

Research article

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## Protected by Criminal Law, Historical Memory of the Peoples of the Russian Federation of the World War II and the Great Patriotic War: Experience of Sociological Research

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* the article analyzes problems of falsification of historical facts and history of the Great Patriotic War. Nowadays, the international public debate is devoted to the role of the USSR, its army in World War II, their contribution to the victory over fascism, and significance of the results of the Great Patriotic War. Attempts to rewrite the history of the war, diminishing the importance of the Soviet army, are connected with the desire of certain Western countries to discredit the Russian Federation in the international arena. Russia, as the successor of the USSR, is obliged to preserve historical truth about events of the Second World War; therefore, the policy of protecting it is being carried out at the state level. In 2014, the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation introduced liability for “falsification of historical information established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal”, but the norm is limited only to the facts established by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. In this regard, the study of criminal-legal aspects of protecting historical memory is relevant from the point of view of criminal legislation development. *Purpose:* to substantiate the expansion of criminal liability for falsification of historical information about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War. *Research results:*

in order to consider the proposed issue, the authors conducted a sociological study to identify respondents' opinion on establishment of criminal protection of historical memory of the events of the Second World War and determined a vector of legislative initiatives afterwards. *Conclusions*: the ways to protect history of the Great Patriotic War require improvement of criminal law norms providing for liability for encroachments on historical heritage of the Russian Federation, in particular, by including in the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation a new special norm capable of protecting not only the facts established by the International Military Tribunal, but also a number of others confirmed by official historical sources.

**Key words**: criminal liability; World War II; Great Patriotic War; falsification of history; historical memory.

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### *Dedicated to the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland*

#### *Problem statement*

At the end of the 21st century, the geopolitical situation in the world changed significantly, which, first of all, was facilitated by the collapse of the USSR. The reshuffle of forces in the international arena led to establishment of a unipolar world with the hegemony of the United States and its allies, who seek to consolidate their superiority in all spheres of public life.

Having taken a course towards total hegemony, politicians of the Western countries are making every effort to strengthen their positions, including through a certain reformatting of historical consciousness of the peoples, primarily living in the former Soviet Union. The US leadership and their satellites seek to impose on other peoples their own non-objective view on the causes, nature, events and consequences of the Second World War, and, most importantly, on the place and role of the USSR in this large-scale military conflict. The resolutions of the European Community became the apotheosis of the totalitarian approach to the historical past, state institutions' active intervention in scientific disputes and discussions of historians. So, on September 19, 2019, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War

II, European parliamentarians approved the text of the document (resolution) condemning the USSR and Nazi Germany for unleashing World War II. In addition, the resolution accuses the Soviet Union of building a "dictatorship" in Eastern European countries in the post-war period. In other words, responsibility for the outbreak of the war is shifted to the Soviet Union; the USSR turns from a victim of the war into its culprit. Liberation of the world from fascism is presented in the resolution as the victory of one totalitarian state over another, as a social phenomenon of a regressive rather than progressive nature.

Without going into historical controversy, in our opinion, we should pay attention to other aspects of the consequences of such a policy for the entire population of our planet, and the Russian Federation in particular.

To begin with, a shift in emphasis in assessing the place and role of the USSR in World War II will inevitably entail a desire to change the international security system created in 1945, and will give the Anglo-Saxon political forces the theoretical basis to change territorial borders of states formed as a result of the victory of the countries of the Anti-Hitler coalition over the Fascist bloc in 1939–1945. Thus, the peoples of the Earth can be plunged into

a world war again, which will inevitably lead to destruction of human civilization.

Furthermore, reformatting of historical consciousness will contribute to preservation of undemocratic forms of the current world order, create difficulties in building a multi-polar system of international relations. The need for its formation is discussed by many progressive politicians.

Besides, rewriting of history has led to the revival and activation of neo-Nazi forces in the world, especially in Eastern Europe, in certain states of the former USSR (Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia). These forces seek to take historical revenge, unleash local military conflicts (Donbass, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria), cultivate hatred and enmity between peoples.

A politically biased view of the historical past, enshrined in the most important normative legal acts of the European Parliament, potentially infringes on the political rights of the Russian Federation as a subject of the United Nations (UN), creates legal prerequisites for discrimination against Russian citizens in the international arena. All these possible consequences, some of which are already a fact of reality, require a comprehensive analysis, and, in our private scientific opinion, legal counteraction.

The Russian Federation, represented by the legislative and executive authorities, is aware of political forces' possible interference in the process of reformatting historical consciousness of the peoples of Russia. According to the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (approved by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 400 of July 2, 2021), protection of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, culture and historical memory is carried out in order to strengthen the unity of the peoples of the Russian Federation on the basis of all-Russian civic identity, preservation of primordial universal principles and socially significant guidelines for social development. Attempts to falsify Russian and world history are one of the ways to erode traditional Russian spiritual and moral values and weaken the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, which is one of the threats to national security.

This clearly and unambiguously defines the true meaning of socially dangerous activities carried out by persons who mock the memory of our people, including by falsifying

historical facts about the Soviet Union's activities during the Great Patriotic War.

In order to counteract ousting of Russia to the world sidelines, prevent destabilization of the situation inside the country by external forces, the legal regime for protecting historical memory of the events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War is established in the country. "In the Russian legal tradition, legal protection implies establishment of a general legal regime for certain public relations. Legal protection is conducted on a constant basis. Legal defense is a regime that is activated in case of violation of the protected relations, rights and freedoms. In the context of protecting and defending historical memory, these legal regimes imply that the objects of protection (tangible and intangible) must be defined, the regime of maintaining historical memory – ensured; and liability for violating the historical memory protection regime – established" [7].

The Constitution of the Russian Federation, adopted on December 12, 1993, is a key document for forming such a regime; its preamble justifies the need to preserve the multinational state unity of our country, as well as educate young people to honor previous generations, "who transmitted love and respect for the Fatherland to us". Article 44 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation obliges every person on the territory of Russia to preserve historical and cultural heritage and protect historical and cultural monuments. According to the basic law of the country respect for acts of heroism performed by previous generation is an obligation of Russian citizens. Since arbitrary and sometimes false interpretation of events of the Great Patriotic War is being intensified by external forces, the legislators decided to include amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted as Law No. 1-FKZ of March 14, 2020 "On improving regulation of certain issues of the organization and functioning of public power", which states that "The Russian Federation honors memory of defenders of the Fatherland, provides protection of historical truth. Diminishing significance of feat of heroism of the people in the defense of the Fatherland is not allowed.

In addition to the Constitution, legal protection of historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation on the events of 1941–1945 is provided by federal laws No. 80-FZ of May 19, 1995 "On perpetuating the

victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945”, No. 68-FZ of May 7, 2007 “On the Victory Banner”, of March 13, 1995 No. 32-FZ “On the days of military glory and memorable dates of Russia”, etc. The regime of protection of historical heritage is established by the Federal Law No. 73-FZ of June 25, 2002 “On objects of cultural heritage (historical and cultural monuments) of the peoples of the Russian Federation”.

At the same time, numerous cases of falsification and rewriting of the history of the Great Patriotic War have strengthened the stance of Russian state structures on the impossibility of allowing encroachments on historical heritage of the country, making protection of historical truth a priority state policy.

Creation of the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation to counter attempts to falsify history to the detriment of Russia’s interests in 2009 became a preventive measure for non-proliferation of false information about activities of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War. Although some scientists perceived this measure as an attempt to form a state ideology and interfere in science, the very fact of combating falsification of historical facts was supported. According to the all-Russian survey conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, the majority of those aware of the Commission creation (78%) positively assessed this step of the President of the Russian Federation, considering it a timely measure. Moreover, according to the respondents, the Great Patriotic War (34%) needed protection from falsification of distortion of history first of all [23].

Since the 2010s, the policy of protecting historical memory in the Russian Federation has acquired a multilateral character, which was reflected in the establishment of the Russian Historical Society (RHS), the Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS), adoption of a number of laws protecting objects of the country’s historical heritage. At the same time, the national project “No Statute of Limitations” and the public initiative to hold the annual action “Immortal Regiment” were supported. Speaking on July 2, 2020 at a meeting of the Russian Organizational Committee “Victory”, the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin said: “The memory, which is carefully passed down from generation to generation, is the strongest guarantee that together we will never allow the meaning and

results of the Victory to be changed, to belittle the feat of the Soviet people who defended their Homeland, saved the peoples of Europe, and suffered irreparable – and not only combat – losses” [26].

Ensuring safety of citizens and protecting them from criminal encroachments on historical heritage led to introduction of criminal liability for rehabilitation of Nazism (Article 354 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) in 2014. Violation of the law prohibiting justification of Nazism, deliberate spread of false information about activities of the USSR during the war and post-war period, as well as a number of acts committed in order to express obvious disrespect for public memory found expression in the objective side of the crime under consideration, in particular:

1. denial of the facts established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal for the trial and punishment of the main war criminals of the European axis countries, committed in public;
2. approval of crimes established by the specified sentence;
3. dissemination of deliberately false information about activities of the USSR during the Second World War, committed in public;
4. spread of information expressing obvious disrespect for society about the days of military glory and memorable dates of Russia related to protection of the Fatherland;
5. desecration of symbols of military glory of Russia;
6. insulting memory of defenders of the Fatherland;
7. humiliation of honor and dignity of a veteran of the Great Patriotic War.

Responsibility for the listed acts was introduced in order to eliminate a legislative gap – absence of criminal law norms establishing responsibility for approving crimes provided for by the International Military Tribunal for the trial and punishment of the main war criminals of the European Axis countries. Introduction of this norm, in our opinion, was a timely step, since the methods of committing such crimes have become more sophisticated, encroaching on security of the whole society.

In 2013, the first trial was held in the case of rehabilitation of Nazism. Citizen L. published an article entitled “15 facts about Banderera, or what the Kremlin is silent about” on December 24, 2013 on the personal page of the Vkontakte social network. According to statistics, the publication was seen by more



than 20 users. Employees of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation initiated a criminal case. The case materials stated that the citizen, having reposted article, spread “deliberately false information” about activities of the USSR during the Second World War (Archive of the Semenovskii District Court of Nizhny Novgorod Oblast. Criminal case No. 1-55/2013). It should be noted that the process took place at the time when a coup d’etat was committed in Ukraine and neo-Nazi ideas were actively introduced into the practice of state-building in the post-Soviet space, in particular, Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, having a fairly broad regulatory framework for preserving historical memory, none of the current legal acts enshrines the concept of “historical memory”. In general, the phenomenon of historical memory is one of the most poorly researched spheres of public consciousness in relation to jurisprudence. The current state of affairs can hardly be considered acceptable, especially in the situation when Russian society faces encroachments on its own history, and is also in the state of intensive search for ways to preserve its own historical identity.

From a scientific point of view, the concept of “historical memory” cannot be unambiguously deciphered. Foreign sociologists consider memory as an individual and collective phenomenon. Thus, J. G. Mead considers memory as a phenomenon of individual consciousness that is located in the “depths of the spirit” and is a repository of “traces” and “imprints” to understanding that the content of memory and its internal organization is determined from the outside, through tools provided by culture, prevailing norms, socio-political context, etc. [18, p. 119]. Individual memory in aggregate forms its collective form, through shared memories of events experienced together. In turn, E. Renan noted that the existence of a nation is impossible without shared memories, although there is a collective oblivion of some moments of the past [1, pp. 113–116].

Russian researchers also studied the concept and content of historical memory, often in the context of historical consciousness. For example, M.A. Barg notes that “public consciousness is historical not only because its content improves and progresses over time, but also because it “turns” to the past with its certain side, “plunges” into history” [2, p. 59].

L.P. Repina believes that “at the heart of every description of history there is historical consciousness that unites the present and the past, which, in turn, are then projected into the future” [21, p. 119]. In general, scientists speak of historical memory as an individual memory of an individual subject, which was transformed into a collective one by forming public consciousness of persons who experienced a certain event in the past. In addition to those who directly experienced a particular event, knowledge about it is passed down from generation to generation, which also forms historical memory of society.

Meanwhile, it is difficult to understand the term “historical memory”, as it itself is synthesized from various sources and includes a subjective point of view related to individual characteristics of perception of certain events. In our opinion, in order to exclude subjectivity of reproducing events, individual experience should not form the basis of historical memory, but that of historical information space created through communication and educational environment. Historical information comprises official science, products of human creative activity (literature, art), as well as political interest of the country. This creates a final product “historical memory”, represented by tangible and intangible objects: memorial structures, historical sources, public holidays, etc.

From a legal point of view, the situation is also not that simple. Since there is an object of legal protection in the form of historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, it is necessary to consider gaps in criminal legislation that do not allow the norm to be fully applied.

Thus, the current criminal liability for falsifying historical information about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War is limited only to the facts announced in the verdict of the Nuremberg Tribunal. However, many scientists and experts agree that it is important to expand the scope of application of criminal legal means in relation to deliberate distortions of historical facts about events of the Great Patriotic War, deliberately false assessments and statements regarding the place and role of the USSR in World War II, which were the result, first of all, of the collapse of the USSR, and, in turn, were not the subject of consideration by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Moreover,

many experts in this case refer to criminal law regulations, norms and precedents created in individual European states. We believe, in view of the above, that such a position deserves every attention.

At the same time, these proposals provoked a great public outcry in the Russian community. Some citizens are afraid of possible state censorship on subsequent products of scientific and creative activity of people in the historical sphere. Others believe that introduction of new criminal law norms in the field of protection of historical memory will contribute to strengthening repressive functions of the state. In other words, legal innovations in this area are met with caution in Russian society.

This sociological study is aimed at identifying public attitude to introducing criminal liability for falsification of historical information about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War and those facts that were not considered at the international trial in Nuremberg.

**Methods:** the article is based on results of the sociological study conducted by in January 2022. An online questionnaire survey was completed by participants of the online panel "Webanketa.com". Methods of analysis, synthesis, generalization and comparison were used to process received results.

Public opinion on the need to improve criminal legislation in relation to preventing distortion of historical facts about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War is the research subject.

The work is based on the hypothesis that establishment of criminal liability for falsification of historical information can effectively counteract distortions of history in modern society and will cover a wider range of criminal acts in the field of protection of historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation. Accordingly, it pursues to identify respondents' opinion on the need to counter attempts to falsify history, historical events that need criminal protection, prerequisites for committing crimes in this sphere, goals pursued by falsifiers of history, key directions of history distortion, and practical measures, capable of qualitatively countering falsification of historical information.

The online survey involved 628 people, in particular teachers of higher educational institutions, university students, law enforcement officers, practicing lawyers, as well as persons who have accounts in social net-

works, such as "Vkontakte", "Instagram", "Odnoklassniki". The respondents filled in the questionnaire prepared by the authors of the study at: <https://webanketa.com>.

Fifteen questions in the questionnaire are distributed in the following areas: social prerequisites for falsification of history as an illegal (criminal) phenomenon; qualitative definition of events in need of criminal legal protection of the state; goals and directions of distortion of the history of the Great Patriotic War; consequences of spreading deliberately false information about activities of the USSR during the war for society; measures for prevention of offenses and crimes in the field of protection of historical truth. The last set of questions is devoted to the age of citizens, their gender distribution, level of education and field of activity. Respondents are given the opportunity to express their own opinion on a number of issues. Logically, the questions are arranged according to the principle from general to particular. Some of them have several answer options.

The authors suggest that the results of the study can contribute to obtaining scientifically sound proposals on the need to criminalize the acts under study at the legislative level and determining the vector of legislative initiatives.

### *Results*

More than 75 years have passed since the end of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, several generations have changed, and it can be assumed that the memory of those terrible events in modern society has somewhat weakened. All this is accompanied by continuous attempts to distort and belittle the undeniable historical significance of the feat of Soviet soldiers. The Second World War is still the most global military clash, surpassing in scale all previous and subsequent wars in the history of the planet. The war was of particular importance for the Soviet people, who, despite possible enslavement and destruction, braced themselves and repelled Hitler's aggression. Undoubtedly, the war caused significant damage to the Soviet Union. "About 30 million Soviet people died on the battlefields, in concentration camps, occupied territories, besieged Leningrad, and on the home front; a third of the country's national wealth was destroyed; 1,710 cities, more than 70 thousand villages, a huge number of factories, mines, many kilometers of railway tracks were destroyed; the proportion of the male population decreased"

[5, p. 22]. The consequences are such that mass extermination of Soviet people during the war still affects the demographic situation in Russia. That is why the victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 is a matter of pride and heritage of our people; care for participants of the war and protection of historical memory of the events of that time becomes a historical duty of the state.

At the same time, nowadays there are facts of whitewashing and even glorification of persons who fought on the side of Nazi Germany, falsification of the history of the USSR during the war, perpetuating the memory of Nazi criminals, as well as their rehabilitation. In particular, since 2013–2014, in such an environment, the current position of the state is to fully protect historical memory of the feat of the Soviet people and prevent criminal acts aimed at neglecting the role of the USSR in the Victory over Nazi Germany.

Since memory of generations who have not experienced the hardships of war is based mainly on materials of school textbooks about the war, it can be assumed that the historical information about events of the mid-20th century presented in the general education programs of the Russian school potentially has a high degree of representativeness. Accordingly, a person who has received a high-quality secondary general education is able to distinguish false information about events of the Second World War from the true one and can identify cases of its intentional distortion. Thus, the majority of survey participants (71%) gave an affirmative answer to the first question about whether they noticed cases of deliberate distortion of the history of the bloodiest war.

Sixteen percent of the respondents, most of whom are students, did not notice facts of falsification of historical information; 13% of the respondents could not answer the question, most of which – representatives of Russian students. In general, the vast majority of respondents noted that they had experienced deliberate distortion of history (Table 1).

Table 1

*Number of politicians and public figures claim that they have faced attempts to deliberately distort the history of the Russian Federation. Have you personally noticed cases of deliberate falsification of historical facts?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
I have often noticed it	71.02	446

I have not noticed it	15.93	100
Difficult to answer	13.05	82
	Total of answers:	628
	Number of those who have not answered:	0

In order to stop the negative impact of the spread of false historical information, it is necessary to prevent possible cases of deliberate distortion of history, especially those capable of whitewashing the crimes of Nazism and fascism. To the next question of the questionnaire, “Is it necessary, in your opinion, to counteract those who are trying to deliberately distort the history of Russia?” 93% of respondents answered in the affirmative (Table 2).

Table 2

*Is it necessary, in your opinion, to counteract those who are trying to deliberately distort the history of Russia?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Yes	95.56	602
No	1.27	8
Difficult to answer	3.19	20
	Total of answers:	628
	Number of those who have not answered:	0

The following answers were received to the question of ways to counteract attempts to revise historical facts. Let us note that within the framework of this question, respondents could choose several answer options. The majority of the respondents (79%) found it necessary to “improve the quality of teaching the discipline “History” in general education and higher educational institutions”; 52% of the respondents supported “strengthening patriotic education”. In addition to raising the level of education and upbringing, the respondents considered it important to “disseminate historical truth through the media and information and telecommunication technologies, including the Internet” (64%), “denounce falsifications and distortions”, and “monitor the quality of literature, art and cinema” (44%). Another sufficient part of the respondents (45%) backed “introduction of legislative liability” for deliberate distortion of historical facts. It should be noted that within the framework of this issue, it was not specified what kind of liability should be introduced as a measure to counter attempts to falsify history. A small part of the respondents con-

sidered “holding rallies, actions and protests to prevent distortion of history” (3%), “deportation of persons spreading false information from the country” (2%) as effective means of countering falsification of history. Two percent of the respondents found it difficult to answer the question (Table 3).

*Table 3*  
*How exactly, in your opinion, should attempts to revise historical facts be countered?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Disseminate historical truth through the media and information and telecommunication technologies, including the Internet	64.2	401
Improve the quality of teaching the discipline “History” in general education and higher educational institutions	79.27	549
Monitor the quality of literature, art and cinema	44.39	276
Engage in patriotic education of young people	51.83	321
Introduce legislative liability	45.06	282
Hold rallies, actions and protests to prevent distortion of history	3.96	24
Denounce falsifications and distortions	44.12	265
Deport persons spreading false information	3.01	18
Difficult to answer	2.44	15

As for prevalence of false interpretation of historical events, the respondents supported the need for its protection by criminal law (89%) vs 7% of those who were against it. Four percent could not answer the question. These figures indicate the respondents’ positive attitude to the criminal law protection of Russian history (Table 4).

*Table 4*  
*Do you think that historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about the most significant events in the country’s history needs criminal protection?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Yes	88.85	558
No	7.16	45
Difficult to answer	3.98	25
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

Among the list of historical events in need of legal protection, according to 82% of the respondents, it is the history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War that requires it to a greater extent. Three percent of the respondents consider it necessary to protect the history of the Patriotic War of 1812, 6% – the history of the First World War of 1914–1918, 7% – the history of the October Revolution of 1917 (Table 5).

*Table 5*  
*Indicate which event, in your opinion, needs to be protected by criminal law more than others?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Patriotic War of 1812	3.82	24
First World War of 1914–1918	6.53	41
October Revolution of 1917	7.32	46
Second World War of 1939–1945 / Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945	82.33	517
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

Distribution of the respondents’ opinions on prerequisites for committing crimes in the field of protecting historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation of events of the Second World War was expressed in the following figures: 73% of the respondents highlighted a “low level of historical and legal literacy of the population”, 58% – “oblivion of historical results of the war among the younger generation”, 40% – “mismatch of politics and national interests of the state”. Twenty percent mentioned an “unstable position of the state in the international arena”, 17% – “consequences of globalization”, “difficult economic situation of the population”, “attractive economic promises from the followers of Nazism” (Table 5). We emphasize that the respondents could, in particular within this question, choose two or more answers.

*Table 6*  
*What prerequisites for committing crimes, in your opinion, exist in the field of protecting historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about events of the Second World War?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Consequences of globalization	17.99	112



Mismatch of politics and national interests of the state	40.55	254
Difficult economic situation of the population	17.68	111
Attractive economic promises from the followers of Nazism	15.85	99
Unstable position of the state in the international arena	20.43	128
Low level of historical and legal literacy of the population	73.48	461
Oblivion of historical results of the war among the younger generation	58.84	369

As for the question, which also provides the opportunity to choose several answers, about the purpose that falsifiers of history pursue, 83% of the respondents identified “belittling and distorting the role of any people or state in significant historical events”. Besides, the respondents noted “establishing the historical right to a certain territory for a particular people” (36%), “proving legal succession of the state in relation to a particular historical predecessor” (19%), “substantiating the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty” (14%). The respondents also presented their own suggestions, such as “introduction of the idea of criminality of the Soviet state into citizens’ consciousness to create conditions for delegitimization and subsequent revision of decisions taken during the Soviet period, which will lead to revision of the entire post-war world order”, “justification of fascism and Nazism”, “provocation” (Table 7).

*Table 7*  
 What purpose, in your opinion, do falsifiers of the Second World War history pursue?

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Establishing the historical right to a certain territory for a particular people	35.67	219
Substantiating the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty	14.33	87
Proving legal succession of the state in relation to a particular historical predecessor	18.6	113
Belittling and distorting the role of any people or state in significant historical events	82.62	514
Other	9.15	56

On the question of key directions of falsification of the history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, the following results were obtained: 71% mentioned “diminishing the decisive role of the USSR in the

defeat of Nazi Germany” as the main direction of distortion of the history of the Russian Federation; 61% – “glorification of collaborationist formations from among the Ukrainian nationalists (The Banderites), the Russian Liberation army (the Vlasovites), nationalists of the Baltic republics (“Forest Brothers”) and justification of their activities”; 55% – “denial of the liberation mission of the Red Army (“USSR-occupier”)”. Thirty-five percent of the respondents argued about equal responsibility of A. Hitler and I. Stalin for unleashing the war as the main direction of falsification of the history of the beginning of the Second World War (Table 7). Let us note that the respondents could choose more than one answer.

*Table 8*  
 What are, in your opinion, key directions of falsification of the history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War nowadays?

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Equal responsibility of A. Hitler and I. Stalin for unleashing the war	35.98	225
Diminishing the decisive role of the USSR in the defeat of Nazi Germany	70.43	442
Denial of the liberation mission of the Red Army (“USSR-occupier”)	54.57	342
Glorification of collaborationist formations from among the Ukrainian nationalists (The Banderites), the Russian Liberation army (the Vlasovites), nationalists of the Baltic republics (“Forest Brothers”) and justification of their activities	60.67	381
Other	8.84	55

In addition to falsification of historical information and events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, the acts provided for in Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Rehabilitation of Nazism” have become widespread on the territory of Russia, which should also not be ignored by the public. We asked the respondents about the growth of facts of rehabilitation, justification and propaganda of Nazi and fascist ideologies today. Twenty-three percent of the respondents spoke about a significant increase, 23% – a certain increase in these acts. The fact that the situation had not changed was reported by 13% of the respondents; a slight reduction in the facts of rehabilitation of Nazism was noted by 10%.

A significant reduction in the number of facts of rehabilitation, justification, propaganda of Nazi and fascist ideology was considered by 9% of the respondents. Twenty percent of the respondents could not answer the question (Table 9).

*Table 9*  
*Has the number of facts of rehabilitation, justification and propaganda of Nazi and fascist ideologies, in your opinion, increased nowadays?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Yes, there is a significant increase	23.24	146
in general, it has increased	23.57	148
It is at the same level	13.38	84
It has decreased slightly	10.67	67
On the contrary, there is a significant decline	9.22	58
Difficult to answer	19.92	125
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

The majority of the respondents (45%) gave an affirmative answer to the question: “Criminal codes of foreign countries often contain articles stipulating liability for encroachment on established historical facts. Is, in your opinion, the introduction of such a criminal law norm in the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation justified?” Twenty-six percent did not find this proposal reasonable, 28% could not answer the question (Table 10).

*Table 10*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Yes	45.38	285
No	26.11	164
Difficult to answer	28.51	179
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

Criminal codes of foreign countries often contain articles stipulating liability for encroachment on established historical facts. Is, in your opinion, the introduction of such a criminal law norm in the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation justified?

The choice of several answers was given to the question about practical measures aimed at countering falsification of the his-

tory of the Second World War, which, according to the respondents, will be able to reduce the number of encroachments on historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about the events of 1939–1945. Most respondents (65%) were in favor of “providing open access to archival documents of the period of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, little known to the public, thus hindering revisionists’ attempts to arbitrarily interpret them in their own interests, thereby deliberately distorting and falsifying national history”. Many (49%) support “active military-patriotic work with the younger generation in educational organizations, summer health camps, youth forums, etc.”, which once again confirms the previously presented answers about improving the quality of education of the younger generation. Forty-four percent of the respondents were for the “formulation of the question of responsibility of countries and statesmen who revise results of the Second World War, denigrate members of the anti-Hitler coalition, and justify the Nazis and their accomplices directly or indirectly in all authoritative international organizations”. Forty-three percent chose “improving the regulatory framework related to liability for deliberate falsification of the history of Russia” as an effective counteraction measure. For 29% of the respondents it is the “creation of a nation-wide integral system to counteract falsification of the history of Russia, when every public body and organization would have a non-standard unit responsible for fulfilment of this task”; for 27% of the respondents – an “increase in the volume of state funding for patriotic mass media, the target audience of which is young people”. In our opinion, providing state funding to all educational institutions of the country for subscriptions to such publications would contribute to the formation of positive historical consciousness and preservation of historical memory. What is more, “improvement of general scientific and special historical methods based on the latest scientific methodology” is one more effective measure to counteract revision of history (20% of the respondents). In conclusion, we note that none of the respondents neglected the question, which demonstrates citizens’ concern for preserving historical memory and preventing falsification of the Russian history in the future (Table 11).

*Table 11*

*Which of the presented practical measures aimed at countering falsification of the history of the Second World War to the detriment of Russia's interests, in your opinion, will be able to reduce the number of encroachments on historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about events of 1939–1945?*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Creation of a nation-wide integral system to counteract falsification of the history of Russia, when every public body and organization would have a non-standard unit responsible for fulfilment of this task	28.96	181
Creation of public organizations to solve problems connected with history falsification	20.73	130
Formulation of the question of responsibility of countries and statesmen who revise results of the Second World War, denigrate members of the anti-Hitler coalition, and justify the Nazis and their accomplices directly or indirectly in all authoritative international organizations	44.51	279
Improving the regulatory framework related to liability for deliberate falsification of the history of Russia	43.6	273
Consolidation of scientific communities of Russia and the CIS countries, whose population and territories suffered the most from aggression during the war. Practical implementation of this direction involves regular holding of joint symposiums, conferences, publication of scientific papers devoted to the most significant events of the war and post-war periods	36.28	227
Interpretation of new and existing data with regard to the latest scientific methodology, general scientific and special historical methods	20.43	128
Active military-patriotic work with the younger generation in educational organizations, summer health camps, youth forums, etc	50	314
Increasing volume of state funding for patriotic mass media, the target audience of which is young people. Provision of budgetary funds to all educational institutions of the country for subscriptions to similar publications. The goal is to form positive historical consciousness and preserve historical memory	26.52	166
Providing open access to archival documents of the period of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, little known to the public, thus hindering revisionists' attempts to arbitrarily interpret them in their own interests, thereby deliberately distorting and falsifying national history	64.94	408

The last set of questions is devoted to the survey of the age of citizens, their gender distribution, level of education and field of activity. Thus, the studied audience has different gender distribution (women – 64%, 36% – men) (Table 12).

*Table 12*

*Specify your gender*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Female	63.70	400
Male	36.30	228
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

The age of the respondents is presented in the following ratio: 23% represented the age group of 8–25 years, 19% – 26–35 years, 20% – 36–45 years, 23% – 45–60 years, and 15% over the age of 60 years (Table 13).

*Table 13*

*Specify your age*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
18-25 years	22.60	142
26-35 years	18.64	117

36 -45 years	19.90	125
45-60 years	23.73	149
over 60 years	15.14	95
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

The survey participants have a good level of education: 67% of the respondents have higher education, 25% are currently receiving higher education, 4% of the respondents have – secondary special education (technical school, vocational education institution), and 2% have graduated from college. Two percent of the respondents have secondary general education, no respondent have finished school (Table 14).

*Table 14*

*Specify the level of your education*

Answers	%	Number of respondents
Incomplete secondary (grades 8–9)	0	0
General secondary (grades 10–11)	2.22	14
Secondary vocational (college)	1.60	10



Secondary special 1 technical (technical school)	3.66	23
Incomplete higher education (at least 3 years of study)	25.00	157
Higher education	67.52	424
	Total of answers: Number of those who have not answered:	628 0

The respondents are occupied in law (65%), social work (16%), healthcare (10%), history (11%), and economics (2%). Marketing specialists, accountants, teachers, etc. comprise 1% of the total number of respondents each. Thus, the survey participants are highly educated people, among whom there is a large proportion of representatives of legal specialties who are able to give a high-quality legal assessment and professionally answer the proposed questions.

#### *Discussion*

The authors of the research analyze results of the sociological survey conducted as part of the study of possible use of criminal legal means to protect historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War. The sociological research allows us to obtain a cross-section of public opinion about phenomena that are studied by specialists, experts, scientists, but have a contradictory nature of discussions. The analysis of the empirical material of this study helps determine that falsification of the history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War is a common phenomenon today and does not leave the citizens of the Russian Federation indifferent. Russians, whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers defended their homeland with immeasurable losses, honor the memory of heroes and are certainly interested in objective coverage of the history of the war and all events related to it.

The criminal distortion of events of the national history of the Second World War can be conditionally divided into three vectors of falsification: falsification of history committed by representatives of Western countries, distortion of history in the post-Soviet space, domestic falsification.

1. Falsification of the history of the Second World War triggered by Western countries.

As part of the fight against external interference in Russian political life, it is necessary to consider deliberate distortion of the history

of the most significant misanthropic event of the 21st century, and the role of the USSR in the victory over Nazi Germany. Although the tragedy of the Second World War itself is not disputed at the official level, the assessment of its causes, its nature, and results is interpreted by representatives of the Atlantic community members (the United States and Western European countries) in accordance with their own priorities and interests that contradict national interests of Russia and its allies. All this is focused on understating Russia's role in the international arena, and transforming spheres of influence in the world. The collective West in the presented concept proposes to consider itself the liberator of mankind from Nazism, and presents Russia only as a follower of the totalitarian Soviet Union. Moreover, this concept often emphasizes that "Nazism" and "Communism" are equivalent regimes with a totalitarian aggressive nature. Here we mention the statement of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson that "the Soviet Union lured Poland between the hammer of fascism and the anvil of communism" published in "Twitter". It should be noted that the authors of this concept apparently do not take into account the rationale of the American researcher Carlton Hayes, who in 1939, speaking at the scientific symposium, pointed out that "totalitarianism is a market economy phenomenon, a phenomenon of bourgeois civilization and outside of it, it does not work" [32]. Carlton Hayes attributed Mussolini's Italian fascism and Hitler's Nazism in Germany to totalitarian regimes. Stalin's Soviet Union, in his opinion, is a completely different type of state, where there is no private property and classes, where systemic anti-capitalism – socialism was built, where the ideology fundamentally different from the Nazi ideology prevailed [32].

The desire to belittle the role of the Soviet people in the victory over fascism is illustrated by the example of biased coverage of the events of the Second World War. Thus, according to historian H. Baldwin (USA), the outcome of the Second World War was decided by 11 battles ("great campaigns"), namely, Operation Market Garden in Holland, the landing of Anglo-American troops in Normandy, the Battle for Midway Atoll in the Pacific Theater of Operations, etc. At the same time, of the battles won by the Red Army, he mentions only the Stalingrad one [31]. Surely, during 4 years of the war the parties conduct-



ed countless battles, some of which became significant, but there were battles that determined the outcome of the most terrible war in the history of mankind, such as the Battle of Moscow (1941–1942), during which Germany suffered the first major defeat in World War II, and for the first time the myth of invincibility of its army was dispelled; the Battle of Kursk (1943), which resulted in the change in the military balance dramatically in favor of the Red Army and created favorable conditions for subsequent strategic operations. Obviously, the American historian deliberately does not mention the main successes of the USSR during the war, which determined the course of historical events, in order to belittle its role in the Victory.

2. Distortion of the history in the post-Soviet space.

The next vector of falsifications is “reinterpretation” of historical events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War occurred in the territories of the former Soviet republics. Unfortunately, the common past between countries of the post-Soviet space and Russia generates not only “good-neighborly” partnerships, but, often, relations built on rejection of the common Soviet past. Ukraine is a leader in these relations. Falsification of history in Ukraine is one of the main components of modern Ukrainian Russophobia. The essence of this phenomenon is that some, as a rule, nationalist Ukrainians who do not want to have a common history with the Russians interpret events of the Second World War in such a way that they are victims not only of Hitler’s repressions, but also of Stalin’s repressions. For the sake of building their own historical concept, Ukrainian pseudo-historians resort to numerous omissions and historical speculations, and outright lies and distortion of facts. For example, the myth was actively spread on the territory of the country that during the Second World War, not one (Great Patriotic War), but several wars were fought in Ukraine – German-Ukrainian, Soviet-Ukrainian, Polish-Ukrainian” [28].

Georgia is another country that equated the communist regime with fascism. So, in 2013, the Parliament of Georgia amended the Code of Administrative Offenses and the Charter of Freedom [9], according to which the use of fascist and communist symbols in public places will be punished with a fine of 600 US dollars. The Georgian government does not see the difference between the crimes of Na-

zism and communism, and considers it necessary to introduce a ban on wearing Soviet orders and medals, which offends memory of exploits of veterans of the Great Patriotic War, and as a result falsifies the history of the Great Patriotic War.

A glaring fact is Poland’s adoption on September 23, 2009 of the resolution that qualified liberation of the Polish-occupied lands of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus by the Red Army in September 1939 as aggression against Poland. There is an obvious disregard for the official history and contribution of the peoples of the Soviet Union to liberation from the “brown plague of the 20th century”. In general, at the official level, the USSR was declared an aggressor who along with Germany unleashed World War II [15]. In this context, we agree with the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov: “attempts to falsify history, equalize victims and executioners cause outrage... Russia will continue to harshly oppose such plans that threaten stability of the entire world order” [16, p. 1].

3. Domestic falsification of our own history.

Russian researchers are also incredibly productive in interpretation of history according to their own scenarios, ignoring archival materials and official historical sources.

The most famous propagandist of myths about events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War is the former intelligence officer and literary author Viktor Suvorov (real name — Vladimir Rezun), now living in the UK. In the published books “Icebreaker”, as well as the subsequent books “M-Day”, “The Last Republic”, “Suicide”, “Purification”, etc., he consistently developed the thesis that allegedly the USSR was the initiator of the Second World War [10, p. 446].

Thanks to the journalist Yulia Latynina, the myth that Soviet soldiers, at the beginning of the war, surrendered en masse and went over to Hitler’s side became widespread: “how did it happen that the Russian people, name me at least one more war in which such crowds went over to the enemy, threw such fantastic weapons and how to explain it...” [17]. This statement has nothing to do with reality, since even in the most difficult conditions of combat, the Soviet people restrained Hitler’s blitz attack and retained a large number of soldiers [12, pp. 289–332].

Of course, within the framework of this study, it is impossible to consider the en-

tire array of falsifications that are so actively coming to us from abroad and from individual compatriots. These examples clearly show directions of falsification of the history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, methods and means to revise history.

In modern mass media, the Internet, cinema and literature, history is not always covered objectively, and criminal encroachments on historical memory are actively spreading in society and create unfavorable ground for the cultivation of a new generation of young people who are not able to recognize the truth of historical information. Methods and means of criminal falsification of history are being actively improved. The Russian historian V.V. Korneev identifies the following methods for falsification of history: falsification of a fact, event, phenomenon, or source, as well as their subjective interpretation, which “all together lead to the creation of a mythological picture of the world, disinforming society, which can have sad consequences for functioning of Russian society in the context of modern global challenges” [14].

These methods are effectively used by falsifiers of the history of the Second World War. As it seems, Russia’s geopolitical opponents in the person of special services and organizations of individual states, Nazi ideologists and leaders of extremist structures focus in their activities mainly on young people (sports and student environment, informal associations of nationalists, etc.) in order to dilute traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, provoke crimes and offenses, destabilize domestic political and social situation.

In order to prevent the undermining of national interests, countering falsification of history should be an important component of maintaining historical consciousness of the society. “The purpose of state policy in this regard is to effectively counteract attempts to falsify history at different levels of formation of public consciousness by forming and maintaining an appropriate discourse in the information field of the country, to help bridge gaps in public consciousness and thus strengthen the Russian identity, historical subjectivity of the Russian state” [27].

Measures to counter attempts to falsify and distort history are different, and the respondents consider betterment of the quality of education in schools and higher educational institutions as key ones. This proposal has certain ground, as since the 1990s the

ideas of patriotism and citizenship have been “washed out” from the school curriculum, many significant Russian victories – excluded from textbooks, and unfounded events that are personally interpreted by the author of the textbook and have no historical basis – included [29].

In addition to these measures, it is advisable to support the so-called “memory policy” at the state level. “Modern historical policy is aimed at forming the political unity of Russian society on the ways of glorification and mythologization of the common past” [22]. We note that in Russia the policy of historical memory in the Russian Federation has recently been widening: nowadays various national projects, for example, “No Statute of Limitations”, are created, and crimes against humanity committed by Hitler and his followers – documented. Various events and international conferences are organized covering topics, such as causes and consequences of the Second World War, the policy of I.V. Stalin, the lessons of Nuremberg, the years of the Cold War, etc.

It seems to us that improving the quality of teaching history, and accordingly, state support for historical research, as well as control of historical information disseminated in society (including introduction of legislative liability for false information) will facilitate counteraction of falsification of history, preserve traditional spiritual and moral values and prevent erosion of cultural identity in society.

It should be noted that the interviewees see prospects in the legislative consolidation of liability for falsifying historical information about events of 1939–1945, in particular, the norm of criminal law would contribute to expansion of the protective function of the state in the field of protecting historical memory of the peoples of the Russian Federation. Moreover, respondents are sure that it is the Great Patriotic War that needs protection by criminal legal means, since the victory in the war of 1941–1945 is the pride of our people, national treasure and important component in the patriotic education of the country’s younger generation. It is fair to note that it is indeed the period of 1939–1945 that is subjected to the greatest number of false interpretations of events, since the Victory of the Soviet people remains the “cornerstone” in the world understanding of the results of the Second World War, which encourages the state to take a special attitude to attempts to revise the reasons

for its beginning, results, as well as activities of the USSR during the war. The first crimes encroaching on the protection of historical heritage of the history of the Great Patriotic War were recorded long before the introduction of Norm 354.1 in the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. During the period of perestroika, “persistent attempts were made to break the historical and moral code of perception of the Great Patriotic War through the implantation of a significant number of various black myths into the official ideology and mass consciousness: about the nature of the war, scale of losses, key moments of hostilities, price of Victory, etc.” [30].

Care for participants of the war and protection of historical memory of the events of that time become not only the historical duty of the state, but also the personal responsibility of each descendant of the participants of those terrible events. Of course, the decline in the level of historical and legal literacy of the population boost activities of falsifiers of history and, due to the fact that many years have passed since those events, historical events of the Second World War, reasons for its beginning and results are being forgotten.

This thesis once again highlights the problem of the insufficient level of school education, which creates grounds for new attempts to falsify history of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War. Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Russian Military Historical Society, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on environmental protection, ecology and transport S.B. Ivanov noted: “attempts to revise the results of the Second World War in the West are politicization of history, focused on young people who do not know historical facts about the events of 80 years ago. After all, our current schoolchildren do not know history as well as, say, my generation did”. He also added that when interviewing fifth- and sixth-grade students, a “simple question of who the Soviet Union fought with, how the Great Patriotic War ended has, to put it mildly, different answers” [11].

Such a situation in educational programs cannot but cause concern, since it is pupils and students who become the main object targeted by falsifiers of history. In this regard, the establishment of control over the quality of teaching history and other humanities in universities and schools will contribute to improving literacy rates of the population and prevent penetration of false destructive information

about the most significant events of our history into its consciousness. Professor of MGIMO E.G. Ponomareva defines “reformatting of consciousness” as the main goal of falsifications of history, which is a “kind of ‘artillery preparation’ ” that creates opportunities for solving a complex of financial, economic, geopolitical and psychohistorical tasks of competitors and direct enemies of our country” [20, p. 6].

These prerequisites facilitate criminal manifestations of history distortion; the respondents consider belittling the role of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in order to discredit Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union in the world community as the crucial goal of history revision. For example, a correspondent of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper conducted a survey of representatives of different countries on the results of the Second World War before the Victory Day in 2019. Thus, 90% of the French residents reply that the United States won the war, the residents of Italy and Belgium also answer that “the Americans liberated the world”, and the Americans note that “the average American has no idea about details of the USSR’s participation in World War II. Most Americans would say that the allies were, for example, England, France and possibly the Netherlands”. In Germany, compared to the whole of Europe, the largest number of people remember that the USSR was the main force in the fight against Nazism. In England, 59% of the respondents are sure that it was the British army that defeated Hitler [29]. Statistics of responses indicates that criminals achieve their goal effectively, and the whole world does not know about the feat that Soviet soldiers performed and what losses (26 million people) the USSR suffered.

Without any doubt, the criminal purpose of falsifying history is destructive for our country and mainly aimed at splitting the peoples that were part of the USSR (Ukraine as an example), as well as at establishing a negative attitude towards the entire Russian people as the successor of the Soviet one. Falsifiers are focused on depriving Russia of the status of a victorious country and the USSR of the right to play a decisive role in the victory over Nazi Germany. “In this area of information warfare, myths are used about “weakness of the Soviet military art, Soviet commanders and military leaders”, as well as that “lend-lease supplies were the economic basis of the victory of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War” [4].



Falsifiers of history try to establish equality between those who started the war and those who preserved peace with their courage and heroic self-sacrifice, as well as glorify collaborationist formations from among the Ukrainian nationalists (the Banderites), the Russian Liberation Army (the Vlasovites), nationalists of the Baltic republics ("Forest Brothers") and justify their activities. This opinion is undoubtedly connected with the country's political past and geographical location of the Russian Federation and its neighbors. Thus, glorification of Nazism in Ukraine worries not only Russia, but also the entire world community. An American political scientist of Dutch origin, C. Mudde, who studies modern right-wing radicalism, after the 2013–2014 events in Ukraine, issued a statement condemning the entry of representatives of the neo-fascist Svoboda party into the illegally formed new government and appointment of members of another even more dangerous right-wing extremist group Right Sector to responsible government posts [3]. The policy of the current Ukrainian authorities is aimed at rehabilitating Nazi figures, justifying their crimes, cooperating with the Nazis, and praising such persons. There is a bright example: the annual (since 2016) march of radical individuals to the glory of S. Bandera, whose biography is associated with creation of the Ukrainian insurgent army and numerous terrorist acts against opponents. Such a "favorable" position is used by persons who distort the history of the Second World War, relying on the support of countries where neo-Nazism is reviving.

Occupation of the Baltic countries by Soviet troops is a popular area of falsification in recent years. In particular, on May 7, 2020, the Presidents of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia accused the USSR of occupying and annexing their territories in congratulation on the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory. In their opinion, the Russian Federation is trying to falsify history, distorting the truth about past events: "the end of the Second World War did not bring freedom to the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. Instead, one totalitarian regime was replaced by another when the Baltic countries were cynically incorporated into the Soviet Union..." [24].

Leaders of some Western countries (the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine) constancy speak about causes of the outbreak of war, already confirmed by historical archival sources. They claim that not only Hitler, but also I. Stalin was responsible for unleashing the Second

World War. Thus, there appeared a whole global concept, reflected in the resolution "On the importance of preserving historical memory for the future of Europe", adopted by the European Parliament in 2019. The international legal act attempts to equate the Nazi regime of Hitler and the communist regime of Stalin, as well as recognize the USSR as an aggressor country. Russia spoke negatively about the content of the resolution, emphasizing the inadmissibility of distorting the past: "History, in our deep conviction, should remain the lot of responsible professionals, and not politicians who use it for their own selfish purposes" [19].

The progress that humanity should strive for excludes falsification of history as a human activity, since the "modern world is interested not only in obtaining breakthrough technologies..." [25, p. 109], but also in objective coverage of world history. Not all Western countries are aimed at distorting world history, in many of them world history is protected by legislative norms. The respondents draw a parallel between the existence of foreign legal norms to protect historical facts and the absence of such in the national legislation; consider it possible to adopt the experience of some Western European countries and establish a criminal law regime for protecting crucial historical events of the middle of the 20th century. Indeed, the national legislations of some Western European countries have legislative norms, including criminal law, establishing liability for distortion of historical information [8]. In particular, Austria, Israel, Switzerland, Belgium, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, France and others criminalize Holocaust denial. Public denial of the Holocaust, distortion of historical facts about persecution of the Jewish people during World War II, belittling the number of victims among the Jewish people, refutation of established facts of violence against them are considered criminal in these countries. For example, at the beginning of the 21st century, the persons who did not recognize the Holocaust were prosecuted: "in 2000 a Swiss resident was sentenced to one year in prison for denying the Holocaust, because he published personal doubts about the existence of gas chambers and the number of dead Jews on the pages of the journal" [6].

In addition to a positive attitude to establishment of a rather repressive measure for protecting historical memory of the events of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War



in the form of a new special criminal law norm, the study allowed us to identify other practical measures to counteract falsification of history. Thus, the interviewees note that open access to archival documents of the period of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, their study in the framework of general education courses will contribute to improving the legal and historical literacy of the population; encouragement of military-patriotic work with the younger generation can weaken the decline in morale of the country's residents. Since the persons attempting to falsify historical information about activities of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War and spreading deliberately false or deliberately distorted information use insufficient awareness of Russian citizens about the crimes and facts established by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, as well as no access is provided to the Russian-language text of the verdict of the Tribunal, it is necessary to publish and disseminate this unprecedented significant document among citizens of the Russian Federation. Inclusion in the "Domestic History" program of the history of the International Military Tribunal and key facts established by the Tribunal would be a timely measure. All this should be focused on increasing the level of historical literacy of young people, promoting reliable historical knowledge and clarifying unreliability of the

most popular myths not only about the Great Patriotic War, but also other significant events in the history of Russia.

#### Conclusion

Summarizing the above, we note that the hypothesis proposed by the authors that the Russian Federation does not fully protect historical truth about the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War by criminal legal means was confirmed by the responses of 628 respondents. The results of the conducted sociological survey can be used in rule-making activities to substantiate the need to improve the current domestic criminal legislation in the field of protecting historical heritage of the Russian Federation on the events of the Great Patriotic War, including by introducing a new special norm into the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation that can protect not only from falsification and oblivion of facts established by the International Military Tribunal, but also a number of other events and activities of the persons involved in them, confirmed by official historical sources.

The authors of the article are sure that it is highly important to preserve history in its original form, without political "embellishments" and biased interpretations and deliberate distortion that can belittle the role of the Soviet people in the bloodiest war of the 20th century.

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