



ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA IN THE FORMATION OF UKRAINE'S NATIONAL MEMORY DURING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

HISTORIA MÓWIONA I MEDIA W KSZTAŁTOWANIU
UKRAIŃSKIEJ PAMIĘCI NARODOWEJ PODCZAS WOJNY
ROSYJSKO-UKRAIŃSKIEJ

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ABSTRACT

In the fight against the Russian aggressor, the Ukrainian political nation was finally formed, and historical memory is one of the important elements of the national resilience of the Ukrainian people. The Russo-Ukrainian war in all its manifestations will form the backbone of the national memory of Ukrainians in the future, so the process of recording the stories of both the military and civilians is of great importance. The recorded stories show the personal experiences, pain, and suffering of citizens, which will form an objective image of the tragic events as part of the collective memory.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia²³ served as an impetus for Ukrainian identity and a return to national memory. Traditional and new media have columns or other permanent sections where stories of the heroes of the Russo-Ukrainian war are told. In the context of interpreting the history of Ukraine, mediatisation technologies enable the creation of a completely new Ukrainian media

ABSTRAKT

W walce z rosyjskim agresorem ostatecznie ukształtował się ukraiński naród polityczny, a pamięć historyczna jest jednym z ważnych elementów narodowej odporności Ukraińców. Wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska we wszystkich jej przejawach będzie stanowić kręgosłup pamięci narodowej Ukraińców w przyszłości, dlatego proces rejestrowania historii zarówno wojskowych, jak i cywilów ma ogromne znaczenie. Nagrane historie pokazują osobiste doświadczenia, ból i cierpienie obywateli, które stworzą obiektywny obraz tragicznych wydarzeń jako część pamięci zbiorowej.

Inwazja Rosji na Ukrainę stała się impulsem dla ukraińskiej tożsamości i powrotu do pamięci narodowej. Tradycyjne i nowe media mają kolumny lub inne stałe sekcje, w których historie bohaterów wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej są opowiadane w stylu medialnym. W kontekście interpretacji historii Ukrainy technologie mediatyzacji umożliwiają stworzenie zupełnie

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space with a large audience and influence the formation of historical memory.

nowej ukraińskiej przestrzeni medialnej z dużą publicznością i wpływają na kształtowanie pamięci historycznej.

Keywords: oral history; national memory; Ukraine; media; Russo-Ukrainian war

Słowa kluczowe: historia mówiona; pamięć narodowa; Ukraina, media; wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, approaches to the study and popularisation of history are changing, particularly under the influence of oral history.

Oral history is a method and tool for collecting and archiving testimonies about people and events related to history. As part of the interdisciplinary approach, this method is used in historical, sociological, psychological and anthropological sciences. The attractiveness of this method lies in the fact that the researcher or the consumer of the intellectual product has the opportunity to become directly acquainted with witnesses of history. Furthermore, it should be noted that the interview is a more accessible material compared to the traditional archive (Gocół, 2023). Oral history as a method is currently understood as the process of recording and archiving the memories of witnesses to history. Oral history is recorded (on any audio or video medium) as a narrative interview focused on an individual's experience of the past, allowing the narrator to tell their story and share their reflections on it, to which the speaker has full copyright (Maciąg, Lewandowska, 2019).

In oral history, the participant in events, who leaves their testimony for present and future generations, is an active creator of society's historical memory. Together with academics and oral history specialists, they take an active part in shaping the historical narrative. Scholars also consider oral history to be a methodological approach, which, as a process, consists of several interrelated stages: testimony collection, processing and/or archiving, access and use/presentation (Kierzkowski, 2014).

Oral history can be viewed in a narrow and broad context, as P. Thompson and J. Bornat suggest (Thompson, Bornat, 2021). The researchers see the past as an oral history treatise with three complementary forms: (1) recording of memories of various kinds, (2) biographical narrative and (3) oral tradition. The list also includes reports, radio broadcasts, diaries, letters and types of recorded and recorded memories (Jarząbek, 2022). The goal of oral history is the subjectivity

of the person/citizen, the co-authors of history, in the process of change. Citizens narrate history in memoirs, books, radio programmes, films, photographs, and museums (Jarzabek, 2022).

Certainly, it can be argued that the intertwining of oral history and media has an important role in the process of shaping Ukrainian national memory, including in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. In turn, historical memory plays a key role in the process of consolidation of the Ukrainian state and nation.

In this article, the focus will be primarily on how the specifics of media functioning in a democratic transition state, such as Ukraine, which has been subjected to Russia's unjustified aggression, affect the formation of national memory in the context of oral history. The research will refer to conceptual reflections on the phenomenon of media culture. For example, representatives of the Frankfurt School, such as Th. Adorno and M. Horkheimer point to the culture industry as the most effective tool of social control. Considering the origins of global consumerism, they argued that media culture should be based on ethical principles that would limit, balance and counteract attempts at manipulation in their negative sense. Media culture is a structural element of the whole complex of the national cultural condition, which is recognised by the broadest involvement of citizens, both inside and outside the state. It is most susceptible to the introduction of technological innovations and manifestations of multiculturalism. The subjectivity of its participants is undermined by anonymity and mass participation. In general, when considering the integral concept of 'culture', it is worth recalling F. Fukuyama's work *The Primacy of Culture*, in which the author discusses the prospects for democracy and its enhancement and identifies four levels at which he believes this process occurs. He argues that the level of culture is the deepest one, because it includes such important social phenomena as 'family, religion, moral values, ethnic identity, citizenship and historical traditions,' i.e. the phenomena that change the most slowly (Fukuyama, 2001). We refer to the sphere of functioning of the modern state to the phenomena of national and cultural identity and national memory. The Ukrainian researcher V. Soldatenko defines 'national memory' as a peculiar phenomenon of social consciousness, a preserved set of knowledge about the nation, its ideas, value judgements of historical events that have had a decisive influence on its formation, self-identification, state building, and civilisational achievements. They are unanimously perceived in society as the most important for its self-preservation, consolidated existence, and constructive development in the future (Soldatenko, 2011).

This research will follow the approach of the German scholar J. Assmann, one of the founders of the concept of 'collective memory', who divided it structurally into 'communicative' and 'cultural' memory (Huk, 2016). The former is particularly close in nature to the phenomenon that is called 'media culture', which includes oral history as well. Assmann understands communicative memory as the stories of contemporaries about recent events, often tragic, which they have witnessed, participated in, experienced, and have emotional impressions about. These memories are transmitted between the closest generations (up to four) and are reinforced by everyday communicative discourses, including media discourse, and in live communication. Oral history is also based on the stories of witnesses and participants in events. Therefore, what is observed is *the inseparability of the interaction between national and global media* in the cultural environment of a community (state, group, or society) and *oral history as a source of communicative (national) memory*. In turn, communicative memory creates a more general phenomenon – national memory (Denysiuk, 2017).

WAR AND MEMORY

Wars, struggles for independence and the accompanying martyrdom are inherent in the historical memory of most nations. Ukrainians are no exception, their history containing references to the Stalinist repression and crimes, including the tragedy of the Great Famine and the Cossack Wars, the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921, and the Second World War, as part of the restoration of national memory. Tsarist and Bolshevik Russia has long remained in Ukrainian national memory as an imperialist invader, suppressing the freedom aspirations of Ukrainians. Under the influence of the contemporary Russo-Ukrainian war, the national memory of Ukrainians faces two main challenges. Firstly, as part of the restoration of national memory, Ukrainian historiography is making efforts to present the struggle for independence in the context of Moscow's wars with Kyiv from the time of the Kyivan Rus', the Cossacks, the Ukrainian People's Republic and World War II. Secondly, it perpetuates in the national memory of Ukrainians the current Russo-Ukrainian war, starting from 2014.

The dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of a sovereign Ukraine took place under peaceful conditions, which is why there have been claims of 'donated independence'. From the perspective of Russia's war against Ukraine, it can be seen that Ukraine's war for independence and sovereignty was merely postponed.

The war that Russia unleashed against Ukraine has radically changed the lives of Ukrainians and has had a significant impact in terms of shaping Ukrainian national memory.

The 2014–2021 Russo-Ukrainian war was seen in a broader context as a hybrid war, in which ideological, informational and historical components were important in addition to the military dimension. Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine combined military and non-military instruments. Russia chose propaganda and disinformation as one of the main tools of hybrid warfare, through which it disseminated its ideological, historical, political and cultural narratives and myths. Returning to the imperial traditions of the tsarist and Soviet eras, Russia prepared plans for political, economic, cultural and military expansion in Ukraine. Russia's ideological offensive against Ukraine was aimed at building a 'Russian world' with a common historical memory. Any attempt to unfreeze the historical memory of Ukrainians was treated as a falsification of history. The different approach of the Ukrainians to the assessment of the events of the Cossack period, the Stalinist repression and the Second World War constituted a conflict of memories and the desire of the Russian Federation to impose its own 'historical truth' on its neighbours (Baluk, Doroshko, 2022).

Russia's war against Ukraine between 2014 and 2024 significantly affected the approach of the Ukrainian state and society to national memory. President V. Yanukovych's pro-Russian historical policy was replaced by a national narrative consolidating the state and society during the war. The process of decommunization of Ukraine, which started in 2009 and was *de facto* halted during 2010–2013 by the pro-Russian political parties, was resumed. In 2015, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine enacted the so-called decommunization 'package of laws' concerning Ukraine's freedom fighters, the commemoration of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War, access to the archives of the secret police of the Communist totalitarian regime, and the condemnation of Communist and National Socialist totalitarianism (Legislation of Ukraine).

Russia's war against Ukraine is a crime not only in terms of international law but also against the civilian population. According to the United Nations estimates, at least 2,803 civilians were killed between 2014 and 2017, including passengers on the MH-17 flight (Report, 2017). In the first year of Russian aggression against Ukraine, some 2 million people were forced to flee their homes (Report, 2017), mostly civilians in the Ukrainian Donbas. During the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine between February 2022 and October 2024, 12,162 civilians are estimated to have been killed and another 26,919

injured (Ukrinform, 2024). The actual death toll may be much higher, as not all losses due to ongoing hostilities can be confirmed. According to preliminary data, between 20,000 and 100,000 civilians were killed in Mariupol alone (“ZN. UA” 2023). Officially, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine put the number of victims of torture and inhumane treatment at 3,800 civilians and 2,200 military personnel (Espresso TV, 2024). The Ukrainian Helsinki Union for Human Rights has been documenting Russia’s crimes against Ukraine. From the beginning of the full-scale invasion until March 2024, 47,419 war crimes were registered (UHUHR, 2024). A much higher number of such cases have been registered by Ukrainian prosecutors – 122,000 war crimes committed by Russian troops in Ukraine (“Gordonua”, 2024).

Russia’s military invasion has led to a new and even larger wave of refugees. By December 2022, 7.4 million refugees were registered in European countries, including 1.5 million in Poland (UNHCR, 2023), and at least 2.8 million Ukrainians were forcibly deported or forced to leave for Russia (Havrylov, 2023). Abduction of Ukrainian children, which is a crime against humanity, has received widespread publicity, with some 150,000 to 200,000 children believed to have been illegally deported (Horban, 2023). Officially, 4.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) are registered in Ukraine, while unofficial estimates put the figure at almost 7 million (“Slovo i dilo”, 2023). By the end of 2024, Ukraine’s demographic loss was estimated at 10 million people, including those who moved abroad and reside in occupied territories. Furthermore, the military will have a huge impact on shaping the national memory of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In repelling Russian aggression, Ukraine called up some 900,000 soldiers under arms, of whom 80,000 may have been killed and some 400,000 wounded (BBC, 2024).

As a result of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, the country’s economy has shrunk by more than 35 per cent. Russia is destroying not only military targets, but also civilian populations and infrastructure. The World Bank and the European Commission estimate the damage caused by the war in Ukraine in its first year at USD 134.7 billion and the reconstruction needs at USD 410.6 billion. Experts estimate the losses of various sectors of the economy at USD 69.7 billion, while infrastructure suffered losses of USD 65 billion (Bohdan, 2023). By December 2023, the Russian army had destroyed more than 210,000 homes and public buildings, 708 schools, 106 hospitals and 109 religious facilities in Ukraine (Bunyak, 2024).

The above figures illustrate the tragedy of the Ukrainian people in terms of human and material losses. Russian occupiers are killing civilians, deporting

Ukrainian citizens, shelling humanitarian corridors, destroying residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, setting up filtration camps, looting residents' property, torturing and raping civilians. In the annexed territories, Russia has established occupation administrations, forcing the civilian population to collaborate. At the same time, Russian propaganda is trying to justify war crimes and shift responsibility for the war to Ukraine. For domestic and foreign policy purposes, Russia is already shaping its own memorial narrative. Ukrainian society and the state, on the other hand, are making efforts to memorialise the war, despite the difficult situation surrounding it.

MEMORIALISATION OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

Currently in Ukraine, active cooperation between oral history and the mass media is being established. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, almost all Ukrainian media launched their own programmes modelled on oral history practices. Examples include the Ukrainian National News Agency (Ukrinform), which has been documenting the events of the Russo-Ukrainian war as part of the programme 'The Year of the Great War through the Eyes of Ukrinform' (Ukrinform, 2023) and the collection of the Kyiv Organisation of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine – 'Ukraine: Journalists on the Front Line' (Malienko, Bondar, Yakovets, 2023).

It is quite understandable why interest in the practice of oral history in Ukraine increased so dramatically during Russia's invasion. Ukraine's media landscape was ready for this explosion, and the journalistic community realised its responsibility for the process of recording 'living history'. As the Ukrainian researcher Nina Averyanova notes, oral history as an element of the nation's historical memory can become an effective factor in consolidating Ukrainians, including through the phenomenon of media culture. Researchers of historical memory, and thus of communicative memory, conclude that its loss destroys national consciousness. In the absence of such memory, national identity disappears, and with it the nation itself. Ukrainian history is replete with examples of Russia's efforts to erase Ukrainian historical memory and identity, with the ultimate goal of destroying the idea of an independent Ukrainian state. The post-Soviet resentments of a certain section of Ukrainian society and the negative attitude towards the Western world as a remnant of Russia's imperial influence are also a threat. And since 'concepts of historical memory are mainly formed in

the media space, the cultural values of the Soviet or neo-imperial model were and are actively reinforced by the Russian propagandistic media. The ideologues of the 'Russian world' constantly repeat narratives about 'Slavic unity', 'brotherly nations', shared values, and belonging to the same Russian Orthodox Church (Averyanova, 2018).

National memory is characterised by being shared by the majority of the population. An agreed and informed interpretation of the past is a prerequisite for 'developing a common position in the future'. Today, knowledge of historical events is shaped not only by the education system as a separate institution, but also by various media platforms, including the mass media. Incidentally, the latter are capable of causing large-scale changes in collective memory, which is activated by significant socio-political events (Bevz, 2018).

It should be noted that the interaction between the media and oral history is a structural element in the formation of media culture. This is evidenced by the phenomenon in new and traditional media of telling the stories of the heroes of the Russo-Ukrainian war according to media art. Eyewitness accounts are very often recorded on the front line or at the scene of events. This is evidenced by the algorithm used by the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation's "Museum of Civilian Voices" to collect oral histories of victims of the armed conflict. The materials of this project are primarily produced according to media standards ("Museum of Civilian Voices").

Drawing on the experience of Western colleagues, the Voices of People of Peace Museum organised the first 'Oral History Forum of Ukraine' in Kyiv in October 2023 with the participation of the USC Shoah Foundation, the Oral History Association, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin ("Oral History Forum of Ukraine", 2023). In addition, the "Museum of Civilian Voices" organised an international school of communication in Kyiv and Lublin, entitled 'How to document war stories' (UMCS, 2023). The task of the above initiatives was to develop appropriate methods for documenting oral histories during the Russo-Ukrainian War.

In the process of memorialisation of Ukraine's historical memory, museums are playing an increasingly important role. As Nina Baranovska noted, today Ukrainian museums have finally ceased to be ideological puppets of the Soviet era; they have been integrated into the state policy of preserving and shaping historical memory, and are quite modern and effective institutions of communication, 'raising the public's awareness of Ukraine's past and future,

positively influencing the political consciousness of the Ukrainian people and contributing to the formation of civil society' (Baranowska, 2016).

In this context, an interesting example would be the Maidan Museum, which is managed by the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINM). It hosts an Information and Exhibition Centre where one can not only learn about the conditions and course of the Euromaidan, book a tour of the 'Places of the Revolution of Dignity', but also leave memories of the events and one's participation in them. The museum exhibits original objects belonging to participants in the Revolution of Dignity, as well as photographs and films of the protests (Maidan Museum, 2024).

Interesting in terms of cooperation and the mutual influence of oral history and the media is 'Maidan: Oral History', the UINM's project, which was initiated in February 2014 after the end of the Revolution of Dignity. The project aimed to collect video and audio testimonies of participants in the 2013–2014 events, with 1,250 interviews collected so far (Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (UINP), 2024). Over the years, the project has produced a series of print publications: *Maidan from the first person. 45 stories of the Revolution of Dignity* (2015); *Maidan in the first person. Art at the barricades* (2016); *Maidan from the First Person: Regional Dimension* (2017–2018).

Another project that contributed to the formation of media culture and national memory in Ukraine is the initiative of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory and the First Channel of Ukrainian Radio, which broadcast a series of radio programmes, *Maidan: An Oral History*. The project, launched in November 2015, invited the participants in the events on the Maidan to speak (UINM, 2024).

Another joint media project between the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance and TSN.ua was implemented in 2020 under the title *Unknown Maidan: The Revolution of Dignity in Eyewitness Stories*. Ordinary volunteers, musicians, writers, doctors, teachers, architects, marketers and 'simply brave people who risked their lives, their futures and made history in front of the whole world' shared their memories of the historic events in the centre of the Ukrainian capital (TSN, 2024).

Among the initiatives of the UINM is the project 'Oral history of the Russo-Ukrainian war', which collects, processes and publishes interviews of participants in and eyewitnesses of the armed conflict. It currently lists 286 interviews, mostly in video format, which have been recorded and prepared by UINM staff or provided by other institutions and researchers. The interviewees include

military personnel, their relatives, doctors, volunteers, chaplains, and internally displaced people. It should be noted that UINM experts have developed and formulated methodological recommendations and a programme of oral history interviews with participants and witnesses of the Russo-Ukrainian war (UINM, 2024). Obviously, these recommendations and the experience of the Institute's research community can be useful for organisations and museums, as well as media specialists implementing oral history projects.

The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory has been running an Oral History Archive since 2014, which by 2024 contained more than 1,900 interviews in audio and video formats, including 1,250 witnesses of the Revolution of Dignity, 286 witnesses of the Russo-Ukrainian War and more than 300 memories of the Soviet era – the Holodomor, World War II, and the national liberation movement (UINM, 2024).

With the establishment and development of the “Museum of Civilian Voices”, the largest archival collection of witnesses of the Russo-Ukrainian War is being assembled in Ukraine. By 2025, the Museum had collected almost 130,000 testimonies (“Museum of Civilian Voices”).

Table 1. Oral history institutions in Ukraine by activity indicators (2023)

	Monthly website performance (X2023)	Subscribers on social media
Ukrainian Institute of National Memory	111 900	146 300
Centre for Urban History	54 700	16 776
„Dattallion”	53 500	14 958
Centre for Civil Liberties	44 600	22 168
Museum of Civilian Voices	28 000	693 000
‘Archive of War’	11 900	42
Laboratory of Public Interest Journalism	11 400	4 653
‘Past/Future/Art’	8 800	6 206
Ukrainian Oral History Society	8 200	179
‘After Silence’	5 400	6 246
Memorial Platform ‘Memorial’	-	91 531

Source: The current state of oral history initiatives in Ukraine, Analytical report based on the results of comprehensive research, <https://civilvoicesmuseum.org/potochnyy-stan-initsiatyv-z-usnoi-istorii-v-ukraini-analitychnyy-zvit-za-rezultatamy-kompleksnogo-doslidzhennya>.

Oral histories about Russian aggression in Ukraine are being used to make interesting documentaries and feature films based on eyewitness accounts of the dramatic events. In Ukrainian national memory, Russia's war against Ukraine will be identified with the war crimes of Russian soldiers committed against civilians in Bucha, Irpin, Borodianka, Hostomel, and Mariupol. Several valuable documentary films have been made about the occupation of Bucha and Irpin (*Shattered Bucha*, *Lost Souls of Bucha*). Of note is the autumn 2023 premiere of *Irpin*, which is one of four documentary episodes in the *My War* series created by Fresh Production Group. The film is based on the oral history of a man who survived the atrocities and torture of Russian soldiers. The film's protagonist miraculously survives and rescues people locked in a cold storage facility. The *My War* project shows the extraordinary stories of ordinary people about their experiences of war, about courage, resilience, compassion and sacrifice in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances ("Ukraine crisis media center"). Another episode in the *My War* series is the documentary *Sydorovychi*, which tells the story of the atrocities committed by the Russian army during the occupation of the Kyiv region, and in particular the village of Sydorovychi. The film focuses on the tragic fate of the Komarenkos, in which only three of the six family members were left alive ("Ukraine crisis media center").

The town of Bucha remains a media symbol of the inhuman cruelty of Russian occupation forces on Ukrainian territory. It was there that a massacre of civilians took place in the spring of 2022, the consequences of which the world saw after the liberation of the town by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. More than 1,400 people, including 37 children, are known to have been killed there (UNIAN, 2023). A feature drama entitled *Bucha* has been made, based on facts and the story of Konstantin Gudauskas, a Lithuanian Jew, a citizen of Kazakhstan, who was once granted asylum in Ukraine and lived in Bucha. During the occupation, thanks to his Kazakh citizenship, Konstantin was able to move relatively freely in the occupied territory, which allowed him to get 203 civilians out of Bucha. At the same time, the protagonist becomes a witness to the murders, robberies, rapes, and looting carried out by Russian troops (Bucha, 2022).

Eyewitness accounts of those defending Ukraine against Russian aggression have also allowed for the creation of documentary films, such as *The Battle for Kyiv* and *The Battle for Kharkiv* (Pechersky, 2023). The heroic deeds and stories of Ukrainian soldiers have been reflected in such feature films as *Cherkasy* (2020), a story of Ukrainian minesweeper sailors bravely resisting the Russian occupation of Crimea; and *Cyborgs* (2017), which is about Ukrainian soldiers defend-

ing the Donetsk airport (Masenko, Karmanska, 2024). Other noteworthy films include *From Where to Where*, a documentary about the fate of war refugees; *Myth* (2018), the life story of the famous opera singer Vasyl Slipak, who died defending his homeland; *Chimera War* (2017), a story of war and love told by the direct participants; and *20 Days in Mariupol*, depicting the annihilation of a Ukrainian city, realised by an eyewitness, a war correspondent. The vast majority of these films have received prizes and awards from national or international film festivals. The most prestigious one, the Academy Award, went to the film *20 Days in Mariupol* in 2023 (Smagina, 2023).

The battle of Mariupol has become a symbol of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The “Museum of Civilian Voices” preserves more than 4,600 stories of the inhabitants of this Ukrainian city on the Sea of Azov, who witnessed the heroic defence and barbarism of the Russian army. In this context, it is worth mentioning the documentary *Mariupol. Unlost Hope*, based on the diaries of Mariupol journalist Nadia Sukhorukova (Mariupol, 2022). In another documentary, *Mariupol. Occupation*, ordinary residents of the devastated Ukrainian city tell “about the monstrous crimes of the Russians that they saw with their own eyes” (STB TV, 2024). The documentary *Mariupol. Rage Allows Me to Breathe*, created by the Association of Ukrainian Producers, tells the story of Kseniya Kayan, who survived the siege of Mariupol and lost her son there (TV channel “Dim”, 2023). The documentary *Invincibles*, on the other hand, tells the stories of Ukrainian soldiers who, despite serious injuries, take part in the Invictus Games (Unconquered, 2023).

The Ukrainian media product, which documents the atrocities of Russian aggression in Ukraine using visuals and oral histories, is an effective element and tool of the national strategic communication system. For example, the film *20 Days in Mariupol* by Ukrainian documentary filmmaker Mstyslav Chernov was presented at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly. The film was viewed by more than 100 high-ranking officials (Espresso TV, 2023), a sign of its impact on the international community. The above activities also allow for the refutation of Russian propaganda narratives and disinformation about ‘Ukraine bombing the Donbas’ and ‘Russia the liberator’.

During Russia’s aggression between 2014 and 2024, a form of journalism, such as reportage, developed in the Ukrainian media. Non-fiction and journalism depicting real events and authentic characters filled the Ukrainian information space. After the annexation of Crimea, the first war correspondents appeared, including A. Tsapliyenko, Y. Butusov, N. Nahorna, and after Russia’s full-scale

invasion in 2022, a multitude of others followed, such as V. Kipiani, P. Kazarin, T. Berezovets, etc. It is worth mentioning the series of reportages titled *Heroes among us* by Taras Berezovets and the series of radio programmes based on Pavlo Kazarin's book *The Wild West of Eastern Europe* (Chubuk, 2022). The stories of Chernihiv's students are presented in the documentary film *Today and Tomorrow There Will Be No Lessons*, showing the drama and unfulfilled plans of high school graduates ("OKOpress", 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, a new segment of documentaries and feature films has emerged in the Ukrainian information space as a result of the interaction of oral history and the media, recording the events of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Ukrainian society and the journalistic community seek to bring closer the end of the ongoing war and the ensuing just peace. Keeping in mind the 'Never Again' motto, Ukrainian media are working with oral history specialists to improve the effectiveness and quality of documenting eyewitness and participant accounts of tragic events, shaping communicative and historical memory.

The struggle against the Russian aggressor has seen the consolidation of the Ukrainian political nation, with historical memory being one of the important elements of the national resilience of Ukrainians. The Russo-Ukrainian war in all its manifestations will be at the core of Ukrainians' national memory in the future, and therefore, the process of recording the history of both the military and the civilian population is of great importance. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has increased the importance of ontological security, including Ukrainian identity and historical memory.

New documentary and fiction products are emerging in the Ukrainian media as a result of the interaction between the media and the oral history approach to recording the recent events of the Russo-Ukrainian war. In the context of interpreting Ukraine's history, the technologies of mediatisation make it possible to create a completely new Ukrainian media space with a large audience and influence the shaping of historical memory. The popularisation of historical media projects in Ukraine is facilitated by the activities of traditional media and the emergence of new media, including popular online video streaming programmes.

Oral history and the mediatisation of history play a very important role in the process of shaping the national memory of Ukrainians in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. State and civil society initiatives in this area are crucial in documenting eyewitness accounts of these events. Consolidating the memory of the Russo-Ukrainian war in cultural memory will be the next step in this process.

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