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Kirill I. Lyashenko, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation

Circumstances of the Appointment of M.V. Alekseyev Commander-in-Chief of Armies of the Northwestern Front

Abstract

Drawing on archival and personal documents from personal provenance fonds of the Russian State Military History Archive (RGVIA) and from the Research Division of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library, the article considers the circumstances of Mikhail Vasiliyevich Alekseyev's appointment Commander-in-chief of the Northwestern front and the reaction of some Stavka officials to this appointment. After the failure of the August operation Commander-in-chief of the Northwestern front Adjutant General Ruzsky petitioned for resignation because of ill health. On the same day Chief of Staff of the Southwestern front, General-of-Infantry M.V. Alekseyev was appointed to the post. After the Battle of Galicia many military officials voiced an opinion that Alekseyev should be placed not in the General Headquarters, but in charge of a front. His appointment Commander-in-chief of the Northwestern front armies was a direct consequence of a change in the Stavka strategy. The

Southwestern front was to be the main attack force, and Alekseyev was to maintain its right wing and establish the defenses. However, there being two operational directions, the Stavka remained undecided on the direction of the main effort and the support role of the Northwestern front was not yet settled. The situation in the lines was difficult: the armies suffered a series of defeats, ill prepared operations and inept command of the Northwestern front exhausted all its reserves, while the German troops could reopen an offensive at any moment. M.V. Alekseyev's letters home show that even before his appointment he spoke ill of the Northwestern front command action and foresaw the complexity of the duty to stabilize the situation, duty that was imposed on him. And yet his appointment provoked a mixed reaction from the Stavka officials and the military.

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Keywords

Archive, source, letters, First World War of 1914-1918, M.V. Alekseyev, RGVIA, documents NIOR RGB.

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About author

Lyashenko Kirill Igorevich, Russian State University of the Humanities, Master's Degree Student, Moscow, Russian Federation, +7-965-211-21-27, eggi94@mail.ru

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