

УДК 355.48"1914/1918"

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/cusu-hist-2026-1-14>

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## THE INFORMATION FRONT OF WORLD WAR I: THE ROLE OF THE PRESS IN PROPAGANDA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS (1914–1918)

*The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the formation and development of information and psychological operations during the First World War as a component of the phenomenon of total war in the early twentieth century. The study examines the process of transformation of propaganda from an auxiliary instrument of political influence into a systemic tool of state military strategy aimed at mobilizing society, shaping the image of the enemy, and legitimizing military actions. Particular attention is paid to the pre-war stage of information confrontation, when chauvinistic rhetoric and the ideological logic of dividing the world into antagonistic categories of “us” and “others” were used as a means of ideologically preparing mass consciousness for a global conflict.*

*The article analyzes the mechanisms of the functioning of the press, military periodicals, press agencies, propaganda literature, graphic materials, and cinema as instruments of psychological influence. It is demonstrated that with the outbreak of the war, an institutionalized system of centralized control over mass media was established, including the creation of specialized bureaus and coordinating structures that ensured the purposeful formation of public opinion in the interests of the state. The study reveals the specific features of influencing various target audiences: domestic populations, allies, neutral countries, and the enemy, as well as methods of demoralizing enemy troops through the dissemination of rumors, leaflets, falsified documents, and the use of historical myths.*

*Special attention is also paid to the role of the national factor, the support of separatist movements, and irredentism as new technologies of information confrontation are actively used by the belligerent states. It is concluded that during 1914–1918, the theoretical and practical foundations of modern psychological warfare were laid, within which the objects of influence became not only the armed forces of the enemy but also the mass consciousness of society as a whole.*

**Keywords:** *information and psychological operations, information and psychological influence, propaganda, First World War, image of the enemy, chauvinism, military periodicals, disinformation, social mobilization.*

Humanity has been conducting psychological warfare since ancient times, although it has rarely been openly acknowledged. Napoleon Bonaparte once remarked: “Four newspapers will cause the enemy more harm than an entire army.” For some time after his defeat, this axiom was largely forgotten. It returned to prominence only with the outbreak of the First World War, which undoubtedly became a turning point marking the arrival of the modern era.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, mass media had become an important element of social life that could no longer be ignored. Consequently, their use for military purposes and within information and psychological operations became inevitable.

The First World War demonstrated the enormous role of mass media as a means of influencing public opinion and the psychology of the masses. Through information about the war and the specific presentation of facts, the press shaped views and opinions and influenced the morale of both the army and society.

It contributed to the formation of favorable public opinion in allied and neutral countries and introduced disunity within the ranks of the enemy. Printed media thus became a significant factor in armed struggle.

Scholarly reflection on the effectiveness of this new weapon began shortly after the guns fell silent. Among the works of the interwar period, the large-scale study of information warfare by divisional commissar F. Blumenthal should be noted (Блументаль Ф., 1928). After a long pause, the propaganda use of mass media in information warfare has again become the subject of research in recent decades by scholars such as A. Atrokhov (Атрохов А. В., 2002), D. Guzhva (Гужва Д. Г., 2007), N. Volkovsky (Волковский Н. Л., 2003), and S. Segeda (Сегеда С. П., 2012).

However, these authors address the problem of the use of mass media in the information and psychological operations of the First World War only fragmentarily.

Purpose of the article is to conduct a comprehensive study of the formation and development of information and psychological operations during the First World War, to clarify their role within the system of total war, and to analyze the mechanisms through which mass media influenced the formation of public opinion, the mobilization of society, and the demoralization of the enemy. Particular attention is focused on identifying the main instruments and technologies of propaganda, the principles of constructing the image of the enemy, and the use of the national factor in information confrontation, as well as determining the historical significance of this experience for the further development of modern information and psychological strategies.

In preparation for a war aimed at the redistribution of global power, competing military-political blocs placed their primary emphasis on the promotion of chauvinistic propaganda. This was regarded as a form of "ideological weapon" intended to prepare the populations of these military-political groupings for war. The ideological foundation of this approach was the so-called principle of binary opposition, the essence of which was reduced to a biological confrontation within the framework of the "us – them" dichotomy.

Thus, the informational confrontation preceded the actual outbreak of hostilities. Ultimately, many prominent political thinkers, from Clausewitz to Churchill, agreed that the influence of the press should be controlled not only during wartime but also long before the outbreak of hostilities.

At the early stage of the pre-war period of information confrontation, the task of the press was to create a firm conviction not only among fellow citizens but also among the population of the entire world regarding the peaceful intentions of their own state, emphasizing that the measures undertaken by it were forced and aimed at improving the welfare of its people and serving the interests of humanity as a whole. For example, German propaganda carefully constructed for its country the image of a victim.

At the subsequent pre-mobilization stage, the press sought to provide irrefutable evidence that the anticipated war was the only possible and unavoidable solution to the situation that had arisen. At the same time, the press highlighted the intransigence of the adversary and the hostility of its intentions and actions, which had previously remained unmentioned.

Consequently, the attention of the mass media was focused on explaining the causes of the forthcoming war and placing blame on the enemy. The population was systematically convinced that it was necessary to defend national interests against the intrigues of a hostile adversary. The war waged by one's own state was presented as a struggle against an aggressor responsible for all tensions. Accordingly, one's own goals were portrayed as noble and just, while those of the opponent were depicted as unjust and expansionist, threatening the very existence of the nation, that is, vile, shameful, and immoral. In this way, propaganda deliberately shaped a hostile representation of the adversary by reviving old stereotypes and searching for new ones upon which it could rely.

Each side presented itself as a victim of aggression. The German side characterized the Entente as a coalition of antagonistic regimes united by a single goal – the destruction of progressive Germany. In contrast, the Entente spoke about Germany's inherent aggressiveness (Агафонов В. К., 1918).

The cause of the war was not attributed to the global system of international relations but rather to the alleged deceitful instincts of the enemy. This was done in order to eliminate any doubts among the population regarding whom they should hate (Волковский Н. Л., 2003, с. 70–74).

At the same time, information was disseminated to the global public. In other words, the press was expected to mobilize world public opinion in favor of its own state even before the declaration of mobilization. All this was accompanied by the dissemination of discourse emphasizing the moral superiority of one's own state. Such views were expressed, for example, by D. Dontsov (Донців Д., 1913). Similar arguments were widely reproduced, including through the use of authentic documents that were selectively edited and interpreted in accordance with propagandistic objectives. A notable example includes the so-called "colored books"<sup>1</sup> published by all participants in the confrontation<sup>2</sup>.

The outbreak of the war led to a restructuring of all spheres of social life. From that moment onward, the influence of the mass media increased rapidly. This was particularly evident in military periodicals. New sections appeared in newspapers and journals reporting on events at the front, condemning the enemy, and highlighting heroic episodes of military history.

Regarding the objects of influence of the mass media, the Russian researcher N. Volkovsky distinguishes between the population and the armed forces. At the same time, he divides the population into domestic, allied, neutral, and enemy audiences, while the armed forces are categorized as domestic, allied, and hostile [Волковський Н. Л., 2003, с. 75].

The objectives of the press varied depending on the target audience. Concerning allies, the media sought to strengthen the spirit of solidarity, cohesion, mutual understanding of interests, and confidence in victory. However, as the war dragged on, such support gradually transformed into interference in the internal affairs of allied states. All this required sophisticated propaganda support and was accompanied by intensified intelligence activities. In this particular context, however, this referred not to intelligence information work but to the formation of so-called agents of influence.

A particularly illustrative example is provided by the Russian Empire. By the end of 1916, it had effectively been divided by its allies into spheres of influence. This created an paradoxical situation: the empire sacrificed millions of the lives of its subjects while fighting for its own dismemberment. This was largely determined by Russia's semi-colonial status and was reinforced by a powerful information apparatus. Through the efforts of the mass media, several supporters of the Entente were transformed into national heroes and "saviors of the fatherland", whose authority later ensured the continuity of the country's foreign policy course. First and foremost, this concerned A. Kolchak and L. Kornilov. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that, while preparing the information support for a future coup, the British government facilitated the publication of the book "*Lavr Kornilov – the Savior of Russia*"<sup>3</sup>, almost one hundred thousand copies of which were stored in the British embassy.

As for the enemy, propaganda cultivated and supported everything that could weaken its internal cohesion. Thus, all opposing blocs actively supported revolutionary and separatist movements on enemy territory. This represented a genuinely new phenomenon in information warfare. For instance, in the mid-nineteenth century, during another escalation of Russian-Austrian relations, Russia initiated subversive activities among the Slavic peoples of the Habsburg Empire. At that time, such activities were halted after a series of negotiations. Now, however, the situation had changed radically.

About neutral states, the objective was to generate favorable attitudes toward one's own side and to isolate the enemy. A particularly interesting example is the work of Russian intelligence in Romania. Russian operatives resorted to the use of musical art as a tool of influence. Neutral coverage of concerts in the Romanian press soon turned into enthusiastic reporting, which significantly contributed to the growth of pro-Russian sentiment in the country (Авдеев В.А., 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "Color Books" – collections of documents from foreign ministries published by the warring parties to justify their own participation in the war and discredit the enemy

<sup>2</sup> Белая книга о войне с Турцией. Дипломатическая переписка Англии, предшествовавшая войне с Турцией. Петербург, 1914; Книга лжи. Германская Белая книга о возникновении германо-русско-французской войны. По представлению рейстага. Петербург, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> Цветков В. Ж. Лавр Георгиевич Корнилов. URL: <http://www.dk1868.ru/statii/kornilov2.htm> (22. 01. 2026)

<sup>4</sup> Игнатъев П. А. Моя миссия в Париже. Москва, 1999.

At the same time, the press not only conducted offensive information campaigns but also countered attacks from enemy media. In this process, connections with neutral countries were also strengthened.

At the beginning of the war, information and psychological operations were carried out rather spontaneously. However, soon afterward the military-political leadership of the countries began developing the main directions for the activities of military periodicals. The latter acquired a clearly defined structure. In the territories of Ukraine under Russian rule, the central organs were the military-scientific journal *"Voennyi Sbornik"* and the newspaper *"Russkii Invalid"*. These were followed by publications of district headquarters, Cossack troops, branches of the armed forces, military educational institutions, and the military clergy (Гужва Д. Г., 2007, с. 37).

A decision was also made to establish publishing houses at the front. Among the troops, the following publications began to be distributed free of charge: *"Album of War Heroes"*, *"Army and Fleet"*, *"War and Heroes"*, and *"Ilya Muromets"*.

Starting in August 1914, the newspaper *"Armiyskiy Vestnik"* began to be published at the headquarters of the Southwestern Front, and from November of the same year a weekly illustrated supplement was issued.

Army newspapers were also published within the troops. Over time, this experience spread to other fronts (Гужва Д. Г., 2007, с. 37–38).

As for Russia, although the propaganda apparatus of the autocracy made considerable efforts to stimulate patriotic and anti-German sentiments, its activity achieved only limited results. Patriotic enthusiasm was observed primarily during the first months of the war. A characteristic feature of Russian propaganda was its abstract nature combined with high-flown rhetoric. In most cases, such appeals affected neither the intellect nor the emotions of mobilized soldiers.

A deep gap existed between the mentality of the ruling elite and that of the general population. The population's complete misunderstanding of the causes and goals of the war is reflected in the memoirs of General Brusilov, who noted the country's moral unpreparedness for war<sup>5</sup>.

Modern researchers also point to the low effectiveness of Russian propaganda of that time, even among officer circles. Naturally, this did not concern the goal of the war itself, but rather the propagandistic portrayal of the enemy, especially considering the traditional respect for German customs within the professional military environment (Мальков В. Л. (ред.), 2002, с. 523).

For the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that all the belligerent countries faced similar problems. Society was heterogeneous, and patriotic rhetoric resonated mainly with the middle class. Expressions of loyalist sentiment took various forms – from solemn religious services to financial support. The wounded traditionally evoked sympathy. Active manifestations of patriotism also included requests to be transferred to the front. It was precisely the patriotic enthusiasm of the first months of the war that allowed the official Russian propaganda to establish such designations for the conflict as the Great, Patriotic, and People's War.

Thus, attempts were made to influence the military environment. This is evidenced by the content of propaganda brochures distributed among soldiers, such as *"Russia's Sacred Impulse for a Great Feat in Defense of the Oppressed Slavic Brothers"*, *"Why Russia Cannot Fail to Defeat Germany"*, *"How We Fight and How the Germans Fight"*, *"War for Truth"*, and *"What Awaits a Soldier Who Voluntarily Surrenders to Captivity and His Family"*, among others. The main directions of propaganda can already be traced in their titles. These texts explained the causes and nature of the war, constructed the image of the enemy, and called for the cultivation of military duty.

An evolution of methods can also be observed – from high-flown appeals at the beginning of the war to direct threats at its later stages.

It should be noted that propagandists attempted to find concepts that were close to the popular mentality. There was a transition from the vague idea of Slavic unity to the concept of a struggle for truth. Although this was also an abstraction, it corresponded to popular mentality and Orthodox dogmas (Мальков В. Л. (ред.), 2002, с. 523–524).

<sup>5</sup> Брусилов А. А., 1983. Мои воспоминания. Москва, 1983. С. 102.

However, chauvinism was, so to speak, a product intended primarily for domestic consumption.

Another aspect of information and psychological operations involved methods of influencing the consciousness and psyche of foreign citizens, as well as altering the psychology of the enemy. Here again, the same simple principle was applied.

During wartime, the influence of the press on shaping public opinion and the consciousness of domestic populations, allied societies, neutral states, and enemy nations intensified significantly. During the war years, systematic foreign propaganda was implemented for the first time. Thus, the year 1914 can be considered the beginning of psychological warfare, although the term itself appeared later. In pursuit of their goals, each side was prepared to use any means. As the American propaganda specialist J. Martin stated: "It was then realized that total war could be waged by attacking not only the bodies but also the souls of people" (Щеглов С. И. 1984, с. 61).

As previously noted, the effectiveness of this new type of weapon was not immediately recognized. Funding for information and psychological operations was initially allocated very reluctantly.

Nevertheless, the first steps in this direction were taken. In particular, attention should be paid to such a new approach as the exploitation of the national factor, separatism, and irredentism among oppressed peoples. All belligerent states, without exception, declared themselves defenders of oppressed nations. For example, H. Delbrück wrote about the need to liberate the so-called "small nations". At the same time, all sides actively advocated future territorial annexations without perceiving any contradiction with their declarative statements (Теодорович И. М., 1968, с. 116).

New propaganda technologies were also applied to Ukrainian lands. Russia, for instance, presented itself as the liberator of the Slavs. The primary "liberated" peoples were the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, and the South Slavs. Regarding Ukrainians, the thesis of the reunification of the triune Russian people was employed. All these elements were reflected in the well-known "Appeal". To reinforce these ideas in both public and international consciousness, artistic means were actively employed. In particular, Fyodor Tyutchev's poem *"The Eagle"* and appeals addressed to the Polish people were widely disseminated.

Russia can also be credited with pioneering the propagandistic use of historical narratives, including the falsification and fabrication of historical documents. For example, the idea of the Battle of Grunwald was actively exploited as an "Armageddon" between the Slavic world and Germanic civilization (Кадилин П. Н., 1914, с. 43–45).

Allied and enemy states were not far behind in this respect. In fact, since 1914 history had finally become a propaganda instrument. The deliberate use of historical forgeries also began at that time and has become widespread in modern times. In particular, when accusations of aggression were made, special importance was attributed to documents produced by historians and other individuals who, in the eyes of society, were perceived as sincerely striving to establish the truth. For instance, in Germany, the so-called *"Testament of Peter the Great"* was published, which later spread to Iran<sup>6</sup> (Шлиффен А., 1938, с. 368–369).

Successful examples of Russian propaganda can be seen in reminders about the opportunity for the Czech nation. Here, ideas of Slavic unity were skillfully intertwined with the concept of the revival of Czech statehood, while emphasis was placed on the historical past, particularly the Hussite wars. One propagandist expressed the hope that "the monument to the martyr Jan Hus planned to be unveiled in Prague in 1915 would witness a free Czech-Moravia overshadowed by the double-headed eagle of the Russian state" (Кадилин П. Н., 1914, с. 48). The success of such propaganda is evidenced by the rapid formation and effective rear operations of Czech national intelligence and sabotage units within the Russian army. Soon they grew into a full-fledged military formation.

As for the Czechs and Slovaks who fought within the Austro-Hungarian army, under the influence of Russian information and propaganda measures they began surrendering in such numbers that it was reflected in a special imperial order issued by Franz Joseph II.

<sup>6</sup> Шлиффен А. Канны. Москва, 1938. С. 368–369.

The idea of pan-Slavic unity was further developed in the appeal *"To the Russian People"*, addressed to Ukrainians. It expressed hopes that the "turbulent stream that breaks stones" would soon merge with the sea. The appeal called on people to remember the ancient Rus' past and not to oppress peaceful inhabitants regardless of their nationality, urging them only to turn their swords against the Swabians. Galician Ukrainians were assured that "there is no force capable of stopping the Russian people in their striving for unity" (Кадилин П. Н., 1914, с. 45–46).

The idea of awakening the "Nest of Eagles" was also frequently exploited. According to this concept, the next oppressed nations to which the Russian Empire turned its attention were the Serbs and Croats, primarily those under Ottoman rule.

Meanwhile, the countries of the Triple Alliance proclaimed a campaign for the liberation of the same Poles and Ukrainians in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, each side "liberated" those nations whose majority happened to live under the rule of the enemy.

As mentioned earlier, the effectiveness of this new weapon was not immediately recognized by the governments of the belligerent states, which was reflected in the level of funding. However, the failure of maneuver warfare and the unexpected course of military events forced governments for the first time to provide war propaganda with comprehensive state support.

In this respect, the Entente achieved greater success. It attempted to keep all targets within its field of vision: the enemy and its rear, its own population and allied audiences, as well as neutral states.

For example, in September 1915, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov informed General Alekseev about a proposal by the American journalist S. Washburn to deliver the latest war news to frontline positions describing the activities of Russian troops and their allies, as well as to drop leaflets on German positions from airplanes containing reproductions of paintings by Vereshchagin and other artists depicting the war of 1812. According to him, this could frighten German soldiers with the prospect of a harsh winter campaign. The minister also proposed several leaflets containing Washburn's text<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, the military significance of printed media was determined by the ability of governments and military command to influence the population through the press in ways beneficial for the war effort. This required effective control over the mass media.

By that time, centralized management of the media had already been achieved. At the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, a so-called Information Bureau was established, whose staff included experienced General Staff officers and journalists. From the moment of its creation, the Bureau was regarded as an instrument of information warfare.

At the end of September 1915, the heads of the Bureau, Noskov and Lemke, finally formulated a plan for cooperation between the army and the press. After that, the Bureau was ready to transmit to all media outlets, except left-wing publications, any information that the military authorities considered appropriate to disclose.

Publications were prepared in such a way that they could also influence the public opinion of neutral countries, which in turn sometimes had a significant impact on the public opinion of the enemy. For this purpose, specially inspired articles were prepared that Russian newspapers were required to publish. In each case, however, the Bureau undertook not only to indicate the degree of inaccuracy in reporting the event but also to provide an explanation of the reasons for such informational inspiration (Щеглов С. И., 1984, с. 96–97).

Later, all belligerent states established specialized propaganda units equipped with technical resources. In addition to propaganda, they actively used disinformation, including the production of fake newspapers and informational bulletins. Cinema also emerged as a powerful instrument of influence on mass consciousness.

After two years of war, propaganda activities within domestic territories became significantly simplified and were reduced primarily to emotional appeals. In this context, the press acted as the main

<sup>7</sup> Лемке М. К. *250 дней в царской Ставке, 1914–1915 гг.* Минск, 2003. С. 66.

instrument for shaping public opinion. It focused public attention on examples of the enemy's alleged arrogance, moral corruption, greed, and hostility. Thus, at the beginning of the First World War, publications describing German atrocities in France were widely disseminated. In response, German media wrote about the supposed brutality of Cossacks.

At the same time, all sides emphasized violations of the laws and customs of war committed by the enemy (Мальков В. Л. (ред.), 2002, с. 525).

The dissemination of such materials pursued a dual objective. In addition to discrediting the enemy, soldiers of one's own army were warned against surrendering.

Analytical materials are also of considerable interest. Survey reports indicated that German and Austro-Hungarian officers intimidated their subordinates by claiming that all prisoners in Russia were executed (Мальков В. Л. (ред.), 2002, с. 525–526).

Similar claims were made within the Russian army as well<sup>8</sup> (Эрн В., 1915). In this case, the primary means of disseminating such information to broad audiences were the mass media, which closely cooperated with the so-called *Extraordinary Investigative Commission for the Investigation of German Atrocities*. The commission published its own materials, which, in addition to describing enemy atrocities, emphasized the shamefulness of surrendering to the enemy<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the same methods were used for different purposes.

A significant role in shaping information at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was played by press agencies – organizations engaged in collecting, processing, and distributing information. German newspapers, in particular, received a large portion of their information from such agencies. German publishing houses and information bureaus were among the first to use a method that is now widely employed by the Russian Federation: the simple repetitive implantation of messages into the minds of readers. Through systematic repetition, the population developed a desired pattern of thinking, and millions of people began to perceive these ideas as their own. The decisive instrument of persuasion was not evidence but a striking phrase and stereotypical repetition. Falsified quotations from foreign newspapers were also frequently used. For instance, German publications often cited chauvinistic French media outlets, thereby creating the impression that such views were typical for all French people.

One of the main objectives of information and propaganda campaigns was to maintain the militant spirit of the population and to create the illusion of imminent victory, regardless of how long the war continued. Indeed, no matter how terrible the enemy might be portrayed, if it began to achieve military success, the morale of many social groups could decline. In such circumstances, public anger might be directed against the government and its allies. Therefore, the press described military setbacks as temporary, while emphasizing the heroic resistance of the most steadfast units and the feats of individual soldiers and commanders.

Slogans calling for heightened vigilance were widely disseminated, and new weapons were actively advertised. Considerable attention was devoted to strengthening ties with allies and maintaining friendly relations with neutral countries.

At the same time, an active demoralizing influence was directed against the enemy. The main propaganda messages aimed at enemy troops and populations included claims that their military situation was hopeless, that their blood was being shed in vain, and that the capabilities of one's own army and its allies were vastly superior.

The primary targets of such information campaigns were enemy troops. The German propaganda apparatus focused particularly on soldiers of the opposing side. In other words, German propaganda prioritized messages that could complement military force. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to note the relative primitiveness of German propaganda.

<sup>8</sup> Эрн В. *Время славянофильствует*. Москва, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> Из жизни наших героев-воинов. Петербург, 1916. С. 22–23; Эрн В. *Указ*. соч.

At the same time, information and psychological operations also pursued defensive objectives. The effectiveness of enemy propaganda was repeatedly discussed within the highest authorities of Germany. In most cases, the measures adopted consisted of urging soldiers to collect enemy leaflets and hand them over to special points for destruction, sometimes in exchange for payment. Later, Hindenburg himself acknowledged the susceptibility of German soldiers to enemy propaganda.

When discussing the use of mass media in the information and psychological operations of the First World War, it is impossible not to mention the controversial and speculative issue of the exploitation of political opposition by the belligerent states. On the one hand, all sides attempted to subordinate opposition movements within enemy territories. On the other hand, they engaged in the systematic discrediting of their own domestic opposition. This applied not only to those groups that might have been used by the enemy but to all political forces that in any way interfered with government policy.

Alongside the press, non-periodical printed materials also played an important role, particularly popular propaganda literature, as well as graphic images, paintings, photographs, and other illustrative materials that effectively influenced mass psychology.

The First World War became a turning point in the development of information and psychological confrontation. While at the initial stage propaganda activity was largely spontaneous and financed on a residual basis, during the course of the war it acquired a systematic, centralized, and institutional character. Specialized bodies for coordinating information activities were established, cooperation between the military command and the press was organized, and the use of press agencies, propaganda literature, illustrative materials, and cinema was significantly expanded.

The key methodological principle of propaganda became the binary model of "us versus them", which made it possible to create a clear distinction between the "civilized" domestic society and the "barbaric" enemy. Such an approach ensured the moral legitimization of war, consolidated the population, and minimized doubts regarding its justice. At the same time, methods of disinformation, document falsification, manipulation of the historical past, support for separatist movements, and the exploitation of the national factor were actively employed.

The experience of the First World War demonstrated that total war is waged not only on the battlefield but also in the sphere of consciousness. Mass media became a full-fledged instrument of state policy capable of influencing the morale of the army, the cohesion of society, as well as the positions of allied and neutral states. At the same time, the limited effectiveness of propaganda in certain countries demonstrated that its success depended on the social structure of society, the level of trust in government, and the correspondence of ideological messages to the mass mentality.

Thus, during the years of the First World War, the fundamental principles of modern psychological warfare were formed, involving the systematic combination of ideology, information influence, disinformation, and cultural-symbolic mechanisms for mobilizing mass consciousness. It was at that time that the information front finally became an integral component of interstate military confrontation.

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## ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИЙ ФРОНТ ПЕРШОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ: РОЛЬ ПРЕСИ У ПРОПАГАНДІ ТА ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИХ ОПЕРАЦІЯХ (1914-1918)

У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз становлення та розвитку інформаційно-психологічних операцій у період Першої світової війни як складової феномену тотальної війни початку ХХ століття. Досліджується процес перетворення пропаганди із допоміжного засобу політичного впливу на системний інструмент державної воєнної стратегії, спрямований на мобілізацію суспільства, формування образу ворога та легітимацію воєнних дій. Особлива увага приділяється передвоєнному етапу інформаційної боротьби, коли шовіністична риторика та принцип бінарної опозиції “свій – чужий” використовувалися як ідеологічна підготовка масової свідомості до глобального конфлікту.

У статті проаналізовано механізми функціонування преси, військової періодики, друкованих агентств, агітаційної літератури, графічної продукції та кіно як інструментів психологічного впливу. Показано, що з початком війни відбулося інституційне оформлення системи централізованого контролю над засобами масової інформації (ЗМІ), створення спеціалізованих бюро та координаційних структур, що забезпечували цілеспрямоване формування громадської думки в інтересах держави. Розкрито особливості впливу на різні цільові аудиторії: власне населення, союзників, нейтральні країни та противника, а також методи деморалізації ворожих військ через поширення чуток, листівок, фальсифікованих документів і використання історичних міфів.

Окремо висвітлюється роль національного чинника, підтримки сепаратистських рухів та іредентизму як нових технологій інформаційної боротьби, що активно застосовувалися воюючими державами. Зроблено висновок, що саме у 1914–1918 роках було закладено теоретичні та практичні основи сучасної психологічної війни, в межах якої об'єктом впливу стають не лише збройні сили противника, а й масова свідомість суспільства загалом.

**Ключові слова:** інформаційно-психологічні операції, інформаційно-психологічний вплив, пропаганда, Перша світова війна, образ ворога, шовінізм, військова періодика, дезінформація; мобілізація суспільства.

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Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 16.02.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 18.03.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 18.05.2026