

Alexander Khodnev

The Future of Public History – What Shall We Teach Perceptively: Russian Situation

Before we discuss the future of public history teaching a question should be raised if there is a future for the history in Russia? Francis Fukuyama saw the end of the history at the time of the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. And this was connected with the triumph of the West, with the victory of the international democratic liberalism for marxism. However, global contradictions have remained, they acquired a new shape and form, ensuring the continuity of history, and therefore its tomorrow. Yet, the history, of course, does not develop according to the paradigm explained by Francis Fukuyama, but according to its own laws. History have experienced in Russia serious difficulties in the last 25–30 years. It was tough for many Russian historians who defended the old marxist ideology to give up the idea that history cannot predict the future, and it does not have an authority to teach the lessons to the people. All alterations that happened in world historiography all the famous “turns” were met in Russia with much pain. Postmodernism was identified in Russia by many historians as a serious and harmful foreign influence on the verge of enemy ideology capable to undermine the very foundations of native Russian civilization and history. There exists an opposite point of view. Professor Andrei Sokolov encourages historians to experience “liberating influence of postmodernism on our historical consciousness, and on this basis to restore the prestige of history.”¹ In general, the question of the future of history in Russia and possible ways of its teaching, especially in the field of public history, does not look simple and clear.

The retrospective of historical culture and public history: The case of Russia

Historical culture as a general understanding of the history, and the types of historical writing and the collective representation have developed in Russia in the nineteenth century. Historical culture is a network of the images and the representations of the past formed in the scientific historiography and transferred into

1 Andrey Sokolov. *Postmodernism i istoricheskoe soznanie. In Problemy istoricheskogo poznaniya*, Ksenija V. Khvostova (ed.), 163–177. Moskva: IVI RAN, 2009.

popular views on history through museums, literature, art, and in a broad sense through various means of communication. The American sociologist Charles Cooley in the early twentieth century attached a great importance to the changes in the industrial society, associated with communication, and included in this concept the post, telegraph, railways and education.² Consequently, with the growth of education and the emergence of new forms of communication there must develop a special relationship to history in society.

In Russia in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, there were major changes in historical culture. Famous works of historians Sergey M. Solovyov and Vasily O. Kliuchevsky caused the emergence of new images and representations of history among the educated people. Nevertheless, we cannot say that these images became the basis for mass people's perceptions of the past. The direct link between professional historians and literature, art and music were being only forming in the educated society. There have been only a few attempts to go into the people. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that the public history did not appear in Russia in 1804 with the inception of the "Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities", as it was claimed by an article in the Russian part of Wikipedia.³ This society was highly selective, and it appeared in the academic atmosphere at the Moscow University on the initiative of professor August Ludwig Schlözer. The position of the history in the society sometimes led to a decrease in the popularity of historical subjects. However, in general, in the life of pivotal era in the Russian Empire age, there existed a logical and pretty healthy interaction between professional historians and educated public demand.

Soviet era, which came after 1917, was a disaster for the history's social status. Previous professional historiography was gradually displaced by the main official "science" – the history of the Communist Party. In the new Bolshevik's Russian history, the history prior to the Soviet period, was counted of secondary importance. World history has been fixed to the frames of the Marxist theory of socio-historical formations change. The strict censorship was introduced, and it was echoed by the increase of the historians' self-censorship. Historians understood what kind of history to write and what the state awaits from them, and those who did not understand often became subjects to various repressions. The communication between historians and the society in the field that existed before was also destroyed. The Communist Party agitation and propaganda began to play a huge role in dissemination new images of the past into the masses of the people.

² Charles H. Cooley. *Social Organization: A study of a Larger Mind*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910, 61–62.

³ URL: ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Публичная_история (last accessed: 27 March 2016).

In the middle of 1980s, there has been a profound crisis of authority and communist ideology in the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev initiated reforms in 1985. Soviet system of history acceptance in the society began to ruin since 1987 during Mikhail Gorbachev's "*Glasnost*" and "*Perestroika*" policy. History became particularly popular in the society in the end of 1980s. The public interest was very high because the popular Russian periodicals revealed so called "white spots in history". They were several very sensitive for most of Russians topics connected for instance with Joseph Stalin's time, great purges of the 1930s, casualties of the World War Two and many others. The circulation of the "*thick journals*" ("*tolstye zhurnaly*") that published history texts and the weekly "*Ogoniok*" were raising by about 20 million each year and in 1988 they were 65 million higher than in 1985. The periodical "*Rodina*" ("*Motherland*") that published its first copy in 1989 became a best seller and in a year in 1990 had already a 450 thousand readership.⁴

Starting with this epoch Russia, if not re-opened, it regained its complete and free history and a new historical consciousness about three decades ago. The history of Communist Party was still considered the main part in academic history in the last years of the Soviet Union. It was due to the state supported ideology. The academic history again due to the same state supported ideology missed important events names, personalities. This led to a certain decrease in the role of academic historians in society. In the last years of the Soviet Union the "white spots of history" began to be discussed outside the academic history, in different public media. I believe it was the beginning of extensive public history of a special kind.

However, the Gorbachev's "glasnost" and "perestroika" today is widely regarded in the political elite as a great national disaster that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On 25 April 2005 President Vladimir Putin in his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation called the collapse of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century." Was it a catastrophe or not, it is still a debate. For real the place of history in the Russian society had changed with Mr. Gorbachev's movements. A new history was born, the history free from the dictation of ideologists and propagandists of the Communist Party.

The place of the history in the Russian society

Russia has been existing as a new state for more than a quarter of a century. During this time the policy has been changed and the political elite altered.

⁴ V. Bondarev. "Press Svobody i Svoboda Pressy," *Rodina*, 7 (2007): 14.

Russian society had experienced a severe crisis, and there were limited gains. One development trend remained unchanged. The Russian public consciousness is historical-centric. This does not mean that Russian society is living with history, entirely captivated by it, or knows it deeply. Opinion polls show very peculiar visions of the Russians about history, often far from the actual assessment of the facts. However, references to the past are the main component in collective representations. The value of history, as polls show, is growing in the structure of the construction of collective identity and memory images.⁵

History as an agenda generates an intense debate in the public debate and criticism of both from the right and from the left. For example, proponents of liberal reformers often argued about the “unpredictable past” of Russia. Their opponents from the camp of guardians of the Soviet past repeated the view that the true history of Russia was “demonized” by its enemies, acting at the direction of external Western forces. At the same time, not all the ages of Russian history fall into the epicenter of these disputes. The community of historians tried to deal with so-called “difficult questions” in recent years. More than half of items from “The Model List of difficult questions of the history of Russia” belong to the history of Soviet period and contemporary history since 1991.⁶

Two trends significantly affect the state of history in the modern Russian society. The first trend relates to the fact that the humanities in Russia, freed from the pressure of Communist party and the Marxist-Leninist ideology, are still not fully integrated into global social sciences. Russian historiography in many senses achieved the world level. Russian historians are divided into several groups. Historians who are fluent in foreign languages have become a part of international science. They are published in international publishing houses, they make presentations at conferences around the world. They accepted international standards, including those in the field of methodology. However, most of the domestic professional historiography remained closed to new trends. The history did not come out of its own identity crisis in this respect. Many historians still hope to retain their old positions. Professor Andrei Sokolov noted boldly in this connection that “the hope to restore history on previous principles – is as much an illusion as the hope for the restoration of the borders of empires of the past.”⁷

5 Boris Dubin. *Zhit v Rossii na Rubezhe Stoletii. Sotsiologicheskie Ocherki I Razrabotki*. Moskva: Progress-Traditsiya, 2007, 297–298

6 Kontseptsiya novogo uchebno-metodicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoi istorii: 65.

7 Andrei Sokolov. “Neravnodushnye zametki provintsialnogo professora istorii,” *Znanie-sila*. 5 (2009): 95–101.

The second major trend is the politicization of history in Russia. The political context still is the main anxiety for school and other kinds of history in Russia. The government still tries to make decisions about what aspects of Russian history to remember and honor and which ones to forget. Russian historian Alexei Miller suggested a special term to describe this trend. He called it “the politics of history”. It is an explicitly political phenomenon in which the government interferes into the work of professional historians for political reasons, usually to promote particular interpretations of history that match its political goals.⁸ This interference occurs through such mechanisms as the establishment of institutes for historical memory, the creation of museums designed to enshrine a particular version of history, and state sponsorship of school history textbooks that promote certain historical interpretations while dismissing or ignoring other versions that are less favorable to the achievement of state policy objectives.

Alexei Miller describes the four key concepts of historical policy of the state as follows:

- History and memory are viewed primarily as an arena of political struggle with foreign and domestic opponents;
- The policy makers justify their actions by pointing to the universality of historical policy actions around the world;
- The policy makers argue that foreign enemies are working to establish an interpretation of past events that will harm their country if not countered;
- Historical politics is justified by the poor state of education in the country in question.⁹

Alexei Miller’s observations help to understand another important part of the socio-cultural context of formation of historical memory in Russia. It is obvious that the policy of history, conducted by state institutions, invades the normal dialogue that exists in social practices in the field of history and it destroys them. The history images may vary significantly under the influence of the invasion of the policy. The politics of history, facing in the recent past, can be widely used to address both short-term tasks of government and justify the change of ideological priorities. The Moscow State University professor Elena Senjavskaja emphasized a strong influence of the “retrospective propaganda” on the collective historical memory of the people.¹⁰

8 Aleksei Miller. «Rossija: Vlast i istoriya,” *Pro et Contra*, 3–4 (2009): 7.

9 *Ibidem*, 11–13.

10 Elena Senjavskaja. *Psikhologija voiny v 20 veke: istoricheskii opyt Rossii*. Moskva: Rossiiskaja politicheskaja entziklopedija, 1999: 48.

The trend to a strong state interference in history led to a tendency to protect academic history from all kind of other history subcultures. The well-known Russian historian Vladimir V. Sogrin divided all modern Russian historical culture into three subcultures: a popular subculture reflecting the perception of history by a mass public consciousness, a state-political subculture born through a state order, and a scientific academic subculture created by professionals on the basis of documentary sources and scientific disciplinary criteria. Vladimir Sogrin believes that only the third subculture of historical knowledge deserves to be nurtured, and only academic historiography can be called a true story.¹¹

These trends of the history existence in Russia should be taken into account in the discussion about the future of public history in Russia and the teaching of public history.

The position of public history in Russia

History is in the center of public attention as it was stated. Many believe that the history as a school subject is a foundation of patriotic education and the construction of the people's collective identity. In this regard, the history at school is influenced by different social actors: the government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Russian Academy of Sciences institutes, editorial boards of scientific and popular journals, community of historians and history teachers. In recent years there was significantly increased the influence on the history as a school subject by the new media, which are in the public history area.

By the word media we understand in Russia different means of mass communication, in other words - the system of public information that transfers news through technical means. There is a continuity of the following media in the order of their appearance in public sphere: newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, internet. Websites for teachers of history are particularly popular in the era of globalization in the field of modern media. The fact is that with the unlimited number of visits, the possibilities of interactive media discussions the Internet has opened new possibilities in comparison with magazines and newspapers. It changes the content of public history and the context of history living in the society.

Discussion about the problems of school history on the Internet falls under the definition of "public history". Public history, despite not being very well-knit sound of this term in Russian, is a new phenomenon and a way to present the

¹¹ Vladimir Sogrin. «Tri istoricheskie subkul'tury postsovetskoj Rossii,» *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*: 3 (2013): 92.

existence of history in society that is rising its interest to the Past. Academic historians do not have a monopoly in the “making” history in today’s social environment. Society learns the history through its own practices, reconstruction, through the creation of new films and images, as well as through discussions on the Internet.

The professional community of historians has recognized new challenges of cultural history and seeks to answer. For example, a well-known Russian historian Lorina P. Repina emphasizes that “an important role in this necessary for community of historians’ communication strategy should belong to the public history oriented to an audience outside the professional scientific community, or the so-called history for all”.¹² It should be underlined that Lorina Repina expressed the approach of the majority of Russian historians to public history as to the applied area with limited opportunities to create new knowledge.

In reality public history in Russia no matter of it quality gains popularity by leaps and bounds. If we take the example of a school history, despite of all the influence and control from the part of state institutions, it is a vast border area between the public and adapted academic history. I argue that schoolteachers of history are public historians in an actual peculiar form. In this case a Russian translation in 1992 the book of the French historian Marc Ferro “The Use and Abuse of History: or How the Past is Taught to Children” played a major role in the Russian understanding of public history in the field of history education. M. Ferro in this book was one of the first to study the problem of the history of public in the context of education.

On the other hand, the representatives of many other professions in Russia: journalists, politicians, media commentators, theater and cinema directors, artists and bloggers also have access to the past, and often interpret it in an unusual and original form. These forms have nothing to do with the “competences and skills” proposed in the syllabuses of university historians. In other words, for a successful interpretation of the past, that modern society creates as a collective memory, according to Jerome De Groot not necessary today to be a professional historian.¹³

Of course, the Russian discussion on the role of public history and the history is not on the in the foreground. Russian historians are divided on political and professional reasons. They heatedly debating the problems of interpretation and teaching a lot of issues of history. The common mood is that public history is something new and standing far from general way of history.

¹² Lorina P. Repina. “Nauka i obschestvo: publichnaya istoriya v kontekste istorichskoi kultury epokhi globalizatsii,” *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*. 157–4 (2015): 55–67.

¹³ Jerome de Groot. *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary popular culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009. 1.

The debate is scheduled another, more traditional, look at the current state of history. I believe that a lot of Russian historians would support the famous British historian John Tosh who argued that the role of the academic historian in public history remains worthy. Academic historians have an important function of deepening the civil and public understanding of large national and international issues in the History that are not part of public history. According to John Tosh, public history, as a rule, does not rise to the big national problems and focuses on local history and construction on this basis of local identities. Consequently, academic history will continue to be linked to civic education. John Tosh says that public history is an applied area of cognitive and descriptive practices.¹⁴ All beginnings in the public or application history are far enough away from the ethos and fundamental research topics of academic history and it is not capable to add new questions for academic research.

However, we note that in the last fifty years in Russia there were three waves of strong interest in the history in public. This can be considered as developments of public history. The rise of the mass movement of protection of historical monuments in the Soviet Union the mid-1960s. The society had a huge interest in the history of the church buildings, Andrey Rublev's frescoes and icons. The second wave was associated with the earlier described growth of the mass interest in the history of the end of Soviet period in 1987–1991. It began with history journalism campaign in the "Ogonyok" magazine, and "Novy Mir", "October" and other periodicals that marked the beginning of free media in Russia. The last, the third wave of interest in History from the public related to the appearance and development of the Internet in Russia from 1999 to the present. The new media and E-turn reached the history in Russia.

A distinctive feature is the lack of own methodology in public history. The history as a discipline suffered many external and internal changes that have affected historical science in the second half of the twentieth century. One of the points of view on the public history is that it is a field in which debate can take place between the historical science, historical memory media and representatives of civil society. In this case, representatives of the public history transfers methods of historical science. All these features are important in the issue of public history future and teaching.

¹⁴ John Tosh. Public History, Civic Engagement and the Historical Profession in Britain: *History. The Journal of Historical Association*: 335 (2014): 191–212.

Russian pioneers of public history

Several historians and specialists in humanities played a prominent part in setting the agenda of public history in Russia. First, the name of Valery Tishkov should be mentioned. Valery Tishkov was the first to study the situation of history and historians in the United States.¹⁵ He examined the fact that historians in the United States were prepared to work in the offices of various companies and public organizations. Valery Tishkov drew attention to the existence of a new phenomenon of history living outside the walls of the academy. He was also the first to use the terms “public history” and “public historian” in Russian.

Andrei L. Zorin, Russian historian and philologist, specialist in the history of Russian culture and intellectual history became the chief guru of public history. Andrei Zorin was the first to propose a training MA program in public history in 2012 in the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (“*Shaninka*”). Public history in Russia began to develop in universities. Master’s programs in public history have been opened in six Russian universities.¹⁶ In the Russian part of the Internet there is a “Public History Portal”.¹⁷ The first specialists in the field of public history received diplomas and degrees. Graduates of these programs acquired skills and competencies in the field of applied history, modern media, innovative processes in Russian and foreign education, as well as in a wide range of humanitarian fields. They find relevance of their skills as research scientists, specialists in the socio-cultural sphere, in the museum business, in state and local government bodies, as well as in tourist-excursions.¹⁸ However, the position of public history in Russia is of concern to many historians. Lorina P. Repina urged Russian historians to explore not only the content of public history, but also the entire structure of the relationship between scientific and popular knowledge, the system of forms and methods of public representation of the past, as well as the specific processes of translating scientific knowledge into new media.¹⁹ Yegor Isaev published important insights about the interaction of the state history from

¹⁵ Valery Tishkov. *Istoriya i istoriki v SSHA*. Moskva: Nayka, 1985.

¹⁶ *Educational Programs in Russian Universities*: <http://rupublichistory.ru/edu/edum.html> (last accessed 16 July 2018).

¹⁷ *Portal of Public History*: <http://rupublichistory.ru> (last accessed 16 July 2018).

¹⁸ Alexander Khodnev. “Public History in Russia: What Is It?” In: *Public History Weekly* 6 (2018) 2, DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1515/phw-2018-11011](https://doi.org/10.1515/phw-2018-11011) (last accessed 16.07.2018).

¹⁹ Lorina P. Repina, “Nauka i obshchestvo: publichnaya istoriya v kontekste istoricheskoy kul’tury ehpoi globalizacii,” *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*: 157, (2015) 3: 65.

above and public history from below.²⁰ Noted professor Irina Savelieva discussed different facets of public history from the point of theory of history.²¹

Public history in Russia is a massive field of activity, far beyond the definitions of this movement. In the United States, public history is an approach that creates a joint study of history by professionals and nonprofessionals in order to maintain a broad dialogue with the state and move history to the public.²² In Russia, public history means a broad historical movement mainly from below and often as a challenge and answer to the state propaganda of history. Yet a constructive dialogue with the state, society and professional historians is in question. Unfortunately, the attempts to convey new ideas and interpretations of history useful to society from below and pressure on history from above are too multidirectional lanes today.

Where to teach public history?

The public history is just beginning to emerge as a discipline in Russia. This is due to a much more pronounced than in Western Europe trend of the political regulation of history. In other words, the space in which the public history could exist is filled with “politics of history”. The public history is usually based on a kind of dialogue practices. The present Russian politics of history is very rare based on dialogue or talk. It frequently destroys public practices in the field of history.

However, it was mentioned that in summer 2012 Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, opened the first admission to a master’s program “Public history: Historical knowledge in modern society”. Several universities follow this example: National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, European University in St. Petersburg, Perm University, the Baltic Federal University after Kant, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after Konstantin D. Ushinsky.²³

20 Yegor M. Isaev. “Publichnaya istoriya v Rossii: nauchnyj i uchebnyj kontekst formirovaniya novogo mezhdisciplinarnogo polya.” *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta*: 33, (2016) 2: 7–13.

21 Irina M. Savel’eva. Professional’nye istoriki v «publichnoj istorii»: *Novaya i novejšaya istoriya*: (2014) 3: 141–155; Irina Savel’eva. Gorodskoe proshloe v praktikah publichnoj istorii: *Honoris causa: sbornik nauchnyh statej, posvyashchennyj 70-letiyu professora Viktora Vladimirovicha Sergeeva*. SPb.: Nestor-Istoriya (2016): 255–264.

22 *Public History Defined?* (2007). URL: <http://blog.historians.org/2007/06/public-history-defined/> (last accessed 16.07.2018).

23 *Educational Programs in Russian Universities*: <http://rublichistory.ru/edu/edum.html> (last accessed 16 July 2018).

Public history in MA level

Public history in master's Program at the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences "Public history: Historical knowledge in modern society".

Required Masters Courses:

- *Modern historiography*
- *Interdisciplinary approach to the study of history*

Module of elective courses "History and Media":

- *Instrumentalization of history in the Media*
- *Commemoration practices: a way of creating personal, collective and individual image of the past*
- *Institutes of historical knowledge and their representation*
- *Biography and family memory in historical research*

Module elective courses "Nationalism and Politics"

- *Studies of nationalism in historical perspective*
- *Critical History of State*
- *History of Human Rights*
- *Radical leftist terrorism in Russia*

In Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University, The Master's program was opened in 2015. "Educational aspects of public history":

- *Modern historiography*
- *Methodology and methods of scientific research*
- *The culture of foreign countries*
- *Public history in the modern media*
- *Modern museums*

What shall we teach perceptively?

I hope that in the future the aims/objectives of education will be determined not only by the Ministry of Education commissioned by the political authorities, but by the academic community and society in general, students and their parents.

1. Where to teach public history? Most likely it is the level of MA in Russia. However, the basic information, skills, knowledge of the history of dissemination in society should be given at the undergraduate BA level.

2. School history didactics at the bachelor's level (BA) must be supplemented. In addition to the study of the system of history education in Russia, should be given:
 - Information on the shape of the history in the society
 - Information about the design and main features and existence of collective historical memory in society
 - The knowledge of the ways of spreading of historical facts in the public space and social practices.
 - What competencies should be in the focus of the study support in student's leaning the public history at the departments of history? I think we need to rely on those social practices that are associated in recent years with the popularity gained by history:
 - The search for family trees and biographies, family history in historical research.
 - Historical Societies. Public organizations. Societies for Protection of Monuments.
 - Media, press. Journalists and the public in the field of public history.
 - Popular magazines in the field of public history.
 - Museums and society.
 - School museums.
 - The dramatization of historical events.
 - "Big events" in the public history: World War II, the Cold War, and so on ...
 - Television and cinema in public history
 - E-games in public history
 - Blogs, bloggers. Web-sites development in the field of public history

Conclusion

We are increasingly convinced that there are many "histories" as areas of knowledge and representations of people. The analysis of communication practices in the collision of different histories helps to understand how the modern Russian state appropriates and transforms people memories into its official history, as well as how society integrates into these practices or resists them, supporting or rejecting the national images acquiring various meanings stemming from local contexts.

Worlds of history beyond the borders and walls of the academia in the late 20th – early 21st century increased in Russia in multiple with the development of modern media: first television and popular history magazines, then in the 1990s

with the advent of the Internet. The ideology of creating museum expositions has changed significantly. It was naturally a popular, applied, mass or public history.

Public history in Russia erases borders thanks to mass interest, but not all. The forms of presentation of the material remain national, connected with linguistic possibilities, as well as features of communication of social groups, state institutions, universities, and new media. The specifics of these contexts and practices should be in the focus of the study of professional historians and the context of history teaching.

The emergence and dissemination of practices of public history is associated with a special case of interdisciplinary, dictated by the fact that people come to this field and create history for the public with a completely different experience, often far from professional discipline and the history training. It can be journalists, television directors, writers, various amateurs-voluntaries and even musicians and artists from the world of mass pop culture. The case of new interdisciplinary in teaching of public history must be in focus.