

Dmitry Poldnikov (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) e-mail: dpoldnikov@hse.ru

Piercing the Soviet veil of Russian national identity with comparative studies in truly European legal history.

National legal identities across Europe have been shaped to a large extent through legal history since the early 19th century. The academic discipline of legal history legitimized the positive law with its dogmatics and delivered evidence to build a legal ideal (within jurisprudence). Today many Western legal historians challenge this approach via comparative legal history which transcends national borders and identifies the circulation of legal ideas across the Continent and beyond.

Objectively, Eastern Europe, and Russia in particular, took part in this circulation for centuries. Yet, Russia's legal identity, as a stand-alone legal system, is still determined by 'the national romance' (both in legal and general history), not least due to the old-style studies in European legal history.

In this presentation I intend to examine how the Soviet legacy still blocks productive studies in comparative legal history in Russia and, thus, influences its '*sui generis*' legal identity. I will elaborate the topic in three parts.

First, I will examine the key features of foreign legal studies in the USSR, namely:

- the sociological interpretation of legal phenomena in past and present (due to the Marxist dogma of social sciences);
- the historicisation of studies in foreign legal experience (in the sense that lawyers mostly abandoned it to the benefit of general historians capable of reading the primary sources);
- the isolation from international legal science.

Second, I will demonstrate the persistence of the above in today's Russian academia.

Finally, I will conclude by assessing perspectives of narrowing the gap between Russian and European legal culture by piercing the national veil of Russian legal identity with comparative legal history.