

The Russian State and the Interpretation of History during the Second World War: the Impact of B. I. Syromyatnikov's *The 'Regulated' State of Peter the Great and its Ideology*

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the interaction between the Russian state and the interpretation of history during the Second World War. This period is vital to understanding the development of Soviet historiography but, unfortunately, little research has focused on this area to date. Studies into Soviet historiography during the war are ongoing.

Сквозь призму полемики по поводу книги Б.И. Сыромятникова "Регулярное государство Петра Великого и его идеология" в статье рассматривается историографическая ситуация, сложившаяся в течение Великой Отечественной Войны.

В развитии советской исторической науки изучаемого периода необходимо отметить несколько основных тенденций. В первую очередь очевидна тесная связь истории и идеологии, а также использование Коммунистической партией истории как обоснования собственного политико-идеологического господства. Следствием такого положения вещей являлось частое изменение интерпретации прошлого в угоду сложившейся политической ситуации. В данном случае мы можем проследить изменение трактовки русского прошлого с ультраревOLUTIONНЫХ позиций в 20 – е годы к державно-патриотическому освещению отечественной истории с 30 - х.

Немаловажной чертой советской историографии, так же как и культуры советского периода в целом, является сосуществование и борьба традиций царской России и послереволюционной эпохи.

В условиях «плавающей» государственно-идеологической концепции неизбежна борьба различных направлений в попытке повлиять на власть. 30 – е годы и годы мировой войны прошли под знаком борьбу школы Покровского и историков, сложившихся в дореволюционное время. Пиком противостояния явилось совещание историков в ЦК ВКП (б) в мае – июле 1944 года. Следствием совещания было

установление дальнейшего (впрочем, отнюдь не всеобъемлющего) контроля партийно-властной структуры над историческими исследованиями в СССР.

1.

The interpretation of Russian history during the Soviet period is a complex matter. Soviet historiography and Soviet society evolved through struggles between the existing heritage of the Russian past and the new Soviet outlook. On the one hand, Soviet historians kept the traditions of pre-revolutionary historiography; on the other hand, many of the old school's achievements were lost. The works of many pre-revolutionary scholars were repressed, and Soviet history was closely connected to the official Soviet ideology. This connection was especially strong in Stalin's time. His primary aim for history was for it to provide a basis to legitimate his own political supremacy.

The tradition of treating history as a kind of policy began with M. N. Pokrovsky (1874–1936). He was a key figure in the first generation of Marxist historians and his ideas became the foundation of 20th century historiography. He interpreted Russian history as demonstrating the evolution of “merchant capital”, which he presented as the main force of historical progress. One of the distinguishing features of both his works and the works of his followers was the negative view of history before the Revolution. Pokrovsky created a new generation of historians (M.V. Nechkina, A.M. Pankratova, A.L. Sidorov and others) who made truth and honesty subservient to the proletarian revolution and the party line. Their works were characterized by a desire to interpret the historical past in ways that suited the state power.

The situation changed in the next decade. Stalin advanced the theory of constructing socialism in “a single country” and official ideology became increasingly patriotic. This view of history corresponded more to the international situation when hopes of a ‘world revolution’ were lost. It also aided Stalin's position and he soon became a supporter of the idea of a strong state. The position taken by Pokrovsky's school was now unacceptable to the state. Consequently, at the beginning of the 1930s, Pokrovsky was officially blamed for the current state of historical writing. There were demands for a new type of historical work. However Pokrovsky's main followers still played an important role in the academic life of the country.

In 1934, a competition for new school textbooks was organized. The judges were Stalin, Kirov and Zhdanov – the main figures in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. No work received the first prize, but after the competition, the commission's decisions were published, and they demonstrated to historians how they should now write history¹. Historians had to present the history of the Russian people and the pre-revolutionary state in a positive way, but not so positively that they diminished the achievements of the Soviet period. Such a formula was too vague: it was “often unclear, which ways were Marxist, and which views supported the ‘enemies of the working class and Communism’².”

Such circumstances created a paradox: on the one hand, there was forcible state control of history; on the other hand, historians of the pre-revolution generation were able to return to the profession because Pokrovsky's school had lost its supremacy. As a result, many 'old historians' took up key positions in Soviet academia: B.D. Grekov, S.V. Bukhrushin, E.V. Tarle and others. The Second World War brought disruption. History became a key type of patriotic propaganda. Historians gave lectures to troops about the heroic events in Russian history. This period saw the publication of many history books with a patriotic military content. Typical titles included "The Russian people's struggle against foreign invaders in the 17th century" and "Napoleon's invasion and its collapse".

Against this backdrop one work in particular stood out. This was B.I. Syromyatnikov's "The 'Regulated' state of Peter the Great and its ideology", part I, published in 1943. Boris Ivanovich Syromyatnikov (1874–1947) became a professional historian in the pre-revolutionary period³. He was a follower of the Moscow school, especially the ideas of Kluchevskii, and applied scientific principles to the history of law. Syromyatnikov was well known as an active manager of the Moscow Society of People's Universities. After the revolution, he remained in Russia working at Kazan University, Moscow University and eventually at the Institution of State and Law of Academy of Sciences of the USSR. His interest in the period of Peter the Great was apparent before the revolution. In 1911, he published an article on "Absolute monarchy in Russia in the 18th century"¹. After several years he returned to this topic. With his friend, N. A. Voznesensky, Syromyatnikov prepared the legislative documents of Peter the Great for publication². This was an important event in Soviet academic life³.

Syromyatnikov's new research on "The 'Regulated' state of Peter the Great and its ideology" actually repeated the ideas of his pre-revolutionary work about the development of the absolute state in Russia. The first chapter was dedicated to an analysis of the historiography of Peter's rule. Syromyatnikov came to the conclusion that neither tsarist nor Soviet historians had developed an adequate interpretation of Peter's time. The main arguments of the second chapter were as follows:

1. Historians have identified three periods in the history of the feudal state: feudal separation; limited monarchy; absolute monarchy. Following this idea, the state of Peter the Great was an evolutionary stage of the feudal state.
2. The absolute (regulated) state appeared as a result of the balance between classes of feudal lords and the rising bourgeoisie. This situation meant that the state was able to dominate society. On the surface, Syromyatnikov accepted the opinions of classic Marxists. He also complied with Stalin's view as reported from a conversation with E. Ludwig⁴. However, in reality he repeated the conclusions expressed in his earlier work ("Absolute monarchy in Russia in the 18th century").
3. Syromyatnikov showed how the ideology of Peter's regulated state was influenced by the ideas of western Enlightenment philosophers (including Gobs, Pufendorf, Leibniz, Wolf).

4. Anti-feudal tendencies can be found in the legislation of Peter the Great.

The research was not really very original. Essentially, Syromyatnikov reiterated the main arguments contained in pre-revolution historiography⁵. However, in the context of the time, his interpretation became a topic for debate. There were scientific and political aspects to his analysis of Peter's state. The demarcation of these aspects had proved difficult: a scientific problem could conversely become a political one.

The book caused controversy. The first review was positive, although the author did not agree with Syromyatnikov's ideas about anti-feudal traits in Peter's rule⁶. Subsequent reviews were extremely condemnatory. V. Lebedev and S. Yushkov's review of the work was especially negative and harsh⁷. They accused Syromyatnikov of representing Peter the First as a follower of the German philosophers, Puffendorf, Leibniz, and Wolf (although in fact, Syromyatnikov also showed the influence of English and French thinkers on Peter and not just that of German philosophers):

So, Peter the First, the pupil of German publicists Pufendorf, Leibniz, and Wolf, transplanted in Russia, a 'police state'. Thus Syromyatnikov's thesis throws back Russian historical thought to the time of supremacy of German historians in the Academy of Sciences – Miller and Shlrcer [Shletser]⁸.

As the Soviet Union was waging war against Nazi Germany during this time, it was a very dangerous accusation. One of the reasons why the review was so negative was because of the personal animosity between Syromyatnikov and Lebedev and Ushkov. Syromyatnikov had provided a critical evaluation of Lebedev and Ushkov's books on the history of Peter the Great's time⁹.

A more objective review was given by B.B. Kafengause¹⁰. He noted how pre-revolution historians such as M.M. Bogoslovsky and N.P. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, who had described the Peter's state as the realization of Enlightenment ideas, had influenced Syromyatnikov. Kafengause also rejected the opinion that the foundation of Peter's state was a balance between classes of feudal lords and the rising bourgeoisie. He viewed Peter's state as a typical feudal formation. Kafengause also noted elements of Pokrovsky's ideas, in particular, the suggestion of the coming era of noble reaction after Peter's death. S.V. Bukhrushin's review made similar points¹¹.

At the time, being accused of holding similar views to Pokrovsky was very serious. After the rout of Pokrovsky's school and the discrediting of his interpretation of history, the slur of holding similar views to Pokrovsky could ruin a historian's career. Critiques of Syromyatnikov were published in sanctioned historical journals which was especially damaging. Syromyatnikov tried to protect himself. He wrote a response to his critics which was kept in the archives¹². This response argued that his work was founded on classic Marxist ideas. He rejected the accusation of being influenced by Pokrovsky and tried to prove that reviewers had misinterpreted his book. However, his response was not published.

2.

The situation in which Syromyatnikov found himself reflected the circumstances of Soviet historiography during the first years of the war more widely. The entire system of Soviet ideological control was focused on the war. Of course, officially historians became a part of the propaganda machine too; they gave stirring patriotic lectures, and wrote books on patriotic subject matter. However, in reality it was impossible to maintain control on all spheres of life, especially during the war. This led to greater freedom for scholars than had been the case previously. There was a short period of relaxation from ideological oppression¹³. Historians who had trained during the period before the revolution were increasingly able to express more independent opinions. Their new works were not patriotic in an official sense. After many years of repression and accusations of national roots, they tried to return to the national view on history (with some elements of nationalism). For example, in a speech, E.V. Tarle stated that

we do not need to blame the expansion of the Russian Imperia and say that it was a type of colonialism which brought only slavery, because a more developed culture was also imported, and Central Asia and the Caucasus were protected from British aggression.

The “old formation” of historians tried to revive the methodology, traditions and interpretations of individual events of pre-revolution history. However, Pokrovsky’s pupils still remained influential. They were trained in the revolutionary tradition and to them, the history of the Russian state was a history of class enemies and class struggle. They could not accept these other interpretations of Russian history. The clash of historical interpretations was irresolvable and the growing conflict was expressed in negative internal and external reviews of historical works.

The Revolution and Stalin’s repressions had created a generation of historians who followed the party line. The relaxation brought about by the war made them uncomfortable. When the conflict over interpretations of history developed, they sought the help of the Communist party. The Deputy Director of the Institution of history, A.N. Pankratova, took the lead role and wrote several letters to the Central Committee of the Party with a request for help to settle the contradictions in the interpretation of historical problems. A Central Committee conference was held from 29 May to 8 July 1944. All historians of note attended, such as: B.I. Grekov, A.V. Efimov, and G.S. Fridljand. Others attendees included Bukhrushin, V.I. Lebedev, A.N. Pankratova, E.N. Gorodetsky, M.V. Nechkina, V.P. Volgin, S.K. Booshuev, I.I. Mints, E.N. Genkina, A.L. Sidorov, K.V. Basilevich, N.L. Rubenstein, B.I. Syromyatnikov, E.V. Tarle, V.I. Picheter, and A.I. Yakovlev¹⁴. Representatives of the state authorities included G.F. Alexandrov, the Chief of the administration of propaganda and agitation. The Chairman of the conference was A.S. Scherbakov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party. Other secretaries such as A.A. Andreev and G.M. Malenkov were also present. The conference was mainly dedicated to historians researching topical historical questions. When Pankratova wrote to the Central Committee, she probably thought that she would be the main judge and that the conference would be a trial of her opponents,

but the state leaders had other ideas¹⁵. Pankratova herself became one of historians who were subjected to criticism.

When the Institution of History was in exile in Kazakhstan, it participated in the work of local historians on the “History of Kazakhstan SSR”. Pankratova was one of the main editors. This book depicted the annexation of Kazakhstan territory by the Russian Empire in negative light and, conversely, presented all the uprisings against Russian rule in a positive one¹⁶. Academics S. K. Booshuev and H. G. Adjemjan disagreed. Booshuev said that historians should reject too critical a view of the Russian conquerors as they brought many benefits to the people who lived in primitive conditions. Booshuev termed the book on the history of Kazakhstan an “anti-Russian work” which should be discredited. He also criticized the work of Institution of History as being a closed and non-effective system. Adjemjan’s report made similar points¹⁷. They referred to Stalin’s work which criticized Friedrich Engels for calling the Russian Imperia a “gendarme of Europe” that brought enslavement instead of freedom.

Pankratova was the next to report. She argued against the idealization of the Russian past, particularly the aggressive external policy of the Russian Imperia. She rejected the opinion that the people’s uprisings were less progressive than Soviet scholars thought. She was especially critical of E.V. Tarle’s attitude to certain classic Marxist-Leninist ideas (such as Engels’s reference to Russian Imperia as “the gendarme of Europe”), which he claimed were out of date. Pankratova accused her opponents of undermining Marxist-Leninism, citing Syromyatnikov’s book on “The ‘Regulated’ state of Peter the Great and its ideology” as an example. In her opinion, Syromyatnikov described Peter’s state as a classless superstructure over society leading to the revival of bourgeoisie historiography¹⁸. Her opinion was supported by Pokrovsky’s other pupils (Nechkina, Volgin, Genkina and Sidorov). This group of historians took an aggressive stance against opponents at the conference. Rubenstein took a similar, but more restrained, position.

When Syromyatnikov had the opportunity to speak, he tried to defend himself. He said that his research was based on classic Marxist-Leninist conceptions, and Stalin’s works in particular, but that malevolent persons had misrepresented his book. He then criticized the Institution of History as an establishment which impeded the progress of historical writing in the Soviet Union. However, his main focus was an argument with B.I. Grekov’s conception of the feudal condition of Kiev Rus’: in his opinion it was a typical slaveowning society¹⁹.

Grekov was less radical than Booshuev, but also had a ‘patriotic’ viewpoint. He argued that the Russian state should not simply be described as an instrument of class oppression. People had to remember that the state operated in the interests of everyone²⁰. Stalin’s favourite historian, Tarle, made similar arguments. Historians including Mints and Efimov took an intermediate position. They supported the idea that historians need not occupy polarized positions. Soviet historians must look at the problems from a dialectic point of view: they did not need to condemn the entire pre-revolutionary history of Russia, but remember about the class position²¹.

It is possible to identify certain groups at the conference:

1. The new generation of historians, essentially Pokrovsky's pupils who maintained Marxist views of history (in Pokrovsky's tradition) and were swayed by the ideals of the October revolution;
2. Historians trained before the Revolution who were not committed to Marxism and objected to attempts to depict the Russian past in a negative manner;
3. A group of "dialecticians" (as Kaganovich termed them), such as Mints, Efimov, and Bukhrushin. They tried to unite both groups and foresee official viewpoints²².

The group of Pokrovsky's pupils was more unified and aggressive, while the historians of the 'old school' were more disparate and disjointed. This did not matter as the judge in these debates was the state. Therefore the representatives of the Communist Party had to decide what was right and what was wrong. This situation strengthened the case for returning to the strong control of history and historical interpretation that had weakened during first years of the war.

The resolution of the dispute was complex²³. It was not just a decision about historical questions: it concerned important ideological problems. The main reason for the uncertainty of the Department of Ideology and Propaganda was the lack of a clear ideological state position. The ideas of national patriotism, which had prevailed in the previous decade especially in war time, were an effective ideology. However, after the war, it should have been possible to spread Communism more widely than before, and an agreed international state position would have been useful²⁴. Accordingly, the resolution took a "middle position", including both elements of national patriotism and class internationalism.

The written conclusion of the conference was divided into several parts. The first was entitled "The influence of the reactionary views of German historians on modern Russian historiography". This included a criticism of the opinion of historians such as Pankratova, Rubenstein, Yakovlev, Bukhrushin, Lebedev, and Grekov, who claimed that the word "rus" had a Scandinavian origin, and that prince Ruric, the founder of the ancient Russian state, was a Viking. They were blamed for the influence of the ideas of German historians, such as Bayer, Shletser and Miller, who proposed the Norman theory of the origin of the Russian state. This attitude was viewed as antipatriotic²⁵. The second part was entitled "The negligent attitude of certain Soviet historians to our country's history". Many scholars were criticized for presenting too negative a view of pre-revolutionary Russia. This was called the 'reincarnation of Pokrovsky's school'. In the same way, the inevitably positive interpretations of national uprisings in the Russian imperia were also condemned²⁶.

The next section, entitled "The viewpoint of great power chauvinism among some historians", accused Tarle, Yakovlev, and Grekov of Russian nationalism. As a manifestation of the great power chauvinism it was considered the using ideas of bourgeois historiography too, especially, the conception of 'the state school'. Syromyatnikov was also

accused of this error. However, the next part of the document states: “Some resurgence of nationalist ideology is very dangerous, because it is connected to the idealization of the bourgeois-democratic state and hopes for the evolution of the Soviet state into an ordinal bourgeois republic”³⁰. State officials concluded that the main charge against Syromyatnikov’s book was that he showed too close a connection between the development of Peter’s regulated state and the influence of Western ideology. To the representatives of the Communist party, the work appeared too much like propaganda in favour of the western way of life.

The resolution was not published, but after the conference many historians were genuinely afraid for their position and probably even for their lives. Syromyatnikov even wrote a letter to Stalin in hope of protection³¹. However, the actual consequences were not as dramatic as had been the case seven years earlier. Officially, the Institution of History and the main historical journal of the Soviet Union “Historical Journal” were reviewed. No individual historian was commended. After official accusation of Syromyatnikov’s “The ‘Regulated’ state of Peter the Great and its ideology” there was a resurgence of Pokrovsky’s conception³².

CONCLUSION

The problems of historical interpretation during war-time were a consequence of the changes at the beginning of the 1930s, when the ‘old school’ historians were able to return to academia. They inevitably conflicted with the pupils of Pokrovsky as a result of the obvious differences in their interpretations of historical questions, methodology, and political attitudes. The last years of Stalin’s cultural repressions established that the main judge of historical interpretations was the state. History became a privileged science, because in history, the Communist Party saw a legitimization of its own political supremacy. State control of history was very strong as was demonstrated by the conference held by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The state used the willingness of some old historians to change existing historiography and revive a nationalist view of the past. It assisted the stabilization and establishment of Soviet ideological and social systems. But was reserved and many revolutionary traditions that still played the most important role in ideology at the same time.

The development of Soviet historiography shows the evolution of Soviet society from an extreme revolutionary position to more a conservative one during the 1920s and 1930s. The conflict between new revolutionary tendencies and old traditional ones led to the incorporation of pre-revolutionary Russian virtues (such as great-power patriotism and the historical continuity of traditions of the Russian Imperia) into the Soviet ideological system. By the end of the war, the Communist Party was at a crossroads. The Communist statesmen had no certainty about the future ideology. We can see the efforts of historians to influence it. Old historians tried to revive pre-revolutionary virtues, while a new generation tried to maintain the ideals of Pokrovsky’s school. The state eventually chose a middle way, a combination of both schools of thought.

NOTES

- ¹ *K izucheniu istorii*. [Towards a study of history], Moscow 1946.
- ² I. D'jakonov, *Kniga vospominanii* [The book of memories], Saint - Petersburg 1995, p. 275.
- ³ V. Muraviev, B.I. Syromjatnikov, in *Istoriki Rossii* [Historians of Russia], Moscow 2001, p. 524.
- ⁴ B. Syromjatnikov, *Absoljutnaja monarhija v Rossii v XVIII v.* [The absolute monarchy in Russia in the XVIII century] in *Kniga dlja chtenija po istorii novogo vremeni* [The history of the modern period], vol. II, Moscow 1911, pp. 511 - 548.
- ⁵ N. Voznesenskii, *Zakonodatel'nye akty Petra I* [The legislation of Peter I], Moscow - Leningrad 1945.
- ⁶ C. Black, *The reforms of Peter the Great in Rewriting Russian history*, New York 1962, p. 250.
- ⁷ I. Stalin, *Besedy s Emilem Lyudvigom* [Conversations with Emil Ludwig], Moscow 1933, p. 3.
- ⁸ B. Kafengause, *Epoha Petra Velikogo v ocveschenii sovetskoj istoricheskoj nauki* [The epoch of Peter the Great in the review of Soviet historical science] in *Petr Velikii* [Peter the Great], Moscow - Leningrad 1947, p. 378.
- ⁹ Review by S. Pokrovskii in "Istoricheskii jurnal" [The historical journal], 1943, 8 - 9, pp. 94 - 97.
- ¹⁰ In "Istoricheskii jurnal" [The historical journal], 1944, 10-11, pp. 120-128.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹² OR RGB, f. 366, k. 28, e.h. 17.
- ¹³ B. Kafengause, *Voprosy istoriografii epohi Petra Velikogo* [Questions of historiography in the epoch of Peter the Great] in *Istoricheskii jurnal* [The historical journal], 1944, 9, pp. 24 - 42.
- ¹⁴ S. Bukhrushin, *Kniga B.I. Syromjatnikova "Reguljarnoe gosudarstvo Petra Velikogo i ego ideologija* [B.I. Syromjatnikov's book "The 'regulated' state of Peter the Great and its ideology"] in "Bolshevik" [The Bolshevik], 1944, 22, pp. 54-59.
- ¹⁵ OR RGB, f. 366, k. 4, e. h. 2.
- ¹⁶ C. Black, *The reforms of Peter the Great in Rewriting Russian history*. New York 1962, p. 245.
- ¹⁷ *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1996, 2, pp. 83 - 84.
- ¹⁸ S. Konstantinov, *Nesostojavshajasja rasprava (O soveschjanii istorikov v TsK VKP (b) v mae - iune 1944 goda* [violence (About the conference of historians held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in May-June 1944)] in *Vlast' i obshchestvennye organizatsii v pervoi treti XX stoletija* [The State and social organizations in the first third of the XX century], Moscow 1995, p. 257.
- ¹⁹ *Istorija Kazakhskoi SSR s drevneishih vremen i do nashih dni* [A history of Kazakhstan SSR from ancient times to the present day], Alma-Ata 1943.
- ²⁰ *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1996, 2, pp.55 - 65.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67-76.
- ²² *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1996, 3, pp. 99 - 105.
- ²³ *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1996, 4, p.87.

- ²⁴ *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in *Voprosy istorii* [The Questions of history], 1996, 3, pp.105 - 110; *Stenogramma soveschjania po voprosam istorii v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 godu* [The shorthand record report of the conference on questions of history held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1996, 4, pp. 69-78.
- ²⁵ B. Kaganovich, E.V. *Tarle i peterburgskaja scola istorikov* [E.V. Tarle and the Saint-Petersburg school of historians], Saint-Petersburg 1995, p. 81.
- ²⁶ For the history of the creation of the text of the document see: D.Brandenberg, A. Dubrovsky *Itogovyi partiinyi dokument soveschjanija istorikov v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 g.* [The concluding party document of the conference of historians held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in *Arheographicheskii ezegodnik 1998* [Archeographical annual 1998], Moscow 1999, pp. 148 - 163.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ²⁸ *Novie dokumenty o soveschjanii istorikov v TsK VKP (b) v 1944 g.* [New documents about the conference of historians held by the Central Committee of the All-Soviet Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1944] in "Voprosy istorii" [The Questions of history], 1991, 1, pp. 191 - 194.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 199 - 200.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ³¹ OR RGB f. 366, к. 37, е. h. 5.
- ³² *Očerky istorii istoricheskoi nauki v SSSR. T. V.* [Outline of history and historical science in the USSR, Vol. 5.], Moscow 1985, p. 221; *Istoriographija istorii SSSR. Epoha sotsializma* [The historiography of the USSR. The epoch of socialism], Moscow 1982, p.128.

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SOURCES

Syromjatnikov's letter to Stalin

Глубокоуважаемый Иосиф Виссарионович,

Я отлично понимаю, что моё обращение к Вам в тот момент, когда Вы, как великий вождь нашей страны, всецело поглощены решением грандиозных мировых задач, являлось бы непростительным дерзостью, если бы в настоящем письме к Вам я позволили бы себе руководствоваться только личными интересами, как автор специального исследования о государстве Петра Великого, первой в русской научной литературе попытке научного анализа «регулярного» государства начала XVIII века. Но положение с моей книгой, которая сделалась предметом организованной травли в печати, в ответ на мою критику основных установок сотрудников Института истории АН, заставило меня обратиться к Вашему авторитету, так как в данном случае речь идёт о правильном понимании и оценке одного из поворотных этапов в развитии русского государства, этапа привлекающего к себе в наши дни широкое внимание. В моём исследовании, разумеется, как и во всякой научной работе, могут быть те или иные недочёты, но в данном случае вопрос идёт о том, как следует понимать учение марксизма – ленинизма.

[.....] У меня нет уверенности, что мои возражения и разъяснения по поводу выступления моих критиков, могут появиться в печати (в чём мне не раз приходилось убеждаться), так как многие издания, где заготовленные мною ответы могли бы найти

место, находясь в исключительном обладании моих противников на фронте исторической науки.

ОР РГБ ф. 366. к. 37. е. х. 5.

Dearest Josef Vissarionovich,

I perfectly understand that my addressing You while, as great leader of our country, You are completely absorbed by great world problems, would be an unpardonable impudence, if in this letter to You, I concerned myself only with my private interests as the author of special research on the state of Peter the Great, the first attempt in Russian literature of a scientific analysis of the “regulated” state at the beginning of the 18th century. However, the situation with my book, which has become a subject of organized press-persecution, in response to my criticism of the basic directions of researchers at the Institution of History of Academy of Sciences, forced me to address to You, because this is a case of the question of the correct interpretation and estimation of one of the turning-points in the development of the Russian state, a stage which attracts wide attention in our days. In my research, of course, as in every scientific work, different defects could surely be present, but in this case it is a question of the correct understanding of the teaching of Marxist-Leninism.

[.....] I have no assurance that my objectives and explanations of the performance of my critics will appear in the press, because many journals where my responses could be published, are possessed exclusively by my enemies at the front of historical science.