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Fragments from M.O. Menshikov's Notebooks in the Context of History of Technical Naval Education in Post-Reform Russia: The Turn of the 20th Century

Abstract

Here are being published fragments from notebooks of a popular publicist of the turn of the 20th century, leading employee of the Nedelya and later Novoe Vremya, Mikhail Osipovich Menshikov. Personal provenance documents are essential for detailing historical research. Their specificity is connected to personality of the eyewitness and participant of the described events. From the age of thirteen, Menshikov was in habit of keeping systematic records containing a description of the day's events and people, as well as his reflections. His journalistic talent, which was revealed later, manifested already in these early recordings where we can find sharp observations and deep analysis of characters and situations. The first few Menshikov's notebooks belong to the period of his studies in the Technical School of the Naval Department in Kronstadt. They contain descriptions of his classmates, teachers, and various situations that arose while in school or during educational voyages. Along with positive reviews, there are scathing descriptions of the teachers, school workers, and the school head A. I. Zeleny. Menshikov makes bold remarks on inconsistency of the latter's views with requirements of the time; he underscores Zeleny's refusal to arrange for a special room for students who wished to read fresh newspapers in the midst of the Russo-Turkish War. This was a painful prohibition for young Menshikov who was unable to subscribe to newspapers due to extreme poverty. Among his 29 schoolmates, only 4 shared his desire to learn all current news. It is significant that this fact worried the students, but not the teachers. While Menshikov nurtured a dream of instilling an appreciation for reading in his comrades, the school head considered any extracurricular occupation of his students unnecessary and even harmful. M. O. Menshikov's notebooks, combined with memoirs of his classmate, future member of the Narodnaya Volya, I.P. Yuvachev, provide an outlook at school education through the eyes of its students, drawing a more complete picture of naval technical specialists training in the post-reform era. These materials help to understand what was expected of the future technical naval personnel and what was actually achieved. The presented excerpts from M. O. Menshikov's notebooks are stored in fond 202 in the Department for Storage of Documents from Personal Collections of Moscow in the Central State Archive of Moscow.

Keywords

Historical source, diary, M.O. Menshikov, biography, Navy, Technical School of the Maritime Department.

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