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'I'm Writing Entirely from Memory...': A New Collection of Memoirs on the Beginning of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945

Abstract

The review of the collection of documents 'I'm writing entirely from memory ...' assesses the research potential of this new corps of the Great Patriotic War participants' memoirs. The novelty of the sources introduced into scientific use is determined by the nature and the composition of the materials, as well as by high standard of archaeological preparation of the publication. The two-volume collection contains materials of the questionnaire survey of the Red Army formation and unit commanders of the western military districts who had to face the war on June 22, 1941. The survey was conducted by the Military History Department of the General

Staff of the Soviet Army in 1949-1956. The document collection compiler publishes not just the answers and the memoirs of the commanders, but also the questions asked by the General Staff, and these he provides with a detailed historical reference. The author of the review analyzes the content and the structure of the questions addressed to commanders and considers them a professional historical reflection of military historians of the late 1940s - early 1950s. An analysis of the contingent of respondents, the circumstances and the time of writing offer a means to see respondents as a collective author. This approach is supported by a detailed biographical data included in the collection. It allows to paint a kind of 'intellectual portrait' of the Red Army commanders in the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. The review also attempts to connect volume and contents of the materials with time of their creation and also with posts held by the authors of memoirs and their war-time career. The author underscores the fact that most memoirs and responses were written after 1953, and their size increased considerably over the volume of 1949-1953 materials. Moreover, another correlation has been detected: between the volume of memoirs and answers and the respondents' promotion in the war-time. The review concludes that the new collection of memoirs has a high research potential for studying the eve and the beginning of the Great Patriotic War.

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Keywords

Sources, beginning of the Great Patriotic War, General Staff, Red Army command, memoirs

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