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Preparation of the Internal Affairs Agencies of the USSR to Action under Wartime Conditions in 1967: A Source Study Aspect

Abstract

Modern Russia has its national interests in the Asia-Pacific region and progresses towards rapprochement with the People's Republic of China. This close rapprochement is not the first one in the history of two countries. In the mid-1960s, similar friendly interaction for a relatively short time gave way to extreme confrontation, manifested in ideological, economic, and military-political conflicts, which soured relations between Russia and China for a long time. In March 2019, Russia commemorates the half-century anniversary of the Soviet-Chinese armed border conflict on the Damansky island. Over the last years, the problems of international relations have been thoroughly studied, the course of the conflict has been described in detail, and yet the socio-political situation in the Far East, the role and activities of political and Soviet authorities and of internal affairs bodies remains to be assessed. Today, with declassification of the archives, there is a real opportunity to take a fresh look at the events of 50 years ago. The article is the first attempt to describe the activities of the internal affairs agencies that were to formulate operating procedures in case of outbreak of hostilities on the Chinese border in autumn 1967. The ideological confrontation between China and the Soviet Union in the late 50s–mid 60s took the form of economic sanctions, diplomatic demarches, and border provocations and tended to military conflict. By 1967, everything pointed to imminent military conflict. Under these conditions, the Ministry for the Preservation of Public Order (MOOP) of the USSR and its territorial units took preventive actions within the framework of the “special period” to be ready for war by September–November 1967. The Chinese border was to be provided with police vehicles, special equipment and weapons, automatic weapons, etc. In addition, the internal affairs bodies monitored the public mood and worked out plans of interaction in case of riots. To some extent, the Far Eastern units of the Ministry for the Preservation of Public Order of the USSR performed tasks that fell within the province of the Committee for State Security. For a variety of reasons, the Soviet-Chinese military conflict expected by November 1967 did not take place. However, the emergency measures taken by the MOOP and its territorial bodies to improve combat readiness proved a good training for establishing cooperation. A future power projected scenario was carefully worked out to be put into practice in 1969. Along with

this, the events of 1967 stimulated the Soviet leadership to expand propaganda work among the population of the Far East, who learned of a different view on what was happening from foreign radio stations.

Keywords

Asia-Pacific Region, sources, People's Republic of China, "special period," border war, loyalty of the population, evacuation.

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