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The Theme of the Issue:

**“LET'S CHANGE THE PAST...”: POWER AND HISTORIANS  
IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING HISTORICAL MEMORY**

FROM THE EDITOR

In our fast-moving age, the tendency of professional historians to reflect turns into a desire to assess their place in the social system. Of course, understanding the sociality of knowledge only strengthens the desire to generalize historical experience, both one's own, native, and the instructive experience of the “other”. The historian's natural habit is to seek answers to modern questions, revealing their genesis and the sequence of stages of development. It is no coincidence that in recent decades there has been a growing number of studies in which historical science, its individual groups and representatives appear as one of the many actors. Without claiming to cover this topic as a whole, we have chosen one of the key issues for discussion: the interaction of historians and authorities in the context of the formation of historical memory. Postmodernist turns (poststructuralist, linguistic, cultural) caused a refocusing of the view from classical historiography, familiar since Soviet times, to the study of the phenomenon of historical memory, the role of historians, politicians and different groups of society in its formation, to the analysis of the historian's activities in such different fields of a highly professional system of scientific communications and public discussions, generated increased attention to texts – research, ideological, educational and others, to the actions and behavior of a professional placed in a deeply grounded analysis of the historical context.

The past has been used since ancient times as an instrument of ideological struggle. A change of political course is always motivated by a view of the past different from that of its predecessors, while mobilization of supporters requires purposeful work to correct collective ideas about the past. With the emergence of historians as a professional group, they were invariably involved by the authorities in the process of forging historical memory. The “memory laws” adopted in recent decades in many countries of the world are a clear example of how the government seeks to regulate approaches to the past through legislation. As a result, there is a problem of the status of historical knowledge and the role of the historian as a professional.

We propose to look at this problem at the intersection of several subject fields, such as the history of historical science, the problem of historical memory, the history of ideology, political history, and the methodology of history. This approach allows us to see not only the obvious thematic core, where the relations between the authorities and historians are experiencing the greatest tension, but also the thematic periphery associated with various ways of adaptation of professionals, gradations of their conformist behavior. This idea was embodied in an international scientific conference held by the Institute of History of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the editorial office of the Historical Courier magazine on April 25–26, 2024. The articles prepared on the basis of the reports presented at the conference form the backbone of this issue. However, as often happens, not all the speakers wrote articles, but, in turn, the conference and the announcement of the issue received feedback from colleagues, which made it possible to attract other authors.

The published materials are presented in three sections. The first one – “History, ideology and politics” – implies the analysis of various perspectives of the use of historical research for political and ideological purposes, the involvement of professional historians in the formation of historical memory or the examination of problems of memory politics. Despite all the previous studies of these problems, the journal covers completely new, some-



times unexpected, innovative topics, research subjects, groups of sources and approaches to their study. The second section is “Questions of historiography. A Change of perspective” – includes articles on the topic of memory politics from a review of historiography, while the authors consider historiographical sources in the context of political development of societies and reveal the influence of politics on historiographical processes. And finally, the third block – “Organization of scientific research” – combined articles on the organization of science, contacts between scientists and government agencies. The subject of the study was the influence of the government on the forms of the research process and, conversely, the influence of historians on the priorities of scientific policy.

The thematic issue of the Historical Courier offered to readers shows that the problem under consideration – the interaction between government and historians – remains relevant for various societies, regardless of political regimes and institutional environment, which, however, determine the specifics of the forms and methods of implementing memory policy and seriously affect the nature of interaction between politicians and the professional community of historians.

Naturally, the editorial board’s opinion may not coincide with the opinion of the authors of the articles.

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