

## **National history and historical memory**

The Soviet Union ceased to exist more than 20 years ago. After 1991 “making new national histories” and replacement of Soviet paradigms became the primary tasks of new independent states’ national historiographies. The search for national self-identification was accompanied by natural criticism of former historiographical model, which was intended for proving historical stipulation of coexistence within the scope of a single state. Historical science performed both functions of “retrospective politics” and future-shaping science.

Reducing changes in historiographical complex only to political (performance of new national goal) and organizational (formation of infrastructure and human resources base) constituents would be an exceptional simplification. The transformations got timed with change of methodological paradigms of the Humanities. Attention shifted from political and social history problems to the sphere of cultural history, whose main tasks are discourse, space, and visual sources’ analysis.

Modern encyclopedic and reference editions define a scientific community as a group of people engaged in science. Academic community represents a complex self-organizing system, which includes functioning state institutes and public organizations, as well as informal groups. A distinctive feature of such community is a higher level of recognition of authority, earned by academic achievements, lowered level of recognizing overbearing authority, and higher than average effectiveness of informal groups and, particularly, of definite personalities.

It is impossible to deny the fact that history has always been accountable for appraisal groups related to value orientations of culture and the society which a researcher belongs to. Any value characteristic is always subjective. Even a choice of topic, not to mention analysis and conclusion, suggests interference of researcher’s scale of values in his work. A. Toynbee rightfully noted that, “in any epoch and society, study and cognition of history, just like any other social activity, is submitted to mainstream of the present”.

Scientists also dispute over disciplinary approach’s applicability in conditions of historical study, necessity of interdisciplinary research of region (i.e. of social and territorial community; a set of social, economic, and political factors of the territory development), and possibility of keeping a kind of balance of your science and region’s study interests in social and human sciences. M. Olcott wrote, “Methodologies of social sciences and regional researches demonstrate serious differences, as disciplinary study devotes much attention to microanalysis, preferring to put a “why” question rather than a “how” question. Regional studies focus on the macroanalysis, which ensures universal conclusions”.

Attention to real life and people led historians to social history and to understanding the necessity of making works “not about the high and mighty”, but about common people of their time. They have been granted voice to tell in what way they saw themselves in a rapid stream of events”. First of all, social history sees a historical process as movement of society together with proper institutions. A man is standing in the spotlight not on his own, but as an elementary cell of living and developing social organism.

Necessity to pay attention to personal impressions and life experience of “a plain man” is emphasized by Ye. Zubkova. In her opinion, “after a “boom” of sorts experienced by social history, there is no need for proving that people’s attitude and psychological orientations are an independent factor of political or economic development, as they influence peculiarities of social behavior and define decision making mechanism to a great extent, including those in power-holding structures”.

Nevertheless, views on social history, understanding of what components should be included in it, its correlation to other trends of historical science, remain a subject of a serious dispute.

Ye.Ossokina, "Relying on historiography achievements and accepting drawbacks of its modern stage", puts following question: who is making history? Authority or society? A conclusion states that "absolutization of state power, its control and influence on society is as dangerous as absolutization of people's self-sufficiency, independence from authorities' decisions. We should admit that both parties are active participants in the historical process. Protecting their own interests, they co-exist, interact and fight in real life, which, eventually, represents a result of their reciprocal activities".

At the end of the XXth century "new social history" became widely spread in world historiography, its supporters insisted on the radical transformation of the correlation between social history and mental, intellectual history. They believed that history of society and its constituent big and small groups can not be studied in isolation from the history of value systems, of social behavior forms, symbols, and rituals.

"A movement for analytical interdisciplinary history, enriched with theoretical models and social sciences' research technique, as opposed to traditional history, viewed solely as a field of humanities knowledge" was a principal and determinative indicator of historiography development in the middle of the XXth century. "In case we try to formulate the most important distinctive traits of social history as a sphere of historical knowledge, above all else we should note its wonderful mobility and ability to adapt to radical transformations of dynamically developing modern historiography. Changeability and susceptiveness, which had defined inner logic of this discipline's development over several decades and let it demonstrate full diversity of possible forms of history of "the social", was stipulated by utmost openness of other fields of knowledge, such as historical, humanities, and socio-scientific, which is inherent in the very nature of its integral object of cognition".

In the context of intrascientific transformations, which radically changed situation in historical science, two factors seem to be of the utmost importance for the professional community of "post-soviet space" historians.

The first factor is "the archival revolution", which started after 1991. From that moment on, while carrying out researches, historians could easily combine possibilities offered by "oral history", the study of Soviet and postSoviet political culture with archival materials. The second factor was replacement of sole ("the only true") MarxistLeninist methodology by a wide range of methodological approaches, used in the world historical science.

Historians found themselves in an extremely peculiar situation. Euphoria caused by archives' declassification soon enough led to understanding that historical science is not able to analyze and process all the archival material. Doubts, concerning a key status of written source in the process of historical event cognition, as an instrument which "would reveal what events actually took place", started to amplify among historians.

A written source would rather express its author's opinion, than show a real course of events, so many researchers started analyzing discourse within the interpretation suggested by French philosopher M.Foucault and using such sources as diaries and memoirs for reconstructing thinking and mentality of a definite historical period.

Naturally, a historian is not able to check his knowledge by practical consideration, as an object of his knowledge always remains in the past and a scientist has to deal only with his trace, i.e. a

historical fact. Also, a researcher can not get rid of his knowledge of consequent historical events and in accordance with this knowledge he inevitably corrects his attitude to evidences left by some event's contemporaries. Thus, a historical fact acts in several capacities, i.e. as the past reality, as the past reality reflected in sources, and as the result of scientific interpretation of the past reality reflected in sources.

Transformations in historiographic complex of new independent states were related to replacement of methodological paradigms in the Humanities by political (execution of new national task) and organizational (formation of structural and human resources' base) constituents. Ultimately, perception of the past gets defined by the historical situation a historian is working in.

For national historians, the turn of Millennium became a period of established views' reconsideration and the time of renewing disputes over the almost entire set of national and world history problems. In the second half of the XXth century, the world historical science traveled a complex and contradictory path. At large, it was a progressive development which led to the renewal of theoretical foundations, methodology and techniques of historiography.

A process of analysis extension and broadening a research subject is taking place right now. Nevertheless, as any other cognition process, it not only multiplies the number of solved problems, but also broadens the borders of unstudied spheres. S.Dmitriyev wrote that such complicated category as "social changes" is most probably to remain a constant cognition object; just like "nature" remains an eternal object of cognition for natural science.

In cooperation with other social sciences and the humanities history is able to suggest some versions of explaining the past and it does suggest such versions if methodological basis of historical research relies on scientific principles of historicism, as well as on systematic and comprehensive approach to under-study matters.

**Vyacheslav MENKOVSKY,**  
**Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor at Belarusian State University,**  
**Minsk, Belarus**  
**Mangi El Journal, № 1 (9), 01.02.2015**