

July 13, 2009

Dmitrii Medvedev, President  
Russian Federation  
Ilinka Street, No. 23  
103132, Moscow, Russia

Dear President Medvedev:

On June 17, 2009, the American Historical Association sent you a letter (a copy of which I enclose) expressing its “intense concern” over the recent creation of a “Commission to Counteract Attempts at Falsifying History to Damage the Interests of Russia.” In its letter, the AHA conveyed its fear that “to establish a commission to adjudicate the ‘truth’ or ‘beneficial’ impact of any given historical judgment, and conversely to seek to control false or detrimental opinions through government action, contradicts the basic principle of intellectual freedom.”

I write to you as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. The AAASS, a nonprofit, non-political, scholarly society, is the leading private organization in the world dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about the former Soviet Union (including Eurasia) and Eastern and Central Europe. The AAASS supports teaching, research, and publication relating to the peoples and territories within this area. AAASS members include historians as well as scholars of the humanities and social sciences.

Like the AHA, our members share a commitment to freedom of inquiry, as well as to the principle that when that freedom is used to put forward untenable or questionable arguments, it is through free public debate that those arguments should be rebutted, rather than by government investigations and prohibitions. We therefore join with the AHA in urging you to reassess the establishment of this Commission and to consider abolishing it.

As an association dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Russia, we are committed to pursue the best possible scholarly relations with colleagues in the Russian Federation. It is in that spirit that I write you this letter.

Sincerely yours,

William Taubman  
President