

**History teaching in the
Soviet school of the 1920s -
1930s: (for example, schools
in the city of Kazan).**



HISTORY TEACHING IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL OF THE 1920S - 1930S: (FOR EXAMPLE, SCHOOLS IN THE CITY OF KAZAN).

ENSEÑANZA DE LA HISTORIA EN LA ESCUELA SOVIÉTICA DE LA DÉCADA DE 1920 - 1930: (POR EJEMPLO, ESCUELAS EN LA CIUDAD DE KAZAN).

ABSTRACT

This publication is devoted to the problems of history teaching in the Soviet school in the 1920s-1930s. The article presents the main conclusions and provisions that characterize the change in government policy regarding historical science in general, and the teaching of school history course, in particular. It was shown the evolution of state policy, which resulted in the fact that the government refused of the experiments of the 1920s in the 1930s. All this eventually led to the nationalization of historical science. Of all the variety of directions that existed in the late XIX - early XX century, the government chose and turned Marxist direction into the only one that had the right to life and the right to be considered truly scientific.

When writing the article, we used the system-structural approach, dialectical, general historical and logical methods, which allowed revealing the essential features of history teaching in the Soviet school. Consideration of the problem both at the all-Union level and at the regional level made it possible to identify the general and particular, the difficulties and contradictions in the adaptation of historical narrative for the purposes of teaching in the secondary school. Practical application of this publication is aimed at focusing attention of the professional community of historians and educators on the achievements of Russian historical thought, the integrated application of particular developments and recommendations developed by the Soviet historians and teachers.

KEYWORDS: People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros), the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR), school reform, civil history, linear system of history teaching

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RESUMEN

Esta publicación está dedicada a los problemas de la enseñanza de la historia en la escuela soviética de las décadas de 1920 y 1930. El artículo presenta las principales conclusiones y disposiciones que caracterizan el cambio en la política del gobierno con respecto a la ciencia histórica en general, y la enseñanza del curso de historia escolar, en particular. Se mostró la evolución de la política estatal, que resultó en el hecho de que el gobierno se negó a los experimentos de la década de 1920 en la década de 1930. Todo esto condujo finalmente a la nacionalización de la ciencia histórica. De toda la variedad de direcciones que existieron a fines del siglo XIX y principios del XX, el gobierno eligió y convirtió la dirección marxista en la única que tenía derecho a la vida y el derecho a ser considerada verdaderamente científica.

Al escribir el artículo, utilizamos el enfoque sistema-estructural, dialéctico, histórico general y métodos lógicos, lo que permitió revelar las características esenciales de la enseñanza de la historia en la escuela soviética. La consideración del problema tanto a nivel de toda la Unión como a nivel regional permitió identificar lo general y particular, las dificultades y contradicciones en la adaptación de la narrativa histórica para la enseñanza en la escuela secundaria. La aplicación práctica de esta publicación tiene como objetivo centrar la atención de la comunidad profesional de historiadores y educadores en los logros del pensamiento histórico ruso, la aplicación integrada de desarrollos particulares y las recomendaciones desarrolladas por los historiadores y docentes soviéticos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Comisariado del Pueblo para la Educación (Narkompros), República Socialista Soviética Autónoma Tártara (TASSR), reforma escolar, historia civil, sistema lineal de enseñanza de la historia

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history both in the past, and present is called to be a system-forming discipline. The status of historical knowledge is very high almost in the public consciousness of almost any state. In the modern Russian school, the process of reviewing the content of historical education continues - this requires new approaches to the creation of textbooks, programs, methodological developments that most fully reflect the achievements of historical science and pedagogical thought.

In this regard, there is the question of to what extent the modern system of school history education is adequate to the tasks faced by it in Russia. Undoubtedly, there is a clear connection between the prospect of building a civil society and modern qualitative education at this time. The large-scale modernization of such an important sphere of public life as education is one of the most urgent tasks. The 1920s and 1930s are of particular interest, when a whole series of social transformations have been undertaken in the country. The activity of all state cultural and educational organizations and institutions during the period under study was aimed at solving the problem of the education and upbringing a Soviet man. At that time, a special role was assigned to the educational work of the school, which was to carry out the tasks of ideological training and educating of youth in the spirit of the ideas of communism. The effectiveness of its implementation was largely determined by the conditions of the process of history teaching at school, which in fact was the instrument and conductor of socialist modernization. The school reform, which was carried out within the framework of the Bolshevik project of "Cultural Revolution", helped lay the foundations of the educational system and established the educational standards of the Soviet school for decades. The identification of the peculiarities in the development of historical science and the history teaching in

the schools of the Republic and Kazan is also of particular relevance in connection with the possibility of using it in the modern conditions. The study of the process of history teaching in the 1920s-1930s allows identifying the main vectors of the development of state and regional educational policy, evaluating and characterizing the scale of transformational processes unfolded in the region during the specified period.

2. METHODS

The methodology of research approaches allows seeing the main trends in the development of such a science as a method of history teaching, to evaluate the diverse practice of theoretical researchers, methodologists and practicing teachers, to understand the structure and level of methodological knowledge of predecessors and contemporaries. The theoretical and methodological basis of our work was the conceptual provisions of scientific researches in the field of studying the problems of history teaching in schools and universities. The use of methodology and technique of existing researches contributes to the development of methodological scientific thought in the practice of teaching basic historical disciplines, methods and ways of scientific research in this field. The system-structural approach provided an opportunity to consider the system of methods and techniques of history teaching in the secondary school, to choose the best methodological methods for teaching these disciplines for the university students, and to combine the theory and methodology of historical research within the framework of a unified teaching methodology. The dialectical method helped to trace the interrelationships between the phenomena inherent in the development of the methods of history teaching at the level of the subject of the Russian Federation, the all-Russian and global trends. The general historical and logical methods allowed building the created methodology in its continuity and consistency with internal logical connections between certain elements.

3. RESULTS

Thus, the state laid the basic and main principles of the functioning of the Soviet system of school education at the all-Russian and regional levels in the 1920s-1930s. The government and workers of the public education system adhered to the basic principle that was laid in the legislative acts of the Soviet state

and the republic - the education of a new generation in the spirit of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The search for a new approach in history teaching in the school was quite complex and thorny. In the 1920s, the school was declared labor, having turned into an experimental site for the development of new methods of teaching public disciplines. The new government won fairly quickly the struggle for school as a network of educational institutions, but the process of solving the personnel issue, the development of new programs and textbooks on the subject, the preparation of methodological manuals for teachers was quite difficult and lengthy. The experiments in the field of education led to rejection of the subject system in schools, respectively, this also affected the history teaching. Thus, the concept of "history" was deleted and replaced by the concept of "social science". It was understood as the totality of knowledge on political economy, law and sociology, knowledge of history, constitution of the RSFSR. The programs were oriented toward a sociological approach to studying the past. The issues of class struggle and social history were the main components of knowledge. A great place was given to the studying the history of the native land. In the upper classes, there was a substantive study of history, but already within the framework of the Marxist sociological scheme. Historical knowledge, in accordance with the programs of 1920, was to reflect the development of productive forces and production relations, classes and class struggle, the theory of scientific communism (socialism), the activity of the masses. The whole basic concept of a single labor school was built not on a scientific basis, but on the principles of studying life complexes. There were three main topics in the content of the training material: first-nature, second-labor and third-society.

The central place of all school education was taken by the labor activity of people. Children had to receive knowledge, showing creative independence, while the physical work of students occupied the leading positions. The historical information given at the school was communicated in connection with the issues of the present day: disclosure of the essence and origin of capitalism and the emergence of labor movement both in the West and in Russia; comprehension of the socialist construction, the policy of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state. Consequently, the chan-

ges touched the very approach to historical education, the old system was rejected, it was believed that a detailed study of antiquity and the Middle Ages distracted the younger generation from the problems of modernity.

When the TASSR autonomous republic was formed in 1920, the main goal of local authorities was to raise the cultural level in accordance with the needs of the peoples living in it. It was planned to spread education among the Tatars, to create equal conditions for the full implementation of the native language for all nationalities of the republic, but, due to the type of social, interethnic and ethno-confessional differences of the population, the process of organizing school education had its own peculiarities. New forms and methods of teaching, curricula and plans appeared in the republic. They had the following tasks: the unification of the school with the socio-political life of the country, labor education, the formation of materialistic views on the phenomena of nature and society, the communist worldview. But when the history teaching was terminated as a separate subject in the Soviet school, the Tatar people history teaching was also ended. Only certain topics were preserved in the general course of Social Studies ("Conquest of Kazan", "Struggle of Kazan with Moscow", "Commercial Rivalry between Kazan and Moscow", "Campaigns of Ivan the Terrible to Kazan", "National Composition of Kazan") [14].

In the early 1930s, the People's Commissariat of the RSFSR made an attempt to introduce the history elements into the school teaching of social science. However, there was a problem when the students could not learn a new course without introducing systematic study of domestic and foreign history in the school programs. The situation in the history of science and humanities began to change in the mid-1930s. Such a turn of government to the history was due to the socio-economic processes taking place in the country. It was no longer enough for the government to be only communist, it needed to prove its historical legitimacy. The soviet power is the legitimate heir of Russia's millennial history, tried to enlist the patriotic support of the people. The main emphasis was not only on the upbringing of a "fighter defending the gains of the revolution", but a patriotic citizen [7]. As the researchers note, the revolutionary culture, inspired in many ways by utopian ideas,

poorly rooted in national soil, has been replaced by a culture of stability - pragmatic and national, reflecting the archetypes of popular consciousness oriented toward tradition [6]. There is also another interesting aspect, which explains why the historical science has been brought to the forefront in the ideological and politico-educational, educational work of government in the 1930s. The fact is that unlike philosophy, historical science could appeal to a wider audience, since it dealt not with philosophical abstractions that were difficult to understand, but with such material that possessed clarity, concreteness, could be represented in images, concealed the opportunities for educational action. Another prerequisite for the evolution of the Bolshevik ideology was related to the external threat. Beginning with the spring of 1934, the foreign policy factor came to the forefront as a catalyst for the further evolution of the Bolshevik ideology and policy of the formation of new historical consciousness among the population of the country.

In 1933, the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR issued new programs on history. They were based on the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of socio-economic formations, which was considered to be the only correct one from the point of view of the scientific periodization of the historical process for that period of time. The class-lesson teaching system was restored. On May 15, 1934 the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Bolsheviks (b) issued the Resolution "On Civil History Teaching in the Schools of the USSR" [13]. This decision marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of historical science and the history teaching in the school.

The document noted the unsatisfactory state of teaching history in schools, its abstract, schematic nature of teaching, criticized the content of programs and textbooks. The condition for the students to master the course of history was, as stated in the Resolution, the scientific periodization, the introduction of courses of Russian and foreign history, which together gave students an idea of the process of human society development. The basis was represented by a linear principle, which supported the interest in the history by the novelty of the educational material [15]. The task of historical courses was to bring students to

the scientific materialistic understanding of civil history. The government, accepting this document, took into account not only the internal causes, the need to raise the level of education and upbringing the successful socialist construction, but also the international situation caused by the world economic crisis. All this together required knowledge of the heroic past of the Motherland and the most important events in the world history. According to the Resolution, the teachers had to express the discipline taught, to teach the students how to work with the textbook. Also, the need to increase the responsibility of students and the observance of school discipline was stressed [11]. According to M.M. Gibatdinov, there were no significant changes with the restoration of history as an independent subject in the secondary school in the situation with teaching the history of the Tatar people. The restored systematic course of history was a simplified mold of the university course in the history of social forms. The history of Russia, and not the history of the peoples of the USSR, was given in the section of the Russian history program; there was no material describing the conditions for the development of individual nationalities, etc. The material on the history of nationalities completely "dropped out" of the program [3].

4. DISCUSSION

Beginning in the mid-1920s, the Soviet historians attempted to sum up the results of the development of historical science in the republic, [5] but for ideological reasons the main emphasis was placed on the development of local history and study of the local land [17]. The authors were to solve not so much scientific, as political tasks and draw the corresponding conclusions. In the future, the schematism, the use of vague phrases of agitational and propagandistic sense and Stalin's quotations was growing.

By the beginning of the 1930s, the number of scientific researches of a general nature [1] on certain issues of historical science in the republic [10] and the study of local land was growing in the Tatarstan.

Mass repressions against prominent academic historians in the mid-1930s led to a decline in interest in the humanities, in particular history in the country. There are almost no researches on the development of science in

Tatarstan in the works of this period, and the available publications are usually made in the form of articles, whose volume does not allow sufficiently covering the problem.

A general, regional and thematic historiography appeared in the subsequent period. The works on certain issues of the history of science, the works of Russian and Soviet historians began to be published, the study of historiography [8] of the former Soviet autonomies began to be carried out, the national historiography of the peoples of the USSR began to be developed. Concerning the problem study at the regional level, it is possible to single out the works of N.A. Konoplev [9], N.K. Mukhitdinov [12], V.M. Gorokhov [4], Z.G. Garipova [2] et al. They contain important factual material and correspond to the official ideological paradigm of that time [1], highlighting the issues of education administration by the party.

The works of modern historians of Tatarstan are of particular interest. Thus, the monograph of M.M. Gibatdinov [3] shows the main stages and features of the development of the Tatar people history teaching, changing its status in the early years of Soviet power. It should be also noted the study of I.I. Khanipova [16], examining the issue of the formation of new social knowledge of students of the TASSR schools in the 1920s-1930s. But, unfortunately, the authors, in practice, do not cover the peculiarities of history teaching in the republic and Kazan since the mid-1930s, giving only a concise review. The topic of the transformation of methods and techniques of teaching various school disciplines in the Soviet school is also covered in the English-language literature [6]. Thus, one of the authors, L. Holmes, reveals an interesting feature - the transition from the experiments of the 1920s to the nationalization and pragmatism of the 1930s in school politics, was initiated not only by the supreme power, but also went from below - from the parental mass worried about fate of their children, who often did not receive well-mastered knowledge [7].

5. SUMMARY

The following stages are highlighted in the development of the Soviet school in the 1920s-1930s. The school construction of the 1920s can be characterized as the period of formation of the Soviet education system: the


introduction of universal compulsory education, the growth of the number of educational institutions, the ideological and political leadership of the Communist Party of the people's education and school history education, in particular. The experience of transformations in school history education had many negative sides (at first, the history exclusion from the school curriculum and its replacement by a simplified set of social science disciplines) in the TASSR, as in other regions of the country, in the 1920s-1930s. However, this period was not deprived of attractive and useful undertakings due to the peculiarities of the republic (introduction of new programs, including history and methods, taking into account national specifics, increasing the number of teachers and improving their skills, taking into account the education of students of different nationalities, etc.). In the mid-1930s, the civil history was "returned" to the school. The pragmatic moments of strengthening the legitimacy of the Soviet regime in the face of a tense international situation played a significant role in this process.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The identification of the peculiarities of the teaching system of such school discipline as history is of particular relevance in connection with the possibility of using the material revealed for a detailed reconstruction of the everyday life of Soviet society in the 1920s-1930s. In addition, the issue of the fate of history as a school subject in the Soviet school in the TASSR in the 1920s-1930s did not receive full coverage in the historiography and did not become the object of a special study up to the present time.

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