



**Centre for  
Information  
Resilience**

# The Kremlin's Generation Z

How Ukrainian and Russian children are  
weaponised for pro-war propaganda

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July 2022



## Kremlin's Generation Z

*How Ukrainian and Russian children are weaponised for pro-war propaganda*

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Disclaimer: this report contains images of children and potentially upsetting content.



*Figure 1: Picture of 8-year-old Lyosha Pavlichenko during his initiation into the Russian Young Army Cadets / Source: RIA Novosti.*

### Executive Summary

In Ukraine, children are not only targets of violence but also tools for polarisation. By mixing Soviet-era propaganda techniques and digital-age information influence tactics, the Kremlin is using childhood to trigger nationalist emotions domestically and build support for the war in occupied areas and abroad.

In early March, Russian kindergartens, schools<sup>1</sup>, and hospitals<sup>2</sup> began sharing social media content showing children supporting the invasion. Videos and pictures of letters and drawings made in Russian schools filled Telegram and Twitter with military symbols such as ribbons, tanks, carnations, the emblematic 'Z', and the Russian flag<sup>3</sup>. On the 9th of March, during

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/nursery-school-children-dragged-russian-26492452>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-children-hospice-z-ukraine-b2031341.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://twitter.com/francis\\_scarr/status/1541356279230259205/photo/1](https://twitter.com/francis_scarr/status/1541356279230259205/photo/1)

Victory Day celebrations, children paraded wearing military outfits and custom-made toy tanks with the 'Z' symbol.

Although these indoctrination tactics are not entirely new to Russian domestic audiences, they have now been replicated and adopted in occupied territories.



Figure 2: Pictures of children wearing military outfits during Victory Day / Source: Twitter.<sup>4</sup>

This report analyses how Russia is using underage Russians and Ukrainians to deflect responsibility for the invasion, romanticise the war by glorifying Russian soldiers, and indoctrinate children in occupied areas.<sup>5</sup> For this, the Kremlin uses three key strategies: top-down influence campaigns, sociocognitive hacking, and patriotic education.

The report examines data collected and analysed between the 27th of February and the 7th of July through a combination of open-source techniques. Evidence gathered includes over two hundred pictures, videos, news articles, blog and social media posts, poems, drawings, and letters collected from Kremlin-official media, pro-Kremlin websites, and Telegram, YouTube, and Twitter accounts.

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/MarushevskaY/status/1523323926931197952?s=20&t=r-xWfkAi23f5Q8sY7FyE7g>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-generation-z-kremlin-pro-war-propaganda-targets-young-russians/>

***Top-down-influence campaign: building a little national hero***



*“There aren’t many people like him in Mother Russia,  
who have been in love with their Motherland since early childhood,  
but Lyosha knows the meaning of the word “honour”  
and why the country should fight fascism.*

*Patriotism is not ostentatious in the boy.  
Not for PR, he’s waiting by the road for the moment  
when a column of troops goes to smash fascism  
at the call of duty and the order of their President”.*

Figure 3: Illustration and translation of a fragment of a poem, both created for Lyosha Pavlichenko and shared on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 / Source: VK.<sup>6</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> May, Lyosha Pavlichenko (Лёша Павличенко) was still an unknown eight-year-old boy from Veselaya Lopan, in Russia’s Belgorod region.<sup>7</sup>

From the 12<sup>th</sup> May, a top-down influence campaign was started by Russian-state owned TV Zvezda to build Lyosha up as one of the main Russian symbols to glorify the invasion<sup>8</sup>. Within a short timeframe, other Kremlin sources strategically amplified the content.

<sup>6</sup> [https://vk.com/wall-124840108\\_13515](https://vk.com/wall-124840108_13515)

<sup>7</sup>

[https://www.google.com/search?q=%22%D0%9B%D0%B5%D1%88%D0%B0+%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%22&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enGB935GB935&biw=1428&bih=655&sxsrf=ALiCzsZWdhAsgsMql7aTZLje1f4kWsMsYw%3A1657551541805&source=Int&tbs=cdr%3A1%2Ccd\\_min%3A5%2F11%2F2022%2Ccd\\_max%3A5%2F11%2F2022&tbm=](https://www.google.com/search?q=%22%D0%9B%D0%B5%D1%88%D0%B0+%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%22&rlz=1C5CHFA_enGB935GB935&biw=1428&bih=655&sxsrf=ALiCzsZWdhAsgsMql7aTZLje1f4kWsMsYw%3A1657551541805&source=Int&tbs=cdr%3A1%2Ccd_min%3A5%2F11%2F2022%2Ccd_max%3A5%2F11%2F2022&tbm=)

<sup>8</sup> <https://stavropol.bezformata.com/listnews/leshi-otdohnet-v-sanatorii-kislovodska/107347019/>

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022, TV Zvezda published two consecutive pieces<sup>910</sup> with a video interview describing how Lyosha ran every day for two weeks to greet a column of Russian tanks moving towards Ukraine. In the video, Lyosha declares with pride that he wanted to become a general himself.

Immediately after TV Zvezda's first piece, the Russian Ministry of Defence shared a visual post on their Telegram account using the hashtag #СпасибоЛёша (#ThankyouLyosha).<sup>11</sup>

When TV Zvezda shared a new piece, within an hour, the video included an image created by the Russian MOD. The short timeframe and shared imagery suggest coordination or close communication. The interaction between these two Kremlin agents reflects the use of "information laundering" to bring Lyosha to light.

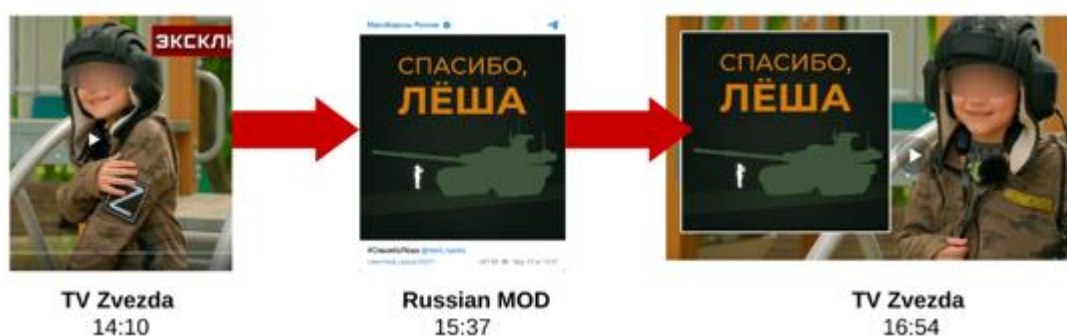


Figure 4: Graphic showing the laundering process of Lyosha's interview on TV Zvezda / Source: TV Zvezda and Russian MOD's Telegram.<sup>12</sup>

Information laundering refers to a process in which a network of actors legitimises false or deceitful information by applying a set of techniques in order to amplify, distort and obscure the original source.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the close publication times, this case presents other indicators of coordination between laundered content<sup>14</sup>. For example, the second article from TV Zvezda includes a hyperlink to the Russian MOD's Telegram post.

From this time, Kremlin<sup>15</sup> and pro-Kremlin media began a laundering and content syndication process that turned the eight-year-old into a war hero. Only two days later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May,

<sup>9</sup> <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/20225121348-cZQPA.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/20225121649-ZqWJv.html>

<sup>11</sup> [https://t.me/mod\\_russia/15671](https://t.me/mod_russia/15671)

<sup>12</sup> [https://vk.com/wall-124840108\\_13515](https://vk.com/wall-124840108_13515)

<sup>13</sup> <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/information-laundering-in-the-nordic-baltic-region/26>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjnDQYtePyA>

Russian-speaking social media users were already sharing pictures, drawings and poems<sup>16</sup> with the now-trending hashtag #СпасибоЛёша, showing great admiration for Lyosha. The operation also had a strong impact offline. In less than a month, graffiti appeared on Studencheskaya Street, Nizhny Novgorod, where Lyosha was painted saluting Russian soldiers and encouraging them on their way to war.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 5: Graffiti for Lyosha on Studencheskaya Street, Nizhny Novgorod / Text: *работайте, ребята!* (“Get to work, guys”) / Source: *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*.<sup>18</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, Lyosha was initiated into the Young Army Cadets National Movement (Всероссийское военно-патриотическое общественное движение Юнармия)<sup>19</sup> in an event charged with symbolism, led by Russian gymnast Nikita Nagornyy (Никита Нагорный).

During this event, Lyosha was thanked by the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics for his “incredibly important and responsible volunteer work” and appeared in pictures on social media waving a flag<sup>20</sup> with the hashtag #своихнебросаем (“We support our people”). #своихнебросаем has been one of the top trending pro-invasion hashtags within the Russian-speaking community.

<sup>16</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>17</sup> <https://ria.ru/20220602/graffiti-1792536356.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://rg.ru/2022/06/02/reg-pfo/v-nizhnem-novgorode-poiavilos-graffiti-s-izobrazheniem-belgorodskogo-aleshi.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgEq4ZqRTLl>

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/gymnovosti/status/1530728793651937280?s=20&t=-KdhuAqLq9rsh6FWxUKf4Q>



Figure 6: Lyosha waving a flag with the hashtag #своихнебросаем and the 'Z' symbol / Source: Twitter<sup>21</sup>



Figure 7: Lyosha during his initiation into the Russian Young Army Cadets / Source: YouTube.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/gymnovosti/status/1530728793651937280/photo/1>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjnDQYtePyA>

Lyosha has been taken on tours in Russia and Belarus to mobilise support for the war in Ukraine. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May<sup>23</sup>, he joined Belarusian children from the military-patriotic club 'Лынь' (Военно-патриотический клуб 'Рысь')<sup>24</sup> to greet and wave at Belarusian soldiers on their way to Russia's war.<sup>25</sup>

The video was filmed in the military unit 3214 building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus (войсковую часть 3214 внутренних войск МВД)<sup>26</sup>.



Figure 8: Lyosha and Belarusian children in a pro-war video filmed in the building of the military unit 3214 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus / Source: Twitter.<sup>27</sup>

The outsized success of Lyosha is not an isolated case. Several young children have been used as propaganda tools for the Kremlin's political gain during the invasion of Ukraine. If Lyosha has been exploited as a morale-booster and indoctrination tool, twelve-year-old singer, Sofia Khomenko (София Хоменко), has been used as a loudspeaker of the Kremlin's pro-war narratives.

<sup>23</sup> [https://twitter.com/kaverzneva1960/status/1526260721981476867?s=20&t=X5cV\\_YVHiNzekfBkjm-LcQ](https://twitter.com/kaverzneva1960/status/1526260721981476867?s=20&t=X5cV_YVHiNzekfBkjm-LcQ)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bel.kp.ru/daily/27393/4588475/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://web.telegram.org/z/#-1355540894>

<sup>26</sup> <https://3214.by/>

<sup>27</sup> [https://twitter.com/kaverzneva1960/status/1526260721981476867?s=20&t=X5cV\\_YVHiNzekfBkjm-LcQ](https://twitter.com/kaverzneva1960/status/1526260721981476867?s=20&t=X5cV_YVHiNzekfBkjm-LcQ)



Earlier this year, she appeared on TV telling young viewers that they were going to "have a lesson about world peace" while depicting NATO as an aggressive power and the United States as a warmonger.<sup>28</sup>

### *Teddy bears for sociocognitive hacking*

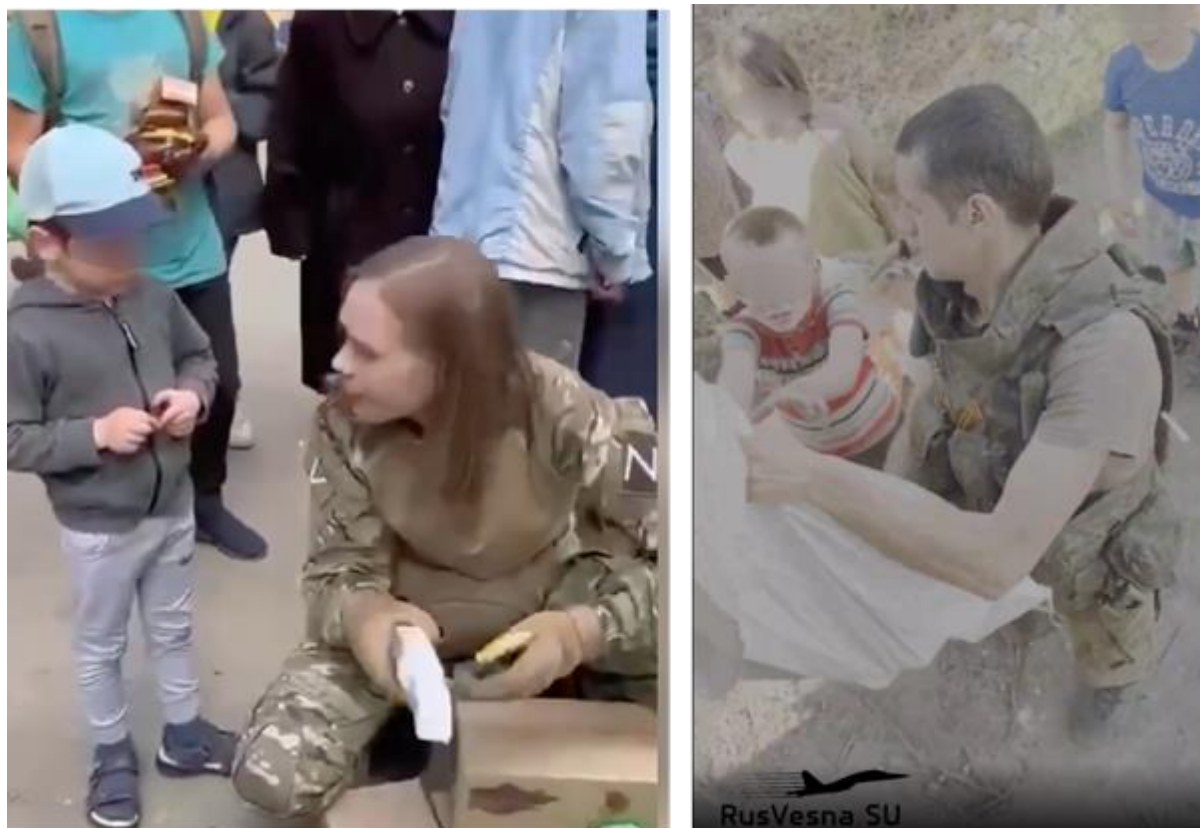


Figure 9: Screenshots of videos showing Russian troops delivering supplies to Ukrainian children / Source: Rusvesna.<sup>29</sup>

In cities such as Mariupol (Donetsk) and Melitopol (Zaporizhzhia), lost to Kremlin forces, Russia increasingly uses cognitive hacking techniques to shift local and international audiences' perceptions and move from occupiers to liberators. Cognitive hacking is an influence technique based on emotions. It employs highly emotive content to short-circuit a community's cognitive defences and trigger overpowering emotional responses.<sup>30</sup>

In the context of this piece, Russia conducts cognitive hacking to make audiences think irrationally about the war in two different ways: a) by providing victims of war, especially

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/russia-propaganda-children-ukraine-war-b2028690.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://web.telegram.org/z/#-1355540894>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.msb.se/RibData/Filer/pdf/28697.pdf>

vulnerable groups like women and children, with humanitarian aid, supplies, and gifts; and b) by interviewing children with strongly pro-Russian views in occupied areas.

## Дети Донбасса на праздник получают 13 тонн подарков от Югры

Марина Некрасова

Накануне Дня защиты детей Югра отправила в Донбасс почти 43 тонны гуманитарных грузов, в том числе 13 тонн подарков. Гумпомощь улетела из Сургута двумя самолетами Минобороны РФ.



Департамент общественных и внешних связей Югры

Figure 10: Rossiyskaya Gazeta: “Children of Donbas will receive 13 tons of gifts from Ugra region for the holiday. [...] On the evening of Children’s Day, Ugra sent almost 43 tons of humanitarian goods to Donbas, including 13 tons of gifts.” / Source: Rossiyskaya Gazeta.<sup>31</sup>

On Russian and Ukrainian Children’s Day, celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, Russian media<sup>32</sup> and social media disseminated videos and pictures of soldiers giving toys and supplies to Ukrainian children. In occupied Mariupol, Russians held celebrations with games and sweets for children,<sup>33</sup> while in Melitopol, there were swimming competitions and concerts.<sup>34</sup>

These concerts included traditional Russian propaganda songs for children like “Children and War Are Incompatible” (Несовместимы дети и война)<sup>35</sup>, performed by young locals. This ended with balloons in the colours of the Russian flag being launched.

<sup>31</sup> <https://rg.ru/2022/06/01/reg-urfo/deti-donbassa-na-prazdnik-poluchat-13-tonn-podarkov-ot-iugry.html>

<sup>32</sup> <https://regnum.ru/news/society/3608158.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://t.me/swodki/107825>

<sup>34</sup> <https://regnum.ru/news/society/3608158.html>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.karaoke.ru/song/6448.htm>

By providing children with goods and experiences that are scarce in wartime, the Kremlin aims to manipulate their memories and generate a feeling of protection. Likewise, videos of little children receiving gifts with joy are compelling tools to engage local audiences. Images are able to convey information quickly and evoke deep emotions in their viewers. A giant teddy bear in a warzone is not an accidental feature in the Kremlin's wartime propaganda. It has enough visual impact to manipulate audiences' cognition and, by extension, their memories and future perceptions about the war.

A second cognitive hacking tactic used by the Kremlin in Ukraine involves interviewing children that can share moving stories about the invasion. Children who have lost their homes or families to war now celebrate Russian occupation, either because they have been persuaded or for identity reasons. 'Children of Donbas: War through the years' (Дети Донбасса: Война сквозь года) is an emotive five-episode documentary<sup>36</sup> produced between the 26<sup>th</sup> of May and the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2022 and spread through several pro-Kremlin platforms on YouTube.

The documentary features a series of interviews with children based in Donbas, who describe how it feels to be raised in a warzone. These children blame Ukraine for killing their families and friends<sup>37</sup> and support the Kremlin's manufactured narrative that Kyiv has been shelling Eastern Ukraine since 2014. The full documentary aims to justify the presence of Russian forces in the region.

These interviews are powerful ways of combining images and narrative, using the charade of a journalistic device, normally aimed at obtaining reliable answers from adults, to broadcast children's recollections about the invasion.

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<sup>36</sup> Episode 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXa9IGulfFQ> ; 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xarqEH1JKMY> ; Episode 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ndx9TusCmgY> ; Episode 4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p85ldwFEED0> Episode 5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUEV2gDwFQE>

<sup>37</sup> <https://portal.research.lu.se/en/publications/countering-information-influence-activities-the-state-of-the-art>



Figure 11: Screenshot of Episode 5 of the documentary, shared by the account, shared by the pro-Kremlin account 'Beautiful Russia Z' (Красивая Россия Z) / Source: YouTube.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the propaganda component of the documentary, the videos also constitute a flagrant violation of the privacy of the interviewed children, showing their homes, and exposing their locations, family names, and ages. Children's right to privacy is protected by article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)<sup>39</sup>, which Russia ratified on the 16th of August 1990.

To produce and disseminate the material to enable sociocognitive manipulation, the Russian State uses troops on the ground and local proxies. In Kherson, pro-Kremlin figure Krill Stremousov (Кирило Стремоусов), who has been appointed deputy head of the Kherson region's military-civil administration, has used his own children to promote the idea that life has returned to normal. Via his YouTube channel, 'Stremousov family' (Семья Стремоусовы),<sup>40</sup> Stremousov shared a video of his youngest daughter, Amelia, playing in

<sup>38</sup>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUEV2qDwFQE&ab\\_channel=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%8F%D0%A0%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8FZ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUEV2qDwFQE&ab_channel=%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%8F%D0%A0%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8FZ)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvWzD4VJAmD8BVFyIWIrMxg>

the family's home. The video was captioned "There is a war in Ukraine, but little Amelia is safe".<sup>41</sup>



Figure 12: Screenshot from a video uploaded by Stremousov to the family's YouTube channel, Семья Стремоусовы. / Source: YouTube.<sup>42</sup>

The UK sanctioned<sup>43</sup> Stremousov and his organisation 'Salvation Committee for Peace and Order' on the 16th of June 2022, accusing both of collaborating with the Russian army to support the occupation of the Kherson Oblast. The EU followed suit on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>44</sup>

Stremousov had previously come under scrutiny for the way he treated his own children, notably after a video in 2017 where he filmed himself swinging his four-month-old daughter around by her legs and arms. In the video, he says that he can 'hear her bones popping'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCA6CzQghFU&ab\\_channel=%D0%A1%D0%B5%D0%BC%D1%8C%D1%8F%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCA6CzQghFU&ab_channel=%D0%A1%D0%B5%D0%BC%D1%8C%D1%8F%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvWzD4VJAmD8BFylWlrMxg>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-russian-linked-to-forced-transfers-and-adoptions>

<sup>44</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D0883&from=EN>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4513146/youtube-video-dad-swings-baby-around-sick-video/>

## Educating young patriots



Figure 13: Picture of little Russians drawing the iconic 'Z' under the Russian flag. / Source: Twitter.

The last strategy discussed in this piece is the propaganda targeted directly at children which, to some extent, resembles military-patriotic education in Russia.<sup>46</sup> To support the war, the youngest children<sup>47</sup> are told to draw pictures of the 'Z'. Older children write letters to soldiers in the front.

Analysis of several letters<sup>48</sup> handwritten by children from Donbas proves that schools have been pushing Ukrainians to write anti-Ukraine narratives even prior to the 2022 invasion.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, Petro Andriushchenko (Петр Андрющенко), an advisor to Mariupol's mayor, denounced via Telegram<sup>49</sup> that educators in the city were being forced by occupiers to send video recordings of children celebrating the arrival of Russia. According to Andriushchenko, children had to film a video claiming that they had been waiting eight years, since 2014, for the Russian 'liberation'.

<sup>46</sup>

[https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/333718/nexus\\_of\\_patriotism\\_and\\_militarism\\_in\\_russia\\_9\\_russias\\_young\\_army\\_raising\\_new\\_generations\\_into\\_mi.pdf?sequence=1](https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/333718/nexus_of_patriotism_and_militarism_in_russia_9_russias_young_army_raising_new_generations_into_mi.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/03/17/in-russias-pro-military-z-campaign-children-are-placed-front-and-center-a76976>

<sup>48</sup> <https://podvig-dnr.ru/category/proekty/vojna-glazami-detej/page/1/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://t.me/andriyshTime/1328>

This strategy, which was undertaken in Russian schools from the early stages of the invasion, is being progressively implemented in occupied areas.

Pro-Russian actors have also introduced a new textbook for first graders in Mariupol, ‘ABC of Donbas’ (азбука Донбасса).<sup>50</sup> The book includes poems with lines such as "Donbas is a Russian land" and "our Homeland is Russia". It was produced by the Donetsk People’s Republic on August 2021.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 14: Photos of the text book *азбука Донбасса*. / Text on the right: “This is Russia, our Motherland, with rivers and prairies, forests and fields. There is no more beautiful place on this planet. Let’s take care of it together, friends!” / Source: Twitter, Gazeta.ua.<sup>52</sup>

In what can be seen as an attempt to *Russify* the East of Ukraine outside schools, Russia has also taken groups of children from Donetsk and Luhansk to summer camps, where they spend several weeks learning with “other” Russian children.<sup>53</sup>

Beyond that, Russian authorities are preparing adoption procedures for around two thousand Ukrainian children.<sup>54</sup> According to Ukraine’s Human Rights Commissioner, Lyudmyla Denisova (Людмила Денісова) hundreds of thousands of children from Donetsk and Luhansk have been forcibly removed and placed in orphanages around Russia.<sup>55</sup> From schools to

<sup>50</sup> <https://novosti.dn.ua/news/314788-dnr-podarit-pervoklassnikam-azbuku-donbassa-tam-pushilin-i-rodina-rossiya>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/online/news/4399548/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://gazeta.ua/ru/articles/donbas/azbuka-donbassa-okkupanty-izdali-propagandistskij-uchebnik/1047298>

<sup>53</sup>

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://oblast45.ru/publication/47250&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1657539831813250&usq=AOvVaw3hsKDly58fKcZWY1CMxv0f>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/voennyh-sirot-i-detey-razluchennyh-s-semyami-nasilno-vyvezennyh-iz-ukrainy-detey-gotovyat-k-usynovleniyu-v-rf-31920006.html>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/100044138451142/posts/517421623072448/?d=n>

adoptions, this process of indoctrination and russification of Ukrainian children fits within Russia's wider strategic goal to consolidate power in occupied areas.

## Conclusion

Evidence obtained through open sources demonstrates that the Kremlin is using top-down influence techniques, cognitive hacking and patriotic education to strategically exploit the lives, stories, and images of Russian and Ukrainian children for political gain.

Three key points stem from this analysis:

1. The Kremlin is not only attempting to build or maintain support for its invasion; it is indoctrinating future generations. These influence strategies targeting children in Ukraine are aimed to have a long-term effect. They want to manipulate the perceptions of younger generations and their memories of the war to secure long-lasting influence in the region.
2. The Russian state is demonstrating a flagrant disregard for international standards on the rights of children. The Kremlin and its proxies share Ukrainian and Russian children's locations, homes, names, ages, and personal details in media and on social media. While this sort of online exposure is increasingly scrutinised in many democratic societies by privacy laws and guidelines (both domestic<sup>56</sup> and international<sup>57</sup>) Russia stands on a diametrically opposite path.
3. The Kremlin's use and targeting of children in its propaganda is not new, but it has a reach never seen before. Today, Russian State propaganda reflects techniques seen elsewhere in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. During World War I, Germany used children to convey norms, values and politically biased information to their parents.<sup>58</sup> In the Soviet Union, they were constantly targets of cult-of-personality and patriotic education.<sup>59</sup> Today, however, these tactics are enhanced by the possibilities provided by digitalisation and the coordinated activity of the Kremlin's well-established propaganda apparatus.

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<sup>56</sup> <https://ukmedialawpocketbook.com/2021/12/16/featured-content-3/>

<sup>57</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/laos/media/6496/file/Media%20and%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Rights%20\(2021\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/laos/media/6496/file/Media%20and%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Rights%20(2021).pdf)

<sup>58</sup> <https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/children-target-war-propaganda>

<sup>59</sup> <https://blogs.bu.edu/guidedhistory/russia-and-its-empires/elise-alexander/>