



GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

Zvezdina G.P., Priymak E.N.**Military service in the value orientations
of young men of military age**

The article focuses on consideration of the problem of transformation of value orientations of young men of military age in a changing society. The authors show the place of military service in the value orientations of modern young men. Revealing the changes taking place in society, the article focuses on the transformations that have affected the army, and the psychological problems that it faced. The empirical part of the study is the analysis of the results of multiple diagnostic tests and monitoring to study the attitudes of young people to serve in the Armed Forces of Russia, the study of value orientations and spiritual and moral foundations of young men that determines their position in life. Being based on the analysis of empirical studies the authors have shown that the process of self-identification of young people cannot take place without the process of reflection and sense formation, to which one should draw his/her close attention, especially in the transition of a modern army on a professional basis.

Keywords: *military service, army problems, readiness for service, value orientation, identity of young people, transformation of values*

The modern civilized world is undergoing profound transformations that Russia has not passed by. These changes have affected all spheres of human existence: together with the cardinal reforms in the socio-political and economic fields there are fundamental changes in the army. The scientists – sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and other professionals, who are involved in the study of trends and regularities in the development of social and individual consciousness that occur at the stage of change of epochs, note a need to reassess the significance of many fundamental values, including those relating to the service in the Armed Forces.

The army is closely related to the main areas of the life of the society. Functioning and development of the army is determined, first of all, by the level of material production, the state of the military-industrial complex, that affects its providing with equipment and weapons, the quantitative and qualitative armed forces personnel. It is also important national and confessional struc-



ture of the army, their influence on the army personnel, the nature of the relationship between the military personnel, moral and political unity of the army and society, and morale in the armed forces. The state of the army is also influenced by social and economic processes taking place in the society, the spiritual life, the development of culture and science.

During the last decades the modern Russian army has been undergoing significant changes under the influence of socio-political and socio-economic factors, and it has faced a number of problems:

- social anomie, when former spiritual values are rejected and there are no new, which is dangerous for the society as a whole, and for the army;
- reduction of recruiting resources, the transition of recruitment for the army to a mixed principle, when the basic structure of military personnel is consist of conscripts and contract soldiers who has come to the army on a voluntary basis;
- reduction of a positive motivation of young people to serve in the army;
- reduction of the willingness of young men to serve in the armed forces which is developing in the deterioration of the adaptation of young soldiers in the first months of service at a time when there is increased information, physical, nervous and mental exertion, an increase of percentage of servicemen returning from the troops on the neuropsychic disorders (N.N. Kamenskov, 1987; S.A. Nuzhin, 1997);
- contradiction between a relative freedom of the society and a complete lack of freedom of soldiers, between the natural rights and freedoms of an individual and their unconstitutional exclusion in the army;
- an early military age of young men and the emerging trend to lengthen the period of childhood, which often determines the unwillingness of young people to serve in the army.

Military service as a kind of an activity is a system of interrelated actions undertaken to achieve socially significant objectives based on the real and the potential use of weapons, military equipment and others. In its basic characteristics military service inheres in fighting character, increased moral, psychological and physical activity, requiring a special physical preparedness and emotional and strong-willed resistance, intelligent preparedness in the use of modern engineering tools and telecommunication technologies.

Organizational, legal and psychological uncertainty caused by the transition period in the army, leads to the fact that not only the level of discipline of soldiers reduces, but, first of all, personal-valuable sense of service in the army is getting lost. According to sociological and psychological studies anti-army sentiments are widespread among young people. At present recruits



and young soldiers interest in service has fallen down sharply. The number of those who consider the military service as a duty has increased more than 3 times. The number of young people who are indifferent to execute their duty to defend the Homeland becomes more and more.

According to the research by the Federal State Statistics Service a little more than a half of the surveyed young men (52 %) are willing and ready to serve in the Army. Most of them are found among students of vocational schools (60 %), and least of them are found among university students (40 %). Almost 90% of respondents have a positive attitude towards the contract service. More than a half of respondents (60 %) would avoid military service if they had a chance, and would spend the time on work or study. The number of young men, who are not ready to join the army physically and psychologically, is growing.

The analysis of the results of numerous studies shows that in the post-Soviet time difficult processes have taken place among the young people. They show reevaluation of cultural values of previous generations, breaking of continuity in the transmission of social and cultural experience. Tangible property has become much more important in the hierarchy of values of today's youth. Success in life and self-realization are more associated in the minds of young people with the material well-being and achievement of certain status positions in the society. Material wealth and a high status in the mind of the society and young people are essential attributes of masculinity [3, 8].

Today's youth as a whole is characterized by a change of directedness of life orientations from a social (collectivist) component to an individual one. Material well-being has become appreciated by young people much higher than freedom; the value of wages has prevailed over the value of interesting work. Inclination to individualistic value system is more inherent to Western culture: an attitude to the autonomy of an individual, rationality and respect for private property is recognized significant by modern Russian youth. In the first place young people prefer to take care of material prosperity. For most young people work has lost its meaning as a way of self-affirmation, self-realization. In their striving for good earnings and high income many young people lose their moral guiding line, and often conflict with legal rules.

Values always include moral concepts of an individual what is correct, positive or desirable; they are conscious or intuitive moral choice of that what is important and worthy for a person.

A special place in the value area is occupied by the values of work, and many psychologists believe they are basic coordinates of the whole value sphere of a person. In the context of many social sciences work values are regarded as an extremely important factor in human history, determined not



only economic development, but also rise and decline of entire civilizations. The pragmatic attitude of young people to work as to the basis of material prosperity often leads to an intrapersonal crisis, inability of prediction of one's own future and self-realization.

In determining the value of military service young people also appeals to the economic benefits and individual values to a greater extent. The study of R. Emtsov and M. Lokshin shows that the former recruits lose from 5 to 15 % of their annual income during the life. The acquired in the army military skills and professions often do not meet the needs of civilian life [4, p. 61]. Serving in the army conflicts with the life plans of young people, complicates the realization of significant individual values. In this connection the values of military service are losing their relevance in the minds of young people and acquiring a secondary character, attitudes to its active avoidance are being formed, and the society regards them quite tolerant. As a consequence of reduction of positive motivation to serve by conscription there is an increase of activity of the youth in its avoidance.

A.V. Smirnov studied attitudes of pre-conscription youth notes that 26,6 % pupils have agreed with the statement that "every man must do military service in the army, even if it is not in his own interests". The other point of view that "military service is a private affair of a person, every man must decide himself whether to serve or not to serve" is believed by significantly upperclassmen (59 %). About 12 % of senior pupils could not answer that question. About 3 % of the respondents identified their own position in regard to the military service, did not agree with any of the suggested points of view. The researcher notes that university students share the views of pupils on the subject. Among them the number of those who agree with compulsory military service is 18.6 %, while the number of supporters of military recruitment on a voluntary basis is 60 %. About 5 % of the students reported their own position which is, as a matter of fact, a specification of the first two points of view, 16.6 % were undecided [9].

Thus the proportion of boys who regard military service is obligatory is even less among students than among senior pupils.

The implementation of contract principle of service in the armed forces has its characteristic features and problems. The transition to the recruitment for the army on a contract basis assumes fundamental changes of not only the structure of the army, but also the content of many concepts, including the concept of "military duty". Today one of the main problems in reforming of the Armed Forces is an emerged contradiction between the moral duty of a soldier and his legal status. The moral-psychological factor has always had a great importance for the military fighting efficiency of troops. The ex-



perience of national and world history is clearly proved it. However, today, in present-day Russian life, the problem of morale of the troops is getting particularly acute.

The military duty of a citizen to the State and the society as a moral category and entry into military service on a contract basis as a market category assume completely different moral and legal foundations for the execution of the military duty. The importance and necessity of a shift of training guidelines of military personnel to formation of the public spirit is determined by the fact that the contract army will be weaker than the conscription army in a number of political and social positions. First of all the contact between the army and the society is weakened. According to experts, conscription military service is an important factor of social mobility and interethnic communication of the population, "a school of life". The contract army by its nature is caste, corporate. It will objectively reduce the level of the public trust in the army, on the one hand, and a sense of personal responsibility for defense of the Homeland, on the other hand. This non-identity of the army and the society necessitates permanent efforts to integrate the armed forces with the civil society [7].

The moral justification, ideological "reinforcement" to execute military duty is sharply weakened with introduction of the contract service. Thereby the roles of legal regulation and material encouragement are greatly increasing. The legal regulation is just starting improving, and material encouragement can not be guaranteed, budgetary provided today.

The foreign experience in reforming the armed forces, the detection of adverse changes in the army also indicate that increasing the "technical", narrow-professional level of military personnel does not often solve the social and psychological problems, including the problem of discipline. For example, American experts believe that the main factor that contributes to reducing the number of disciplinary cases is that fact that the high level of discipline is primarily maintained by administrative and legal means, and only then by the knowledge of military personnel of their duty.

In the context of the devaluation of values in the modern society, national spiritual values that have always, regardless of the political situation, cemented the society, have been losing their significance and regulatory function in the army. They are patriotism and willingness to serve the Homeland, adherence to military duty, and pride in belonging to the Russian Armed Forces.

It is known that during the transition period many contradictions and diseases become more intense. The transition of the Russian army to the mixed type of service activates many social and psychological problems and conflicts that existed before, even in a rudimentary form. Today we can es-



establish the intensification of such “traditional” for the armies of many countries phenomena (although, to a variable extent) as bullying, protectionism, international conflicts (national, racial, fellow-countryman’s sectionalism), malpractice, deviant behavior (alcoholism, drug addiction, homosexuality). As reasons for intensification of these problems researchers designate features which are characteristic for a society in transition. They are an “erosion” of the normative-value system that regulates the behavior of people, weakening of social control, sharpening of social interests that inevitably lead to the unification according to social, territorial, ethnic, clannish, etc. integrating grounds. The main condition for the solution or, at least, mitigation of these problems is a creation of a new sustainable system of values, moral and legal norms of behavior. The military reform is able to solve them to the extent which will contribute to the process of statutory and regulatory stabilization of the society [7].

The targeted work to form value orientations of young people must take into account both the transformation processes taking place in the society, and mechanisms of transformation of sense-value sphere of an individual. Under the current definition, “the transformation of value orientations of an individual is in transformation of the internal basis of the existing system of values; it is characterized by qualitative changes of its core elements on the basis of the political interests of the authorities and the society, taking into account the features of mentality and traditional culture whatever changes happen” [8].

D.A. Leontiev reveals mechanisms of transformation of the sense sphere of an individual through the process of conversion, as a result of which “the original system of relations is minimized, mediating links and intermediate dependences are reduced and fallen out, some characteristics of the object which are functionally important in the given converted form are found, and others which are of no importance for the relevant aspects of its operation are deleted. All these transformations are determined by nothing else, but the properties of the substrate in which the original subject content is incarnated” [5].

Normative value systems that are specified by the current level of culture are generated by social practice and social experience. The dynamics of the normative-value system “develops from thinking on the level of personal meaning through forming social values up to the full institutionalization of the program of social activities, which underlies it” [10]. G.L. Tulchinsky notes that identifying individual, personal and social relationships it is possible to point at their interdependence and interpenetration. “However, one cannot but admit the obvious fact: personality is a source, means, “mechanism” of dy-



namics of understanding and sense-creation. It is exactly that field where this dynamic is developing, and in particular its energy generates this dynamic, potentiating being”.

Under all circumstances and changes the sense-value structures of consciousness are inherent to the inner world of an individual. Thereby, the value orientation and attitudes can be considered as the most essential tool of self-regulation of an individual. The value orientations underlie the search of personal identity with his/her inner “Self”. Therefore, they are a flexible and constantly corrected relation between an individual and the society, between creating awareness of the subject and his/her responsible personal choice [2].

Spiritual and moral foundations and values are important components of the education of the younger generation. Internalizing behavioral standards of dominant social relationships, a young person can determine the boundaries of his/her external identification only in the context of culture, unifying his/her spiritual needs, and leading them mainly to the recreational field. Such an external identification has a conformist nature and forms an attitude of quasi-assimilation of spiritual values. Discovering by an individual conscious beliefs and value orientations that determine his/her social role is a process of self-identification. The essence of self-identification is in understanding oneself as integrity in the process of determining the boundaries of one’s own cultural identity. The process of self-identification cannot take place without processes of understanding and sense-creating. I.V. Abakumova specifies mechanisms of sense-creating and notes the crucial importance of life-senses as an attribute of the life-world, on the one hand, and as a stable core system of senses of his/her subjective world, on the other hand. “The closure of the sense components of the subjective experience of a person, the sense matrix of his/her consciousness on life values of life-world of the person transfers them to the level of personal meanings, inversely affecting the stable sense structure generated them” [1].

Strengthening the spiritual and moral foundations of the Armed Forces, relying on historical experience, combining realities of the present and prospects of the future in development of the nation and the State will allow young people to come to the social, cultural and civic identity and will primarily contribute to forming moral objectives and values.

Moral objective causes a huge mobilization of forces for a long period of time – for the prospect of creative activity and self-realization. The specific objectives do not have such a character. After their reaching a decline in activity quickly comes, fraught with depression and boredom. In making vital decisions it must be given a place to a phenomenon that might be called



a social-psychological realism, an ability to determine the correspondence of one's own "Self" to that social space, which the real life situation implies. Exactly the sense core structure of personality makes its basic "Self", and implements sense regulation of life activity of an individual [2].

The transition of the army to the professional base requires a special approach to the organization of the social environment for the military personnel, which is characterized by its subculture, the system of specific values and norms that regulate human behavior, reliance on its personal potential. Training and education of recruits are the kind of "military socialization", internalizing of relevant values and norms, among which the values of humanism and patriotism, the values of a free democratic society and the change of the "image" of the army in the minds of the military personnel and the whole society must take an important place.

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