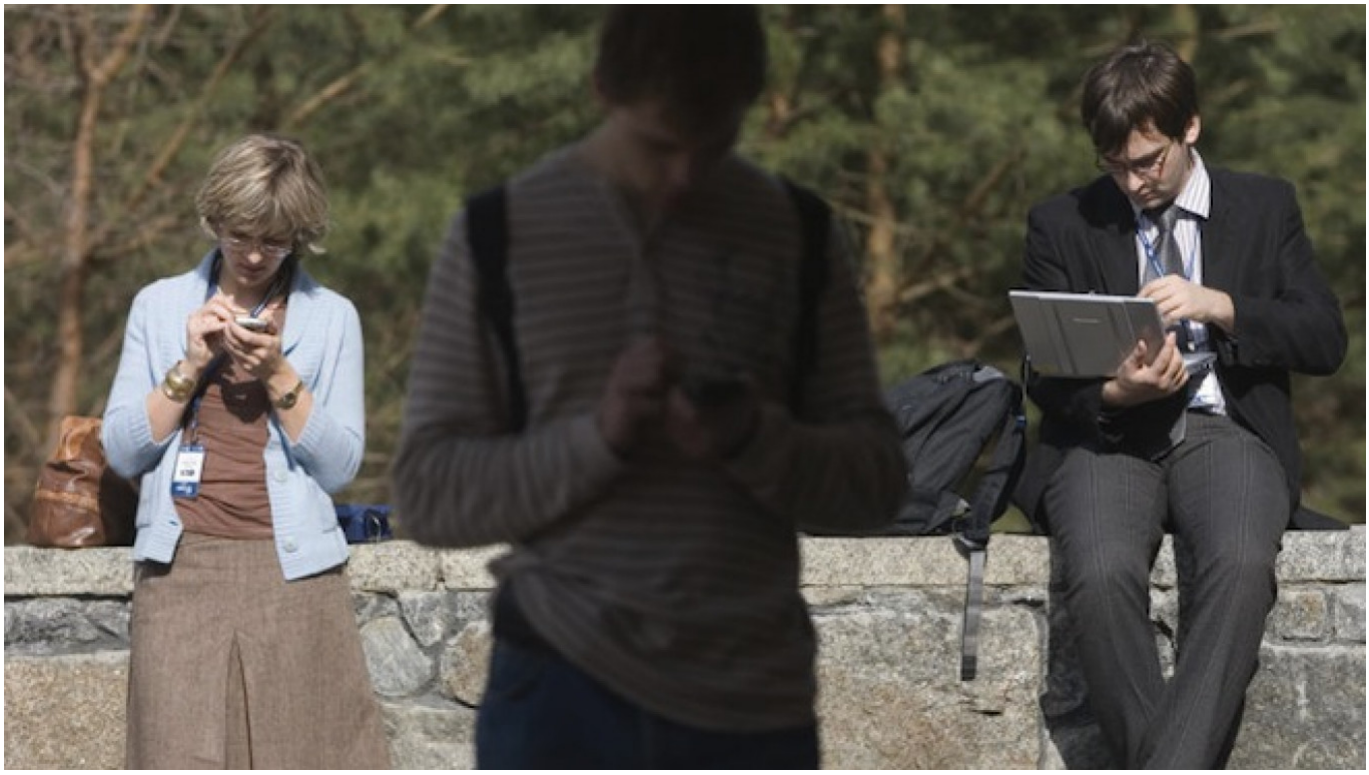
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Culture Minister Wants 'Patriotic Internet' to Protect Russians

By Anna Dolgov

January 14, 2015



Russia's Culture Minister has called for the creation of a "patriotic Internet."

Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky has called for the creation of a "patriotic Internet" to combat Western ideas, adding that those who are against Russia are against the truth.

Russia needs to "consolidate the state and society on the basis of values instilled by our history," according to a statement released Tuesday and published on the website of a military historical society chaired by Medinsky.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and other public figures also put their names to the statement, which added: "Against us — and that means against the truth — a new blitzkrieg has begun."

"We need a patriotic trend in the public conscience. We need films, books, exhibitions, modern video games, we need a patriotic Internet, patriotic radio and television."

The statement's signatories, who also included artists such as film director Nikita Mikhalkov along with army generals, indicated that their call was prompted by a recent statement by Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk that was "unprecedented in its insolence and deceitfulness."

In an interview with Germany's ARD television this month, Yatsenyuk spoke of a "Soviet invasion of Ukraine, as well as of Germany." He later told Germany's DW that he was referring to the Soviet occupation of East Germany after World War II.

In Moscow, where government officials and state-run media have long accused Ukraine of being overrun by "fascists" and the West of condoning them, the interview with ARD received much publicity as supposed justification of Russia's concerns.

State-run Rossia television ran a headline on its website this weekend that read: "Yatsenyuk Conceded He's a Nazi," followed by a story arguing that the Ukrainian politician had been referring to Soviet actions during the war.

The culture minister's society reflected this rhetoric by describing Ukraine's government by a term referring to Nazi Germany's SS death squads.

The interview with ARD was the "first barrage against the historical truth, made by Yatsenyuk and his Einsatzgruppen," the statement said.

"We cannot yield to the nonchalance of Europe, where the chants 'I am Charlie' are droning out the roar of artillery barrages by the Ukrainian army against the peaceful towns of the Donbass," the statement added.

While Russia's President Vladimir Putin last week expressed condolences after 12 people were killed by Islamic terrorists at the offices of French magazine Charlie Hebdo, Kremlin loyalists have accused France and other Western nations of ignoring supposed offenses by Ukrainian government forces against pro-Moscow separatists in Ukraine's east.

Kiev and Western governments blame the bloodshed in eastern Ukraine on Russia's supposed supplies of arms and fighters to the separatists, but Moscow denies the allegations.

"Through the efforts of the Russian president, we are seeing a rebirth of the might of our army and navy, which crushed European Nazism 70 years ago," the statement signed by the culture minister said.

"A strong army is the best guarantee of peace," it said, adding: "We must support the president's course and begin an ideological counteroffensive in this war for the minds."

As Moscow's relations with the West grow fetid over the Ukrainian crisis, Russian officials have increasingly called for "patriotic" education, media and cultural projects, while shutting down a number of reputable websites that had criticized Moscow's policies.

Last spring, a Russian senator also proposed creating a Russia-only Internet that would be shut off from the U.S. and EU and suggested the service could be named after the popular children's cartoon character Cheburashka.

Contact the author at newsreporter@imedia.ru

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