and therefore, it is necessary to reach a consensus on the importance of joint Russian-American work in cyberspace (Putin, 2021). However, pro-Western Ukrainian authors rarely pay attention to this kind of data.

G. Pocheptsov writes a lot on the issues of how to counter disinformation. His recommendations on the perception of inaccurate information and fakes are very detailed and meticulously spelled. His main message is – if you want to understand whether you are dealing with disinformation, then you need to answer two questions: does this information have evidence and whether this fake information was beneficial to someone (Pocheptsov, 2019).

It is necessary to emphasize that all kinds of media information strategy should be directed by some form of preliminary inquiry or investigation. But for pro-Western Ukrainian authors there is no reason to test or assess evidences. Their consciousness is distorted by hypotheses about the harmful influence of Russia on the whole world and especially on Ukraine. However, it is known that a hypothesis is a conjecture that one has reason to believe is true but for which adequate evidence is lacking. How do the authors such as G. Pocheptsov explain the lack of necessary evidence for testing their hypothesis? And are they really trying to prove their hypothesis about the

destructive power of Russian propaganda? Obviously, not! Disinformation – is a part of their plan. They know that disinformation is a formidable weapon because it is refuted *ex post facto* after it has fulfilled its negative destructive mission. G. Pocheptsov writes about it in such a way: “Now it becomes perfectly possible to live by the rules and without them at the same time. The informationally complex world turned out to be incapable of self-regulation. ... From time to time, the formula of this kind appears and allows to combine truthful and untrue information to enhance the credibility of messages. ... this method can be denoted as the transformation of an individual fact into a symbol, into a sign. In the next step, this sign already living its new life in virtual space, leaving space informational” (Pocheptsov, 2019: 15). Moreover, to clarify the mechanism of this formula, the author chooses examples from the past of Soviet press, when a metallurgist who gets an apartment becomes a reflection of the whole country, just like the unemployed American, rummaging in a garbage can, becomes an iconic picture of America.

Recently, G. Pocheptsov has been waging an open war with Russia. He willingly accuses Russia of undermining social stability in different countries, playing off social groups with opposing interests, meddling into established Western democracies, etc. In his opinion all this is done with the help of Russian media with the only aim – to throw the country (namely the US, Germany, France and Britain, among others Ukraine) into a chaotic period and to stir up outrage. In the article “Fakes like news without real events” (Pocheptsov, 2019) he writes that during the United States’ 2016 presidential election American social groups with different opinions “for” and “against” immigration, for” and “against” Islam were taken to the streets. This was done through Russian media intervention guiding from St. Petersburg (Pocheptsov, 2019: 63). Again, he does not indicate sources of information. Following the logic of the author’s theoretical propositions about manipulation in media sphere, we can understand that he is not impartial. Undoubtedly, the author is ideologically engaged and acts within the framework of the modern Ukrainian political conjuncture constantly making serious accusations against Russia.

Even when G. Pocheptsov indicates the source of information to which he refers he is not completely veridical. In the article “Communication technologies, describing the world, actively create it” he cites the George Orwell’s 1940 Review of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and draws a perplexing conclusion: “By the way, Orwell once wrote in a review of Hitler’s book that people do not want a simple comfortable existence, they are ready to sacrifice themselves for great goals. It was this discovery of Hitler that Orwell emphasized” (Pocheptsov, 2016).

But we believe that it is unfair to do such an assumption about Orwell’s main idea of the Review. We are absolutely convinced that it is not what Orwell really wanted to say. Let’s split up the Review content and come up with our own conclusion.

Already in 1940, Orwell realized that the figure of Hitler was very attractive to the masses. He noted: “But Hitler could not have succeeded against his many rivals if it had not been for the attraction of his own personality, which one can feel even in the clumsy writing of *Mein Kampf*, and which is no doubt overwhelming when one hears his speeches... The fact is that there is something deeply appealing about him” (Orwell, 1940). That’s why he talked about the phenomenon of Hitler’s personality. Orwell wondered how was it that Hitler had been able to put his monstrous plans to create an indestructible state into effect.

Orwell was struck by the inertness of Hitler’s intellect, his static view of the world which didn’t develop: “it is difficult to believe that any real change has taken place in Hitler’s aims and opinions ... It is the fixed vision of a monomaniac and not likely to be much affected by the temporary manoeuvres of power politics”. But, nevertheless, Orwell emphasized the danger of fascism and Nazism: “However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life” (Orwell, 1940). Therefore, Orwell warned everyone (and this was 1940!) from underestimating the personality of Hitler, who was able to lead people under the slogan ‘Better an end with horror than a horror without end’. Orwell deduced: “Now that we are fighting against the man who coined it, we ought not to underrate its emotional appeal” (Orwell, 1940). And we believe that the main message of Orwell’s Review was a warning about the threat of fascism and its ideology.

Thus, we see that G. Pocheptsov uses Orwell’s material in a one-sided perspective, taking the author’s words out of context and interpreting them in his own way, he takes the reader away from the general concept of Orwell’s Review. This is the example of the power of communicative technologies, which allows any person to describe the world from his own angle, forming someone

else's mind and thereby creating a different model of the world. And G. Pocheptsov uses this mechanism of consciousness manipulation rather skillfully.

Content analysis of G. Pocheptsov's publications reveals the growth of his negative attitude towards Russia. We have found out that his focus is shifting toward anti-Russian trend in the assessment of modern political life. The author's tone has radically changed towards the designation of conflict and confrontation in relation to Russia. There is a bias in the choice of examples and excerption of a certain kind. The essence of the statements is characterized by repeated and obsessive themes of war, confrontation, terrorism, which, according to G. Pocheptsov, are initiated by the Russian side. A comparison of the author's publications of the late 1990s and works published after 2014 shows a multiple increase in statements about the war on the part of Russia, while reducing critical references to the West, the United States and Ukraine. We may conclude that his efforts are aimed at presenting a completely distorted picture of reality. To lift a phrase from G. Pocheptsov's statement about cognitive mapping and operational coding: "We are talking about the search for certain structures within which there is a real processing of information by a person" (Pocheptsov, 2001: 427).

On close inspection we may also find out that Ukraine experts, as a whole, has become more aggressive, ideologically biased and overweighted in the process of media education. Especially since 2014 clear features of anti-Russian propaganda can be traced in many Ukrainian publications, monographs and textbooks on media education. Along with this, these publications contain unwarranted criticism of Russian media scientists and their scientific approaches to media literacy, media education, its content and methods.

For example, in the article "Media education and media literacy: definition of terms" (Ivanov, Schkoba, 2012). V. Ivanov and his coauthor O. Schkoba analyzed 47 theoretical works of different authors. Among them there are 6 works of Russian media educator and researcher A. Fedorov. His works have been quoted by V. Ivanov and O. Schkoba many times (32 times) in relation to the history and methodology of media education, to the theoretical foundations of media literacy, to the concepts and theories of media literacy education, its main goals, principles and types which A. Fedorov carefully studied, systematized and elucidated. V. Ivanov and O. Schkoba write: "He (A. Fedorov) analyzed various definitions of this concept (media education, media literacy, education aux medias, medienpadagogik, educacion para los medios) and conducted a survey of experts from different countries of the world on this issue. In addition, based on studying the views of Western scientists, he identified eight theories of media education" (Ivanov, Schkoba, 2012: 44).

Despite the fact that Ukrainian authors call A. Fedorov the leading media educator in Russia, they conclude: "the researcher clearly lacked knowledge about basic theories of mass communication. Out of sight remained, for example, the later leading theories of gatekeepers, spirals of silence, cognition, learning, etc., that are more adapted to the present time" (Ivanov, Schkoba, 2012: 44).

Why do the authors make such a judgement? Their reasoning seems particularly strange, since A. Fedorov is not only a leading Russian media educator, he is a worldwide known scientist, and his contribution to the development of media literacy education has been marked by numerous international awards and prizes (for example, in 2019 A.V. Fedorov became the Winner of UNESCO Global Media and Information Literacy Award).

The position of the authors becomes clear when one has got acquainted with the conclusion of the article under consideration. V. Ivanov and O. Schkoba urge Ukrainian media educators to be guided not by the works of Russian experts, but by the approaches and theories of Western and American scientists. This is how they explain their point of view: "But it is necessary to note that, first, in Western countries for a long time there is already a permanent practice of media education, which can be and it is necessary to be guided, secondly, by theoretical developments Ukrainian scientists are not aimed at formation critical thinking autonomous from the media personally – (as in many Western countries), and to master media equipment and the use of opportunities media in the learning process. It should be noted that most media education specialists are held captive by outdated ideas about the power of media influence. But even considering this error, the conclusions of Western scholars on ways to implement conducting media education and achieving media literacy as a result, a critical view of the media they are of great importance for the development of Ukrainian media education" (Ivanov, Schkoba, 2012: 52).

We believe that when conclusions are based on ideology and anti-Russian orientation, then distortions of the kind considered here are likely to occur. In this regard, we make the essential

deduction: this is a part of the anti-Russian propaganda technology. Such articles are not written by chance, but within the framework of anti-Russian propaganda crusades and image promotion campaigns that are specially planned and also have “execution and evaluation stages” (Ivanov, Schkoba, 2012: 52). In this case, the ‘executors’ are known. And it is not difficult to guess about those who are planning these anti-Russian attacks and evaluating their results in Ukraine.

With the beginning of an active confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, American (and, in general, West European) politicians became seriously interested in the development of media education in Ukraine. It is clear that in the context of sanctions against the Russian Federation, these politicians are very interested in the development of media education in Ukraine with a propaganda bias and with a tangible taste of anti-Russian orientation.

And the result of this influence is obvious. For example, in 2019 in the materials of the Seventh international scientific and methodological conference: “The modern space of media literacy and prospects for its development” (Ivanov, Voloshenyuk, 2019), we practically do not find references to Russian-language sources. References to publications of Ukrainian, German, French and English-speaking authors prevail. In the brochure of the collection of conference materials in the list of references to 39 articles there are 432 bibliographic sources. Only 37 of them are written by Russian authors. These figures are indicative and prove that anti-Russian tendencies are growing in the sphere of media education. This move is largely determined by both the foreign curators and the modern Ukrainian trend towards Russophobia. It is noteworthy that the publication of the “Collected papers” was supported by *The Deutsche Welle Academy* which is Germany’s leading organization for the development of international media.

Assuming all these it would not be superfluous to analyze at least some textbooks on media literacy that came out in Ukraine after 2014. For example, textbooks on media education published in Kiev in 2015-2017 (Gumenyuk, Potapova, 2015; Ivanov et al., 2016; Ivanov, Voloshenyuk, 2017). They are already based to a large extent on Western developments; there are almost no references to Russian research findings and practical experience. This is a response to the trends in Ukraine that appeared back in 2015, which challenged for a change in the media education on the assumption of Western experience. These new textbooks emphasize ideological confrontation and informational enmity with Russia. One of them is the manual for teachers “Media literacy at the lessons of social disciplines” edited by V. Ivanov, O. Voloshenyuk, O. Mokroguz (Ivanov et al., 2016). It is worth mentioning that the creation and publication of the manual has been made possible by the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The editors of the Manual write that this publication is the first attempt to integrate media literacy into the teaching of social disciplines. The first two sections of the book discuss what media, media education, media literacy and basic methods of critical thinking are. In the sections 3-11 – lesson plans and summaries for the courses “history of Ukraine” and “world history” and “Man and the world” are presented. The manual is recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (letter 1 / 11-19172 from 29.12.2015).

The analysis of the manual’s content shows that the book has already been written as a counter propaganda one: teachers are taught how to resist Russian media propaganda using numerous examples. The authors intentionally involve children in considering the controversial historical problems of hunger, repression, conflicts which were allegedly introduced into the life of Ukraine from the outside, namely from Russia. Indeed, the themes of hunger and repression in the 1930s, Stalin’s personality cult are not easy problems to analyze and understand in the school curriculum. But the authors of the textbook select such a material, both textual and visual, that sets students up for the conclusion: Russia is a hostile force that is capable of torturing, killing, and starving the citizens of Ukraine.

Let’s contemplate as an example a task from the manual in which students are asked to review, compare and evaluate posters about the life of pioneers in the Soviet Union (“Pioneer! Learn to fight for the cause of the working class”; “Pioneers, strengthen the defense of the Soviet country: more circles of young friends of Osoviachim”; “May our Motherland live and prosper!”) and adolescents in Nazi Germany who are loyal to Hitler (“Youth serves Führer”; “Officers of tomorrow”; “Ten years in the Hitlerjugend”) (Ivanov et al., 2016: 152). The posters are set next to each other. This manipulative technique gradually leads students to judge them as phenomena of the same essence (which is certainly not the case). After the section “Nazism and propaganda. Propaganda as a repeater of ideology” students are offered a set of questions, that they must answer after comparing the posters, and the task: “Name the common features of all the posters”.

Such manner of presentation of information (assimilation of opposite entities, blurring of boundaries, confusion of ideologies and concepts) undoubtedly creates cognitive dissonance in students' heads and distorts their worldview.

We think it is necessary to draw special attention to this problem of media education in order to ensure that Ukrainian students are not outrageously misled on the matters of this sort.

Another very urgent problem is connected with the position of some Ukrainian authors on the issues of the Second World War. The aforementioned manual is a living proof. Their authors argue that Russian media deliberately politicize this topic and use it for manipulative purposes to split Ukrainian society. They claim: "This is dangerous, because often people who use the Soviet concept of historical memory of the Second World War believe that the Ukrainian state is building some other history, where the heroes are those whom they have always considered enemies. The mythology of the Second World War is now actively used in Russian propaganda, which tries to discredit Ukraine, which declares a pro-European course and attempts to go beyond the Soviet and post-Soviet mentality and ideology" (Ivanov et al., 2016: 133). Such a position, in my opinion, is unacceptable.

Here is the title of the section devoted to the Second World War from the manual: "World War II for Ukrainian People: Among Totalitarian Ideologies" (Ivanov et al., 2016: 115). After reading it, one gets the impression that during the war time the Ukrainian people were absolutely apolitical, and were under the cruel influence of two totalitarian ideologies that were tearing them apart. This is how the myth is born about the Ukrainian people as a victim or the "sacrificial calf" suffered from external enemies, almost equal in harmfulness. This approach is also prompted by the visual representation of the two leaders of these opposing forces: Hitler and Stalin, as well as a commentary by the authors of the manual: "The posters offered to you are an ideological weapon of the opposing parties of the World War II, which was widely used on the fronts, in the rear and on occupied territories. On the territory of Ukraine, they aimed to incite to enmity between the Ukrainian population, which resulted in the most tragic conflict – a fratricidal war. History has shown that totalitarian regimes viewed the media information as a propaganda tool, they became a means of manipulation, shaping human behavior, influencing based on her ideological choice" (Ivanov et al., 2016: 162).

That is, it becomes clear that such textbooks purposefully form the identity of Ukrainian schoolchildren outside the common culture and history with Russia, falsifying, distorting and denying the centuries-old experience of our economic, spiritual and civilizational unity.

It is no coincidence that Putin on July 12, 2021, came out with an article "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians", in which he stated: "In fact, the Ukrainian elites decided to justify the independence of their country by denying its past, however, with the exception of the issue of borders. They began to mythologize and rewrite history, to obliterate everything from it that unites us, to talk about the period when Ukraine was part of the Russian Empire and the USSR as an occupation. The common tragedy of collectivization, the famine of the early 1930s, is passed off as genocide of the Ukrainian people" (Putin, 2021).

4. Conclusion

Based on the carried out research a general conclusion can be drawn.

The obtained results allow us to state that since 2014 there is a steady increase in anti-Russian propaganda in the works of leading Ukrainian media experts and in textbooks on media education for schools and universities. In them different instruments and technologies of communication are used to negatively influence the perception of the Ukrainian audience of Russia, its politics and culture. Especially disturbing is the fact of massive anti-Russian agitation aimed primarily at such target groups and audiences as schoolchildren, students, young people, and school teachers. This is due to the active introduction of disinformation and anti-Russian rhetoric into the content of textbooks on media education. This may have a further negative impact on the children's audience in Ukraine and lead to an aggravation of socio-cultural confrontation, cause an increase in intolerance and development of large-scale ideological extremism. That's why I argue that it is necessary to actively resist lies in the media, challenge unsubstantiated accusations, and work to counteract the growing scale of aggressive anti-Russian propaganda at all levels, especially in the youth educational environment. Of course, this proves the relevance and importance of media education in a situation where new problems arise, including ideological, national and cultural ones.

I am convinced that the use of media manipulative technologies for the purpose of escalating hostility and hatred is unacceptable.

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