

## **„Totalitarian Propaganda and Memory“**

In the 20th century, a new and extreme form of tyranny emerged known as totalitarianism. This term refers to the complete domination of a community and its members by tyrannical rulers and self-centered ideologies. The power of the government is so immense that it seeks not only to control its subjects but also to reshape human nature. Violence serves as the foundation of all totalitarian states—controlled, systematic, and state-sanctioned violence. This violence often manifests as indiscriminate mass terror and genocide targeting entire groups, categories, or classes of people.

Totalitarian regimes of the 20th century espoused ideologies that aimed to mold a new type of person and society. Behind the slogans and propaganda, their true intention was to raise generations of citizens who would obediently conform to the system, devoid of independent thought, perpetually subjected to the system's dominance over their minds and bodies.

To fulfill this objective, the totalitarian regimes employed massive propaganda and agitation mechanisms. The regime's voice resonated everywhere - on the radio, on television, in every newspaper column, on city walls, and in transportation. The faces of the totalitarian leaders stared at the population across generations, from kindergarten to old age. Decades of totalitarian regime propaganda even influenced the language itself, altering its fabric.

Indeed, in a totalitarian state, and particularly within the education system, mechanisms are required to raise a generation obedient to the government's will. To ensure compliance, textbooks in humanities subjects are utilized, often containing examples of explicit or covert propaganda.

In their quest to shape a "new man" and society, totalitarian regimes sought to erase collective memory and replace it with their own version. The science of history, educational institutions, and sites of remembrance were tightly controlled within ideological frameworks. Eyewitnesses and participants of the era were silenced, preventing them from publicly sharing the true historical narrative. Historical sources were locked away in secret repositories inaccessible to citizens, and new generations were presented with a single, distorted version of history crafted by the past regime. Constant rewriting of the past, changing "enemy icons," and erasing undesirable figures and events became commonplace and necessary practices in the compilation of history

textbooks—a defining characteristic of the totalitarian state alongside mass repressions and internal purges.

The collapse of the Soviet Union did not mark the end of the process of distorting historical memory into a totalitarian model, and its effects still persist despite gaining independence.

The modern school and higher education systems have not completely shed their Soviet heritage, enabling authoritarian governments to exploit history for propaganda purposes.

In the upcoming 2023-2024 history school competition on the topic "Totalitarian Propaganda and Memory," participating students and teachers are encouraged to explore and analyze the impact of totalitarian regime propaganda on our society's collective memory. They are urged to uncover its traces in various fields, examining how the regime manipulated the history of civilizations, influenced the perception of culture, affected medieval and modern history. They should also investigate the regime's imprint on cinematography, painting, architecture, and language.

To directly assess the influence of the totalitarian system on history education, let's examine and analyze history textbooks from both the Soviet totalitarian and independent state periods. Students can find relevant materials on the influence of totalitarian propaganda and ideology on history and memory in both older editions and modern textbooks.