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Russian State Archives of Contemporary History: Documents of the Department of Science and Culture of the Central Committee of the CPSU (March 1953 – September 1955) on Control over 'National Histories' of the Peoples of the USSR

Abstract

The article studies documents of the Department of Science and Culture of the Central Committee of the CPSU stored in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), which throw light on the mechanisms of ideological control over 'national history' in the USSR. On the basis of the RGANI documents it investigates how D. T. Kabanov attempted to reassess Makhach Dakhadaev's role in the revolutionary movement. It assesses the resonant statement

of B. G. Gafurov, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Tajik SSR, voiced on a joint scientific session dedicated to the history of Soviet republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (January 30 – February 6, 1954). According to the American radio, he announced that the Soviet government was to make fighting nationalism its policy, and urged the Kazakh people to ‘cement ties with Soviet Russia.’ As there was a tacit ‘localization policy,’ the statements was rather dubious. Many could interpret it as a new party line. Moreover, the matter itself was rather dubious, as it went against the chain of authority: ideologically important statements should have come from a Union leader, not a national one. Notes and reports related to a series of joint scientific sessions make up an important part of the documents of the period in the department fond. The article examines the documentary complex, which reflects organization and holding of joint scientific sessions in Tashkent from January 30 to February 6, 1954. Writing ‘national histories’ was an important element in constructing a common history of the peoples of the USSR, on which the ideological justification of the ‘friendship of the peoples’ policy and of the concept of the Russians as ‘the first among the equals,’ was to be based. Documents of the Department of Science and Culture of the Central Committee of the CPSU for March 1953 to September 1955 show the inner workings of ideological control over ‘national history’ of the USSR. One should emphasize that control was not overly prescriptive, not as if the center issued clear-cut orders to be fulfilled. Rather, the department was a controller and an arbiter, while initiative came from other sources: people, party organizations, institutions, etc. The studied documents show that control was much mitigated, and that controlling agencies increasingly refused to use methods of ‘tongue-lashing,’ or other such public campaigns.

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Keywords

Archive, source, Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, Department of Science and Culture of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Soviet historical science, ‘national histories,’ ideology.

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