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Nicholas II's Post-Coronation Voyage to Europe in Records of the Chamber Fourrier Journal for 1896

Abstract

The article analyzes the Chamber Furrier journal of the voyage of Emperor Nicholas II across Europe in 1896. The voyage was made immediately after the coronation ceremony. It was undertaken with an aim of adjusting his notions on the foreign policy of the Russian Empire, and

at the same time, in order to implement representative functions. It is the ceremonial side of foreign summits that this unique source reveals. It provides several functions at once: informational, utilitarian, and commemorative. The article sums up the features of this document, the nature of the notes and their content. The source permits to identify the emperor's route, his activities, time and place of contacts with various officials. The notes contain information on vestments of individuals, decoration of premises, usage of state symbols. There are notes of organizational and economic significance. Among the pages of the journal there are characteristic tabs: seating plans, performance programs, menus, and other documents in foreign languages testifying to political and cultural connections. On the basis of the register covering the visits to Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, a general "scenario" of summit meetings can be identified with their key stages and main tasks. Particular attention is paid to recording toasts that were pronounced at ceremonial dinners and were of declarative nature. In fact, they were an official communiqué of the entire meeting delivered in person. Such texts were fully reproduced on the pages of the Chamber-Fourrier journal in Russian. Other information on diplomatic negotiations was not reflected in the ceremonial journal. Memory of each visit was being written synchronously to its proceedings. Summit meetings were an integral part of the international cooperation. The 1896 voyage presented a new actor on the "European stage," attracting attention and thereby contributing to the resumption of discussions of general geopolitical situation. The experience of participating in official receptions, as presented in the Chamber-Fourrier journal, was taken into account when developing programs for return visits of the heads of foreign powers to the Russian Empire in subsequent years. On one hand, these notes reflect the "ceremonial side" of the events of national importance; on the other hand, they allow a better understanding of various organizational aspects.

Keywords

Historical source, Chamber Fourrier journal, Russian Empire, Europe, international relations, Nicholas II, coronation in 1896, ceremonial.

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