The past is an important resource that Russian politicians and businesspeople use to replace ideology, frame policies, or earn money. The state attempts to control the use of history by outside actors, but similarly instrumentalizes it for its own purposes. However, in the last five years, alternative social actors (the Yeltsin Center, the Immortal Regiment, various Orthodox groups and others) have emerged within Russia to claim their right to control the past and challenge the state monopoly on memory. In this talk, Ivan Kurilla discusses different such actors to illustrate how memory operates in contemporary Russia.

Ivan Kurilla is Professor of History and International Relations at European University, St. Petersburg. In addition to authoring monographs and editing collections in his primary field of interest, the history of US-Russian relations (especially during the American antebellum and Civil War periods), he has organized workshops, published articles, and edited volumes on the use of history, historical memory, and historical politics in Russia and the post-Soviet space. Dr. Kurilla has also published articles on relations between the state and society in contemporary Russia and op-ed pieces in the Washington Post and New York Times on aspects of contemporary US-Russian relations.

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