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Declassified Documents of the GPU-OGPU of the 1920s as a Historical Source

Abstract

The article analyzes a documents complex of the GPU-OGPU deposited in the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of Russia (TsA FSB Rossii) that have been recently declassified. Selected materials from the Eastern Department of the GPU-OGPU relate to the early Soviet period of the 1920s and the events that took place in Siberia and the Far East. The goals and objectives of the study include, first of all, assessment of the significance of the source material chosen by the authors for enriching our knowledge of the historical phenomena and processes that took place in the emerging Soviet state. In addition, the authors identify the mechanisms of creating “Surveys of the situation on the eastern outskirts of the USSR and in the neighboring countries,” which characterize the cause-and-effect relationships in the development of events in Siberia and the Far East. The materials of the sources demonstrate the level of knowledge about the ethno-confessional specifics of the aborigines and about the replenishment of the population in the region with new ethnic groups as a result of the change of government and the Civil War. The novelty of the research lies in identifying criteria for assessing the population groups of the region, primarily from the point of view of their possible actions against the Soviet regime. Integrated approach to assessing the source material of special services allows a comprehensive approach to their activities and rejects the stereotype persisting since the 1990s that everything done by the GPU-OGPU was aimed at terror against local residents. Since the article also deals with the factor of external influence (USA, Japan, France) on the mood of the aborigines, it can be argued that information about anti-Soviet efforts of other states, as analyzed by intelligence analysts, justifies in the eyes of modern reader the GPU-OGPU activities in order to stabilize the situation in Soviet Russia and the USSR beyond the Urals. The authors come to the conclusion that materials of the Eastern Department of the GPU-OGPU are a valuable source of information on the role of the Russian special services in ensuring stability in the Far East and Siberia in the first half of the 1920s. The point is that this information not only complements the available information on what was happening in the region, but also confirms the importance of collecting and analyzing data for making more effective decisions by the Soviet political elite.

Keywords

Historical sources, GPU-OGPU, Eastern department, revolution and counter-revolution, Siberia, Far East, Bolsheviks, intelligence and counterintelligence

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