

HISTORY

The word history is most commonly used to express a thing that has already happened. So one can say that the mankind LIVES the history. But the term history does not mean only this - it means much more: it can also mean a kind of science, that has a growing importance in the developed world.

But why has history as science such a big importance?

It's because of its educational meaning. The old Romans used to say: *historia vitae magistra est*. This means that history is the teacher of life. We all learn from the mistakes that we've made in the past. The utmost one can hope not to do is to repeat the mistakes made in the history. The same stands for the whole humankind. But as it seems the humankind is not so smart: it repeats the mistakes made even more times in history - for example wars.

The history as science had begun to exist within the first countries. With the formation of the first countries appeared also the need for more organized and effective justice. It was not anymore self-evident that the prosecutor was also the judge. The documents for contracts, inheriting and other legal matters were needed. The documents needed to be written and with written laws and documents there appeared also the need for archives, the fundamental history source. So the people not only lived the history, they've begun to write it. The history as science was born.

The history had experienced further development in the times of ancient Greeks. Two of their historians were of great importance for the future of the history: Herodot and Tukidid. Their work contained mostly the descriptions of the Greek - Persian wars. Herodot is important because of the structure of his books and essays: his works were short and brief so he didn't involve with mythic descriptions of the facts. With Tukidid the history had begun to exist as science. He acquainted the rule that a historian should always first research the facts and causes of the happening and yet then describe it in his works. Not all of the modern historians stick to this rule and maybe that is one of the causes for nowadays problems we must face.

Next step in the history of the history as science is the history-telling of ancient Romans. I mentioned that their principle thought was that we all learn on our failures, so a nation learns on its history. That led to a popularization of history. There were many great historians in ancient Rome but the two most important were Livius and Tacit. As scientific historians they established the causes and true facts of the historical happening, and they also changed the Herodot's rule about length of a historical work: their works were long and great and also of great importance: they described the world of ancient Romans as it really was - with its good and bad sides. Without them, nowadays their world would be known only by its great achievements and their problems such as political disunion remained unknown. But though they were both very pessimistic and they showed dark rather than the bright side, we can feel in their works a small, but very realistic hope for the union of all Romans under one Caesar.

But after the ancient Romans, the history as all science had begun to stagnate and there were only a few historians left, but those had rather searched the history and the meaning of life in God. We cannot blame them for such behaving though. It was a dark and cruel time in the world and one had very much to do with the thought of how to live, instead of even thinking about writing down the actual happening. The real progress of that age had been made in the monasteries, where monks had nothing else to do than to educate the children from nearby villages, to pray and to write down the current politics and wars. The talented people of that age thought that history, present and future are in the hands of God, so there is no use in writing it down - that is only for those who have got nothing better to do. But no matter how persistent the stupidity and darkness of that time was, the persistence of the monks was even greater. Without them, we would literally be without any information about that time.

Science and as well history had begun to develop in the age of renaissance again - and again in Italy. During that period people started to show interests for ancient philosophical works such as the works of Plato and Homer. That lead to the rediscovery of history as science. People were interested in habits and life of ancient nations and the method to reach the information about that was history. Historians and philosophers of renaissance didn't take the word of God for pure and only truth. They again searched for causes of actual happening and established the connection between facts and mythic. It was in that age that the humanism was formed. Humanism was a motion that showed itself in all the human achievements and science of that time: arts, history, music, medicine...etc. Humanism believed more in the human race than in God. It believed strongly in the progress the human race has already made and in the progress we are capable of yet making. If a priest had said: the Sun spins around the Earth, a medieval man would have said: of course. But not a man of renaissance; he would say: possibly yes, but let's first look at the facts.

Since the renaissance all the science and also the history had made the progress that is unimaginable. History has discovered facts that were in previous ages certainly not known and were not even believed to be known one day. History has reconstructed almost all known history of this planet and is now digging for the details of known facts. If we know in general how the ancient Indians lived, we will want to know what did they eat, what were their cooking recipes and history can tell us about all this and more. But which tools does history use at searching for those facts? What does it search for? What are it's obligations?

The modern history had begun to exist in the second half of 18th century, when a Frenchman, Voltaire, expressed his thought of the World history. Such history would no longer be a matter of only one nation, but of the whole World. Another important turning point for history was in 19th century with Karl Marx and Friderich Engels. They published a book about the fundamental laws of the mankind's social structure. That laws are in connection with the manufacturing forces and the relationships between those forces.

History as modern science has four basic tasks:

- * researching of the history as it really was
- * revealing the laws about the historical progress of the mankind
- * critical estimation of the historical facts
- * propagation of the historical way of thinking

To achieve those tasks it must use the historical sources:

- * material sources, such as objects from the researched age. Those are stored in museums and are researched by archeology.
- * written sources, such as books and essays are stored in the archives, older ones in the museums. Most of today's archives are computerized. They are researched by paleography.
- * verbal sources, such as tales of the people.
- * audio-visual sources, such as filmed events, ...etc.

The most important rule that is in use by historians is that you should always tell the truth! You go onto a historical research site, you collect the facts and then you tell the truth if you know it, otherwise you are simply a liar. History could be a great tool to nowadays politics and it will be if we use it in connection with what I said before. But unfortunately many historians in the past deliberately misused the history so the politicians could turn the people to their side. History can always reach us a helping hand. We shouldn't make that hand dirty.