

УДК 930.253

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The 1917 Revolution and Russian Archives: How It All Happened

Abstract

The article studies the history of the Russian archives during the 1917 revolutions. It is noted that by early 20th century the scientific society had realized the necessity of radical changes in the archival system, and historians and archivists contested the absolute power of bureaucratic institutions. The article discloses that in the course of the “Red trouble” the archival committees of provincial scholars were succeeded in their mission to save the documentary heritage by the Association of Russian Archival Workers, a society that laid down a ideological and theoretical basis for the future reorganization and centralization of the archives administration. The article contends a continuity of ideological and theoretical foundations of the reforms in the national archival system. The Association of Russian Archival Workers was created by the public in March 1917 in answer to inability of the authorities to save the archives, one of the more important components of the Russian culture and statehood. The sources allow analyze the

efforts of the Association of Russian Archival Workers to rescue the archives. Place and role of the Association of RAW in the archives salvation history of the “Red trouble” years represents a unique stage in the history of Russian, as well as world culture. History of the Russian archives in the days of the Revolutions is ultimately a history of archivists’ and historians’ selfless labour. There is documental proof that most members of the Association of RAW had to collaborate with the representative of the new regime, D.B. Ryazanov, for the sake of saving the archives. In the gathering of the archives and in rebuilding of the archival system on a new, democratic and genuinely scientific basis D.B. Ryazanov managed to unite nearly all leading archivists and historians.

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Keywords

1917 revolution, Russian archives, provincial scholars, archival committees, Association of Russian Archival Workers, reorganization and centralization of the archives administration, D. B. Ryazanov.

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Submitted 20.02.2017, published:

KHORKHORDINA, T. I. Revolyutsiya 1917 g. i rossiiskie arkhivy: kak eto bylo [The 1917 Revolution and Russian archives: How it all happened. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an archivist, 2017, no. 2, pp. 38-56.

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