УДК 94(47)

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-2-558-571

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The Role of Stalin in the Formation of Official History of the Tsaritsyn Defense during the Civil War in Russia

Abstract

The article presents results of comparative analysis of the texts of original publication of Professor V. Melikov's scientific monograph "Heroic Defense of Tsaritsyn: 1918" and its 1938 version published in view of the 20th anniversary of the defense of Tsaritsyn during the Civil War. J. V. Stalin's editorial revision of the text is probably the only evidence of his active intervention in late 1930s in the formation of the official view on the defense of Tsaritsyn and his own role in it, as well as that of K. E. Voroshilov and M. S. Budyonny. The study allows to identify main points and accents of editorial treatment of censorship and of Stalin himself as main participant in the event and unofficial editor of the new publication. Stalin's editorial changes expunged names of most command officers from the text. All information on the military operations of the Steel division and its commander, D. P. Zhlob, who was arrested and executed during the prepress, was removed. Stalin also edited and deleted the "cult of personality" flattery to himself and his comrade-in-arms S. M. Budyonny. At the same time, the censorship, namely the editorial board of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR, promptly updated the text by inserting documents and materials on the ongoing trials for counter-revolutionary activities of persons mentioned in the monograph as participants in the events. Political repression of early 1938 resulted in their neutralization as "enemies of the people." Thus, editing of V. A. Melikov's monograph by I. V. Stalin and the censorship was an example of the gradual transformation of scientific publication into instrument of political and ideological strife in the context of oncoming new wave of terror.

Keywords

Historical source, defense of Tsaritsyn, censorship, V. A. Melikov, J. V. Stalin, historiography, Civil War in Russia.

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Submitted 22.12.2018, published (for citation):

BELOV, D. A., VOROBIEV, E. P. Rol' I. V. Stalina v formirovanii ofitsial'noi versii istorii oborony Tsaritsyna v gody Grazhdanskoi voyny v Rossii [. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2019, no. 2, pp. 558-571. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-2-558-571

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .