

N.N. Golovin on the Causes of the Russian Empire's Defeat in World War I: A Source Study

Written by Anfertiev I.A.

Tuesday, 12 March 2024 00:00

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Annotation

According to general-lieutenant N.N. Golovin, an active participant in the World War I, among the main reasons of Russia's unpreparedness for war the following should be named: faulty legislative support of warfare measures and of waging of the war, low professionalism of the state officials responsible for preparing the country for war, the government's moral incompetence in the crisis, absence of fully functional Joint Staff in the Russian Empire, deficient patriotic education in Russia, lack of will in the academia for creating and developing the study of the social phenomenon of war, non-compliance of the works on military history with high scientific standards. As his main treatises were written in emigration, he had no access to the main archive documents collections on the war, which definitely interfered with the objectivity of his conclusions. On the plus side, he draws on a wealth of reliable facts and extensive materials he himself amassed, uses data from both foreign and Soviet historiographies and strives to identify and solve the most fundamental issues that caused the Russia Empire to suffer defeat in the war. Making assessment of the source study potential of his works we have to concede that Golovin carries out a thorough and knowledgeable analysis of Russian and German Selective Service Acts, of conditions that hindered Russia in preparing and using its mobilization base to the utmost, of obvious and latent defects in the country's military establishment. He estimates the strength of the Russian army and personnel losses, describes the transport support and troubles with various combat supplies (artillery equipment, aviation, cars, rifles, ammunition, foodstuff, uniforms, etc.). He reports the changes in the mood of in the lines and in the rear-based units, the corruption and doom of the army in 1917-1918.

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Keywords

N.N. Golovin, World War I, source, sociology of war, political crisis, military science

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