



## Revising Russian Historical Memory

**OE Watch Commentary:** The current Kremlin leadership continues to commemorate (and perhaps exploit) the USSR's victory in the Great Fatherland War (WW II)—even if it entails rewriting history. In the brief excerpt from the military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, the author describes the background of the recent decision to establish “3 September as the Day of Military Glory of Russia, marking the End of World War II.” Prior to this change, Russia, like the rest of the world, marked the end of WW II on 2 September.

The author lists 8 reasons as to how this date change was made, even though experts within “the Russian Academy of Sciences, could not confirm the accuracy of 3 September 1945 as the date of the end of the Second World War.” He states that the origin of this date change began when Foreign Minister “Sergey Lavrov and [Minister of Defense] Sergey Shoigu made a proposal to establish this Day of Military Glory,” followed by a 13 February decision whereby “Putin agreed with them.” Once the top leadership had decided on the date change, all the other pliant ministers and government officials voiced their support.

The author suggests that camouflage or distraction may have been the primary Kremlin motive behind altering WW II history. As the author points out, for the past 15 years, 3 September was marked as “the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism,” whereby Russians “remember the victims of the tragedy at school No. 1 in Beslan.” On 1 September 2004, terrorists took over 1,000 students, teachers and family members hostage in a school in Beslan, North Ossetia. The situation exploded on 3 September, and during the chaotic attempt to free the hostages, more than 330 were killed, including 186 children.

Without question, the Beslan tragedy of 1-3 September 2004 remains the darkest, most painful memory that Russia has experienced thus far under President Putin. By changing the historical date to commemorate the end of WW II to 3 September, at least some Russian observers think that the Kremlin leadership may be trying to replace painful reminders of Beslan with victorious memories from the Great Fatherland War (WW II). End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

***“...It is a well-known historical fact that the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945, and therefore the proposal of the ministers to set the date for 3 September - the Day of the end of the Second World War also has no historical basis.”***



Collage of images, showing victims and memorial of Beslan tragedy.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beslan\\_kollazh.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beslan_kollazh.jpg) CCA-SA 3.0 Unported



## Continued: Revising Russian Historical Memory

**Source:** Vladimir Kiknadze, “3 сентября как день капитуляции РФ,” [3 September as the day of surrender of the Russian Federation] *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, 29 July 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/57965>

*Changes in Vladimir Putin's official approaches to increasing the retirement age and revising the fundamental provisions of the Constitution were followed by a renewed view of the Russian president on the history of World War II....*

*In February, V. Putin agreed that the date of 3 September 1945 is the day of the end of World War II, and on 24 April, he signed Federal Law No. 126-FZ, which established the Day of Military Glory of Russia “3 September is the Day of the End of World War II...”*

*And suddenly a sharp turn. Instead of the generally recognized world and national historical science, the date of the end of the Second World War (2 September 1945), which has international legal grounds (on this day, the Act of Japan's unconditional surrender was signed), which was included in all history textbooks, which were used by students in the USSR and are taught to students of the Russian Federation, now appears on 3 September....*

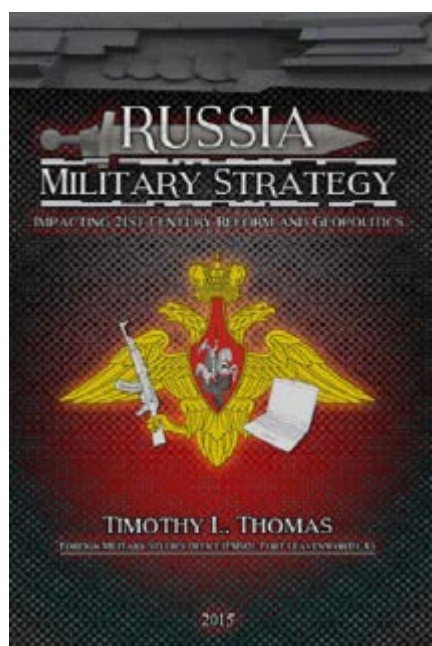
*The authors of the federal law are well known. But the very hasty and strange course of consideration of the draft law from United Russia raises many questions.... Moreover, the adoption of the law caused a negative resonance in society. ... For the Republic of North Ossetia - Alania, September 3 is a day of mourning, and participation in solemn events on the occasion of the Day of Military Glory is excluded. The opinion of the academic historical science of Russia represented by the Russian Academy of Sciences again turned out to be unclaimed by the authorities.*

*...Sergey Lavrov and Sergey Shoigu made a proposal to establish this Day of Military Glory. On 13 February Putin agreed with them. However, the grounds indicated in the address of the two ministers to the Russian president either do not fully correspond to reality, or cause surprise and misunderstanding in Russian society.*

*...It is a well-known historical fact that the Second World War ended on 2 September 1945, and therefore the proposal of the ministers to set the date for 3 September - the Day of the end of the Second World War also has no historical basis. ...The government did not reflect in its opinion on the draft law the position of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which did not confirm the accuracy of 3 September 1945 as the date of the end of World War II.*

*...Thus, the adopted law does not have in its argumentation anything related to the history of Russia, its modern state interests and sovereignty, it does not correspond to the basic principles of our state, which are outlined in the 2020 Constitution...*

*...The Republic of North Ossetia - Alania will not participate in the celebrations marking the end of World War II on 3 September. In accordance with the same Federal Law No. 32, 3 September is the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism, this date in the republic is mourning: residents remember the victims of the tragedy at school No. 1 in Beslan. The head of North Ossetia-Alania Vyacheslav Bitarov said that he himself would not allow “any celebrations, even if someone expresses such a desire....”*



### RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

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