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Russia: An Incessant Battle for Education

Rosja: nieustająca walka o edukację

• Abstrakt •

Tematem niniejszego artykułu są zmiany w rosyjskiej oświacie, które miały miejsce w latach 2013–2016, a zatem w okresie prezydentury Władimira Putina. Przedmiotem badań są zarówno przeobrażenia w systemie edukacji na poziomie kadrowym (zastąpienie Dmitrija Liwanowa przez Olgę Wasilijewą na stanowisku Ministra Edukacji i Nauki FR), formalnym (powstanie nowej: *Koncepcji nowego kompleksu edukacyjno-metodycznego w zakresie nauczania historii ojczyzny*), instytucjonalnym (reformacja Rosyjskiej Akademii Nauk), jak i jakościowym (wprowadzenie nowych podręczników do historii). W artykule podjęto próbę pokazania, że wymienione zmiany stanowią egzemplifikację zaostrzenia kontroli państwa nad oświatą oraz traktowania jej jako narzędzia kreowania polityki historycznej Federacji Rosyjskiej (FR).

Słowa kluczowe: system edukacji, oświata, polityka historyczna, Federacja Rosyjska, Olga Wasilijewa, Dmitrij Liwanow, Władimir Putin

• Abstract •

The presented paper discusses the changes in the Russian education system that took place in the years 2013–2016, during the presidency of Vladimir Putin. The analysis encompasses all dimensions of changes in the education system: personnel changes (replacement of Dmitri Livanov by Olga Vasil'eva in the position of the RF Minister of Education and Science), formal ones (development of the new: *Concept of a new educational – methodological complex for teaching national history*), institutional (reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and finally also qualitative changes (introduction of new history textbooks). The article attempts to show that the above changes are in fact manifestations of tightening state control over education and its treatment as a vehicle to create the historical policy of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: education system, education, historical policy, Russian Federation, Olga Vasil'eva, Dmitri Livanov, Vladimir Putin

Introduction

The year 2013 turned out to be a watershed moment for the Russian education system. It was the year when President Vladimir Putin critically assessed how history was taught in Russian schools, criticized the fact that textbooks presenting different viewpoints on the key moments from Russia's past were in use, and suggested the creation of a uniform textbook to teach national history in all schools (*Zasedanie Soweta po meźnacional'nym odnoszeniam...*). In 2015, the Russian Historical Society [hereinafter: RHS], acting on Putin's recommendation, selected three series of textbooks by different publishers that met the new requirements for teaching of history – from that moment on, teachers were obliged to pick one of these recommendations¹. The Russian education system was also not spared personnel changes at the highest level. In August 2016, Kremlin loyalist Olga Vasil'eva became the Minister of Education and Science, replacing Dmitri Livanov – considered in Putin's circles to be a moderate – in this role (*O Ministerstve obrazowania...*).

One of the primary „tools” used by state authorities to legitimize their power is exploitation of the past². The past seen in this instrumental way means not just revival of a memory of past events, but also an advanced method of shaping memory of the society, which is constantly subject to interpretations and manipulations. The objective of this paper is to present some of the changes taking place in the Russian education system; the intent of the author is to demonstrate how these changes constitute an excellent example of the state's tightening control over the education system and, consequently, are used as tools to influence the society's perception of history of the Russian state and nation in a direction favoured by the Russian authorities³.

¹ Starting with the 2014/2015 scholyear, teachers would be able to use the textbooks selected earlier for 5 more years, to make it possible to complete the educational process for students following a previously chosen series of handbooks. From 2014/2015, it is also not possible for schools to purchase textbooks that failed the evaluation by RHS for school libraries, i.e. if a school uses a coursebook series by a given publisher for grades 5, 6, 7, if this series is not one of the officially approved ones the school still has to buy a textbook that passed the evaluation for grade 8 (see *„Kniźnyj” skandal s...*).

² For more about the use of history by a state to exercise control over the nation, see Stobiecki (1998).

³ Shaping the vision of history of the Russian state and nation in the direction favoured by the Russian authorities is what is known as the state historical policy. A similar definition was put forward by authors of the report *The image of Poland in the Ukrainian historical policy* (in Polish only, orig. title *Obraz Polski w polityce historycznej Ukrainy*) published by the Polish Institute of International Affairs. In their view, historical policy is a *political message about the history of the country*

The primary research method used was an analysis of official federal-level legal acts and materials publicly available in the Russian Federation, published by various media and on websites of relevant organizations and institutions concerned with the topic of education. The examination of available material was complemented with qualitative and quantitative social analysis carried out using the techniques of questionnaire and free-form interview (the latter having only ancillary character).

Reshuffle at the Education Ministry

On 18 August 2016, under the presidential order no 417, Olga Vasil'eva replaced Dmitry Livanov as Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Thus dismissed Dmitri Livanov had been in charge of the Russian education system in the years 2012–2016. He had made many enemies during his time occupying this post, in part due to his stubborn fight against plagiarism in doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations. Livanov also became involved in the high-profile reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) which, instead of streamlining the outdated Russian science system (with its origins rooted deeply in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or USSR), allowed the authorities to take control over both its functioning and its enormous wealth. The reform, which began in 2013, was supposed to focus on incorporation of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences and the Russian Academy of Agriculture Sciences into the RAS. However, in reality the process consisted mainly in takeover of the RAS assets by a specially created, government-controlled entity – the Federal Agency of Scientific Organizations (FASO). As a result, the FASO currently manages the assets (especially real estate) of all scientific institutions in Russia, not just those belonging to the RAS (*D. Livanov's reform...*). In short, the reform brought changes beneficial for the government, but unfavorable for the Russian scientific community as such. Despite creation of the FASO and its successful takeover of e.g. the RAS, Putin decided to dismiss Livanov from his ministerial post and appoint him as advisor for the trade and economic relations with the Ukraine (*Dmitrij Livanov naznačen...*) – while designating Olga Vasil'eva, a patriarchate-friendly loyalist, as the head of the Education Ministry in his stead. Putin's decision was interpreted as a concession towards the patriotic portion of the Russian governing elite, in whose

and the nation propagated by state authorities and constituting part of governmental policy (translation from Polish; see Dyner, 2017).

view Livanov was an apolitical, liberal-minded technocrat who did too little to promote values such as love for the Motherland. It can be said, therefore, that this key change at the helm of the Education Ministry indicated a shift in the Russian educational policy towards a more conservative option⁴.

Olga Vasil'eva (born 1960) is a historian of Orthodoxy, focusing on the history of the Orthodox Church at the time of the USSR, in particular relations between the clergy and the communist authorities; she is well-known in the academic community for her work in this field. Vasil'eva graduated from the Sholokhov Moscow State University for Humanities with a degree in history, then in 1990 defended her doctoral dissertation – on *The Soviet state and the patriotic activity of the Russian Orthodox Church during the Great Patriotic War* – at the Russian Academy of Sciences. She continued her academic career studying the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet times and in 1998 she was conferred a habilitation degree for her thesis: *The Russian Orthodox Church in the policy of the Soviet State in 1943–1948 (Kto takaâ Ol'ga Vasil'eva...)*. In the period 1990–2004 she worked at the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences (later the RAS), initially as a research assistant and later advancing to finally become the Director of the Centre for the History of Religion and the Church. In 2007, she graduated from the Russian Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Academy majoring in international relations. Vasil'eva also holds a degree in conducting (Orthodox choir music) and at the very start of her career worked as a teacher of singing and history (Mil'man).

Over 30 years of her active scientific career, Vasil'eva published nearly 160 works, some of them considered quite controversial. The controversy was not linked directly to her chosen research topics (history of the Russian Orthodox Church in the 20th century, relations between the Church and the state in the Soviet times, international relations and the problem of political and religious extremism) (*Vasil'eva Ol'ga biografiâ*), but rather the way she was interpreting the past. Many texts and lectures by the current minister praise the Stalinist period, in particular Stalin's positive influence on the growth of the Church⁵ and the

⁴ Information obtained directly during conversations with Russian teachers and authors of textbooks (material collected by the author).

⁵ The relations between the Church and the Stalinist government are an extremely complex and complicated issue. The USSR leader's policy towards the Church before 22 June 1941, or the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, was strictly antireligious (in line with Marxist theory). Only after the German attack on the Soviet Union did a radical change in Stalin's policy towards the church take place, largely due to the need to mobilize all the nation's resources in the war against Hitler's Germany. For more about the relations between the Church and the Stalinist authorities, see (Czykwin, *Stalin: zbrodnie ...; Istoriâ vosstanovleniâ moskovskoj ...; Materski*, 2017).

spread of patriotic spirit in the nation. It's not a surprise then that her appointment aroused enthusiasm among the Orthodox clergy, particularly from pro-Putin Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'⁶ ('Nadeûs', nam dali...) and the superior of the Sretensky Monastery on Lubyanka, Bishop Tikhon, who is considered to be Putin's confessor and spiritual guide (*8 važnyh faktov...*). Moreover, the new minister was involved not only in academic, but also political activity, having worked in the presidential administration and advising the government and the president on religious, cultural, social and educational matters (*Kto takaâ Ol'ga Vasil'eva...*)⁷.

Reception of Vasil'eva in the Media

Just a day before assuming her post as Minister, Vasil'eva gave an interview to the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper in which she stated that her appointment was a fulfillment of the "will of God" (*božestvovanie*). The remark caused some controversy as the new head of the ministry put herself in the role of a person fulfilling the heavenly will, which in turn could implicate that also Putin, who appointed her to the position, was carrying out divine work. Two days later, Vasil'eva semi-retracted those words, explaining that she meant a fulfillment of "what was bound to happen" (*dolženstvovanie*) and blamed the journalist who interviewed her for the misunderstanding. The minister shrewdly extricated herself from the trouble brewing as indeed in the Russian language the expressions "will of God" and "what is bound to happen/has to happen" sound much alike as indicated above (*božestvovanie vs. dolženstvovanie*) (Golovanov, *Izvinite za "božestvovanie..."*).

The choice of Vasil'eva was not accidental – it was a result of both her longtime loyalty to the Kremlin and her propagation of love for the Fatherland and pride in the achievements of the Russian state. Shortly before her promotion to Minister, Vasil'eva clearly and plainly spoke about patriotism. During a lecture delivered at the "Territory of Senses" National Youth Education Forum organized at the

⁶ It is worth noting that Patriarch Kirill is a figure close to Vladimir Putin, and professes his belief in the principle of consonance (symphony, consistency) between positions of religious power and state power.

⁷ In February 2012, Vasil'eva was appointed deputy director of the Russian Federation Government's Department of Culture; she has also worked for the Governmental Commission for Religious Associations, the President's Working Group for the Disabled and Their Participation in Cultural life of Society, counseled the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media on portraying of religious issues in the electronic media, and served on the Russian Ministry of Education Council for developing teaching curriculums – focusing on the course on *National History*.

State Management University in Moscow (June 2016), she stressed that patriotism means “subordinating personal interests to the interests of the state” (*Kak prowela pervyj...*), that „a betrayal of the ruler is treated as a betrayal of the homeland”, and „the Russian state and Tsar must not be betrayed. They must be loved and defended” (‘Nadeûs’, nam dali...), pretty much echoing the words of Ivan IV the Terrible. Vasil’eva also mentioned patriotism at the all-Russian youth education forum Tawrida (Crimea, August 2016), whose goal was to educate youth in the spirit of pride in the Motherland. Organization of the event cost the state budget nearly 200 million roubles: „[In Russia – note by D.M.] there can be no other idea to integrate the society besides through patriotism” (*V Krymu obsudili...*), she stated, and modern patriotism should be based on the idea of fighting “for the Russian land” (*V Krymu obsudili...*). The future education minister also quoted one of Stalin’s speeches, one he gave at the 1931 All-Union Conference of Leading Personnel of Socialist Industry: “In the past we had no fatherland, nor could we have had one. But now that we have overthrown capitalism and power is in our hands, in the hands of the people, we have a fatherland, and we will uphold its independence.” (*V Krymu obsudili...*).

The behaviour of the Russian media outlets, which were very quick to react to the new ministerial appointment by recalling Vasil’eva’s past remarks about the Church, Stalin and the times of the USSR, should be noted as well. For example, the portal Lenta.ru cited a 2013 lecture given by the new minister (for the audience consisting solely of the United Russia party members), during which she openly talked about Stalin’s services to the Russian state: “Stalin, despite his faults, is a public good, because on the eve of the war he committed himself to uniting the nation, revived the heroes of the pre-revolution Russia and promoted the Russian language and culture, which in the long run made it possible to win the war” (*Iudei potrebovali ot Vasil’evoj...*). Moskovsky Komsomolets, in turn, noted that Vasil’eva was the first academic supervisor of Ilya Goryachev⁸, a member of the BORN, or Military Organization of Russian Nationalists, sentenced to life imprisonment for murder (*Istorik Cerkvi pri...*). What is more, the newspaper

⁸ Ilya Goryachev was held responsible e.g. for organizing several murders, including the deadly shooting of Stanislav Markelov, a well-known Russian lawyer, human rights advocate and Amnesty International activist and journalist for “Nowaja Gazeta” and Anastasia Baburova, young journalist and anarchist – both were shot and killed together on 19 January 2009 (see Łaniewski, 2014; Nowak, Wojnar, 2015).

While studying, Goryachev attended a course on mutual relations of the state and the church (at the State University for Humanities) taught by Olga Vasil’eva. It was at that time that he began to take active interest in Orthodoxy and the Balkan issues (see *Il’â Gorâčev. Universitet*).

pointed out that she repeatedly stated in her interviews and lectures that “there are no atheists in time of war [the Great Patriotic War – note by D.M.]” (Istorik Cerkvi pri...) and quoted letters of the clergy that were supposed to attest to it (Istorik Cerkvi pri...). Moskovsky Komsomolets also quoted Vasil’eva’s remarks about „falsification of history” at the time of Boris Yeltsin and the number of victims of Stalinist repressions being artificially inflated: „if we counted up the number of dead and suffering repressions as given by the Ogoniok magazine, it is impossible to understand how could be there still was anyone left to live and work in the country” (‘Nadeûs’, nam dali...).

Politicians close to Putin did not hide their joyful reaction to personnel changes at the helm of the Education Ministry. For example, in the opinion of United Russia MP Vladimir Burmatov, Vasil’eva would certainly find common ground with representatives of the academic community: “The appointment of Vasil’eva – it’s a very good sign, she’s an excellent candidate. I know Vasil’eva and her career. She has worked both in the primary education system and in colleges” (‘Sokhranit’ lučšhee i...). The new head of the ministry was also praised by the first Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Education, Oleg Smolin: “I know her very well. She’s a person who cares about our education system and has a very reasonable stance on the issue of reforming it” (‘Sokhranit’ lučšhee i...). The RAS President Vladimir Fortov on the other hand saw Vasil’eva as a hope for speeding up and improving the reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences: “I believe it [the dismissal of Litvinov – note by D.M.] was needed (...) as there had been a lot of talk about necessary changes” (Fortov: *RAN nastroena...*).

The new minister, most importantly, also became involved in the effort of developing the so-called „uniform textbook” for teaching Russian history. In September 2016 Vasil’eva state that it was necessary to reduce the number of handbooks available for each subject as soon as possible to just three publishing series, each suitable for one course level: foundational, basic and extended⁹.

⁹ Interestingly, teachers themselves have a problem identifying the difference between the foundational and the basic textbooks. It appears, however, that the foundational (*osnovnoj*) textbook is designed for grades 5–9, and the basic (*bazovyy*) one for grades 10–11 (see *Minobrnauki so-kratit količestvo...*).

One Textbook, one Vision of the Past¹⁰

The idea to reform the Russian education system was born in February 2013, when at a meeting of the Council for International Relations Vladimir Putin spoke out critically about how history was being taught in Russian schools and called for unification of the national history curriculum and textbooks. The new textbook “would be written in beautiful Russian (...) and be free of internal contradictions and ambiguous interpretations. This should be a mandatory requirement for all teaching materials” (*Zasedanie Soweta po meźnacional'nym odnoszeniam...*). Putin’s speech started a debate over the idea of developing a single „correct” perspective on the history of Russia and provided an impetus for creation of two documents intended to serve as basis for the new set of textbooks: *The historical and cultural standards* (hereinafter: *Standards*) (*Istoriko-kul'turnyj standard*) and the *Concept of a new educational-methodological complex for teaching national history* (hereinafter: *Concept*) (*Koncepcia nowego ucebno-metodiceskogo...*).

In line with Putin’s recommendation, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) became the entities responsible for creation of the above mentioned documents. In their development, they were cooperating with the RHS and the Russian Military History Society [hereinafter: RMHS]. These institutions jointly formed the Working Group for the Development of the Textbook and Methodological Concept for Teaching of National History (hereinafter: Working Group), which was to be overseen by the RF State Duma Chairman and the RHS Chairman, Sergey Naryshkin (head of the Working Group), the Minister of Education and Science, Dmitri Livanov, and the RF Minister of Culture and the Chairman of the Russian Military History Society, Vladimir Medinsky. The Director of the Institute of World History at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Alexandr Chubarian, became the scientific head of the project (scientific head of the Working Group). Historians, teachers, social organizations and individuals participated in development of the *Concept* – as the creators opted for broad public consultations, the total in the end exceeded 1,000 people (*Koncepcia nowego ucebno-metodiceskogo...*). The draft of the *Concept* was approved in October of 2013, leading to the launch of work on the so-called “uniform textbook”.

According to the initial guidelines adopted, the planned textbook should promote patriotism, civic engagement and tolerance towards other nationalities,

¹⁰ For more about the *Concept of a new educational-methodological complex for teaching national history* see Hordecki (2014), Moskwa (2014), Portnov (2013).

emphasize the nation's unity in fight against a common danger, foster among students a sense of pride in their state and nation (*Koncepcia nowego ucebno-metodičeskogo...*) (especially in the achievements of combatants of the 1812 war and the Great Patriotic War) and act as a “navigator”¹¹ (i.e. encourage students to think independently and draw conclusions) (*Koncepcia nowego ucebno-metodičeskogo...*). It also should include information about incorporation of two new territories – Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – into Russia. On 20 March 2014, at a joint meeting of the Russian Historical Society and the Council for Culture under the Chairman of the State Duma, Naryshkin noted that the agreement to incorporate two new regions, Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, into Russia had been signed on 18 March in Moscow. Following the declaration, those present at the meeting voted to include this very recent event in the *Concept* (Rossijskoje Istoričeskoe Obščestvo. *Koncepcia...*). In June, Putin instructed the RF Government and the Russian Historical Society to expand the *Concept* document to include information about the role played by Crimea and Sevastopol¹² in the history of the Russian Empire, the USSR and contemporary Russia. Putin's decision was a direct result of his meeting with Viktor Oganisyan, a representative of the All-Russian National Front in April of 2014. During the meeting, Oganisyan asked Putin to include the fact of the recent incorporation of Crimea and Sevastopol into Russia, as well as discussion of their place in the national history – including the role of the Hero City of Sevastopol in the Great Patriotic War – in the new coursebook (*Putin potrebowal dopolnit'...*).

During the implementation of the project, however, a decision was made to replace the idea of a „single, uniform textbook” with just a few approved publishing series of history textbooks for different grades. “There will probably be no unified history textbook. There will be only one historical and cultural standard in force, on the basis of which history textbooks will be developed. That doesn't mean there will be one handbook” (*V Rossii ne budet...*) – emphasized the then – Minister of Education Livanov in August of 2014 in “Izvestia”. In April 2015, Chubarian announced that three series of textbooks by different publishers had been selected for inclusion on the federal approved list as a result of evaluation by the Russian Historical Society: specifically, those were the coursebooks by publishers *Prosvieščenie* (grades 6–10), *Drofa* (grades 6–10) and *Ruskoje slovo* (grades 6–9). As the scien-

¹¹ The term “navigator” or “guidepost” (orig. *navigator*) in reference to the textbook is found in both *The historical and cultural standards* and the *Concept of a new educational-methodological complex for teaching national history*.

¹² Russian media also reported that information about the 2014 Winter Olympic Games taking place in Sochi was included in the *Concept* (see *Koncepcia odna, učebnikov...*).

tific head of the Working Group pointed out: “The textbooks we have selected do differ, they are not a monolith, but conceptually they all contain a certain leading thought, i.e. a vision to help navigate the content, and this is very important. They reflect a balanced point of view that encompasses all the figures of national history, opposition in different time periods, the dissident movement, contentious moments, and include discussion about the people... There is something akin to a storyline, there are also fragments of literary works” (*Učebniki po istorii...*). Chubarian also noted that the textbooks which had successfully passed the evaluation would be delivered to schools on 1 September 2015 (*Učebniki po istorii...*).

As a result of the reform the list of textbooks approved for use by the Ministry was reduced about 2.5-fold (list from the schoolyear 2015/2016). The coursebooks that had been used before found in school libraries were removed as they were considered ineffective and unpatriotic (interestingly, some older maths textbooks were deemed unpatriotic as well). The Ministry of Education also decided that the lists of textbooks approved for use will now be created once every 5 years (previously they were renewed every year) (“*Knižnyj skandal s...*”). Thus, a new list will be formulated in the schoolyear 2017/2018 – and in the five years following, no changes to the list will be allowed. On a side note, school textbooks publishers can be seriously affected by potential launch of a new series of handbooks (lower profits from sales).

Moreover, the idea of the so-called “uniform textbook” is not the first attempt at harmonizing the curriculum taught in Russian schools. In Soviet times, a similar model was in place – all textbooks intended for school use had to be green-lighted at the Communist party level and their content had to be consistent with the Soviet ideology.

Institutions, experts, teachers and representatives of organizations involved in the work on the *Concept* agreed that its adoption constituted a historic success for the Russian science and education circles. However, its implementation has met with a negative response¹³ on the part of some publishers as well as parents and teachers (*Utveršden prikaz o...*). The initiative was also criticized by members of the International Historical, Educational, Human Rights And Charitable Society “Memorial”, independent scientists and some media¹⁴.

¹³ Criticism of uniformization of the history curriculum emerged even before 2013 in commentaries to a high-profile debate around the textbook by A. V. Filipov titled: *The most recent history of Russia 1945–2006*. The textbook, written in 2007, caused a lot of controversy due to its contents being perfectly in line with the government ideology (e.g. the so-called “sovereign democracy”) (see Filipov, 2007; Vázemskij, 2013).

¹⁴ President of the Science and Research Institute for History, Economics and Law Studies,

Summary

In Russia, the decisions about school handbook contents are not made by their authors, but a group of politicians and officials who draw up the school curriculum. The selection of historical material to be used is made at the level of the ministry and its affiliates (Ronikier, 2002) – which explains why it is so important for the authorities to fill ministerial positions with people who are loyal to them and faithfully follow the pre-set policy lines. In fact, the appointment of Olga Vasil'eva as the head of the Education Ministry, the implementation of the *Concept* and development of the new shortlist of pre-approved textbooks are just a drop in the ocean of Kremlin's controversial actions pointing to the state tightening control over the Russian historical policy. One should mention here other moves going hand in hand with these efforts, such as the adoption – in 2014 – by the State Duma of a law introducing criminal liability for rehabilitation of Nazism and criticism of actions taken by the USSR during World War II¹⁵, a 2013 law according to which Volgograd could use its old name Stalingrad during the period devoted to commemorating its role in the Great Patriotic War (*Volgograd w pamâtnye...*)¹⁶, or a 2012 law on “foreign agents” (Federal'nyj zakon ot 20.07.2012 N 121-F3)¹⁷. These initiatives clearly show that the state wants to be in charge of shaping and preserving memory about the past. The authorities can achieve it, inter alia, through oversight of the education system and the mass media, control over all commemorative activities, like opening (and closing) museums dedicated to certain events or ideas, establishment of a calendar of public holidays or naming of streets, plazas and squares (Szacka, 2006).

It is something completely natural that textbooks are designed to build historical awareness mainly of “clear-cut” events and figures of the past. But in Russia, the battle to introduce a “uniform textbook” has clear overtones of trying to ensure that the coursebooks show all events in an unambiguously positive light, in a way that portrays even defeat as a success and offers justification for even the worst of the historical figures. Importantly, this approach means that “the only

Igor Turitsyn, stated in “Izvestia” that the *Concept* contains a lot of errors, has no logic, isn't written according to any cohesive outline and the notions it contains replicate the terms used in Soviet textbooks. In his opinion, the *Concept* can be called “(...) remarks on the margins of a Soviet textbook” or a “collection of scatter-brained thoughts” (see Firsov).

¹⁵ These so-called “historical lies” are punishable by up to three years imprisonment (see *Ugolovnyj kodeks*).

¹⁶ The State Duma has rescinded the Law in 2015.

¹⁷ According to its provisions, all non-governmental organizations financed from foreign funds have to be referred to as “foreign agents”.

true history” (i.e. the history of Russia) is not placed in any a broader context. It is a serious mistake to cut down the hours spent on teaching world history and expand the time spent on national history instead – which is nowadays the norm in the country ruled by Putin. An education system built in this way leads to many controversies, from restricting the freedom of teachers in doing their job (a very small number of textbooks to choose from), to lists of federally approved textbooks being created every 5 years and virtually impossible to change in the interim. All this results in formation of a system where the state exercises increasing control over schooling, and consequently also the way of thinking and interpreting reality by the successive generations of Russian citizens.

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