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'The Noblest Soul': A Sad Page in the History of the Grand Duchy of Hesse through the Eyes of Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich. The Darmstadt Diary, 1892

Abstract

This is the first publication of a fragment of the diary of Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich of Russia for 1892 describing illness, death, and burial of Grand Duke Ludwig IV of Hesse and by Rhine, head of one of the states forming a part of the German Empire. Ever since the 18th century the Russian Imperial Family was bound by close kinship to the Hessian ducal family. The author of the diary was a member of the House of the Romanovs, a younger brother of Russian Emperor Alexander III. Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich held the post of the Moscow Governor-General. In 1884 he married Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, n?e Princess of Hesse, who was a daughter of Grand Duke Ludwig IV. This publication includes diary records from February 26 to March 9, 1892, covering the time when Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich and his wife were staying in Darmstadt. The diary describes the daily life of the Royal family in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Hesse and by Rhine during said period and the participation in the obsequies of the deceased's family and the representatives of the Russian, British and German ruling dynasties. Among others, the Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich's diary mentions German Dowager Empress Victoria (the mother of Emperor Wilhelm II), Prince Henry of Prussia (the future Grand Admiral of the Imperial German Navy), Prince Louis Battenberg (the future British First Sea Lord), Princess Alice of Hesse, the younger sister of Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, future Russian Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The daily entries record family unity of the members of the Russian, the German, and the British Royal dynasties in the face of common tragedy against the backdrop of difficult relations between their empires. The deceased, Grand Duke Ludwig IV, enjoyed universal respect. Diaries of Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich are stored in his personal provenance fond in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (Moscow).

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