



REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Title of Session: Contemporary Historical Textbooks and the Ways of Representation of the Past in the 21st Century

Name of Session Convener(s): *Sergiy Kurbatov*, Uppsala University, and National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine;

Li Bennich-Björkman, Uppsala University

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Comments: -

I) The Game of Time: Reflecting Varieties of Soviet in Post-Soviet Nation-building via Textbooks' Comparisons

Marharyta Fabrykant, Belarus State University

Alla Marchenko, Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University

Natalya Tregubova, St Petersburg State University

II) Narrative of an Image

Danzan Narantuya, National University of Mongolia

III) Production of Space and Geopolitical Imagination in Post-Soviet History Textbooks

Michail Suslov, Uppsala University

IV) Social Construction of Soviet Past in the Textbooks of History in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan: Commonalities and Specifics

Zhanna Andreasyan, Yerevan State University

V) The Problem of Adequate Representation of the Past in the Context of Social and Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Concept of Integral Historical Text

Serge Rode, National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine

Session description:

The past plays crucial role in human culture as a kind of substantial background of any social activity. Here we face the important philosophical (and also sociological, psychological and anthropological) issue – how the past (something, which is currently absent de facto), could influence human behavior and human worldview. Argument “from the past” in majority of cases legitimizes our norms and values. Instrumentalization of the past is a powerful weapon in contemporary politics (in particular in cross-national relations, which continue to be extremely sensitive topic and to provoke powerful emotional attitudes now).

School and university textbooks play the role of a “guide to the past” for future generations of these countries. They help to create “collective memories” according to particular ideological or other schemes. What are the main forms of representation of the past in the 21st century? How past could be used for legitimization of current political and social order? Could we identify attempts to deconstruct, to reconstruct and to censor the past in contemporary textbooks?

In framework of this panel we plan to present the results of our project on remembering and reconstructing perestroika and late Soviet history in the textbooks of three post-soviet countries – Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, which received funding of Swedish Institute and was realized in cooperation with the representatives of Belarus State University, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine and St Petersburg State University, Russia. Before 1991 the republics of the Soviet Union had one official version of history. How do the current versions of the last decades of the USSR in the textbooks of post-soviet countries relate to this official version? What common and particular features of the analyses of perestroika period do we have in each particular case? What are the differences in describing perestroika period between school and university textbooks? How is the leader of USSR Mikhail Gorbachev and his activities described in each case? What is the relation between national revival and perestroika period according to textbook narratives in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine? How is the large industrial disaster, Chernobyl catastrophe, interpreted in the framework of perestroika period?

We are welcome papers, which are devoted to the problem of representation of the past in historical textbooks and looking for answers to these and many other questions!

Abstracts:

1) The Game of Time: Reflecting Varieties of Soviet in Post-Soviet Nation-building via Textbooks' Comparisons

Marharyta Fabrykant, Belarus State University

Alla Marchenko, Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University

Natalya Tregubova, St Petersburg State University

The paper undertakes an attempt to complement the traditionally used scheme of content, discourse and narrative analysis with elements of game theory as well as mirror varieties of Soviet in Post-Soviet nation-building. The period of perestroika, finalizing the existence of the Soviet Union, seems to be one of the most relevant to reflect upon the issue in three Post-Soviet states – Belarus, Russia and Ukraine as the most comparable cases in sociocultural contexts. However, the interplay of textbooks' inter- and intra-case comparisons during the research resulted in “reconstruction” of cases' borders. How did the interpretations of perestroika and its main figures influence the interplay of Soviet and Post-Soviet in three histories? Such approach gives possibility not only to represent three attitudes to the Soviet legacy and the USSR collapse in line with the official schemes of History reflected in the textbooks, but also decode hidden meanings of perestroika nowadays.

II) *Narrative of an Image*

Danzan Narantuya, National University of Mongolia

Social enquiry and teaching of social sciences should embrace the analysis of images which tell cohesive narratives and deepen stories told through words. As an illustration of making sound inferences from visual materials and using pictures for teaching, the paper reads descriptive meaning and explores cultural and historical context of a color halftone printed version of the photograph with a long title- Ssuyungpatv, a fourth-grade primary school pupil in Olunchun Autonomous Banner in Inner Mongolia, answers his teacher's question taken in 1954 in China. The picture about a distinguished schoolboy as an inheritor of communist leaders aims to inculcate the people with the eternity of communism and its ideology. The paper demonstrates how social documentaries can be used to enhance our research and understanding of the past in new ways.

III) *Production of Space and Geopolitical Imagination in Post-Soviet History Textbooks*

Michail Suslov, Uppsala University

Informed with critical geopolitics, this study discusses how contemporary Russian history textbooks for secondary school construct spatial configurations of the post-Soviet identities. In spite of the recent claims to produce ideologically 'decontexted' and well-defined history textbooks, history in Russia still generates controversies and ideological clashes much rather than it is able to consolidate the society. Geography in this sense could produce more stable narratives and evoke more intense feelings of belonging and loss. Russian history in this sense is being translated in geographical terms and consumed by geography so that the story of political and social developments becomes the story of spatial acquisitions and losses. This paper inquires into this 'spatial turn' in textbooks and analyzes its relevance to the attempts of nation-building during the last decade.

IV) Social Construction of Soviet Past in the Textbooks of History in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan: Commonalities and Specifics

Zhanna Andreyan, Yerevan State University

In one shining morning a trainer asked teachers of history: "Please, write down which weather is today?" Everyone wrote that it was a bright day. The trainer collected all descriptions and threw them into the recycle bin, and then he wrote: "It is raining today". After he said: "Look, you were wrong when you wrote that today was a sunny day, but all your descriptions have gone and mine will stay for the history. And tomorrow no one will remember this".

History is not only a combination of facts from past. It's always a way of construction of one's views, life world, a vision of a nation. The strategy for the construction of national history is an important part of a state policy and ideology. The differences in interpretation of historical facts can be seen very precisely when taking a comparative view of explanation of same facts in different societies. Sometimes one can have a feeling of a mirror effect in such a situation when the same fact could be interpreted in one way in one country and in the contrary way in another. It is more than right when looking at the post soviet countries. Maybe we will have more than fifteen different explanations concerning the same fact in regard to the fifteen former soviet republics. To understand the differences and commonalities in the interpretation of the soviet past the textbooks of history of three South Caucasian countries have been studied. The main research method used during study was content analysis. The specific research questions for the study are:

- Which facts are included in the textbooks for presentation?
- Which persons are included in the textbooks for presentation?
- What are the main adjectives used for description of the soviet past?
- What are the main adjectives used for description of non-soviet world?
- How the role of the own nation is described and presented in the textbooks?
- How the post soviet developments of the country are seen in the textbooks?

The main hypothesis of the study was that the interpretation of Soviet Past in these three countries in historical textbooks of each is represented in the context of national history. In this regard the modus of interpretation of Soviet past is depending on the post soviet developments of a society. If the post soviet period is described in more positive way than the soviet past should be presented more negatively and the contrary.

V) The Problem of Adequate Representation of the Past in the Context of Social and Cultural Heritage of Humanity: Concept of Integral Historical Text

Serge Rode, National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine

The past plays the crucial role for human worldview. One of the most important problems in this context is preservation and adequate representation of the past in its wholeness. How could we make the representation of the past as adequate and full as possible? What does the concept of Integral Historical Text mean? How it can be used in philosophical studies, for scientific research, educational and other purposes? These questions would form a philosophical background of my presentation.