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The Theme of the Issue:

MAN ON THE VERGE OF DEATH:
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECT

FROM THE EDITOR

Historians explore society and its activities in all forms and aspects, but there are topics that rarely attract attention due to their specificity. One of them is mortality. In many ways, F. Arjes put an end to this in his famous book “Man in the Face of Death”, showing not only that it is necessary to speak on difficult topics, but also how this can be done. No wonder our issue opens with an article by V.G. Semenova and S.A. Vangorodskaya “Perception of death as a measure of the value of life against the background of epidemiological transition”, analyzing the works of F. Arjes and proposing to compare them with the works of another, no less significant scientist, A. Omran. It perfectly reflects the idea underlying this issue.

Despite the foundation laid by F. Arjes and the successful development of the history of mortality abroad, the active study of mortality in our country is carried out mainly by specialists in the field of historical demography. It would be desirable for this issue to attract the attention of scientists developing other areas, because, as F. Arjes wrote, “the perception of death, the other world, the connections between the living and the dead is a topic whose discussion could significantly deepen the understanding of many aspects of the socio-cultural reality of past eras, better understand what man was in history”¹. In the context of escalating military conflicts in the world, this direction of thought acquires particular importance.

The topic of health is inseparable from mortality. Domestic historiography is dominated by research in the field of health policy and the history of medicine, while health issues are rarely considered. But the gradual growth of interest in the history of everyday life, on the one hand, and the actualization of problems in the context of demographic crisis, the experienced pandemic and the forecasting of new threats, on the other hand, inevitably focus attention in this area. This thesis is confirmed by the recent publication of the book by N.A. Aralovets “Health Care and Population Health of the RSFSR in 1959–1989”², laying the methodological and methodological foundations of work in this area.

The chronology of the issue is quite broad, it covers the period from the 19th century to the present day, allowing you to see all the stages of demographic transition. Particular attention of researchers is attracted by the difficult periods of the 1920s and 1990s. The geography of the issue is extensive, scientists from Belgorod, Moscow and Kazan sent their manuscripts, and most of the articles were written by Siberian historians. The authors include both the top experts and young researchers who presented their first serious works. Of great interest are articles on the demography and health care of the autochthonous peoples of Siberia.

The content of the issue consists of 6 sections. The first part presents authors exploring the historical and demographic problems of mortality. Most of the articles are devoted to the Soviet period. Aspects of source study, problems of research on child and infant mortality, specifics of mortality in individual regions are considered. The second part combined manuscripts addressing health history issues. The focus of the authors is on the fight against epidemics and the sanitary culture of the population. Significant successes in the field of health care during the twentieth century are noted. Of particular interest is the article by M.A. Semenov, inviting the reader to the research “inner workings” of the historical demographer. The publica-

¹ Арьес Ф. Человек перед лицом смерти. М.: Прогресс; Прогресс-Академия, 1992.

² Араловец Н.А. Здравоохранение и здоровье населения РСФСР в 1959–1989 гг. М.; СПб.: Институт Российской истории РАН; Центр гуманитарных инициатив, 2023. 530 с.



tion presents successful experience in applying the quantitative analysis method to assessing the impact of medical care on reducing mortality in the population in 1944–1945. The author, based on calculations, justifies the effectiveness of the health care system in wartime.

The third part is represented by the section “Discussion Club”, which contains an article by the Brazilian doctor and scientist M. Azambuja, devoted to the study of the influenza epidemic in Russia in the second half of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries, posing rather complex questions, as well as a discussion of this manuscript, which brought together specialists from various fields of science – health, humanitarian geography, historical informatics and historical demography.

The heading “From the First Person” transfers the conversation from the field of statistics and demography to the sphere of spiritual history, presents the publication of two unique sources of the 19th century – the spiritual testament of the entrepreneur M.K. Sidorov and the letter of Princess E.M. Shakhovskaya to N.N. Sheremeteva, telling about the early death of, Natalia the daughter of Prince V.M. Shakhovsky. The publications are accompanied by extensive introductory articles revealing the cultural and historical significance of these texts and revealing the depth of morality and spirituality of Russian Orthodox people.

The article by T.G. Nedzelyuk, is dedicated to the burial culture. This publication presents an opportunity to get acquainted with the peculiarities of the rites among Siberian Catholics. Note that the material for the study was collected throughout Siberia from Tobolsk to Irkutsk.

Closes the number of the heading “Scientific Life”, which gives an overview of two significant events in the spring of 2024 – the international scientific seminar “Mortality and Health Development in Soviet Russia”, organized by the Institute for Demographic Research of the Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the sector of agrarian and demographic research of the Institute of History of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the publication of the 3rd volume of “The History of Siberia”, the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, prepared by Institute of history.

Thus, the number turned out to be multifaceted, interesting and quite voluminous, inviting reflection and discussion.

Executive editor:
Candidate of Historical Sciences
Nataliya Vladimirovna Gonina

Executive editor
Executive secretary
Corrector
Layout designer
Web designer

Candidate of Historical Sciences N.V. Gonina
V.V. Vvedenskiy
T.V. Soboleva
V.V. Vvedenskiy
K.A. Vasil'ev