

HISTORY LESSONS – NOT ONLY PROMPTS....



The Russian Historical Society was re-established in the outgoing year which was proclaimed the Year of Russian History. A century and a half ago it was founded by outstanding personalities of our country – historians, statesmen, poets, enlighteners, and diplomats.

The Imperial Russian Historical Society offered an example of unification of top state authorities, academic and public forces. It was an enlightenment center. It strengthened the foundation of archive and museum business in Russia and gave a major impetus to publishing business.

After the Bolshevik Revolution the society was disbanded and its chairman Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, a staunch supporter of parliamentary system, was executed by VChK secret police.

By reviving the Historical Society we united efforts of the government and academic community. We will not only support academic projects but also facilitate access to Russian archives and promote thorough analysis of their documents. Both public and private funds have to be attracted for new research and the creation of modern enlightening resources.

One of the founders of the Russian Historical Society and its chairman from 1879 to 1909, Alexander Polovtsov, wrote in his diary: "Russia will be happy when merchants donate money for education without hoping to receive a medal in exchange".

Much has to be done to develop history education, remunerate best teachers, introduce the latest scientific achievements into pedagogical science, and form a non-contradicting approach to making history manuals.

An important task of the Society is to foster relations with compatriots abroad to preserve memory of those who emigrated because of the revolution and civil war and to bring historic documents and relics back to Russia.

This year the 1812 war museum opened in Moscow with a century-long delay. Major exhibits from various museums, private collection, and numerous gifts were ready for it by the centennial of the victory over Napoleon. However the building was not erected as a big war broke out.

The first exhibits of the new museum are unpublished letters of Napoleon to his war minister Henri Clarke dated 1812. They were provided by Larisa Anisimova who resides in Italy.

...History lessons are not only prompts left to us to avoid mistakes of predecessors. They are our national memory, a result of the life of numerous generations and hundreds of millions people.

Sergei Naryshkin,

Chairman of the Russian State Duma,
chairman of the Russian Historical Society

