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Autobiography of the Introducer of the 'Primitive Communism' Theory, 'Red' Professor Mikhail P. Zhakov in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (1933)

Abstract

The author publishes an annotated autobiography of the Soviet historian M. P. Zhakov (1893 – 1936). He belonged to the so-called 'red' professors, graduates of the Institute of the Red Professors, who in the first half of 1930s held leading positions in the Soviet science. He studied the history of the primitive society. He worked at the Institute of History of the Communist Academy and in the Moscow branch of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture. M. P. Zhakov's contribution to studying the primitive society was modest. In fact, he adhered to the concept of primitive communism, which was later harshly criticized in the Soviet science. In

1936 he was arrested as a Trotskyist and sentenced to death. The author contends that the scientific biography of M. P. Zhakov exemplifies the character of Marxist historians of 1920s-1930s and the vicissitudes of the emergence of Soviet research tradition. The article introduces M. P. Zhakov's autobiography, which he wrote in November 1933 for the personnel department of the Moscow branch of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture. By its nature, the autobiography is a record keeping document, a matter of form. It seems to have been meant as an apology. M. P. Zhakov underscored his revolutionary past and merits during the Civil War, while his scientific work was described almost drily. M. P. Zhakov's autobiography is a typewritten text printed on the both sides of a single sheet. On the first page there are two illegible corrections. While preparing the document for publication, the author have brought it into compliance with modern rules of spelling and punctuation, expanded all abbreviations (except conventional ones) in square brackets, and made all necessary annotations in order to explain the circumstances of M. P. Zhakov's scientific career.

Keywords

Communist Academy, Moscow branch of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture, M. P. Zhakov, Soviet historiography, primitive history, autobiography.

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