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*Рецензия / Book Review*

**Сидорова Л.А. Советские историки:  
духовный и научный облик. М.: Институт российской  
истории РАН; Центр гуманитарных инициатив, 2017. 248с.  
(Historia Russica)**

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**Sidorova, Lyubov A. *Sovetskiye istoriki:  
dukhovnyy i nauchnyy oblik* [Soviet Historians:  
Spiritual and Scientific Image]. Moscow: Institut rossiyskoy  
istorii RAN; Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ Publ., 2017. 248 p.  
(Historia Russica)**

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Biography has been one of the most popular genres of historical works over many centuries and it continues to hold a leading position in modern historiography under different names: “new biographical history,” “history through personality”, “personal history”. It is significant that in the new millennium, historical biography has gone from narration to research on history, demonstrated through personality, and finally to research on individual consciousness and personal spiritual development. These features of the modern stylistics of personal history can be clearly traced in Lyubov Alexeyevna Sidorova’s monograph “Soviet Historians: Spiritual and Scientific Image”.

Primarily, it is crucial to pay attention to the author’s suggestion, right in the introduction, of narrow-mindedness and insufficiency of consideration of the scientific heritage of Soviet historians, predominantly within the framework of politics and ideology, of “specific conditions of their scientific activity”, “research traditions” and “social demands”. Moreover, for L.A. Sidorova, the tradition of similar studies seems to be exhausted, but the phenomenon of Soviet historiography requires a new approach to its study and the scale of its representation. That is why the new monograph focuses on “the complex of spiritual and mental reasons” that impact Soviet historians’ creative work and the creation of their spiritual and scientific image, which are manifested only in individual stories, individual fates and biographies.

The author’s suggested approach also determines the type of sources used for the research, which mainly consists of so-called “ego-sources”, sources of personal origin: memories, diaries and correspondence of historians. It is precisely these sources that

allowed Sidorova to impersonate the Soviet historiography, to personify the collective image of Soviet historians of different generations through their personal stories, and to discover their “spiritual biographies”, their moral and esthetic values which make up the psycho-emotional sphere of their creativity and academic activity.

The author structures the monograph in such a way as to clearly identify two profiles of reconstruction of the collective image of Soviet historians, representing them as the “spiritual image” and the “scientific image”, without concealing the priority of the first one over the second in order as well as in scope of narration. Revealing the meaning of the evaluative concept of the “spiritual image”, the author emphasizes the issues of the historian’s attitude toward religion, faith, and the spiritual values that form the basics of his daily and academic life. In the author’s opinion, these attitudes represent a particular “moral compass” for Soviet historians, which formed the basis of personal and business relations in a historical society. The author analyses the esthetic, moral and religious views of Soviet historians, using particular examples of individual personalities and giving the reader the opportunity to hear the voice of a scientist, and to comprehend the meaning of estimation, mood, and emotional experience as related to the spiritual sphere of a day-to-day life. Thus, Sidorova’s approach to reconstructing religious mood in the life of Soviet historians of different generations is highly entertaining. For example, she proves convincingly that for the historians of the “old school” religion was a “natural element of education”, a fine daily rite, and at the same time, the subject for philosophical speculation. The author provides the fascinating description by the famous historian M.M. Bogoslovsky of the celebration of “Tatiana’s day”, a tradition at Moscow University that included a visit by the professors and students to a temple, “teatime in a Big professors’ room, and then, a ceremonial act”, during which discussions “on such old and eternal issues as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul” took place (p. 13). The author very accurately choose the event to highlight – “Tatiana’s day”. This celebration opens up a wide scope of speculation, not only about a scientist’s attitude toward religion, but also about the interconnection between science and religion, and Moscow University’s cooperation with the Church.

While demonstrating the significance of family in developing historians’ personalities, Sidorova points out that scientists cannot consider factors such as compliance or non-compliance with rites in everyday life or the religious origins of a historian to be definitive indicators of indifference to the question of faith or historians’ intensity of religious sentiment. At the same time, the author expands the personal stories of scientists such as the academics M.K. Lyubavsky and M.M. Bogoslovsky, who were profoundly religious people. She highlights their personal statements and attitudes toward Orthodoxy, faith and religion in general. These specific fragments of the historians’ memories constitute the factual basis for the author’s conclusions that religiosity was an essential part of their world outlook.

Of equal interest in the monograph is the analysis of the issues of faith and church organization in the world outlook of A.E. Presnyakov, a description of V.S. Solovyov’ skeanness on religious philosophy, and a speculation on L.N. Tolstoy’s works “The Death of Ivan Ilyich”, “The Power of Darkness”, and “The Kreutzer Sonata”,

as well as answers to the questions: “in what does happiness lie?”, “what is to be done?” and “who is to blame?” There is an important emphasis by the author on “historical background” in the reconstruction of reflections and observations by A.E. Presnyakov and on pictures of the artist A.A. Ivanov or Tolstoy’s ideas. Thus, for example, a statement given by A.E. Presnyakov that A.A. Ivanov “transferred the task of demonstration of Christ from the ecclesiastical and religious ground to the historical ground, without diminishing its ideal significance at all” (p. 19). Highly significant are reflections by A.E. Presnyakov on L.N. Tolstoy’s ideas on the negative influence of “animosity based on outlook” and “mutual incomprehension” among people. Sidorova ultimately concludes that “this feature of Aleksandr Yevgenyevich’s nature... was crucial in his choice of line of cooperation with Soviet Marxist historians” (p. 20).

Eventually, Sidorova reveals the role of faith for historians of the “old school” through their personal estimation of the revolution upheaval of 1917 as retribution for the fact that, according to M.M. Bogoslovsky, the Russian elite was “nihilistic” and “did not know either belief in God or patriotism”.

The moral and religious bases of Soviet historians’ world outlook are expanded by the author’s analysis of their esthetic views and the influence of belles-lettres and works of art on molding the historians’ creative personalities. An interesting aspect of the unfolding of this subject is consideration of the style of historical study in the context of relations between history and literature. In this regard there is a competent statement by the academician M.N. Tikhomirov in the monograph that “a historian is not just a researcher, releasing the necessary product from the laboratory,” but a writer as well. Referring to M.M. Bogoslovsky’s notice on “the damage to the Russian language on scientists’ lips,” Sidorova states that it is “an incredibly complex, but achievable” task of scientific work to combine “language richness, accuracy of terminology and bright psychological images of historical characters (p. 51).” In the academic society of Soviet historians, the talent of literary style of such scientists as Y.V. Tarle, M.V. Nechkina, A.Z. Manfred, was highly esteemed.

Sidorova’s scrupulous work on the reconstruction of the literary tastes and preferences of such important persons as S.B. Veselovsky, N.M. Druzhinin, I.I. Mints, M.V. Nechkina and many others on the basis of diaries and other memoir-type sources of the literary circles noteworthy. At the same time, the author of the monograph does not simply narrate about the esthetic views of Soviet historians, but very clearly demonstrates a historical context for the dramatic events of the coming 20<sup>th</sup> century. Events of World War I, revolutions and other social collapses, according to the author of the monograph, powerfully motivated the historians’ attitudes toward literature, as “belles-lettres helped historians endure the vicissitudes of fate” (p. 89–90). The author gives the very impressive examples of the arrest of M.M. Bogoslovsky, S.B. Veselovsky, A.A. Kiesewetter and D.M. Patrushevsky on political and antigovernmental charges in September of 1919. Sidorova quotes the memories of participants in that drama, recounting the fact that they were expecting books in a package to be delivered to the Butyrskaya prison, books that bring “meaning and order” to their life, and that they were for them “a protective barrier,” and “the illusion of a conventional way of life”.

The author amplifies her analysis of the role of books and fiction in the lives of Soviet historians with ideas on the historians' usage of literature in their scientific activity. Sidorova emphasizes her general conclusion that "works of fiction were often used by historians to fully and comprehensively understand a given historical epoch" (p. 92–94). She also gives examples from the diaries of M.V. Nechkina, M.M. Bogoslovsky, and other historians to further support this point.

We should also mention one more of the author's perspectives for reading the historical context in exposing the spiritual image of Soviet historians. This is the period of "the thaw" in the life of Soviet society, when "belles-lettres and historical science were more tightly combined with the aim to comprehend the origins and the deep meaning of Soviet history" (p. 103). Sidorova introduces the section entitled "A Historian and His Literary Image" with these words, which includes highly emphasized research of the image of famous Soviet historian and academic Anna Mikhaylovna Pankratova. This image was poeticized in the poem "Tan'ka", by N.M. Korzhavin. The section also includes a reconstruction of her personal story, full of dramatic events in the everyday, social and scientific spheres of life. It is in this reconstruction that the author demonstrates the high professionalism of a historiographer while analyzing discussions on the pages of periodical historical press, most notably in the magazine "History Questions", directed by A.M. Pankratova. At the same time, Sidorova perfectly commands the methods of linguistic analysis and interpretation of artistic images that strongly intensify emotional coloring and vivacity of perception and personality of the historian A.M. Pankratova and of the epoch as a whole.

The second part of Sidorova's monograph, devoted to the characteristics of the scientific image of Soviet historians, is spotlighted by the issues of theory, methodology and source study of historical research, which have been the source of much heated controversy and debate. Here the main issues are Marxist theory and class approach as a new basis for historical studies of the Soviet period, which were confirmed by the Marxist historians in the struggle with "old school" of the historical society. The methodological "battle field" is depicted by the author not in contrasting black and white, but in a diversity of shades of a historian's private and personal choices. Thus, the monograph's author wisely demonstrates the estimation of the historiographical situation of the 1920s, given by N.M. Druzhinin, in which he writes that he lives "among two opposite and hostile trends:" the cultural but reactionary sphere of the professors' community of Moscow University, and the "communist environment" (p. 135–136).

Sidorova managed to find her own style in interpreting controversy over well-known historiography issues, restoring the voices of contemporaries and participants of those polemics, and selecting ones that sound contrasting and conciliatory. This approach is demonstrated effectively in the exposition of controversy among A.M. Pankratova, Y.V. Tarle and I.I. Mints over the issues of the role and tasks of history and the problem of patriotism. Their relevance has not yet been diminished at the present time. It is very revealing that, at the center of discussion of that time, participants in which include M.V. Nechkina and S.A. Piontkovsky, is the problem of the historical source: the question of the priority of a source over an interpretation, and the "new" class approach to a source over the formal juridical approach, intrinsic for

representatives of “the old school”. The topic of the historical source is continued by the author in the section on polemics around documentary publications, that is, on issues of archeography and source study, which is displayed through the personal correspondence of two famous historians from capital schools – B.A. Romanov and E.N. Kushevaya.

A personified approach and the use of authentic sources is characteristic for the author’s exposition of the problem of “science schools” as well. In particular, this is manifest in the example of the development of A.L. Sidorov’s school, who replaced the academician B.D. Grekov as director of the Institute for the Russian History of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1953. Grekov was an active participant in the reorganization of Soviet historical science after Stalin’s death. It is precisely through the personality of the historian A.L. Sidorov, “a brilliant but somewhat controversial representative of Soviet historians of the generation of ‘red professors’”, and on the basis of the memories of the young, talented scientists who surrounded him – A.Y. Avrekh, A.M. Anfimov, V.I. Bovykin, P.V. Volobuyev, M.Y. Geftter, I.D. Kovalchenko, K.N. Tarnovsky, K.F. Shatsillo – that the author reconstructs the process of the formation of the science school. She pays particular attention to the role of personality of the leader and master, his life experience, and dramatic events in the course of his daily, scientific and academic life (p. 175–181).

This musing on the monograph *Sovetskiye istoriki: dukhovnyy i nauchnyy oblik* should conclude with a note on the importance of the author’s keenness on her research, at which Lyubov Alexeyevna Sidorova has been profoundly and productively working for over a decade. Her previous monograph, *Sovetskaya istoricheskaya nauka sere diny XX veka: Sintez trekh pokoleniy istorikov* [Soviet historical science in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century: Synthesis of three generations of historians], published in 2008, was a very interesting and much-discussed historiographical event. As they are closely related by the subject of research, L.A. Sidorova’s two monographs are simultaneously characterized by the clearly defined angles of reconstruction and comprehension of such a controversial and multi-faceted phenomenon as the national historiographical tradition of the Soviet period.

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