History of the Russian State as Personal Project; Vasily Tatishehev and Nikolai Karamzin

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This article analyzes the individual projects of Tatishchev and Karamzin as Russian historians. Vasily N. Tatishchev (1686–1750), a civil servant during the Petrine era, spent thirty years creating his Russian History as a set of commentaries on “chronicle records.” Nikolai M. Karamzin (1766–1826) gained entrance to European intellectual culture through his travels around Europe, which served as a source for his Letters of a Russian Traveler and later publication of his journal Vestnik Evropy (1802–1803). The exposure to European intellectual life stimulated Karamzin’s project, the twelve-volume History of the Russian State. This article examines the similarities and differences in the thinkers’ methodologies for constructing history, which relied on European historiography and a substantially different set of personal experiences: one the builder of Empire under Peter, and the other an intellectual educator, writer, creator of the Russian literary language, and professional historiographer in the court of Emperor Alexander I.
Keywords: Russian culture in the eighteenth century, intellectual culture, European historiography, methodologies of history, personal project, Vasily Tatishchev, Russian History, Nikolai Karamzin, Letters of a Russian Traveler, Vestnik Evropy, History of the Russian State, history as a discipline, Sergey Solovyov

In all respects, our undoubtedly happy fate is a kind of extraordinary speed: we mature not in centuries, but in decades.

—N.M. Karamzin

We have long known that a heightened level of interest in the past of one’s country is related both to major political changes in its development and to intellectual movements within the state. This is a central idea in Karamzin’s December 5, 1818, speech at the Solemn Assembly of the Imperial Russian Academy on the occasion of his admission to the Academy. Uniting the “life of the individual” with “the life of empires” through intellectual and artistic achievements, Karamzin formulates concepts important for his time: not so much military victories as the moral dignity of the people, embodied in the artistic word of historiography and bequeathed to subsequent generations that bind that history to themselves. The Age of Enlightenment looked back to the great examples of antiquity and saw in them an ideal in relation to the historical past. The history of one’s people, their glory, feats, passions, and, most importantly, their creative deeds also constitute ideal food for the reader’s soul.¹ Karamzin likewise concludes his speech in this spirit:

The Tamerlanes might eclipse the Themistocleses and Caesars, but the Mongols only killed, while the Greeks and Romans nourish the soul of their most remote offspring with the eternal beauty of their creations … Both our lives and the lives of empires should contribute to uncovering the human soul’s great abilities; everything here is for the mind and the senses; everything is immortal in their successes!²

This personal interpretation of history as enlightenment can be taken as a formula for reading it philosophically, as the goal and task of generations living in history. However, was this the program under which construction of a historical picture of the fatherland began in the eighteenth century?³ How did Russia’s intellectual thought move toward its historical past? It seems we can use the term personal projects when discussing eighteenth-
century writings about Russian history, and I would furthermore suggest that the conceptual creation of history can be conducted as a personal project. It is interesting that this project’s beginnings are connected with Tatishchev’s early eighteenth-century work on records from the chronicles, and its end with the late-eighteenth-century figure of Karamzin, who traveled through Europe during the tumultuous era of the French Revolution and reflected on this historical turning point and other topics equally important to him in his intellectual conversations with Europeans. Without this intellectual contact, Karamzin’s historical view of Russia would undoubtedly have been impossible.

The Petrine age awakened Russia, including new layers of the population, in the process of its transformation. A circle of people formed among the tsar’s entourage, including F. Prokopovich, P.P. Shafirov, and B.I. Kurakin, who not only participated in the reforms and forged military victories, but also were interested in and capable of being witnesses to and historians of the changes taking place. Peter himself carefully preserved his deeds and documented Russian successes and transformations. His collected Decrees essentially represent a chronicle of his process, and the preservation of state archives begins work toward a history of the empire. The panegyric nature of some of the remembrances of “Petrine deeds” in historical accounts is evident. This is, however, a kind of history of modernity, in which “Young Russia” replaced the “Ancient Rus’” that remained in the collected chronicles.

In reforming and creating the “civic alphabet,” Peter greatly contributed to the carrying out of a process that had by then nearly matured among Russian scribes. The Church Slavonic language remained for religious service books and somewhat for theology, but the growing need for the humanities, along with the transition from the Church Slavonic language to Russian, required the culture to create a Russian literature; that is, texts written in a Russian literary language. Meanwhile, foreign scholars guided studies at the Academy, which opened in St. Petersburg in 1724. A certain tension developed between the writing of historical texts about Russia in the Russian language and the mastery of foreign-language European works in the humanities, despite the fact that, according to one of Peter’s decrees, historical works, such as Pufendorf’s, were translated (Introduction to European History According to Samuel Pufendorf, Expressed in the German Language, translated by G. Buzhinskii [St. Petersburg: 1723], containing a section on the history of Russia). The opening of the Academy of Sciences was intended to eliminate this contradiction and train future Russian writers in historiography using European models, for
which purpose the German scholars G.-F. Müller and J.E. Fischer were invited and gave lectures, though they were not well versed in Russian history and lectured only in German. Müller’s works on Russia were published in Russian in the 1750s after his Siberian expedition, and they were accompanied by serious conflict between Lomonosov and the German professor on the same topic: to what degree can a foreign scholar understand and create Russian history?

Reformation of the calendar gave Russia a new sense of the mechanisms of time’s flow. At the behest of Peter I, the beginning of the new time was marked by a celebration of the New Year on January 1, 1700. This event emboldened those who wanted to embrace the thought of time that had already elapsed into the past. The new calendar brought Russia closer to Europe, and it meant that Russian intellectuals could interest themselves in topics other than the Sacred History derived from the hand of God and recorded in the Scriptures. As early as 1706, this kind of history was compiled by Dimitrii of Rostov in his *Private Chronicler*. He brought together events from Sacred History with available historical writings from Western European theological literature, and found himself faced with inconsistencies in the chronology of events based on the various sources. It is, by the way, significant that St. Dimitrii would stumble on this particular chronological issue.

A type of history so far lacking in Russia was necessary—a yet-to-be-written sequence constructed of events from the time of Ancient Rus’. Having obtained a new calendar, Russia could not afford to lose its old one, which was defined by chronicled events. Any writing of large-scale history was, therefore, necessarily fated to involve the binding of “ancient” and “new” time. In the Petrine era, the point of connection could only be the new statehood built by Peter, which the historian had to justify and uphold in his historical work. Knowledge of the past could not, therefore, be free from the ideological interests of the contemporaneous Russian empire. I believe this particular dependence greatly influenced Tatishchev’s very free treatment of sources and a certain modernization of his history, and it provoked his “appending” of the chronicles, which were sometimes “insufficient” for linking the events and ideological constructions necessary for the author’s explanations.

Vasily Nikitich Tatishchev (April 19, 1686–July 15, 1750) spent more than thirty years of his life collecting and preparing sources to create variants of his book, *Russian History*. It is clear from his “Prefatory Note on Universal History and That of Russia Proper,” the author’s introduction to the overall work, that the historians of antiquity provided a pattern for Tatishchev to follow, as it had for Karamzin. The foreword had been a steadfast opening for all historical writings since the times of Herodotus, Thucydides, Tacitus, and beyond. Even Dimitrii of Rostov’s *Private Chronicler* begins with a
“Foreword,” in which the author briefly describes the tasks and difficulties of the work he is creating.

In his foreword, Tatishchev divides history into four types. Divine (or Sacred) History is written on the basis of the Scriptures; Church History is dedicated to the history of establishing the church as an institution with its own rules, disputes, hereies, rites, established orders, and so forth; Civic History recounts human deeds; and philosophy of nature belongs to Natural History. Tatishchev defined his task as simply the creation of a civic (secular) history describing human affairs. He did not conceal from the reader the mainspring of human deeds that constitute the basis of historical events: the presence of a “cause or external action,” which differs both from those that come from Divine Providence and those that come from human beings. For further details on these matters, Tatishchev refers his readers to Wolff’s *Physics and Morality.*

In discussions of the methodological foundations of Tatishchev’s historiography, historians have noted the rationality of his constructions and common sense as a characteristic feature of contemporaneous Western intellectual thought. His argument about the usefulness of history also derives from this. Tatishchev adopts the well-known formulation of ancient philosophy that history teaches, that it provides people with valuable moral lessons. The traditional instructive designation of history has been necessary for all spheres of knowledge established in Europe since the medieval university, Tatishchev notes. Neither theology, nor jurisprudence, nor medicine, nor philosophy could do without history. History finds its place in these sciences for their own good and their own needs. It represents a collection of all sorts of “utilities.” Tatishchev does not, however, question whether history has its own disciplinary space. He rather perceives and grabs hold of the challenge the Petrine era had raised before Russian culture: to create a historical text about Ancient Russia in the context of its present day.

Tatishchev is not original in asserting that history represents “a remembrance of former deeds and adventures,” but the importance lies in how a person is connected with history and by what means new paths of obtaining historical knowledge are forged. “Everything we have learned about and remember,” wrote Tatishchev, “from times distant or not so distant, through hearing, vision, or sensation, is very real history.” Why do we need this kind of history? We need this for knowledge, without which we cannot be “perfect, wise, and useful.” We should ask, however, what “real history” obtained through “hearing, vision, or sensation” from times “not so distant” or especially from “distant” times really means.

His perception of the distant and not-so-distant is primarily concentrated on political issues. As one of the first to be involved in domestic historiography, Tatishchev deliberately insisted on identifying the ideas in his historical work
that were firmly associated with political actions benefitting the fatherland. Tatishchev introduces his three-part concept of politics into history: (1) knowledge of “domestic management,” which he calls the economy; (2) external discourse, or the history of foreign affairs; and (3) knowledge of the military operations necessary for the country’s military victories. Contemporary scholarship has shown that Tatishchev understood “truth” in a very particular sense, as when he referenced his “fear of true history.” The truth is anything useful for one’s state and one’s people, based on one’s contemporary interests. All three parts of Tatishchev’s political activities are intertwined in his biography. He was a “domestic manager” in the Urals (1720–1724 and 1734–1737) as the founder of state factories who laid the groundwork for more than one future Ural city, he established the Gornyi Chancellery, and he opened primary schools where soldiers’ children could study. He was promoted to advisor of and later appointed Siberian marshal for the Collegium of Mining, an institution focused on developing the mining industry, then Russia’s leading economic sector. He was also appointed head of the Orenburg expedition (July 1737–March 1739) for establishing order over the Bashkirs in the wake of their uprising (1735–1740).

Tatishchev also had experience in diplomatic service. During the war with Sweden, he participated in organizing a peace congress on the Åland Islands (1718). His diplomatic assignments were also of a peaceful nature. Tatishchev was sent to Sweden (December 1724–April 1726) to learn more about the mining and ore industry, and while there he made sketches and plans for factories, studied commercial activity at the port of Stockholm and the Swedish monetary system, and hired a lapidary foreman for the workshop in the Urals. Tatishchev was also personally acquainted with military operations: he fought and was wounded in the Battle of Poltava (1709) and he participated in the Pruth Campaign (1718). Following the “general review” of Peter’s army (April 5, 1716), he was transferred from cavalry to artillery and, after passing the exams, was promoted to engineer lieutenant of artillery (May 16, 1716), establishing an artillery supply for the active army near Königsberg and Danzig (1717).

Once he left these affairs behind and began writing history, he of course could not help but bring the things he himself “learned about in not-so-distant times” as an active statesman into the creation of his historical work.

Given the above, we can formulate the origins and principles underlying Tatishchev’s Russian History: (1) a practical approach to construction (“construction” is an extremely common metaphor in Tatishchev); (2) an appeal to European historiographic tradition, including the use of Herodotus and contemporaneous philosophers and historians, their understanding of the place and purpose of history and the issues involving periodization and chronology; (3) an orientation toward the political component of historical events, often
extremely modernized and related to the historian’s personal experience, (4) a connection between history, geography, and ethnography—the need to show Russia’s historical context with its neighboring peoples, where the success of this task depends on knowledge of these people’s languages and lifestyles; (5) an understanding of the need to compile existing chronicles (or “create” them) as the basis for writing historical narrative; (6) a procedure for editing the written historical text (Tatishchev created two editions of Russian History: the first in chronicle style and in Church Slavonic, famous for the second half of its 1746 catalogue; the second written in eighteenth-century Russian); (7) a “measured” argument for Divine intervention in the historical narrative; (8) a connection between the history of Ancient Rus’ and that of Imperial Russia via mystification and modernization of sources, a method that led historians of the next generation to question whether history was doomed to be an ideological instrument of state policy; and (9) the critical nature of “Tatishchevian records.” Tatishchev himself more or less reflects on all these positions in his foreword to Russian History. He also considers other foundations important for successful construction (literally, “constructing the home”) of domestic history:

Just as the careful homebuilder will collect a multitude of necessary materials for constructing the home and keep them in a reliable storehouse so that, whenever something is needed, he can find and use it, it nonetheless remains necessary to apply one’s intelligence before construction begins to determine the plan of construction and use of the stored materials in their corresponding locations, without which the construction will be unsteady, uneasy, and of poor quality. Similarly, the writing of history requires common sense, for which the science of Logic is most useful. The second is judgment, for just as a builder must distinguish suitable materials from the unsuitable, the rotten from the healthy, so must the writer of history use diligence to avoid taking fables for truth and the fabricated for the real, and must further beware of prejudgment, for applying scholarly criticism even to the best ancient writers is not without reason. Third, just as any building requires decoration, so every legend requires eloquence and intelligible elaboration as guided by the science of rhetoric.

Without the science of Logic, the distinction between true and fictitious, and rhetorical devices to make reading interesting, Tatishchev does not see historical works as possible. In his evaluation of Tatishchev’s work, Sergey M. Solovyov highlighted the “seeking” nature of his history, believing that the historian “used thirty years of work only to gather and consolidate sources, and keeping his compilation undisturbed, on the side, in notes, attempting for the first time to supplement, understand, and apply criticism to the chronicle
However, it was Tatishchev’s diligence that defined the main trends in the later progress of domestic history: the development of a factual basis and search for some general idea of Russian history that could either unite or divide future historians.

Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin named his twelve-volume work *History of the Russian State*. However, it is more difficult to see the practical statist in this author than it was in Tatishchev, an experienced courtier and historiographer who drew praise even from the authorities. Two fundamental circumstances apparently formed the basis of Karamzin’s work. First, he wanted to enlighten his people, who needed the history of their state to understand their spiritual unity, an understanding of Russia’s place and purpose in world history. Second, he saw his task as creating history in a language that was understandable and accessible and that opened up the opportunity for free linguistic contact with the ancient historical chronicles of Rus’. A relevant question is whether Karamzin wanted to see his *History of the Russian State* as a sort of textbook laying the foundation for historical knowledge as a discipline in the fatherland, though the answer should likely be negative. Pushkin, as we recall, referred to every new volume of Karamzin’s history as “a fresh newspaper,” but at the same time the author, for example, discusses in detail the positions of his predecessors on the chronology of Russian history and adopts the European version as his model, which had received textbook status by the beginning of the nineteenth century: the Ancient (from Rurik to Ivan III), Middle (from Ivan to Peter), and New Eras (from Peter to Alexander). After conducting a detailed analysis of the chronological question, Solovyov, a university historian who teaches disciplinary knowledge, agrees with Karamzin:

> The infelicity of later writers’ objections against the division of Russian history Karamzin accepted illustrates the merits of that division best of all. We cannot but recognize the correctness of dividing Russian history into ancient and new, and cannot but recognize the seventeenth and part of the sixteenth century as the transitional period. Consequently, Karamzin had every right to accept the ancient, middle, and new Russian history.  

How Karamzin worked on his *History*, how he brought new chapters to the court of listeners by reading them in intellectual circles in Moscow and St. Petersburg, how he referred to the “dim mirror of the ancient Chronicle” with reverence and patience, how he sought out living colors when creating his characters in order to “lift our famous ancestors from the grave” through his words, how he felt himself a “contemporary” of Igor and Vsevolod—all this and much more give us reason to believe that Karamzin did create a
literary and enlightening form of historical narrative. Solovyov likewise defines the nature of his historical work thus: “words spoken about the general appeal of Russian history best define Karamzin’s view of his subject: he looks at history from the perspective of art.” It appears that Solovyov is right not to limit the definition of a historian’s work to letters alone, but to expand it to include the broader field of art. There is evidence for this, as well.

In January 1802, Karamzin took over as chief editor and publisher of the journal Vestnik Evropy. His address “To the Publisher” in the first January edition contained a brief, very optimistic description of the political situation in Europe. Everyone in the finally peaceful Europe should contribute their talents that “can, in free tranquility and leisure, be applied to every topic useful and dear to the soul; where literature, in its true disposition of minds, must have a greater impact than ever on morals and happiness.” Here Karamzin addresses the journal’s task: to transplant the European flowers of literature to Russian soil (a task, we should note, familiar to Russia since the time of Simeon Polotskii’s Vertograd Mnogocvetnyi). Two sections were established in the journal: literature and politics. Literature, according to the publisher’s vision, could not be understood outside the context of events in the new century, and politics must coexist or link directly with literature. Today’s politics, however, is tomorrow’s history. This unity of letters, modernity, and a distant but dear past also represents the atmosphere in which Karamzin’s historical plans were conceived, and it is understandable why they could not but manifest in that unity. However, it was not just literature, but the concept of “art” that united literature, painting, and history that represented the broadest terrain for Karamzin’s sentimentalist enlightenment.

In “The Situations and Characters in Russian History That Can Serve as the Subject of Art,” an article in epistolary style addressed to Mr. N.N. and published December 24, 1804, in Vestnik Evropy as the second in their “Literature and More” series, Karamzin responds to a decision taken by Count A.S. Stroganov, President of the Imperial Academy of the Arts, to require students to select topics for their work from among stories in the national history. Karamzin sees this decision as part of the large-scale task of using art to plumb the depths of centuries to foster a patriotic spirit among the people:

Not only the historian and poet, but also the painter and sculptor, are the organs of patriotism. [I]f the historical character is strikingly depicted on a canvas or in marble, it even makes the corresponding chronicles more engaging for us; we investigate further to know the source of the artist’s idea, and we approach the description of this
person’s affairs with greater attention, recalling the living impression his image made on us. I do not believe in any sort of love for one’s fatherland that despises its chronicles or fails to engage with them; one must know what one loves; and in order to love the present, one must have a record of the past.  

Karamzin accepts this proposal and advises artists on how to proceed with their paintings, which will bring history closer to its people. The source of his advice is the chronicles. The stories in them, Karamzin believes, could be the basis for various kinds of paintings, depending on the type of heroes the artists would be depicting. With great enthusiasm, Karamzin undertakes to describe the subject for possible paintings, sketching the images of princes, building compositions, and arranging the figures within—just as he would later do in his history. Here is Rurik “leaning on his bow, lost in thought,” there are “Sineus and Truvor consulting among themselves,” someone else is fishing, and another is meeting the ambassadors of the Slavs. He even advises artists about the types of faces among the Varangians and the Slavs. The historian distinguishes these types of paintings from the philosophical type. Paintings of that type, Karamzin believes, should illustrate stories like the death of Prince Oleg, and its impression should be one of “moral instruction”:

This picture’s impression should be (as I have said) philosophical, moral: remember that human life perishes! I would have depicted Oleg the moment he pushes away the skull with a look of disdain; the serpent exposes its head but has not yet struck him; the feeling and expression of pain in the hero’s face are distressing. Standing behind him are warriors with Greek trophies, a sign of his victories. In the distance we might represent a mage, who is giving Oleg a significant look.

It is hard not to hear Alexander S. Pushkin’s “Song About Wise Oleg” in this description and not to recognize its Karamzinian source in Vestnik Evropy.

In great detail, Karamzin describes historical paintings on stories from the Nestorian chronicles, enumerating its heroes: Princess Olga, Prince Sviatoslav, Vladimir the Baptizer, Gorislava, the Pereiaslav battle with the Pechenegs, Prince Yaroslav with his code of laws and monks with “translated books,” King Henry of France and the Russian Princess Anna, Vladimir Monomakh, Yuri Dolgoruky, and more. Karamzin truly imagined “an entire art gallery of national history and its effect on the hearts of art lovers.” Sculptors could also contribute by depicting heroes and victors in war. The article ends with Karamzin’s credo as a historian: “Let us repeat this incontrovertible truth: great and honorable are the people who, through
their noble arts, literature, and sciences, contribute to the successes of humanity in its glorious course towards intellectual and moral perfection!"19 In this symbiosis of literature, art, and history, Karamzin prepared himself for his future service: we might say he saw Russia among the other enlightened countries and peoples.

By a decree on October 31 (November 12), 1803, Emperor Alexander I granted Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin the title of historiographer. Karamzin’s “tonsuring” as a historiographer did not fundamentally change his attitudes toward his work. He buried himself in sources but remained faithful to his artistic vision of events in their verbal articulation. His productivity with pen and ink and without secretaries or assistants was striking for the time: he wrote and published eleven extensive volumes of *History of the Russian State* from 1803 to 1826, and another twelve volumes were published posthumously by his widow, Ekaterina Andreevna Karamzina.

In his own work, the historiographer Karamzin could not help but turn back to historical works that were written earlier in the eighteenth century. Among the other names included in his *Pantheon of Russian Authors*, published in individual parts by iconographer, publisher, and compatriot of Karamzin P.P. Beketov in 1802,20 the historian composed a small text about Tatishchev and his contribution to the creation of national history. Karamzin respectfully noted the author’s diligence, calling him a rare man “in the activity of his mind and in his passionate hunt for the historical sciences,” but noted that he “left only materials for history instead of history itself, appending his own notes to the chronicles.”21

We find Karamzin’s attitude toward Tatishchev’s experience in working with documents and an example of how to prevent inventing facts in history in his 1803 article “On the Secret Chancellery,” published in the twenty-second volume of *Vestnik Evropy*.22 Tatishchev believed that the Secret Chancellery “frightened the chroniclers and forced their silence.”23 Based on his own historiographic experience, however, Karamzin showed that Tatishchev had misled later historians. Why? He had misunderstood the meaning of the word “secret.” “Secret,” Karamzin writes, meant “related to the home” or “private”:

This chancellery dealt with the Monarch’s economic affairs; under its jurisdiction were those villages and hamlets He considered His own . . . and when the Tsar wanted to grant His good favor on a particular monastery, He subordinated it to the Secret Chancellery . . . The Clerk or Secretary managed it, traveled everywhere with the Monarch, and personally wrote tsarist decrees. In a word, he was the Cabinet and never dealt with punishment of state
criminals. The name “Secret” deceived Tatishchev: he imagined a sinister court that has unfortunately become famous in recent times, and finding that the chronicles do not go much farther than the death of Mikhail Feodorovich, he concluded that the monks did not dare write them under His son and made a guess about the historical truth, along with the Ioachim chronicle and many curious anecdotes whose source we will never know. As we can see, Karamzin positions himself as a critic of Tatishchev, which is understandable. The art of criticizing his sources became more and more necessary for Karamzin with the publication of sources and the expansion of his own history-related activities.

In his work on eighteenth-century writers and historiographers and on Karamzin’s *History*, historiographer and creator of a grandiose new project on Russia history Sergey M. Solovyov first raised the issues discussed in this article. Comparing Tatishchev’s and Karamzin’s methodologies and methods for addressing issues related to sourcing was necessary for Solovyov not only to conduct his own research, which required assessing the substantive virtues and weaknesses of their work, but also to trace the path of Russian historiography throughout a full hundred years! V.N. Tatishchev’s *Russian History* was the first, and N.M. Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State* was the concluding work. V.N. Tatishchev forged the trail and created the “building material” for writing Russia’s ancient history. N.M. Karamzin traveled through the centuries and princedoms of Ancient Rus’, seeking reasonable explanations for the events described in the available sources. His literary style of historiography made state history lively and fluid. Karamzin’s *Notes of a Traveler*, his personal experience of interacting with Europe and with European intellectuals, expanded the author/historian’s horizons. *Vestnik Evropy* became his preliminary introduction to the intellectual life of Russian literature and humanities.

Tatishchev was a builder of state who needed a story “from a practical point of view.” Karamzin found the joy of intellectual labor in his creation of history. Solovyov wrote an entirely different history: history as a scholarly discipline, as the work of a university professor. With him, Russia entered the space of European intellectual history in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Notes**

1. Sergey M. Solovyov, who assesses Karamzin’s work in comparison to Tatishchev’s *Russian History*, wrote: “an eighteenth-century historian’s view of his subject is, in its general outline, similar to that of a nineteenth-century historian’s:
both view history as the science of experience; both follow the same modus in describing its usefulness. There is a difference, however, alongside these similarities: the nineteenth-century historian already senses the science of national self-consciousness in history; he says that it is a supplement or explanation of the present and an illustration of the future.” S.M. Solovyov, “N.M. Karamzin i ‘Istoriia gosudarstva Rossisskogo,’” Sochineniia v 18 kn. Book XVI: Raboty raznykh let (Moscow: Mysl’, 1995), p. 49.


9. Perhaps the scholars most grateful to Tatishchev are domestic geographers, geologists, paleographers, and ethnographers. Among other things, their work on the history of the national economic geography and ethnography and on the study of soils, mountain massifs, and climate demonstrates the success of Tatishchev’s ideas about combining history and geography to understand their country’s past. See, for example, N.P. Arkhipova and E.V. Yastrebov, Kak byli otkryty Ural’skie gory (Sverdlovsk, 1990).

10. A contemporary historian writes of the world of Tatishchev’s history: “This world has political speeches by princes, its rulers possess knowledge about the political economy, and projects to reform the state structure are composed and circulated. This is a culture with a well-developed sense of individuality, as evidenced by the numerous portraits in words, as well as by the moral and behavioral characteristics of princes. In this Tatishchevian Rus’, princes are not early medieval chieftains leading their retinues, but often enlightened monarchs not unfamiliar with philosophy who study foreign languages and maintain impressive collections of books. Some are even freethinkers who allow themselves to doubt the usefulness of the institutional church and approach the world with the yardsticks of reason and public good.” A. Tolochko, “Istoriia rossiiskaia” Vasiliia Tatishcheva: istochniki i izvestiia (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie; Kiev: Kritika, 2005), p. 19.

20. In a March 28, 1800, letter to I.I. Dmitriev, Karamzin reported on the beginning of his work on the Pantheon: “I am now writing annotations for portraits of Russian authors.” One of the main sources was N. Novikov’s Attempt at a Historical Dictionary of Russian Authors, published in 1887. We should note that Russia found itself in the midst of a historiographic publishing “boom” in the 1860s–70s that lasted until the end of the century: not only were works of contemporary authors published, but also those of Feofan Prokopovich, Stefan Iavorskii, and, after the death of M.V. Lomonosov, his Ancient Russian History (1766); the first volume of F. Emin’s Russia History came out in 1767, and eventually the first part of Book 1 of V.N. Tatischev’s Russian History in 1768. In 1799, M.M. Shcherbatov released the first volume of Russian History from Ancient Times. Publication of historiographic sources, the chronicles and legislative landmarks, began at the same time: the Königsberg and Nikonian chronicles were published in 1767, as was the legal codex “Russkaia Pravda”; the Sudebnik code of laws of Ivan IV came out in 1768; and N.I. Novikov’s Ancient Russian Library began publication in 1773. This represented Russia’s breakthrough to European norms of historical knowledge, a necessary step in the formation of history as a discipline and a science.
25. Beginning in 1853, Solovyov published these works alongside the release of volumes 3–7 of his History. See (1) publications of the article “N.M. Karamzin i ego literaturnaia deiatel’nost’” across multiple issues of Otechestvennykh zapiskakh (1853–1856, vol. 80, no. 10; vol. 92, no. 2; vol. 94, no. 5; vol. 99, no. 4; vol. 100, no. 5; vol. 105, no. 4); (2) his work Pisateli russkoi istorii XVIII veka, published in 1855 in Arkhiv istoriko-iuridicheskikh svedenii, otnosischchiksa do Rossii, ed. N. Kalachev; and (3) his 1854 works on G.F. Müller and A.L. Schlözer in Sovremennik and in the journal Russkii vestnik. All of these are published in S.M. Solovyov, Sochineniia v 18 kn. Book XVI: Raboty raznykh let (Moscow: Mysl’, 1995).