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Sergey M. Ryazanov

Perm Institute of the Federal Penal Enforcement Service of Russia (FSIN), Perm, Russian Federation

The Diary of Lady-in-Waiting Princess S. L. Shakhovskaya: An Unknown Source about the Romanov Family, 1900-1901

Abstract

The review considers the new publication of well-known Perm historian D. M. Sofjin, historian and archaeographer M. V. Sofjina, and translator A. G. Neklyudova. It places their work in the broader archaeographic framework of sources about the Romanov family. The distinguishing characteristic of the diary is its relatively small volume (about 2 author's sheets). The published document has not been introduced into scientific use until now. This is probably due to its unlikely place of storage: in the fond of M. N. Katkov in the Research Division of Manuscripts of

the Russian State Library (NIOR RGB). But the main barrier was, certainly, the language: French is unfamiliar to most Russian historians, including specialists in the history of the Romanovs. The diary is dated July 5, 1900 – July 24, 1901. It allows to see the Romanovs (Empress Maria Feodorovna, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, and others) through the eyes a young girl, Princess S. L. Shakhovskaya. The diary can be conditionally divided in two parts: the first outlines events, the second is focused on the girl's rather gloomy feelings. The publication is prepared at the highest archeographic level. The introduction details all special considerations of text transmission, its translation into fundamentally different sign system. The remarks of the translator are noteworthy; she contends that the young Duchess had poor command of French and 'thought in Russian.' Most praiseworthy are the notes, which contain all necessary references and biographical data. Although it does not add anything radically new to the understanding of the period, the publication puts the finishing touches to the portrayal of several key historical figures of the turn of the 20th century (primarily, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich and Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, at whose court Princess S. L. Shakhovskaya was in waiting).

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Keywords

Archeography, publication, personal provenance source Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna.

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About author

Ryazanov Sergey Mikhailovich, PhD in History, Perm Institute of the Federal Penal Enforcement Service of Russia (FSIN), senior lecturer, +7-909-111-09-23, s_ryazanov@mail.ru

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