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The History of One Telegram: Palestine, the Fashoda Incident, and Kaiser Wilhelm II

Abstract

The article studies historical sources (diplomatic notes, correspondence, telegrams of the employees of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and presents a content analysis and a systematization. Most documents are being introduced into scientific use for the first time. The information basis is formed by previously unpublished materials of the Political Archive from the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire. The article attempts to characterize the documentary sources found in the archival file 'The Journey of Emperor Wilhelm to Palestine' that are dedicated to the Fashoda incident. The validity of the hypotheses of relevance of microhistorical plots in objective evaluation of crucial historical events is verified by traditional

methods of historical research: comparative historical analysis, chronological approach, retrospective and perspective methods. The method of historical reconstruction helps to narrate the episode of Emperor Nicholas II's telegram to Kaiser Wilhelm II in the circumstances of the developing Fashoda crisis. The author takes into account the assessments found in Russian sources. A variety of official and unofficial documents allows to clarify and to correct existing ideas about the resolution of the Fashoda question in 1898. The article is the first to examine the history of the Fashoda crisis in the diplomatic correspondence between Nicholas II and Wilhelm II. The correspondence focuses on the role of Russian consul-general in Beirut K. N. Lishin. The author concludes that Lishin's excessive diligence and fear to harm his own career bolstered the diplomatic incident concerning the telegram and compounded the diplomatic situation around Fashoda. The archival file 'The Journey of Emperor Wilhelm to Palestine' yet again demonstrates a strong connection between the event and the policies of the great powers in the Middle East and Europe. To understand the history of international relations it is important to research not just the relevant topics and cases, but to study the whole complex of diplomatic sources of the period.

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Keywords

Archival documents, Fashoda crisis, Palestine, Nicholas II, Wilhelm II, K. N. Lishin.

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