THE SOVIET HISTORY NARRATIVES ON THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING

HISTORICAL INTERNET FORUMS (2004-2020)

By

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Abstract

In this thesis, I study the narratives about the Soviet past, which are reproduced by participants in Russian-speaking historical Internet forums. Internet forums, the practice of people communicating while using Internet access, is part of the web history. Researchers identify two eras of web development: 1.0 and 2.0. The web in its first version did not have social media. People had to invent communication practices beyond e-mail. Forums with their own technical infrastructure and engines made it possible to create local communities in the global network. At the very beginning of forums' existence, messages on them went one after another, it was difficult to create coherent topic-related threads. The forums that are the sources of this study are structured into sections, subsections, and topics. This thesis examines the history of these forums: who and under what circumstances created such platforms for discussing history?

An important part of this thesis is the analysis of the language practices used by the participants in the discussions, and a review of the sources of their knowledge. Discourses, along with language practices on forums, are formed both by the rules of communication and by the practices of using these rules and changing them.

Soviet narratives were chosen for study because they are on the borderline between memory as personal experience and memory as a narrative of state history. What topics are covered by the participants of the form? What arguments are used? What influences the formation of the narrative more: group trauma or individual? I tried to answer these questions in my thesis.

Acknowledgments

Preface

This thesis was written during the war — the brutal war started by Russia against Ukraine. On the morning of February 24, I woke up to the news that the country in which I lived for 15 years was launching rockets into a neighboring independent state, shelling the families of my colleagues and acquaintances. In Russia, one cannot call a war a war. But the CEU taught me that it is necessary to protect the values of an open society based on human rights, so I will never call this a "conflict" or a "special operation." I am not just condemning this war; it is a truism. I now consider it my duty to do everything possible so that it stops, and the authoritarian government of Russia is held accountable.

I am very sad and hurt that the rector of my previous university signed a letter in which he supported the war. When I studied at the HSE, I was engaged in student activism, to which I was always told that "the university is out of politics." Now, these same people put the symbols of war on their avatars on social media. Fellow historians have asked what is the point of studying public perceptions of history, which I have been doing. I hope that after the use of the historical argument by the president of Russia as a justification for the invasion, my colleagues no longer have any questions about this.

This is the text of the war. My condolences to all Ukrainian families. This is the responsibility of Russia and all its citizens, including me.

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Introduction

The Internet and the web are constantly evolving, becoming the daily practices of millions of people. People are making their track on the web by producing content on social media, and by communicating. The need for communication provoked during the days of web 1.0 the creation of special communities that communicated with each other, using access to the network. Such websites are called Internet forums: they are available to every web user. If you find a forum, you can register on it and start chatting with the participants. If topics and sections are open to people who are not registered on the forum, anyone can view the discussion. Russian-language historical Internet forums as sources represent the captured historical narrative trace that Russian-speaking users of these forums left during discussions, which allows us to study what narratives people use to discuss the past. Narratives about Soviet history are interesting in this context not just as an example of the reproduction of a narrative, but as a special temporal unit that is on the border of memory as a personal experience and memory as a narrative.

Literature Overview.

Not many works have been written on the topic under consideration. There are three groups of historiography that are considered useful.

The first group: media studies of memory on the Internet.

This rather wide research layer is represented by works on the study of commemorative practices and their changes in connection with the emergence of the global network. It can be argued that the Internet has significantly expanded the opportunities for the extensive development of such[1]. It seemed that the Internet offered new opportunities for building

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[1] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading, eds. *Save as... Digital Memories* (Chippenham; Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

their own narratives, different from state ones[2], but such statements can be considered disputed: people not only do not build their own historical narratives, but they also either repeat the usual ones or create radical or even racist ones[3]. But such a struggle of binary oppositions is still far from the truth, as studies come to conflicting conclusions. So, for example, V. Zvereva resorts to other binary oppositions, contrasting "amateurs" (users of the social network VKontakte) and "professional historians", and such a contrast often leads to a declaration of the author's unsupported ideas about the methods of cognition of history by the latter, Moreover, the "wars of memory" are studied on the example of antagonistic groups: those who come out with the approval and glorification of the actions of the ROA and OUN-UPA, and those who condemn them[4].

Among the media studies of memory, the article by D. Khlevnyuk, which studies the phenomenon of the Stalinists in the social network VKontakte. The author deliberately does not explore the wars of admirers and opponents, trying to study the phenomenon of exclusively admirers, highlighting their heterogeneity (on examination, it turns out that Stalin's fans do not resemble each other)[5].

The second group: studies where data from Internet forums are used as a source base.

An unusual work in the Public History paradigm can be considered an article by A. Makhov, in which he considers discussions on historical topics on the E1.RU Internet

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2 Volodymyr Kulik, "War of Memories in the Ukrainian Media: Diversity of Identities, Political Confrontation, and Production Technologies". In *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*, ed. Ellen Rutten, Julie Fedor, Vera Zvereva. (London: Routledge, 2013), 63-81.

3 Paulo Drinot, "Website of Memory: The War of the Pacific (1879-84) in the Global Age of Youtube", *Memory Studies,* 4, no. 4 (2011): 370-385.

4 Vera Zvereva, "Historical Events and the Social Network "VKontakte", *East European Memory Studies*, no. 7 (2011): 1-6.

5 Daria Khlevnyuk, "Narrowcasting Collective Memory Online: 'Liking' Stalin in Russian Social Media", *Media, Culture & Society*, 41, no. 3 (2019): 317-31.

forum, more precisely in one of its subsections – "Communication of the Auto Club". However, discussions about the past and everyday knowledge about the past of forum users are the subject of the author's research. The author's conclusions are comparable to the original theses - everyday knowledge about the past is reproduced through three patterns: nation-state, group and personal[6].

Some studies draw readers' attention to various aspects of user experience on Internet forums. For example, some Orthodox Jews used the Internet forum to ask anonymous questions about their own experiences that went beyond religious dogma, thereby gaining knowledge of the social and physical "I"[7]. Users of forums dedicated to mixed martial arts talk about their emotions, the past day, share information about fights, their history, and various techniques[8]. It is important that J. Hopton's article is the only one that offers a special method of using Internet forums as sources for oral history. The author substantiates this by the fact that Internet forums are a form of communication. But these studies do not propose to classify themselves as historical.

The third group: theoretical and practical work using web sources, epistemological reflection.

The historiographical group is represented by the publications of various scholars edited by Niels Brügger, who devoted a lot of time to theoretical constructions[9].

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[6] Alexander Makhov, "Povsednevnoye znaniye o proshlom v diskussiyakh na veb-forumakh" ["Everyday Life Knowledge of the Past in Discussions on the Internet Forum"], *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya* [New and Contemporary History], no. 1 (2015): 141-54.

[7] J.T. Baumel-Schwartz "Frum Surfing: Orthodox Jewish Women's Internet Forums as a Historical and Cultural Phenomenon". Journal of Jewish Identities 2, no. 1 (2009): 1-30.

[8] J. Hopton "Mixed Martial Arts and Internet Forums: A Case Study in Treating Internet Sources as Oral History". Oral History 35, no. 2 (2007): 91-99.

[9] Niels Brügger, "The Archived Website and Website Philology", *Nordicom Review*, 29, no. 2 (2008): 155-175; Idem, "Website History and the Website as an Object of Study", *New Media & Society,* 11, no. 1 (2009): 115-132; Idem, "When the Present Web is Later the Past: Web Historiography, Digital History, and Internet Studies", *Historical Social Research*, 37, no. 4 (2012): 102-117.

Summarizing what was written in the articles, we can dwell on the following theses that are important for our study. Firstly, there is a well-developed classification of sources by type: digitally born (originally conscious in the digital environment and existing in it), digitized (originally created on a material object, and then digitized using special technology) and digitally reborn (originally created in a digital environment, but then disappeared from the current web, but restored using web archives)[10]. Secondly, it seems that all possible features of the technical work of web archives are listed and critically comprehended.

The study of the memory of the First World War using big data, when researchers, using the hyperlinked nature of the Internet, have created graphs that show the connection between sites that talk about the First World War[11]. However, this did not lead the authors to any serious conclusions about how the collective memory on the web was transformed. Nevertheless, this analytical approach allowed authors to show connections on the Internet with graphics.

A special place in the historiography of this thesis is occupied by books that largely influenced the approaches in this work to the study of everyday knowledge about the past.

Firstly, this is a book by I.M. Savelyeva and A.V. Poletaev, which raises the question of the past in general, of the time frame and its images. The authors propose to separate temporal ideas, knowledge about the past in different universes and social scientific knowledge about the past[12]. Such a division will help us to trace what temporal representations exist among users of Internet forums and whether it is connected with representations of the past in different universes. Secondly, the work of R. Rosenzweig and

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[10] Idem "Understanding the Archived Web as a Historical Source". In The SAGE Handbook of Web History, edited by Niels Brügger and Ian Milligan, 16-29. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2018.

[11] V. Beaudouin, Z. Pehlivan and P. Stirling. "Exploring the Memory of the First World War Using Web Archives: Web Graphs Seen from Different Angles". In The SAGE Handbook of Web History, edited by Niels Brügger and Ian Milligan, 441-463. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2018.

[12] A. Poletaev and I. Savelieva, Teoria istoricheskogo znaniya [The Theory of Historical Knowledge]. (Saint-Petersburg: Aleteya, 2007), 74-75.

D. Thelen written in the public history paradigm. After interviewing 1,500 Americans, the authors concluded that everyday knowledge about the past is used in life within certain patterns: nation-state, local (group) and personal[13]. Thirdly, the study by A. Assman, in which she reflected and theoretically systematized approaches to the consideration of commemorative practices. A. Assman also divided the memory of the past into different groups: individual, social and cultural[14].

Research objectives:

1. Give context of creation of the historical Internet forums.

2. Determine how narratives about the Soviet past are constructed on Russian-language Internet forums.

3. Find what are the sources for argumentation during the process of *agonism*.

4. Explore Internet forums as communities through their history.

Hypothesis.

My hypothesis is that with the help of web archives it is possible to carry out a comparative analysis of public knowledge and discourses about the Soviet past on various Internet forums. My key hypothesis is that the history of the Soviet Union is now on the verge of memory and knowledge. This position distinguishes it from other topics discussed on the forums. Thus, the approaches of public history will be used in the study of public knowledge, and a comparative approach in the study of the peculiarities of constructing narratives in forums and memory studies to understand the genesis of narratives. Moreover, I am interested in developing new approaches in history for using web sources. Therefore, I often turn to interdisciplinary research.

Methodology.

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[13] Rosenzweig R., Thelen D. The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 11-13.
[14] A. Assmann, Dlinnaja ten' proshlogo: memorial'naja kul'tura i istoricheskaja politika [The Long Shadow of the Past: Cultures of Memory and the Politics of History]. (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2014), 17-51.

The process of working with sources.

I use *web search* to find discussions on "current web" Internet forums. I consistently study various discussions on Soviet history on the platforms, after which they are *archived on the web - saving an invariant copy of the page*. The copy I archived is given in footnotes that one can follow to see the item in the web archive. *Web archive search* is used by us to work with forums, access to which is currently only possible through the web archives.

Discussion analysis process.

The canons for the study of discourses are the works of Meyer, Michael and Dijk, Teun Adrianus van, in which they develop and develop methods of analysis[15]. However, this thesis develops the ideas of classical philosophers who raised the question of language as a formative and essential element of structural ontology. Michel Foucault suggested that researchers turn their attention to discourse, and not to the textual heritage of the past. A set of discursive events form a discursive unity[16]. From this follow the fundamental questions that Michel Foucault asks: how is discourse formed and why is it the way it is? Ludwig Wittgenstein in his late period of creativity believed that language games are not just basic replicas, but such language constructions that mean not only themselves, but also the actions that accompany the language game[17]. The study of language games can help us in the analysis of discourse as a large sum of textual and non-textual features. Considering language games between users, we rely on what J.-F. Lyotard's theory in "The State of Postmodernity", in which J.-F. Lyotard continued the ideas of the L. Wittgenstein. Within the framework of this theory, J.-F. Lyotard distinguishes the forms of statements: *denotative* (calling for dialogue, discussion)[18], *performative* (the meaning of which coincides with the statement itself and does not involve discussion)[19], *prescriptive* (the recipient must complete the stated installation)[20] and *technical* (their validity lies in efficiency)[21]. Moreover, all these

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[15] T. van Dijk Discourse and Power. (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); M. Meyer and R. Wodak Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2001).

[16] M. Foucault The Archaeology of Knowledge. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 21-40.

[17] L. Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 8-11.

[18] J.-F. Lyotard The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 9-11.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Op. cit., 16-18

forms of statements can be combined, pass from one form to another, and even imitate itself through *paralogy* or *terror*. An important part of the existence of an utterance are *prescriptions* (rules of statement-making)[22] or even *metaprescriptions* (rules for playing a language game)[23]. All these forms of language games acquire in the process of *agonism* - a common dispute, participation for the purpose of confrontation.

I use this method because it reflects the essential functioning of Internet forums. They are built on the metaprescription that the user, by registering or entering a discussion on the forum, confirms agreement with the prescriptions - *the rules of the forum*. If the user does not follow the rules of the language game, his messages are deleted, his account is blocked, which excludes him from the language game (terror[24]).

Sources.

Forums were selected based on three indicators. First, an important indicator was the total number of messages left by users on an Internet forum. Secondly, since it is not always possible to find out the exact year of creation of a web page, the first saved copy of the forum is taken as a conditional "beginning". Moreover, if the forum is the direct successor of another forum (user data, messages and topics were transferred from one address to another), then the first saved copy of the ancestor forum is considered the establishment date. Forums created in 2010 and later were not included in the sample, since social media are actively developing at this time, and forums become only part of the social interaction space on the Internet, but not its basis. Thirdly, the number of saved copies of Internet forums was considered to minimize the possible loss of information. The ancestor forum data is given separately.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Op. cit., 23.

[23] Op. cit., 65.

[24] Op. sit., 46.

Web Forum	Messages	Saved copies	The first saved copy	Establishment date
Новый Геродот[25] (New Herodotus)	226 734	313 693	27.05.2004	Spring 2004
Новый Геродот (old)[26] (New Herodotus)	165 224	126 060	21.04.2003	20.04.2003
Historica[27]	900 384	239 225	11.04.2005	11.03.2004
Historica (old)[28]	70 001	15	19.03.2004	11.03.2004
История.ру[29] (Istoriya.ru)	564 843	376 403	30.08.2007	21.04.2007
forum.ISTORICHKA.RU[30]	498 026	9 353	05.08.2005	unidentified
Eurasica[31]	397 600	91 064	02.01.2010	31.01.1999
Eurasica (old)[32]	6 718	42 623	08.04.2003	31.01.1999

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[25] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20051201000000*/gerodot.ru
[26] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20051201000000*/http://history-forum.spb.ru/
[27] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20051201000000*/https://historica.ru
[28] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20041101000000*/http://bardguild.com1.ru/
[29] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?act=idx
[30] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl
[31] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20041101000000*/https://forum-eurasica.ru
[32] Link to the web archive: http://web.archive.org/web/20040302024716/http://www.kyrgyz.ru:80/board/

Chapter I. History of Russian-speaking historical internet forums.

Why are people creating historical forums? It is difficult to determine the aim pursued by the creators of the forums without a deep knowledge of the "alien self". However, Internet archives allow one to penetrate the deep past of the RuNet[33]; and try to restore a picture of what was the web ten or fifteen years ago.

In this chapter, I will try to answer the following questions. Who were the authors of Russian historical Internet forums? What preceded the creation of historical Internet forums? What goals were pursued by the creators of historical Internet forums? How have the rules of Internet forums changed through time? How have the functionality and capabilities of forum users changed? How is the vertical power implemented, and what features of its functioning can be traced on various Internet forums?

1.1. Creators of Russian historical Internet forums.

Who is the creator of the forum? In a strictly technical sense, the owner is the owner of the hosting, the person who owns the domain name. It is purchased on special sites, and possession is extended for money. Therefore, if the creator or owner suddenly disappears without transferring administration and ownership rights to other administrators or moderators, then the forum may simply disappear, as the domain name possession will expire.

By going to the Internet forum "New Herodotus"[34], we will not find any data about the creator or the forum team. All this data is available only to registered users. We were unable to complete the registration form because the service was unavailable. Moreover,

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[33] RuNet – is the name of the Russian segment of the web, most often in the .ru cluster.

[34] Internet forum "New Herodotus" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20200529130023/http://gerodot.ru/

since the January 2022 forum is not available for Internet users because the domain usage period passed. The only way to access is Internet Archive[35].

By searching "New Herodotus" in the web archive one could find something interesting - many different web-websites related thematically or by name: http://liberea.gerodot.ru, http://tochka.gerodot.ru, http://vlastitel.com.ru, http://rec.gerodot.ru/. One way or another, all these resources are in an abandoned state. This is proved by the "News" section on each of them. Most of the latest entries date back to 2009[36]. The exception is the portal "Great Rulers of the Past", where the latest news in a special section were published in 2004, and on the main page - in 2006.

The following link should be noted: http://history-forum.spb.ru/, by clicking which it gives an error. But the Internet Archive show us that this page was used to host the "New Herodotus" forum we are considering, the last readable copy of which is dated September 10, 2012[37], and the first - April 21, 2003[38]. At the same address, one can read the first post on the forum from Mikhail[39], which reports that "the Open General Historical Forum "New

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[35] From a technical point of view, the Internet Archive is self-sufficient. It saves pages both manually and automatically. The Internet Archive automatically saves a snapshot of a page if it is visited a certain number of times or if it appeared in the search results and was stored in the search engine's cache.

[36] Section "News" websites: "Point of view" [Electronic resource] URL: http://tochka.gerodot.ru/news.htm.

Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200522150605/http://tochka.gerodot.ru/news.htm, "Liberia of the

"New Herodotus" [Electronic resource] URL: http://liberea.gerodot.ru/news.htm. Saved copy:

https://web.archive.org/web/20200522150911/http://liberea.gerodot.ru/news.htm, "Great rulers of the past"

[Electronic resource] URL: http://vlastitel.com.ru/news.html. Saved copy:

https://web.archive.org/web/20200522151108/http://vlastitel.com.ru/news.html, "Reconstruction" [Electronic

resource] URL: http://rec.gerodot.ru/. Saved copy:

https://web.archive.org/web/20200522151318/http://rec.gerodot.ru/.

[37] Forum "New Herodotus" (old version) [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20120910144931/http://www.history-forum.spb.ru/.

[38] Forum "New Herodotus" (old version) [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030421215537/http://history-forum.spb.ru/.

[39] Ibid.

Herodotus"" was established. We can observe that the forum originally had a tree structure, with posts being posted one after the other.

Let's return to Mikhail and the other people. If we open the "About the project" section of the old version of the "New Herodotus" forum, we will find references to Mikhail and Yuri[40], as well as that the project was established by the creators of the portals "Great Rulers of the Past" and "Ancient World". Yuri Tumkovsky and a certain Yulli (pseudonym) appear in the creators of the "Ancient World" portal[41], and in the "Great Rulers of the Past" - Mikhail Kovalchuk[42]. With the help of simple manipulations through the "Forum Members" section of the old version of "New Herodotus", I discovered the archived personal website of Mikhail Kovalchuk[43], and through a search at the new address of the "Ancient World" project, the mysterious Yulli - Yuliana Uletova was declassified[44]. Yuliana Uletova was also the administrator of the websites "Point of View"[45], "Liberia of the "New Herodotus""[46].

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[40] Section "About the project" of the forum "New Herodotus" (old version). [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030618090929/http://www.history-forum.spb.ru/about.htm.

[41] Section "About the website" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20010406081328/http://www.ancient.holm.ru/topics/add/about.htm.

[42] Section "About the project" of the portal "Great Rulers of the Past" [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040709105516/http://vlastitel.com.ru/o.html.

[43] Website with contacts of Mikhail Kovalchuk. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050213091223/http://kovalchuk.ru:80/.

[44] Section "About the website" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040129155040/http://www.ancient.ru/topics/add/about.htm.

[45] Section "About the project" of the portal "Point of View". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20191206114831/http://tochka.gerodot.ru/about.htm.

[46] Section "About the project" of the portal "Liberia "New Herodotus"". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20191019084910/http://liberea.gerodot.ru/about.htm.

We found one of the most detailed descriptions of the authors through the archives of the website "Reconstruction". The archive page even contains information that Yuri Tumkovsky left the project, Yuliana has a daughter, and Mikhail has a son[47].

Thus, we managed to establish the real names and surnames of the creators of the Internet forum "New Herodotus": YuriTumkovsky, Mikhail Kovalchuk and Yuliana Uletova, using data exclusively from the web archives. Moreover, from the user cards of each, one can find out the place of residence and type of activity, if the user himself decided to indicate this data. It is known that Yuliana and Mikhail lived in St. Petersburg[48], and Mikhail indicated that he is a lawyer[49]. It is possible that the team knew each other personally since the original domain name indicates the geographic location of the forum.

Forum "Historica", the largest in terms of the total number of messages among those considered, on the current page does not contain information about the authors of the project. In the "Forum Code" section, there are only lists of nicknames of administrators[50].

However, we found a resource that preceded the forum "Historica". If we access the earliest archived version of the "Forum Code" section, we will find in it links not to the "Historica" forum, but to the websites that are not working now: http://bardguild.com1.ru/forum/index.php and http://bardguild.com1.ru. The Internet

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[47] Section "Our team" of the forum "New Herodotus", to which the link from the portal "Reconstruction" redirects [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20191024032751/http://gerodot.ru/komanda.php.

[48] Michael's custom card. [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20080129040107/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/profile.php?mode=viewprofile&u=3; Yuliana's user card [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090225053622/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/profile.php?mode=viewprofile&u=5.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Forum Code section of the Historica forum Electronic resource]
URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200522182755/http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules.

Archive will help us in restoring information. The "Guild of Bards[51]" website turned out to have quite a few copies, but they are enough to understand: the website was originally intended to publish various kinds of literary works of visitors[52]. April 2, 2004 there are news about the creation of a forum close in topics of discussion to history[53]. As for the author with the nickname "Demic", then in the "About us" section, we see all the data: Kuznetsov Andrey Petrovich from Tula[54], it is possible to add the birthday, which becomes known to us from the user's card: May 29, 1989[55]. However, for unknown reasons, Andrey Petrovich ceased his activity on the forum and has not visited it since October 25, 2005. Perhaps this led to the forum at some point stop functioning and was forced to move to a new domain name.

Then the administrators periodically changed, someone left the forum forever[56] and someone went on a sabbatical[57].

In the forum "forum.ISTORICHKA.RU" (hereinafter referred to as the "Istorichka"[58]) information about the author can be found in the "Forum Rules" section[59],

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[51] Bards are people, who create and tell poems or tales. In the Soviet Union "bards" were single songwriters, who wrote mostly critical songs about everyday life.

[52] The main page of the website "Guild of Bards" [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040319044813/http://bardguild.com1.ru/index.php.

[53] The main page of the website "Guild of Bards" [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040429110715/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/.

[54] Section "About Us" of the website "Guild of Bards" [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040717032158/http://bardguild.com1.ru/page.php?id=1.

[55] Personal card "Demic" [Electronic resource] URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?showuser=1. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200522193107/http://historica.ru/index.php?showuser=1

[56] Statement by administrator "Alan" dated 20.07.2014 [Electronic resource]

URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=12153. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200522200945/http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=12153

[57] Statement by administrator "Alan" dated 18.09.2005 [Electronic resource]

URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=2690. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200522203033/http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=2690

[58] "Istorichka" in Russian means female history teacher in the school jargon.

and in the section "About the project" of the main website of the project "Istorichka. Papers on history"[60]. However, we could not find more detailed information, except for the name Anton Kless. I had to use the Internet Archive.

Opening the earliest copy of the "About the project" section, I found that the author was much explicit: both in describing himself and in describing the aims of creating the forum. The most interesting information for us is on the only saved version of the "Author" section, which is not available on the "current web"[61]. From this section it is possible to learn the full name of the author, the approximate year of birth, place of residence and much more: "The author of the website is Kless Anton Georgievich, b. in St. Petersburg in 198..., where he lives to present day. According to the Zodiac - Cancer. By nature, a pessimist romantic. In life, a lazy eccentric. A programmer by hobby. Part-time musician - composer - multi-instrumentalist. Single. All in all, a nasty guy."[62]

A primitive search through "Google" leads us to the portal "Rodovid", on which users make their family trees. Among the records, we find a card of Anton[63], where the full date of birth is indicated - July 9, 1989. The city and the sign of the zodiac, with which

[59] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka" [Electronic resource]

URL:http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200523130735/http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm

[60] Section "About the project" of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on history" [Electronic resource]

URL:http://www.istorichka.ru/about/. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200523130331/http://www.istorichka.ru/about/

[61] From a conceptual point of view, in this paper, the concepts of "current web" and "saved web" are separated. The "current web" is the state of web capabilities where websites can be accessed directly through a browser and web access. The "saved web" assumes that access to information requires the use of third-party tools, such as the Internet Archives.

[62] Section "Author" of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on history". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050427234758/http://www.istorichka.ru/author/.

[63] Record 206860, Anton Georgievich Kless on the Rodovid portal. [Electronic resource] URL:

https://ru.rodovid.org/wk/Record:206860. Saved copy:

https://web.archive.org/web/20200523132839/https://ru.rodovid.org/wk/%D0%97%D0%B0%D0%BF%D0%
B8%D1%81%D1%8C :206860

Anton described himself, coincide. There we can find information about his parents. Thus, the task of establishing the identity of the creator of the forum can be considered complete.

The next forum is "Eurasica". If we go to the "Our team" section, we will see users with links to their personal cards[64]. However, which of all these people is the creator is not obvious.

Using the Internet archive, we find that the forum of the website "Eurasica. Eurasian Historical Server"[65]. Through the archive version of the "About the project" section, we find out that the resource was previously located at a different address: http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru and www.kyrgyz.ru[66], of which only the second is currently in operation. We find the earliest version of the website in the Internet Archive http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru, on which we find the forum attached to it[67]. On the forum, go to the "About the Author" section and confirm our assumptions: Abdumanapov Rustam Abdubaitovich, born in 1968[68]. Rustam Abdubaitovich is also the author of the project "Eurasica. Eurasian Historical Server" and the forum of the same name[69]. Now the creator of the forum is the honorary consul of the Kyrgyz Republic in the city of Tomsk[70]. It is important to note that the creator of the forum graduated from the Faculty of History of Tomsk State University[71].

[64] Section "Our team" of the forum "Eurasica". [Electronic resource] URL:https://forum-eurasica.ru/staff/. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200523134928/https://forum-eurasica.ru/staff/

[65] Section "Forum" of the portal "Eurasica. Eurasian Historical Server. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20100102062209/http://forum-eurasica.ru/.

[66] Section "About the project" of the portal "Eurasica. Eurasian Historical Server. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20081023160449/http://www.eurasica.ru:80/about/.

[67] Section "Forum" of the portal http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru/. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20000819135217/http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru/forum.shtml.

[68] Section "About the author" of the portal forum http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru/. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20000522035914/http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru:80/rust.shtml.

[69] Section "About the project" of the portal "Eurasica. Eurasian Historical Server". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20081023160449/http://www.eurasica.ru:80/about/.

[70] Section "Consular Section" of the official website of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation. [Electronic resource] URL:https://mfa.gov.kg/ru/dm/posolstvo-kyrgyzskoy-respubliki-v-

"Istoriya.ru" is the only resource whose authorship could not be restored. There has been no information about the project since its creation[72], and the personal card is not filled out[73].

Thus, from the overview of the authors, the following conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the forums were created by people of different ages, social groups and different professional interests. The love of history united both professional historians and amateur programmers. The Internet has made it possible to discuss the interests of people with different experiences. Secondly, the breadth of geography stands out: forums allowed people from different cities to communicate equally on topics of interest. Even though St. Petersburg stands out against the general background (two of the four forums were created by people from this city), Tula and Tomsk are not far behind. For all the authors, the forum was not the main project: initially, websites about history were created. Forums that enable communication to portal visitors were additions to a specific metanarrative (hereinafter, a metanarrative is a large narrative about narratives, which shapes the nature in which all other narratives could be reproduced), which became independent after some time, when the authors devoted themselves entirely to them. In the next section, we will analyze the pre-forum period of portals about historical narratives.

1.2. What was before the Internet forums?

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rossiyskoy-federacii/menyu---inostrannoe/o-posolstve/konsulskiy-otdel/onsulskiy-otdel. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200523141607/https://mfa.gov.kg/ru/dm/posolstvo-kyrgyzskoy-respubliki-v-rossiyskoy-federacii/menyu---inostrannoe/o-posolstve/ konsulskiy-department/onsulskiy-department

[71] Section "About the author" of the portal forum http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru/. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20000522035914/http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru:80/rust.shtml.

[72] The main page of the portal "Istoriya.ru" [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20051210230711/http://www.istorya.ru/.

[73] Personal card of the user "admin" [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071018052250/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showuser=1.

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The history of forums began not just from nothing. In none of the cases I have considered has the forum appeared as a separate entity. There has always been something that preceded it, usually themed websites. In this section, we will consider the distinctive features of the predecessors of the Internet forums we are studying.

The predecessors of the "New Herodotus" can be considered, as I wrote above, the websites "Great Rulers of the Past" and "Ancient world"[74], since the other resources we mentioned earlier: "Liberia of the "New Herodotus"", "Reconstruction", "Point of View" and so on, came from the "New Herodotus".

The website "Ancient World" was a collection of narratives about civilizations of antiquity. These small narrative texts were given separately for each civilization in chronological order. Sources of information were not specified[75]. But, judging by the comments of Yuliana Uletova in the "Guestbook", the information was taken from the books available to the authors of the website, as the result they were simply reprinted or copied in a not very conscientious manner[76]. Moreover, some users noted this as a serious drawback[77]. A year later, the website was updated and a section with sources of information

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[74] Section "About the project" of the forum "New Herodotus" (old version). [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030618090929/http://www.history-forum.spb.ru/about.htm.

[75] The article "Old Assyrian period (20-16 centuries BC)" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20000930060053/http://www.ancient.holm.ru/history/assiria/index.htm.

[76] Comment of the user "Lida" dated 01.02.2001 and the answer to it from the user "Yuliana" dated 02/02/2001 in the "Guestbook" section of the "Ancient World" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20011122075343/http://guestbook.net.ru/cgi-bin/book.cgi?user=ANCIENT&action=show.

[77] Comment of the user "Artak" dated 28.11.2001 in the "Guestbook" section of the "Ancient World" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20011223073421/http://guestbook.net.ru:80/cgi-bin/book.cgi?user=ANCIENT&action=show. Comment of the user "Irina" dated November 28, 2001 in the "Guestbook" section of the "Ancient World" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20011223073421/http://guestbook.net.ru:80/cgi-bin/book.cgi?user=ANCIENT&action=show.

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appeared[78]. Throughout the existence of the website, the "Guestbook" section worked, where any user could add a comment, to which the creators could respond.

The website existed until moving to a new address in 2004 - www.ancient.ru - where it stayed until 2006, after which disappeared for unknown reasons. If one looks at the updates and news of the website, it was abandoned back in 2004[79]. Perhaps this is due to the retirement of Yuri Tumkovsky from the project[80].

The portal "Great Rulers of the Past" has a much more complicated history. Initially, the website was developed as an author's project and was located on the domain http://vlast.kovalchuk.ru/[81]. Even before the creation of the website, as Mikhail Kovalchuk himself writes, there was a mailing list for the website "Secrets of Tyrants"[82], then transformed into the website "Great Rulers of the Past", linked to the portal "Rising Russia"[83]. Thus, the portal "Great Rulers of the Past", if we take into account the project "Secrets of Tyrants", has changed four domain names.

The website presented a collection of different materials about each individual. The method of selection of literature and documents is not described anywhere. It seems that the author added everything he found. However, he himself does not deny this: "I publish and

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[78] Section "Sources" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20010408010302/http://www.ancient.holm.ru/topics/add/sources.htm.

[79] Section "Latest news" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20051029043619/http://www.ancient.ru/topics/news/index.htm.

[80] This text. P. 18.

[81] Main page of the portal "Great Rulers of the Past" [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030228103641/http://vlast.kovalchuk.ru/.

[82] Main page of the portal "Secrets of Tyrants" [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20010119180300/http://tirani.narod.ru/.

[83] The main page of the portal "Great rulers of the past" based on the website www.vos.ru[Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20010503115714/http://vvp.vos.ru/index.htm.

will continue to publish various materials that reflect the essence of these personalities from different points of view."[84]

The project was abandoned in 2006 as there were no updates after the Napoleon articles. However, the website is still available on the current web, one can access it and see all the materials[85].

Forum "Historica" was preceded by the "Bards Guild" portal and its attached forum. The website was archived for the first time on March 12, 2004, and the first record that the website is in the process of being set up is dated November 30, 2002[86]. As we described earlier, the website was intended for the publication of literary works of Internet users. Everyone could send a product of their creativity to the mail of the Demic administrator (Andrey Petrovich Kuznetsov) and count on its publication[87].

The forum was not focused on the discussion of history, the subsections of the forum were called: "At the bar ...", "Smart conversations", "Just chatting", "All sorts of problems" and "Games"[88]. At the time of the earliest archived version, there were 13 registered users on the forum, leaving 163 messages, mainly in the topic "Just chatting" (81 messages)[89]. The next version was made on August 17, 2004. For almost 5 months, the total number of

[84] Section "About the project" of the portal "Great Rulers of the Past". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030717105146/http://www.vlast.kovalchuk.ru/o.html.

[85] Portal "Great rulers of the past". [Electronic resource] URL:http://vlastitel.com.ru/index.html. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200523194430/http://vlastitel.com.ru/

[86] The main page of the portal "Guild of Bards". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040312123418/http://bardguild.com1.ru/.

[87] Section "About Us" of the portal "Guild of Bards". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040717032158/http://bardguild.com1.ru/page.php?id=1.

[88] Forum section of the "Guild of Bards" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040319044012/http://bardguild.com1.ru/forum/index.php.

[89] Ibid.

messages increased to 39,976, users to 195[90]. Moreover, during this period, forum sections appeared: "Capitol" (total 1019 messages), "History" (total 21,716 messages) and "Communication" (total 14,957 messages), and the most discussed subsection was "Industrial Age" in the "History" section. Between September 6 and 25, 2004, the forum moves to the main address of the Bards Guild website and completely replaces it[91], and between 28.11.2004 and 25.01.2005 the website is blocked, possibly for non-payment of hosting or domain name[92].

During this period, a temporary forum "Bards Guild" was created on a third-party resource, which can still be visited now[93]. On it you can find topics with a choice of a new forum name and domain[94], as well as a vote on this issue[95]: chose between http://historyguild.ru and http://historica.ru. This is how the history of the "Historica" forum began.

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[90] Forum section of the "Guild of Bards" portal. [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040817002413/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/forum/index.php.

[91] The main page of the portal "Guild of Bards". 06.09.2004 [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040906094141/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/ and 25.09.2004 [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040925201149/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/.

[92] Forum "Guild of Bards". 28.11.2004 [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20041128231144/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/ and 25.01.2005 [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050125232658/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/.

[93] Temporary forum "Historica". [Electronic resource] URL:http://bg.borda.ru. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200524103247/http://bg.borda.ru/

[94] Topic "Choosing a domain name for the forum" on the temporary forum "Historica". [Electronic resource]
URL:http://bg.borda.ru/?1-0-45-00000013-000-0-0-1104674115. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200524103859/http://bg.borda.ru/?1-0-45-00000013-000-0-0-1104674115

[95] Topic "Voting: NEW FORUM DOMAIN NAME = ITS ADDRESS: ... VOTE" on the Historica temporary forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://bg.borda.ru/?1-0-45-00000015-000-0-0-1105865225. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200524104128/http://bg.borda.ru/?1-0-45-00000015-000-0-0-1105865225

Oddly enough, the "Istorichka" Forum was preceded by the author's project - "Istorichka. Papers on History"[96]. Now the website is practically not updated: the latest posts are dated April 1, 2015[97]. If one reads the contents of the earliest versions of the website, which was located on a different domain until 2005, it becomes clear that the website was originally created as a humorous[98]. There were not very many papers themselves - only 10 texts for September 8, 2004.[99] On the other hand, the method of selecting documents is described quite forthrightly: "Where do I get "PAPERS" from? Oh, God knows where I borrow them... I write myself =) Well, sometimes I find something like that on the Internet, I translate it into thieves' language; I involve friends. If you want to join, go ahead. I mean go to rc5hack@yandex.ru."[100]

In July 2004 the website was closed for renovation[101] until September[102], and in April 2005 moved to a new address[103]. The first readable version of the "Istorichka" forum

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[96] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20031123173750/http://istorichka.h10.ru/.

[97] Section "News" of the portal "Historic. History Reports. [Electronic resource] URL:http://www.istorichka.ru/news/. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200524105202/http://www.istorichka.ru/news/

[98] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20031214222709/http://www.istorichka.h10.ru:80/.

[99] Section "Reports" of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040908134005/http://istorichka.h10.ru/cat.php.

[100] Section "About the project" of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040603225655/http://www.istorichka.h10.ru/about.php.

[101] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040725140251/http://www.istorichka.h10.ru:80/.

[102] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040905042054/http://istorichka.h10.ru:80/.

[103] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050412160653/http://www.istorichka.h10.ru:80/.

appears in the archive on January 26, 2006, on which 81 users are registered and 853 messages are left[104].

Forerunner of the forum "Eurasica" can be considered a personal project of its creator - "History of the Kyrgyz" and a forum with it[105]. From the content of the forum, initially the resource was on a rather narrow topic: a discussion of the past and present of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Then the website moves to a new domain - http://www.kyrgyz.ru/. With the move, the name and theme change: "Central Asian History Server" is now dedicated to different peoples of Central Asia[106]. A forum was also added to it, at which various discussions were held not only about the history of peoples, but also about the animal and plant worlds of Central Asia[107].

Later, in October-December 2008, the portal makes another and this time the last move to the domain name www.eurasica.ru[108]. Now the topic is expanding even more, and the "Central Asian Historical Server" is being transformed into the "Eurasian Historical Server", in which there is a historical forum of the same name[109]. However, after January 2016, something happens to the main portal - it ceases to exist. The latest updates are dated

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[104] Forum "forum.ISTORICHKA.RU". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20060126212804/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl.
[105] Portal "History of the Kyrgyz" and section "Discussions". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20000816071954/http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru:80/;https://web.archive.org/web/20000819135217/http://www.kyrgyz.tsu.ru/forum.shtml.
[106] Portal "Central Asian Historical Server". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20011204082750/http://www.kyrgyz.ru:80/.
[107] Section "Forum" of the portal "Central Asian Historical Server". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040803050129/http://www.kyrgyz.ru/forum/.
[108] The main page of the portal "Central Asian Historical Server" with a link to the new project "Eurasian Historical Server". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20081201145654/http://kyrgyz.ru:80/.
[109] Section "Forum" of the portal "Eurasian Historical Server". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20110629035718/http://forum-eurasica.ru:80/.

February 2015[110]. Just at this time, the website is activated again http://www.kyrgyz.ru/, where the "Central Asian Historical Server" resumes its work, and one of the ads on it says: "18.02.2015 Due to the closure of the Eurasian website, the design of the "Central Asian Historical Server" is radically changing."[111]

Thus, having gone through many changes of addresses and resources, the "Central Asian Historical Server" and the "Eurasian Historical Forum" linked to the website have reached our time.

"Istoriya.ru" appeared in RuNet in 2005 as a project with essays, books, maps, audio lectures, chronology and genealogical trees of ancient Russian princes[112]. The method of selection of materials is not described anywhere. In the "Papers" section can be found notes without authorship[113] and abstracts of dissertations[114]. Sometimes the encoding was lost in the texts and they were unreadable[115], however, no one corrected such "blunders", which is why this abstract is still in the appropriate section in the same state as 13 years ago[116]. From this we can conclude that the authors did not care about the materials they posted. This, among other things, is indicated by the number of papers published at the time of the study:

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[110] Main page of the Eurasian Historical Server portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20160119120224/http://www.eurasica.ru:80/.

[111] Main page of the Central Asian Historical Server portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20150225172744/http://www.kyrgyz.ru:80/.

[112] The main page of the portal "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20051220140659/http://www.istorya.ru:80/.

[113] Paper "Ancient Russia - a healthy lifestyle" in the "Abstracts" section of the portal "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071118023005/http://www.istorya.ru/referat/6165/1.php.

[114] Paper "Hegel on the State" in the section "Abstracts" of the portal "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071118043822/http://www.istorya.ru/referat/7208/1.php.

[115] Paper "Dates of the II half of the 19th century" in the "Abstracts" section of the "Istoriya.ru" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071118030430/http://www.istorya.ru/referat/7552/1.php.

[116] Paper "Dates of the II half of the 19th century" in the "Abstracts" section of the "Istoriya.ru" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:http://www.istorya.ru/referat/7552/1.php. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200526114042/http://www.istorya.ru/referat/7552/1.php

8235[117]. Such a number of texts is simply impossible to review for quality. Most likely, everything was published that users sent or that they found on the Internet.

The resource "Istoriya.ru", unlike other examples we have reviewed, has not changed its domain name throughout its existence. Significant changes occurred twice. The first is the appearance on April 21, 2007 of a forum at the website, according to the message of the administrator[118]. In the Internet Archive, the first archived version appears in May 2007[119], as well as the corresponding section on the main page[120].

Thus, several interesting conclusions can be drawn. First, all the forums we are considering were preceded by metanarrative projects that offer users of the worldwide web texts about history. Secondly, some of them initially had a built-in channel for discussions and discussions (a "Guestbook" on the "Ancient World" portal or a primitive forum on the "History of the Kyrgyz" portal). Thirdly, the forums could be separated into independent projects (forums "Historica", "New Herodotus").

1.3. The aims of the creators of Internet forums.

Speaking about the aims pursued by the authors of Internet forums, it is worth paying attention to the versions of the "About the project" sections of the resources preceding the forums. One can understand the global goals and objectives that their creators set for themselves.

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[117] The "All papers" page of the "Papers" section of the "Istoriya.ru" portal. [Electronic resource] URL:http://www.istorya.ru/referat/all.php. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200526115347/http://www.istorya.ru/referat/all.php

[118]Topic "Welcome" in the "Website News" subsection of the "Senate" section of the "Istoriya.ru" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200526120630/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1

[119] Forum "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20070509210343/http://istorya.ru/forum/.

[120] The main page of the portal "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20070510080540/http://www.istorya.ru:80/.

The purpose of the portal "Ancient World" was described by the authors as the desire to make as complete an Internet encyclopedia as possible about the states of the "Ancient World"[121]. While advertising the website, the creators asked users to leave the following description: "The "Ancient World" is the history of distant centuries, forgotten civilizations and countries. Cruel wars and uprisings, great rulers and conquerors, legends and myths, history and fiction, philosophy and religion, the latest hypotheses and fresh news from the world of archeology".[122] It is remarkable that the authors did not pursue any scientific or analytical goal. However, it is difficult to call a collection of random texts an "encyclopedia", because this quite strict scientific genre has criteria, and the articles in it must be monographic. As we wrote above, the method of their selection by topic was determined by the books available to the authors.

The earliest description of the Great Lords of the Past project stated that the author of the project strives for "maximum objectivity", while not denying the presence of "his own preferences"[123]. The author also expressed the hope that users will come to the "right decision" in choosing their favorite great rulers.[124] Nonetheless, Mikhail Kovalchuk did not claim explicitly any methods of searching for "correctness", that is, offering users to focus on the subjective when choosing, which clearly contradicts the original aspirations. An attempt at an "objective" selection of historiography can be considered a failure, since in the

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[121] Section "About the project" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20010406081328/http://www.ancient.holm.ru:80/topics/add/about.htm.

[122] Section "About the project" of the portal "Ancient World". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20011216071916/http://www.ancient.holm.ru:80/topics/add/about.htm.

[123] Section "About the project" of the portal "Great rulers of the past". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030301005522/http://vlast.kovalchuk.ru/o.html.

[124] Ibid..

selection of books on the results of Stalin's reign alone there is not a single work by a professional historian, but only works by writers and contemporaries[125].

A later description shortly repeats the aspirations of the creator, but it clarifies that the author does not pursue any commercial goals, and the description of the project is supplemented by a thesis "about people who themselves created world history", which is not explained in any way[126].

As for the goals of creating a forum, one of the earliest descriptions tells that the forum should satisfy the needs of visitors in discussing historical problems, is designed to provide information to help historical websites by providing a section on its forum[127], and the rules stated that the project was "aimed at meeting the urgent needs of educated people of the world community in the discussion of historical and related problems"[128].

The aims of the creators of the forum "Historica" are not described in the Forum Code, they only mention that the forum is created for free communication, therefore it is not limited by the discussions of history[129]. Why did the forum still become thematic? The fact is that the vector for discussing history was set by the creator of the forum - Andrey Kuznetsov (nickname "Demic")[130]. However, among other things, he offered not only

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[125] Page "Results of Life and Struggle" of the "Stalin" section of the "Great Rulers of the Past" portal. [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030929064613/http://vlast.kovalchuk.ru/stalin/itog.html.

[126] Section "About the project" of the portal "Great rulers of the past". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20060618053427/http://vlastitel.com.ru/o.html.

[127] Section "About the project" of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20030618090929/http://www.history-forum.spb.ru/about.htm.

[128] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20031204221342/http://history-forum.spb.ru/oz.php.

[129] Forum Code section of the "Historica" forum. [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050411122706/http://www.historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules.

[130] Message from user "Demic" on the main page of the portal "Guild of Bards". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20040429110715/http://bardguild.com1.ru:80/.

academic topics for discussion (philosophy and methodology of history), but also "club" ones (telling historical anecdotes, role-playing historical games, and guessing riddles)[131].

The rules of the "Istorichka" forum do not describe the author's goals, but himself, when invited to visit the forum, indicates the following: "Talk about life or discuss a serious issue of history, culture, philosophy at the local historical forum."[132] Author initially defined the forum as "historical", but did not limit the topics of possible discussions to history alone. Already during the forum there is a message from Anton Kless about the goals of the forum[133], in which he reports that "Istorichka" is a place of respectful communication on historical and related topics, and the goals of the administration are to maintain the replenishment of the website's materials and the proper level of discussions and behavior of participants.

"Eurasica" does not tell users what goals it sets for itself, neither in the rules nor in the "About" section. But its creator in his messages sometimes mentioned why he created it: "And the last thing - this forum exists for discussion, there are forum rules - among which the main thing is respect for the interlocutor and a normal discussion of issues related to certain issues of the history of Eurasia."[134]

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[131] Ibid.

[132] The main page of the portal "Istorichka. Papers on History" [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20061107182326/http://www.istorichka.ru/.

[133] The topic is "The concept of the Historical forum" of the "Editor's column" subsection of the "Conversations" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1258794669. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200527182713/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1258794669

[134] Message from user "Rust" dated 16.01.2010. [Electronic resource] URL:https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/3828-dur-dir-dir-affix-or-verb/page/5/?tab=comments#comment-78866. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200526155036/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/3828-%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%80-%D0%B4%D0%B8%_D1%80-%D0%B4%D1%8B%D1%80-%D0%B0%D1%84%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BA%D1%81-%D0%B8%D0%BB%_%D0%B8-%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB/page/5/?tab=comments

In the forum rules Istoriya.ru is welcome: love of history and academic style of communication based on argumentation[135]. No more information can be found about the goals of the creators, which is a feature of this forum, the only one without a certain authorship.

Thus, when considering the goals of the forum creators, the following conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the plans of the creators greatly influenced the future content of the forum, even if they were just recommendations ("Historica", "Eurasica"). Secondly, all forums, as conceived by the authors, did not pretend to get "the truth" with the help of discussions or try to restore "historical reality", despite the fact that the author's projects that preceded them had such goals ("Great Rulers of the Past", "Ancient World"). Thirdly, many creators did not limit user discussions solely to history, most likely in order to keep users on the forum.

1.4. Changes of the rules of Internet forums and the peculiarities of the organization of the vertical power[136].

Following the changes of the rules of Internet forums, one can know more about how the culture of communication that developed, what limited users in writing messages. The system for adopting and changing rules are also relevant to the governance of the site. It can be traced where *democratic* tools were used (voting and discussion), and where *authoritarian* ones were used (direct decision of the administrator).

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[135]Topic "Forum Rules" of the "Website News" subsection of the "Senate" section of the "Istoria.ru" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1319. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200526160117/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1319

[136] The use hereinafter of political language to describe the features of the forums is conditional in order to show the alignment of hierarchies, which, of course, are present on the forms. In addition, the users themselves use political language when commenting on the actions of the administration. [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=8202

The other side of the consideration of these rules is helping to evaluate the informational potential of messages on Internet forums as historical sources. Earlier, it was written about the importance of describing the constraints dictated by the service, since they predetermine the framework within which the narratives we study are created.

Reading the latest rules of the "New Herodotus" forum will not be easy, as it is not entirely clear from the forum navigation where to find them. They were located at: https://web.archive.org/web/20200527130153/http://www.gerodot.ru/oz.php[137]. The rules are located at this link since the forum moved to a new domain name. The rules of the previous forum were located at a similar address[138].

One of the first editions of the rules was compiled by its authors and in its structure was similar to the constitution: a preamble, 8 chapters, inside of which there are 38 articles[139]. The "Basic Law" announced the general availability and secularity of the forum, established holidays, user ranks, singled out the governing bodies: the Advisory Council, the Administration, the People's Council and the Council of Moderators, regulated the behavior of participants: respectful communication, prohibition of advertising and unhistorical discussions, determined the procedure for obtaining the title of "New Herodotus" and changes in the "Basic Law"[140].

The rules did not change before moving to a new domain. After the move, they lost their constitution-like form, became more formal, and many rules disappeared.[141] The governing bodies disappeared, now the "administration" decided everything, the procedure

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[137] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:http://www.gerodot.ru/oz.php. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200527130153/http://www.gerodot.ru/oz.php

[138] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20031204221342/http://history-forum.spb.ru/oz.php.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20041204095035/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

for making changes has changed: in the new edition "the forum administration can make changes to the current rules unilaterally, informing registered forum participants about this no later than 10 days in advance", forum holidays have disappeared and conferring the title "New Herodotus"[142].

On the other hand new restrictions have appeared: the procedure for creating nicknames was regulated, an impressive list of prohibited topics in messages was created, including a ban on "an excessive number of grammatical errors", norms for the use of graphics were introduced, a list of punishments for breaking the rules were introduced[143]. However, the amended rules also contain certain *positive* changes, for example, a section "Procedure for appealing against the actions of the administration" appears, which allows users to defend their interests and appeal the ban. The new edition also expands the possibilities of communication: now it is not limited to history, those wishing to discuss other topics can use the appropriate section[144]. Thus, even though collegiality has disappeared in decision-making, and the list of restrictions has increased significantly, the rules have become more practical.

Further, the document underwent minor changes. I compared the editions of each year, the changes are presented below.

Changes in the 2005 edition[145] compared to the 2004 edition[146]:

1. In paragraph 2.6. the norms for the number of messages to achieve a particular rank have been changed, the names of the ranks have been changed;
2. Almost everywhere the word "conference" is replaced by "forum";

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20051218112640/http://gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[146] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20041204095035/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

3. clause 3.1. was divided into clauses 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, the ban on registration using website-promoter scripts was removed;

4. added clause 4.14, which forbade many small answers instead of one big one;

5. clause 4.15.5 was added, which prohibited copying large pieces of text from other websites.

Changes in the 2006 edition[147]compared to the 2005 edition[148] - no.

Changes in the 2007 edition[149]compared to the 2006 edition[150] were very serious: the structure of the rules changed, many rules either disappeared or were moved to other sections. One of the most significant can be considered an even greater expansion of administrator rights. According to clause 1.5, the administration can now make decisions that are not prescribed in the rules of the forum, that is, whatever they like[151], clause 4.1 declares unlimited rights of administrators, clause 4.8 allows the administration to have "favorite users" and apply unequal decisions, clause 4.10 prohibits users from discussing the administration's decisions, that is, censorship was introduced[152]. The section with the procedure for appealing against decisions of the administration disappeared, users could not defend their rights. Such drastic rule changes, which greatly expand the rights of administrators and moderators, have clearly influenced the establishment of vertical power on the forum.

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[147] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20061027111138/http://gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[148] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20051218112640/http://gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[149] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071120104953/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[150] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20061027111138/http://gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[151] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071120104953/http://www.gerodot.ru:80/oz.php.

[152] Ibid.

The rules have not changed since 2007. The latest edition is almost identical[153].

Forum rules of the "Historica" are presented in the form of the "Forum Code", the page of which is always pinned to a panel accessible to any user[154]. This approach facilitates quick access to the rules, which cannot be said about the "New Herodotus". The first edition of the "Forum Code" (2005) was adopted collegially by the Cuncil of Administrators and Moderators and was a large text of 9 sections[155]. The main rules can be considered: the absence of a declaration of a narrow subject matter framed only by history (clause 1.3), restrictions on the power of moderators were established, for example, it was forbidden to use one's power to defend one's point of view (clause 3.3.3), a procedure for appealing decisions was introduced (clause 1.3. 3.4.2-3.4.4), as well as the duty of the moderator to justify his decisions and draw up reports (clauses 4.10, 4.14), it is very clearly stated what users can do and what not (prohibition of insults, use of obscenities not for the purposes of philological parsing, etc.), and what sanctions may follow[156]. The rules provided for a closed group of managers - the Council, which collectively analyzes conflict situations at the forum and resolves issues important to the forum[157]. There was also a procedure for revising the rules[158].

I compared the rules and their modified versions, as in the case of the "New Herodotus" forum. Changes in the 2006 edition[159] compared to the 2005 edition[160]:

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[153] Rules of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:http://www.gerodot.ru/oz.php. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200527130153/http://www.gerodot.ru/oz.php

[154] Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200527155357/http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules

[155] Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050411122706/http://www.historica.ru:80/index.php?act=boardrules.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20060112195000/http://www.historica.ru:80/index.php?act=boardrules.

1. In paragraph 1.1, the name was changed from "Bards Guild" to "Historica" and links http://bardguild.com1.ru/forum/index.php, http://bardguild.com1.ru at historica.ru.

At the end of 2006, the rules change significantly towards simplification: five sections instead of nine[161]. Sections about "Council", "Logins (nicknames) and avatars", sections "Forum moderation. General rules" and "Sanctions" were merged with the sections "Administration of the forum" and "Participants" of the forum, respectively[162]. Almost all the rules that limited the power of the moderator and forced to report and explain their actions disappeared[163]. It remains possible to leave a complaint about the actions of the moderator to the forum administrator[164]. However, two features should be considered. Firstly, although slightly, the composition of the "Council" changed (at the beginning of 2006: Alan, Aelia, Val, Clarence, L'osha, Artashir, Sextus Pompey, Lanselot and Demic[165]; at the end: Alan, Aelia, Val, Lanselot, Artashir, Clarence, Sextus Pompey, Knysh, Sulpicius Aurelianus[166]). Secondly, the voting results indicate that there was no absolute agreement among the administration regarding the introduction of a new version of the rules, since out of 25 voters, 18 were in favor and 7 were against. These rules were valid until 2011.

Changes in the 2011 edition[167] compared to the 2006 edition[168]:

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[160] Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050411122706/http://www.historica.ru:80/index.php?act=boardrules.

[161] "Forum Code" of the Historica forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20070225004941/http://www.historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] "Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20060112195000/http://www.historica.ru:80/index.php?act=boardrules.

[166] "Forum Code" of the Historica forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20070225004941/http://www.historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules.

[167] "Forum Code" of the Historica forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20110705120148/http://www.historica.ru:80/index.php?act=boardrules.

[168] "Forum Code" of the Historica forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20070225004941/http://www.historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules.

1. The phrase was added to the first section: "In each section there are individual traditions of communication that have developed over time";

    2. In the third section, the wording: "For these violations, the moderator of the section or the forum administrator issues a warning to the participant. Three warnings entail temporary or permanent removal of the participant from the forum (ban). If there are no repeated violations within a month, the warning issued to the participant is removed" was replaced by the wording "For these violations, the section moderator or, in the absence of a moderator, the forum administrator may issue a warning to the participant. Three warnings entail temporary or permanent removal of the participant from the forum (ban). Warnings can be removed by the forum administrators, but not less than a month after the issue. If the participant's behavior indicates that the above actions are the main purpose of his/her stay on the forum, he/she may be banned after the first warning by the decision of the administration, adopted by two-thirds of the votes, including both administrators".

Thus, in the new version, the mandatory removal of warnings a month after the absence of violations was canceled. Decisions to remove warnings were now made by the moderator/administrator, which can be considered a step towards increasing their power. But an element of collegiality was also added: the decision to permanently block a user was made based on a vote. This edition is still valid[169].

The rules of the "Istorichka" forum changed quite often, however, due to the fact that a separate section with them appeared only in 2008, it is almost impossible to restore previous editions, since the Internet Archive rarely saved the topics of the forum subsections. It is known that there was a version of the rules from October 2005, but it was deleted by the administrator[170]. This was followed by the August 2006 revision, which is preserved at the Internet Archive[171]. Other editions of the rules, including the one that came into effect in

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[169] "Forum Code of Historica Forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200527155357/http://historica.ru/index.php?act=boardrules

[170] Topic "Forum: Rules" of the "News" subsection of the "Istorichka.ru: about the website and the forum" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071213232118/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1128094606.

[171] Topic "Forum: Rules" of the "News" subsection of the "Istorichka": "About the website and the forum" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071213232704/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1156765840.

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January 2008, have not been archived. However, the last four have been retained: dated November 2008[172], dated April 2009[173], dated June 2009[174]and from January 2010[175]which is still valid[176].

The first edition of the forum rules available in the Internet Archive, in addition to standard settings such as bans on obscenities (clause 5.7) and advertising (clause 5.1), unacceptable logins / nicknames (clause 10), there are forums that are different from the previous forums we are considering, for example, it was allowed discuss the actions of the administration and criticize them (clause 17), explained the basic principles for the appointment of moderators (clause 6), and also indicated that the appointment to the post of coordinator was carried out on the basis of an open discussion (clause 6)[177].

November 2008 revision[178] compared to August 2006 edition[179]:

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[172] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090217064830/http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm.

[173] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090426034630/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[174] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090710082301/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[175] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20111129002750/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[176] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200528085359/http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm

[177] Topic "Forum: Rules" of the "News" subsection of the "Istorichka.ru: about the website and the forum" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071213232704/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1156765840.

[178] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090217064830/http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm.

[179] Topic "Forum: Rules" of the "News" subsection of the "Istorichka.ru: about the website and the forum" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071213232704/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1156765840.

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1. Wording and grammatical inaccuracies changes that do not affect the meaning in clauses: 0-17;

2. Clause 11 of the rules has been changed: now it defines the topics of the forum - "culture in its broadest sense, historical and related sciences and academic disciplines";

3. From paragraph 4, the restriction on "two or three" coordinators has been removed.

Users could still discuss the actions of the administration, but the moderators did not receive

additional rights, the sanctions were not tightened.

April 2009 revision[180]compared to November 2008 edition[181]:

1. The rules for creating nicknames in clause 10 have been slightly changed;

2. Removed clause 13.14;

3. Item 15 has been changed. A ban has been introduced on discussing the actions of the administration, in sections other than "Suggestions, wishes and complaints".

Thus, the rules for challenging the actions of the forum administration were tightened.

On the one hand, the change in this paragraph of the rules made it possible to clear the

topics of meaningless and off topic discussions of the administration, on the other hand, it

was a clear restrictive tool.

June 2009 revision[182]compared to April 2009 edition[183]:

1. Clause 16 has been slightly changed, the wording "for organizational or technical destabilization of the Forum" has been added, clarifying the possibility of the administration of blocking a user bypassing the rules for issuing warnings.

January 2010 revision[184] compared to June 2009 edition[185]:

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[180] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090426034630/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[181] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090217064830/http://forum.istorichka.ru/pub/rules.htm.

[182] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090710082301/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[183] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090426034630/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[184] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20111129002750/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

[185] Section "Forum Rules" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource]

URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20090710082301/http://forum.istorichka.ru:80/pub/rules.htm.

1. Clauses 2 and 3 have been slightly changed;

2. From clause 4, the wording obliging to openly discuss the candidacy of the coordinator has been removed. Now the administrator has the right to appoint him without discussion;

3. Added clause 9 prohibiting duplicate user registration;

4. Clause 11 has been slightly changed;

5. Minor editorial changes have been made to the remaining clauses to comply with the logic of the rules.

Thus, we can observe a trend towards tightening the rules, strengthening the power of the administration. However, the current rules of the forum cannot be called despotic, since all the "rules of the game" are spelled out in detail, and users could appeal and discuss the actions of the administration.

Forum Rules "Eurasica" are located in a topic inside the forum, which is why the Internet Archive has not made a single copy of these rules. The task is simplified by the fact that the changes made to the rules were described by separate messages[186]. The rules are written in short and understandable language. Among them there are standard prohibitions: on the use of obscene language (clause 1), insulting other users (clause 2), flooding and trolling (clause 7)[187]. Sanctions for violation of the rules are clearly defined (clauses 1, 3)[188].

The administrative resource of moderators is seriously limited: they only have the right to issue warnings (clause 8, subclause 1), and all actions are subject to a report in a special topic (clause 8, subclause 5)[189]. Also, moderators are forbidden to close the topic without a preliminary discussion (clause 8, subclause 4) and use the "administrative

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[186] Topic "Forum rules Eurasica.ru" of the subsection "Ask a question to the forum administrators" of the section "Forum announcements". [Electronic resource] URL:https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/3759-forum-rules-eurasicaru/?tab=comments#comment-74603. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200528120054/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/3759-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0 %BB%D0%B0-%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B0%D0 %B7%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%83/?tab=comments

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

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resource" when participating in the discussion (clause 8, subclause 3)[190]. Moreover, any user can appeal against the actions of the administration in a special topic (clause 3)[191].

The first edition of the rules was adopted on November 7, 2009[192]. On November 12 of the same year, bans were added on flooding, trolling, transliteration and opening a topic that duplicates an already open one[193]. The rules have not been updated and are still valid.

Thus, we can note a rather selective approach to blocking users (this is only the administrator's right) and limiting the administrative resource of moderators, which confirms the fact that amnesties of blocked users even occur on the forum[194]. Moreover, I did not find any tendency to strengthen the power of individual user groups or to tighten the rules, which distinguishes this forum from those considered earlier.

Forum Rules "Istoriya.ru" are located in a separate topic, which was archived by the Internet Archive[195]. The current rules are located at the same address, and all changes were made to the main text after the publication of separate messages about them[196]. In addition to the standard bans on obscene language and advertising, flooding and off topic statements, common on other forums[197] there were also special ones: PR of religious institutions,

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[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Topic "Amnesty" of the "Server Announcements" subsection of the "Server Announcements" section. [Electronic resource] URL:https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/6125-amnesty/?tab=comments#comment-355948. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200528121951/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/6125-%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%81%D1_%82%D0%B8%D1%8F/?tab=comments

[195] Topic "Forum Rules" of the "Website News" subsection of the "Senate" section of the "Istoria.ru" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20111011080047/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1319.

[196] The topic is "Forum Rules" of the "Website News" subsection of the "Senate" section of the "Istoria.ru" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1319. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200528123436/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1319

[197] Ibid.

religious and political propaganda, writing "denunciations" to state bodies[198]. All these special prohibitions appeared later than the main text of the rules.

On May 15, 2010, eight months after the publication of the main rules, a very voluminous section "About moderators" appeared, which regulated the work of forum moderators[199]. Moderators are appointed either by the administrator or by user voting[200]. Moderators are required to communicate correctly with users, keep a report on the actions taken in a special form, not have "favorites", not succumb to provocations[201]. Users do not have the right to discuss the personality of the moderators, but they can leave a complaint about their actions[202]. The section "Actions of the administration" describes in detail the work of the system of punishments[203]: the user can be blocked for a while, transferred to the "read-only" or "pre-moderation" mode.

Thus, the rules of the forum "Istoriya.ru" differ from others by a detailed moderation system, which significantly limits the capabilities of users who can block, shape and reframe discussions. There are even elements of democracy, for example, the procedure of appointing a moderator. The rules have not been significantly tightened.

What general conclusions can be drawn from the questions we have considered? Firstly, the rules over time could be simplified ("New Herodotus", "Historica"), and become more complicated by the introduction of additional sections ("Istoriya.ru"). Secondly, one can note both the repetitive framework of user behavior regulations (ban on obscene language, advertising, meaningless messages, etc.), and those specific-to-specific forums (religious and political propaganda at the "Istoriya.ru" forum, a general ban on discussing

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[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ibid.

actions administration at the forum "New Herodotus"). Thirdly, vertical power worked differently in different forums. Moreover, this difference in the rules can be considered the most significant. We can single out a group of forums where it is possible to appeal against the actions of the administration ("Historica", "Istorichka", "Eurasica" and "Istoria.ru"), and a forum where this is not only impossible, but forbidden ("New Herodotus"). There are forums where moderators must keep reports: "Istoria.ru", "Eurasica", and there are those on which reports are not required: "New Herodotus", "Istorichka", "Historica" (initially, such a report was required on the "Historica" forum, but then it disappeared from the rules). Fourth, we can highlight the trend of forum rules to tighten over time. This was especially evident in the forums "New Herodotus", "Historica" and "Historic". From all of the above, the top forums can be ranked according to for user friendliness (in descending order of friendliness): "Eurasica", "Istoriya.ru", "Historica", "Istorichka" and "New Herodotus".

1.5. Changing the functionality and capabilities of Internet forums.

An important part of any forum is its technical component. In this part of the work, we will try to trace the development of user capabilities. It is possible to do this by looking at the FAQ or "Help" section of the forums, which contain answers to the most popular questions from users, as well as technical descriptions.

In the original New Herodotus Forum FAQ (2007), users could exchange messages, edit them, and send private messages (these are standard features), but they could not upload images, only leave links to them[204]. In 2010, it becomes possible to upload attachments, create draft messages, add other users to "friends" and "detractors"[205]. Moreover, the "detractors" function hides messages from people included in the list from a person. At the

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[204] Section "FAQ" forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20071112200137/http://gerodot.ru/faq.php.
[205] Section "FAQ" forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20100203133139/http://gerodot.ru:80/faq.php.

same time, forum search, bookmarks and topic subscriptions appear[206]. After that, no technical innovations were made[207].

Looking at the "Help" section of the forum "Historica", we found that all the features were available to users initially: attachments, subscriptions to topics, private messages, and so on[208]. There have been no functional changes from that moment[209].

Also, no changes have occurred with the functionality of the "Istorichka" forum in comparison with the "Help" section of 2005[210] and 2020[211]. However, if in the case of the Historica forum all rather progressive functions were available initially, then on the "Istorichka" forum it is still impossible to add attachments, only leave links.

On the forum "Eurasica", unfortunately, there is no separate section with help and all the functions. But we know that the forum was technically updated[212]. And the "Help" page

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[206]Ibid.

[207] Section "FAQ" forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource] URL:http://gerodot.ru/faq.php#f0r7. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529085851/http://gerodot.ru/faq.php

[208] The "Help" section of the "Historica" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20050910101220/http://historica.ru/index.php?act=Help.

[209] The "Help" section of the "Historica" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?act=Help. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529091751/http://historica.ru/index.php?act=Help

[210] The "Help" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:https://web.archive.org/web/20060524234616/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?action=help.

[211] The "Help" section of the "Istorichka" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?action=help. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529092945/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?action=help

[212] Topic "Forum Update" of the "Server Announcements" subsection of the "Forum Announcements" section. [Electronic resource] URL:https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/4665-forum-update/. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529093942/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/4665-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0 %BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0/

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of the "Istoriya.ru" forum was not archived by the Internet Archive, which makes the comparison process impossible[213].

Summarizing the sections of help we have reviewed; the functionality of the forum could both develop ("New Herodotus") and stagnate ("Istorichka"). The possibilities for forum users are approximately identical: creating topics and messages, sending private messages, downloading attachments. But still, different forums provide different opportunities: on some it is possible to add users to " detractors", on others it is impossible. All this introduces quite interesting contexts: the same people can prefer one forum to another and they can participate in discussions on different forums.

The last thesis is our hypothesis. It is almost impossible to trace the same person in different forums, but one thing can be proved for sure - the forums in question are interconnected not only by a historical theme, but also relationships. So, on the forum "Historica" we can find explicit criticism of the "New Herodotus"[214].

Thus, the forums we are considering have both common features: in the formation of rules, in building the vertical power, in the development of functionality, and significant differences: in the predecessors of the forums, in their goals, in the creators. We can judge the authors and administrators of forums by looking at the resources they created and the habits on them that became the rules.

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[213] Section "View Help Sections" of the "Istoriya.ru" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?s=85fcbe19511ba4fa08cbfb86db15d763&app=core&module=help. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529100256/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?s=85fcbe19511ba4fa08c bfb86db15d763&app=core&module=help

[214] Topic "Latest news" of the "Statements from the website administration" subsection of the "Capitol" section of the "Historica" forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=769. Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20200529101517/http://historica.ru/index.php?showtopic=769

We studied the history of Russian-speaking historical forums, traced how the rules and the vertical power developed, who the creators of Internet forums were, what goals they pursued and what resources preceded historical Internet forums.

Chapter II. Soviet History Narratives.

There are many different historical and non-historical topics on examined Internet forums, but Soviet narratives are reproduced quite often. Another interest is the question of theorizing the boundary between historical memory as experience and historical memory as narrative. For the analysis of narratives, I have chosen several culturally remembered moments topics in the history of the USSR, which are most often touched upon in the forums I consider.

Firstly, there are the revolutions of 1917 and the discussion of their legacy. Russian historical politics, which is extraordinarily active in other aspects of working with memory and historical narratives, consistently ignore the 1917 revolutions. This became especially noticeable in 2017 when practically no state acts of celebration or memory were carried out in Russia[215]. Second is the Stalin era, which is probably the most discussed in Russian-language forums on history. As a rule, a dichotomy of narratives in public discourse appears: Stalin is a bad or a good ruler. Innumerable texts support or refute these two theses on the forums. Various aspects of the activities of Stalin and his government are discussed as if trying to strike a utilitarian balance: were the repressions worth the victory in World War II? A third topic, which I call the transitional period, is how I outlined the discussions that are being held by the forum participants on issues related to Gorbachev's perestroika and the collapse of the USSR. Here I also placed an overview of discussions about the USSR as a conceptual whole: could the USSR exist at all or was it an initially failed project? It is in these discussions that we can most often observe the living memories of

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[215] B. Kolonitskii, M. Matskevich *Desakralizaciya revolyucii i antirevolyucionnyj konsensus v sovremennoj Rossii: yubilej 2017 goda i ego politicheskoe ispol'zovanie/neispol'zovanie* [Desacralization of the revolution and anti-revolutionary consensus in modern Russia: the anniversary of 2017 and its political use/non-use], Mir Rossii. Sociologiya. Etnologiya. 27, no. 4 (2018); 78-101.

forum participants about the past as an experience and its combination with memory as a narrative.

2.1. The Revolutions of 1917 as a narrative.

The forum *"New Herodotus"* is interesting in that the information from it is completely taken not from the current web, but from the web archive. Thus, it is the result of the archeology of the web space. The forum, despite its name, often discussed topics related to the Soviet past. This forum lacks the classic Russian historical narrative division into "domestic" history and foreign history. The determination of the temporality of the narrative is represented by the subsections "Ancient World", "Middle Ages", "Modern Times", "Late Modern Times", "General Issues", "New Theories", "History of Religion" and "Issues of Linguistics". The discussions we need are in the subsection "Late Modern Times".

It is worth noting that many discourses on the revolutions of 1917 in this forum are of a conspiracy nature, even antisemitic ones. Very often users try to find traces of external interference in the events that took place during 1917. It should also be noted that when talking about revolutionary events, users most often mean the October events.

For example, in the topic "Decree "On Peace and Land""[216], the user "Onkel_Wowa" writes that the text of the document itself seems strange to him, after which the author interrupts the short speculation and begins to retell the book about the creation of a Jewish battalion in London in 1917, which captured Palestine. The author ends his short message with the words: "As they say in the popular television series: all coincidences are random." At first glance, it is not at all clear how these two topics correlate at all, what the user had in

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[216] "New Herodotus" forum topic "Decree "On Peace and Land"" [Electronic resource] URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20110603035710/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14320&sid=3885e02db 823586682731ee9bbc67907

mind when he tried to connect the Jewish battalion with a certain "Decree "On Peace and Land"". Another forum user - Serzh - is trying to argue with the author: he says that there were two decrees, not one, that the Bolsheviks almost immediately filed notices of their desire to make peace, and so on. A few messages later, Onkel_Wowa writes: "Firstly, the *Tsarist Okhranka*[217] and other similar organizations already had their agents in the Russian army. To a large extent, they brought the Bolsheviks to power. <...> Anti-Semitism was invented for very specific political purposes. In particular, to "convince" the Jews to move to Palestine. Since the Rothschild family financed the settlers, there is no doubt that the pogroms were also their work. How else could you convince a person to drop everything and go somewhere in the desert to fight with the Arabs?" After reading some of the messages of the discussion, an interesting conspiracy theory concept created by the user Onkel_Wowa turns out: the revolution in the Russian Empire was invented by the "Rothschilds" to provoke the Arab-Israeli war. When asked by other users about how these events could be connected, the author replied: "Okay, the conspiracy theory is a delusional fiction. Maybe you have your own version explaining what happened? Please share." On the next page of disputes, the user Onkel_Wowa continues to talk about how the entire history of the world is the struggle of the Rothschild clan against the Rockefeller clan[218].

Another notable topic is "The Protocols of Zion 1897, the Internationals 1864-1889 and October", where a Gosha user posts several pages of anti-Semitic messages, providing them with reflections on the guilt of the Jews in the October Revolution of 1917[219]. Up to a

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[217] Simple way to call political police during Russian Empire.

[218] Page 15 of the "New Herodotus" forum topic "Decree "On Peace and Land"" [Electronic resource] URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20110603035429/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14320&sid=3885e02db 823586682731ee9bbc67907&start=15

[219] "New Herodotus" forum topic "The Protocols of Zion 1897, the Internationals 1864-1889 and October" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20140703101924/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=19909

certain point, no one enters into a discussion with the author, until he is reminded that inciting ethnic hatred in Russia is criminalized[220]. After some time, the administrator with the nickname "Somov" forcibly closes the topic, but does not delete it and does not block the user.

Another topic dedicated to the revolution is "October Revolution. An interesting version." in which the author with the nickname "Knyaz'" simply inserted a link to a third-party resource and recommended that users read the article[221]. The article says that the revolution is the result of a conspiracy of army agents[222]. He is supported by another forum user "Lemuryi" and offers other links to third-party resources and writes that the revolution had "customers" to receive rent and gold after it was completed[223].

Revolutionary tales were also discussed in the topic "Wrangel. Crimea, which we lost." The thread started when user "Diletant" copied text about Pjotr Wrangel from someone's livejournal page. To which he received the following response from the user "Lotsman": "The experience of the GPW[224] showed that, on the contrary, they shot too few. And most importantly, too few were exiled. *Okyenno*[225] "democratic" country - the USA in this respect did not chew snot. At the very beginning of the war, all Japanese were

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[220] Page 4 of the "New Herodotus" forum topic "The Protocols of Zion 1897, the Internationals 1864-1889 and October" [Electronic resource] URL: [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20140703090037/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=19909&start=45
[221] "New Herodotus" forum topic ""October Revolution. An interesting version." [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20210825215512/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=20227
[222] Potapov-Lenin precedent. Russian military and Bolsheviks. [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20190906082808/http://www.warandpeace.ru/ru/analysis/view/52603/
[223] "New Herodotus" forum topic ""October Revolution. An interesting version." [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20210825215512/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=20227
[224] GRW – Great Patriotic War - a separate part of the history of World War II in Russian historiography, which singles out the period from the German attack on the USSR to May 9, 1945.
[225] Okyenno – is changed obscene "okhyenno", which means in this context sarcastically ideal.

repressed, and the *liberasty*[226] are keeping quiet about this." This text is a good example of a language game on the forum, changing the language forms of words in order to avoid punishment for using obscene vocabulary. In the same topic, another user with the nickname "edvins" tells a life story that his grandmother caught the revolution and fled from St. Petersburg. The user "Lemuryi" then asks him what he would do in 1917. "Lemuryi", answering his own question, says that he would join the *Chornaya Sotnya*[227].

The last topic we will consider about the revolution on the forum *"New Herodotus"* will be the topic "Who is to blame for the October Revolution?"[228], created by the user "Andrey Lyapchev", who wrote a rather large text with quotes and his own research question: who is to blame? The author believes that there are those who are guilty, because "there is no social revolution in a healthy society." The first response on the topic was a sarcastic comment from the user "El_mariachi": "As always, the Jews and Americans are to blame, if you do not believe, ask "Lemuryi"[229]. To which the well-known user "Lemuryi" appears immediately and writes: "Were the Americans 80-85% in the composition of the Council of People's Commissars of 1918?"[230]

The "Historica" forum structurally resembles the "New Herodotus" forum; there is also no division into national and world history. Forum users are aware of other forums we

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[226] Liberast – is a combination of obscene "pederast" and "liberal".

[227] Chornaya Sotnya (the Black Hundred) – the far-right movement of Russian conservatives in the early 20th century.

[228] "New Herodotus" forum topic "Who is to blame for the October Revolution?" [Electronic resource] URL: [Electronic resource] URL:

https://web.archive.org/web/20210824034259/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=20109

[229] Ibid.

[230] Ibid.

are considering and discuss, for example, that the "New Herodotus" is no longer functioning[231].

The section with a discussion of history is divided into subsections "Primitive society and ancient civilizations", "Antiquity (before the Fall of Rome)", "From the fall of Rome to the XIX century", "Industrial era (XIX-XX centuries)", "History of Religions, mythology, epic", "Philosophy and methodology of history" and "History of Antarctica". The division into periods and issues of temporality and names is also interesting: there are no Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Modern Times, all this is combined into one subsection from the fall of Rome to the 19th century. The last section, at first glance, is devoted to the study of Antarctica, but in fact, topics related to pseudo-history, UFOs and various historical fictions are moved into it by moderators. Perhaps the creators found the consonance with the mythical Atlantis amusing.

Starting a discussion of the October Revolution, the user "Get'man" creates a topic in the subsection "Industrial era (XIX-XX centuries)", where he asks forum users the question of whether the events of October were a coup or a revolution.[232] However, the discussion does not have time to take place, because after two messages, the user "Val" closes the topic, referring to the fact that a similar one already exists[233]. Thus, the debaters from 2009 are forced to relocate to 2004 topic, when the original debate about revolution and coup

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[231] Message from user "Ferrum Adventus" on the "Historica" forum topic "Forum silently dies". [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/forum-tixo-umiraet.5705/post-956288 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033412/https://historica.ru/threads/forum-tixo-umiraet.5705/page-29

[232] Message from the user "Get'man" dated 11.01.2009 in the forum topic "25 (November 7) October 1917". [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/25-7-nojabrja-oktjabrja-1917.7887/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033525/https://historica.ru/threads/25-7-nojabrja-oktjabrja-1917.7887/

[233] Message from the user "Val" dated 12.01.2009 in the forum topic "25 (November 7) October 1917". [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/25-7-nojabrja-oktjabrja-1917.7887/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033525/https://historica.ru/threads/25-7-nojabrja-oktjabrja-1917.7887/

began[234]. The user with the nickname "Nina" cannot decide how to call the revolution, because in different history books it is called differently: some say that it was the "great October socialist revolution", others that it was the "Bolshevik coup", and still others that it was an "uprising"[235]. From further dialogue, it turns out that "Nina" is a schoolgirl and argues with her father, who "<...> received a communist upbringing, so his opinion is unambiguous: REVOLUTION!"[236] Two forum moderators responded to help. The first one, "Alan", claimed that 30-40 people took over the Winter Palace in October, and there was no revolutionary situation at that moment. The second, "Val", claimed that it was a coup, but added that the revolution was a long process, and, in his opinion, it ended only in 1936 with the adoption of the "Stalin's constitution"[237]. Later, the third moderator "Knysh" connects and writes that there was a massacre in Moscow, compared to St. Petersburg[238], after which he repeats his thesis that "very few people died during the assault on the Winter Palace[239], but in Moscow, all passageways to the Kremlin were littered with corpses"[240]. The last two users also believed that it was a coup, but they left their opinion almost five years after the start of the discussion in January 2009, when the above-mentioned topic was closed. It seems that users have followed the link provided by the moderator "Val" and decided to leave their opinion in an open topic.

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[234] Page 1 of the "Historica" forum topic "Revolution, uprising, coup?" dated 07.04.2004. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-vosstanie-perevorot.264/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033715/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-vosstanie-perevorot.264/

[235] Ibid.

[236] Ibid. Spelling preserved.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid.

[239] In this case "Winter" is a substantive adjective meaning "Winter Palace".

[240] Page 2 of the "Historica" forum topic "Revolution, uprising, coup?" dated 07.04.2004. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-vosstanie-perevorot.264/page-2 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033757/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-vosstanie-perevorot.264/page-2

In another topic, dedicated to the revolution, but to the February events, the moderator "Val" asks users to clarify how many civilian casualties were on February 26-27, 1917 and complains that there is no exact figure in the textbooks[241]. Despite the fact that no one answered the moderator, this topic is interesting because in it "Val" says that he needs to study this topic with schoolchildren. That means that in 2004 this user was a schoolteacher.

The largest topic on the revolutionary events in the Russian Empire on the "Historica" forum is the topic "Russian Revolution of 1917"[242], which did not start at the initiative of the users, but because the moderator of another forum dedicated to the French Revolution decided to move the dispute between the users of "Val" and "rspzd" to a more appropriate forum subsection. Users argue about the causes and interpretations of the events of 1917 for 19 pages and 15 years, periodically reviving the topic with new discussions and materials.

The main dispute concerned two concepts. The first, close to the official state narrative, was defended by "Val", who believed that the revolution is a long process that began in February 1917, continued with the October coup and ended with the end of the civil war. The second concept was defended by the user "rspzd", who believed that no revolution took place in February 1917. He argued his position by the fact that Mikhail Alexandrovich, who abdicated the throne, legitimately transferred power to the provisional government, which was supposed to govern the country until the convocation of the

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[241] Page 1 of the "Historica" forum topic "February Revolution 1917" dated 07.12.2004. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/fevralskaja-revoljucija-1917g.1770/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614033828/https://historica.ru/threads/fevralskaja-revoljucija-1917g.1770/

[242] Page 1 of the "Historica" forum topic "Russian Revolution of 1917" dated 22.03.2006. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614034049/https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/

Constituent Assembly. Thus, from the point of view of the user "rspzd" no radical change in the socio-political life of the state has happened[243].

Later, other users from various discursive fields also enter the dispute. "Garry", obviously sympathizing with the Constitutional Democratic Party, is trying in every possible way to label his opponents as Marxists, as they call the February events of 1917 a "bourgeois revolution"[244]. He also writes that the members of the Constitutional Democrats were not "bourgeois" but were from the middle class. After some time, the discussion turns into a search for a Masonic conspiracy and the influence of Freemasonry on the revolutionary events in the Russian Empire[245].

User "Dmitry G." wrote that "the revolution of 1905-1907 was pre-planned. Gapon[246] was an agent of the tsarist secret police", as if hinting at the presence of a conspiracy in the highest echelons of the political investigation of the Russian Empire[247]. A similar theory also arose among some users of the "New Herodotus" forum. In 2013, users argued in this thread about the succession of the USSR and Russia during the revolutionary

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[243] Ibid.

[244] Page 4 of the "Historica" forum topic "Russian Revolution of 1917" dated 16.11.2006. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-4 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614034104/https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-4

[245] Page 5 of the "Historica" forum topic "Russian Revolution of 1917" messages dated 26.11.2006. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-5 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614034227/https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-5

[246] Georgy Gapon was a Russian Orthodox priest and leader of the demonstration column during the protest in 1905, which was fired by the Imperial Army.

[247] Page 8 of the "Historica" forum topic " Russian Revolution of 1917" messages dated 08.12.2009. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-8 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614034249/https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-8

period, even bringing each other and discussing the texts of historical sources, for example, "Decree on the proclamation of Russia as a republic."[248]

Another rather curious topic regarding the 1917 revolution is the "1917 Revolution and Cocaine", created by the user "Kaperang"[249]. The user writes: "There are a lot of rumours among the people about the "Jewish-cocaine" background of the 1917 revolution. About the nationality of the leaders, the question is more or less clear from the surnames, but I can't find actual data (at least from memoirs) about the facts of the use of drug No. 1 by top-brass. Of course, the figure of Lenin is of most interest. For all sorts of requests "Lenin cocaine", etc. "Yandex"[250] gives out only trash. Has anyone been interested in information on this topic?"[251] Apparently, the users liked this topic very much, because someone started joking that "none of those present with members of the Soviet government sniffed cocaine," and someone quite seriously decided to discuss and suggested that, given the spread of opium at that time, it was unsurprisingly to catch one of the revolutionaries using drugs[252]. Someone even suggested that the sailors of the Baltic fleet came up with the "Baltic tea cocktail", which is prepared by mixing vodka and cocaine. The "Rzay" user himself claims that he first learned about this cocktail from the book of the famous writer

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[248] Page 10 of the "Historica" forum topic " Russian Revolution of 1917" messages dated 13.06.2013. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-10 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614034256/https://historica.ru/threads/russkaja-revoljucija-1917-g.4171/page-10

[249] Page 1 of the "Historica" forum topic "1917 Revolution and Cocaine" messages dated 23.01.2011. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040009/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/

[250] Popular Russian internet search engine.

[251] Page 1 of the "Historica" forum topic "1917 Revolution and Cocaine" messages dated 23.01.2011. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040009/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/

[252] Ibid.

Viktor Pelevin[253]. After that, people begin to discuss other works of the writer, in which he often uses drugs to indicate various details and characteristics of the characters. One of the users, "Alaricus" (as part of the forum administration), claims that people addicted to drugs cannot make any revolution, since he himself met many such people after working in the investigative bodies[254]. After that, users rather agree that Lenin did not use cocaine[255]. Then the users of "Val" and "Alaricus" discuss their military past in the context of a discussion about German Goering's drug addiction and the adequacy of creating airfield divisions[256].

At the forum "Istorichka", unlike previous forums, there is a division of subsections into world history, which is divided into temporal periods, and into the history of Russia, which is represented by a simple subsection that is not divided into periods[257]. In this subsection, we find topics mainly related to Russia during the Putin period and the history of the USSR, but there is very little discussion of the revolution, with the exception of a couple of topics. The most discussed topic and, in fact, the only one concerning the events of 1917 is the topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?"[258] Simplifying the narratives, we can say that the discussion was reduced to an agonistic language game

[253] Ibid. In the Victor Pelevin's novel "Chapaev and the emptiness" (known as "Buddha's Little Finger" or as "Clay Machine Gun") this cocktail was used to give the enormous strength and courage to the soldiers.

[254] Page 2 of the "Historica" forum topic "1917 Revolution and Cocaine" messages dated 24.01.2011. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/page-2 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040146/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/page-2

[255] Ibid.

[256] Page 3 of the "Historica" forum topic "1917 Revolution and Cocaine" messages dated 24.01.2011. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/page-3 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040224/https://historica.ru/threads/revoljucija-1917-i-kokain.9946/page-3

[257] Forum "Istorichka", main page. [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl Saved copy:

[258] "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040312/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl

between two camps of binary oppositions: people who support the USSR and as a state entity and their opponents, since any message contains an opinion about Soviet power. People like "Mislitel'_N", which started the discussion, condemn the Soviet authorities as criminals who created the Gulag and carried out mass repressions, and users like "Chessplayer" oppose them, using examples of "collectivization, industrialization" and other Soviet transformations as something positive. Participants sometimes try to discuss other topics or alternative paths except revolution[259].

For example, the user "Severga" suggests that such a path was possible: "Alternative - the same as in Germany - the victory of the "whites"[260]. First, the whites would defeat the reds, declare a republic. Then for several years they would smash the rebellious provinces, drive around the outskirts of the "red-green" gangs, carried out terror and repression against those who were suspected of sympathizing with the "reds". And then they would have fight each other. All this would have ended in the late 20s and early 30s with a military coup, the coming to the authoritarian power of some domestic "Fuhrer", and then as it was - industrialization, militarization, war with Nazi Germany (all the same but with other slogans: "For Holy Russia!", for example). It seems everything is the same, but. .. there would be fewer Russophobes in power. Maybe less Russian blood would have been shed."[261] Like other discussions, the main topic is gradually forgotten, and the use of historical analogies encourages people to discuss other topics. Thus, despite the fact that the

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[259] Page 2 of the "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290/20 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040358/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290%2F20

[260] "Whites" – the anti-communist opposition block engaged in civil war against Red Army, so-called "reds".

[261] Page 3 of the "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290/40 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040444/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290%2F40

rules forbid discussing other topics, in the discussion of the revolution there are discussions about the first and second world wars[262].

Periodically, users quote various cultural works in order to laugh at other users during discussion. For example, the user "Mikola" quotes the postmodernist work of Venedikt Erofeev "Moscow-Petushki": "For some reason, I remembered" Moscow-Petushki" by the immortal Venechka:

"And you should note that homosexuality in our country has been eradicated, although completely, but not entirely. Rather, entirely, but not completely. Or rather, even like this: entirely and completely, but not finally. What's on the public's mind right now? Only homosexuality."

"And it wasn't written by him today, but during the Golden Five-Year Plan!"[263]

User "Severga" quotes the Gospel of Matthew, trying to explain the collapse of the USSR in the subject of the revolution: "The USSR collapsed because it was built on sand: 'And the rain came down, and the rivers overflowed, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house; and it fell down, and its fall was very great.' (Gospel of Matthew 7:24-27)"[264] Someone appeals to the current situation and tries to prove that in 2017, not 140 million people live in Russia, but 89 million[265]. Sometimes users shared stories about their

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[262] Page 29 of the "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290/560 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040543/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290%2F560

[263] Page 67 of the "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290/1320 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040642/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290%2F1320

[264] Ibid.

[265] Page 69 of the "Istorichka" forum topic "The October Revolution: mistake or necessity?" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290/1360 Saved copy:

life in the USSR. For example, the user "ivan vasilievich", as a counterargument to the assertion that the policy of anti-Semitism was widespread in the USSR, and it appeared, among other things, because of quotas for higher educational institutions, writes: "I believe. But while living in the USSR I did not notice. In our "porch"[266] - no. But my mother had a friend at work - they were friends, then they were friends with families. Mom's friends had a higher education received at the turn of the 40s and 50s, their child - a girl, received her higher education without problems in the early seventies. All with whom I studied at school - received a higher education, some in Moscow. At work, I met people only with a higher education."

Sometimes disputes about the revolution are found in topics that at first glance are not directly related to it. So, a rather extensive discussion between users about the legitimacy of the Bolsheviks took place in the topic "White Terror"[267]. Users argued whether the Bolsheviks were a "gang of invaders" or a "legitimate force" that had support of the society.

The "istorya.ru" forum differs in structure from others in that it divides the historical narrative into periods of world history and the history of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The latter is presented in the "Ruthenia" section and subsections: "Before Rurik", "Rus", "Belarus", "Ukraine", "Russian Empire", "Soviet Russia" and "Russian Federation". The most popular topic dedicated to the revolution is a multi-page discussion in the topic,

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https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040725/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1440744290%2F1360

[266] In that context this means the close community with whom user had communicated.

[267] "Istorichka" forum topic "White Terror" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1518457205 Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040736/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1518457205

familiar from previous discussions, "Was the October coup a revolution?"[268] The dispute

began as a discussion between two users, "marinin" and "Leta". The first one believed that

the October events were a revolution because they fit into the theoretical framework of what

is a revolution, which he himself built, apparently based on Marxist constructs, since he

used such terms as "ruling class", "bourgeois system" and "feudal order". The second was in

opposition. User "Let" did not like this approach, so it was it which was criticized: "hmm ..

a predictable answer ... but what if we abstract from Marxist scholasticism and think with

our head?"[269]

Other users also argued not so much about the revolution as they used the event to

clarify political disagreements: communist supporters argued with their own opponents[270]. I

would call it a euphemistic dispute, when the historical becomes not so much an argument,

not even semiotically signifying, but is a field of ideological disputes. This is very different

from the so-called "memory wars" that can be found in social media, where memory itself

and historical narrative are at issue and users try to prove that something or someone was

better or worse for one reason or another. At some point, the discussion turns into a dispute

about whether the US is a totalitarian state (the user "Yaroslav Stebko" considers the US

totalitarian, and the USSR non-totalitarian), and users comment on the state of education in

Russia from their own experience[271].

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[268] "Istorya.ru" forum topic "Was the October coup a revolution?" [Electronic resource] URL:
http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265 Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041011/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265

[269] Ibid.

[270] Page 4 of the "Istorya.ru" forum topic "Was the October coup a revolution?" [Electronic resource] URL:
http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265&page=4 Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040916/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265&page=4

[271] Page 6 of the "Istorya.ru" forum topic "Was the October coup a revolution?" [Electronic resource] URL:
http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265&page=6 Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614040948/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=6265&page=6

The forum "Eurasica" is specific in the selection of forums that are considered in this thesis. It is not dedicated to the history of Russia in general. It is a classic example of a narrowly focused Eurasian regional forum on the history in Russian language. I suppose that good research question for further decolonial research would be to examine why Kazakhs, Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kirghiz and other peoples of Central Asia do not use their national languages for discussions of their history. The forum is quite large with 6334 members and 407 thousand posts[272]. It does not contain separate topics devoted to the 1917 revolution in the context of national Russian history, however, it is periodically mentioned as an event that influenced the history of the peoples of Central Asia.

One of the topics, for example, discusses the activities of Mustafa Chokaev, who during the revolution and the events of the civil war wanted to create an independent Turkmenistan, but had to flee abroad because of the red terror[273]. In the same topic, users criticize the communists in every possible way and accuse them of provoking famine[274]. User "AksKerBorzh" writes about his grandfather's participation in the political events of 1917 and his struggle for the independence of Kazakhstan[275]. For representatives of this

272 Statistics from the main page of forum "Eurasica" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/
Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041036/https://forum-eurasica.ru/

273 "Eurasica" forum topic "Mustafa Shokai (Chokaev)" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/1514-%D0%BC%D1%83%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B0-%D1%88%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B9-%D1%87%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%B2/?tab=comments#comment-22376 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041150/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/1514-%D0%BC%D1%83%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B0-%D1%88%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B9-%D1%87%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%B2/?tab=comments

274 Ibid.

275 Page 2 of the "Eurasica" forum topic "Mustafa Shokai (Chokaev)" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/1514-%D0%BC%D1%83%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B0-%D1%88%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B9-%D1%87%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%B2/page/2/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041206/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/1514-

forum, the history of the revolution is rather a traumatic narrative, the nature of which is not strongly disputed.

Summing up the first results, it can be said that one can observe the projection of national-state uncertainty on the reproduction of narratives about the revolutions of 1917. Basically, users discuss and argue about the nature of the revolution: whether it was inevitable, whether the events of October 1917 were a coup or a revolution. Conspiracy theories occupy a separate place in discussions. Despite the fact that there are separate sections called "alternative history" for such discussions on the forums, the moderators do not always follow the discussion process. Non-explicit political disputes take place on the forums. The reason for them is a historical event, which remains in the background in such disputes.

2.2 Stalin's Times as a narrative.

On the forum "New Herodotus" the subject of the great interest is the discussion on the topic "once again about the 'Stalinist repressions'", started by the user "M-r Forrest"[276]. The user puts Stalinist repressions in quotation marks, does not deny the very fact of repressions and even quotes documents from the state archive, but comes to the conclusion that Stalin was a great leader, even the experience from the history of his own family did not bother him:

"Here is another example from my own, one might say, life. My grandfather (God rest his soul) in 1937 (!) worked as a nuclear heat engineer by profession. You understand

[276] "New Herodotus" forum topic "once again about the "Stalinist repressions"" [Electronic resource] URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20140703082659/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=19535

what the nuclear industry was like in those years. *sov.sec.*[277] and *ty dy*[278] :) So, according to the papers, he was listed as the main person responsible for ventilation, but in fact, he was responsible for the entire plant. Well, for the first few months of his work, everything was fine, but then some explosions began to be heard in the ventilation. He, of course, was raked in for deliberate damage to the state. property. You understand what kind of article [of the criminal code] this was in those years (as you rightly said most of the *vyshka*[279] were right then), to the wall without trial, but thank God my grandfather was acquainted (to put it mildly in the apartments opposite) with Igor Vasilyevich Kurchatov, so the matter came to Stalin through Beria. They began to understand. <…> In short, grandfather was acquitted, but he already had one foot in the coffin, he did lose hope at all. Until the end of his life, a small portrait of Stalin hung on the wall of his house and not a single acquaintance of him, nor he himself, in this house not only swear, but also loudly did not dare to speak. And everyone understood why. Here is what I know about Joseph Vissarionovich. and this example is not the only one. You know, I noticed that Stalin is vilified and scolded only by those who did not live under him and who do not know anything about him, but heard something on TV and read in brochures like "The whole truth about Stalin" (underpass 15 rubles). They all pity our grandfathers and grandmothers, and even though they had a hard life, they now remember him [Stalin] with kind words."[280]

User "Onkel_Wowa" (who was mentioned above) suggested that Stalin knew nothing about the repressions, and all of them were carried out and financed from abroad and were the result of a civil war of the special services[281].

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[277] Sov.sec. (sovershenno secretno) - top secret.

[278] Ty dy (t.d.) – and so on and so forth.

[279] Vyshka (vysshaya mera nakazaniya) – in this context, capital punishment - execution by shooting.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Ibid.

Another topic dedicated to the repressions on the "New Herodotus", even though it is much larger than the previous one, mainly contains posts by the user "Khromets" with discussions about the reasons for the repressions[282]. Stalin stands in his narrative as if on the sidelines. He argues that repression is the result of 1) the normalization of repression and terror in the society of that time; 2) the nature of security officers and agents of special services; 3) consensus on this issue among the elites and the intelligentsia[283]. Another user with the nickname "Lotsman" hints that there was a Jewish conspiracy, so he inclines the debaters to discuss the nationalities of the Bolshevik Party figures[284]. From another topic, one can learn that "Khromets" believes that Stalin knew about the planned attack by Germany, but does not agree that the lack of preparation for war is Stalin's fault, on the contrary, "Khromets" claims that Stalin pursued a policy of preserving the state[285].

Accordingly, "Khromets" seems to be a latent Stalinist who tries to hide his admiration for the leader by trying to bring "objective facts". He can always be found in topics in which Stalin is discussed in one way or another. In all cases, he will come up with a non-aggressive and polite defense of a dictator. Often, he tries to be the first to bring up discussion topics about Stalin in order to be the kind of one who leads the discussion.

In the "Historica" forum the most popular topic of the last chronological subsection "The Industrial Age (XIX-XX centuries)" is "Stalin". Laconically formulated in December 2004, it laid the foundation for the classic denotative agonistic language acts for the next

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[282] "New Herodotus" forum topic "Terror and repression" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20170705210041/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14638&sid=3d2d93b038e2538f25b17605f9469bb2

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

[285] "New Herodotus" forum topic "Did Stalin know about the date of the German attack on the USSR?" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://web.archive.org/web/20170122135326/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14545&sid=97dd8667439e7acca18b2bac530b067e

122 pages and almost 17 years. Basically, the discussion consists of mutual ideological attacks of users against each other with the requirement to "give arguments", and neither of the parties gives them[286]. The main dispute is whether Stalin's "proses" (supporters cite industrialization and victory in WWII) can be considered a better choice on the scales than Stalin's crimes. In this discursive framework, there are no convinced Stalinists; rather there are latent, hidden Stalinists who are trying to expose the view that the political genius of Joseph Stalin is more valuable than the destroyed human lives, while at the same time recognizing his crimes in the narrative. Therefore, the basis of discussions about Joseph Stalin on the forum "Historica" are moral and ethical philosophical disputes about the price of "victories" and not the "bad/good" dichotomy.

On the "Istorichka" popular topic about Stalin and his times is "Poll Topic: Who really was J.V. Stalin?" Starting as a struggle between Stalinists and anti-Stalinists, it went as far as clarifying personal relationships and reasoning about the nature of slaves[287]. Forum users also put on the agenda the issue of famine in the USSR in the 1930s. None of the users denies the very fact of the famine; however, the dispute begins about the discourse about the famine, that is, about the Holodomor - the deliberate destruction of certain peoples by famine, for example, Ukraine[288]. Another discussion dedicated to the Stalin era is the topic

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[286] Topic "Stalin" of the "Industrial Age (XIX-XX centuries)" subsection of the "History" section of the "Historica" forum. [Electronic resource] URL: https://historica.ru/threads/stalin.2073/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20210507182943/https://historica.ru/threads/stalin.2073/

[287] Page 84 of the topic "Poll Topic: Who was I.V. Stalin? subsection "History of Russia" of the section "Historical Science" of the forum "Istorichka". [Electronic resource] URL:http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1254417534/1660 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20210507200530/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1254417534%2F1660

[288] "Istorichka" forum topic "Famine in the USSR, thirties" [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1367934257 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041313/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1367934257

"The role of society in the terror of the 20-30s of the last century in the USSR.", in which users discuss the responsibility of ordinary people in mass repressions[289]. User "Zemlyak" cites various testimonies about the creation of inspection and inspection bodies as an argument supporting his point of view on the responsibility of society. The user "ivan vasilievich" believes that the main fault lies with the organizers, and not with ordinary people[290].

On the "Istorya.ru" forum the most lively discussions are in the "Recent Times" subsection, especially in the "Munich Agreement" topic, in which forum users discuss what role the "Munich Pact" played in unleashing World War II[291]. Over time, the discussion turned into the plane of only one question: could the USSR aid Czechoslovakia and prevent the war[292]. In the "Soviet Russia" subsection, the most discussed subject was the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact". However, the discussion that began in 2007 regarding the document itself and the reasons for its conclusion did not last long, after which it flared up with renewed vigour in 2019, but rather as a question of the reception of the pact on the political agenda[293].

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[289] "Istorichka" forum topic "The role of society in the terror of the 20-30s of the last century in the USSR." [Electronic resource] URL: http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1572907919/0 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041325/http://forum.istorichka.ru/cgi-bin/yabb2/YaBB.pl?num=1572907919%2F0

[290] Ibid.

[291] Topic "Munich Agreement" of the subsection "Recent Times" of the section "Chronos" of the forum "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1247. Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20210508121655/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1247

[292] Page 29 of the topic "Munich Agreement" of the subsection "Modern times" of the section "Chronos" of the forum "Istoriya.ru". [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1247&page=29. Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20210508123231/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1247&page=29

[293] Page 9 of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact theme of the Soviet Russia subsection of the Ruthenia section of the Istoriya.ru forum. [Electronic resource] URL:http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=199&page=9 Saved copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210508133740/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=199&page=9

Another discussed topic in the history of the Stalin period is "Collectivization in the USSR". The user "Ivan Alexandrovich" believes that there could not be a good solution, a dead-end was created: either everyone would die of hunger, or collectivization was necessary, which, in his opinion, created the "GREAT power of the USSR"[294]. The user "bayar", who introduces himself as a manager, enters the discussion and agrees with the statements of the user "Ivan Aeksandrovich", referring to his managerial experience. After that, the anti-communist "Victor Skovorodnikov" enters the discussion, who, referring to the "peasant mentality", claims that it was because of it that the Stolypin reform could not be realized[295]. The user "bayar", who introduces himself as a manager, enters the discussion and agrees with the statements of the user "Ivan Aeksandrovich", referring to his managerial experience. After that, the anti-communist "Victor Skovorodnikov" enters the discussion, who, referring to the "peasant mentality", claims that it was because of him that the Stolypin reform could not be realized. After that, "Rambo" enters into an argument with him, who asks for proof of the theses of "Victor Skovorodnikov" however, dissatisfied with the statistics given, he writes: "Numbers, numbers. You study everything from books. Have you ever visited rural areas? If only you would be curious about how the peasants live today. Maybe it would clear your mind. Statistics is a prostitute. As you like, so it will turn. Today's agriculture drags out a miserable existence. So pathetic that if you don't see it, you won't even believe it."[296] At some point, the discussion turns to a comparison and discussion of the tsarist army and the red army[297].

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[294] "Istoriya.ru" forum topic "Collectivization in the USSR" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1581 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041448/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1581

[295] Ibid.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Page 7 of the "Istoriya.ru" forum topic "Collectivization in the USSR" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1581&page=7 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041500/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1581&page=7

The topic "Stalin saved my country" is very emotional, in which the user "Ane4ka:))" writes: "<...> I believe that the war was won not by the people, but by Stalin, who led them. I say to him a huge and human "thank you" for that, he saved my country. And those unfortunate people who died there were nothing more than pawns in the hands of Stalin."[298] Further, she writes that victory in the war is the merit solely of Stalin, and not of the "pawns" who died on it[299].

As I wrote earlier, the forum "Eurasica" is specific in terms of building narratives. So, Stalin appears at the forum as an unambiguously negative historical figure who is guilty of repression against the peoples of Central Asia. So, the user "Boroldoi" in the topic "Khalkha-Mongols" writes that Stalin repressed the Buryats in Mongolia as "socially hostile"[300]. Another user, telling the story of Bukharian Jews, writes that Stalin: "<...> During the Stalinist repressions in the 30s and 40s, thousands of Bukharian Jews were arrested and sent to the Gulag, where an unknown number of them died. <...> in 1938 by Stalin's decree all cultural activities of the Bukharian Jews were banned. Newspapers, theatres and cultural centres were closed. The last national institutions ceased their activities in 1940."[301]

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[298] "Istoriya.ru" forum topic "Stalin saved my country" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1089 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20150511162347/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1089

[299] Ibid.

[300] "Eurasica" forum topic "Khalkha-Mongols" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/4208-%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8B/?do=findComment&comment=433431 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041614/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/4208-%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8B/page/248/?tab=comments

[301] "Eurasica" forum topic "Bukharian Jews" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/859-%D0%B1%D1%83%D1%85%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B8/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041715/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/859-

The time of Stalin excites users of the forums much more, they are ready to spend more time and resources arguing about it and the results of his rule. Even though in Russian public discourse Stalin is a positive character and, according to public opinion polls, his approval is more than 50%[302], on historical Internet forums, Stalinists and anti-Stalinists are approximately equally divided. Moreover, the position of the forum moderator noticeably either strengthens or leaves the position of one side or another. Therefore, some users are difficult to classify by dichotomy: rarely does anyone openly articulate their boundless love or hatred for the leader. Thus, the same uncertainty arises in the narrative as with the case of the revolution. The only space where the attitude towards Stalin is unequivocally negative and of a mass nature is the Eurasian forum, where an audience gathered that has a historical trauma associated with terror and the forcible deportation of their peoples.

2.3 Transition Period as a narrative.

On the "New Herodotus" forum in the "Recent Times" subsection, the topic "Causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union" became the most discussed topic. As a topic header, there is a poll "What, in your opinion, is the reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union?" with answer options: "economic, foreign policy, domestic policy, all of the above and others." 39 users took part in the survey. Top three reasons: economic (11 votes), all of the above (11 votes) and domestic political (10) votes[303]. At the beginning of the conversation,

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%D0%B1%D1%83%D1%85%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5-
%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B8/

[302] Levada-Center opinion poll and report on results on Stalin. [Electronic resource] URL: https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/04/19/dynamic-of-stalin-s-perception/ Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614041831/https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/04/19/dynamic-of-stalin-s-perception/

[303] The topic is "The Causes of the Collapse of the Soviet Union" of the "Recent Times" subsection of the "World History" section of the "New Herodotus" forum. [Electronic resource]

users simply exchanged opinions and theories, expressing their own preferences. Someone called even a "palace coup" as the reason for the collapse[304], someone saw the reasons in the "Masonic" or even "Jewish conspiracy"[305]. There were also participants who tried to argue their position analytically, citing graphs of changes in oil prices and the rate of its production.[306]. Sometimes users shared personal experiences:

"Homo Sapiens: <...> Of course, I don't discount the mood in society either - after 1982, it was already very felt that everyone was tired of the "sovok"[307], at least the thinking part of the population <...>

Nehbcn: <…> And by the way! I was not tired of my homeland in 82 at all! I had something that now cannot be bought for any money - Pride in myself and the Country and Confidence in the future! <…>"[308]

Gradually, as in other discussions, the discussion periodically drifts away from the main topic and the battle begins between adherents of the Soviet planned economy system

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[304] Message from the user "foma" dated 17.02.2010. [Electronic resource]

URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210506192230/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119

[305] Messages from user "edvins" dated 02/20/2010. [Electronic resource]

URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&sid=f3b535f3269a1e4bd34cf869614673ff&start=15. Saved

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[306] Message from the user "Homo Sapiens" dated 02/24/2010. [Electronic resource]

URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=30. Saved

copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210506193559/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=30

[307] Sovok - in English "scoop" - is used as a shortened jargon naming of the USSR.

[308] Messages from users "Homo Sapiens" and "Nehbcn" dated 25.02.2010. [Electronic resource]

URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&sid=d115d83de1fa349e2e663f1378a1967b&start=45. Saved

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on the one hand and market mechanisms on the other[309]. Sometimes the controversy turns into citing various publications from books and websites[310]. The intensity of passions reached unprecedented proportions:

"chugunka: <...> I quote again: In the January issue of the journal Problems of Economics for 1941, an article by M. Kubanin "The level of labor productivity in agriculture in the USSR and the USA" was published. For all the complexity of cross-country comparisons, it showed that our country lags far behind America in this indicator. The article was sharply criticized in an editorial review of the Bolshevik magazine, entitled "On the slanderous outburst of M. Kubanin." Soon he was shot.

Khromets: That's right, actually, they shot him .... You need to think, and then write ....."[311]

There are practically no discussions of the history of the USSR of the last stage of its existence at the Historica forum. A similar topic "The collapse of the USSR" appeared relatively recently - in 2019, by separating from the topic in which users discussed the possible occupation of the former USSR countries by the regime in Russia in order for

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[309] Page 11 of the topic "Causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union" of the subsection "Recent times" of the section "World History" of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=150. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210506195329/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=150

[310] Page 23 of the topic "Causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union" of the subsection "Recent times" of the section "World History" of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=330. Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210506200059/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=330

[311] Page 26 of the topic "Causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union" of the subsection "Recent times" of the section "World History" of the forum "New Herodotus". [Electronic resource]
URL:http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=375 Saved
copy:https://web.archive.org/web/20210506200935/http://gerodot.ru/viewtopic.php?f=7&t=14119&start=375

Vladimir Putin to stay in power[312]. A retrospective look at the discussion of the participants is disappointing about the final result. On the topic as such, there is no discussion of the USSR of the late period. At some point, the dispute develops into a discussion about the price of oil and the US war in Iraq[313].

Another topic is "October 1993: should we polish off the communists in the toilet[314]?"[315] encouraged users to share their own experiences, even though they were discussing mainly their political views, so the user "Utro psovogo laya" wrote:

"Do you remember the armed mutiny in the capital? And the trash drunk 'boys' driving around the Garden Ring in trucks and shooting in short bursts into the air to 'warm up'? And the assault on the television centre? I remember. That night I visited the White House[316], saw these 'revolutionary masses' at arm's length. The most frequently used word by them, after *'vodyary'*[317], was 'polish off'. All those who did not die that night were amnestied and feel great. And 'tanks to parliament' is nonsense. Tell me, please, how many parliamentarians died from the notorious 'shooting of parliament'? Good 'shooting'! .. If they really were shot, less communist scum would now trample our land, and so - *laughter and sin*[318] ... 'Shooting' ... The October events of '93 showed that any bastard in Moscow can take up arms and go shoot at policemen - having a communist party card in his pocket

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[312] "Historica" forum topic "The collapse of the USSR" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://historica.ru/threads/krushenie-sssr.13606/ Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042003/https://historica.ru/threads/krushenie-sssr.13606/

[313] Page 19 of the "Historica" forum topic "The collapse of the USSR" [Electronic resource] URL:
https://historica.ru/threads/krushenie-sssr.13606/page-19 Saved copy:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042011/https://historica.ru/threads/krushenie-sssr.13606/page-19

[314] A reference to a popular phrase that has become a meme, uttered by V. Putin during comments about the bombing of the city of Grozny by the Russian military. Putin announced that he intends to " polish off terrorists in the toilet," a phrase popular among people serving sentences in colonies.

[315] https://historica.ru/threads/oktjabr-1993-g-mochit-li-kommunistov-v-sortire.6439/

[316] Governmental building in Moscow. Used to be the Parliament building during these events.

[317] Vodyary! – proclamation with the demand of vodka.

[318] Popular Russian idiom.

guarantees amnesty for him. In any country in the world, these scoundrels would at least be brought to justice, or rather, they would be slapped on the spot, both the immortal gods and people would justify this. But our president[319] was a retired secretary of the Moscow City Committee..."

There are no topics on the forum "Istorichka.ru" dedicated to the transition period. Users even in other sections do not discuss this part of the narrative.

On the forum "Istorya.ru" in the topic "The collapse of the USSR was inevitable", a user who calls himself a Marxist is trying to prove the inevitability of the collapse of the USSR[320]. However, a potentially interesting discussion about Marxism almost immediately turns into a dispute between fans of the USSR and its opponents. Someone finds the cause of the collapse of the USSR a CIA conspiracy[321]. In the topic "How the USSR collapsed - the participants' memories", users cite texts from the memoirs and interviews of the participants in the Belovezhskaya Accords as well as various witnesses[322].

The topic "realities of life in the USSR" is all about memory as a personal experience, in which forum users left their memories of their daily life in the Soviet Union and discussed it[323]. This is not just evidence, but memory used as experience as an argument in a dispute. Initially, at least, users shared memories to counter the claim by user "FIN" that the refrigerators were overflowing with food. For example, the user "Bibliograph" wrote:

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[319] At that time - Boris Yeltsin.

[320] "Istorya.ru" forum topic "The collapse of the USSR was inevitable" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=2337 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042026/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=2337

[321] Ibid.

[322] "Istorya.ru" forum topic "How the USSR collapsed - the participants' memories" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=7678 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042107/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=7678

[323] "Istorya.ru" forum topic "realities of life in the USSR" [Electronic resource] URL: http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1120 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042111/http://istorya.ru/forum/index.php?showtopic=1120

"Many people did not have refrigerators themselves. I lived in a communal apartment with eight families and not one of them had a refrigerator. <…> But there was nothing in the stores. There was nothing to sweep away. We began to forget, sir. And as for whom you served... I understand that you work in the Department of Contemporary History? Goddamn, you served. Young people were brought up in the Marxist spirit, loyalty to the Party and the people was invested in young brains? So you had something to sweep away in special places where I had no access."[324]

Here is the flashback of the user "Alisa": "The choice of products was strictly limited. As I remember now, at school we were even given humanitarian help from the USA - ham in a jar. I then tried it for the first time in my life."[325]

At the "Eurasica" forum there is a dispute about the transition period when Russian participants in the forum are trying to justify colonial actions against Central Asia, and forum participants are arguing with them[326].

Summing up, it is possible to draw intermediate conclusions. First, users of different forums are interested in different topics of Soviet history. This can be traced by the number of posts that appear on a particular topic. The most popular part of Soviet history in terms of discussions is the Stalin period. Users are ready to discuss both the personality of the leader and repression, industrialization, collectivization, as well as the war, which, according to some, was won by Stalin alone. Secondly, users reproduce the public historical discourse in Russia, but not in the same proportion as public opinion polls show. Thirdly, narratives are

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[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Message from user "AksKerBorzh" on the "Eurasica" forum topic "Kyrgyz" [Electronic resource] URL: https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/363-%D0%BA%D1%8B%D1%80%D0%B3%D1%8B%D0%B7%D1%8B/?do=findComment&comment=86317 Saved copy: https://web.archive.org/web/20220614042138/https://forum-eurasica.ru/topic/363-%D0%BA%D1%8B%D1%80%D0%B3%D1%8B%D0%B7%D1%8B/page/58/?tab=comments

fundamentally influenced by historical trauma, the more it is scalable within the national narrative, the stronger it is strengthened. This was shown clearly in the "Eurasica" forum. Participants recognize all state colonial crimes that were committed against their peoples by USSR and particularly Stalin. This cannot be said about individual trauma: the chapter gave examples of how people talked about the experience of repression in the 1930s in the USSR, but still hung portraits of Stalin in their apartment. Fourthly, we found out that memory as an individual experience can be used as an argument not only in relation to the time in which a person lived. In this case, family memory becomes part of individual experience in terms of constructing narratives. Fifth, on some issues, users have points of consensus: the fact of repression (their price is being disputed), and the fact of victory in the Second World War. Moreover, the victorious narratives practically repeat the state one, as if appropriating the USSR the right to be the sole winner. The debate about Lend-Lease exists only to legitimize the narrative of the marginal impact it had on the outcome of the war. Sixth, since forums are communities, people are willing to share their personal experiences. From their messages, you can find out their professional activities, approximate age, a various preferences, that is, personal information that does not directly relate to discussions of history.

Conclusion

Within the framework of this thesis, the object of study in a broad sense was Internet forums, which were popular in the best days of Web 1.0. After the transition to the Web 2.0 paradigm and emergence of the social media, many of them remained in existence and were supported by the communities that formed in them. Most Russian-language historical Internet forums remain active today. People continue to exchange opinions on them about various events that excite their consciousness. It can be both disputes about history and disputes about politics. An overview of the history of the creation and development of these forums was given in this thesis.

As we found out, the composition of the authors was as extremely diverse as user communities from various social groups and with different education: historians, lawyers, and programmers. Their initial attempts to build "encyclopedias" as precursors can be considered to varying degrees successful, but they paid a lot of attention to them. The growing popularity of the forums they created sometimes forced them to tighten the rules of communication, because no one on the Internet is immune from "spammers" and "trolls". The functionality available to users at the first stages did not allow them to reveal themselves as creative individuals, which began to change with the ability to attach attachments: photos, audio, give forum-readable links to third-party resources.

Forum users are included in a system of hierarchical relationships, where a moderator or administrator can edit a user's message at will or remove user from the forum. Usually, forums have clear rules with the explicit rights and obligations of the participants in the discussions: rules for conducting language games, prescriptions according to which users must argue with each other.

An important feature of any forum discussion is that it never works to stay within the topic, as the rules prescribe, so moderators often move discussions from one topic to another, from one subsection to another.

Narratives about the Soviet past occupy a special place on the forums: users not only discuss the details of Soviet history, but also share their own memories or memories of their family members. It is in discussions about the Soviet past that the value differences of users are especially acutely felt. Often, they use some topic from the past not to discuss narratives, but to defend their own views. This is how the euphemism of historical discussion takes place: the temporality of the dispute is conditional; the main part of the language game is agonistic disputes about the correctness of the ideology. Our assumption is confirmed by the language itself, which users use in such disputes. Proponents of Marxism talk about classes and their struggles that provoke historical events, their opponents use more neutral analytical language, but concentrate not so much on large classes as on individual experience, scaled to a large narrative. The Stalin's period is the most discussed of all the elements of the Soviet past. Users discuss various deeds: collectivization, the number of victims of repression and terror, argue about its scale regarding the outcome of development, and also speculate about its nature. Stalin himself plays a key role in these discussions. Users discuss how great his contribution to the history of Russia.

Very often, discussions about the number of victims and the place of the individual in history are interrupted by conspiracy supporters. Someone believes that revolutions, Stalinist repressions and the collapse of the USSR are endless conspiracies of special services or Jews. Moreover, such users do not always receive punishment for violating the rules of the forum. Someone tries to disguise himself and builds a strategy of his language game based on hints, for example, he constantly asks a question about the nationality of the person.

The forum "Eurasica" stands somewhat aloof in the discussion of narratives about the Soviet past. The deportations and repressions of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia and the colonial policy in relation to their culture left a great collective trauma, which is expressed in anti-colonial discourse in relation to everything that is connected to the USSR.

Thus, Soviet narratives on Russian-speaking historical Internet forums are not so much a field for 'wars of memory', but a space in which various individuals try to defend their views on life and conceptual past.

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