

DEAR READER

About this book

Since the end of 2021, Ukraine and the world were living in suspense: was Putin going to realize his threats of a full-scale invasion? The situation seemed unprecedentedly serious and almost unbelievable at the same time. On the one hand, never did he so openly lead Russia to a large-scale European war. On the other hand, there was still hope that this was only blackmail, an attempt to increase the stakes as much as possible, and that at the last moment the dictator would back down.

The probability of the worst-case scenario was estimated by domestic and foreign analysts. One of the discussion platforms at that time was the Kyiv Stratcom Forum, organized in December by the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security (CSCIS) under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy.

The Centre was established in the spring of 2021 as a tool of public communications to counter Russian disinformation and build the resilience of Ukrainian society towards it. One of the formats of the Centre's activities was weekly (and then daily) digests of information threats and vulnerabilities. This book is a sample of these digests, it reproduces the course of the Russian information warfare against Ukraine day after day: from the beginning of the full-scale invasion to late November 2023.

A detailed chronicle allows analyzing the main points of Russian propaganda, as well as tracing its dynamics. But the fact is that **Russia laid out most of its toxic narratives in the first two months of the full-scale war. With this, its creativity ran out; subsequently, previously familiar topics were only occasionally updated and developed.**

The transformation of Russian rhetoric into a stream of already familiar, worn-out clichés naturally causes irony. Humour has become a manifestation of confidence and a guarantee of stability in crisis. This indestructible spirit of the Cossacks from the painting by Ilya Repin is what the Centre is trying to convey to its readers, together with verified facts and accurate interpretations.

The key to successful counteraction to hostile information influences is the immunity acquired by society towards propaganda. This is when people are able to read the enemy's motives, instead of listening to its arguments. Thus, the enemy voices cease to be scary, they become ridiculous instead. That is why we are not afraid to cite even extensive enemy's quotes. After all, they primarily characterize the authors themselves, not from the best side. The original vocabulary of Russians

is sometimes much more eloquent than hundreds of objections and refutations on the part of Ukraine or its partners.

This book was prepared by the Centre for Strategic Communication not only for history. We hope that it will also be useful for law enforcement agencies investigating Russian information crimes. We believe that the collection will become a kind of guide to Putin's propaganda, which should be criminalized and condemned.

Key topics and typical propaganda methods

Russia's military propaganda during the full-scale invasion is characterized by the consistent use of specialized vocabulary. This phenomenon is called **“newspeak”**: when the attitude to everyday life is corrected by the political regime through the introduction of more convenient euphemisms.

It all began with the concept of the “Special Military Operation,” which propagandists used as a legal substitute for the banned word “war.”

Why not war? The war is perceived by all as a terrible, large-scale, not time-limited conflict, with the participants being equals while clarifying relations. From the very beginning, Putin's propaganda tried to deny all of the above features of the invasion of Ukraine. **The concept of the “Special Military Operation” was based on the soothing ideas of locality, short duration, and the one-sided nature of Russia's actions.** The special operation means it is not going to take long, it will not be violent, it is an act committed by an actor in relation to a subject. One cannot say that there is an “ongoing operation” between Russia and Ukraine. Thus, the propaganda refuses to even give a name to defensive and counteroffensive actions of Ukraine in the course of the “special military operation,” in fact, it declares them illegal.

Most likely, the infamous “SMO plan” looked precisely like that; later, it became the object of many jokes, due to its secrecy and flexibility. In the future, the more ridiculous the SMO format looked, the more avidly Moscow defended this wording: up to the criminal prosecution of sceptics. Meanwhile, the “SMO” continued strictly in accordance with its “secret plan,” each time changing the main goals: from “denazification of Ukraine” to “protecting Russia from the collapse.”

Propaganda is constantly trying **to convince of the inevitability of a Russian victory**, even if this did not happen in the promised “three days” or according to other deadlines, postponed more than once. Propaganda is looking for the recipe for victory in the genius of the commanders (Dvornikov, Kadyrov, Surovikin,

Prigozhin) or in brilliant strategies (“encirclements” in the Donbas, attacks against critical infrastructure and seaports), or in brand-new categories of occupiers (“volunteers,” mobilized, convicts).

For self-confidence, the Russians need victories not only over Ukrainian soldiers, but also **over the Western weapons** the latter are using. This is another obsessive topic: the inefficiency and destruction of all Javelins, Bayraktars, HIMARS, Patriots, and Leopards. As soon as there is at least a hint of Ukraine receiving another sample of Western weapons, the official Russian statistics of “victories” are sure to feature new “achievements.”

Moscow prefers not to talk about its defeats. Therefore, to explain its obvious failures, propaganda uses such expressions as “reduction of military activity,” “goodwill gesture,” “regrouping,” “folding and transferring units to more advantageous positions,” or even “humanitarian considerations and concern for the civilian population.”

Russians invariably try to humiliate and discredit the Ukrainian authorities and the army. Starting from fakes about fleeing the country and the battlefield, and ending with a variety of fictional accusations. Allegedly, Ukrainian leaders are “out of their minds” (“homeless people and drug addicts”), “non-independent puppets with passports of foreign states in a drawer,” and also terribly corrupt. Rumours are spread that commanders are killed or severely wounded and no longer command in the war, that splits and rebellions are brewing among the authorities (nationalists against moderates, generals against the president, etc.).

The defenders of Ukraine are accused of war crimes, atrocities, and executions, which are a reflection of the behaviour of the occupiers in Ukraine. The standard way for the Russians to shift responsibility for shelling civilians with missiles and drones is to blame Ukrainian air defence. Often, after another act of missile terror, the Russians try to devalue or informationally interrupt the attacks, staging a shelling of the long-occupied Donetsk allegedly by the Ukrainians. Such cases are also recorded in the digests of the Centre.

Propaganda demonizes Ukrainian soldiers in every possible way, even at the level of vocabulary: gunmen, Nazis, terrorists, nationalists, devils, satanists, cannibals... This disdain peaks at the moment of the occupiers’ defeats. To rationalize the situation, the Russians invent new, “worthier” opponents at the front: mercenaries (for some reason, mainly Poles or black people), NATO troops because in a global, albeit “hybrid” war, losing to the West is not as bad as losing to the Ukrainians in the “special military operation.”

The “Collective West” is the main rhetorical opponent of Moscow. But at the same time, Russia is trying to convince Europe and America not to interfere in its relations with Ukraine. The main point of propaganda addressed to the Western audience: Russia will never retreat, and it is impossible to defeat it. Neither sanctions against Russia nor assistance to Ukraine will change anything. Thus, the West, allegedly, has no choice but to meet the “legitimate interests” of Moscow (“to consider the current situation”).

Russia is putting pressure on European countries, blackmailing them with winter cold and global hunger. It is trying to provoke social discontent there (in particular, due to the allocation of significant resources by governments in support of Ukrainians). “Ukraine is not worth it. It is corrupt and ungrateful, and Ukrainian refugees are burdensome and confrontational,” Russian heralds and their local associates convince the West. In turn, propaganda tries to convince the Ukrainian audience of the insincerity, treacherous nature, and predatory motivation of Western partners: they “seek to dismember Ukraine!”

Then, pathetically announcing another decline of the West, Russia states its global pivot to the East and South.

Shamelessly and irresponsibly, Russia uses its status as a member of the nuclear club for outright **nuclear blackmail**. It all began with the announcement of the transfer of the strategic deterrence forces to the special combat duty mode, ending with blatant threats of nuclear Armageddon. Russian nuclear weapons are used now to intimidate the West and Ukraine, they serve as the last resort in the case of crossing the so-called “red lines.”

When direct threats cease to yield results, Russia resorts to creating alarming uncertainty: transfers nuclear weapons to the “crazier” Lukashenko, accuses the Ukrainians of creating a “dirty bomb” or of intending to commit a provocation at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Each of these actions and statements carries a hidden threat: a more serious one because Moscow will not be directly responsible in this case.

Another astonishing topic of Russian propaganda is **bio-laboratories in Ukraine**, where, allegedly, unconventional weapons of mass destruction are being developed. It seems that this nonsense addresses a poorly educated public prone to conspiracy. It also concerns the United States because Russian speakers constantly associate mythical biological laboratories with the American government and even with the immediate entourage of President Joe Biden. Even high-ranking diplomats (for example, Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya) readily spread the topic of “bio-laboratories.”

There are enough other high-profile and absurd accusations targeting irrational human fear. The propaganda machine, for example, invests many resources in the topic of **black transplantology** in Ukraine. It even came to the allegations voiced by Anna Kuznetsova, the Vice-Speaker of the State Duma, that revenues from this illegal industry account for 7% of the budget of Ukraine.

The Russian propaganda machine systematically produces fakes: it falsifies statements of famous people, videos, photographs, and even creates fake twins of well-known Ukrainian and foreign media. Russians use the achievements of artificial intelligence to generate fake video messages of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, ex-Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi. Propagandists are not afraid to expose their own lies and do not worry about their reputation. The bet is not on the quality of propaganda, but on its mass character: at least something will yield the result.

The “newspeak” of propaganda TV shows is designed to correct the emotional perception of negative news. Thus, routine explosions in Russian and occupied cities have become “booms,” a fire is “a smoke,” a plane crash is “a hard landing.” George Orwell warned that this was happening in totalitarian states. Real historical examples are known to researchers of German Nazism and Stalin's times.

The full-scale war gave rise to **new visual symbols**, first of all, the tactical “Z” sign raised to the level of an unofficial emblem of Russian imperialism. The aesthetics of ruscism openly echoes the Nazi symbolism.

Propaganda in the temporarily occupied territories

Russian invaders aren't concerned with civilian casualties in the course of hostilities (it is still unknown how many civilians are buried under the rubble in Mariupol). In the occupation, the Russians resort to mass slaughter, as was the case in Bucha. Civilians are also terrorized in filtration camps and improvised torture chambers. Under Russia's control, Ukrainians lose all their rights, and their fate depends entirely on armed invaders.

However, the Russians are constantly trying to shift the responsibility for this violence onto the Ukrainians. Often literally—by blaming Azov regiment for the destruction of Mariupol or claiming that the victims of Bucha were fake. However, they even resort to a more cynical logic: allegedly, cities that surrender rather than defend themselves do not get destroyed. Or, for example, that Kherson under Russian control did not experience such shelling as after the liberation by Ukraine.

The first thing the occupiers resort to is plunging people into an artificially created information vacuum. In the conditions of their monopoly on news, the Russians blatantly lie: about their capture of Ukrainian cities, about the surrender of Ukrainian troops, or about the escape of the political leadership of Ukraine. Propaganda seeks to convince people under occupation of Russia's power and invincibility, and that there is no point in resisting.

The occupiers consistently build relations of dependence with the locals: first they create a deficit, and then they “generously” distribute “humanitarian aid” (often stolen). Constantly claiming that “Russia is here forever,” its representatives are trying to create an illusion of normality: for example, they are distributing housing in some restored districts in the ruins of Mariupol. The Russians pretend to be missionaries who brought the light of civilization to the degraded province. Meanwhile, they appropriate other people's achievements and attribute their failures to their “predecessors.”

The strengthening of the occupation administration reveals Russia's real goals in regard to the conquered population: its de-Ukrainization and transformation into a demographic and mobilization resource of the empire. That is why Ukrainian-language literature and symbols are eliminated as “extremist,” monuments are destroyed, cities and streets are renamed. Even clocks get set to Moscow time. People are forced to pledge allegiance through passportization, fake referenda, and pseudo-elections.

Russians pay special attention to Ukrainian children and young people: they are brainwashed at school, dragged into the newest analogues of pioneering, often taken to Russia. The problem of Russia deporting the population and, above all, kidnapping Ukrainian children, has been properly assessed by the International Criminal Court and other justice institutions.

“Fighters” and “generals” of information troops

Speaking about the Russian propaganda machine, we do not mean any specific official media, speaker, or PSYOP-generating unit. Propaganda has become an integral part of Russian political life and is produced at absolutely all levels: from kindergarten to statements at the UN Security Council.

Putin himself is the actor in the propaganda play: he makes false promises, distorts facts, manipulates, intimidates. Periodic programmatic appeals of the Russian dictator, which his press secretary Dmitry Peskov always announces as epochal and fateful, set the current propaganda framework for thousands of small repeaters.

There are other personal roles in this performance. Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church blesses the murders; Kirillov, the chief of the Troops of Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defence, is responsible for “military-biological activity”; intelligence officer Naryshkin — for the “imperialist plans of Poland”; and ex-president Medvedev, the deputy of the Security Council, for cursing and threatening with the end of the world.

Various political TV shows play an important role in the Russian propaganda system. Hosts Olga Skabeeva, Vladimir Solovyov, Dmitry Kiselev, and others hysterically address the audience like in Orwell's *Two Minutes Hate*. A corresponding “pool of experts” is formed around their programmes, which includes MPs, political scientists, Ukrainian collaborators, foreign friends of the Kremlin, etc.

Since most Russian political speakers have long been branded propagandists, Moscow is trying to attract and promote foreigners, especially influential ones from among the citizens of “hostile” Western countries. Thus, the pool of “friends of the Kremlin” included the German journalist Thomas Röper and Mick Wallace, MEP from Ireland. Situational “contributors” who voice certain statements, consonant with the Kremlin, (for example, calls for reconciliation by the American billionaire Elon Musk) are also considered successful propaganda.

The full-scale war has become a “moment of glory” for another category of propagandists: the so-called “war correspondents.” Aleksandr Sladkov, Semen Pegov, Aleksandr Kots, Dmitry Steshin, and many others pretend to be journalists working in the combat zone, although in fact they are full-time employees of Russian military information units serving the aggressive invasion.

A side effect of the glory of the “war correspondents” was the spike in their ambitions. Some “war correspondents” began to stand out from the general propaganda chorus, publicly criticizing their military leadership in moments of defeat and failure. As a result, some earned a reputation of “unreliable people,” fell into disgrace, and were even persecuted for “spreading fakes about the army.”

Chronicle of the information warfare

Almost two years of the full-scale information warfare is a sufficient period to identify trends and dynamics of enemy propaganda, which can be divided into seven chronological stages.

1. February–March 2022

The beginning of the offensive and the peak of Russian euphoria. Enemy propaganda triumphed: Ukrainians were defeated, everyone capitulated, the army did not meet

respectable resistance. The fleet, aviation, air defence, decision-making centres of the “Kyiv regime” were destroyed.

However, from the very first day of the invasion, this was the enemy's wishful thinking. Ukraine withstood and restrained the Russian onslaught. Kyiv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv turned out to be more than the invader could take, while Javelin systems and Bayraktar UAVs did their job. The trend of the liberation war was set by the defenders of Snake Island, who told the Russian warship to go to hell.

The first month of the war was very difficult: the enemy captured Kherson, Melitopol, Chornobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants, besieged Mariupol, bombed the maternity hospital and the drama theatre there. But in the same month, Ukraine deployed the territorial defence forces, inflicted colossal losses on Russian military columns and aviation, and consolidated the world against the invader.

Putin's calls for Ukrainian generals to go over to his side remained unanswered, and the Ukrainians simply ridiculed the terrible (for the Russians) Kadyrov and his army. This period ended with the loss of the Russian “blitzkrieg” and the first forced “reduction in military activity” in Kyiv and Chernihiv oblasts.

2. April–July 2022

Moscow changed its strategy. Realizing that it was impossible to capture all of Ukraine at once, the enemy decided to concentrate on a more local and realistic goal—inflicting losses on the most capable Ukrainian forces in the east of the country. Putin's strategists dreamed of large flank encirclements, and the “special military operation” itself was supposed to last symbolically until Victory Day—May 9.

It was a very difficult period for Ukraine. A war of attrition had begun, and the West had yet to launch the assistance process. There was a critical lack of artillery ammunition. The defence forces had to retreat from Iziium, Sievierodonetsk, Lysychansk. After three months of defence, the Mariupol garrison surrendered its weapons in full encirclement. However, there were no encirclements in the Donbas as the enemy expected.

The truth of Bucha was revealed to Ukrainians and the world, the genocidal nature of the aggression became finally clear. The global community began to limit Russia with sanctions and expel it from international platforms. The Ukraine Defense Contact Group was launched and 155 calibre artillery and HIMARS systems were put into use. The Ukrainian Defence Forces sank the Moskva flagship of the Black

Sea Fleet, destroyed enemy armoured vehicles at the crossing near Bilohorivka, and liberated Snake Island.

The Russians were looking for excuses to justify their failures: allegedly, there were a million Ukrainians at the front; the slow pace of the offensive was due to considerations of a “humanitarian nature.” The propaganda overcame the lack of international support for Russia by declaring the armed formations of the puppet “people's republics” as “allies.” To simulate the support of Russians by the Ukrainian population, a meme was spread about a “granny with a red flag” (which was later debunked by the Centre for Strategic Communication).

Trying to avoid sanctions, Russia began to blackmail the world with hunger, destroying Ukrainian harvests and arranging a naval blockade of the ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv oblasts. In the end, under the pressure exerted by the international community, Moscow was forced to sign “grain deals,” which it intended to sabotage from the very beginning.

The second period began with the exposure of a large-scale crime of Russia (Bucha) and ended with the commission of another—the murder of prisoners of war in the Olenivka prison. Russian propaganda traditionally blamed the Ukrainian side for both crimes.

3. August–November 2022

The third period marked the Ukrainian counteroffensive. It started in the south, as expected, but its pace was slow. Unexpectedly for all, the Defence Forces conducted a brilliant Slobzhanska operation, liberating most of the occupied Kharkiv Oblast and the north of Donetsk Oblast. Then it came to the south: the Ukrainian liberators triumphantly entered Kherson. The war also touched the long-occupied Crimea: the Russian airbase in Novofedorivka and the Kerch Bridge were attacked. The Defence Forces demonstrated their know-how—sea drones.

For Russian propaganda, it was a time of humiliation and despair. Even Putin's encouragement sounded like clumsy excuses: “Russia lost nothing, but strengthened its sovereignty,” “we did not start anything, but we strive to complete what began in 2014.” Moscow's inconsistency was also noted: first, it declared the Azov regiment to be terrorists and promised a trial of POWs, and then suddenly it exchanged the main commanders of the regiment for... Putin's friend Medvedchuk.

Revenge for these defeats was the pseudo-referendum in the occupied territories and the subsequent illegal annexation; this was the outcome of the intrigue regarding

Putin's intentions towards the invaded territories. Another “reunification” after 2014 drove Russia into an even deeper diplomatic deadlock.

Russia legalized the recruitment of prisoners in Wagner PMC and announced mobilization (delicately called “partial”). The Russians were explained that the special military operation might take long because it was necessary to fight not just Ukraine, but the entire “collective West.” Prigozhin and his comrade “General Armageddon” Surovikin had to win the war. The latter focused on air warfare: the destruction of critical infrastructure by missiles and drones before winter.

Moscow actively threatened the West, either with its own nuclear arsenal or with a Ukrainian “dirty bomb.” It also tried to scare the world with problems at the ZNPP (even Elon Musk became a victim of this bluff). Lukashenko, who imitated a potential threat to Ukraine from the north, also became more active. Putin's “gas war” with Europe ended with the blow-up of Nord Streams. Russian propaganda traditionally blamed the opponents for the sabotage.

Meanwhile, Ukraine applied for NATO membership, and the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on Russian reparations. After years of investigation, the District Court of The Hague sentenced the Russian murderers of passengers and crew of flight MH17. The propagandist Simonyan had every reason for despair: “If we lose, we are in for The Hague!”

4. Winter 2022/2023

The second winter of the full-scale war was a crash test for the Ukrainian energy system, which the enemy began to destroy to freeze Ukrainians and break their will to resist. This was stated quite frankly: civilians would stop suffering if Kyiv made the decisions necessary for Moscow.

The propaganda machine worked hard to split society. It stated that some regions lived without heat and light, while others did not suffer at all. The government was accused of supplying electricity abroad, while there was an acute shortage in the country. Not only thermal power plants and power grids suffered from enemy missiles and drones, but also the homes of Ukrainians. There were many victims of the attacks in Kherson and Dnipro. In each case, enemy propaganda blamed the deaths on the “poor performance of the air defence system.”

Russia again went on the offensive on the front. The goal of “the special military operation” was narrowed to reaching the administrative boundaries of Donetsk Oblast, declared a “people's republic” within the Russian Federation. Thousands of conscripts and Wagnerites recruited in Russian prisons were involved in the attack.

Suddenly, the weak link was not the former, but the latter. The losses of Prigozhin's mercenaries near Soledar and Bakhmut were colossal, and the “Putin's cook” began to openly complain about the army command.

Ukraine withstood that winter and inflicted painful blows on the enemy. An accurate HIMARS shot on New Year's Eve “demobilized” soldiers from Saratov in the occupied Makiivka. Ukrainian drones reached the airbases of strategic aviation in Engels and Ryazan, there was an epic defeat of the Russian armoured unit near Vuhledar. While the intense hysteria of Russian propagandists continued, U.S. President Joe Biden visited Kyiv.

5. Spring 2023

The “2023 Russian Spring” was special in that the Russians were fighting on the right side. Anti-Putin units of the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion conducted a raid in the Bryansk region in March, and in May, they opened a front in the Belgorod region. The forces of the Russian resistance have demonstrated that the rear of the Russian Federation is weak because all its forces are used in Ukraine. The audacious acts of the two units resulted in an increase in their supporters and showed the Russians that it was quite possible to fight the Kremlin with weapons in their hands.

The official propaganda machine got seriously scared and tried to instil its fear in ordinary Russians from the border regions. The acts of the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion were declared “terrorist” and equated to the raid of Basayev on Budyonovsk in 1995. They immediately started talking about territorial defence and invented dramatic stories about the deeds of local boys.

With modern Western air defence systems, Ukraine learned to shoot down Kinzhal aeroballistic missiles, a Russian super-weapon, which propaganda did not admit. Instead, it was difficult to ignore Ukrainian drones not just in Moscow, but right above the Kremlin (this was called an “assassination attempt on Putin”).

The Russian dictator could no longer calmly watch Zelenskyy fearlessly visiting the front and Biden visiting Kyiv. Therefore, in response, video footage of dubious authenticity was created about Putin's visits to the occupied Mariupol and Kherson Oblast.

To split Ukrainian society, Russian propaganda bet on religion; it tried to turn Muslims against Ukraine and accused Ukraine of persecuting “canonical Orthodoxy.” Putin, together with children's ombudsman Lvova-Belova, was rightly

accused by the International Criminal Court. The arrest warrant immediately closed the door to most countries of the world for the dictator.

Propaganda also tried to shake Ukrainians by spreading violent videos of war crimes, with the shooting of Oleksandr Matsievskyi and the beheading of another Ukrainian prisoner.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's warnings did not deter Putin from announcing the deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus. Even the news story about the transfer of depleted uranium ammunition to Ukraine was presented by enemy propaganda as a pretext for nuclear escalation.

That spring, one of the largest Russian geopolitical defeats took place: Finland officially joined NATO. Thus, the Alliance got really close to Putin's hometown.

6. Summer 2023

The battle near Bakhmut destroyed not only tens of thousands of invaders, but also the nervous system of Evgeny Prigozhin. He knew about the weakness of the Russian rear, so he took advantage of the vulnerability: he captured the headquarters of the Southern Military District in Rostov-on-Don and then started his “march of justice” towards Moscow. The mutiny paralyzed the entire vertical of power and the entire propaganda machine. The leader of the mercenaries had a real chance of success, which he unexpectedly wasted. The lack of decisiveness to go to the end cost him his life; the same summer, Prigozhin was killed simply by shooting down his plane. Igor Girkin, long-time critic of the Russian leadership, who before that had got away with everything, was also behind bars.

Another reason for the Kremlin's concern was the expected summer counter-offensive of Ukraine. Propaganda prepared for it in advance. Its main “target” was Western armoured vehicles, primarily Leopard tanks, which had been provided to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In their reports, the Russians “destroyed” Leopard tanks in unprecedented quantities. In fact, Ukrainians lacked modern Western equipment and ammunition. The tanks were provided too late, when the enemy had already managed to build a powerful line of defence. In those conditions, without proper air support, Ukrainian soldiers did their best.

The desire to stop the Ukrainian offensive in any way actualized the topic of “negotiations,” as well as another nuclear blackmail. This time, “respectable” political experts in the West, such as Sergei Karaganov, joined the team of apologists for the use of weapons of mass destruction. However, the transfer of cluster

munitions to Ukraine by the allies expectedly caused much indignation: they were called “prohibited weapons.”

The Russians did not limit themselves to words and blew up the dam of the Kakhovka HPP, leading to almost the largest deliberate man-made disaster of recent decades. Traditionally, they blamed Ukrainians for their terrible terrorist attack.

Russia decided to return to food blackmail and finally withdrew from the grain deal. Against this background, the Kremlin's active diplomacy unfolded in the countries of the Global South. St. Petersburg hosted the Russia-Africa summit, but Putin did not go to the BRICS summit in South Africa, fearing arrest under the warrant of the International Criminal Court.

Russia demonstrated its real attitude towards Africans by shelling Kyiv during the stay of a peacekeeping delegation of African leaders in the capital of Ukraine. Russia also launched air warfare against the port infrastructure to block food exports again. Despite all this, Ukraine successfully launched a temporary sea corridor, proving that the grain deal could operate without Moscow.

7. Autumn 2023

Russia has long been waiting for another front of global confrontation with the West. In October, it was opened by Russian partners from the Palestinian terrorist group HAMAS. The terrible massacre of civilians in the Israeli territories adjacent to the Gaza Strip gave the Kremlin hope that the West would have to divide its military assistance between the two victims of aggression—Ukraine and Israel. Propaganda predicted that Ukrainians would quickly be forgotten because the allies had new priorities and concerns. It is probably no coincidence that the Russian offensive on Avdiivka was synchronized with the beginning of the HAMAS attack on Israel.

Russian propaganda tried to squeeze the maximum out of the Middle East crisis: it accused the Ukrainians of transferring Western weapons to the HAMAS forces, and at the same time made Ukraine look “too pro-Israeli” to spoil its reputation in the countries of the Global South.

Fuelling anti-Israel sentiment among the domestic Russian audience, Russian propaganda unleashed a genie of anti-Semitism. This was most clearly manifested in the republics of the North Caucasus, where an angry crowd resorted to pogroms. Thus, Russia showed the world its other true colours.

In autumn 2023, for the second time, the Kremlin held an “electoral” farce in the newly occupied territories. This time, there was an impression that it was not the “Russian standards” that were introduced in the occupied territories, but, on the

contrary, the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine served as a testing ground for Moscow to grow a totalitarian regime designed for Russia. But propaganda does not tire of speculating on the Western values of democracy, accusing Ukraine, a country at war, of not holding elections.

Meanwhile, Ukraine decisively seized the initiative in the maritime and Crimean theatres of war. The defence forces regained control over the gas offshore platforms, known as “Boiko Towers,” seized back in 2014. Storm Shadow missiles caused losses to the Russian fleet in the occupied Sevastopol and destroyed the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The occupiers in Luhansk and Berdiansk felt the power of ATACMS missiles for the first time.

This is a brief summary of the 21 months on the information front of the full-scale war. Ukrainians do not give up and are determined to continue resisting the aggressor.