

Russian Preschoolers' Victory Day March Stirs Outrage

May 10, 2019

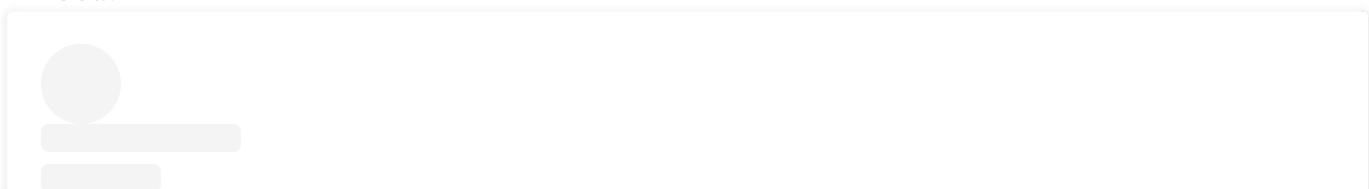


Pyatigorsk administration press service

Children in southern Russia who donned military uniforms and paraded in front of their parents and officials ahead of Victory Day have generated pride among local authorities and caused outrage elsewhere in Russia.

The Pyatigorsk city administration [boasted](#) that around 500 preschoolers dressed as airborne troops, sailors and Soviet soldiers took part in the parade on Monday. Since-deleted footage [showed](#) some children as young as 6 armed with mockups of U.S.-made M16 rifles that the Soviet army had never used.

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Около 500 пятигорских детсадовцев участвуют в первом в истории города Параде дошкольных войск. #Пятигорск #СКФО #ДеньПобеды #ПарадДошкольныхВойск

A post shared by [Администрация Пятигорска \(@adm_pyatigorsk\)](#) on May 6, 2019 at 12:41am PDT

While officials who oversaw the parade said instilling “patriotic education” at a young age contributes to a “healthier society,” others were outraged by the display, saying that children shouldn’t be taught to glorify war.

Tamara Pletneva, the head of the State Duma’s Committee on Family, Women and Children, stressed that kids should not be armed with weapons.

“As for going out with flowers, that’s very good,” she was [quoted](#) by the Govorit Moskva radio station as saying.

“I’m terribly saddened that May 9 turned into a kind of carnival in Russia,” Ksenia Chudinova, editor-in-chief of the Snob.ru magazine, [said](#). “But what can you do? Russia has no other fun holidays.”

Related article: [Russia to Re-Educate ‘Brainwashed’ Youth in Patriotic Camps](#)

Psychologist Guzel Makhortova noted that the young military display “feeds the often unhealthy narcissism of adults.”

“Children can begin to identify themselves with warriors, something they’re not due to their natural individuality. Society dictates who they should be,” she told Snob.ru.

A BBC Russia compilation of Victory Day commemorations ahead of May 9 [shows](#) that the practice of dressing children in military uniforms stretches from Moscow to Siberia.

The militarization of young Russians comes almost four years after President Vladimir Putin [ordered](#) the establishment of *Yunarmia* — or Youth Army, which has drawn comparisons to the Hitler Youth. As its numbers swelled to half a million by Victory Day, the Youth Army hopes to reach 1 million members between the ages of 8 and 18 by 2020.

Last month, state television [launched](#) a new channel targeting Russia’s youth with 24/7 programming dedicated entirely to World War II. In March, security officials [announced](#) that delinquent youngsters would be sent to military-patriotic reeducation camps.

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