

Review

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Sources on the History of Russian-Finnish Relations in Early 20th Century: Problems and
Prospects of Publication

Abstract

The review examines content and features of sources published in the three-volume collection “Russia and the Independence of Finland” (2021), prepared by the Russian-Finnish team of authors (compiled by M. V. Zelenov and P. Hakala) headed by the head of the Federal Archival Agency, Doctor of Historical Sciences A. N. Artizov, with participation of the National Archive of Finland. The publication presents documents from the Russian federal archives: State Archive of the Russian Federation (GA RF), Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE), Russian State Archive of the Navy (RGAVMF), Russian State Military Archive (RGVA); from departmental archives: Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (WUA RF), Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (AP RF); and from the National Archive of Finland (NAF). From the NAF fonds have been chosen for publication mostly Russian-language documents of Russian institutions and officials. The collection contains documents revealing the development of political process starting with the Grand Duchy of Finland’s struggle for autonomy and ending with Finland’s movement for the state independence. Commentary, nominal and geographical indexes, chronicle of events, appendices with a list of resolutions of the Russian and Soviet institutions in Finland are of independent scientific significance. Absence of illustrative materials is compensated by lists of photographic documents, including photographs and documentary newsreel footage, with indication of the archives. The collection materials expand the source base of research, reflect specifics of the source base on the history of Russian-Finnish relations, where prevail documents on the legal status of the Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire. The authors pay considerable attention not only to the legal controversy of the parties, but also to documents revealing the complex political relations between Russia and Finland, especially in the period of 1917–20. Introduction into scientific use of documents containing information on the underlying causes of confrontation between the Russian and Finnish political elites of the Russian Empire and on interaction of the Soviet and Finnish structures give credit to the team of Russian and Finnish archivists. Among documents published for the first time, stand out documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia on the support of revolutionary movement in Russia in 1905–07 by the Finnish left-wing political forces. The documents point to diverging positions of Russian bureaucracy on the Finnish issue and search for compromise solutions. Introduction into scientific use of documents containing information on the underlying causes of confrontation between Russian and Finnish political elites and their publication are associated with difficulties in deciphering handwritten texts and their translation from French, Swedish, and other languages. It is noted that some documents on the essence of the Russian-Finnish contradictions during the First World War have already been introduced into scientific use by Russian researchers, indicating presence of research interest and need for further work on the publication of sources.

Keywords

Historical sources, Russian Empire, Grand Duchy of Finland, publication of documents of early 20th century.

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