

Russian Defense Ministry Plans Archive Unit to Counter 'WWII Lies'

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Russian history textbooks are being standardized to present a “canonical” version of the Soviet war with Nazi Germany.

Russia's Defense Ministry will deploy a special scholarly unit to its central archive to defend against “falsifications” in accounts of the Soviet Red Army's conduct during World War II, the Interfax news agency reported Monday.

Citing an unidentified military source, Interfax said the Defense Ministry was working to create small research units to station at the Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defense by 2016.

Their purpose will be “first and foremost, to examine the history of the Second World War [and] facts associated with falsifications concerning the victory of the Soviet people in the years of the Great Patriotic War,” the source said.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has seen a resurgence of nationalism and patriotism — feelings predominantly rooted in glorification of the Soviet Red Army's contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

In this climate of popular militarism, it has become taboo in Russia to question the conduct of Red Army soldiers during the Soviet campaign through Eastern Europe, which resulted in the capture of Berlin in 1945.

Russian history textbooks are being standardized to present a “canonical” version of the Soviet war with Nazi Germany, free from unpatriotic notions that Soviet soldiers were complicit in acts of rape and other wartime atrocities.

In one example of this, leading British historian Antony Beevor learned in August that his books about the eastern front in World War II would be removed from all schools and universities in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg for “promoting stereotypes formed during the Third Reich” that Red Army soldiers engaged in mass rapes of German women in the later stages of the war.

According to Interfax, the new special companies of information warriors — who will combat historical narratives such as those forwarded by Beevor — will be formed of young specialists in history, social sciences, and related humanities subjects.

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