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Anti-Bolshevik Omsk in 1919: A Source Study Analysis of the French Intervention Newsreels

Abstract

After the opening in 2012 basis of a Center for Studying History of the Civil War at the premises of the Historical Archive of the Omsk Region, a newsreel, shot in April–May 1919 by French military journalists became well-known to scientific and cultural community. And yet despite great popularity of this unique and ‘live’ historical source among filmmakers and journalists, it remains unstudied by researchers. The article aims to fill the lacuna in order to introduce the French newsreel of the anti–Bolshevik Omsk into scientific use. For this purpose, the authors have carried out an attribution and a historical analysis of the film document. The study incorporates scientific publications and an array of historical sources (including photo documents), which the authors have found in the fonds of archives and libraries. The resulting study follows the footage and identifies buildings and places on the film. It also provides a detailed description of what the buildings housed in 1919, when Admiral Kolchak was in power, and what they house now. It points out the well-known personalities of anti-Bolshevik Omsk (A.V. Kolchak, M. Zhanen, A.I. Dutov). Attribution of the French newsreels depicting Omsk in 1919 allows to reconstruct daily life of a provincial town, which had been for a time the capital of anti-Bolshevik Russia. The chronicle features official aspect of White Omsk, but also some particulars of town life and Omsk urbanism of a hundred years ago, which are of great value for historians. It is noteworthy that visual sources on the Civil War are little used by researchers. The fact enhances the significance of the publication, which may be of interest to military historians studying the Civil War and foreign military intervention, scholars in the history of Siberia, source studies, and history of everyday life.

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Keywords

Sources, film document, newsreels, Kolchak, Omsk, Civil War, intervention, local history.

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