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Counteraction to the spread of anti-government publications on the railroads of Russia in the last quarter of the XIX - early XX century. On the materials of the gendarme railway police

## Abstract

The article is devoted to the reconstruction of the historical experience of countering the spread of revolutionary and anti-war literature within the steel highways of the Russian Empire in the last quarter of the 19th – early 20th centuries. Based on an analysis of the records of the gendarmerie railway police, two main directions of the gendarmes' struggle with anti-government publications were identified - supervisory activities and obtaining information from secret informants. The importance of countering the spread of illegal publications on railways was determined by the concentration of passengers within their infrastructure. This struggle took on particular significance during the First World War, when the activity of agitators was aimed at instilling pacifist sentiments among the lower ranks and officers. Through the press, revolutionaries criticized the tsarist government and the decisions it made; discredited the imperial family and the ruling dynasties of countries allied with Russia. The Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs notified the railway gendarmerie police departments (GPUZD) about the admission of representatives of public organizations and publishing houses to railway stations. The legality of the activities of literature distributors was checked by gendarmerie officials. Often, agitators resorted to subterfuge, handing over revolutionary literature under covers that did not arouse suspicion. The supervision of the gendarmerie railway police also covered events held at mobile exhibition carriages and lecture carriages. The books and brochures given to their visitors were studied. The largest number of prohibited publications was identified during inspections of library bookcases located at railway stations. To discover hidden copies, it was allowed to send informants to librarians with a request to provide prohibited literature for reading. The provision of such a service by a librarian became the basis for a careful inspection of the institution entrusted to him. The interaction of railway gendarmes with informants was not limited to the supervision of libraries. Information was received from agents among the revolutionaries about cargoes of illegal literature transported by rail. The names of such cargo in the accompanying documentation were distorted by the senders. Cases of railway employees assisting in the transportation of revolutionary literature on trains were revealed. It was concluded that the gendarmerie implemented a wide range of measures aimed at suppressing the spread of harmful literature within the railway infrastructure entrusted to them. At the same time, the depth of the

socio-political crisis in Russia, which ended with the destruction of the empire in 1917, did not allow the gendarmes to radically influence the spread of revolutionary agitation.

## Keywords

Railway police, railway gendarmerie, railway, revolutionary publications, anti-monarchist press, anti-war agitation, исторические источники, архивные документы.

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