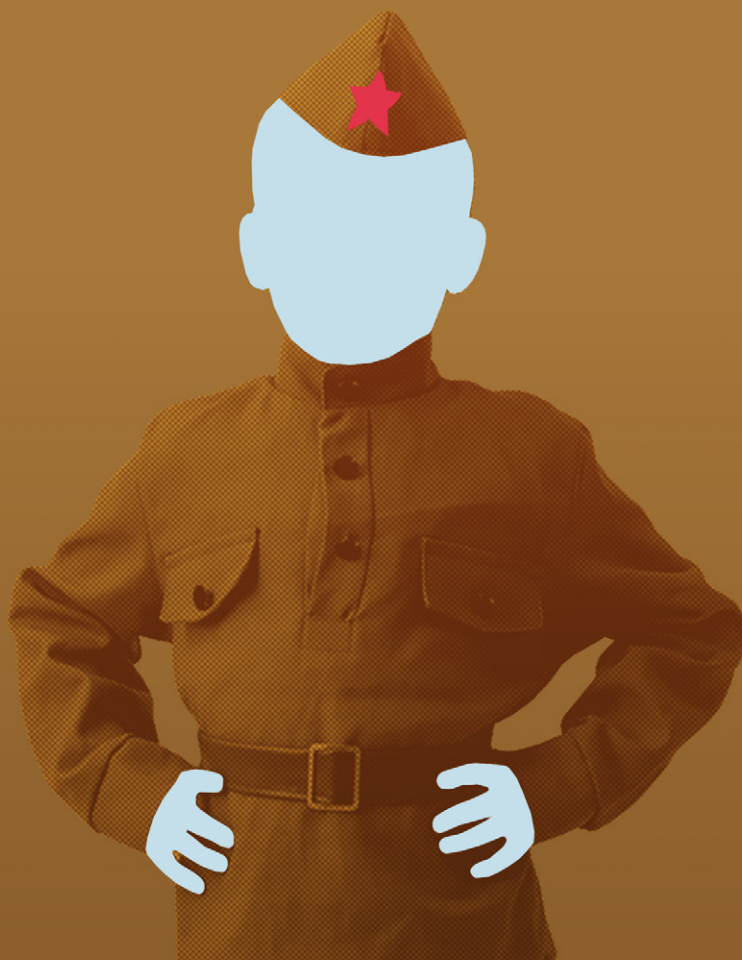


The monitoring report

«UNIVERSAL SOLDIER»

or Education as the Weapon of Russia in
the Occupied South of Ukraine



January-June 2025

Author: Tetiana Lychko

Monitoring: Olha Shapoval, Tetiana Lychko

Translation: Olga Androsova

Layout and design: Olena Afanasieva

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The Centre for Civic Education “Almenda” (CCE “Almenda”) is a non-governmental organisation registered in Yalta in 2011. Until 2014, its main area of work was human rights education. In 2014, following the occupation of Crimea, the organisation was forced to relocate to Kyiv. Today, its key focus is the systematic collection of accurate, timely and verified data on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

In preparing its monitoring reports, the CCE “Almenda” is guided by the principles of objectivity, reliability and timeliness.

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E-mail for comments and suggestions: info@almenda.org.



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INTRODUCTION

Following the occupation of parts of Ukraine, the Russian Federation (hereinafter – RF) established full control over all aspects of public life, imposing its own political, cultural, religious and educational narratives through the system of occupation administrations it created. One of the key pillars of this policy has been the systematic ideological programming and militarisation of children and young people, carried out with the involvement of both state institutions and religious and civil society organisations.

Monitoring of open sources conducted between January and June 2025 confirms the implementation of a large-scale strategy aimed at instilling Russian identity, glorifying war, and promoting service in the armed forces of the occupying state. Soviet and modern Russian military symbols are actively used across the temporarily occupied territories. Children are required to take part in events wearing military uniforms, chant propaganda slogans, undergo drill training and learn basic weapons handling skills.

Alongside this, the RF is carrying out a range of indoctrination measures: it organises mandatory screenings of propaganda films, involves the church in the educational process, and takes Ukrainian children to Russia and to the TOT of the AR of Crimea under the guise of “recreation” or educational trips, during which they undergo ideological programming and military instruction. At the same time, the policy of forcibly issuing passports to children is gaining momentum, aiming to instil in them a sense of belonging to the RF as their only possible “Motherland”.

The content, scale and methods of this activity point to a deliberate attempt at the systematic assimilation and Russification of Ukrainian children, which constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law. The actions recorded during the monitoring period include violations of the following:

- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups;
- Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which also addresses the issue of education;



- Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law;
- Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that the education of the child shall be directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- Articles 38 and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which regulate the protection of children in time of war;
- Article 50 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which prohibits the Occupying Power, inter alia, from enlisting children in formations or organizations subordinate to it;
- Article 51 of the Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), which provides that the Occupying Power may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces. No pressure or propaganda which aims at securing voluntary enlistment is permitted.

METHODOLOGY

This monitoring report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2025.

Areas of research: destruction of Ukrainian identity, militarisation of children in the occupied territories, involvement of children in actions aimed at supporting Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, assimilation of the population of the occupied territories, destruction of the Ukrainian education system.

Geography: temporarily occupied territories of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

The report is based on information from:

- state authorities of Ukraine;
- reports by civil society organisations;
- open sources from the temporarily occupied territories, namely:
 - information published on the official websites and social media pages (including VKontakte) of the so-called "ministries / departments / divisions of education of the temporarily occupied territory";



- information published on the websites of general education schools in the temporarily occupied territories;
 - publications by local media in the temporarily occupied parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol;
 - information shared on social media;
- official statistical data of the Russian Federation.

LIMITATIONS

The report does not cover the territory of the occupied Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

For this report, the authors used only sources available to them. Work with sources and analysis of information continued until 9 July 2025. Information and messages that could not be verified as of the date of publication of the report were not included.

To prepare this report, the authors used data found on the social network VKontakte. This is due to the fact that following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, most of the information from representatives of the occupation authorities has been published on this platform, making it virtually the only available source for accessing the necessary data. The same reasoning applies to the use of Russian sources and sources from the temporarily occupied territories. The information presented in this report is intended to document the crimes of the Russian Federation and to counter the disinformation it spreads.

ABBREVIATIONS

AR of Crimea — the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

DPRK — Democratic People's Republic of Korea

DOSAAF — the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (a Soviet-era organisation, known in Russian as ДОСААФ),

RF — Russian Federation

SMO — “special military operation”, a term used in Russia to describe the full-scale invasion of Ukraine

TOT — temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine

UAVs — unmanned aerial vehicles

I.

MILITARIZATION



1.1. ACTIVITIES HELD AS PART OF THE “YEAR OF THE DEFENDER OF THE FATHERLAND”, AS WELL AS OTHER THEMED EVENTS

Since the beginning of 2025, there has been a significant increase in the intensity of militaristic and propaganda activities in the temporarily occupied territories. These events are no longer limited to specific dates or occasions but now span the entire calendar year, becoming embedded in both the educational process and leisure time. The growing number of militaristic events is underpinned by official regulations, particularly the implementation of Presidential Decree No. 28 issued by RF President Putin on 16 January 2025, “On the Conduct of the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland in the Russian Federation”. The official justification for introducing this themed year is “to preserve historical memory, express gratitude to veterans, **and honour the heroism of participants in the special military operation**”.¹ In line with this decree, corresponding activity plans were developed for the TOT, including at the level of general education institutions.²



A photo of children in Russian military uniforms at the ceremonial launch of the “Year of the Defender of the Fatherland” at “Yakymivka Secondary School No. 26” in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region. Source: <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3189>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/3qGhZ>

1 <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202501160039?index=1>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/bGqBY>

2 http://xn--80aaelcra4bbfoevfe7s.xn--p1ai/index/god_zashhitnika_otechestva/0-373, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/OMrRj>



Representatives of educational institutions openly declare their involvement in supporting Russian military personnel participating in the war against Ukraine. For example, the headteacher of School No. 7 in the TOT of Yalta, Maya Bysheva (*a Ukrainian citizen who has collaborated with the occupation authorities*), emphasised that diligent study and an active civic stance among pupils are a form of support for participants in the so-called SMO.³



A photo from the ceremonial assembly dedicated to the launch of the “Year of the Defender of the Fatherland” and “Defender of the Republic of Crimea Day”, held on 26 February 2025 at the occupied Yalta Secondary School No. 7. Source: <https://yalta7.crimeaschool.ru/news/43013>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/k73qj>

Support for participants in the so-called SMO goes beyond declarative statements – it is put into practice by involving them in the educational process as “heroes” who are meant to serve as role models. These meetings with military personnel take place directly during lessons as part of the school day. The purpose of such events is to instil a positive image of Russian soldiers, legitimise the aggression against Ukraine, and promote “patriotism” towards Russia and the importance of serving in the RF army. The selection of SMO participants for such meetings is conducted, among other channels, through the Kremlin’s personnel programme “Time



of Heroes” (Russian: “Vremya Geroev”), which was launched on the instruction of RF President Putin. Servicemen who complete this programme are appointed to positions in government and local administration, including in the occupation authorities in the TOT.⁴ Among the graduates of this programme identified as involved in promoting Russian narratives in the **TOT of the AR of Crimea** during the reporting period were:



Yurii Nimchenko⁵ – held a “Lesson in Courage” titled “Time of Heroes” for pupils of School No. 18 in Simferopol;^{6,7}



Anton Starostin^{8,9} – conducted a lesson on the topic “Serving Russia” for Year 9 pupils at the same school.^{10,11}

4 <https://времягероев.рф>, archive: <https://archive.ph/YDkoQ>

5 Yuriy Nimchenko is a Ukrainian citizen who previously served under contract in the Ukrainian army. In 2014, following Russia’s occupation of Crimea, he joined the Russian Armed Forces and later took part in Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In March 2022, Putin awarded him the title “Hero of Russia”. Nimchenko was included on the list of Putin’s authorised representatives during the 2024 presidential election campaign and is currently a member of the Federation Council representing Crimea.

6 <https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/01/16/1567917.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/zrQi2>

7 <https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/01/20/1570974.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/H9LG0>

8 Anton Starostin is an assistant to the so-called Head of the Republic of Crimea and serves as the so-called Deputy Chair of the State Committee for Youth Policy of the Republic of Crimea.

9 <https://времягероев.рф/news/tpost/ceee59ys71-geroi-rossii-uchastnik-programmi-vremya>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/kslNy>

10 <https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/01/20/1571005.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/bz4c9>

11 <https://gkmp.rk.gov.ru/heads/bc9b7836-850f-4899-b22a-dc8cac31e20f>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FErYS>



Monitoring of open sources recorded **more than 20 such events involving 35 participants of the so-called SMO in the occupied territory of the AR of Crimea in February 2025 alone.**

In addition to the nationwide personnel training programme “Time of Heroes”, a number of similar local initiatives have also been operating in the TOT in 2025, with participants actively involved in propaganda work with children. These projects include “Heroes of Crimea”,¹² “Sevastopol – City of Heroes”,¹³ “Heroes of Kherson Region”¹⁴ and “Zaporozhzhia Heroes”.¹⁵

Both active and former servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces are involved in events with children in the TOT.^{16,17,18} In **the TOT of Kherson region**, Russian paratroopers from the “Dnepr” military grouping conducted a lesson for school-children, during which they demonstrated the equipment used by fighters of the so-called SMO, **taught children how to operate unmanned aerial vehicles, and introduced them to elements of military support operations**, including equipment for radiological, chemical and biological protection.¹⁹



Screenshot from a video showing Russian paratroopers from the “Dnepr” military grouping displaying weapons and equipment used by Russian servicemen to children, TOT of Kherson region, May 2025. Source: https://t.me/tavria_kherson/50660, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/aUIVn>

12 <https://glava.rk.gov.ru/articles/cd5e0487-8597-45cb-a7da-f6c299c83d0c?ysclid=m8ouxnkl3y910935428>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/oCHUc>

13 <https://sev.gov.ru/info/news/254572?ysclid=m8ovels5tj579308535>, archive: <https://archive.ph/xZpmA>

14 <https://repoir-xo.pф>, archive: <https://archive.ph/zX03r>

15 https://zs.zo.gov.ru/news/show/zaporozhskie_geroi_kadrovyy_konkurs_dlya_uchastnikov_svo_provoditsya_v_zaporozhskoj_oblasti, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/UCIIf>

16 <https://sevastopol-news.com/society/2025/01/21/429648.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/3HfxJ>

17 <https://my-evp.ru/news/glavnoe/o-spetsoperatsii-iz-pervykh-ust-v-evpatorii-sostoyalas-vstrecha-uchastnika-svo-s-molodezhnyu/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Hdj5H>

18 <https://t.me/m2mxo/2105>, archive: <https://archive.ph/R5rio>

19 https://t.me/tavria_kherson/50660, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/aUIVn>



In the **TOT of Zaporizhzhia region**, servicemen of the RF stationed in the BARS-32 unit named after P.A. Sudoplatov and in the so-called rifle battalion of the military commandant's office of Zaporizhzhia region conducted a pre-conscription military training session for pupils of Chkalivka Secondary School No. 42. The children were taught how to **disassemble and reassemble an AK-12 rifle**, familiarised with its design features, and introduced to basic first aid skills.²⁰

In addition to regular meetings with military personnel, the system of weekly compulsory lessons titled **“Conversations About Important Things”** also carries a militaristic focus.²¹ In January 2025, the theme of these sessions was the “Year of the Defender of the Fatherland”. Pupils were encouraged to draw parallels between the events of the Second World War and the current aggression against Ukraine – **suggesting that, just as in the past, Russian soldiers are supposedly “defending” their homeland from “Nazism” and “external threats”**. As a result, pupils are deliberately indoctrinated to justify the RF's armed aggression against Ukraine.

In May 2025, during the “Conversations About Important Things” sessions dedicated to the theme of the “80th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War”, there was also a clear effort to instil hostility towards Ukraine. In particular, the lesson script included claims about **Russian soldiers fighting for their homeland (i.e. Russia) against “Ukrainian neo-Nazis” in the area of the so-called SMO**. This presentation of the material is explicitly aimed at shaping children's perceptions of the war as legitimate and fostering enmity towards Ukraine.²²

The occupation administration pays particular attention to celebrating Russian state holidays – “Defender of the Fatherland Day” (23 February) and “Victory Day” (9 May). These dates are used as yet another tool to instil in children, starting from preschool age, a distorted understanding of the war against Ukraine.

Some examples of events in the **TOT of the AR of Crimea**:

- At Nyzhnioghorsk Secondary School No. 2, a so-called “Victory Parade” was held, during which pupils were **dressed in military uniforms representing various branches of the armed forces: tank crews, infantry, pilots, paratroopers, naval infantry, special operations forces, as well as “Young Army” cadets (members of Yunarmiya – Russia's militarised youth movement, also commonly referred to as the “Youth Army”)**.²³

20 <https://t.me/yunarmmeetzo/3157>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/mNjNE>

21 <https://xn--80aafadvc9bifbaeqqOp.xn--p1ai/27-01-2025/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/OXwEe>

22 https://пазговорыоважном.пф/05-05-2025/10-11/1s/10_11.pdf?v=1.0, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/RVV8o>

23 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3349, archive: <https://archive.ph/5SdCX>



In the photo: pupils of Nyzhnioghorsk Secondary School No. 2 in military uniform, TOT of the AR of Crimea, May 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3349, archive: <https://archive.ph/5SdCX>

■ At Zhuravlynka Secondary School, during the event “For the Glory of Victory!”, children, starting from Year 1, not only marched and sang military songs but also received training in weapons handling.²⁴



In the photo: staff of the Western Zonal Centre of the “Regional Centre for Pre-Conscription Training and Military-Patriotic Education” (“KrimPatriotCentre”) teaching pupils of Zhuravlynka Secondary School how to handle weapons, TOT of the AR of Crimea, May 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3366, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/wriJa>

In the TOT of Kherson Region.

- At a kindergarten in the town of Henichesk, children dressed in military uniforms performed in front of invited servicemen of the Rosgvardia and a so-called member of the upper chamber of the Federal Assembly of the RF.²⁵ Such events shape children’s perception of military service as supposedly prestigious and a natural part of life.



In the photo: representatives of the territorial branch of the Rosgvardia, RF senator Ayrat Gibatdinov, and the head of the regional veterans’ organisation – retired colonel Yevgenii Chervonyi – together with children dressed in military uniform at a kindergarten in the TOT of Kherson region, February 2025. Source: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/28294, archive: <https://archive.ph/WPLOM>



In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region.

- At Kostiantynivka Secondary School No. 2, where a specialised Rosgvardia class has been opened, pupils and teachers performed the song **“Serving Russia”** during a ceremonial assembly. This performance was intended to reinforce in children’s minds the idea of serving the aggressor state as a “honourable duty”.²⁶



In the photo: pupils of Kostiantynivka Secondary School No. 2, dressed in the uniform of the militaristic organisation “Young Army”, march with the Russian flag and a red flag bearing the symbols of the communist totalitarian regime, TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, May 2025. Source: <https://t.me/konstantinovskaya2/2120>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ZSJGN>

- At the “Kalyinka” kindergarten in the occupied town of Tokmak, children were told about the war and involved in making themed crafts.²⁷



In the photo: preschool-aged children dressed in military uniforms and holding objects resembling weapons, set against a backdrop of propaganda posters bearing slogans such as “Russia is my Motherland”, “2025 – Year of the Defender of the Fatherland”, and a poster featuring Putin’s portrait and quotes. TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, June 2025. Source: <https://t.me/obrzp/34360>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/mOCJI>

²⁶ <https://t.me/konstantinovskaya2/2120>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ZSJGN>

²⁷ <https://t.me/obrzp/34360>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/mOCJI>



The extracurricular leisure activities of children from the TOT also have a militaristic character.

- At School No. 24 in the occupied city of Sevastopol, children prepared parcels with gifts and letters of support for Russian military personnel participating in the war against Ukraine.²⁸



In the photo: pupils of School No.24 holding boxes decorated with Russian flags and "Z" symbols, which are used to represent Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. TOT of the city of Sevastopol, April 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-177557250_30906, archive: <https://archive.ph/B8gMI>



At the Henichesk Centre for Children and Youth Creativity, as well as in institutions in the Chaplynka district (**TOT of Kherson region**), children took part in the “Portrait of a Hero” campaign by drawing portraits of Russian servicemen who participated in the war against Ukraine.^{29,30} A project titled “School and the SMO” is also active in the occupied part of Kherson region, aimed at involving children in activities supporting participants of the so-called SMO – such as weaving camouflage nets and making trench candles.³¹ In this way, children are involved from an early age in the glorification of those taking part in the RF’s armed aggression.



In the photo: pupils of the “Magic Brush” art studio at the Henichesk Centre for Children and Youth Creativity holding drawings of a Russian serviceman participating in the war against Ukraine. TOT of Kherson region, May 2025.

Source: <https://t.me/depobrherson/13568>, archive: <https://archive.ph/B8gMI>

At Novodanylivka Secondary School No. 32 (in the occupied part of **Zaporizhzhia region**), children spend their extracurricular time weaving camouflage nets in a specially equipped “workshop”.³²



In the photo: pupils of Years 5–9 at Novodanylivka Secondary School No. 32 making a camouflage net for Russian military personnel participating in the war against Ukraine. TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, May 2025. Source: <https://t.me/obrzp/33383>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/HmCkC>

29 <https://t.me/depobrherson/13568>, archive: <https://archive.ph/B8gMI>

30 <https://t.me/depobrherson/13470>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/SHi1c>

31 <https://t.me/depobrherson/13545>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/chGrm>

32 <https://t.me/obrzp/33383>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/HmCkC>



Systematic propaganda is used to instil in children the belief that the invasion of Ukraine is “acceptable” and “justified”, that serving in the army of the aggressor state is a “honourable duty”, and that participants in the so-called SMO are “heroes” who are to be seen as role models and supported in every possible way.

1.2. HOLDING MILITARISTIC GAMES AND COMPETITIONS

As part of the growing militarisation of both the educational system and extracurricular activities in the TOT, competitions and games with a strong military focus are being organised. The largest of these is the “Zarnitsa 2.0” project (Russian for “Summer lightning”), which is officially presented as a tool for preparing a future mobilisation reserve for the RF army – including children from the occupied territories of Ukraine. The game and competition format is deliberately chosen because children tend to absorb information and behavioural models more easily and positively through play, which the occupation authorities actively exploit to normalise military training.

More details about the revival of the Soviet-era game, the scale of children's involvement, funding, and those responsible for organising “Zarnitsa 2.0” are provided in the article “‘Zarnitsa 2.0’ Game: Military Training for Children in the TOT”: <https://almenda.org/en/gra-zarnicya-2-0-vijskovij-vishkil-ditej-na-tot/>

Across all TOTs, children are actively involved in the qualifying, municipal and regional stages of the “Zarnitsa 2.0” game, and are also taken to the territory of the RF to participate in the district stage and the final.

Some examples of events in the **TOT of the AR of Crimea**.

- The municipal stage of “Zarnitsa 2.0” in Simferopol district took place at No-voandriivka School, with 18 teams competing in drill and firearms training, knowledge of history, and the assembly and disassembly of weapons.³³ **Since January 2025, a total of 35,518 children aged six and above have taken part in the game.** Partners involved in organising the event include the Rosgvardia, DOSAAF, the Union of Veterans of the so-called SMO, Ministry of Emergencies of Russia, the Crimean Research Institute for Unmanned Technologies, among others.³⁴

³³ <https://www.krympatriotcentr.ru/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B0-2-0-%F0%9F%87%B7%F0%9F%87%BA.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/2YQ49>

³⁴ <https://rk.gov.ru/articles/cb5611ba-031d-48a2-9635-d68c4423f889>, archive: <https://archive.ph/DcXOf>



In the TOT of Kherson region

- The municipal stage of the “Zarnitsa 2.0” game took place at Prymorska School, where children competed in drill training, shooting, and UAV operation. **A total of 1,311 children took part in the qualifying stage.**³⁵ The games were held with the support of representatives of the occupation administration, the “Warrior” Centre, the Main Directorate of Ministry of emergencies of Russia in Kherson region, and the regional Military Commissariat.^{36,37}



In the photo: children wearing gear for the military-tactical game “Laser Tag”, which simulates combat operations, during the “Zarnitsa 2.0” competition. TOT of Kherson region, May 2025. Source: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/30376, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Br2vD>

35 <https://henichesk.ru/news/1966-rosogvardeicy-prinjali-uchastie-v-sudeistve-municipalnogo-etapa-voenno-patrioticheskoi-igry-zarn.html>, архив: <https://archive.ph/wip/DE3lu>

36 https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/30376, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Br2vD>

37 <https://t.me/mypervie84/3912>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/XwIAW>



In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region

Representatives of the so-called military police held a drill training session and a masterclass on assembling and disassembling the AK-12 for pupils of Vovchansk Secondary School No. 31.³⁸ **A total of 70 teams and around 100 schoolchildren took part in the regional stage of the game.**^{39,40} The organisation of the game in the region involved representatives of the occupation government of Zaporizhzhia region, the so-called Ministry of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia region, the so-called Ministry of Youth Policy of Zaporizhzhia region, and the regional branch of the “Warrior” Centre.⁴¹



In the photo: representatives of the military police teaching students of Vovchanska School No. 31 in Yakymivskiy District how to assemble and disassemble an AK-12, temporarily occupied territory of Zaporizhzhia region, April 2025. Source: <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3711>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/bAVTm>



In the photo: a schoolchild firing a weapon used in the military-tactical game “Laser Tag”, which simulates combat operations, during the “Zarnitsa 2.0” competition, TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, April 2025. Source: <https://berdyansk-news.ru/society/2025/05/21/62078.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/47CYO>

The organisers of the “Zarnitsa 2.0” project in 2025 are the movements **“Movement of the First”** and the **“Young Army”**,⁴² both of which have been designated as key actors in implementing state policy on the **“preservation and protection of traditional Russian values”**. This was publicly stated by

38 <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3711>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/bAVTm>

39 <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3725>, archive: <https://archive.ph/PAVww>

40 <https://berdyansk-news.ru/society/2025/05/21/62078.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/47CYO>

41 https://vk.com/wall-218359825_1088, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/00evT>

42 More details about these and other Russian movements can be found in the Report “Youth movements as the instrument of indoctrination and militarization in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine”, as well as in the article “Movement of the First” – the new pioneers? The All-Russian movement of children and youth, which is personally managed by Vladimir Putin.



RF President Putin on 10 June 2025 during a meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.⁴³ It is important to note that the notion of “protecting traditional values” is a core element of the ideological framework of the “Russian world”, which has been used as the official justification for the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in 2014, as well as for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

These organisations play a central role in the system of militarisation and ideological influence and are actively expanding their presence across the temporarily occupied territories. **The number of children and young people involved in the activities of the regional branches of the “Movement of the First” and the “Young Army” continues to grow.**

- TOT of the AR of Crimea – around **100,682** (Young Army – 14,562;⁴⁴ Movement of the First – 86,120⁴⁵);
- TOT of the city of Sevastopol – around **37,000** (Young Army – over 17,000;⁴⁶ Movement of the First – around 20,000⁴⁷);
- TOT of Kherson region – around **6,520** (Young Army – around 320;⁴⁸ Movement of the First – over 6,200⁴⁹);
- TOT of Zaporizhzhia region – around **19,413** (Young Army – around 413;⁵⁰ Movement of the First – around 19,000⁵¹).

During the reporting period, regional branches of the mentioned movements, in cooperation with the occupation administrations, organised the transfer of children from the TOT to the territory of Russia under the pretext of participating in pseudo-patriotic events and forums.^{52,53,54}

43 <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/77160/videos>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/tsV6v>

44 <https://surl.lu/ahxjfu>, archive: <https://archive.ph/oxzB0>

45 <https://surl.li/xgdzyr>, archive: <https://archive.ph/oxzB0>

46 <https://sevastopol-news.ru/other/2025/06/22/471217.html?ysclid=mc8yfc5lt0952224576>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/LPFpW>

47 https://vk.com/wall-126326014_191160, archive: <https://archive.ph/UPA2x>

48 <https://www.herson.kp.ru/daily/27666/5055218/?ysclid=mc8w6t0iuc822631130>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ccvV6>

49 <https://bloknot-herson.ru/news/predsdatel-dvizheniya-pervykh-v-khersonskoy-oblas-1842838?ysclid=mc5cob3h5588732499>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/nKjz1>

50 <https://surl.li/dgayki>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/8P59f>

51 <https://t.me/BalitskyEV/5051>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/XAL00>

52 <https://t.me/obrzp/31366>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/AmPSc>

53 https://t.me/za_tv_ru/34003, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/vrn78>

54 <https://t.me/obrzp/31360>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/42mj1>



1.3. MILITARY TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION IN UAV OPERATION FOR CHILDREN

Military training of children in the occupied territories is carried out systematically and is aimed at turning Ukrainian children into a mobilisation resource for participation in the wars initiated by Russia. Such activities were documented during the monitoring period (January–June 2025).

In the TOT of the AR of Crimea.

■ In April 2025, a ten-day military field training camp titled “School of Young Commanders – STORM CRIMEA” was organised for 120 children aged 14 to 18. The name “STORM” (Russian: ШТОПМ) is an acronym derived from the name of the organisation, which translates as **“School of Tactical Training for Russian Youth”**. The main organiser of the camp was the State Budgetary Educational Institution of Supplementary Education of the Republic of Crimea “KrymPatriotCentre”. The training took place at an active training facility with conditions **closely simulating those of real combat**. Servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces, including participants in the so-called SMO, conducted intensive instruction for the children in the following areas:

- carrying out simulated combat missions
- combat tactics
- mountain training
- tactical medicine
- engineering and firearms training
- land navigation
- operation of self-propelled vehicles
- UAV operation^{55,56}.

Among the organisers of the camp were:



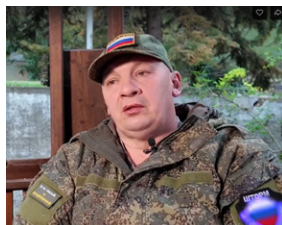
Director of the “Krym-PatriotCentre” **Sergey Havrilchuk**



author of the “School of Young Commanders – STORM CRIMEA” project and head of the Centre’s field department **Viktor Osetrov**

55 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3289, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ulgMx>

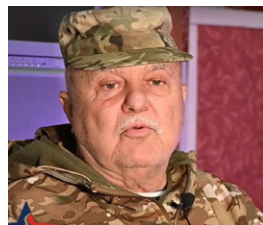
56 https://vk.com/wall-148027165_9349, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/O84qz>



head of the “KrymPatriotCentre”’s department for combating extremism and terrorism **Dmitrii Pikinier**



instructor **Daria Gorokhova**



participant in the so-called SMO **Valentin Rusakov**



participant in the so-called SMO **Dmitrii Donskoi**



reserve lieutenant colonel of the Russian Armed Forces and instructor **Mikhail Klipach**



and instructor **Mikhail Mansurov**⁵⁷

The photos are taken as screenshots from video footage:

https://vk.com/wall-127187746_4241, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FKzsR>

As part of the camp, children carried out tasks related to **the construction of fortifications, including setting up a machine-gun nest, digging individual trenches for firing from prone and kneeling positions, and simulating the delivery of ammunition and evacuation of the “wounded”**. Some participants, who were being trained as UAV operators, **practised “eliminating a simulated enemy”**. According to the organisers, the children **“mastered the use of both FPV drones and reconnaissance UAVs capable of lifting loads of up to 30 kg”** – drones that are actively used by the RF in its war against Ukraine. Military instructors stated that the ability to operate UAVs should become second nature, and that “this skill develops fastest at a young age”. In addition to purely military skills, the camp also had a clearly defined ideological and career-orientation focus. According to the organisers, one of the goals was **to prepare teenagers for serving the Motherland** (i.e. the Russian Federation) by introducing them to the structure and specialisations within the armed forces – with some



participants, they said, expressing a desire to become assault troops or drivers of military vehicles.

It is specifically emphasised that the organisers plan to expand the format of the programme, including by **involving younger children in future training camps**.⁵⁸



In the photo: children dressed in military uniforms and holding weapons during the military field training camp titled "School of Young Commanders – STORM CRIMEA", TOT of the AR of Crimea, April 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3289, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ulqMx>, https://vk.com/wall-148027165_9349, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/O84kz>

⁵⁷ https://vk.com/wall-127187746_4241, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FKzsR>

⁵⁸ https://vk.com/wall-127187746_4241, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FKzsR>



Between April and May 2025, **more than 3,800 schoolchildren**⁵⁹ from educational institutions, including residential schools in occupied Crimea, underwent training in **disassembling and assembling assault rifles, grenade throwing, and magazine loading**.⁶⁰ The training camps were organised by the occupation Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of the Republic of Crimea and the State Budgetary Educational Institution of Supplementary Education of the Republic of Crimea “KrymPatriotCentre”, with training held at the zonal centres of the “KrymPatriotCentre” and the “Avangard” Training and Methodological Centre for Military-Patriotic Education of Youth.^{61,62}

In the TOT of Kherson region.

Pupils of Tarasivka and Velyki Kopany schools received **drill training and took part in live-fire exercises** organised by the so-called Ministry of Youth Policy of Kherson region in cooperation with the Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation “Youth Centre ‘Patriot’”.⁶³ Similar training sessions were also held for children from other schools in the region, including Chonhar School in the Henichesk district.⁶⁴

In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region.

At School No. 24 in temporarily occupied Melitopol, an active officer of the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) is teaching children drill training, stating: **“Every schoolchild is a future defender of the Motherland”** (referring to Russia).⁶⁵

In May 2025, **80 children**⁶⁶ were taken to the **“Avangard” defence-patriotic camp** in the Russian city of Volgograd to undergo military-patriotic training and “explore future career paths”.⁶⁷ In June, a second group of children was transferred to the same camp with the support of the “Warrior” Centre.^{68,69} These transfers are aimed at fostering loyalty to the Russian Armed Forces, normalising military life, and encouraging children to see military service as a desirable life path.

59 https://vk.com/wall-148027165_9530, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/nNKhL>
 60 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3315, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/EMfgR>
 61 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3335, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/GKQXI>
 62 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3321, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/JNS8m>
 63 <https://t.me/m2mxo/3158>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/204DD>
 64 <https://t.me/m2mxo/3203>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/4RZt7>
 65 <https://t.me/obrzp/31448>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/62lvD>
 66 <https://t.me/obrzp/33471>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/UQ6cc>
 67 <https://t.me/obrzp/33511>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/YTgrI>
 68 https://t.me/za_tv_ru/34439, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/KE8n8>
 69 <https://t.me/obrzp/33977>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/USKu4>



More details on the activities of the “Avangard” camp in Volgograd can be found in the article “Warriors for the Russian regime. How Russia militarises Ukrainian children from the temporarily occupied territories” <https://almenda.org/en/voini-dlya-rosijskogo-rezhimu-yak-rosiya-militarizuye-ukrainskix-ditej-z-tot/>

The occupation authorities place particular emphasis on the military training of cadets in the temporarily occupied territories. In May 2025, a training camp was held in the town of Yevpatoria for students of cadet classes from occupied Crimea, as part of the subject “Fundamentals of Security and Defence of the Motherland”. The event took place at the “Avangard” Youth Military-Patriotic Education Centre and involved 93 schoolchildren who underwent intensive training in tactics, firearms handling, protection against radiation, chemical and biological threats, construction skills, physical training, and military medicine.⁷⁰ Representatives of the occupying “Ministry of Education” of Crimea, the military recruitment office, and Rosgvardia were involved in the sessions. Anton Starostin, a participant in the so-called SMO and recipient of the “Hero of Russia” title for his involvement in the war against Ukraine, also took part.⁷¹



In the photo: members of the “Patriot” club at a display of military equipment and weapons, TOT of the AR of Crimea, May 2025.

Source: https://vk.com/wall867631847_631, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/fFjIz>



In the photo: children wearing helmets and holding weapons under the supervision of a man in military uniform during a training camp for cadet class students, TOT of the AR of Crimea, May 2025.

Source: https://t.me/crimean_patriot/8671, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/fFjIz>

70 https://t.me/crimean_patriot/8671, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/fFjIz>

71 https://vk.com/wall867631847_631, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/fFjIz>

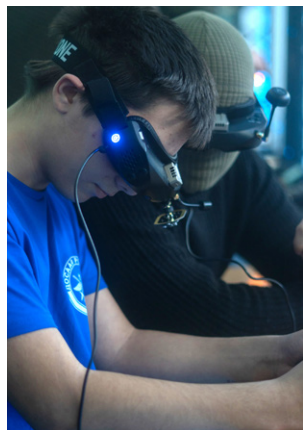


The number of children enrolled as cadets in the TOT continues to grow (as of 2025).

In the TOT of the AR of Crimea — 260 cadet classes, 6,265 children⁷²;
 In the TOT of the city of Sevastopol — 55 cadet classes, 1,479 children⁷³;
 In the TOT of Kherson region — 9 cadet classes, 205 children⁷⁴;
 In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region — 13 cadet classes⁷⁵.

More details on the development of the cadet movement can be found in the analytical report “How the war is produced: childhood spent in the cadet classes in the TOT of the AR Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”: <https://almenda.org/en/analitichnij-zvit-fab-rika-vijni-kadetstvo-na-tot-ar-krim-ta-mista-sevastopolya/>, as well as in the article “Militarisation from Preschool: How Future “Defenders” of Russia Are Being Raised in Temporarily Occupied Sevastopol”: <https://almenda.org/en/militarization-from-kindergarten-how-future-defenders-of-russia-are-raised-in-the-temporarily-occupied-sevastopol/>

One of the notable trends in the militarisation of the TOT is the increasing involvement of children in learning how to operate UAVs — during military training, in the form of games, competitions, or educational sessions.



In the TOT of the AR of Crimea, the regional branch of the Crimean DOSAAF, led by Andrey Popov, has been actively implementing UAV operator training courses since 2024.⁷⁶ As part of this programme, extracurricular training workshops for schoolchildren have been held, during which **children are taught to operate drones — including FPV drones — over a four-day period.**^{77,78}

In the photo: a child wearing drone control goggles during the final session of the educational workshop “Unmanned Technologies” at Simferopol School No.29, TOT of the AR Crimea, February 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-229349429_10, archive: <https://archive.ph/4saUd>

72 <https://monm.rk.gov.ru/structure/a98ae330-6d53-4d32-ad5c-df3bfe1d20c5>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/4Lqm7>

73 https://sevizakon.ru/assets/files/otchet/gubernator/otchet_ot_27_05_2025.pdf, archive: <https://archive.fo/wip/JxY6S>

74 <https://edu.ru/news/regiony/v-shkolah-hersonskoy-oblasti-otkryto-devyat-kadets/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/eVvJQ>

75 <https://edu.gov.ru/press/9330/v-shkolah-vossoedinennyh-regionov-rabotayut-okolo-12-tys-profilnyh-klassov>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Ly5Hy>

76 https://vk.com/wall-196982714_1125, archive: <https://archive.ph/Vsw9o>

77 https://vk.com/wall-229349429_10, archive: <https://archive.ph/4saUd>

78 <https://surl.li/kkxrdr>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/xTPKw>



In the photo: a child wearing drone control goggles and holding a UAV remote control during the “Intellect Cup: Unmanned Technologies” competition held at the Open Space Lyceum named after H. T. Beregovoy, TOT of the AR Crimea, May 2025. Source: https://vk.com/albums-229349429?z=photo-229349429_457242737%2Fphotos-229349429, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/dDVRB>

From late December 2024 to May 2025, 192 pupils from eight schools in the TOT of the AR Crimea completed this training.⁷⁹ The course concluded with final piloting competitions, in which 48 schoolchildren took part.⁸⁰

Upon completing the course, children receive a certificate confirming their training under the main professional preparation programme for the specialty of **“Operator of unmanned aerial systems with a maximum take-off weight of up to 30 kg”**,⁸¹ the very type of drones that Russia actively uses in the war against Ukraine. Therefore, this is not a recreational activity but a deliberate preparation of children to master a military-technical specialty.

The significance of training children in the field of UAVs is further emphasised by the **introduction of a new textbook** for pupils in grades 8–9, dedicated to un-

79 https://vk.com/wall-229349429_77, archive: <https://archive.ph/KaMOe>

80 https://vk.com/bplaedu?w=wall-229349429_757, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/2mgY>

81 https://vk.com/wall-229349429_94, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/dMbU8>



manned aerial vehicles.⁸² The textbook, approved by the Order of the Russian Ministry of Education dated 1 April 2025, No. 258,⁸³ has been included in the federal education programme and is taught as part of the subject “Technology”, including in the TOT. This step demonstrates the systematic integration of military-technical training elements into general secondary education, aimed at equipping school-children with basic skills for future service in the Russian Armed Forces.

A telling fact is that the list of directives from Russian President Putin following the supervisory board meeting of the “Movement of the First” on 26 March 2025 includes measures aimed at increasingly involving children in military-technical training. In particular, it provides for **lowering the minimum age of participants in drone racing competitions from 10 to 7 years**, as well as the **introduction, from 2026, of the All-Russian Drone Piloting Championship “Pilots of the Future” for children aged 7 and above**.⁸⁴

82 https://geoscan.education/uchebnoye-posobiye?utm_source=telegram&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=geoscan-group&utm_content=26.05.25-uchebnik-bas, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/gOH61>

83 <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202504300026?index=3>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/VQKON>

84 <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/assignments/orders/77193>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/S8dbB>

2. INDOCTRINATION





2.1. ENFORCING COMPULSORY FILM VIEWINGS

Among the tools used by the Russian Federation in the TOT for ideological influence, **cinema** has become particularly prominent during the monitoring period. The practice of using visual content as an element of education is implemented both within the formal educational process (through regular lessons such as “Conversations about Important Things”,^{85,86} events marking the “Year of the Defender of the Fatherland”, and screenings of educational films⁸⁷) and outside school settings — in the form of competitions, themed screenings, and festivals. For example, under the initiative “Cinema of Victory”, schoolchildren attend free screenings of films about the Second World War (presented through the lens of the ‘Great Patriotic War’), where the “Russian” army is portrayed as the sole defender, and any modern military aggression by Russia is depicted as a historical continuation of this “heroic struggle”.⁸⁸

For a more detailed analysis of the psychological impact of films on children's and adolescents' minds, as well as the practice of film screenings in the TOT, see the article “Cinema as a Tool for Political Indoctrination of Children in the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine” <https://almenda.org/en/kino-yak-instrument-politichnoi-indoktrinacii-ditej-na-timchasovo-okupovanix-teritoriyax-ukraini-2/>

In March 2025, the Russian Ministry of Education officially approved a list of recommended films, known as the “Golden Collection of Films”. This collection is intended for use in educational institutions to support “patriotic education”, including during extracurricular activities.⁸⁹

During the monitoring period, children **in the TOT of the AR Crimea and the city of Sevastopol** viewed the following films from this list.

- As part of the “Cinema of Victory” initiative at the “Storm” cinema, the Soviet film “Belorussky Station” was screened. The film depicts a reunion of former soldiers 25 years after the end of the war and features the song “We Need Only One Victory”.⁹⁰ This song, which calls for continuing the war at any cost, is widely used by Russia in propaganda campaigns.⁹¹ The “Cinema of Victory” ini-

85 <https://пазговорыоважном.пф>, archive: <https://archive.ph/er6ld>

86 <https://rutube.ru/video/b0de602c0c5f6868b9ffd9b55d76eb12/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/rNk6x>

87 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6s4jXvzll8>, archive: <https://archive.ph/C5nlR>

88 <https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/03/10/1613244.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/VqGOO>

89 <https://t.me/minprosrf/11269>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/vMJAl>

90 https://m.vk.com/wall-195779511_8387, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/baBFF>

91 https://risu.ua/melitopolski-svyashcheniki-upc-mp-u-propagandistskomu-proekti-zaspivali-nam-nuzhna-odna-pobeda_n146860, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/w2Jq8>



tiative also includes screenings of other Soviet films with similar themes, such as “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”, “The Cranes Are Flying”, and “Officers”, as well as contemporary films like “Battle for Sevastopol” and “28 Panfilov’s Men”.⁹² These films aim to create a romanticised image of war for young viewers and encourage the belief in the necessity of “defending” Russia. Incidentally, the film “28 Panfilov’s Men”, directed under the supervision of Vladimir Medinsky, depicts a myth fabricated by Russian propaganda about the alleged heroic act of 28 soldiers from the 316th Rifle Division, commanded by General Ivan Panfilov. According to the cinematic portrayal, during the enemy’s advance on Moscow, the soldiers destroyed 18 enemy tanks and died in battle. The fabrication was exposed in 1947 when one of the soldiers was arrested for treason and confirmed that, while the battle had taken place, there had been no heroic feats, they had voluntarily surrendered to the Germans.⁹³ Nevertheless, even these historical facts have not prevented Russian propaganda from continuing to exploit the Soviet-era myth of heroism.

- For students of the Crimean Federal University, the Russian organisation “Knowledge” screened the documentary “Our Own People”, which carries a propagandist message and tells the story of the Bogush-Denysenko military dynasty, whose members fought in various wars, from the First World War to the so-called “special military operation”.^{94,95} By drawing analogies between the world wars and the so-called SMO, Russia seeks to justify its armed aggression against Ukraine in the eyes of viewers of such films.

In the TOT of Kherson region.

- The film “The Fate of a Man”, which portrays the life of a Soviet soldier during the Second World War (referred to in Russian propaganda as the “Great Patriotic War”), was shown to children at Henichesk School No. 3 in the presence of a representative of the occupation authority, the so-called Deputy Governor Tatyana Kuzmich.⁹⁶ Pupils at Hryhorivka School also viewed the same film.⁹⁷

92 <https://crimea-news.com/culture/2025/03/13/1615963.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Xx72B>

93 <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28144286.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/AJlID>

94 <https://pobedarf.ru/2025/03/05/studentam-pokazyvayut-kino-o-vojne/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/xmSqJ>

95 <https://cfuv.ru/news/v-kfu-startoval-cikl-kinoseansov-posvyashhjonnykh-godovshhine-pobedy-v-velikoj-otechestvennoj-vojne>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/IP9ym>

96 <https://t.me/mypervie84/3544>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/EEOpS>

97 <https://t.me/mypervie84/3482>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/XHGdC>



In the photo: pupils of Hryhorivka School watching the film “The Fate of a Man”, TOT of Kherson region, April 2025. Source: <https://t.me/mypervie84/3482>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/XHGdC>

- Students of the Chaplynka Agricultural College were shown special reports from the television channel titled “Azovstal: Liberation”. The author of the programme states: *“Thanks to this project, the young people of Kherson region will be able to deepen their understanding of the course of the SMO, as well as the reunification of Crimea with Russia. It effectively refutes Ukrainian propaganda”*.⁹⁸

In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region.



The documentary “Steadfast”, shown as part of the “No Statute of Limitations” project, is included in the propaganda film cycle “Thank You for Your Service!”. The film series is aimed at promoting service in Russia’s security forces and glorifying Russian military personnel.⁹⁹

In the photo: members of the “Young Army” organisation watching the film “Steadfast”, a screening organised by the Russian Military Historical Society of Zaporizhzhia region, TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, March 2025. Source: <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3542>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/kUA5e>

98 <https://t.me/m2mxo/1982>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/U25ai>

99 <https://t.me/yunarmeezzo/3542>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/kUA5e>



■ Pupils of School No. 15 in the TOT of Melitopol,^{100,101} Yakymivka School No. 27¹⁰², and Novodniprovska School in the TOT of Vasylivka district¹⁰³ were shown the film “Heroes Are Alive” with support from, among others, the Russian propaganda-driven public organisation “Immortal Regiment of Russia”. This organisation conducts marches of the same name featuring portraits and commemorative speeches honouring “war participants”, which are used as a tool of military propaganda.¹⁰⁴



In the photo: pupils of Schools No. 1 and No. 24 in occupied Melitopol, wearing pilotkas and tied scarves resembling Soviet Pioneer organisation insignia, with St George ribbons attached to their clothing, TOT of Zaporizhzhia region, April 2025. Source: <https://t.me/obrzp/30169>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/X3ICF>

100 https://t.me/za_tv_ru/32143, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Xjq8t>

101 <https://t.me/obrzp/29781>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/gVEEe>

102 <https://t.me/obrzp/30062>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/vyeyz>

103 https://vk.com/wall-217630752_5062, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FTWzO>

104 <https://t.me/obrzp/30169>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/X3ICF>



Overall, this information and cultural policy in the TOT reflects a revival of Soviet practices alongside an adaptation of Russian propaganda strategy to modern conditions, where media, particularly cinema, serves as a tool for targeted influence on the consciousness of the younger generation.

2.2. INTEGRATION OF THE CHURCH INTO EDUCATION

During the monitoring period, open sources reveal a clear **trend of religious organisations – particularly the Russian Orthodox Church – interfering in both the formal education system and informal learning** of children and youth in the TOT of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. Its influence in the TOT of the AR Crimea has been growing since the early years of the peninsula's occupation. In 2016, Metropolitan Lazar of Simferopol and Crimea publicly emphasised the importance of establishing a system of cooperation between clergy, educators, and representatives of the occupation authorities to “influence the younger generation”.¹⁰⁵ These principles laid the foundation for the further integration of church ideology into the educational process.



Source: photo of the textbook cover <https://surl.li/dyfhlg>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wjp/e9oBW>

Currently, at the primary school level, an obligatory course called “**Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics**” has been introduced for 4th-grade pupils.^{106,107} Its implementation is closely coordinated between local structures of the Russian Orthodox Church and representatives of the occupation administrations, including so-called ministries of education.^{108,109,110}

The content of the course “Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture” contains clearly defined ideological messages. Topics include: “**Russia — our homeland**”, “**Love and respect for the Motherland**”, and “**Patriotism of the multiethnic and multifaith Russian**

105 <https://glava.rk.gov.ru/articles/ea4bd936-e108-4ac5-9ff0-60000f502947>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wjp/lko2X>

106 <https://t.me/depobrherson/13157>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wjp/0r8MJ>

107 <https://t.me/depobrherson/12033>, archive: <https://archive.ph/K8Zu8>

108 <https://crimea.riaa.ru/20231107/krymskaya-eparkhiya-khochet-rasshirit-sotrudnichestvo-tserkvi-so-shkolami-1132624983.html> archive: <https://archive.ph/Bw1Vs>

109 <https://t.me/depobrherson/11611>, archive: <https://archive.ph/fA1g7>

110 <https://crimea-eparhia.ru/166631.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wjp/h18kl>



people". The course is designed to shape in children a perception of Russian civic identity, a sense of belonging to the "Russian nation", pride in Russia as their "historical homeland", and to undermine any alternative identities – in particular, the Ukrainian national identity. After completing the course, children are expected to "feel a sense of pride in their Motherland" – that is, in Russia.¹¹¹

In addition, during the 2024–2025 academic year, a **new programme titled "Family Studies"** is being introduced in schools across the temporarily occupied territories. It is taught as part of the extracurricular course "Conversations About Important Things".¹¹² In March 2025, a textbook for teaching "Family Studies" was presented, with plans to distribute it to schools from September 2025.¹¹³ According to official statements, the course is designed for 36 academic hours and aims to address "demographic problems in the Russian Federation".¹¹⁴ Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church are involved in teaching the subject, promoting traditional religious views on the "proper family", the roles of women and men, and encouraging children to adopt attitudes of obedience and loyalty to the state.^{115,116}

In addition to integration into the formal education system, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church actively use extracurricular tools to influence children's consciousness. Within the Russian Orthodox Church structure, this includes the **All-Church Orthodox Youth Movement** and the **Brotherhood of Orthodox Pathfinders**,¹¹⁷ whose activities explicitly aim, among other things, to "foster a patriotic attitude towards the homeland (that is, Russia) and to raise the prestige of military service".¹¹⁸

Branches of the Brotherhood of Orthodox Pathfinders are actively operating in the temporarily occupied territories of the AR Crimea,¹¹⁹ Sevastopol,¹²⁰ Donetsk

111 https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/frp_orkse_4-klass.pdf,
archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/w0Z5m>

112 <https://lenta.ru/articles/2024/09/06/semievedenie-v-rossiyskih-shkolah-v-2024-godu/>,
archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/hGBPj>

113 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/23537603>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Zogmy>

114 https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2_5300844784137559930.pdf,
archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/NpE16>

115 <https://surl.li/gxiqxl>, archive: <https://archive.ph/r3Fym>

116 https://edsoo.ru/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2_5300844784137559930.pdf,
archive: <https://archive.ph/NpE16>

117 <https://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/65961.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/UWpbK>

118 <https://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3693780.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/9pbxP>

119 <https://bydgotov.com/novosti-regionov/69891-krym-belogorskaja-druzhina-imeni-arhangela-mihailaotrijad-apostola-fomy.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/Luk3L>

120 <https://bydgotov.com/novosti-bratstva/69887-sevastopol-druzhina-svjatogo-voina-fedora-ushakova-otrijad-svjatogo-knjazja-vladimira-v-hersonese.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/weDYl>



and Luhansk regions,¹²¹ as well as Zaporizhzhia region.¹²² The Pathfinders' motto – **“Be ready! Always ready for God and Russia!”** – vividly illustrates the organisation's agenda, which in effect serves to russify children, erode Ukrainian identity, and prepare young people for service within the structures of the Russian Federation.

In May 2025, under the slogan of “readiness for God and Russia”, the Crimean regional branch of the Brotherhood organised the St George Parade titled “Children of the Victors” **in the TOT of the AR Crimea**, with the participation of 250 children.¹²³



In the photo: children who are members of the Brotherhood of Orthodox Pathfinders holding Russian flags during the “Children of the Victors” parade, TOT of the AR Crimea, May 2025. Source: https://vk.com/bps_crimea?w=wall-216621083_2779, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/9COay>

121 <http://pravlug.ru/vse-novosti/deti-iz-luganska-prinyali-uchastie-v-slyote-bratstva-pravoslavnyh-sledopytov/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/69dG>

122 <https://berdyanskeparhia.ru/2024/12/17/otkrytie-otryada-bratstva-pravoslavnyh-sledopytov-imeni-savvy-osvyashennogo-v-g-melitopole/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ZooNr>

123 https://vk.com/bps_crimea?w=wall-216621083_2779, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/9COay>



In January 2025, participants of the Melitopol unit of the Brotherhood of Orthodox Pathfinders were transferred **from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** to the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea to take part in the winter gathering “Cadet Corps”. The programme included religious rituals (a prayer service), participant introductions, as well as sessions on providing basic first aid, fundamentals of field engineering (fortifications), and obstacle course training.¹²⁴

In addition to the activities of the Brotherhood of Orthodox Pathfinders, in the **TOT of the AR Crimea:**

- In May 2025, representatives of the Arkhangelsk Sunday School (village of Oreanda, TOT) held a meeting with Year 6 pupils of Yalta Secondary School-Lyceum No.9 as part of the “Conversations About Important Things” course. Pupils were presented with narratives promoting the idea of a **“future victory over modern Nazism”** (referring to Russia’s claimed victory in the war against Ukraine).¹²⁵
- With the participation of pupils from the 5th Cadet Cossack Class of Chervonohvardiiske School No. 2, a permanent exhibition titled “Clergymen and Monks – Veterans of the Great Patriotic War” was opened at the Church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God as part of the diocesan project “They Defended the Motherland”.¹²⁶ In essence, the event is aimed at legitimising Russia’s current aggressive policies by perpetuating Soviet myths – in particular, the glorification of clergy as fighters for the “revival of spiritual life” and defenders of the state.



In the photo: Pupils of the 5th Cadet Cossack Class from Chervonohvardiiske School No. 2 at the exhibition “Clergymen and Monks – Veterans of the Great Patriotic War”, TOT of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, May 2025. Source: https://vk.com/wall-193303062_12644, archive: <https://archive.fo/wip/rEKlw>

124 https://t.me/za_tv_ru/30150, archive: <https://archive.ph/Xo1e5>

125 https://t.me/pravmission_yalta/569, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/L6KzH>

126 https://vk.com/wall-193303062_12644, archive: <https://archive.fo/wip/rEKlw>

In the TOT of Kherson region:

- **In all 106 schools**, by initiative of the occupation authorities and in cooperation with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, a series of lessons titled **“Faith and Victory”** was conducted. These lessons aimed to inform pupils about the participation of clergy in the Second World War (referred to by the Russian authorities as the “Great Patriotic War”).¹²⁷
- On 14 March, Bishop Filaret of Skadovsk and Oleshky, during his visit to general education institutions in the temporarily occupied town of Skadovsk, handed over Orthodox literature, including the book **“Childhood in a Soldier’s Cap”**. Such literature is regularly distributed to schools.¹²⁸



In the photo: books handed over by representatives of the Skadovsk Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church to educational institutions in occupied Skadovsk, TOT of Kherson region, March 2025. Source: https://t.me/tavria_kherson/46562, archive: <https://archive.ph/HOH7E>

127 <https://t.me/depobrherson/12121>, archive: <https://archive.ph/ukYJi>

128 https://t.me/tavria_kherson/46562, archive: <https://archive.ph/HOH7E>



In the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region.

- Since 2023, the local School No. 5 in occupied Berdyansk has been transformed by the occupation authorities into an “Orthodox gymnasium”, where 40 children studied in 2024–2025 academic year.¹²⁹ The institution is funded by the regional budget and the diocese.¹³⁰ In addition to the standard curriculum, children are subjected to “spiritual-moral and patriotic education”, as well as “Christian values”. At the event dedicated to 9 May, ideological messages supporting the war and manipulation of Orthodox values were expressed: **“There is no greater honour than to sacrifice yourself”**, and teachers expressed hopes that **“the children will continue the work of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers”**.¹³¹
- In the building of the Berdyansk Diocesan Administration, letters written by pupils of the 2nd grade of School No. 19 and attendees of the Sunday school at the church were handed over to Russian soldiers participating in the war against Ukraine.¹³²

During events for children, priests themselves often take up weapons. In TOT of the AR of Crimea, the presiding priest of the Holy Protection Church in Simeiz, Archpriest Yevgeniy Khalabuzar, participated in a master class on shooting and assembling/disassembling an AK-74 rifle at the Simeiz community club alongside children.¹³³ At another event, the same Russian Orthodox Church priest, while assembling the rifle, spoke to the children about the necessity to “love and be devoted to their motherland (i.e., Russia) and God”.¹³⁴



In the photo: Archpriest Yevgeniy Khalabuzar, the presiding priest of the Holy Protection Church in Simeiz, holding a weapon during children's master classes on handling firearms, TOT of the AR of Crimea, March 2025. Sources: https://t.me/yalta_bлаго/8186, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/le5XG>, https://t.me/yalta_bлаго/8090, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/zYPU1>

129 <https://za-inform.ru/zaporozhskaya-oblast/v-berdyanskoj-pravoslavnoj-gimnazii-rasskazali-o-svoih-dostizheniyah/?ysclid=magj200sbf910030703>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/6MjCy>

130 <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/20404837>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/50Cc7>

131 <https://news-berdyansk.ru/society/2025/05/07/61345.html?ysclid=magj0w5lct579488666>, archive: <https://archive.ph/NGMcK>

132 https://t.me/za_tv_ru/33347, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/rSLiN>

133 https://t.me/yalta_bлаго/8186, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/le5XG>

134 https://t.me/yalta_bлаго/8090, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/zYPU1>



More details on these and other examples of the Russian Orthodox Church's involvement with children in the temporarily occupied territories can be found in the article "Religion of War: Russian Orthodox Church as the Instrument for Militarization and Indoctrination in the Temporarily Occupied Territories": <https://almenda.org/en/religiya-vijni-rosijska-pravoslavna-cerkva-yak-instrument-militarizacii-ta-indoktrinacii-na-timchasovo-okupovani-teritoriyax/>

Documented evidence shows that in the TOT, the Russian Orthodox Church is being systematically integrated into the educational space, using both formal and informal means of influence to instil a Russian identity, glorify war, justify aggression, and militarise children's minds under the guise of patriotic and spiritual education.

2.3. START OF THE SUMMER RECREATION CAMPAIGN

From 1 June, Russia officially launched its summer recreation campaign, during which over 40,500 children's camps will host around 6 million schoolchildren. Among them, more than 1.1 million children will participate in propaganda sessions dedicated to the "Year of the Defender of the Fatherland" and the "80th anniversary of the Great Victory".¹³⁵ Among these children will be Ukrainian children from **the TOT of Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk regions – around 53,000 in total.**¹³⁶ **Over the course of summer 2025, more than 1,500 children from these TOT regions of Ukraine are expected to be transferred to the branches of "Artek" – the children's centres "Red Carnation" in occupied Berdiansk and "Korsun" in occupied Sevastopol.**¹³⁷

On the TOT of the AR of Crimea, 36 camps will operate during the summer recreation campaign, **with a total of 190,000 children expected to participate in the so-called holiday programmes.** The occupation authorities of Crimea claim that, funded by the budget, they will accommodate 300 children from the occupied Ukrainian regions.¹³⁸

The first sessions are already underway.

- 150 schoolchildren **from the TOT of Kherson region** – specifically from the Aleshkinsky, Holoprystansky, and Velykolepetysky districts – were transferred

135 <https://национальныепроекты.рф/news/ot-kryma-do-khabarovska-kak-otdokhnut-letom-rossiyskie-shkolniki/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/ZJu6s>

136 <https://объясняем.рф/articles/news/svysh-50-tys-detey-iz-donbassa-i-novorossii-otdokhnut-v-letnikh-lageryakh/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/1TCpM>

137 <https://национальныепроекты.рф/news/ot-kryma-do-khabarovska-kak-otdokhnut-letom-rossiyskie-shkolniki/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/ZJu6s>

138 <https://ruinform.com/page/skolko-detey-i-otkuda-priedut-na-otdyh-v-krym-v-2025-godu>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/vWMZ4>



to Yevpatoria in occupied Crimea, funded by the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation.¹³⁹

- 75 children **from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** were transferred to Yaroslavl Oblast as part of patronage assistance from the Russian region. In total, 400 children from the occupied Yakymivka district are planned to be sent to Yaroslavl Oblast this year.¹⁴⁰ 165 children were transferred to the Yevpatoria health camp “Perlyna” for 21 days, funded by the Russian city of Tomsk.¹⁴¹ Over 100 pupils will stay in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod (RF), supported by Maria Lvova-Belova, the presidential commissioner for children’s rights responsible for the deportation of Ukrainian children, and the charity foundation “Country for Children”.¹⁴²

It should be noted that all camps are required to operate in accordance with the **“Federal Programme for Educational Work in Children’s Recreation and Health Institutions”**, approved by the order of the Russian Ministry of Education dated 17 March 2025, No. 209.¹⁴³ The programme is designed **to instil patriotic feelings and reinforce spiritual and moral values in children, including the notion of serving the “Motherland” – meaning the Russian Federation**. This is achieved through mandatory activities such as the daily raising of the Russian flag and singing of the national anthem, introducing children to “Heroes of Russia”, and familiarising them with Russian culture and traditions. Military-patriotic games, such as “Zarnitsa 2.0”, are also organised. Particular emphasis is placed on promoting and encouraging participation in Russian youth movements, including the “Young Army”, the “Movement of the First”, and “Russia’s Eaglets”.

Given the content of the aforementioned programme, children’s stay in such camps has a clear Russification agenda. Its purpose is to displace Ukrainian identity and to instil in children the belief that they must love Russia, adopt its values, and be ready to “defend” it. Moreover, the Russian Federation **has established an extensive network of specialised military-patriotic camps, whose primary purpose is the military training of children and youth**. It is to these camps that Ukrainian children from temporarily occupied territories are systematically sent, which indicates a deliberate policy of militarisation and ideological conditioning of minors.

139 <https://t.me/depobrherson/13704>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/fZrFB>

140 <https://www.mk-zap.ru/social/2025/06/10/prodolzhaetsya-otdykh-akimovskikh-detey-v-yaroslavskoy-oblasti.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/1KrwR>

141 <https://t.me/obrzp/33745>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/uVcmL>

142 <https://t.me/obrzp/34085>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/yv9JV>

143 <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202503310005?ysclid=mbkeynmn2t774192457>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/BYDp8>



Some examples:

- In Yevpatoria (**TOT of the AR of Crimea**), at the camp £Scarlet Sails£, a military-patriotic “Young Army” session has begun, where children are taught military skills daily, including the basics of pre-prescription training and civil defence.¹⁴⁴
- Schoolchildren from the **TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** were sent to Volgograd (RF) to the defence-patriotic camp “Avangard”, where they will undergo a programme aimed at fostering a sense of “responsibility, civic duty, and patriotism” (towards Russia).¹⁴⁵ The occupation authorities plan to send **around 200 children from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** to this camp in 2025.¹⁴⁶

The occupation authorities pay particular attention to the **children’s centre “Artek”**, which has effectively been transformed from an international educational and cultural space into a tool of Russian propaganda and Russification. Under the guise of celebrating the camp’s 100th anniversary, the occupation administration uses “Artek” to impose on Ukrainian children and children from other European countries a distorted understanding of peace – with no mention of the need to end aggression and occupation. The so-called “Friendship Manifesto”, adopted by children from 30 countries during the 6th session in 2025,¹⁴⁷ contains rhetoric about “unity” and a “shared future”, which replaces any discussion about ending the war. At the same time, children are being indoctrinated with a cult of military personnel who took direct part in the war against Ukraine. At “Artek”, there were meetings with Russian serviceman Igor Yurgin – commander of the assault unit “Black Mamba” and participant in the programme “Time of Heroes”, who encouraged children to “serve their motherland” (meaning Russia),¹⁴⁸ as well as with Dmitry Ovcharov – a veteran of three military conflicts who openly justified participation in combat operations as a “duty to defend the motherland” (meaning Russia).¹⁴⁹

144 https://vk.com/wall-217363296_3371, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/JyG0c>

145 <https://t.me/obrzp/33980>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/dEzYc>

146 [https://ria-m.tv/news/379860/okopyi-dronyi-i-lyubov-k-rossii-okkupantyi-otpravili-detey-iz-melitopolya-v-voennyiy-lager-\(foto\).html](https://ria-m.tv/news/379860/okopyi-dronyi-i-lyubov-k-rossii-okkupantyi-otpravili-detey-iz-melitopolya-v-voennyiy-lager-(foto).html), archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/5p0db>

147 https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_16_3, archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20250712095748/https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_16_3

148 https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15_2, archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20250712100439/https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15_2

149 https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15, archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20250712100147/https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15



In the photo: Dmitry Ovcharov during a meeting with children at the “Yantarny” camp, TOT AR Crimea, June 2025. Source: https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15, archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20250712100147/https://artek.org/news/medianews_2025_06_15

More about the propaganda events held for the 100th anniversary of the children's camp “Artek” can be found in the article: <https://almenda.org/en/artek-in-the-tot-from-recreation-camp-to-propaganda-machine/>

In addition to ideological indoctrination in camps, since 2022 Russia has been using another tool to transfer children aged 14–17 from the occupied territories of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions to Russia – the **“University Sessions”** programme. This programme involves transferring Ukrainian children to Russian university campuses for career guidance and Russification.

More details about the programme can be found in the report “The “University sessions” program as the instrument for the destruction of Ukrainian identity and the indoctrination of children and youth from the temporarily occupied territories”: <https://almenda.org/en/prohrama-universytetski-zminy/>

In 2025, the transfer of children from the temporarily occupied territories under this programme continues.



On 14 April, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin held a meeting with his deputies, during which he noted that **over 2,300 Ukrainian children would participate in the programme in summer 2025**,¹⁵⁰ and that the Russian government had allocated **150 million roubles (approximately \$1.8 million)** for its funding.¹⁵¹

On 6 June, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation announced the launch of the fourth season of the “University Sessions” project for over 16,000 children, including those from the occupied territories of Ukraine. The 2025 season will consist of nine sessions.¹⁵² Children from the **TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** have already taken part in the first session.

- Children who are members of the “Movement of the First” were transferred to the TOT of the AR of Crimea to the camp “Artek”, where they took part in a specialised “University Session”.¹⁵³
- 80 schoolchildren were transferred to the RF to the Tambov State University named after Derzhavin, after which, according to the organisers, the children will be able to decide on their future career choice.¹⁵⁴

However, the “University Sessions” programme is not the only tool used by the Russian authorities to transfer Ukrainian children. The list also includes initiatives such as **“More Than a Trip!”**, **“Cultural Map 4+85”**, among others.

Here are just a few examples of transfers recorded during the monitoring period.

- Under the program “More Than a Trip”, children from **the TOT of Kherson region** were taken on an excursion to Moscow called “Faces of Victory”. During the trip, they were told the history of Russia as their «homeland» and introduced to so-called heroes of Russia. According to the organisers, as a result of the trip, “the children saw Russia in a new light”. In 2024, one and a half thousand children from occupied Kherson participated in such transfers.¹⁵⁵

150 <http://government.ru/docs/54752/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ndNeU>

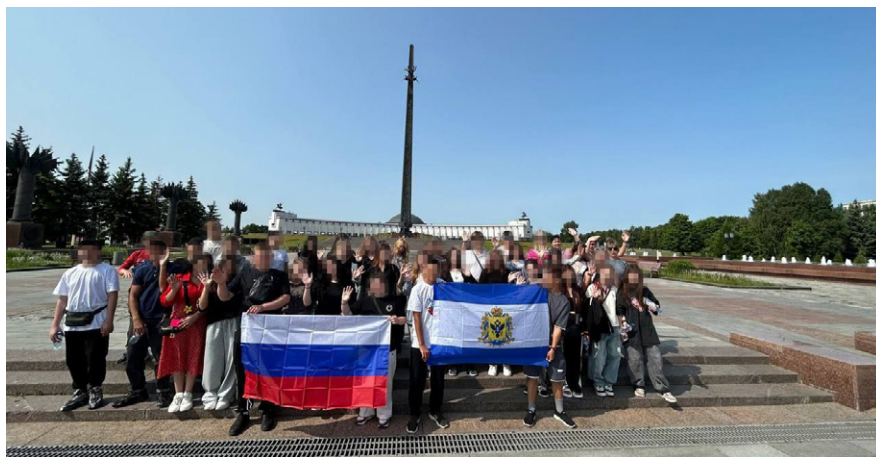
151 <http://government.ru/news/54750/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/SVbS1>

152 <https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/novosti-ministerstva/97668/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/QBYKi>

153 <https://www.mk-zap.ru/social/2025/06/16/yunye-zaporozhcy-uchastvuyut-v-universitetskikh-smenakh-v-mezhdunarodnom-detskom-lagere-artek.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/pUdQ9>

154 <https://tsutmb.ru/news/v-derzhavinskom-universitete-zavershilas-pervaya-universitetskaya-smena-2025-/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/ESaGt>

155 <https://t.me/minmolXO/5522>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Px7pR>



In the photo: children from the TOT of Kherson region on the “Faces of Victory” excursion, Moscow, June 2025. Source: <https://t.me/minmolX0/5522>, archive: <https://archive.ph/Px-7pR>

- In June, 47 children from the Oleshky district **of the TOT in Kherson region** took part in a trip to Moscow under the “Cultural Map 4+85” programme, during which, according to the organisers, they were immersed in Russian culture.^{156,157}

156 <https://gov.khgov.ru/news/47-aktivistov-iz-aleshkinskogo-okruga-otpravilis-v-moskvu/>,
archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/1hBSt>

157 <https://t.me/mypervie84/4865>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/pKxJM>



In the photo: children from the TOT of Kherson region during a trip to Moscow, June 2025. Sources: <https://gov.khgov.ru/news/47-aktivistov-iz-aleshkinskogo-okruga-otpravilis-v-moskvu/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/1hBSt>, <https://t.me/mypervie84/4865>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/iAosy>



- In May 2025, students from temporarily occupied Melitopol (**Zaporizhzhia region**) were taken to Tula (RF) as part of the “More Than a Trip” programme, where they took part in excursions, workshops, and visited military museums. The trip included writing letters of support to Russian participants of the so-called “SMO” and visiting the “Patriot” park, indicating its focus on the militarised indoctrination and russification of Ukrainian youth.¹⁵⁸ Another group, consisting of 45 children, was transferred in May under the “Cultural Map 4+85” programme to Rostov-on-Don (RF).¹⁵⁹ According to Russian Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova, **Russia plans to transfer 10,000 children from the occupied regions of Ukraine in 2025 as part of the “Cultural Map 4+85” programme.**¹⁶⁰



In the photo: children from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region during a trip to Tula, May 2025. Source: <https://t.me/obrzp/33458>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/51Eft>

¹⁵⁸ <https://t.me/obrzp/33458>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/51Eft>

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.mk-zap.ru/social/2025/05/12/45-talantivnykh-detey-iz-zaporozhskoy-oblasti-otpravilis-v-rostovnadonu.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/47LnN>

¹⁶⁰ <https://za-inform.ru/news/dlya-detey-iz-novykh-regionov-zapustili-programmu-kulturnaya-karta-4-85/>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/xp6t9>



- The head of the occupation administration of Zaporizhzhia region, Yevhen Balytskyi, expressed his gratitude to Kremlin-appointed Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova and the charitable foundation "Country for Children" for the recent **transfer of 100 children from the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region**. Balytskyi emphasised that these children came from frontline areas of the occupied region, including the Vasylivskiy, Kamiansko-Dniprovskiy, and Kuibyshevskiy municipal districts, and stated that **over 9,000 children** from the occupied part of the region would take part in "recreation and excursion activities" in Russia during the summer of 2025.¹⁶¹

In addition to transferring Ukrainian children to RF, the occupation authorities are also involving youth from the TOT in political **visits to countries that support Russia's foreign policy**. In 2025, Anastasiia Zolotova – an activist from the **TOT of Zaporizhzhia region** and head of the "Volunteer Battalion of the Combat Brotherhood" – took part in a delegation of the "Young Guard of United Russia" to the DPRK. During the visit, a cooperation agreement was signed with the Socialist Patriotic Youth League of the DPRK, and meetings were held with the Russian ambassador, along with visits to commemorative sites. This illustrates the occupation authorities' efforts to integrate Ukrainian youth into pro-Russian international ideological initiatives.¹⁶²

2.4. FORCED PASSPORTISATION

In March 2025, Russian President Putin declared that the passportisation of occupied Ukrainian territories was virtually complete.¹⁶³ Since then, the occupation authorities have focused on Ukrainian children who have just turned 14 and are, under Russian law, required to obtain an internal passport. Public ceremonies for issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian children were held across all TOT as part of the campaign **"We Are Citizens of Russia!"**.

- **In the TOT of the AR of Crimea**, this took place at the children's centre "Artek", with the participation of the so-called Head of the Republic of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov; First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, Sergei Kiriyenko; Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko; and Minister of Education Sergei Kravtsov.¹⁶⁴ During the event, a Russian passport was also issued to a child from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region.¹⁶⁵

161 <https://t.me/BalitskyiEV/5562>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/2UEEu>

162 https://vk.com/wall-218383340_4589, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/yqSeV>

163 <https://tass.ru/politika/23313165>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/PhPtz>

164 <https://glava.rk.gov.ru/articles/9a035cb6-625b-4364-b68b-43c74a0dd488>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/pcWEn>

165 <https://surl.lu/nsqdew>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/JslJx>



In the photo: a pupil of the Kostyantynivka school from the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region – receiving a passport of a citizen of the Russian Federation at the camp “Artek”, TOT of the AR of Crimea, June 2025. Source: https://zo.gov.ru/news/show/rebyata_iz_zaporozhskoj_oblasti_posetili_smenu_100-letiya_lagerya_artek, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/JslJx>

- The so-called governor of **Sevastopol**, Mikhail Razvozhayev, publicly handed out passports to 13 schoolchildren from Sevastopol in June to mark “Russia Day”. Such staged passport ceremonies are timed to coincide with themed events. This was the sixth passport presentation in 2025, with previous ones held on so-called commemorative days such as “Day of the Pioneers”, “Defender of the Fatherland Day”, “Day of the Reunification of Sevastopol with Russia”, “Cosmonautics Day”, and International Children’s Day. Six more events are planned for the second half of 2025.¹⁶⁶

166
[wip/jjeAL](https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/06/12/1695074.html)

<https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/06/12/1695074.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/jjeAL>



In the photo: children who were issued Russian passports, TOT of Sevastopol, June 2025.

Source: <https://crimea-news.com/society/2025/06/12/1695074.html>,

archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/jjeAL>

- The occupation authorities of **Kherson region** reported that representatives of the migration department of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs issued Russian passports to schoolchildren from the Skadovsk district who had recently turned 14.¹⁶⁷ Young residents of the occupied Chaplynka district of Kherson region also received Russian passports during celebrations marking “Russia Day”.¹⁶⁸



In the photo: a schoolboy from Skadovsk district, TOT of Kherson region, receiving a Russian passport, TOT of Kherson region, June 2025. Source: https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/31413, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ymNqA>

¹⁶⁷ https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/31413, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/ymNqA>

¹⁶⁸ https://t.me/VGA_Kherson/31422, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/67rr2>



- Children from the temporarily occupied towns of Berdiansk¹⁶⁹ and Melitopol **in the TOT of Zaporizhzhia region**¹⁷⁰ were publicly issued Russian passports in April, ahead of Russia's "Cosmonautics Day". Along with the passports, they received copies of the Russian Constitution and souvenirs bearing the symbols of the pro-Kremlin movement "Movement of the First", illustrating efforts to impose Russian identity on children from the TOT. A similar staged passport ceremony was also held in June to mark "Russia Day".¹⁷¹

The forced passportisation of Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. The public issuance of Russian passports as part of propaganda campaigns not only serves to impose Russian identity but also aims to legitimise the occupation by instilling in children a sense of belonging to the Russian Federation. This process goes beyond propaganda – it has far-reaching consequences. Russia is rapidly narrowing the areas of life in which one can function without a Russian passport. It is already impossible to access medical care, pensions, or educational documents without one. At the same time, general secondary education is mandatory under Russian law, and parents or legal guardians are held responsible for ensuring their children attend school. This creates a closed loop: children cannot receive educational certificates without a Russian passport, yet they are not permitted to skip school. In cases where children have not been enrolled in school – as seen in the Yakymivka and Chernihiv districts of the TOT in Zaporizhzhia region – parents have been subjected to administrative penalties for "failure to properly fulfil parental duties". The prosecutor's office of the occupation administration reports on "eliminating violations of children's right to education" and publicly reinstates their "right" to schooling.¹⁷² As a result, children in the TOT are trapped in a situation where refusing a Russian passport effectively excludes them from basic areas of life – education, healthcare, and social services – while accepting one places them under tighter state control, with the added risk of future conscription into the Russian army and restrictions on leaving the occupied territory.

169 https://vk.com/wall-218359825_1064, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/LtjEw>

170 https://vk.com/wall-218359825_1060, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/FlPnZ>

171 <https://berdyansk-news.ru/other/2025/06/12/63191.html>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/Q3JkT>

172 <https://t.me/riamelitopol/16478>, archive: <https://archive.ph/wip/XvEaH>



CONCLUSIONS

The content and nature of the documented activities point to a deliberate, systemic, and multi-faceted policy by the Russian Federation aimed at ideological influence, russification, and militarisation of Ukrainian children in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. At its core, this policy seeks to eradicate Ukrainian national identity among the younger generation and to instil loyalty to the occupying state, its symbols, and military ideology.

To achieve this goal, the Russian Federation employs the full range of available tools: formal and informal education, religious organisations, structured leisure activities, and a system of school-based and extracurricular events. A key role is played by indoctrination through cinema, where manipulative films promote a distorted view of history and justify the current aggression. At the same time, the Russian Orthodox Church is being systematically integrated into the education process, glorifying war as a “sacred duty” and reinforcing the idea of Russia as the only “historical homeland”.

Of particular concern is the large-scale transfer of children to camps in the Russian Federation, where, under the guise of “recreation”, they are subjected to militarisation and propaganda. According to approved educational programmes, all such institutions are required to instil “patriotism” as defined by the Russian state, conduct mandatory ideological activities, and familiarise children with the symbols and myths of the occupying power. Especially alarming is the implementation of the “University Sessions” programme, which aims to ensure the long-term integration of Ukrainian youth into the Russian educational system and to entrench a Russian identity.

The next stage of this systemic policy is the public forced passportisation of Ukrainian children – a symbolic act of their final “integration” into Russia. These actions constitute a grave violation of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and represent a form of coercive assimilation that directly threatens Ukrainian children’s right to national, linguistic, cultural, and civic identity.

Through these means, Russia is seeking to exert ideological control over the younger generation in the TOT of Ukraine. This strategy includes the imposition of a Russian identity, the eradication of the Ukrainian one, the justification of war, and the preparation of children to serve the occupying state.

