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Published in the Russian Federation
Bylye Gody

Has been issued since 2006.

ISSN: 2073-9745

Vol. 35, Is. 1, pp. 192-196, 2015

<http://bg.sutr.ru/>



UDC 94

Contemporary European historiography of Stalinism: Tradition and new Research Strategies for Central and Eastern Europe (Statement of the Problem)

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Abstract

The authors reviews Central and Eastern European scholar's scientific papers of Soviet history and the history of communism in which Stalinism is treated as a special object of study or considered in the context of the other problems of Soviet, European and world history. The study focuses on the scientific literature (monographs, journal articles, collections of articles), prepared and published in the Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1980s to the present day. Thus, it is possible to speak of a new component of the European historiography of Stalinism.

The conditions of modern methodological pluralism provide a choice of integrated multi-disciplinary approach as a concrete methodology of historiographical research. This allows attracting theoretical ideas and techniques of other fields of scientific knowledge for the study of historical processes. Today, the situation in science is such that it is necessary to hear different voices, to be able let in the "other" in your discourse. The study of European historiography of Stalinism enables us to connect the historical, political, anthropological, psychological, and cultural components. Each of them played a role in a particular segment of the discipline development, and in the formation of a collective historical memory.

Keywords: Social Sciences and Humanities; Stalinism; Historiography; Methodology of History; Contemporary History; Interdisciplinary; Polydisciplinary; Eastern and Central Europe.

Introduction

The article is supposed to follow the example of the analysis of Stalinism researchers in Central and Eastern Europe, the process of the formation on the basis of national historiography of modern European historiography of the problem, the output of scientific isolation and integration into the European scientific process of new countries, regions and scientific schools, the expansion process of interdisciplinary synthesis in the end of XX – beginning of XXI century, the transformation of research in Soviet history and the history of communism in one of the leading areas of modern social sciences and humanities.

Research methodology

The methodological basis of the study are scientific principles of historicism, the systematic and comprehensive approach to the subject. The principle of historicism requires the study of theories and models of European authors consider the intellectual and methodological background and conditions for the formation of the analyzed approaches. In the interpretation of concepts tailored to the particular author's intention, political and historiographical situation in which created analyzed historiographical sources. In the development of the research topic the author used a systematic approach involving the study of the national (regional) historiography as an integrated system where all the directions and trends related, perform specific functions and take the necessary space in the structure of the system. The development of the integrated system and its influencing factors are the focus of historiographical research. The principle of

comprehensiveness is based on the effects on problem-theoretical content and the development of historical science as immanent and external social, political and general scientific factors.

Results and discussion

Empowering knowledge of the past and the recognition of its active influence on the state and dynamics of social development requires the professional community more reflected in the activity of change. The search for new approaches to the study of historiography is, first, to the theoretical and methodological level (the definition of the structure, objectives and methods of historiographical studies), and secondly, at the level of studies of specific historiographical problems, and thirdly, in the direction of understanding the various historical concepts and their personalities, and fourthly, the study of the historical consciousness of the society.

The modern world has become a global world. This applies not only to the areas of high technology, communications, economics or supply, but also to the academic field. The academic community today is not divided by national borders, continents or languages.

Address to the European historiography, comparative analysis of schools, movements, scientific paradigms, it is one of the priority directions of development of modern historical science. And this is connected not only with the situation in Europe, but also with the global trends of accumulation and deepening of historical knowledge. European historiography is in this respect, absolute interest, as in European countries, there was organized system of "Soviet and Communist," and then "Post-Soviet and Post-Communist Studies" with certain traditions, theoretical concepts and methodological approaches [more info 1–15]. It should be noted, and the fact that the story of "Soviet and Communist studies" reflects not only the development of the humanities and social sciences, but also the changing political situation in Europe.

Subject to review became scientific papers of Central and Eastern European scholars of Soviet history and the history of communism in which Stalinism treated as a special object of study or considered in the context of the other problems of Soviet, European and world history. The study focuses on the scientific literature (monographs, journal articles, collections of articles), prepared and published in the Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1980s. to the present day. Thus, it will be possible to speak of a new component of the European "historiography" of Stalinism.

"Historiography" is defined in scientific and reference literature as: 1) the history of historical science in general, as well as a set of studies on a particular era, subject, issue, and 2) a branch of historical science that studies the formation and development, the accumulation of historical knowledge and the source base, struggle and change of methodological trends, and 3) self-description of history, the historical process. As the term has a different interpretation, we believe it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the whole concept. We consider the historiography as a special historical discipline that studies the history of the accumulation of historical knowledge, the development of historical thinking and research methods, the history of historical works and biographies of scientists, the effect of the phenomena of social and political life in the work of historians and the impact of historical thought in the public mind, the history of scientific institutions organization of historical education and dissemination of historical knowledge.

The object of study is the European historiographical complex of the late XX century - the beginning of the XXI century. The subject of study is the establishment and development of "Soviet and Communist studies" in Central and Eastern Europe, the collection of works of European authors on the history of Stalinism, the change of methodological paradigms in European historiography, the infrastructure of academic research.

Sources base is amount to scientific academic works by Central and Eastern European researchers, in which Stalinism treated as a special object of study or considered in the context of other issues of European and world history. The chronological framework cover the period from the second half of the 1980s to the present day. Date of the lower boundary is determined by the dramatic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, which led to the transformation of all aspects of life in the region, including the field of social sciences and humanities. The upper limit is associated with the presence of the latest available to the author of academic works by European researchers.

During this time researchers in Central and Eastern Europe were looking for a place in the European system of human and social sciences. Due to the dramatic changes in the region, there was a restructuring of the organizational infrastructure, the rejection of "Marxism-Leninism" as an exclusive methodology of historical studies, the use of experts in the Stalinist period the achievements of world historiography. "Archival revolution" that began after 1991, was a turning point historiographical. Now European researchers, conducting research, could move freely within the territory of the former Soviet Union and the "Soviet bloc", combine the capabilities provided by these "oral history", the study of the Soviet and socialist political civilization with archival materials [16]. The changes coincided with the change of paradigms in the humanities. The focus has shifted to the problems of political and social history in the field of cultural history, for which the most important is the analysis of discourse, space, visual sources.

Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary have special importance in modern European historiography. The proposed project can be considered a European historiography of Stalinism as an interdisciplinary field with a wide range of social sciences and humanities. To complete the task of studying the real Soviet society, the researchers used a methodology of history, political science, social history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics. Attempts to determine the exact list of subjects included in the multidisciplinary "Soviet and

Communist studies" were undertaken but the specialists were not able to reach a consensus. Affected the difficulty of determining disciplinary parameters in the study of any region, to which the specific problems of the terminology of Soviet history. Interdisciplinarity has been triggered by the forward movement of the disciplinary constraints and correcting the effects of excessive specialization of scientific disciplines. Polydisciplinary became a logical extension of this trend, when any object or phenomenon (in the proposed project - a history of Stalinism) is studied simultaneously from different directions by several scientific disciplines, and each discipline retains its own methodology.

Scholars are increasingly turning to the research at the boundaries of different disciplines: history and psychology, history and philology, history and cultural studies, history of science, etc. The key to the effectiveness of their application is complete understanding of each party's own problems, high studies interrogation culture. Priority in the interdisciplinary study of contemporary historians give cultural approach, defining its essence, as the inclusion of historiographical knowledge in the context of the existing types of the era in all its forms: the mentality of society, psychological environment, mentality, literature, style of thinking and language.

In recent years has changed not only the problems of historiography but the methodological tools of historians and their role in the process of writing a historical work. The authors declare today is not about the "objectivity" of his view of the historical problems, they tend to emphasize that, of course, prepare their work on representative sources, but the choice of sources, the wording of these problems, the conclusions to which they come, can not be completely objective because of the dependence on subjective circumstances such as scientific training, cultural and social base of the researcher.

The processes of formation of the modern historiographical space objects are the professional interests of the various sciences and research teams. At the same time, as the experience of the last 10-15 years, the main trend in the development of the social sciences is increasingly acting recognition of their active role in the life of modern society. Socio-colored knowledge is not only a fact of social consciousness, but also of activity-related factor in social development. Models of interaction history, memory and society, developed by Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, John Tosh, Pierre Nora, find their extensive use in social studies and the humanities, and more persistently invade the area of traditional historiography. However, the complex developments in this area are not so many, and their local nature does not allow to enter the deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the changes taking place in modern historiographical practice.

As a research methodology used a systematic approach, which allows to consider the European historiography of Stalinism as a complex system composed of interconnected and interdependent subsystems (different research "schools" and the direction of the theoretical model, the identity of prominent researchers). This system is constantly evolving under the influence of the internal mechanisms of self-development and external factors. The conditions of modern methodological pluralism provide a choice of integrated multi-disciplinary approach as a concrete methodology of historical research. This allows to attract theoretical ideas and techniques of other fields of scientific knowledge for the study of historical processes. Today the situation in science is such that it is necessary to hear different voices, to be able let in the "other" in your discourse. The historiography of Central and Eastern Europe out of the state of "catching reflection", developed in accordance with the requirements of the times and modern trends in science.

The study of European historiography of Stalinism enables you to connect the historical, political, anthropological, psychological, and cultural components. Each of them played a role in a particular segment of the discipline development, and in the formation of a collective historical memory. We use the principle of the "look at the past", which was developed phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, philosophical hermeneutics Philipp Heinrich Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer, "understanding sociology" of Max Weber, historical school "Annals."

Historical scholarship of Central and Eastern Europe has freed from ideological evaluations, outlines stronger role in the known historiographical problems, revise views on the relationship of history and politics. Historical knowledge is approved through the category of "intrinsic value", "national tradition", "interaction", "dialogue". There is a change of explanatory models of historical development. The focus of modern historiography is the question of the relationship between historical scholarship and historical self-consciousness of the people. Self-awareness is considered as a factor in determining the public interest in the science of history, as the link between science and culture. On the other hand, historical scholarship, as a form of social self-knowledge, forms the attitude of society to the past, that is forms the historical consciousness.

Millennium became the national historiography of Central and Eastern time changes our outlook and the resumption of discussions on almost the entire range of issues of national and European history. During this time historical scholarship was complex and contradictory way. Overall it was a gradual development, which led to the renewal of the theoretical foundations, methodologies and techniques of historiography.

Among the complex set of issues pursued by the latest Central and Eastern European historiography, one of the most important was the study of the history of the twentieth century [such as the publication one of the authors of this article, 17–21], and Stalinism, as it is an integral component of its place and role in European and world history. The scientific literature on this period includes a number of books and articles. But, we must admit that to this day the question of "what it was" no simple or single answer. Diagrams created explanation repeatedly depending on various circumstances viewpoints and experience.

History of Stalinism is the ideal object for historiographical research, since they involve a whole series of changes and transformations. In the Soviet Union five-year plans and forced collectivization were abroad between the period of the New Economic Policy and the time of a centralized economic system.

Industrialization, initiated by the state population mobility, the "cultural revolution", the massive state violence dramatically changed the social structure of Soviet society and created the basis for the system that later would be called "Stalinism". The Central Europe's states, part of the Soviet sphere of influence, essentially repeats the Soviet version.

Dynamics of changes in Central and Eastern Europe's "Soviet and Communist studies" has been linked to three major factors: 1) changing the internal situation in Europe as a whole, and in Central and Eastern Europe in particular, and 2) changes in the Soviet Union and its collapse and the formation of new independent states, and 3) the level of development of the social sciences and humanities. To allocate any one factor as the main seems counterproductive. It is a complex interaction of these factors determine development trends of "Soviet and Communist studies" as a phenomenon of scientific and political life in Central and Eastern Europe in the late XX - the beginning of the XXI century.

The first research model that has found wide application in studies of Stalinism, was the totalitarian paradigm. "Classical" totalitarian Stalinist model regarded the Soviet Union as a unique world phenomenon, comparable only to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. However, the academic community has expressed dissatisfaction with the static nature and politicization of the totalitarian model. Began the process of "revision", in which a prominent place occupied by historians. European "Soviet and Communist studies" enriched the methodology of social sciences and humanities, came out of the initial isolation of the academic world and began to use in the study of the "Soviet bloc" technique, characteristic for exploring other parts of the world.

There has been a strengthening of the position of social historians who have put in the center of attention of researchers of the Stalinist period the history of society, not government agencies. Social historians of Stalinism have focused on the study of history "from below", showed the randomness and lack of consistency in government at all levels, social support base isolated Stalinist regime, massive social mobility, overestimated the downward scale of state terror.

The turn of 1980-1990's created a fundamentally new situation by providing opportunities to deepen research in connection with the expansion of the source base, establishing direct contacts with scientists and scientific institutions of the study region. The collapse of the Soviet system has removed the need for the politicization and indoctrination of historiography of Soviet history. Along with the abandonment of the old paradigms study of Soviet history, the name of discipline ("Sovietology") no longer meets the reality and become an anachronism. Now you can use the new methodology, as specialists have been available previously classified, party and state archival documents from the Soviet time.

Intellectual explanation of recent history has been the work of generations. For each new generation of that time meant something else. Although the number of possible explanations is not unlimited, as the system is associated with certain specific historical components, it is extremely large and complex.

Modern European "Soviet and Communist studies" take their own rightful place in the social sciences and humanities. In European historiography of Stalinism was a lot of hypotheses and models. For a long time they were not and could not be properly documented. However, after the opening of the Soviet archives, in spite of the introduction to the scientific use of new materials, unsettled issues associated with this period of history. The field of research is still overwhelming.

The challenge is not that the researchers do not have enough empirical data, although, of course, the academic community welcomed, welcomes and would welcome the extension of the source base. The issue has more to do with the analytical capabilities of social sciences and humanities. History, in collaboration with other social sciences and humanities can give options for explaining the past and gives them. Theme remains in demand in European academia. There is a process of deepening the analysis, the expansion of the research subject. However, like any learning process, he not only increases the number of solved problems, but also constantly expanding area of the unknown. Many of the issues which were brought up by the researchers, are classified as "eternal questions". The answer to them can only be constantly deepening, "eternal" learning process.

Discussions about the phenomenon of Stalinism inevitably led to the question of historical necessity [discussed in detail in the publications of one of the co-authors, 22–25]. Historians began to use the concept of alternatives, allowing escape from the constraints of causation. This made it possible to conceptualize the recent history in terms of a series of crucial solutions. Thus, historians of Central and Eastern Europe refused an approach based on "the only truth" and approaching a freer methodology characteristic of world historical scholarship.

Conclusions

The changes that have occurred in the Central and Eastern European historiography, clearly show that the historical scholarship of Central and Eastern Europe took on a new shape. It has ceased to be a local, closed in their theoretical and methodological foundations. The sum of its new language, identifies the most important trends in the formation of truly scientific historiography of Stalinism.

The attention of scholars is directed to a deeper study of the nature and objectives of the historical-cognitive process, place of scientific historical knowledge of other forms of spiritual culture that existed and existing ideas about the past, the subjects themselves of historical science. Modern interest in the historiography by the needs of its identity, clarify the subject area of research methods, its tasks and functions in historical knowledge and consciousness of society.

Now researchers in Central and Eastern Europe in the development of problems in the history of Stalinism not only comply with the European and world level, but in some respects surpass it. This is due to the fact that the history of Stalinism for their "national history", in which the study of all the national historiography of the main effort is directed. The experience of the Central European (Slovak, Czech, Polish, Hungarian) and Eastern European (Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian) historiography, can and should be integrated into the European historiography of modern history.

We know too little of each other in Central and Eastern Europe, too closed in our countries and regions. We believe that the scholars of Central and Eastern Europe need to move towards a kind of "Scientific Eastern Partnership", which will benefit the scientific community and society united Europe.

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