

Shaping the past and comprehending the present: The World of Russian émigré textbooks in the 1920s–1930s¹

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Russian emigration after the 1917 revolution gave birth to a special culture of memory and a specific historical consciousness. These processes were greatly influenced by the dramatic events of the recent past (the First World War, the Revolution of 1917, the Civil War and the Exodus), which took on the character of historical trauma. The article focuses on how Russian émigré scholars tried to interpret complex issues of the Russian past and present in history textbooks. In this article, the textbooks by three historians (E. F. Shmurlo, L. M. Sukhotin and R. Yu. Wipper) are analyzed. The author of the article attempts to understand how these scholars assessed the Russian imperial past, including expansion, and how they explained the reasons for the Revolution and the collapse of statehood in 1917.

Key words: *Russian émigré textbooks; historical trauma; historiography*

Introduction

Quite a lot is previously known about the Russian emigration that emerged as a result of revolutionary events of 1917 and the merciless Civil War. The subject became firmly ingrained in scientific research and it widely reflected in culture and art. We can say that emigration has turned into a cultural myth of sorts. A centenary of “Russian Exodus”, which was celebrated in 2020, once again confirmed its status. A keen interest in the historical experience of the Russian emigration is associated, among other things, with attempts to understand its reaction to historical ordeals and radical transformations, to analyze critically its experience of constructing the “places of memory” and going through historical traumas. In this regard, the history of Russian pedagogy abroad provides extensive material.

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Foundation and development of the Russian school abroad, which would made it possible to continue and complete education for children and young people, had become one of the pressing issues for emigrants. This idea was inevitably faced with serious obstacles. Russian refugees were scattered all across the globe, and the development of communication level at that time could not provide an opportunity for global communications and exchange of information. The dire financial state of emigrants made it difficult to organize educational process. Among other difficulties were lack or even total absence of necessary textbooks and teaching aids. The deficit of textbooks created great difficulties and at the same time imposed a special responsibility on the teacher, demanding a high level of pedagogical skills.

A distinguished credibility among the émigré community was the *Textbook of Russian History for Secondary School* by academician Sergey Fedorovich Platonov, a Great Russian historian, which was published back in 1909, and then republished repeatedly. Demand for it was so high so in the mid-1920s the Prague publishing house *Plamya* issued its next edition.² The Second Pedagogical Convention held in Prague in 1925 recommended that teachers use pre-revolutionary textbooks and teaching aids in teaching Russian history: *Book on Russian history for primary schools* by K. O. Weichelt, M. N. Kovalensky, V. A. Petrushevsky, V. Y. Ulanov, *A Brief Russian History* by V. G. Lafin, *Textbook on Russian History* and a course of lectures by S. F. Platonov, a textbook on Russian history for the fifth and sixth grades by M. M. Bogoslovsky, *A Brief Russian History* by M. A. Davydkin, I. I. Seleznev, *Textbook on Russian History* by I. M. Kataev, *Textbook on Russian history: a systematic course* by I. V. Skvortsov.³ Despite of distinctiveness of these books, they no longer met requirements of the time and new historical realities. It was necessary to write new textbooks that would fill these gaps and at the same time meet the ideological guidelines of the emigration: its messianic attitudes and belief in the inevitable and fast restoration of Russia. Russian scientists who found themselves in a foreign land took the matter in their hands. As modern researchers have noted, “the world of Russian emigration textbooks was not limited to pre-revolutionary copies”.⁴

² Platonov, S. F. (1924). *Učebnik ruskoj istorii dlja srednej školy: kurs sistematičeskij*. Praga: Plamja, č. 1 (238 pp.); Eadem (1925). *Učebnik ruskoj istorii dlja srednej školy: kurs sistematičeskij*. Praga: Plamja, č. 2 (238 pp.).

³ Leeds Russian Archive, The Zengor Archive, Ms 1500, box 117 (179): Chekhoslovakiia. Pedagogičeskoe Biuro. Biulleten' i pečat. materialy. Komplekt Vestn. Ped. biuro (nepolnyi), 1927–1931, 1925–1926, folder 5/2/14.

⁴ Barannikova, N. B. – Bezrogov, V. G. (2017). *Praktika učebnogo knigoizdanija v russkom zarubežje: Berlinskij variant. Istoriko-pedagogičeskij žurnal*, no. 2, p. 160.

Emigrant history textbooks and teaching aids provide an ample amount of research material. For instance, they give a notion on the connections between ideology, science, politics, for they clearly express collective historical ideas, have their own heroes and myths, demonstrate the level of scientific development of their time, reflect both stable ideological constructions and acute memorial disputes, and contain their own areas of silence and oblivion. However, until now they have hardly come to the attention of either Russian or foreign specialists. Certainly, there are analytical assessments of educational narratives by individual authors or works on specific groups of textbooks (in this sense, textbooks for primary schools can be described as “fortunate”),⁵ but a generalizing picture has not yet been presented.

In this article, we will try to understand how history textbooks written by Russian emigrants reflected the events of the recent past, how the notion of Russia and its history was transformed under the influence of the crucial events of the first quarter of the 20th century. We will attempt to recognize the connection between the methods of shaping the past and comprehending the present, including understanding of historical crises. In this paper, we will review the legacy of three expatriate authors. Their textbooks became widespread in different parts of the Russian diaspora, reflecting various attempts to find answers to difficult historical questions.

Yevgeny Frantsevich Shmurlo and his textbooks

In 1922, the textbook *History of Russia. 862–1917*⁶ appeared on the shelves of European bookstores. The author was Yevgeny Frantsevich Shmurlo (1853–1934), a prominent scientist, corresponding member of The Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences. Before the revolution, he gained fame as a prominent specialist in the study of the era of Peter the Great, as well as Russian-Italian relations, and he was among the discoverers of the Vatican archives for the world science. Shmurlo finished his textbook in March 1922 in Rome, where he lived since 1903, holding the post of a scientific correspondent of the Academy of Sciences. Behind him were years of professorship in Saint Petersburg and Dorpat/Yurjev, fruitful work in European archives, publications of notable scientific works and collections

⁵ Ibid., pp. 159–180; Sedova, E. E. – Terenja, Ju. Ju. (2013). Učebniki dlja načal'nyh klassov kak sredstvo nacional'nogo vospitanija v ruskom zarubežje “pervoj volny”, In Barannikova, N. B., Bezrogov, V. G. (eds.), *Učebniki detstva. Iz istorii škol'noj knigi VII–XXI vekov*. Moskva: RGGU, pp. 116–141

⁶ Šmurlo, E. F. (1922). *Istorija Rossii. 862–1917*. Munchen: Grad Kitež (565 pp.).

of documents, and, in addition, a revolution that he did not accept, and which forced him to stay forever in a foreign land. Shmurlo's textbook was the first to get widespread use among the émigré community. Although in 1920 in New York, a textbook *Discussions on Russian History* by V. A. Yakhontov was published, but it did not become widely known, and in terms of volume, the book was four times smaller than Shmurlo's textbook.

Now, let us pay attention to the release date of Shmurlo's book – it is 1922. Not that long ago Russia experienced the Civil War, the USSR had not yet been officially formed, the memories of the exodus lived too vividly in the memory of the Russian refugees, but at the same time, they all still shared a belief in an upcoming return back. In the early 1920s, staying in a foreign country seemed only a temporary ordeal. Nevertheless, the older generation of exiles was concerned about the education of the younger generation. Many Russian children studied in foreign schools, therefore, their curricula did not provide for the systematic study of Russian history. The older generation of emigrants was worried about possible denationalization. National history became for them the most important standing point, and many reduced its teaching to the task of preserving national and cultural identity abroad. Researchers have long noted the importance of the communicative aspect of historical memories, since through telling the history, subjects realize and construct their own identity⁷. Construction of specific historical narratives fits into the intellectual culture of almost every diaspora and émigré community.⁸

Soon after the publication of *History of Russia* in Munich, the Prague publishing house *Plamya* published *Introduction to Russian History* (1924). It was not a serial publication of the previous work, for it set different tasks, a different range of issues and had a new target audience. In the preface, the author specified that his book came out of university lectures, and that in the book he strove to give general ideas on the peculiarities of the Russian historical process without presenting well-known facts and events. However, this book was not the last one. Shmurlo worked hard on a generalizing course of Russian history until the end of the 1920s, which became a kind of conclusion of all his scientific activities. His three volumes (the second

⁷ Rūsen, J. (2000). Ideal'nyj učebnik. Razmyšlenija o putevoditele i posrednike istoričeskogo obučenija, in: Bakonis, E. (ed.), *Učebnik: desjat' raznych mnenij*. Vil'nyus: Institut pedagogiki Litovskoj respubliki, p. 35.

⁸ Cf. e.g.: Ochs, K. (2006). International Migration and its impact on education: a look at Germany and the USA. *Research in Comparative and international education*, no. 4, pp. 381–392; Glynn, I., Olaf Kleist, J. et al. (2012). *History, Memory and Migration. Perceptions of the Past and the Politics of Incorporation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (251 pp.); Myers, K. (2015). *Struggles for a Past: Irish and Afro-Caribbean Histories in England, 1951–2000*. Manchester: Manchester University Press (275 pp.).

volume consisted of two parts) were published in Prague during 1931–1935 with a miserable print run of 100 copies. If *History of Russia* was aimed at school-age readers, then *Introduction to Russian History* and *Course of Russian History* were aimed at students.

When reading all three of his works, the author's commitment to one of the general lines of Russian historiography of the 19th century catches the attention – increased focus on the historical role of the state, which clearly reflected the spirit of the people who created it. Shmurlo believes that the Russians are obviously such people⁹. Let us pay attention to the seemingly paradoxical fact – the historian was of Polish-Lithuanian origin. However, it should not be surprising in the context of the historical experience of Russian imperial integration and specific understanding of ethnicity. A considerable number of representatives of non-Russian nationalities were zealously involved in the processes of state-political, economic and cultural development of the empire, while creating a very special identity. Another quality of Shmurlo's narratives is that they were greatly influenced by the postulates of geographical determinism. Following V. O. Klyuchevsky, he considered colonization to be one of the main elements of Russian history. It becomes the main metaphor of the textbook. Moreover, the colonization movement is viewed as a desire to find optimal natural boundaries and to protect oneself from hostile neighbors.¹⁰ Therefore, the expansion to the East is seen as historically predetermined, it is explained by the necessity to defend oneself against the constant onslaught of “*semi-barbarian tribes and steppe nomads*”: “... constant conflicts between these Asians inevitably drew us into their affairs. A cultural nation cannot show indifference to the squabbles and feuds of neighboring half-savage folks, since these conflicts will always respond unfavorably on development of such nation. Whether through patronage or conquest, these forces always have to be restrained, enemy land must be occupied or a hedge must be erected in order to shield and ensure the daily life of peaceful people from possible violations”.¹¹ It is curious that practically all of the wars waged by Russia were assessed as imposed, and the policy of the Western states towards it as treacherous and hypocritical.

In his textbooks, Shmurlo without doubt emphasized the positive developments that were brought by Russian colonization: “*Russian Drang nach Osten was a victory of European civilization over the Asian East*”.¹² He has a chresthomatic views on the historical merit of Russia, which shielded Europe from the Asian onslaught.

⁹ Šmurlo, E. F. (1924). *Vvedenie v rusckuju istoriju*. Praga: Plamja, p. 70.

¹⁰ Šmurlo, E. F. (2000). *Kurs rusckoj istorii. Tom 1: Vozniknovenie i obrazovanie rusckogo gosudarstva*. Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteja, p. 45.

¹¹ Šmurlo, E. F. (1924). *Vvedenie v rusckuju istoriju*, pp. 131–132.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

In addition, Russia brought citizenship to the reattached peoples, introduced them to enlightenment and Christian culture. The civilizing mission in Asia becomes, in the eyes of the historian, one of the main historical objectives. Russia must give the East in a peaceful and non-violent way the features of a European-Christian civilization. Shmurlo constantly emphasizes in his text the European identity of Russia. In his opinion, Europe is a symbol of culture, development and progress, and the East embodies stagnation and barbarism.¹³ Reflections on Russian history and especially on the imperial period Shmurlo built around the idea of confrontation between West and East. In this confrontation, Russia was assigned a messianic role as a “*frontline fighter for Europe against Asia*”.¹⁴ Historian formed this concept long before the revolution and since then had become an integral part of his worldview.¹⁵

Shmurlo’s ideological constructs logically correlated with the intellectual quests of Russian pre-revolutionary historiography. The golden age of national history and construction of models of the past began back in the 19th century. According to N. E. Koposov, such concepts of history were transmitted into the mass consciousness primarily through the school system and mass literature. Textbooks became one of the genres of the “national novel”, a kind of “autobiography of the nation”.¹⁶ Pre-revolutionary Russian authors substantiated the idea of the state’s special role, which acted as the “major agent of civilization”.¹⁷ Increased attention to the role of the state migrated to the émigré textbooks, but their authors faced the most difficult task – to explain the recent rapid collapse of Russian statehood and relate it to all the country’s previous experience. Shmurlo gave rather vague answers to this matter. Therefore, it is essential to compare his textbooks with the works of other émigré authors.

Textbooks by Lev Mikhailovich Sukhotin

Textbooks by Lev Mikhailovich Sukhotin (1879–1948) appeared in the educational space of Russia Abroad in the mid-1920s. He was of Oryol-Tula noble family, known for its relations with I. S. Turgenyev. Another family line connected him with the literary community: his father’s, Mikhail Sergeevich Sukhotin, second marriage

¹³ Ibid., pp. 110, 146–147; Šmurlo, E. F. (1922). *Istorija Rossii. 862–1917*, p. VI.

¹⁴ Šmurlo, E. F. (1924). *Vvedenie v russkiju istoriju*, p. 139.

¹⁵ Suvorov, V. V. (2017). *Formirovanie položitelnogo obraza Vostoka v rossijskojm obrazovannom obščestvě vo vtoroj polovine XIX – načale XX veka*. Saratov: Izdatel’stvo SGMU, p. 100.

¹⁶ Radkau, W. (2000). Podgotovka učebnika v Germanii, In Bakonis, E. (ed.), *Učebnik: desjat’ raznych mnenij*. Vil’nyus: Institut pedagogiki Litovskoj respublikai, p. 108.

¹⁷ Koposov, N. E. (2011) *Pamjat’ strogogo režima: istorija i politika v Rossii*. Moskva: NLO, p. 33.

was to Tatyana Lvovna Tolstaya, the daughter of the great writer. L. M. Sukhotin studied at the Faculty of History and Philology of Moscow University from 1898 to 1903. After graduation, he preferred to engage in social activities. However, sudden health problems in 1907–1908 forced Sukhotin to leave his job in the local government of the Tula province. He settled in Moscow, entered the service in the Main Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and returned to science.¹⁸ He was widely known for his scientific works on Russian history in the 16th – 17th centuries and above all for publication of valuable sources.

The revolution split the noble family. L. M. Sukhotin joined the White movement, and after its defeat, on March 1, 1920, he emigrated with his family.¹⁹ At the same time, his younger brother, Aleksey (1888–1942) remained in Soviet Russia and became one of the leading specialists in the field of Slavic, Indo-Iranian and Turkic linguistics. L. M. Sukhotin ended up in the Balkans and, after his wanderings as refugee, he arrived in Belgrade on April 22, 1920. There, he turned to school teaching and from 1931 to 1941, he occupied a position of a headmaster of Russian-Serbian women's gymnasium. Sukhotin was known as a distinguished popularizer of the Russian language in Serbian community.²⁰ It is significant that after the occupation of Yugoslavia by the Germans in the spring of 1941, Sukhotin was dismissed from his post as headmaster of the gymnasium, and his textbook on Russian history was "triumphantly burned" by the Germanophile emigrants.²¹ In 1947, he moved to his son in Belgium, where he died.

Sukhotin was the only author who developed the entire line of school textbooks, including both the history of Russia²² and the history of foreign countries.²³ Furthermore, unlike Shmurlo's works, his textbooks passed official approval – they were approved by the Council at the State Commission of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes for Russian Refugees as teaching aids for Russian

¹⁸ Gosudarstvennyj archiv Rossijskoj Federacii, f. 5881, op. 1, d. 53, pp. 2–3.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁰ Končarevič, K. (2012). Vklad ruskoj diaspory v praktiki sostavlenija učebnikov po ruskomu jazyku dlja serbskoj auditoria. In *Ruska dijaspora i izučavanje ruskoj jezika i ruske kulture u inoslovenskom i inostranom okruženju* (Beograd, 1–2 jun. 2011): Referati. Beograd: Slavističko društvo Srbije, p. 257, 263–264.

²¹ Archiv Rossijskoj Akademii nauk, f. 624, op. 4, d. 219, p. 1 ob.

²² Suchotin, L. M. (1926). *Učebnik ruskoj istorii. Mladšij kurs. Č. 1.* Novi Sad: Russkaja tipografija Filonova (110 pp.); Eadem (1927). *Učebnik ruskoj istorii. Mladšij kurs. Č. 2.* Novi Sad: Russkaja tipografija Filonova (143 pp.).

²³ Suchotin, L. M. (1925). *Istorija Drevnego mira: učebnoe rukovodstvo dlja srednej školy.* Belgrad (191 pp.); Eadem (1929). *Istorija Srednich vekov: učebnoe rukovodstvo dlja srednej školy.* Belgrad (244 pp.); Eadem (1931). *Istorija Novogo vremeni: učebnoe rukovodstvo dlja srednej školy.* Belgrad (208 pp.).

secondary schools. Sukhotin's textbook on Russian history, published in two parts in 1926–1927, was oriented towards the elementary course and was intended for gymnasium students of III–IV grades. The first part of the book covered the period from the history of the Eastern Slavs in ancient time to the Time of Troubles, the second part from the first Romanovs to the revolution of 1917. The author preferred to give account to events as they happened rather than imposing his opinion. He was convinced that history retold this way is easier for a schoolchild to perceive and understand at the age of 12–13. The second part was focused on children of 13–15 years old and therefore there was a gradual complication of the material, introduction of theory and assessments.

Like Shmurlo, the author perceives Russian history as the gradual development of surrounding areas by the Russian people, primarily in the East. At the same time, he clearly traced the empire's genealogy to Peter the Great, under whom Russia entered the "*family of civilized countries of Europe*".²⁴ Peter the Great was an embodiment of the empire for him not only with his official title, but also with all his power and spirit. When reflecting on the annexation of new territories, especially Asian lands, Sukhotin emphasized the "*low level of civilization*" of the indigenous population. Meanwhile, he is by no means inclined to hush up the facts of numerous national uprisings and their brutal suppression, for example, the uprising of the Bashkirs under Peter the Great or the Cossack unrest. Nevertheless, at the same time, he explained the actions of the government by state necessity. For example, devastation of the Ukrainian city of Baturin by A. D. Menshikov in 1708 acquitted as a response to the betrayal of hetman Ivan Mazepa.²⁵ Sukhotin has positive assessments of the imperial policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia. He did not delve too deeply into the reasons for Russia's expansion in these regions, but only repeated the popular opinion of his contemporaries on the necessity to protect the borders from the raids of warlike hill-people or "*restless Kyrgyz*"²⁶.

Sukhotin by no means idealized the czarist regime. He admitted that there was social inequality in Russia, that often governance was ineffective, enlightenment affected only the upper class, imperial splendor was only a decoration that covered up internal defects. The success of foreign policies and the rise of culture did not contribute to the improvement of the social system. The government did not meet the expectations of society; many representatives of the upper class stopped believing in a possibility of reformation and felt disposition towards revolutionary attitudes. It undermined stability of the empire, especially in connection with aggravated foreign affairs.

²⁴ Suchotin, L. M. (1926). *Učebnik russoj istorii. Mladšij kurs. Č. 1*, p. 61.

²⁵ Suchotin, L. M. (1927). *Učebnik russoj istorii. Mladšij kurs. Č. 2*, p. 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Remarkably, in his works, Sukhotin did not mention anything about labor issue, ideas of Marxism and formation of social democratic circles, as if Bolsheviks appeared out of nowhere. Incidentally, he did not differentiate a radical opposition movement in any way, its representatives were labeled as “revolutionaries”, “terrorists”, “left-wingers”, regardless of the differences and disagreements between them, including on tactical issues. As a result, both political assassinations of the early 20th century and participation in the First Russian Revolution were described as the result of actions of some abstract, impersonal forces. Significantly, Sukhotin did not name any of the revolutionaries of the early 20th century, not even V. I. Lenin, but he mentioned their victims – the Minister of Internal Affairs V. K. Plehve and Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich.

In all fairness, Sukhotin did not describe revolutionaries as bloody fanatics. Sometimes it seems that he paid more attention to external forces rather than internal ones. It is important for him to show that the Western powers looked with distrust at the strengthening of Russia, they tried to prevent it and harm the country, constantly interfered in its internal affairs, and provoked national movements. Treacherousness of the Western powers in Sukhotin’s opinion is demonstrated by constant references to attempts to drag Russia into estranged conflicts. We shall pay attention to the story of the Russian-Japanese war of 1904–1905. It was perceived by the author both as a national catastrophe and as a place of heroic memory. It is no coincidence that he devotes significant amount of attention to it than to the Patriotic War of 1812. The Battle of Tsushima is described in more detail than the Battle of Poltava and Borodino all together. Sukhotin emphasizes the role of Germany in organizing the Revolution of 1917 and its direct participation in the delivery of prominent revolutionary leaders from emigration to Russia.

In conclusion, in Sukhotin’s educational narratives like in Shmurlo’s, a big attention is paid to imperial history. Expansion of territories, colonization, civilizing mission become the main metaphors of the textbook. However, motive for the struggle against the Asian is less pronounced in Sukhotin’s works than in his older colleague’s, but he also sees an idea of Russia’s civilizing mission in the East as more important. Sukhotin understands the empire’s crisis more deeply than Shmurlo. While recognizing the numerous miscalculations of the imperial government, he, nevertheless, is too carried away by the external factor, looking for Russia’s enemies outside its borders.

Textbooks by Robert Yuryevich Wipper

In this part we will see how Robert Yuryevich Wipper (1859–1954), one of the most talented scientists of his time, whose destiny took many bizarre turns in history, related to the subject of Russian history and understanding of the empire’s crisis.

A student of V. I. Guerrier and V. O. Klyuchevski, in 1894 he was at once awarded a doctorate for his dissertation “Church and State in Geneva in the 16th century in the era of Calvinism”. Afterwards, he taught in Odessa and Moscow. Wipper did not accept the revolution and in 1924 he left for Riga, where until 1941 he was a professor at the University of Latvia. After the accession of the Baltic to the USSR in 1940, he received an invitation to return to Moscow. In 1943, he was ceremonially elected the Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. There was a rumor that I.V. Stalin appreciated his book on Ivan the Terrible, written back in 1922, which gave a positive assessment of the first Russian czar.²⁷ Long before the revolution, Wipper prepared a series of textbooks, which then were reprinted many times.²⁸ He was fascinated by the theory and practice of teaching the history, having published many articles on this topic before the revolution in the magazines like *Historical Review*, *Russian School* and *Educational Herald*. During the years of emigration, the professor was actively involved in the formation of the Russian school in Latvia. In 1919, the ethnic minorities of this Baltic republic, which included the Russians, received autonomy in organizing school affairs and the right to be taught in their native language. Special national departments were created under the Ministry of Education. Thereby, Russian schools were included in the state educational system and received support from the authorities.²⁹ Specially for the students of these schools, in 1925–1928 Whipper wrote a series of three history textbooks, each of which chronologically covered a particular period – Ancient times, Middle Ages, New History.³⁰

In his textbooks, the professor abandoned the linear interpretation of history. For him, it seemed beyond doubt that in the history of different nations and states there are periods of emergence, development, decline, downfall, and that similar phenomena tend to repeat in different eras. For example, he clearly noticed the modern echoes of civil wars in ancient Rome, tried to find in ancient history examples of the escalation of external military conflicts into inner civil discords. As early as 1923, Wipper published a collection of essays called *The Cycle of History*,

²⁷ Burdej, G. D. (1991). *Istoriik i vojna, 1941–1945*. Saratov: Izdatel'stvo SGU, pp. 46, 187, 189.

²⁸ Wipper, R. Ju. (1900). *Učebnik Drevnej istorii*. Moskva; Eadem (1903). *Učebnik istorii Srednich vekov*. Moskva; Eadem (1911). *Kratkij učebnik istorii Srednich vekov*. Moskva; Eadem (1912). *Kratkij učebnik Novoj istorii*. Moskva; Eadem (1914). *Drevnyaja Evropa i Vostok: učebnik dlja mladšich klassov gimnazij*. Moskva.

²⁹ Fejgmane, T. (2000). *Russkie v dovoennoj Latvii: na puti k integracii*. Riga, pp. 245–246.

³⁰ Wipper, R. Ju. (1925). *Učebnik istorii: Drevnost'*. Riga: Walters i Rapa (237 pp.); Eadem (1925). *Učebnik istorii: Srednie veka*. Riga: Walters i Rapa (290 pp.); Eadem (1928). *Učebnik istorii: Novoe vremja*. Riga (474 pp.).

in which he tried to explain his views³¹. These essays were written between 1917 and 1920 and reflected the author's desire to understand the events he went through: "I involuntarily wanted to distract myself from the immediate and direct experience, due to which the present seems to be the result of recent catastrophes, war and civil discord. On the contrary, in the very catastrophes I wanted to see the natural consequences of the fatal realities inherent in the previous culture, which we used to call the culture of the 19th century".³² He was frightened by the onslaught of unrestrained and uncontrollable technical progress, which in practice turned into improvement of destructive weapons; pressuring intolerance between different peoples, hypocrisy of the ruling classes, social exclusion, cruelty and belligerency, moral decline, ideological contradictions and, as a consequence of all this, the decline of culture. Wipper did not believe that the reason of this crisis was the First World War. In his opinion, it was only "an indicator and result of the collapse of the entire system of European life".³³ If we conclude the author's position to one thesis, then Wipper was a critic of "militant imperialism", the integral parts of which in his opinion were colonial conquests and industrialization.

Wipper's idea of the historical process unity was reflected in his understanding of the subject of Russian history. Perhaps, the main feature of his Latvian textbooks was that he included Russian history in the context of the world history. This approach was fundamentally new and not typical for pre-revolutionary educational narratives. Wipper, being a talented historian and thoughtful observer, could not help but realize the global nature of the upheavals that took place in his time, the very spirit of the era, which so clearly demonstrated the crisis of civilization for him. He tried to understand the Russia's place in these processes. Wipper's textbooks reflected the views of a person who survived the horrors of the First World War, revolution, exile and loss of faith in the irreversible progress of mankind. In his textbook on New History published in 1908 he wrote that one of the main features of modern times that distinguishes it from all previous eras is "rapid, unstoppable movement forward in all aspects of working life and especially the growing triumph of knowledge and intelligence".³⁴ Twenty years later, he was not so optimistic. In his textbook written during the emigration, he lavishly describes the merciless nature of the war, which plunged "cultural Europe" into the depths of barbarism: "Back in 1870, Germany announced that it was fighting

³¹ Wipper, R. Ju. (1923). *Krugovorot istorii*. Moskva – Berlin: Vozroždenie (202 pp.).

³² Ibid., pp. 5–6.

³³ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁴ Wipper R. Ju. (1908). *Učebnik Novoj istorii. 3-je izdanie*. Moskva: Tipografija tovarišestva I. N. Kušnerev i K°, p. 2.

only the French army, not the people. In the recent war, the opponents mercilessly took all provisions from the population of the occupied territories, and the population of these regions was reduced to the position of convict slaves, who performed the most difficult job of building fortifications for the victors. Vast expanses of the land were completely desolate, the best workers in all professions were killed or mutilated. The greatest possible harm was inflicted on the civilians: German submarines sank transatlantic steamers with thousands of civilian passengers on board, aeronauts dropped bombs over London and Paris”.³⁵ However, many European intellectuals shared Wipper’s apocalyptic attitude. While writing of the horrors of a war that clearly made him disillusioned with progress, Whipper was nevertheless extremely cautious in making predictions for the future of Europe and the world. It is difficult to say whether this silence was caused by a special understanding of history as a science of the past. Apparently, he cut off his narration in the textbook by stating the facts that the Versailles Conference was convened and the League of Nations was formed, which was supposed to forestall such conflicts in future. It is unlikely that in the late 1920s he could guess how soon and how rapidly the situation in the world would change, and how unexpectedly his own life would turn out.

In order to understand the causes of the crisis, one had to look closely into the past and try to find answers there. Such speculations resulted in Wipper’s rather restrained, if not critical, perception of the Russian imperial project. Contrary to many of his predecessors, he expressed a decidedly positive attitude towards Ivan III and Ivan IV, supported the importance of their political, economic and military deeds, and at the same time criticized the Romanovs, and Peter the Great in particular. Creation of the Russian Empire was perceived by him, first of all, as a return to the European family of nations, as an opportunity to make up for lost time in science, culture, and arts during compulsory fight against nomadic Asia. However, at the same time, the Russian rulers embarked on the dangerous path of imperialist conquests and interference in international affairs, sometimes in spite of national interests.

Wipper faced a difficult task of how to explain to young readers the reasons for the death of the Russian Empire, and how to make sure that his explanation would not turn them away from their own past. Indeed, reflections on history often aroused negative perceptions in the children of immigrants. Speaking about the crisis, Wipper did not blame outside forces or revolutionaries with their machinations, but the inability of state power and the bureaucracy generated by it to rule a huge country effectively in a dynamically changing world. For these

³⁵ Wipper, R. Ju. (1928). *Učebnik istorii: Novoe vremja*, p. 451.

reasons, the Russian Empire at the turn of the XIX–XX centuries is described in his textbook as a country whose external power did not correspond to its inner state. Rapid development of capitalism and the breakdown of the traditional way of life set tasks that the old bureaucracy was unable to cope with. It followed from the textbook that the growth of revolutionary attitudes at the turn of the century was by no means an accident, but quite natural process. In general, Wipper is characterized by a largely sympathetic attitude towards Russian revolutionaries and an extraordinarily detailed description of political events in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century compared to other textbooks. He focused on the facts of brutal suppression by the authorities of any dissenting views. For this purpose, for example, he inserted into the textbook a story on how suppressors of the December armed uprising in Moscow in 1905 burned down the workers' quarters of the Presnya district and hanged the station employees on the Kazan railway, who they suspected to be sympathetic for the rebels.³⁶ To be fair, we must mention that he criticized the opposition as well, because of the discord in ranks of whose the First Russian Revolution did not fulfill its goals. While Shmurlo and Sukhotin briefly, in a nutshell outlined this period, Wipper presented the readers with a detailed picture filled with facts.

Difficult issues

The positivist approach, which prevailed in teaching of history, instilled in students a monolithic concept of the past, and the process of cognition itself was reduced to memorizing the facts available in the textbook. Emigrant textbooks did not completely break with this tradition. However, the emigrant school and education system developed under special conditions. Intellectual culture of the Russian emigration was formed in the borderland between different traditions and under the influence of crucial historical events.

Authors of almost all textbooks, without exception, faced difficulties in comprehending the modern times they were living in, and therefore tried to bypass the “difficult issues”. For example, Sukhotin made it plain that the most briefly in his textbook he mentioned the events of the last twenty years, since this period “has not yet become part of history and the objective assessment of this period is quit difficult to present”³⁷ Shmurlo was also careful in his assessments when reflecting on the causes of the revolution. On the pages of his textbook published in 1922, he wrote that only in future it would be possible to assess objectively the

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 437–438.

³⁷ Suchotin, L. M. (1927). *Učebnik russkoj istorii. Mladšij kurs. Č. 2*, p. 4.

causes of the events they were experiencing at that time. However, he nevertheless mentioned that the autocracy made a fatal mistake: it created a huge empire, but at the same time, it did nothing to contribute to the transformation of its subjects into citizens.³⁸

The textbooks contained a largely idealized image of the Russian past. However, this idealization did not mean reconciliation with pre-revolutionary political system, the opponents of which were many emigrants. The authors of the textbooks only tried to find ideal objects in the past, special “places of memory” that would brighten up the gloomy émigré everyday life. The imperial period was assessed as a time of missed, unrealized opportunities: constant rushing from reform to reaction, late abolition of serfdom, overlong absence of civil liberties, and belated introduction of parliamentary system of government.³⁹ At the same time, the very historical path of Russia was by no means considered a dead end by Shmurlo, Sukhotin and Wipper, they gave positive assessment to the imperial project, regardless of the views of a particular author. This approach is easy to explain, because even before the revolution, Russian expansionism “*was formed by competing philosophies, each of which represented a specific view of the fate of Russia as an empire*”.⁴⁰

The authors of the emigrant textbooks set themselves a difficult logical problem. In one way or another, they tried to fit the history of Russia into the context of general history, but at the same time, they wanted to emphasize the historical exceptionalism of their country. They denied the expansionist character of the Russian Empire, but welcomed its eastward expansion. They criticized the exploitative aspirations of Europeans, but often did not notice the national contradictions in their own country. Textbooks on Russian history engaged into controversy with the more critical worldview of many ordinary emigrants, especially common among children and young people. However, at the same time, they strove to “heal” young people from negative attitudes towards their own history and its bearers from the loss of Russian identity. It is clear that writing about the events of the recent past was not easy for the authors of textbooks, even from a personal, human point of view. Memories were too painful to bear. They evoked thoughts about the lost homeland and about the tragic events that they had to endure. On the one hand, there was an obvious desire to understand the roots of the historical upheavals that had taken place, and, on the other hand, memories of the recent past traumatized the soul and reopened the unhealed wounds.

³⁸ Šmurlo, E. F. (1922). *Istorija Rossii. 862–1917*, p. 552.

³⁹ Kovalev, M. V. (2014). Imperskaja ideja v učebnyh narrativach ruskoj emigracii 1920–1930-ch godov. *Istorija*, vol. 5, no. 4 (27). URL: <https://history.jes.su/s207987840000732-4-1/>

⁴⁰ Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, D. (2001). Ideologija imperii v Rossii imperskogo perioda. *Ab Imperio*, no. 1–2, p. 215.