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Aleksey Yu. Bezugolny

Scientific Research Institute of Military History of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the RF Armed Forces, Moscow, Russian Federation

General Staff Officers on Lenin's and Trotsky's Military Service

Abstract

This is a review of a new book of A.V. Ganin, well-known scholar in the history of the First World War and the Civil War in Russia. The review underscores the fundamental nature of his new study, fruit of the scientist's long-term work in Russian and foreign archives and libraries. It is based on his doctor's dissertation (2013). The key role of the old army officer corps in building new armed forces of Soviet Russia is well known and well studied. However, until recently, one of the most important aspects of this process remained virtually unknown, namely, the General Staff service, without which the organizational construction and operational management of the troops on fronts of the Civil War would not have been successful. The author proves that the Bolshevik leadership understood the value of this army institute immediately in the first months after the October Revolution, and employed all means to recruit General Staff officers, or more often General Staff Academy graduates to the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, to its

headquarters and field headquarters. There was a special register for this category of service personnel, and its deployment for any other task was rarely allowed. Gradually, General Staff officers occupied all the key posts in the Red Army and maintained their position throughout the Civil War. Although A.V. Ganin examines in detail the development of the young Red Army management, and place and role of the General Staff services within it, he also focuses on the tragic fate of this generation of General Staff officers, who had to fight in the opposing camps, but devoted themselves to construction of the armed forces, organized and conducted military operations for all warring parties (the Reds, but also on the Whites, and also national armies). Having amassed from all types of sources a dossier data bank on General Staff officers in the Red Army, the author paints an accurate prosopographical portrait of this important social stratum. The author analyzes all aspects of their professional and domestic life: official duties, working day schedule, rights, career achievements, motivations and moods, household arrangements; in short, he depicts the "everyday life," as promised in the book title.

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Keywords

Academy of the General Staff, General Staff services, General Staff offices, Red Army, daily life.

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Information about authors

Bezugolny Aleksey Yurievich, PhD in History, Research Institute of Military History of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, senior researcher, Moscow, Russian Federation, besu111@yandex.ru

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