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An alternative view of the fateful periods in Russian political history

Abstract: Russian historical science has developed a certain approach to the interpretation of the most important periods of the formation and development of the Russian state. To a large extent, it relies on such absolute authorities as Karamzin, Klyuchevsky, Solovyov, Rybakov, and Platonov. However, with the development of scientific knowledge, a number of provisions established in Russian political history have been criticized, on the basis of which new hypotheses arise. The article considers various points of view on the fateful periods of Russian history that changed the vector of its development, analyzes the factual evidence base of existing scientific theories and put forward scientific hypotheses. The author concludes that without dismissing these two approaches to understanding the Soviet period, it is necessary to pay attention to the pendulum movement in the political drift of Russia. The analysis of historical material shows that the pendulum movement occupies a significant place in the political drift of Russian society.

Keywords: periods of Russian history, vector of development of Russian history, new hypotheses of fateful periods of Russian history.



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Альтернативный взгляд на судьбоносные периоды в российской политической истории

Аннотация: Российская историческая наука выработала определённый подход к трактовке важнейших периодов становления и развития Российского государства. В значительной степени она опирается на такие абсолютные авторитеты, как Карамзин, Ключевский, Соловьёв, Рыбаков и Платонов. Однако с развитием научных знаний ряд положений, сложившихся в российской политической истории, подвергся критике, на основе которой возникают новые гипотезы. В статье рассматриваются различные точки зрения на судьбоносные периоды российской истории, изменившие вектор её развития, анализируется фактологическая доказательная база сложившихся научных теорий и выдвигаемых научных гипотез. Автор делает заключение, что, не отвергая два подхода к пониманию советского периода, необходимо обратить внимание на движение маятника

в политическом дрейфе России. Анализ исторического материала показывает, что движение маятника занимает значительное место в политическом дрейфе российского общества.

Ключевые слова: периоды российской истории, вектор развития отечественной истории, новые гипотезы судьбоносных периодов российской истории.



Introduction

Russian historical science has developed a certain approach to the interpretation of the most important periods of the formation and development of the Russian state.

To a large extent, it relies on such absolute authorities as Karamzin, Klyuchevsky, Solovyov, Rybakov, and Platonov. However, with the development of scientific knowledge, a number of provisions established in Russian political history have been criticized, on the basis of which new hypotheses arise. In this article, it is offered an author's view of the discussion in this issue.

It is necessary to distinguish five periods of political history; the idea of which science is ambiguously interpreted in Russian. It also seems that these periods are the most significant on the historical path of Russia. These are the Tatar-Mongol invasion, the *Time of Troubles*, Peter's reforms, Russia's movement towards the constitutional rule, and the Soviet period.

1.

One of the main moments in the history of Ancient Russia is the so-called Tatar-Mongol conquest. It is generally believed that the Horde came from the far East from China or Mongolia, captured many countries, conquered Russia, swept to the West and even reached Egypt and planted the Mamelukes dynasty there (*Nosovsky & Fomenko, 1999*).

However, this understanding has many claims. If the Mongol conquerors (the Horde) moved from inner Mongolia, then they had to go a huge distance in 1223 (the battle of Kalka) – more than ten thousand kilometers. Moreover, it had to be a movement not only of horsemen but of the entire Horde, including women, children, provisions, weapons, etc. To consider that the Mongols at this time led a nomadic lifestyle and drove their herds of horses as the food supply ran out, it is difficult to imagine how they moved in one direction from East to West.

It should be taken into account that before the conquest of the Russian principalities, Genghis Khan (born Temüjin Borjigin) subdued the peoples of Siberia. In 1241, he began the conquest of China. He managed to conquer only the Northern part of it. In 1218, Genghis Khan's troops began a campaign in Central Asia. By 1221, his 200-thousandth army conquered it. In the autumn of 1220, Mongol troops defeated Northern Iran, invaded Azerbaijan, won a victory in Georgia, the Mongols went to the North Caucasus, defeated the Polovtsians, and invaded the Crimea, reached the fortress of Sudak.

As a result of the campaigns of the Mongol conquerors, a huge empire was created. It was a very motley conglomerate of peoples, with different levels of development. At the same time, if to analyze the peoples, enslaved by the Horde, as sedentary, nomadic peoples, it is obvious that most of them – China, Iran, Georgia, Russia – were sedentary and at a higher level of development concerning the conquerors at the time of inclusion in the Empire. Of course, there are examples in world history when nomadic peoples prevailed over sedentary ones. However,

this was, firstly, short-lived, and secondly, it was not the nomads who imposed their culture on the defeated settled peoples but rather the defeated ones. In the case of the Tatar-Mongol invasion, this pattern looks completely different. The term *Tatar-Mongol yoke* described a historical period of two and a half centuries, has taken root in history and public consciousness. Throughout this period, there was no major cultural assimilation.

The Horde did not establish its control in Russia. Initially, the unit of taxation was a plow, plough. In 1257, the Horde began a census. At first, the tribute was collected by representatives of the Horde. Then a system of pay-off was introduced, i.e., rich Eastern merchants brought the cost of tribute in advance to the Treasury of the Horde, then took it back.

The baskaks, who had their armed detachments, watched the gathering of tribute. Through the baskak system, the Horde sought to maintain its power in Russia. Russian princes, who received a “label for reigning” from the Horde, directly managed the Russian lands. In Russian historiography, the point of view was established that the Horde did not destroy the system of government in the conquered lands, but used it to its advantage.

Alexander Nevsky, Grand Duke of Vladimir from 1252 to 1263, supported the union with the Horde, helping the baskaks in the census. The Horde needed to organize the collection of tribute. This is the official point of view, which has been established in Russian science concerning the management of Russian principalities during the *Tatar-Mongol yoke*. However, many points in this historical paradigm are questionable.

Could the khans of the Horde so trust the Russian princes that it was practically necessary to give them to collect tribute, i.e., the most important element of government? Management of any territories and peoples is impossible without written decrees and certificates. What language were they written in? It turns out that it was in Russian. The mentioned ‘labels on the reign’ were also written in Russian.

It is important to look at the attitude of the conquerors to the religion of the conquered nations. By the time of the Mongol invasion of Russia, the Byzantine branch of Christianity – Orthodoxy – was established in the Moscow principalities. The Horde not only did not persecute Orthodoxy in Russia but also supported it. During the period of the *Tatar-Mongol yoke* from the 13th to the 15th centuries, the number of newly built Orthodox churches and temples exceeded their number for a comparable period, since the adoption of Christianity by Kyiv. It is an amazing fact of Russian history. The intolerant attitude of one religion to another, even to the point of mutual destruction, is well known. It is enough to recall the Crusades of European chivalry in Palestine in the 13th century, which was then under the rule of Muslims, for the *Liberation of the Holy Sepulchre*. Conversely, European and world history knows no examples when the conquerors supported the religion of the peoples they conquered.

2.

So, there are only some doubts about the approaches to the *Tatar-Mongol yoke* that have taken root in Russian history. The current version of ancient Russian history was most likely created in the mid-18th century, based on sources written or edited by Miller in the early 18th century. Klyuchevsky wrote that “fast forward to another era, to the first years of the reign of Empress Elizabeth. At the Academy of Sciences, Gerard Friedrich Miller, a visiting scholar, worked hard on Russian history. He spent almost ten years travelling through the cities of Siberia,

analyzing the archives there, travelled more than thirty thousand versts and brought to St Petersburg an immense mass of documents written off there in 1743” (*Klyuchevsky, 1983*).

However, history, like any other science, is constantly enriched with new versions, revised, new hypotheses are put forward. This fully applies to the understanding of such a fateful period of Russian history, rooted as the *Tatar-Mongol yoke*.

The next rather controversial period in Russian history is the *Time of Troubles (Smuta)*. At the same time, this period and all the events that took place within it, influenced a huge impact on the further course of the historical process in Russia. Despite the fact that this period occupies a small historical time (1601-1613) and its study is based on a fairly well-known documentary basis, many aspects of this problem have not yet been sufficiently studied.

First, it is necessary to present the material that does not cause many objections. Two years before the new century, in 1598, the childless Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich (the last of the Rurik family) died. Under Fyodor, the government was concentrated in the hands of Boris Godunov. Most of the political forces of that time, which influenced the election of the new sovereign, were interested in Boris Godunov. “For Godunov, there was a Patriarch who owed everything to him; for Godunov, there was a long-term use of the tsarist power under Fyodor; everywhere – in the *Duma*, in prikazs (an administrative, judicial, territorial, or executive office functioning on behalf of the palace, civil, military, or church authorities), in regional management, there were people owe him who could lose everything if the ruler would not have become a king. For Godunov, it was that his sister, although imprisoned in a monastery, was recognized by the Queen of the government and everything was done according to her instructions. Finally, for most, the reign of Fyodor was a happy time, a time of rest after the previous reign, and everyone knew that Godunov ruled the state under Fyodor” (*Solovyov, 1960*).

Only two years of Boris Godunov’s reign were called calm by his contemporaries and historians. In the first year of the new century, the troubles began. First of all, it is necessary to imagine what socio-political and economic events contributed to this.

In 1601, as a result of a bad harvest, a terrible famine occurred in Russia. Cholera joined the famine. Famine and pestilence were followed by robberies: people fleeing from starvation formed gangs to feed themselves with an armed hand at the expense of others. Against this background, there are rumours about the impostor. Who was the impostor False Dmitry (or Pseudo-Demetrius)? Historians of the past and present have been studying quite closely all the issues related to the appearance of an impostor on the political scene. As S.M. Solovyov noted that “rumours, opinions about the impostor went and go different” (*Nosovskiy & Fomenko, 1999*).

In historical science, there are two versions:

- Dmitry was the runaway monk Grigory Otrepyev, an impostor;
- Dmitry was the son of John the Terrible, Rurikovich, therefore the rightful heir.

The first version is the most famous for four centuries, developed and described, both in historical and fiction. It included in the school course of national history. It should be focused on the pros and cons of the version. Of course, the head of the state should have been the Tsar, the direct heir of John the Terrible, the anointed of God. This attitude was fully consistent with the religious mentality of the people. This attitude was reinforced by the fact that False Dmitry fought for the throne of his father, i.e., restored the violated justice. On June 20, 1605, he entered Moscow and was proclaimed tsar. However, as his image was being dissipated, and the

contradictions between the Polish gentry and the Russian boyars and nobles became more acute, a conspiracy developed. At the head of the conspiracy were the princes: Shuisky, Golitsyn, Kurakin. On the night of May 16-17, 1606, the detachment, attracted to the side of the conspirators, entered Moscow and occupied all 12 gates of the Kremlin. False Dmitry was killed.

A different view of the figure of Dmitry was offered by G.V. Nosovsky and A.T. Fomenko. “From the very beginning of Dmitry’s struggle for the throne, everyone who saw him recognized him as a tsarevich. Polish aristocrats, the Polish king, Russian boyars and, finally, his mother, tsarina Maria Nagaya (by this time, the Nun Marfa). While still in Putivl, Dmitry sent out letters everywhere, calling the Russian people under the banner. In Putivl, Dmitry summoned the real Otrepyev and showed him to the people”.

Why have historians refused to believe the numerous claims of contemporaries that Dmitry was the real son of Ivan the Terrible? The authors of the monograph *Russia and Rome. Whether We Understand the History of Europe and Asia Correctly* gave an answer to this question. “Let us recall that Russian history was finally written under the Romanovs. The Romanovs specifically declared Dmitry an impostor. What for? The answer is simple. Dmitry, who became Tsar, and had a royal origin, had a son. Romanov historians called him by the ‘young thief’. After the death of Dmitry, he was supposed to succeed him. However, the Romanovs were eager to power themselves. They usurped the throne, even with the living son of Dmitry. Consequently, the election of Mikhail Romanov as Tsar was illegal. The only way out of this situation for the Romanovs was to declare Dmitry an impostor. However, there was still one obstacle – the son of Dmitry. The problem was solved very simply: the Romanovs hung it on the Spassky gate.” (*Nosovsky & Fomenko, 1999*)

3.

The issue of the duration of the *Time of Troubles* is interesting. The established view is that this was a short period (1601-1613). The upper limit of this time is associated with the *Zemsky Sobor*, which elected Mikhail Romanov to reign. However, it seems that the consequences of the *Time of Troubles* were still felt for a long time. Of course, as a consequence, there was a process of strengthening the Russian state in the 17th century.

In the middle of the century, new important features appeared in the economic and social structure of Russia. The national all-Russian market was beginning to take shape. Its formation meant overcoming the economic isolation of individual territories and the emergence of a single economic environment.

Having an established state, there were new opportunities to deal more effectively with internal turmoil. Here it should be returned to the topic of the *Tatar-Mongol yoke*. To look at this period from the point of view of the internal struggle of political forces but not the reflection of an external enemy, then a completely different picture emerges. The struggle for several centuries was between the Muscovite state and the Horde but not coming from the East (the Tatar-Mongol invasion), it was ‘fragments’ of the older empire (*Tartary* or *Great Tartary*), which was represented by the Cossacks who settled on the outskirts of Muscovy.

Such a reconstruction of events is presented by the authors of the monograph *Russia and Rome. Do We Understand the History of Europe and Asia Correctly* by G.V. Nosovsky and A.T. Fomenko.

4.

It is necessary to return to the events of the 17th century. It is believed that about 60 years after the accession of the Romanovs to the Moscow throne, a major rebellion broke out in the country, today called the Razin uprising. It is also called the peasant war. Allegedly, the peasants and Cossacks rebelled against the landlords and the tsar. Razin's main military force was the Cossacks. The uprising covered a vast territory of Russia but was eventually suppressed by the Romanovs.

Razin's force acted under the banner of the *War for the Great Sovereign* against the traitors of the boyars in Moscow. However, who was, in reality, this *Great Sovereign*, in whose name the Razin letters were drawn up? It is unlikely that Alexey Mikhailovich Romanov was him. Then who was he? In the reconstruction of V.G. Nosovsky and A.T. Fomenko, the so-called Razin uprising of 1667-1671 was a real and difficult war that lasted 4 years. With the Moscow side, Prince Dolgoruky was appointed voivode, his headquarters were located in Arzamas. Razin was the voivode of the Astrakhan troops. This approach was based on the fact that even after the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613, which elected Mikhail Romanov to the Kingdom, Muscovy included the Northern part of the lands along the Volga River. Southern Russia and even the Middle Volga formed another state, with its capital in Astrakhan, where their tsars were. By their origin, they belonged to the old Horde dynasty.

Apparently, the Razin's people considered the Romanovs illegitimate rulers. That is why they were called thieves and traitors. The constantly repeated statement by them that they were fighting against the boyars for the tsar, apparently means that the boyars of the Romanovs were not recognized as legitimate kings. In Astrakhan, obviously, there was a tsar, whom the Razin's force considered "the great sovereign of all Russia".

It should be emphasized that the attitude of Western Europe to these events was exactly like a war for power. V.I. Buganov wrote that "the uprising in Russia, led by Razin, aroused great interest in Europe, especially in the West... Foreign informants ... often looked at events in Russia in a very peculiar way – as a struggle for power, for the throne. Razin's uprising was called the *Tatar Uprising*." (*Buganov, 1995*)

Thus, if to adhere to an alternative point of view on the Razin uprising, it can state that this was the last major confrontation between the two states and the end of the *Time of Troubles* in Russia.

5.

It is necessary to fast forward to the first quarter of the 18th century, the reign of Peter I (1689-1725). This historical period is characterized by profound transformations that covered all spheres of economic and socio-political life in Russia. All these numerous reforms can be grouped into the following areas:

- economic reform;
- reform of the army, military affairs;
- reform of public administration;
- estate reform;

- social reform;
- reform of education, science;
- diplomatic reform;
- land reform;
- church reform.

It should be understood that all these reforms were carried out at a specific political time. The category of 'political time' is used to emphasize the presence, content and influence of political events on the socio-political life of society and the further course of history within the framework of physical time (*Orlov, 2019*). Based on this understanding, it is necessary to approach the analysis of Peter's reforms.

It should briefly discuss the reform of public administration. In 1704-1708, Peter abolished the *Boyar Duma* and established the *Commission of Ministers* (the council of prikazs' chiefs).

In 1711, the *Governing Senate* was established. The main difference between the *Senate* and the *Boyar Duma* was that it did not limit the legislative power of the tsar but was a legislative institution. The members of the *Senate* were appointed at the discretion of the king.

Summing up the consideration of the topic of Peter's reforms in general, it should be noted that there have long been two diametrically opposite approaches in assessing of the transformations and the personality of Peter the Great. One is based on the need for deep reforms that were objectively overdue. Moreover, the emphasis was on the inability of Russia to overcome backwardness and crisis phenomena independently without the help of Europe. Therefore, the measures, by which all Peter's reforms were carried out, are justified or recognized as inevitable. Another approach comes from the artificiality and violence of Peter's reforms for Russia.

At the same time, the following results of the Russian history of the 18th century, recognized by historians of all directions, are indisputable:

- the establishment of an absolute monarchy of the Western European model, the external expression of which was the adoption by Peter I of the imperial title on October 22, 1721;
- the annexation of new lands to Russia (part of which was previously rejected), access to the Baltic Sea, the foundation of the new capital of the state – St. Petersburg;
- intensive development of industry, the appearance of the first manufactories and mining enterprises;
- construction of the army and navy on the Western European model permanently;
- stronger influence of Russia on the policy of European states.

The reform of state administration, of course, established absolutism in Russia, primarily because the tsar, and later the emperor, alone decided all issues of state administration, and the state administration bodies performed the formal role of advisory institutions. This political vector remained in Russia throughout the monarchical period.

The longevity of the public administration system, created by Peter I, is far from obvious. Already in the reign of Catherine I (1725-1727), the *Senate* was transformed into a *Secret Supreme Council*, represented by aristocrats (Dolgoruky, Golitsin) and "nestlings of Peter's nest" (Menshikov, Yaguzhinsky, Tolstoy). It was the Council, not the monarch, which became the main governing body in Russia. The *Supreme Privy Council* decided to invite Anna Ioanovna to the

Russian throne after the death of Peter II, accompanied by a demand to accept the conditions that significantly limit the autocracy.

It is very difficult to assess Peter's reforms from the point of view of their effectiveness. The criteria that are quite difficult to work out, need. It seems that such a criterion could be the attitude of the ongoing reforms to serfdom.

Peter's reforms did not create prerequisites for the liberation of the peasants from serfdom and its weakening. Taxation, recruitment, service in the army and navy, assigned serfs to manufactories were based on the relationship of serfdom. The development of manufacturing production was hindered by the lack of a free labour market. Many of Peter's reforms 'stalled' precisely because of the entrenchment of serfdom in the social and political life of Russia. This tendency for outlived the reign of Peter I and was especially aggravated in the reign of Catherine II (1762-1796). It was observed a certain contradiction in Peter's reforms. All of them were supposed to lead Russia to the European path of development. However, Europe had long been freed from the serfdom of its peasants by the beginning of the 18th century, but Russia did not even embark on this path.

6.

Perhaps, the most difficult periods for historical analysis are non-long periods of the turn of Russian society towards constitutional construction. The movement towards constitutional rule took place at various periods in Russia:

- at the beginning of the reign of Anna Ioanovna (1730), the development and attempt to adopt conditions that introduced some semblance of constitutional rule and limited autocracy;
- during the Decembrist movement (1821-1825);
- the first experience of Russian parliamentarism of the first four *State Dumas*, in which the party of constitutional Democrats took part.

Attempts to turn Russia's movement along the constitutional path were made with a frequency of about once in a hundred years. Each such attempt occurred at a specific political time but did not lead to the adoption of a constitution. As soon as the autocracy collapsed and the socio-economic and political conditions changed (the Soviet period), the constitutions of 1918, 1922, 1936, and 1977 were adopted.

Then it is necessary to take a closer look at Russia's attempts to transition to a constitutional system. The first such attempt occurred during the reign of Anna Ioannovna in 1730. With the death of Peter II (grandson of Peter I), the direct line of his heirs was interrupted and the *Secret Supreme Council* decided to offer the Russian throne to the niece of Peter I – Anna Ioannovna, the daughter of John, Peter the Great's half-brother.

In historical literature, as a rule, it is noted that the conditions significantly limited the power of Anna Ioannovna. This is certainly true. Thus, without the consent of the *Supreme Privy Council*, the Empress could not declare war and make peace with other states, grant military ranks above colonel, etc. All domestic and foreign policy, according to the *Conditions* (an 18th-century constitutional project in Russia), was also carried out by the *Supreme Privy Council*. The delagation of the Council went to Courland, where the Dowager Duchess Anna Ioannovna lived and

handed her the *Conditions*, which she signed. However, upon arrival in Moscow and accession to the throne, she broke them declaring herself an absolute monarch.

In historical literature, this conflict is usually presented as a struggle between the future empress of Russia and several aristocrats, i.e., it is reduced to a private, interpersonal confrontation. At the same time, there are deeper contradictions between the Russian aristocratic families and the nobility, especially the officer corps. Nobles received land, serfs, privileges from the monarch, served the tsar, completely depended on absolutism, aristocrats, heirs of boyar families sought to revive the old order, where the first role was played by the boyars. Relying on the wider representation of the nobles, Anna Ioannovna rejected the *Conditions* and ascended to the throne as an absolute monarch.

Of course, it is impossible to consider the *Conditions* as a full-fledged *Constitution*. It is legitimate to analyze it only from the point of view of limiting absolutism and expanding the number of people taking part in public administration.

The next stage on the path of constitutional construction in Russia was the *Muravyov Constitution*, developed as part of the preparation and implementation of the Decembrist movement. The participation of Russian officers in the war of 1812-1814 caused the Decembrist movement in Russia. In 1816, the first society *Union of Salvation*, headed by the colonel of the General Staff N.M. Muravyov was formed. In 1818, the *Union of Prosperity* appeared in Moscow. In 1821, after the split, the *Southern Society* led by P.I. Pestel and the *Northern Society* in St Petersburg led by N.M. Muravyov emerged.

Pestel's *Russkaya Pravda* was the first Republican program of the Russian revolutionary movement. Drawn up in the form of a mandate to the provisional supreme government, which should be formed after an armed coup, it provided for the destruction of serfdom, estates, the introduction of equal rights and obligations of citizens before the law. Military settlements were destroyed. In the structure of state power, the principle of separation of powers was introduced.

The *Constitution of Muravyov* in many sections, especially of a general democratic nature, coincided with the *Russian Pravda*. At the same time, when proclaiming the equality of citizens, a certain property qualification was introduced to choose a particular state position. Russia was represented in the form of a federation consisting of 13 powers, 2 regions and 569 counties.

The supreme legislative power was represented by the *People's Assembly*, which consisted of two chambers – the *Supreme Duma* and *House of People's Representatives*. The *People's Assembly* was elected for 6 years with the renewal of one-third of each chamber, every 2 years. The law passed by the *People's Assembly* must have been approved by the emperor, who was the head of the executive branch. In fact, the *Muravyov Constitution* offered a model of a presidential republic.

Using the pretext of taking a new oath to Nicholas I instead of Constantine, who had given up power even before the death of Alexander I, the Decembrists raised an uprising on December 14, 1825, in St Petersburg, on the Senate Square. It was suppressed by the evening. As a result, 5 people were hanged and 121 were exiled to Siberia.

History, as we know, does not know the subjunctive mood. However, it can be made a certain assumption and assume that in the event of the Decembrists' victory and the introduction of the *Muravyov Constitution* in Russia, a limited constitutional monarchy would have developed and serfdom would have been abolished. An additional analysis of the reasons for the failure of

the Decembrist movement, which did not allow the implementation of the *Muravyov Constitution*, is required.

Another period of Russian society's movement towards the adoption of the *Constitution* is rightfully considered the first experience of parliamentarism. The activity of the first *State Duma* went in the direction of limiting the absolute monarchy. However, it should be noted that the existing point of view in Russian historical science, according to which with the establishment of the first and subsequent *State Dumas*, Russia became a limited monarchy, seems erroneous. Russia ceased to be an absolute monarchy only after the February revolution of 1917.

The borrowing of the provisions of the *Muravyov Constitution* in the modern constitutional strategy in Russia requires further research.

The Soviet period is subject to an ambiguous interpretation in Soviet historical science. Since it lags behind our time by an insignificant distance by historical standards, and certain age groups of the Russian population directly lived in this society, it becomes obvious that various researchers pay special attention to this historical time.

The Soviet period of Russian history after the collapse of the USSR is considered by the authors from different angles. If in the 1990s, the overwhelming number of publications on various issues of the Soviet period were mostly negative, then in the 21st century, this trend began to change. In the public consciousness, an objective, balanced approach to covering the events of this period is increasingly being established. Trying to explain this trend, some researchers of this issue believe that there is a distortion or falsification of certain facts or events, while others note that this process is based on people's nostalgia for the past, which is always seen as rosier than it really was.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that without dismissing these two approaches to understanding the Soviet period, it is necessary to pay attention to the pendulum movement in the political drift of Russia. The analysis of historical material shows that the pendulum movement occupies a significant place in the political drift of Russian society. The pendulum movement was set both from above and from below through the protest movement of the masses, which led to an alternation of order and chaos in the social and political life of Russia (Orlov, 2016).

The pendulum movement in the political drift of Russian society has been repeatedly manifested. The internal policy of the state can be taken for the 'point of reference', around which the pendulum movement of society takes place. In Russia, there is a tradition of "pendulum", i.e., alternation of reformist and conservative policies. This is especially evident in the reform activity of Alexander I (the first half of his reign, before the Patriotic War of 1812-1814), which was replaced by the conservative policy of Nicholas I. The reformist policy of Alexander II was replaced by the conservative policy of Alexander III. This tradition was broken only by Nicholas II. Upon assuming the throne, he declared, "Let everyone know that I will preserve the principles of autocracy, as firmly and steadily as my unforgettable parent preserved them."

It should be noted that the tradition of the 'pendulum' in domestic politics was also manifested in the Soviet period. After more than 20 years of totalitarian Stalin's regime, there

was the 10th anniversary of the Khrushchev thaw, which was then replaced by Brezhnev stagnation, followed by Gorbachev's "perestroika".

This tradition had a deep meaning. Without reforms, problems accumulated in society, without solving which it would have been impossible to develop progressively. At the same time, it was impossible to continuously carry out reforms, because:

- 1) huge resources were required;
- 2) a permanent reform process could lead to a change in the ruling regime.

The established tradition of the 'pendulum' solves this problem. It seems that the tradition of the 'pendulum' will continue to manifest itself in the political life of Russia in the future. *Thus*, it acts as a certain regularity, based on which it is possible to analyze the Soviet period.



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