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Obtaining Russian citizenship by subjects of enemy countries during World War I, 1914-1918:

ethnicity or loyalty

Abstract

The article examines the conditions and features of the naturalization process in Russia of "enemy aliens" during the First World War. In Russian and foreign historiography since the 1990s, this issue has not been closely considered. The authors mainly pay attention to the mass expulsions of enemy subjects to remote provinces from front-line areas, accusations of the latter of espionage in favor of the enemy, restrictions on rights. The researchers conclude that the dominance of ethnic and religious criteria for admission to citizenship of the Russian Empire: the presence of Slavic origin or belonging to the Christian faith for citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Such conclusions are mainly based on an analysis of the laws and orders of the military and civilian authorities of the first months of the war. The purpose of the article is to reconstruct the process of granting citizenship not only on the basis of an analysis of the normative acts of the beginning of the war, but also documents of the subsequent period, which reflected the change in the positions of the ruling elite on the issue of Russian citizenship. The article uses petitions from "enemy foreigners", documents of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assess the course of discussion of petitions and the reasons for making positive or negative decisions. These are documents of the Russian State Historical Archive, the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Central State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg. The analysis of the documents of the Fund of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (RGIA) based on the results of consideration of the petitions of enemy subjects allowed us to conclude about the number of positive decisions and provide new statistical data on the number of enemy subjects who received Russian citizenship in 1914-1915. The mass transfer of interned foreigners to remote Russian provinces created a huge number of problems for state bodies in the center and on the ground. Naturalization of "enemy foreigners" in the empire allowed tokeep valuable specialists at their jobs, to prevent the closure of enterprises owned by "hostile foreigners". The granting of Russian citizenship during the war increasingly depended on subjective factors: the personal support of officials. With the development of military operations, the granting of citizenship increasingly depends not on nationality, but on the loyalty of the Russian Empire confirmed by recommendations.

Keywords

World War I 1914-1918, internment, Russian Empire, "enemy aliens", Council of Ministers, Russian citizenship.

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