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RUSSIAN NEWS JOURNALISM: NEGLECT OF STANDARDS AND COMMON SENSE

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Abstract

The rules of news presentation are independent of time and space. It is about using professional news journalism methods in order to reflect reality, despite the shortage of time and finances. Messages are formulated according to professional standards of unbiased event coverage. This means that journalists must present the events as impartially as possible. Own assessments are inadmissible; the presentation must be based on facts.

The Russian Information Agency (RIA Novosti), which is part of the International Information Agency (MIA Rossiya Segodnya) violates news standards as well as principles of news agencies and cannot be a true and reliable information source.

Key words

news journalism, professional standards of unbiased event coverage, information agencies principles, fake news, news standards violation.

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1. Retrospective propaganda “news” analysis

The origins of the propagandistic foundations of news journalism in Russia are based on the Russian mass media traditions, which became definite and intensified during the wartime periods. The information component has always been considered by Russian ideologues as an extremely important aspect of a military campaign. Despite the fact that de jure censorship in Russia was abolished in 1905 (October Manifesto), before the beginning of the First World War, the “Provisional regulations on military censorship” were issued in order to let the

government use whatever means needed in the fight against objectionable mass media under the guise of martial law (How Russian..., 2022).

The beginning of the so-called “Great Patriotic War” in 1941 became the impetus for creating another USSR information body, which operated according to the principle of a news (information) agency – the Soviet Information Bureau (Radinformbiuro), the predecessor of the modern Russian Information Agency (RIA) Novosti. It was founded on June 24, 1941, under the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR based on the Resolution of the CPC of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) “On

the Creation and Tasks of the Soviet Information Bureau" (APN ot Sovinformbûro..., 2001, p. 6).

The resolution provided for "entrusting the Soviet Information Bureau with: managing the coverage of international events and the internal life of the Soviet Union in the press and on the radio; organizing counter-propaganda against German and other enemy propaganda; covering front-line events and military actions, compiling and publishing military summaries based on the Main Command materials." The Radinformbiuro managed the work of the All-Slavic Committee, the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women, the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Youth, the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Scientists, and the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

It is clear that all Radinformbiuro activities were essentially propaganda. In 1944, a special department of propaganda for foreign countries was created in the Radinformbiuro structure. Through 1171 newspapers, 523 magazines and 18 radio stations in 23 countries around the world, Soviet embassies abroad and other Radinformbiuro organizations introduced readers and listeners to the anti-fascist struggle, and later to the main directions of the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the post-war period.

In 1961, based on the Radinformbiuro, the Press Agency Novosti (APN is an acronym for the Ukrainian Agentstvo Presy Novosti) was established. It was the first non-state public information agency in the history of the Soviet mass media. Soviet journalism was quite proud of this fact since public and private ownership of the media went beyond the Soviet (communist or totalitarian) press theory described by F. Sybert et al. (1998). Among the founders of the Press Agency Novosti were the Union of Soviet Journalists, the Council of Soviet Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS is an acronym for the Russian "Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnoi Sviasi s zagranitsej"), and the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. The purpose of the created agency was to inform the international public about the Soviet Union life. Its motto was: "Information for the sake of peace, for the sake of the friendship between nations." The non-state founders created the illusion of independence and objectivity of the agency compared to other Soviet mass media.

Information centers or bureaus, departments, branches or correspondent points of the Press Agency Novosti were located in 120 places around the globe. The agency's reporters sometimes found themselves in one or another country before their colleagues from the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TARS is an acronym for the Ukrainian "Telegrafne Agentstvo Radianskoho Soiuzu"),

embassy, or consulate arrived there. By 1990, the Press Agency Novosti had 27 representative offices in Europe, 20 in North and Latin America, 15 in Asia, 29 in the Middle East and Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The former chairman of the Press Agency Novosti board B. Burkov stated:

from the very beginning, it was clear that the name "News" (rus. Novosti) did not impose on the agency the obligation to be a super-operational organization, to some extent competing with the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, it was strictly defined that the Press Agency Novosti is not a telegraph agency; the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union copes well with this (APN ot Sovinformbûro ..., 2001, p. 4).

According to Richard Paul and Linda Elder, such a biased presentation of the news, given the low level of the audience's critical thinking, shapes its view of the world, and determines which countries are friends and which are enemies. Researchers also emphasize the close connection between bias and propaganda (Paul, Elder, 2008). The scientists note that the logic of news presentation is parallel to the logic of writing a story. In both cases, there is simultaneously a vast background of facts for the events covered and very limited actual display of those facts. The result in both cases is the same: 99.9% of the "facts" are never mentioned at all. It is the facts manipulation that creates news bias.

On July 27, 1990, following the Decree of the President of the USSR M. Gorbachev, the Information Agency Novosti (IAN) was established based on the Press Agency Novosti. A computer data bank containing more than 250,000 documents was created. Since 1991, the tape of operational information Infonovosti has been published. IAN offices were located in 120 countries, the agency published more than 60 illustrated magazines and newspapers in 45 languages with a one-time circulation of 4.3 million copies. In 1989, a television center was opened, which was later reformed into the TV company TV-Novosti.

In September 1991, based on IAN and the Russian Information Agency, the Russian Information Agency (RIA) Novosti was created, which at that time was supervised by the Ministry of Press and Information of Russia, with about 80 foreign bureaus and correspondent points, more than 1,500 subscribers in the CIS countries and about 100 abroad. Since 1993, RIA "Novosti has become a state information and analytical agency. The agency also participated in the creation of the radio channel RIA-Radio and the TV channel Kultura. In May 1998,

based on the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (RF), the holding All-Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK is an acronym for "Vserossiyskaya gosudarstvennaya televizionnaya i radioveshchatelnaya kompaniya") was created, which included RIA Novosti under the new name – Russian News Agency Vesti, keeping the well-known RIA Novosti brand in the information environment (APN ot Sovinformbûro..., 2001, p. 166).

Since 2001, RIA Novosti has transferred the distribution of news information to the ria.ru website, which has the following options: geolocation, geotargeting and integration into social networks. That allowed the platform to gain leadership in the number of viewers in Russia among news resources.

On December 23, 2003, the RIA news agency Vesti was removed from VGTRK by a government decree of the Russian Federation and subordinated directly to the Ministry of Press of the Russian Federation. On April 1, 2004, the Federal State Unitary Enterprise Russian News Agency Vesti was renamed as the Federal State Unitary Enterprise Russian Agency of International Information RIA Novosti. The agency turned into a group of media companies, which united several independent, but closely interacting multimedia mass media.

On December 9, 2013, the President of Russia V. Putin signed the "Decree on measures to improve the efficiency of the state media," according to which RIA Novosti was liquidated, and the founder's rights and property rights were transferred to the International Information Agency (IIA) Russia Today. D. Kiselyov was appointed the CEO of the new structure. By the same decree, the Russian state broadcasting company Voice of Russia was liquidated, the property of which was also transferred to Russia Today (RT).

According to the decree, the main direction of activity of the federal agency Russia Today is to cover the state policy of the Russian Federation and public life in Russia for a foreign audience. IIA Russia Today combines radio broadcasting, news feeds, information portals, multimedia international press centers, production and distribution of photo content and infographics, information platforms in social networks and production of mobile applications content.

Information resources of RIA Noviny, Prime, R-Sport, RIA Nedvizhymost, RIA Reyting, InoZmi are part of IIA Russia Today. The agency is considered to be a leader in terms of citations among Russian mass media, social networks and the blogosphere. In November 2014, IIA Russia Today launched a new brand – Sputnik multimedia group. Sputnik (sputniknews.com) – a news agency and radio with multimedia information hubs – includes websites,

analog and digital radio broadcasting, mobile applications and pages on social networks in dozens of countries around the world.

During the study "News as a Weapon", prepared in 2019 by researchers from London's Kings College, more than 10,000 messages from Russian news agencies and more than 150,000 messages from the British media were analyzed. The authors found that out of 2,641 articles analyzed by the Russia Today and Sputnik news agencies about events in the UK, the USA, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy and Ukraine, 2,157 (81.7%) mentioned political failures, conflicts etc. at least once. 80% of all mentions of NATO that Russia disseminated in the British media also contained negative key messages. In these reports, NATO was most often described as an aggressive expansionist threat to Russia. Often, the messages were devoted to conflicts within NATO as well as to the negative effects of membership for member countries and arguments to justify Russian aggression (82% novyn..., 2019).

2. Standards of news journalism in modern conditions

According to the head of the Institute of Journalism and Communication of the University of Hamburg, prof. Z. Vaishenberh:

there is still a consensus among society members and journalists about news journalism principles and the need to preserve them. These principles can be formulated as news reporting rules that ensure a certain quality of events coverage and serve as a guideline for journalists and the general public (Vaishenberh, 2011).

Rules for news presentation are independent of space and time. We are talking about professional methods by which news journalism, despite the time and financial shortage, can provide a reflection of reality, which will enable the modern multifaceted society to constantly observe itself.

This journalism function causes the fundamental problem of any observation. Observation relies on discrimination, which directs the gaze to one side of the phenomenon, eliminating the other. Even if both sides were heard (*audiatur et altera pars*), as required by the professional rules of objective events coverage, news journalism by definition remains "one-sided".

Messages are formulated in accordance with professional standards of objective events coverage. This means that journalists must present as impartial a picture of events as possible. Own assessments

are inadmissible, the presentation must be based on facts. This applies to both the informational and entertainment branch. "Subjective journalism" is allowed only when it comes to one's own opinion (Vaishenberh, 2011).

Therefore, "most researchers agree that journalists should have clear guidelines that will help them make decisions in ambiguous situations," reports prof. V. Ivanov, Ukrainian media researcher. Various countries' codes from the USA to Belarus have such provisions. At the same time, the emphasis is placed on the fact that a journalist must serve society, his main duty is to provide objective information, on the basis of which it is possible to create a picture of the world that would most closely correspond to reality. The SPJ Code of Ethics explicitly states that "journalists shall be free from any obligation other than the public's right to reliable information" (Vaishenberh, 2011).

The Ukrainian Institute of Mass Information has defined six basic standards of news journalism, which, according to media experts, "are universal features of any quality journalistic material. Their non-compliance or violation in information journalism leads to receiving either a low-quality material ('production defect') or a fundamentally different product ('jeans' – propaganda, PR)" (Žurnalisty'ki standarty..., 2011):

1. A balance of opinions and points of view. Life consists of big and small conflicts. Every journalistic topic is either conflictual or, at the very least, ambiguous. This requires us to clearly define who the parties to each conflict are or who a competent and independent expert on each covered topic is. The standard of opinion balance requires us to present the opinion of all parties of the conflict, without exception. Only then does the audience receive the full picture and have enough information to draw their own conclusions;
2. Promptness of information delivery. The standard of promptness requires information journalists to submit any information without postponing it "for later," which means covering the topic in the nearest news release / issue of the newspaper. At the same time, information should be provided as completely as possible and be of the highest achievable quality form;
3. Reliability (references). The reliability of information means the qualitative verification of each fact in sources competent for this fact. A journalist should always use several competent sources to verify any fact. And for this, while dealing with this or that topic, the competence of certain officials or experts must be clearly defined. The last requirement of the reliability

standard is as follows: the journalist must clearly inform his audience about the source of this or that fact or opinion;

4. Separation of facts from comments and opinions. In such a "pure" and conservative information genre as news, a journalist has no right to comment on the material at all. So, without commenting or evaluating in any way, he gives his audience, first, the facts. Secondly, the opinions of the participants of the event. Thirdly, the opinions of experts. Every fact comes from a competent source. Each opinion is voiced by a specific author. The journalist informs the audience about the sources of facts and authors of opinions. In this situation, facts are automatically separated from conclusions and personal evaluation;
5. Accuracy of information presentation. This is the cornerstone standard of informational journalism. It means that any reported fact corresponds to the reality fact, and that any opinion is quoted accurately and out of context;
6. Comprehensive presentation of facts and information on the issue. Any topic needs to be covered as completely as possible, which means presenting a wide range of facts and opinions. Therefore, the journalist's task is to find the competent sources to provide it.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, journalists from the English-language publication Kyiv Independent started a live blog with constant updates for Ukrainians and readers around the world. The Kyiv Independent, *Ukrainska Pravda* and a number of other Ukrainian news outlets continue to cover the war with a dogged commitment to the truth despite being targeted by the Russian military forces (Fighting for..., 2022).

The Ukrainian Institute of Mass Information also monitors and records facts about Russia's crimes against journalists and the media since the attack on Ukraine on February 24, launching a special information resource "Media crimes of Russia in the war against Ukraine (updating)" (*Medijni zločini ...*, 2022).

Foreign social networks were the first to feel the restrictions. On February 25, Moscow partially restricted access to Facebook. On March 5, Roskomnadzor, Russia's communications regulator, completely banned access to Facebook across the country. Access to Twitter was also restricted after the network blocked the pages of Russia Today and Sputnik, Russia's state media channels (Shemakov, 2022).

On the same day, the State Duma of the Russian Federation unanimously adopted a resolution on punishment for “fake news” within the country. A person who spreads information about the Russian military forces, a “special operation” in Ukraine, or calls for sanctions, which has not been officially announced by the government, can be sentenced to 15 years in prison. The Duma cited several examples of serious misinformation that should be punished, including publishing “documented” photos of burned military equipment, reports of attacks on civilians, and assessment of the Russian military personnel losses.

The Fake News Law was adopted as a result of Russia’s restrictions on media reports that “disrespect the government” back in 2019, although the punishment was much lighter three years ago. A fine of up to 1.5 million rubles (\$22,900) and 15 days in prison could be imposed on anyone who disseminated “unreliable” information about public officials and violated public order.

As a result, access to foreign mass media was significantly limited. At the request of the prosecutor’s office, Roskomnadzor “restricted” access to BBC, Meduza, Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe. Bloomberg, The Guardian and BBC suspended the work of their journalists in Russia. The international association of investigative journalists OCCRP was also placed on the list of “undesirable organizations”.

The opposition mass media in Russia have largely fallen silent. Echo of Moscow, Znak.com, The Village, Taiga.info, Dozhd, Tomsk TV 2 and many other channels ceased their activities due to strong pressure and the threat of prosecution. Znak.com refers to “a large number of restrictions that have recently affected the work of the mass media in Russia”. Those who have not stopped their activities are personally persecuted. For example, on the morning of March 5, the editorial office of the newspaper Pskovskaya guberniya was searched; because of this, the website of the newspaper is blocked.

Publications that have not yet been closed are forced to delete news and report only official government messages. 12 Russian publications, including The Bell, VPost and The Blueprint, have announced the cessation of all war coverage reports. Winner of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Journalism, Novaya Gazeta deleted most of the articles about the war (Shemakov, 2022).

Meanwhile, at least 150 journalists left Russia urgently after the start of a full-scale war against Ukraine. The main reason for the departure of media workers is the introduction of military censorship in

Russia. This is reported by RBK-Ukraine with reference to the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security Spravdi (Z RF pislâ počatku..., 2022). A large number of journalists from many mass media companies left the country, among them almost the entire team of Moscow editorial office Meduza (about 20 people). Journalists from Dozhd, Echo of Moscow, and Novaya Gazeta also fled. In addition, the Russian service of the BBC temporarily stopped working in Russia. Now its journalists will work from abroad.

It should be noted that on March 4, 2022, the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin signed a law according to which media workers face 15 years in prison if they publish information about the invasion of Ukraine that contradicts the statements of official bodies.

Russia included the German media company Deutsche Welle, whose broadcasting in Russia was banned at the beginning of February, to the list of “foreign agents”. This was a precautionary measure in response to the ban on the activities of the Russian propaganda channel RT in Germany (Rosîâ vyznala..., 2022).

The Russian Ministry of Justice added nine journalists and three media organizations to the register of mass media “foreign agents.” Radio Svoboda journalists were included in the list. Also journalists from the Nastoyashchee Vremya TV channel were added on the list. “The Bellingcat” investigative project, Dozhd TV channel journalist Danyla Sotnikov, BBC Russian Service correspondent Andriy Zakaharov, journalist Evgenii Simonov, and lawyer and head of the Media Rights Protection Center Galyna Arapova were also included in the list.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine demonstrates the importance of the free press to protect against the arbitrariness of tyranny. This is stated in the New Special Report prepared by the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University (Viprobuvañâ..., 2022).

In Russia, the free information stream and dissemination of alternative opinions were seen as a significant threat to the regime of Vladimir Putin that the pocket parliament (the Duma of the Russian Federation indeed) introduced a criminal penalty of up to 15 years in prison for a reliable description of the events taking place in Ukraine. This decision allowed the authorities to silence almost all independent and oppositional voices in Russia. In other words, the war contributed to the creation of such a media environment in Russia that Joseph Goebbels himself would have envied.

At the same time, journalists from various independent mass media accept the challenge posed

by the war and, at great risk to themselves, describe the bloody massacre of the local civilian population in Ukraine. Such reports are vitally necessary in order to get Western countries to respond objectively to the war and, what is most important now, to resolve the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's actions.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a stark reminder of the vital role these [independent] journalists and their newsrooms play, and how fragile press freedom has actually proven to be in the face of aggression from Putin and other authoritarian leaders around the world," the Nieman Foundation reports. According to its official website, the foundation sets itself the task of "promoting and raising the standards of journalism, educating and supporting those who are ready to make an important contribution to its future" (Viprobuvańâ..., 2022).

3. Interpretation of RIA Novosti news standards

From February 24 to April 1, 2022, 3,534 out of 16,425 publications on the RIA Novosti information agency website had keywords "Ukraine", "special operation", "war". The first flash message was published at 5:50 a.m. Moscow time: "Putin announced a special military operation in Donbas" (Putin ob'âvil..., 2022). First of all, it should be noted that the agency does not call a full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory a war, using the concepts of "special military operation" or "Ukrainian crisis" introduced into the information space by V. Putin. This publication outlines the main goal of the invasion: "the protection of people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the Kyiv regime for eight years, and for this we will strive for the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine...".

Two minutes later, at 5:52, an extended statement of Russia's intentions regarding Ukraine was published. Putin stated that a clash with Ukrainian nationalist formations is inevitable, since such grouping, "Ukrainian nazis", would supposedly go to war with Crimea, sooner or later. In the same statement of Russia's President, he accuses Ukraine of possessing nuclear weapons. Therefore, "Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist with a constant threat coming from Ukraine". At the same time, Putin placed responsibility for the bloodshed on "the conscience of the regime ruling Ukraine" (Putin zaâvil..., 2022).

During the investigated period, the propaganda resource of Russia disseminated the following messages in the context of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine:

- about the successes of Russian troops;
- introduction of sanctions against Russia;
- support for Russia's actions inside the country and around the world;
- actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities;
- deterioration of the economic situation of European countries;
- placement of US-funded biological laboratories on the territory of Ukraine;
- Ukraine's development of nuclear weapons;
- war crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed forces and territorial defense brigades, especially against the civilian population.

The agency paid special attention to the dissemination of information about the support of the president's actions by citizens of Russia. The first message appeared already on the first day of the invasion. Putin's press secretary D. Peskov stated, without specifying the percentages, that the Russians support the military operation in Donbas and suggested that this support is growing (Peskov zaâvil..., 2022).

Reporting on support for Russia's actions abroad, the agency resorts to unfounded generalizations: "The lion has finally roared. Brazilians about the military operation in Donbas" ("Lev nakonetc..., 2022), "Stop Putin? Stop Biden. In Spain, they stood up for Russia" ("Ostanovit' Putina?... , 2022), "In China the special operation of the Russian Federation in Donbas was called a 'correct action'" (V Kitae..., 2022), "Shut up already: the British were outraged by the rebuke from the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine" ("Da zamołči..., 2022), "The USA urged Zelenskyy not to resist and accept neutrality" (V SŠA..., 2022).

The mentioned publications are not about the results of relevant surveys of citizens of Brazil, Spain, China, Great Britain, but about the private opinions of media readers, referring to the readers of the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, the Spanish publication *El Pais*, the British *Daily Mail*, American *Sky News*. At the same time, vague wording is used: "many readers", "many users", "some readers", "hundreds of comments". And the readers to whom the information resource refers can be attributed to unidentified sources, since they are signed with the nicknames LU318, guan_15857017352877, MADPOM01, etc.

Sometimes the agency resorts to quoting completely unidentified "readers" who do not even have nicknames. In the publication "The French were angered by the consequences of anti-Russian sanctions", readers of the newspaper *Le Figaro* are quoted: "wrote in the comments", "another user",

“other readers”, “summarized a Frenchman”. The last wording in general raises many questions, since the readers of *Le Figaro* may not only be French.

By spreading a lot of false information, RIA Novosti is using the principle “the best way to defend is to attack”. Within a difference of a few days (from 28.02.2022 to 01.03.2022) on the agency’s tape appeared the publications with a reference to Kateryna Mizulina, a member of the commission for the development of the information society, mass media and mass communications of the Russian Federation. The agency reported that 100 new fakes appear approximately every 20 minutes (Nebenziâ rasskazal..., 2022). Information about the declared number of fakes is not confirmed by any research results or other reliable data (V OP zaâvili..., 2022).

The topic of Ukrainian fakes about the “special operation” is promoted in “Expert: Ukrainian fakes about the special operation became memes due to their absurdity” (Èkspert: ukrainskije fejki..., 2022). The so-called “expert” is the curator of the people’s movement “Cyberfront Z” Aleksey (AN: the agency does not even provide his last name). He describes the stories about the tanks with a painted letter Z on them, about the downed Russian plane, using the photo of an American plane, etc. All these “debunkings” are not based on any documentary evidence and do not have any source references. It is worth adding that, according to the agency, the organization “Cyberfront Z” was created on February 24, 2022 (AN: the date of the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine) to fight fakes on the Internet about the “special operation” of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

One of the agency’s common techniques is the use of so-called “experts”, including former Ukrainian officials and retired military personnel, who voice the messages needed by the agency. Among such experts is former Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykola Azarov (Putin spas..., 2022), retired US Army colonel (Amerikanskij polkovnik..., 2022), former fugitive Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych, etc. (Ânukovič zaâvil..., 2022).

The propaganda resource pays special attention to people’s persuasion to believe in the urgent need for Ukraine to accept Moscow’s conditions. For this, RIA Novosti together with radio “Sputnik” used various methods: multiple repetitions, appeals to authorities, half-truths, etc.

In the message “Military expert: Zelenskyy must agree to Moscow’s terms”, the agency quotes expert O. Khrolenko, who categorically stated that “Zelenskyy’s office should agree to completely adequate terms of surrender”, because “the Kyiv

regime should not count on some miraculous rescue from the USA and NATO” (Voennyj èkspert:..., 2022). It should be noted that the “military expert” is a participant in more than one “Russian special operation”, a graduate of the Lviv Higher Military and Political School. It is symbolic that in 2014 he became a military columnist for RIA Novosti and radio “Sputnik”. It was in 2014 that Russia started a war in eastern Ukraine.

The subject of Ukraine’s capitulation on Russia’s terms received further explanations in the article “Prime Minister of Israel advised Zelenskyy to accept Moscow’s terms”. It refers to the telephone conversation between Israeli Prime Minister N. Bennett and V. Zelenskyy, in which Bennett allegedly advised the Ukrainian President to agree to Moscow’s terms (Premer Yzraylia..., 2022). This information, according to the version of RIA “Novosti”, became known to the American publication *Axios*, which then referred to a Ukrainian (AN: unidentified) source. The article, however, states that, according to *Axios*, a representative of the head of the Israeli government called the published details of the conversation between Bennett and Zelenskyy untrue. The published version of the conversation between the Ukrainian and Israeli politicians was distributed by numerous Russian and Ukrainian media, including the publications *Novoe Vremya*, *Fokus*, *Espresso* TV channel, and the online publication *Ukrainian Pravda*. It is noteworthy that this information became widespread on the eve of the speech of the Ukrainian president in the Knesset amid the rather uncertain position of Israel since the beginning of the war.

RIA Novosti uses the publications about the alleged “low standards” of Western journalism as an excuse for its own violations of news standards. Thus, in V. Kornilov’s article “Western mass media have lowered the standards of journalism to unprecedented depths”, the world journalism is accused of using double standards, mass production of anti-Russian fakes directed against everything Russian (*Zapadnye SMI...*, 2022). As an example, the author says that the Western media “do not cover the shelling of Donbas cities by the armed forces of Ukraine at all”, “boycott some topics”, such as the topic of “suspicious activities of secret US biolaboratories on the territory of Ukraine”. According to the “media expert”, the Western mass media “do not write anything about the water that, thanks to the actions of the Russian military, began to be supplied to Crimea”.

Regarding water, the author does not say that Ukraine stopped supplying water to Crimea in the

spring of 2014. Such a decision is caused by the fact that according to international law, the country that occupied it and de facto controls it – that is Russia – is obliged to provide for the needs of the occupied territory. The Russian authorities have not been able to solve the problem of water supply to the peninsula for eight years. During the military invasion of Ukraine, the Russian army is trying to do this by force.

Without verifying the information, RIA Novosti relays the opinion of the Russian authorities about the non-existent crimes of the Ukrainian Armed Forces against the civilian population, residential buildings shelling, infrastructure destruction, obstruction of the civilians evacuation, violation of the humanitarian corridors regime, shelling of refugees convoys, etc. Thus, in several publications in a row, the Ukrainian Armed Forces are accused of blowing up the road bridge over the Desna River in the direction of Kyiv, and of shooting civilians (Mynoborony RF..., 2022), and all this despite the fact that world news agencies (Russian forces..., 2022), in particular Reuters reports on the commission of these and other crimes by the Russian military (UK military..., 2022).

Occasionally, materials that cannot be classified as characteristic of the news genre are published on the news feed of RIA Novosti. An example can be the publication of the following: "There are many shows, there is not enough bread. Is the world threatened by hunger riots", in which judgments prevail over facts, there are no references to sources of information, emotionally colored and spatial vocabulary is used, vague wording ("terrible forecasts almost certainly covered the loophole") (Zreliš mnogo..., 2022).

The apogee of the violation of news standards and common sense is the article "What Russia should do with Ukraine", published on April 3, on the 39th day of Russia's attack on Ukraine (Čto Rossiâ..., 2022). The author unequivocally and irrevocably declares that, quoting, "Nazi, Bander Ukraine, the enemy and tool of the West for the destruction of Russia, is not needed". And then a step-by-step plan for the so-called "denazification" of Ukraine is outlined: ideological repression; strict censorship not only in the political sphere, but also in the spheres of culture and education; neglect not only of the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also of the right even to the name of the country ("denazified country cannot be sovereign"). After "denazification", the next stage should be "de-Ukrainization", as it is said, Ukraine is not supposed to exist as a nation state, because Ukraine is an "artificial anti-Russian construct" that "does not have its own civilizational meaning".

The civilized world is presented in the material as "the designer, source and sponsor of Ukrainian Nazism." Therefore, "denazification" is also equated with "de-Europeanization".

4. Conclusions

The origins of the propagandistic foundations of news journalism in Russia are based on the Russian mass media traditions, which became definite and intensified during the wartime periods. The information component has always been considered by Russian ideologues as an extremely important aspect of a military campaign. Despite the fact that de jure censorship in Russia was abolished in 1905 (October Manifesto), before the beginning of the First World War, the "Provisional regulations on military censorship" were issued in order to let the government use whatever means needed in the fight against objectionable mass media under the guise of martial law (How Russian..., 2022).

Analysis of the activities of the news agency RIA Novosti in historical retrospect and modern practice proves that the status of an information agency does not oblige this Russian media source to adhere to news standards, providing consumers with verified, accurate, objective and unbiased information.

Among the most common violations recorded during the investigated period, the following can be distinguished:

- lack of opinions balance;
- violation of reliability principle due to the use of unreliable sources of information;
- a mix of facts with comments and personal assessment statements;
- violation of the news journalism genre forms standards and neglect of the news materials structure.

The messages disseminated by the agency are based on false and distorted information, for example, messages about the placement of US-funded biological laboratories on the territory of Ukraine; Ukraine's development of nuclear weapons; war crimes committed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces and territorial defense brigades, especially against the civilian population, etc.

Violations of the news standards of RIA Novosti are covered up by publications about the allegedly low standards of Western journalism.

Thus, the news agency RIA Novosti, which today is part of the IIA Russia Today, violates news standards, the principles of the news agency's activities and cannot be a source of true and reliable information.

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