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Anton N. Uchaev, Elena I. Demidova, Natalia A. Uchaeva

Saratov Socio-Economic Institute of the Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov,
Saratov, Russian Federation

The Prime Minister of Canada William Lyon Mackenzie King's Perception of the USSR during
World War II: 1939–45

Abstract

The article analyzes the specificity of the Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's attitude to the Soviet Union during the Second World War. The study analyzes the

frequency of the Prime Minister referencing the USSR in his diary from September 1, 1939 to September 2, 1945, as well as his reaction to a number of the most significant events of the Second World War associated with the Soviet Union: the German attack on the USSR, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Canada, the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, the victory over Germany. In the course of work, both general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, inductive method, comparative method) and special methods (historical-chronological and content analysis) have been used to study the materials of the diary. The use of the historical-chronological method is due to the need to correlate information from the diary with the overall historical picture of the studied period, and the use of content analysis helps to create a more reliable picture of Canadian Prime Minister's perception of the Soviet participation in World War II. The article has made allowances for the fact that Mackenzie King sought to create his own positive image in his diaries, planning their posthumous publication. But, since the USSR was not a key topic for the Prime Minister (as evidenced by keywords statistics), it can be stated that the leader of the Canadian liberals was quite frank, at least as frank as a person who, in his lifetime, was known as an extremely cautious politician could be. It is clear, that King was well aware of the significance of the events on the Eastern Front. But throughout the war he retained both a negatively neutral attitude towards the USSR (due to its communist nature) and his perception of the Soviet Union as part of Asia and thus a step below the Anglo-Saxon world, which had a higher level of culture and moral principles. The objective reality, i.e. absence of hostilities in Canada, its maneuvering between Great Britain and the United States, and priority of economic and domestic policy for King, explains that a lesser part of his attention was paid to the events in the USSR in comparison with processes associated with England and the United States.

Keywords

Personal provenance source, Canada, USSR, World War II of 1939–45, Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, Mackenzie King, diary, Stalingrad battle, Kursk battle.

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About the authors

Uchaev Anton Nikolaevich, doctor of history, associate professor, Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov, professor of the department of history and culturology, Saratov, Russian Federation +7-927-622-64-79, uchaevan@gmail.com

Demidova Elena Igorevna, doctor of history, professor, Saratov State University, professor of the department of national history and historiography, Russian Federation, +7-905-383-56-70, demidova-elena@yandex.ru

Uchaeva Natalia Alexandrovna, PhD of history, Yuri Gagarin State Technical University of Saratov, associate professor of the department of history and culturology, Saratov, Russian Federation, +7-927-108-41-96, konnaty@gmail.com

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