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

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THE ACADEMIC STUDY IN THE 1990S AND 2000S OF THE HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF AWARDING ACADEMIC DEGREES AND TITLES IN RUSSIA²

This article reconstructs the activity of the '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 research areas are analyzed, and its achievements are evaluated. The article also 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 had been awarded.

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This article is devoted to the study of two issues: the post-Perestroika research on academic degrees in Russia, 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 (the 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 was an associate professor and professor at universities in Stavropol, Pyatigorsk and Nevinnomyssk. At present he is professor at the Russian International Innovative University in Sochi³. In recent years he has actively participated in discussing reform projects for scholarly certification and published expert estimates of current legislation in this sphere⁴.

Over the last twenty years Yakushev has developed (1994) and updated (2009) a comprehensive research program titled "The history of academic degrees in Russia from the eighteenth century to 1918" which is being run at the Postgraduate School for the History of Science and Technology which he founded especially 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 centuries⁵. Although this body of work may give the impression of carefully planned and carried-out research on the topic, historians of science and historians of

³ 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.

⁴ 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 the Awarding of Academic Degrees in Russia." (see: URL: 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 ekzamena po spetsialnoi distsipline // Nauchnye problemy gumanitarnykh issledovaniy. 2009. № 12. P. 109-114; Yakushev A.N. Opredelenie soderzhaniya kandidatskogo ekzamena po spetsialnoi 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.

⁵ Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie...P. 66-67.

universities still consider the history of awarding degrees in Russia to be poorly studied and have suggested new comprehensive projects for it⁶.

University archives are full of thesis discussions 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 Uvarov's and Speransky's attempts to introduce an accelerated procedure for awarding academic degrees.

How is that possible, given such large-scale research on the subject conducted by the Yakushev school? This article answers this question.

Relevance of the subject matter

Recent years have seen heated arguments in Russia about the scholarly review practice which were provoked by exposés of counterfeit theses and the 'plants' producing them. Dissertation councils losing their scholarly reputation, a devaluation of academic degrees and an crisis in the whole system of scholarly certification in modern Russia are common themes in these debates. Therefore, reform proposals have been put forward, and appeals to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation have been written⁷. 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 technology has promoted a rapid expansion of access to information which nobody anticipated 20 years ago. Relying on these resources, a Russian non-state organization called Dissernet is exposing cases of counterfeited theses and forged thesis defenses, to identify cases of 'wrongful appropriation' and to destroy the reputations of false academics. As a rule, Dissernet activists target government officials and high-ranking managers of higher educational institutions. They also 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 under suspicion, causing disappointment about government science policy⁸. What is the root of the problem?

⁶ See, e.g.: *Mir istorika: Istoriograficheskii 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 uchenyh stepenyakh i o tom, kak dissertatsiya v Rossii obretala nauchnyu i prakticheskuyu znachimost' // Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie. 2013. № 4. P. 84-107.*

⁷ 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. Sotsiologiya. Menedzhment"*. URL: <http://ecsocman.hse.ru/expert/?theme=34859892> (last accessed: 11.04.2014).

⁸ See, e.g.: *Rostovtsev A. Istoriya odnogo podloga, 2.04.2014 // Dissernet. URL: http://www.dissernet.org/publications/story_podlog.htm* (last accessed: 11.04.2014).

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 the 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 hierarchy as specified by the Table of ranks. Therefore, scholarly degrees had their apanages, which gave them social prestige, but, promoted loyalty to the government who might facilitate or complicate, accelerate or slow down the attainment of degrees.

The correlation between academic degrees and state offices and privileges resulted in research focusing on certain sources and issues. Studies in the history of academic degrees (Andreyev, Ivanov, Petrov, Yakushev)⁹ typically draw on laws and memoirs. Drawing on legislation meant that researchers focused on tracking changes in legal norms, i.e. on statutory acts and their contents, for example the scope of degree examinations, disputations, the confirmation of degrees, while memoirs and other archival documents served as an illustration of each legal norm's (in)efficiency.

The birth of the school

The break up of the USSR, the sharp decrease in the prestige of science and in the standard of living provoked a mass emigration of scientists and stimulated the study in the 1990s of the pre-1917 history of scholarly certification in the Russian Empire. The Ministry of Education in its federal programs of education development urged "the concentration of research efforts on studying the legal regulation of vocational training and the certification of scholars in Russia from a historical angle"¹⁰. And the appeal was heard.

In 1994 and 1995 Yakushev authored a comprehensive research program titled "The history of academic degrees in Russia from the eighteenth century to 1918." Bearing in mind the ministry's call, he intended during the implementation of his program "to fill the [...] gap [in the study of this subject] in Russian history and jurisprudence"¹¹. At the same time, he identified two aspects in the existing approaches to the subject matter, 'historical' and 'legal-historical', noting that the former clearly prevailed¹². In his opinion, the historians Eimontova, Ivanov, and Sobolev

⁹ 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...

¹⁰ Yakushev A.N. Organizatsionno-pravovoi analiz... P. 7.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 69.

¹² Ibid. P. 8.

"concentrated on studying the implementation of the legislation that regulated the activity of academic institutions"¹³, while "the legal-historical aspect of the vocational training and certification of scholars 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"¹⁴.

Yakushev's program ran for 12 years and stipulated research in areas such as:

- The prerequisites and origins of the founding of vocational training institutions for scholars and educators and for awarding academic degrees in pre-revolutionary Russia,
- The legal and the regulatory framework of vocational training and awarding academic degrees to scholars in Russia [viewed] from a historical angle, including ideas, bills and normative legal acts for certain time spans, and the legislative fixation of concepts,
- The composition and activity of faculty meetings, university councils and academic conferences, awarding academic degrees at Russian universities and academies from the time of their establishment until 1918,
- The contents of oral, written and practical examinations for applicants at Russian universities and academies: development, issues, and conclusions,
- The main forms of the vocational training of scholars at universities and academies of the Russian Empire: development, issues, conclusions,
- The submission and defense of theses, the confirmation of defense outcomes, and the bibliography of doctoral, master and higher doctoral dissertations by academic discipline at Russian universities and academies from the time of their establishment till 1918,
- Historical and statistical data on the results of vocational training and the awarding of academic degrees in the history of universities and academies of the Russian Empire,
- The inauguration ceremonies and festivities on the occasion of a thesis defense and the awarding of a degree in the history of universities and academies of Western Europe and Russia from a legal historical aspect,
- Developing the software for cataloguing bibliographic data on scholars at universities and academies of the Russian Empire¹⁵.

¹³ Ibid. P. 52.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 53-54.

¹⁵ Ibid. P. 70-76.

Yakushev's 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 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 university annual performance reports"¹⁶, Krichevskii succeeded in compiling a bibliographic reference 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 title with all explanations relating to it, (3) the publisher's imprint, (4) pagination, (5) the place of the previous publication (as a rule, prints were submitted for defense), (6) the defense date, (7) discipline, (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 the defense published in the press"¹⁷.

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 by discipline; the time interval between the defense of a master thesis and doctoral thesis; the scholar's age at the time of their master and doctor defenses; thesis migration (when a thesis was prepared at one university and defended at another); the evolution of thesis volume"¹⁸.

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 Yakushev¹⁹. Within the framework of his federal program, Yakushev published several parts of this voluminous manuscript, supplementing them with new information or providing them with commentaries²⁰.

Yakushev saw a way of implementing his research project by founding a postgraduate and postdoctoral research school for the history of science and technology. In his candidate's

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

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* S. 6-7.

¹⁹ Yakushev A.N., Kuznetsov A.V. *Istoriya russkoi disertatsii v issledovaniyakh G.G. Krichevskogo // Omskii nauchnyi vestnik*. 2007. № 3. P. 7-9.

²⁰ 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.

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 activity of the Ministry of Public Education; the legislation regulating scholarly certification; certification at 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)²¹.

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.

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 Institute²². However, the majority of the numerous works he cited in his dissertation were short-run publications that became 'rare books' right after they were printed. Out of the 25 completed theses²³, the Russian State Library only has 18²⁴. For some of these, only the main texts are

²¹ 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.

²² Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie... P. 66-67.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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 pricuzhdeniya 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 pravoznaniya: 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,

available but no abstracts, which are supposed to be submitted to the Russian State Library's database although during the period under discussion degree applicants did not always fulfill the requirements of the High Attestation Commission (VAK) or submit the complete sets of texts in due manner. For example, Klimov's higher doctoral thesis²⁵ is not available at the Russian State Library, and 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 2001²⁶.

Abstracts of Apolskii's and Makiev's theses are accessible on the Internet, but the titles of Apolsky's abstract and thesis differ from each other²⁷. It is only due to mentions made by Dyomin's and Kuznetsov's candidate theses in Yakushev's higher doctoral dissertation that I was able to identify their titles²⁸, the texts being not available in any library. No data was available on Karamyan's dissertation. Three theses were written within the framework of Yakushev's program but with other academic advisors²⁹.

Yakushev himself in 2001 finished a higher doctoral dissertation in jurisprudence and successfully defended it before the dissertation council in Nevinnomysk ("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)"³⁰). However, the Higher Attestation Commission (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 the impression of a well-functioning assembly-line production of standard dissertations: while titles and authors'

farmatsevticheskikh i veterinarnykh uchenykh stepeni v Rossii (1747-1918): dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Rostov n/D, 2004; Napso M.B. Poryadok prisvoeniya uchenykh zvaniy v Rossii (SSSR): 1804-1995 (istoriko-pravovoi aspekt): dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Nevinnomysk, 2002; Tropina O.N. Realizatsiya zakonodatel'stva o podgotovke i attestatsii nauchnykh kadrov na primere yuridicheskogo fakul'teta Kazanskogo universiteta (1804-1918): dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Nevinnomysk, 2004; Voropaev I.G. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya uchenykh stepeni v Rossii i SSSR, 1802-1995: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Nevinnomysk, 2000.

²⁵ Klimov A.Yu. Istoriya sozdaniya Polozhenii o proizvodstve v uchenye stepeni v Rossiiskoi imperii (1747-1837 gg.): dis. ... d-ra ist.nauk. Pyatigorsk, 2008.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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/teoria-prava/istorija-uchenij-o-prestuplenii-v-dissertatsionnykh-issledovaniyah-universitetov.html> (last accessed: 12.01.2014).

²⁸ 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. Nevinnomysk, 2007. See: Yakushev A.N. Normativno-pravovoe regulirovanie...P. 391, 392.

²⁹ Bulakh K.V. Razvitie psikhologicheskoi myisli v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh Rossiiskoi imperii XIX – nachala XX vv.: dis. ... kand. psikh. nauk. Karachaevs, 2003; Kononova S.V. Stanovlenie i razvitie gosudarstvennoi sistemy podgotovki nauchnykh kadrov cherez aspiranturu v Rossii: 1918-2004: dis.... kand. ped. nauk. Nevinnomysk, 2005; Loba V.E. Doktrina o nakazanii v dissertatsionnykh issledovaniyakh universitetov Rossiiskoi imperii: genesis i razvitie: dis. ... kand. jurid. nauk. Belgorod, 2010.

³⁰ Yakushev A.N. Poryadok prisuzhdeniya...

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

All of these dissertations contain extensive quotations from legislative and archival sources, numerous references to Krichevskii's works, lists of branches of science filling many pages, lists of thesis themes, statistical and comparative tables, annual ministry surveys on the number of academic degrees awarded, etc. In the conclusions, the high value of the 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 the construal of causal relationships.

Each thesis contains elaborate recommendations for the 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 the history of academic degrees in the first half of the nineteenth century

In what follows the focus is 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 dissertations³¹.

Studying government regulations of 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 largely drawing on normative documents what we get is only a history of political representations.

³¹ 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.*

The research by participants of the Yakushev program relies on a limited set of sources that includes (1) Krichevskii's manuscript, (2) selected texts from the Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire and from collections of the Ministry of Public Education's resolutions and orders³², (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)³³ which reflect the discussion of the regulations of academic degree conferral. 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-era names of archives, for example in theses devoted to the Kazan university³⁴ they refer to the Central State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan for what has been called the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan since 1996. In a 2002 thesis³⁵, the Leningrad State Historical Archive is referred to but the archive changed its name in 1991 to the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg. 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 Republic³⁶, and the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences as the Archive of the USSR Academy of Sciences³⁷. Such references are probably due to footnotes being transferred without being checked.

Characteristic of the Yakushev school is the 19th-century-style quoting at length from primary source texts without any source criticism whatsoever. The lack of historical context leads to misinterpretations and factual errors. For instance, Tropina's thesis describes the certification procedure of the lawyer Kambek and mentions Schneider's review based on which the applicant was rejected³⁸. According to the thesis, Schneider was a professor at 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 of Public Education Uvarov³⁹.

The scholarship of the Yakushev program shows a poor knowledge of the university document flow, which results in misconceptions of the value of different sources of information.

³² 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 akademiakh Rossii uchenykh stepenei magistra i doktora (1871-1995 gg.)*: Istorico-pravovye dokumenty. M., 1995.

³³ Yakushev A.N. *O proizvodstve v uchenye stepeni v Rossii (1802-1917 gg.)*: Ukazatel del RDIA. SPb., 1995.

³⁴ Khokhlova D.A. *Op. cit.*, Tropina O.N. *Op. cit.*

³⁵ Napso M.B. *Op. cit.*

³⁶ Goroshko O.N. *Op. cit.*, Artemova L.V. *Op. cit.*

³⁷ Gyulushanyan E.G. *Op. cit.*

³⁸ Tropina O.N. *Op. cit.* P. 120.

³⁹ In detail see: Vishlenkova E.A., Ilina K.A. *Ob uchenykh stepenyakh...* P. 98-101.

A reconstruction of the opinions of professors concerning the conferral of academic degrees by drawing on documents from the archive of the Ministry of Public Education alone is impossible⁴⁰. 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 archives⁴¹. It is only the so-called "general opinion of the university council" and the "dissenting opinions" (if any) that were sent to the ministry.

In terms of historiographic traditions, all authors regard themselves as belonging to a line that goes from Krichevskii to Yakushev. Works by Ivanov, Eimontova, sometimes Petrov, and their fellow researchers who defended their theses under this program are cited. Having confined themselves to their own findings and by self-citing⁴², the project participants find themselves on a self-made 'desert island'. The accomplishments of researchers working in other Russian universities, not to mention the western scholarship which has recently seen much progress in university studies and in the history of academic disciplines, have been ignored.

Despite research into the history of concepts being on the program agenda, its participants take liberties with terminology. Quite often, modern concepts are substituted for historic ones. For example, Klimov's candidate 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 corresponds to that of Master in imperial Russia⁴³.

When writing about the history of university disciplines and training courses, Artemova's thesis enumerated them, without going into details of the cognitive and institutional development of the respective areas of knowledge. As a result of such a simplified approach, the research draws the incorrect conclusion that "changes in the names of chairs at departments determined changes in names of discipline groups, and not vice versa. The Ministry of Public Education played the key role in the development of discipline groups"⁴⁴. It is true, the establishment of each chair at universities was corroborated by the legislation, but, as a study of the minutes of various university 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

⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² See: Kagramanova T.I. Op. cit.; Lovyannikova N.V. Op. cit.

⁴³ Klimov A.Yu. Istoriya kandidatskikh examenov... P. 30-31.

⁴⁴ Artemova L.V. Op. cit. P. 242.

practical importance of the science branch at issue. Further, the history of universities shows cases of chairs being established by public initiative⁴⁵.

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 VAK 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" on the website *Education. Science. Scholarly labor*⁴⁶, in the "Electronic Library" section. The "Response" is 44 pages and is in the form of a scientific article, with a summary and keywords, claiming that VAK and the ministry exceeded their authority when assessing the results of the research presented in Yakushev's thesis.

According to Yakushev, such a genre as a response to reviewers and critics emerged in the Russian Empire as a representation of "the open and free discussion between the examinee and the reviewers concerning their assessment of the research results presented in his thesis"⁴⁷. 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 diploma⁴⁸.

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 the research results presented by the applicant and did not specify the violation of the requirements to the higher doctoral dissertation as stated in the Regulation on the Conferral of Academic Degrees (2011). Yakushev also calls the scientific community's attention to the fact that no criteria for research assessment are specified in the legislation. He claims that the opinion of

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* P. 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 2-3.

VAK Expert Board members cannot be decisive and substantiates this point in a number of articles published in February 2014⁴⁹.

As an expert in the history of academic degrees, Yakushev believes that "the opposing experts are making no comparison between the research results of the theses; instead, moved by ignorance of historiographic literature on the issues under discussion and by the low standard of scholarly culture, they are expressing their subjective opinions on the language and style of the theses"⁵⁰. It is the "previously acquired scientific knowledge of the solution of similar hypotheses" that should be the criterion for research assessment. For this purpose, "a database showing the development of the content and forms of scientific knowledge acquired earlier by other researchers or experts"⁵¹ should be set up and qualitative and quantitative parameters should be elaborated to evaluate scholarly achievements, and assessment methods [should be designed to evaluate] the research results of dissertations and their novelty⁵².

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 them⁵³. He concludes that 99.9% of the findings "are novel to jurisprudence in general and to VAK in particular as they are scholarly achievements. VAK Law Expert Board in its review did not adduce any arguments showing what other research results we are supposed to have repeated in each point of the thesis."⁵⁴

"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 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 for 15 years".

Yakushev refers to the provisions of the law and cites letters he received from VAK and from the Ministry of Education and Science, showing where and how VAK Law Expert Board, VAK Presidium and the Ministry of Education and Science exceeded their authority and what laws were broken in the process. After receiving a negative response, Yakushev wrote letters to the chairman of VAK, the deputy minister and the Minister of Science and Education, the Prime

⁴⁹ 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).

⁵⁰ Idem. Pokazateli nauchnykh rezul'tatov... P. 14.

⁵¹ Idem. Zaklyucheniya i otzvyvy. P. 14.

⁵² Idem. Otkrytoe pis'mo. P. 5.

⁵³ Ibid. P. 6-35.

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 35.

Minister and the President of Russia⁵⁵. He was refused resolution and the shorthand report of VAK Law Expert Board's meeting in which his thesis was discussed, making him suspicious that these documents actually contain no information regarding the research assessment.

If Yakushev had received his degree and if his dissertation council had not been closed, there would be no occasion for him to accuse the government of "having written and trumpeted all over the country about the 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"⁵⁶. Many chairmen of dissertation councils that were established in the 1990s and are now being closed in a process of reform would subscribe to Yakushev's views.

As a way to stop the mass production of theses and the cloning of academic degree holders in Russia, Yakushev suggests that a method and accurate criteria be designed for the assessment of research results and achievements, letter templates be formulated for the correspondence on the issue, and disciplinary responsibility be imposed "for biased assessment of research results presented in dissertations and for the abuse of authority by VAK expert boards and VAK Presidium members"⁵⁷. The boards and the experts, he suggests, should provide "high quality assessment of research results presented in dissertations" instead of "humiliating scientists by the 'infamous posting' of them on the Internet"⁵⁸. 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 VAK [...] talking about all the time? What modernization is the Minister of Education and Science [...] talking about? Do not mislead the scientific community. Talking is one thing and doing is another. Closeness, secretiveness, incompetence, absolute arbitrariness, closed-door deals, total irresponsibility in the decision-making concerning the conferral of academic degrees – all these apply to VAK and to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. What are you, colleagues, proud of, I wonder?"

Summing up, founded in a time of deteriorating standards of state and peer reviewing of theses, the Yakushev school has generated a dead-end branch in the study of the history of academic degrees. The retelling of published laws and archived bills seasoned with very approximate statistical data from Krichevskii's manuscript has not provided an increment in scientific knowledge. Its only legitimization was the political relevance that led to its

⁵⁵ Ibid. P. 37-40.

⁵⁶ Ibid. P. 40.

⁵⁷ Ibid. P. 41.

⁵⁸ Yakushev A.N. Zaklyucheniya i otzvyvy. P. 16.

institutionalization as a research program. Now that in the course of modernization this institution was deprived of its reviewing authority this bubble has burst.

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