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“Carbonarists in the Tsar’s guard!”: Uprising of December 14, 1825 in the European Press: Documents from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire and the State Archive of Turin

Abstract

The article studies perception of the uprising of December 14, 1825 in the Western European public opinion as reflected in the press. The source base of the study consists of archival (including previously unpublished) documents found by the authors while working in the State Archive of Turin, and also of the considerable fond 11 “Foreign newspapers,” stored in the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire. The authors investigate and summarize assessments of the Decembrists’ uprising that appeared in the European press in late 1825 –

early 1826 and identify the origin of the newspaper information. Working with archival documents, the authors have used a number of methods that are typical for both historical research (retrospective, analytical, comparative methods) and source studies (heuristic, textual, and hermeneutic methods). These methods allow the authors not only to analyze the documents and determine their epistemological value, but also to comprehend their content in historical context. The article concludes that the European public opinion not just showed interest in the events in St. Petersburg, but also tried to analyze them, to identify their sources and their consequences for Russia and Europe. There were two trends in the coverage of the Decembrist uprising. Firstly, publicists repeated the information received through official channels. Secondly, journalists were inclined to believe that the revolutionary tendencies that emerged in the Russian army after the Napoleonic wars were characteristic of all European countries. The accumulated scientific material allows the authors to come to certain conclusions that are valuable for studying not just the uprising on the Senate square on December 14, 1825, but also mechanisms of formation of the image of Russia on the international arena.

Keywords

Sources, archives, Decembrists, uprising of December 14, 1825, European press, Alexander I, Nicholas I, revolution, secret societies.

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