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Documents from the Latvian State Historical Archive on the Situation of German Citizens in Riga at the Beginning of the First World War

Abstract

The article discusses the information potential of the documents from the Latvian Historical Archive for studying policy of the Russian government towards subjects of adversary states in the First World War. Citizens of Germany and Austria-Hungary who were in Russian regions, where at the beginning of the First World War the martial law was imposed, were subject to administrative deportation to the Central and Eastern gubernias of the Russian Empire as prisoners of war. This problem is being studied mainly on the basis of documents from the central archives, which does not permit to reconstruct the complete picture of what had

happened. The article analyses the lists, petitions of deported German citizens, correspondence of police officials, statistical data, and orders of the administration of the governorate of Livonia. Drawing on these documents, it studies social and age composition of the deportees, reconstructs courses of action of the gubernia government. It is noted that petitions of deportees have a strong emotional impact, as they draw pictures of difficult life circumstances of those forced to leave their place of residence and travel far into Russian lands. The emotional intensity of these documents needs to be balanced by using record keeping documents. Lists of deportees have notations on canceling of deportation for various reasons; they permit to introduce into scientific use statistics on the number of deportees. The archival documents suggest that the practice of deportation of adversary state subjects was not a standard procedure. At request, many of them were given a brief reprieve, some received permission to return to Riga later. By the winter of 1914-15, within German and Austrian subjects there were exuded categories of persons not to be subject to deportation (Czechs, Slovaks, French, widows who had previously been Russian subjects, their minor children, persons of over 60 and the sick).

#### Keywords

Sources, Baltic gubernias of the Russian Empire, World War I, German citizens, civil authorities of Livonia, administrative deportation, deportation, Latvian State Historical Archive.

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