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Petitions as a Source for Studying History of the Administrative Exile in the Tver Gubernia in the Late 19th – Early 20th Century and Everyday Practices of Persons under Surveillance

Abstract

The article assesses one of the sources on the history of administrative political exile in the Tver gubernia – petitions stored in the fonds of the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the State Archive of the Tver Region. The author analyzes the subject-matter of these petitions, procedure of their consideration, textual patterns, and verdicts on them. Most petitions asked for benefits, revocation of exile, reduction of time under supervision, transfer to capitals in order to resume education or find employment or transfer to a place near relatives' residence, all of which sprang from legal conditions of persons under supervision. Petitions are a most valuable

source of analytical information that allows to identify major problems faced by persons in administrative exile in the Tver gubernia; to reconstruct various aspects of their everyday life; to describe their legal and financial situation; to define decision time and procedures for petitions consideration. Many describe some facts from the life of persons in administrative exile that are reflected in no other record. Petitions reflect hard financial situation of the persons under surveillance. Complexity of procedure for petition consideration, bureaucracy and lengthy communication time delayed decision making and made the situation of persons under surveillance even more difficult. In their decision making the authorities acted within the law. Nevertheless, on the local level (and one closest to the population), the dependence of people from the local administration was strongest. The administration played a crucial role in the settlement of many questions. Most exiled persons in the Tver gubernia could choose their place of living according to the guidance note from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of December 30, 1898, but did not have a right to benefits. In accordance to the note, petitions for benefits were rejected by the authorities. Petitions requesting reduction of time under supervision or transfer to capitals also met denial. Short-term absence was only allowed if the person under supervision had good record and serious reasons for the absence.

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Keywords

Petitions, historical sources, archival documents, administrative political exile, Tver gubernia, late 19th – early 20th century.

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