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# **History and practice of awarding academic degrees and titles in Russia in the 1990s and 2000s**

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## **HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF AWARDING ACADEMIC DEGREES AND TITLES IN RUSSIA IN THE 1990s AND 2000s<sup>2</sup>**

This article reconstructs the activity of 'Alexander Yakushev school', a scholarly movement whose representatives over the last 20 years have studied the history of awarding academic degrees in the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation. The causes of this school's emergence, its prospective research areas are analyzed, and its achievements are evaluated. Besides, the article assesses the reform plan for the thesis review procedure which Yakushev suggested after the Higher Attestation Commission (VAK) refused to confirm the higher doctorate in law he was awarded.

JEL Classification: Z.

Keywords: Russia, universities, academic degrees, scholarly certification, thesis, review, legislation, historiography

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The title of this article indicates the two objects to be studied: the post-Perestroika research on academic degrees of the Russian Empire, and the thesis review practice in Russia during the last twenty years. The 'Yakushev school' provides extensive material for such analysis. It is a movement named after Alexander Yakushev, who got a candidate degree (a Russian equivalent of PhD) in pedagogy (1987), a higher doctorate in history (1993), a candidate degree in law (1998) and attempted to get a higher doctorate in law (2001, 2011). He used to be an associate professor and professor of universities in Stavropol, Pyatigorsk and Nevinnomyssk. At present he is professor at Russian International Innovative University in Sochi<sup>3</sup>. In recent years he has actively participated in discussing reform projects for scholarly certification and published expert estimates of current legislation in this sphere<sup>4</sup>.

Over the last twenty years Alexander Yakushev has developed (1994) and updated (2009) a comprehensive research program titled "History of academic degrees in Russia from the eighteenth century to 1918" which is being implemented at the Postgraduate School for History of Science and Technology he founded extra for that purpose. Between 1995 and 2011, 25 doctoral and higher doctoral theses in law and history were defended at the school, with Yakushev as dissertation advisor. Scholars affiliated with the school published 15 monographs, 14 document editions, 31 manuals, 5 scholarly reference books, 9 survey volumes, 26 collections of essays and 82 articles on the history of the awarding of scientific degrees in Russia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries<sup>5</sup>. Although this solid body of work may make an impression of carefully planned and carried-out research on the topic, historians of science and historians of

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<sup>3</sup> Yakushev A.N. Povyshenie effektivnosti formirovaniya trezvogo obraza zhizni starsheklassnikov: avtoref. dis. ... kand. ped. nauk. M., 1987; Idem. Dvizhenie storonnikov trezvogo obraza zhizni (Istoriya i sovremennost'): dis. ... d-ra ist. nauk. M., 1993; Idem. Organizatsionno-pravovoi analiz podgotovki nauchnykh kadrov i prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepenei v universitetakh i akademiakh Rossii, 1747-1918 gg.: Istoriya i opyt realizatsii: dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. SPb., 1998; Idem. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepenei v Rossii (1747-1918): razvitie i realizatsiya pravovykh idei proektov, zakonoproektov i normativnykh aktov (na opyte nauchnogo napravleniya): dis. ... d-ra yurid. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2001; Idem. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie protsessa proizvodstva v uchenye stepeni v Rossii (1724-1918 gg.): dis. ... d-ra yurid. nauk. SPb., 2011.

<sup>4</sup> For example, on April 25, 2012 he delivered a paper in a seminar on "Corruption in Today's Russia: Analysis and Remedies (Criminological Examination of Draft Laws)" co-sponsored by the Center for Social, Political and Criminological Studies and the Stavropol branch of the Krasnodar University of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia. The theme of his paper was "Corrupt Practices and Anti-corruption Enforcement in the Field of Academic Degree Awarding in Russia." (see: URL: [http://cspki.skforussia.ru/view\\_news.php?id=633](http://cspki.skforussia.ru/view_news.php?id=633) (last accessed: 11.04.2014)).

Also, he co-authored a series of articles published in: Yakushev A.N., Plyasov K.A. Golosovanie v dissertatsionnom sovete po prisuzhdeniyu uchenykh stepenei v Rossii kak istoriko-pravovaya problema // Pravo i obrazovanie. 2008. № 1. P. 133-139; Yakushev A.N., Pavlov I.P., Novichkova M.N. Otsenka rezultatov dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenykh stepenei v Rossii kak teoretiko- i istoriko-pravovaya problema // Pravo i obrazovanie. 2008. № 3. P. 99-112; Yakushev A.N. Neprinyatie dissertatsii k zaschite v dissertatsionnom sovete kak teoretiko-pravovaya i pravoprimeritelnye problemy // Pravo i obrazovanie. 2009. № 3. P. 58-63; Yakushev A.N., Kononova S.V. Opredelenie soderzhaniya kandidatskogo ekzamina po spetsialnoi distsipline // Nauchnye problemy gumanitarnykh issledovaniy. 2009. № 12. P. 109-114; Yakushev A.N. Opredelenie soderzhaniya kandidatskogo ekzamina po spetsialnoy yuridicheskoy distsipline // Zakon i pravo. 2010. № 2. P. 17-21; Yakushev A.N., Grunkovskaya I.A., Aliev V.S. Pasporta spetsialnostey nauchnykh rabotnikov v Rossii kak teoretiko-pravovaya problema // Zakon i pravo. 2010. № 8. P. 7-10; Yakushev A.N., Patsiya D. Schitaem dissertatsii, zabyv o yuridicheskoy nauke // Zakon i pravo. 2010. № 11. P. 13-15; Komarov S.A., Yakushev A.N. Forma zaklyucheniya dissoveta po dissertatsii: pravovye problemy // Yuridicheskaya mysl'. 2012. № 2. P. 125-128; Mrykhina O.A., Yakushev A.N. Sootvetstvie soderzhaniya dissertatsii pasportu nauchnoy spetsialnosti: realnost' i vymysel // Obrazovanie. Nauka. Innovatsii. Yuzhnoe izmerenie. 2012. № 4 (24). P. 41-44; Komarov S.A., Yakushev A. N. Kriterii, kotorym dolzhny otvechat' dissertatsii: nauchnaya nekompetentnost' ili prednamerennyi obman? // Yuridicheskaya mysl'. 2013. № 1. P. 130-134.

<sup>5</sup> Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie...P. 66-67.

universities still consider the history of degree awarding in Russia to be poorly studied and suggest new comprehensive projects for it<sup>6</sup>.

Indeed, I found out that university archives are full of thesis discussion and viva protocols that are untouched by researchers. No historian knows how disciplines were divided into specialties in nineteenth century Russia. No-one can comment on Sergey Uvarov and Mikhail Speransky's attempts to introduce an accelerated procedure of academic degree awarding.

How is that possible, given such large-scale research on the subject allegedly conducted by the Yakushev school? In this article I will try to answer this question.

### **Relevance of the subject matter**

Recent years saw heated arguments in Russia about the scholarly review practice that were provoked by exposures of counterfeited theses and 'plants' producing them. Dissertation councils losing their scholarly reputation, a devaluation of academic degrees and an overall crisis of the whole system of scholarly certification in modern Russia are common places in these debates. Therefore, reform proposals are put forward, and appeals to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation are written<sup>7</sup>. Against this background, the Russian State Library's April Fools' joke about checking for plagiarism the writings of US Administration members was taken in earnest.

The recent development of information technologies promoted a rapid expansion of access to information and opened opportunities which nobody anticipated 20 years ago. Relying on these resources, a Russian public organization called Dissernet made it its crusade to expose cases of counterfeited theses and forged thesis defenses, identify cases of 'wrongful appropriation' and destroy the reputations of false doctors. As a rule, Dissernet activists target government officials and high-ranking managers of higher educational institutions. Also, they look for so-called 'thesis clusters' in which texts are borrowed by pupils from their teachers. Such checks are carried out on a voluntary basis and their results are published on the Dissernet website. However, the authorities ignore the activity of this organization, as do the universities

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g.: Mir istorika: Istoriograficheskiy sbornik /pod red. V.P. Korzun, A.V. Yakuba. Vyp. 6. Omsk: Izd-vo Om. Gos. Un-ta, 2010; Uchenye stepeni v Rossiyskikh universitetakh // Universitet v Rossiyskoy imperii XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX veka /pod obsch. red. A.Yu. Andreeva, S.I. Posohova. M.: ROSSPEN, 2012. S. 326-388; Vishlenkova E.A., Ilina K.A. Ob uchenykh stepenyakh i o tom, kak dissertatsiya v Rossii obretala nauchnyuyu i prakticheskuyu znachimost' // Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie. 2013. № 4. P. 84-107.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g.: Logos. 2013. № 1; Otechestvennye zapiski. 2012. № 4; Ibid. 2013. № 4; Vysshee obrazovanie v Rossii. 2013. № 4. Also a collection of interviews see: Ostorozhno, plagiat! // Federal'nyi portal "Ekonomika. Sotsiologiyaa. Menedzhment". URL: <http://ecsocman.hse.ru/expert/?theme=34859892> (last accessed: 11.04.2014).

under suspicion, causing Dissernet activists' disappointment about the government's science policy<sup>8</sup>. What is the root of the problem?

Russian universities received the right to *award* academic degrees from the state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, while this right was delegated to professorial councils, the state retained the right to *confirm* academic degrees, with the decisions of university councils being subject to a minister's approval. In order to stimulate the development of science and to increase the appeal of 'scholarly service', the hierarchy of academic degrees was correlated to the military and civil ranks hierarchy as specified by the Table of ranks. Therefore, scholarly degrees had their apanages, which over time, on the one hand, led to a peculiar social magic pertaining to them, and, on the other hand, promoted scholars' loyalty to the government who might facilitate or complicate, accelerate or slow down their achievement of the degrees they aspired for.

The correlation existing between academic degrees and state offices and privileges resulted in research focusing on certain sources and issues. Studies in history of academic degrees (A.Yu. Andreyev, A.E. Ivanov, F.A. Petrov, A.N. Yakushev)<sup>9</sup> typically draw upon laws and memoirs. Drawing on legislation meant that researchers focused on tracking changes in legal norms, i.e. on the making of statutory acts and their contents (e.g. the scope of degree examinations, the disputations, the confirmation of degrees etc.), while memoirs and some other sorts of archival documents served as an illustration of each legal norm's (in)efficiency.

## **The birth of the school**

The disruption of the USSR, the sharp decrease in the prestige of science and in the standard of living provoked a mass emigration of Post-Soviet scientists and, on the other hand, stimulated the studying in the 1990's of the pre-1917 history of scholarly certification in Russian Empire. The Ministry of Education in its federal programs of education development urged then "to concentrate researchers' efforts on studying the legal regulation of vocational training and certification of scholars in Russia under the historical angle"<sup>10</sup>. And the appeal was heard.

In 1994 and 1995, Alexander Yakushev, a holder of higher doctorate in history from Stavropol State Pedagogical University, authored a comprehensive research program titled "History of academic degrees in Russia from the eighteenth century to 1918." Bearing in mind

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g.: Rostovtsev A. Istoriya odnogo podloga, 2.04.2014 // Dissernet. URL: [http://www.dissernet.org/publications/story\\_podlog.htm](http://www.dissernet.org/publications/story_podlog.htm) (last accessed: 11.04.2014).

<sup>9</sup> See: Uchenye stepeni v Rossiyskikh universitetakh; Ivanov A.E. Uchenye stepeni v Rossiyskoi imperii XVIII v. – 1917 g. M.: AO "Chertanovskaya tipografiya", 1994; Petrov F.A. Rossiiskie universitety v pervoi polovine XIX veka. Formirovanie sistemy universitetskogo obrazovaniya. Kn. 3. Universitetskaya professura i podgotovka ustava 1835 goda. M.: Polteks, 2000. P. 364-376; Yakushev A.N. Organizatsionno-pravovoi analiz...

<sup>10</sup> Yakushev A.N. Organizatsionno-pravovoi analiz... P. 7.

the ministry's call, he intended during the implementation of his program "to fill a [...] gap [in studying this subject] in Russian history and jurisprudence"<sup>11</sup>. At the same time, he spotted two aspects in the existing approaches to the subject matter, a 'historical' and a 'legal historical' one, noting that the former clearly prevailed<sup>12</sup>. Thus, in his opinion, historians (R.G. Eimontova, A.E. Ivanov, E.V. Sobolev) "concentrated on studying the implementation of the legislation that regulated the activity of academic institutions"<sup>13</sup>, while "the legal historical aspect of scholars' vocational training and certification in the Russian Empire was unfairly ignored by researchers. Strange as it may seem, we do not know how, when, and in what ways the legislation concerning the training of scholars and the awarding of academic degrees developed in Russia"<sup>14</sup>.

Yakushev's program had a runtime of 12 years and stipulated research in areas such as "Prerequisites and origins of founding the vocational training institutions for scholars and educators and for the awarding of academic degrees in pre-revolutionary Russia", "The legal and regulatory framework of scholars' vocational training and awarding of academic degrees in Russia [viewed] under the historical angle" (ideas, bills and normative legal acts for certain time spans, the legislative fixation of concepts), "The composition and activity of faculty meetings and university councils (academic conferences) awarding academic degrees at Russian universities and academies from the time of their establishment till 1918", "The contents of oral, written and practical examinations for applicants at Russian universities and academies: development, issues, results", "The main forms of scholars' vocational training at universities and academies of the Russian Empire: development, issues, conclusions", "The submission and defense of theses, the confirmation of defense outcome, and the bibliography of doctoral, master's and higher doctoral dissertations by disciplines at Russian universities and academies from the time of their establishment till 1918". Furthermore, the program stipulated analyzing "historical and statistical data on the results of scholars' vocational training and awarding of academic degrees in the history of universities and academies of the Russian Empire", studying "the inauguration ceremonies and festivities on the occasion of thesis defense and degree awarding in the history of universities and academies of Western Europe and Russia in legal historical aspect", and developing "the software for a catalog of bibliographic data on scholars at universities and academies of the Russian Empire"<sup>15</sup>.

Yakushev's numerous followers drew largely on the work of Grigorii Krichevskii (1910–1989), the most prominent science bibliography expert and long-standing head of Bibliographic reference service at the Main Library of Social Sciences of the USSR Academy of Sciences

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. P. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P. 52.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 53-54.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 70-76.

(FBON AN SSSR) who spent nearly 50 years (1938 to 1984) collecting data on thesis defenses in the Russian Empire. Drawing on periodicals, "official announcements in newspapers, published minutes of university councils, and universities' printed annual performance reports", Krichevskii succeeded in compiling a bibliographic reference book on dissertations defended in pre-revolutionary Russia. For each thesis, the following data were specified: "(1) the author's family name, first name, patronymic, and years of life, (2) the work's title with all explanations relating to it, (3) publisher's imprint, (4) pagination, (5) place of the previous publication (as a rule, prints were submitted for defense), (6) defense date, (7) discipline (branch of science), (8) opponents, (9) the faculty's review publication imprint, (10) the imprint of the degree applicant's speech published prior to the viva, (11) the report on defense published in the press"<sup>16</sup>.

Krichevskii believed that his bibliography would serve as a basis for scientometric studies. He suggested that research be carried out on such subjects as "the dynamics of theses in different periods of Russian history; the geographic spread of theses defended by branches of science; the time interval between the defense of one's master's thesis and doctoral thesis; the scholars' age at the time of their master's and doctor's defenses; thesis migration (when a thesis was prepared at one university and defended at another); the evolution of thesis volume"<sup>17</sup>.

The manuscript was finished by Krichevskii in 1984 but never published. The author died in 1989, and in 1995 his daughter transferred his archive to Yakushev<sup>18</sup>. Within the framework of his federal program, Yakushev published several parts of this voluminous manuscript, supplementing them with new information or providing them with scholarly commentaries<sup>19</sup>.

Yakushev saw one way of implementing his research project in founding a postgraduate and postdoctoral research school for the history of science and technology. In his candidate's thesis in jurisprudence (1998) he specified the themes offered to the first ten students (six of them successfully defended their theses, but one changed the theme). Judging by these titles, the grand research project was to develop in several directions: the history of the Ministry of Public Education's performance; the legislation regulating scholarly certification; certification at

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<sup>16</sup> Krichevskii G.G. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na yuridicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii (1755-1918): bibliograficheskii ukazatel*. Stavropol: San-San, 1998. P. 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* S. 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Yakushev A.N., Kuznetsov A.V. *Istoriya russkoi disertatsii v issledovaniyakh G.G. Krichevskogo // Omskii nauchnyi vestnik*. 2007. № 3. P. 7-9.

<sup>19</sup> Krichevskii G.G. *Dissertatsii universitetov Rossii: 1805–1919 gg.: Bibliograficheskii ukazatel*. M., 1984; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na yuridicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1918)*; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na istoriko-filologicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1918): Bibliograficheskoe posobie / Sost., predisl., nauch. red. i posmertnoe izdanie A.N. Yakusheva*. Stavropol, 1999; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na fiziko-matematicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1919): Bibliograficheskoe posobie / Sost., predisl., nauch. red. i posmertnoe izdanie A.N. Yakusheva*. Stavropol, 2000; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na yuridicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1918) / Sost., predisl., nauch. red. i posmertnoe izdanie A.N. Yakusheva*. 3-e izd., ispr. i dop. Stavropol, 2004; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na istoriko-filologicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1918) / Sost., predisl., nauch. red. i posmertnoe izdanie A.N. Yakusheva*. 3-e izd., ispr. i dop. Stavropol, 2004; *Idem*. *Magisterskie i doktorskie dissertatsii, zaschischennye na fiziko-matematicheskikh fakultetakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: (1755–1919) / Sost., predisl., nauch. red. i posmertnoe izdanie A.N. Yakusheva*. 2-e izd., ispr. i dop. Stavropol, 2004.

individual faculties such as the Kazan university's faculty of history and philology and faculty of physics and mathematics, faculties of history and philology at Moscow, Kharkov and Kiev universities; faculties of law (all studied by Yakushev alone); the Warsaw university (studied separately); degree conferral procedures at universities of Germany, France and Switzerland (research not implemented)<sup>20</sup>.

As time passed, the period under study envisaged by the project was extended up to the present day, the geographical coverage was narrowed to Russia only, and a new area of research was added, studying dissertations in different domains of jurisprudence. Two theses written in 2003 and 2004 are somewhat out of the picture, focusing on the analysis of sources and research literature and on research programs on history of academic degrees.

## The outcome of the program

Yakushev reported on the results of 15 years' work done by his pupils and followers in his higher doctoral dissertation in jurisprudence, defended in 2011 at St. Petersburg Law Institute<sup>21</sup>. However, a closer examination showed that the majority of the numerous works he cited were short-run publications that became 'rare books' right after they were printed. Out of the 25 theses finished<sup>22</sup>, the Russian State Library only has 18<sup>23</sup>. For some of these, only the

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<sup>20</sup> Yakushev A.N. Organizatsionno-pravovoi analiz... S. 78-79. Idem. Istoricheskie issledovaniya v programme "Istoriya uchenykh stepeni v Rossii: XVIII v. – 1918 g."// Istoriya uchenykh stepeni v Rossii i Zapadnoi Evrope (XII-XX vv.): materialy nauch. konf. M.: RGGU, 1998. S.86-87.

<sup>21</sup> Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie... P. 66-67.

<sup>22</sup> One higher doctorate (A.Yu. Klimov) and 14 candidate's dissertations in history (D.A. Khokhlova, O.N. Lauta, Yu.V. Eidel'nant, S.V. Parka, O.N. Goroshko, L.V. Artemova, N.V. Lovyannikova, E.G. Gyulushanyan, A.A. Kaznacheev, T.I. Kagramanova, A.Yu. Klimov, O.Yu. Karamyan, D.A. Kaznacheev, A.V. Kuznetsov) and 10 candidate's dissertations in law (I.G. Voropaev, M.B. Napso, O.N. Tropina, A.V. Mikhnevich, E.A. Apolskii, A.N. Demin, A.D. Makiev, C.D. Makiev, N.V. Kul'kina, O.P. Meleshko). See: Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie... S. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Artemova L.V. Rol' Ministerstva narodnogo prosvescheniya i universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii v istorii razvitiya razryadov nauk i ispytaniy na uchenye stepeni: 1802-1917: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2002; Eidel'nant Yu.V. Razvitie idei, proektov i pravil o poryadke prichuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii: istoriko-sravnitel'noe issledovanie: ): dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2000; Goroshko O.N. Rol' Ministerstva narodnogo prosvescheniya, Akademii nauk i universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii v istorii razvitiya instituta dissertatsii: 1724-1919: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2002; Gyulushanyan E.G. Akademiya nauk i universitety Rossiiskoi imperii: istoriya mezhdunarodnykh nauchno-pedagogicheskikh svyazei (1724-1917): dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2003; Kagramanova T.I. Istoriya prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii: analiz istochnikov i nauchnoi literatury: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2004; Kaznacheev A.A. Gosudarstvennaya politika v sfere prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v Rossii (1802-1994): dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2004; Kaznacheev D.A. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v universitetakh Rossiiskoi imperii: razvitie nauchnogo i professional'nogo pravosoznaniya: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2006; Khokhlova D.A. Istoriya nauchnoi podgotovki i attestatsii kadrov na istoriko-filologicheskom fakul'tete v arkhivnykh dokumentakh Kazanskogo universiteta: 1804-1918: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. M., 1998; Klimov A.Yu. Istoriya kandidatskikh ekzamenov v normativnykh pravovykh aktakh Rossii (1802-2004) : dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2004; Kul'kina N.V. Pravovoe regulirovanie deyatelnosti Vysheii attestatsionnoi komissii SSSR v sfere prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni: 1934-1991 gg.: dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2008; Lauta O.N. Nauchnaya podgotovka i attestatsiya kadrov na istoriko-filologicheskom fakul'tete Moskovskogo universiteta, nachalo XIX-XX vv.: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Maikop, 2000; Lovyannikova N.V. Istoriya prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii: Razrabotka i realizatsiya otechestvennykh programm nauchnykh issledovaniy: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2003; Makiev C.D. Prisuzhdenie uchenykh stepeni v oblasti rimskogo prava v universitetakh Rossiiskoi imperii: dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. Mahachkala, 2006; Meleshko O.P. Razvitie zakonodatel'stva o proizvodstve v bogoslovskie uchenye stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii: dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2009; Mikhnevich A.V. Pravovoe regulirovanie prisuzhdeniya meditsinskikh, farmatsevticheskikh i veterinarnykh uchenykh stepeni v Rossii (1747-1918): dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. Rostov n/D, 2004; Napso M.B. Poryadok prisvoeniya uchenykh zvaniy v Rossii (SSSR): 1804-1995 (istoriko-pravovoi aspekt): dis. ... kand. yurid. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2002; Tropina O.N. Realizatsiya zakonodatel'stva o podgotovke i attestatsii nauchnykh kadrov na primere



main texts are available but no abstracts, which are supposed to be submitted to the Russian State Library's database. It is true, during the period under discussion degree applicants not always fulfilled the requirements of the High Attestation Commission and submitted the complete sets of texts in due manner. For example, A.Yu. Klimov's higher doctoral thesis<sup>24</sup> is not available at the Russian State Library, and S.V. Parka's candidate's thesis is only available at the Institute of History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw where its defense took place in 2001<sup>25</sup>.

Abstracts of E.A. Apolskii's and A.D. Makiev's theses are accessible on the Internet, but the titles of Apolsky's abstract and thesis differ from each other<sup>26</sup>. It is only due to mentions made of A.N. Dyomin's and A.V. Kuznetsov's candidate's theses in Yakushev's higher doctoral dissertation that I was able to identify their titles<sup>27</sup>, the texts being not available in any library. No data was available on O. Yu. Karamyan's dissertation. On the other hand, I found three theses written within the framework of Yakushev's program but with other persons as academic advisors<sup>28</sup>.

Alexander Yakushev himself in 2001 finished a higher doctoral dissertation in jurisprudence and successfully defended it before the dissertation council in Nevinnomyssk ("The degree conferral procedure in Russia (1747–1918): the development and implementation of legal ideas behind projects, bills and statutory regulations (based on a case study in one branch of science)")<sup>29</sup>. However, the VAK did not confirm the degree awarded, so Yakushev had to defend another higher doctoral dissertation in St. Petersburg in 2011.

An analysis of texts written by Yakushev's pupils and followers leaves an impression of a well-functioning assembly-line production of standard dissertations: while titles and authors'

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yuridicheskogo fakul'teta Kazanskogo universiteta (1804-1918): dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2004; Voropaev I.G. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepenei v Rossii i SSSR, 1802-1995: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Klimov A.Yu. Istoriya sozdaniya Polozhenii o proizvodstve v uchenye stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii (1747-1837 gg.): dis. ... d-ra ist.nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Parka Swietłana. Kształcenie kadry naukowo-dydaktycznej i system nadawania stopni naukowych na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim w latach 1869-1915. Warszawa 2001. In Kagramanova's dissertation the work is referred to as: Parka S.V. Nauchnaya podgotovka i attestatsiya kadrov v Varshavskom universitete (1869-1913): dis. ... d-ra ist. nauk. Varshava, 2001. See: Kagramanova T.I. Op. cit. P. 245.

<sup>26</sup> Apolskii E.A. Uchenie o grazhdanskom prave v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: avtoref. dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. SPb., 2005. // Yuridicheskaya Rossiya. Federal'nyi pravovoi portal. URL: <http://law.edu.ru/book/book.asp?bookID=1362696> (last accessed: 11.04.2014). (In Yakushev's dissertation the work is referred to as: Apolskii E.A. Istoriya uchenii o grazhdanskom prave v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. SPb., 2005.); Makiev A.D. Istoriya uchenii o prestuplenii v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: avtoref. dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Makhachkala, 2006. URL: <http://www.dslib.net/teoriaprava/istorija-uchenij-o-prestuplenii-v-dissertatsionnykh-issledovaniyakh-universitetov.html> (last accessed: 12.01.2014).

<sup>27</sup> Demin A.N. Istoriya uchenii o grazhdanskom protsesse v dissertatsionnykh i monograficheskikh issledovaniyakh Rossiiskoi imperii: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2006; Kuznetsov A.V. Rukopis' G.G. Krichevskogo "": istoriya sozdaniya, izdaniya i ispol'zovaniya: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2007. See: Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie...P. 391, 392.

<sup>28</sup> Bulakh K.V. Razvitie psikhologicheskoi myisli v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh Rossiiskoi imperii XIX – nachala XX vv.: dis. ... kand. psikh. nauk. Karachaevsk, 2003; Kononova S.V. Stanovlenie i razvitie gosudarstvennoi sistemy podgotovki nauchnykh kadrov cherez aspiranturu v Rossii: 1918-2004: dis.... kand. ped. nauk. Nevinnomyssk, 2005; Loba V.E. Doktrina o nakazanii v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: genesis i razvitie: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Belgorod, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Yakushev A.N. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya...

names may vary, sections on relevance and novelty of the subject matter at issue correspond almost verbatim in all theses, as do the sections on sources, state of research, and methods of research. All of them feature ritualized mentioning of names such as G.G. Krichevskii ("the founder of the scholarly movement", which at some point spontaneously turns into a "school") and A.N. Yakushev as Krichevskii's successor.

As for the analysis presented in these dissertations, all of them contain extensive quotations from legislative and archival sources, numerous references to Krichevskii's works, lists of science branches filling many pages, lists of thesis themes, statistical and comparative tables, ministers' annual surveys on the number of academic degrees awarded, etc. In the conclusion chapters, the high value of findings is always emphasized.

The themes of these dissertations invite questions, especially when they dissect a complex but single process of research and defense into parts such as thesis writing and viva voce examination. This approach makes numerous references to 'the other part' necessary and does not allow to construe (or even to think of) causal relationships.

Each thesis contains elaborate recommendations for practical application of its findings "in the law-making process when designing statutory instruments concerning the vocational training and certification of scholars in Russia." Yakushev advised officials to use his works when preparing the federal draft law "On Education in the Russian Federation" and the new edition of "Regulations on the academic degree conferral procedure in the Russian Federation".

## **Studies in history of academic degrees in the first half of the nineteenth century**

In what follows I am going to focus on theses which deal with the first half of the nineteenth century, the reason being that for a number of years I have studied the research done on this subject and this time and did my own research drawing on documents from university archives and from the archive of the Ministry of National Education. Therefore, my experience allows me to appreciate the discourse nature of the historical narrative represented by these dissertations<sup>30</sup>.

To be sure, studying the government regulation policies concerning academic degree conferral in pre-revolutionary Russia is an important and a necessary aspect of studying the history of scholarly certification in general. Yet, when regulation policies are studied drawing on normative documents only (or largely), what we get is not a history of expert reviewing but a history of political representations.

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<sup>30</sup> On the discursive nature of academic texts, see: *Soslovie russkikh professorov. Sozdateli statusov i smyslov / pod red. E.A. Vishlenkovo, I.M. Savel'evoi. M.: ID VShE, 2013.*

Research works by participants of the Yakushev program all rely on a limited set of sources that includes (1) Krichevsky's manuscript, (2) selected texts from the Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire and from collections of the Ministry of National Education's resolutions and orders<sup>31</sup>, (3) the published reports of the Minister of National Education, and (4) copies made by Yakushev of a few records from the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA)<sup>32</sup> which reflect the discussion of academic degree conferral regulations. Given this, one may be surprised to read in each of these dissertations that its respective author is the first to introduce these sources for scientific use.

The few references authors make to documents from regional archives look incidental and outdated. Typically, they use obsolete Soviet-time names of archives, such as (in theses devoted to the Kazan university)<sup>33</sup> CGA RT (Central State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan) for what bears the name of the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan since 1996. The same holds true for the city archive of Russia's northern capital: in a 2002 thesis<sup>34</sup>, it is referred to as LGIA (Leningrad State Historical Archive), but the archive changed its name in 1991 to the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg (CGIA SPb). In dissertations written as late as the beginning the 2000s, the Estonian Historical Archive is referred to as the Central State Historical Archive of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic<sup>35</sup>, and the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ARAN) as the Archive of the USSR Academy of Sciences<sup>36</sup>. Such careless references are probably due to footnotes being transferred without checking from works of predecessors.

Characteristic of the Yakushev school works is the 19th-century-style quoting at length from primary source texts without any source criticism whatsoever. The authors' poor knowledge of historical context leads them to misinterpretations and factual errors. For instance, O. N. Tropina describes in her thesis the certification procedure of the lawyer Login Kambek and mentions Prof. Schneider's review based on which the applicant was rejected<sup>37</sup>. According to Tropina, Schneider was a professor of Kazan university. In fact, however, it was at Kazan that Kambek succeeded in defending his thesis, while Schneider worked at St. Petersburg university. He wrote the review of Kambek's work at the request of Minister Sergey S. Uvarov<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> See, e.g.: Yakushev A.N. *Sobranie postanovlenii Ministerstva narodnogo prosveteniya po voprosam podgotovki i attestatsii nauchnykh kadrov v universitetakh i akademiakh Rossii (1802-1917)*. M., 1995; Idem. *Sobranie rasporyazhenii Ministerstva narodnogo prosveteniya po voprosam podgotovki i attestatsii nauchnykh kadrov v universitetakh i akademiakh Rossii (1802-1917)*. M., 1995; Idem. *O nagrudnykh znakakh dlya lits, udostoennykh universitetami i akademiymi Rossii uchenykh stepenei magistra i doktora (1871-1995 gg.): Istorico-pravovye dokumenty*. M., 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Yakushev A.N. *O proizvodstve v uchenye stepeni v Rossii (1802-1917 gg.): Ukazatel del RDIA*. SPb., 1995.

<sup>33</sup> Khokhlova D.A. *Op. cit.*, Tropina O.N. *Op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Napso M.B. *Op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Goroshko O.N. *Op. cit.*, Artemova L.V. *Op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Gyulushanyan E.G. *Op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Tropina O.N. *Op. cit.* P. 120.

<sup>38</sup> In detail see: Vishlenkova E.A., Ilina K.A. *Ob uchenykh stepenyakh...* P. 98-101.

Participants of the Yakushev program seem to have a poor knowledge of the university document flow, which results in their misconception of different sources' information value. They seek to reconstruct opinions of professors concerning the conferral of academic degrees by drawing on documents from the archive of the Ministry of Public Education alone, which is impossible<sup>39</sup>. Only regional university archives allow this, since issues concerning scholarly certification were only discussed in university councils. Minutes of such discussions, therefore, were filed with their offices to be transferred subsequently to university archives<sup>40</sup>. It is only the so-called "general opinion of the university council" and the "dissenting opinions" (if any) that one sent to the ministry.

Speaking of historiographic traditions, all authors regard themselves as belonging to a line that goes from Krichevskii to Yakushev. They mention works by A.E. Ivanov, R.G. Eimontova, sometimes F.A. Petrov, and all their fellow researchers who defended their theses under this program. Having confined themselves to their own findings and self-citing<sup>41</sup>, the project's participants found themselves on a self-made 'desert island'. They ignore the accomplishments of researchers working in other Russian universities, not to mention the western scholarship which recently saw much progress in university studies and in history of disciplines.

In spite of the fact that research into history of concepts is on the program's agenda, its participants take liberties with termini. Quite often, modern concepts are substituted for historic ones. For example, Klimov in his candidate's thesis tracks the history of the "qualifying examinations for the Candidate's degree" from 1802 to 2004, ignoring the fact that before 1817 *candidate* was one of the lowest academic degrees (actually it described a graduate student who gained an honors degree), whereas today's *Candidate of science* is a degree that rather corresponds to that of master in imperial Russia<sup>42</sup>.

When writing about the history of university disciplines and training courses, Artyomova in her thesis confined herself to enumerating them, without going into details of the cognitive and institutional development of the respective areas of knowledge. As a result of such simplified approach, the researcher drew a wrong conclusion that "changes in names of chairs at departments (faculties) determined changes in names of discipline groups, and not vice versa. The Ministry of National Education played the key role in the development of discipline

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<sup>39</sup> According to Yu.V.Eidel'nant, "As few as eleven researchers have published works on the development of legislation on degree awarding". See: Eidel'nant Yu.V. Op. cit. P. 94.

<sup>40</sup> For document flow at universities, see: Ilina K.A. Deloproizvodstvennaya dokumentatsiya kak istochnik izucheniya praktiki upravleniya rossiiskimi universitetami pervoi poloviny XIX veka: dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. Kazan, 2011. 208 p.; Vishlenkova E.A., Ilina K.A. Universitetskoe deloproizvodstvo kak praktika upravleniya (Rossiya, pervaya polovina XIX veka) // Voprosy obrazovaniya. 2013. № 1. P. 232-255.

<sup>41</sup> See: Kagranova T.I. Op. cit.; Lovyannikova N.V. Op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Klimov A.Yu. Istoriya kandidatских examenov... P. 30-31.

groups."<sup>43</sup> It is true, the establishment of each chair at universities was corroborated by the legislation, but, as the study of minutes of various universities' professorial councils shows, the establishment of each chair was preceded by written arguments in support of it, which described the development, the relevance and the practical importance of the science branch at issue. Besides, the history of universities knows cases of chairs being established on a public initiative<sup>44</sup>.

Here, I could stop and sum up my findings, were it not for one circumstance.

### **An expert review of scholarly certification**

On March 29, 2014 Yakushev posted an open letter titled "Response to the chairman of the Higher Attestation Commission and the minister of education and science of the Russian Federation concerning their assessment of the results of my scholarly activity and of the research results presented in my higher doctoral dissertation"<sup>45</sup> on the website of the scientific information magazine *Education. Science. Scholarly labor*, in the "Electronic Library" section. The "Response" is rather long (44 pages) and has the form of a scientific article (with a summary and keywords) on the VAK's and the ministry's exceeding of authority when assessing the results of research presented in Yakushev's thesis.

According to the author, such genre as response to one's reviewers and critics emerged in the Russian Empire as a representation of "open and free discussion between the examinee and the reviewers concerning their assessment of the research results presented in his thesis"<sup>46</sup>. In the USSR and the Russian Federation, Yakushev explains, no such letters were written because applicants feared the controlling function of the authorities. Declaring himself a pioneer, he described the essence of the conflict and his claims to the Ministry of Education and Science as follows:

On June 24, 2011 he defended his higher doctoral dissertation at St. Petersburg Law Institute. On June 19, 2013 an order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation was issued in which the conferral of the higher doctorate by the institute's dissertation council was declared "unfounded" and the applicant was refused the diploma<sup>47</sup>.

Yakushev holds that the formulation of the ministry's order violates the law since the VAK Legal Council and the VAK Presidium failed to provide an expert assessment of research

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<sup>43</sup> Artemova L.V. Op. cit. P. 242.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. on the Chair of Physical Anthropology at the Moscow University see: Mogilner M.B. Homo Imperii. Istoriya fizicheskoi antropologii v Rossii (konets XIX – nachalo XX v.). M.: NLO, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Yakushev A.N. Otkrytoe pis'mo // Elektronnaya biblioteka: Nauchno-informatsionnyi zhurnal "Obrazovanie. Nauka. Nauchnye kadry". URL: <http://niion.org/fail/otkr-pismo.pdf> (last accessed: 11.04.2014).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. P. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. P. 2-3.

results presented by the applicant and did not specify his violation of requirements to the higher doctoral dissertation stated in the Regulation on the Conferral of Academic Degrees (2011). In his response, Yakushev also calls the scientific community's attention to the fact that no criteria for research assessment were specified in the legislation. He claims that the opinion of the VAK Expert Board members cannot be decisive and substantiates this point in a number of articles published in February 2014<sup>48</sup>.

As an expert in history of academic degrees, Yakushev believes that "the opposing experts are making no comparison between the research results of theses; instead, moved by ignorance of historiographic literature on the issues under discussion and by a low standard of scholarly culture, they are expressing but their subjective opinions on the language and style of the theses"<sup>49</sup>. It is the "previously acquired new scientific knowledge of the solution of similar tasks" that should become the criterion for research assessment. For this purpose, "a database showing the development of the contents and forms of new scientific knowledge acquired earlier by other researchers or experts"<sup>50</sup> should be set up and qualitative and quantitative indices (parameters) should be elaborated to evaluate scholarly achievements and assessment methods [should be designed to appreciate] the research results of dissertations and their novelty<sup>51</sup>.

Further in the letter Yakushev presents the points of his thesis which were brought up for defense, accompanying each one with commentaries, references to sources and works published on them<sup>52</sup>. He concludes this demonstration with a suggestion that 99,9% of the findings "are novel to jurisprudence in general and to the Higher Attestation Commission in particular as they are scholarly achievements. The VAK Law Expert Board in its review did not adduce any arguments showing what other authors' research results we are supposed to have repeated in each point of the thesis."<sup>53</sup>

"The VAK Expert Board's unanimous voting" against Yakushev's thesis testifies, according to him, either to professional incompetence of the experts, or "to their implementing an instruction from VAK leaders 'to teach me a good lesson so as to scare away others.' But after all I am not a plebeian, I am able to stand up for myself because I know perfectly the trade which I have pursued since 15 years".

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<sup>48</sup> Yakushev A.N. Pokazateli nauchnykh rezul'tatov dissertatsii, kriterii, tekhnologiya i pokazateli ikh otsenki v Rossii: normativnye probely deystvuyushego Polozheniya. Sochi, 2014. URL: <http://niion.org/fail/aykyshev-pokazat.pdf> (last accessed: 11.04.2014); Idem. Zaklyucheniya i otzvyvy o dissertatsii: zakreplenie sub'ektivnosti opponenotov-ekspertov v deystvuyuschem Polozhenii. Sochi, 2014. URL: <http://niion.org/fail/yakushev-otz.pdf> (last accessed: 11.04.2014). Note that there is an obvious misprint in the date in the manuscript (2013 instead of 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Idem. Pokazateli nauchnykh rezul'tatov... P. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Idem. Zaklyucheniya i otzvyvy. P. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Idem. Otkrytoe pis'mo. P. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. P. 6-35.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. P. 35.

Yakushev then proceeds to refer to provisions of the law and to cite letters he received from the VAK and from the Ministry of Education and Science, showing where and how the VAK Law Expert Board, the VAK Presidium and the Ministry of Education and Science exceeded their authority and what rules of law were broken in the process. It turns out that after receiving a negative response, Yakushev wrote letters to the chairman of the VAK, to the deputy minister and the minister of science and education, to the prime minister and to the president of Russia<sup>54</sup>. He was refused the resolution and the shorthand report of the VAK Law Expert Board's meeting in which his thesis was discussed, causing his suspicion that these documents actually contain no information regarding the research assessment.

If Yakushev should get his degree and if his dissertation council weren't closed in which academic degrees were conferred for reading and retelling the laws and documents he copied at the RGIA, there would be no occasion for him to accuse the government of "having written and trumpeted all over the country about a modernization of the [existing] academic degree-awarding system based on false precepts of law, forcing dissertation councils and scientists into submission and now resenting the flood of low-quality theses"<sup>55</sup>. Many a chairmen of dissertation councils that were established in the 'jolly 90s' and are now being closed in process of reform could subscribe to these words of the offended scholar.

As a way to stop the mass production of theses and the cloning of academic degree holders in Russia, Yakushev suggests that accurate criteria and technique be designed for assessment of research results and achievements, letter templates be formulated for the correspondence on the issue, and – last but not least – disciplinary responsibility be imposed "for biased assessment of research results presented in dissertations and for abuse of authority by VAK expert boards and VAK Presidium members"<sup>56</sup>. The boards and the experts, he suggests, should provide for "high quality assessment of research results presented in dissertations" instead of "humiliating scientists by 'infamous posting' them on the Internet"<sup>57</sup>. The latter remark apparently alludes to Dissernet's revision of dissertations.

Yakushev finishes his expose with a question: "What 'reputation liability' is the chairman of the Higher Attestation Commission [...] talking about all the time? What modernization is the minister of education and science [...] talking about? Don't mislead the scientific community. Talking is one thing and doing things is another. Closeness, secretiveness, incompetence, absolute arbitrariness, closed-door deals, total irresponsibility in decision-making concerning the conferral of academic degrees – all these apply to the Higher Attestation Commission with the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 37-40.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. P. 40.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. P. 41.

<sup>57</sup> Yakushev A.N. Zaklyucheniya i otzvyvy. P. 16.

Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. What are you, colleagues, proud of, I wonder."

Summing up, founded in the time of deteriorated standards of state and peer reviewing of theses, the Yakushev school has generated a dead-end branch in studying the history of academic degrees. The retelling of published laws and archived bills seasoned with very approximate statistic data from Krichevskii's manuscript did not provide an increment in scientific knowledge. Its only legitimization was its political relevance that led to its institutionalization as a research program. Now that in course of modernization this institution was deprived of its reviewing authority this soap bubble burst.

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