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The Theme of the Issue:

TARGET UNTOUCHABLE CAPITAL
IN THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN CHARITY
(LAST THIRD OF THE 18TH CENTURY – EARLY 20TH CENTURY)

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the journal was prepared in collaboration with the organizing committee of the Eternal Contribution Award, established by the National Endowment Association (NEA) for the best research on endowments in pre-revolutionary charity.

A trust fund is a donation made in the form of untouchable capital (such as securities or real estate) that was invested at interest and/or generated income that was used to fund social initiatives, such as establishing scholarships, building hospitals, schools, theaters, churches, and more, while the capital itself remained untouched and continued to generate income.

Famous examples of the use of trust funds abroad are the Nobel Prize, Harvard University, and Princeton University. However, in Russia, trust funds were widely supported by the government and society and were very common, and many of them continue to serve their purpose to this day. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, science and art, education, medicine, and public charity in Russia were largely based on the foundation of targeted capital donated by people from various social categories (merchants, nobles, peasants, and others) to improve life in their hometowns, cities, regions, and Russia as a whole.

We are sincerely grateful to all the scholars who have taken on this rare and challenging topic. We believe that the more modern Russians learn about pre-revolutionary philanthropic practices, including those in their own hometowns, and the more they see traces of philanthropic efforts in their familiar urban landscapes, such as schools and museums, the easier it will be for them to understand the importance of endowments for modern social organizations and to embrace this value system.

The issue opens with an important article by Galina N. Ulyanova, an authoritative researcher of Russian philanthropy, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Chief Researcher at the Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who, for the first time in Russian historiography, provides a systematic description of the legal foundations and financial mechanisms of untouchable capital in pre-revolutionary philanthropy, starting with the first experiments in the 18th century. The article clarifies the terms and uses extensive documentary evidence to describe the consequences of various legislative acts, private and public philanthropic initiatives, and various practices of investing untouchable capital assets. In fact, this is a basic article for anyone who wants to learn about pre-revolutionary practices of systemic philanthropy.

The remaining articles are divided into three main sections: 1) endowments in the field of education; 2) endowments in the field of public charity; 3) endowments in the field of regional development.

Interesting and full of new material, these studies focus on both specific cases and systemic philanthropic practices in addressing the most pressing social issues, such as access to education and healthcare, public welfare, and the restoration of justice. They explore the efforts of individuals from diverse backgrounds, wealth levels, and educational backgrounds, as well as in various cities and life situations. The results were not always successful – the theory clashed with reality, and some things worked and others didn't, but that's the value of such research: it gives us, as modern charity builders, something to think about.



We sincerely hope that the interest of professional historians in this complex field will grow, the NEA Eternal Contribution Award will continue to encourage this interest, and Russian philanthropy will have the opportunity to use the rich experience accumulated over more than a century and a half of charity in our country.

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