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**ON THE SOURCES TO STUDY THE HOLOCAUST
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF BELGORODIA)****К ВОПРОСУ ОБ ИСТОЧНИКАХ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ХОЛОКОСТА
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Аннотация. Холокост стал синонимом массовых убийств и геноцида в годы Второй мировой войны. Однако и в дальнейшем масштабное насилие сопровождало развитие человечества. Для того, чтобы выявить практики насилия времен войны, а также понять механизмы современного геноцида, безусловно, необходимо внимательное изучение различных аспектов Холокоста. Цель данной работы состоит в рассмотрении некоторых проблем, связанных с источниковой базой исследования Холокоста на оккупированной части Советского Союза на примере территории современной Белгородской области. Источниками для исследования послужили опубликованные документы и воспоминания, а также неопубликованные документы Государственного архива Белгородской области (ГАБО). Авторы приходят к выводу о том, что рассмотренные источники дают возможность получить некоторую информацию, однако вызывают и немало вопросов. При этом данные материалы демонстрируют некоторые аспекты специфики механизма Холокоста в регионе. Дальнейшее исследование Холокоста затрудняется фрагментарной источниковой базой.

Resume. The Holocaust became a synonym of mass killings and genocide in World War II, but this phenomenon did not disappear. It is impossible to understand the contemporary genocide without a thorough study of different aspects of the Holocaust. The objective of the paper is to consider some of the problems with the source base available in Russia in the study of the Holocaust on the example of Belgorodia. The primary sources include published documents, archival materials from the State Archive of the Belgorod Region (GABO), as well as reminiscences. The authors conclude that the existing evidence gives some answers, but provokes many more questions. Yet it demonstrates some peculiarities of the Holocaust mechanism in the region. The further study of this phenomenon is hampered by the scarce source base.

Ключевые слова: Холокост, евреи, территория Белгородской области, источники.
Key words: Holocaust, Jews, Belgorodia, sources.

The Holocaust became a synonym of mass killings and genocide in World War II, but this phenomenon did not disappear. It is impossible to understand the contemporary genocide without thorough study of different aspects of the Holocaust. Despite a big number of publications devoted to the German occupation regime on the USSR territory and the South of Russia in particular, there is little attention to the Holocaust. There are two major reasons for that: (1) The sufferings of the people on the occupied territory have been (and often are) considered to be a tragedy of the Soviet people without specifying different categories of population, including Jews. (2) A detailed study of the phenomenon of occupation could only start in recent years, as personal documents are being subject to a 75-year rule. The reason for this is clear – the occupation experience provides not only heroic patterns of behavior, and therefore might affect the lives of contemporary population. As a result, many documents are still classified. Consequently, the problem of Holocaust sometimes goes unnoticed.

The objective of the paper is to consider some of the problems with the source base available in Russia in the study of the Holocaust on the example of Belgorodia (with emphasis on the town of Belgorod and neighboring districts)¹. The primary sources include published documents, archival materials from the State Archive of the Belgorod Region (GABO)², as well as reminiscences.

¹ “Belgorodia” here means the territory of contemporary Belgorod Region: in the war years most of the region was a part of the Kursk Province, while a smaller area – of the Voronezh Province.

² We are grateful for valuable advice and the documents to the GABO director Pavel Subbotin, and the GABO archivists Elena Krivtsova and Natalia Matalova.

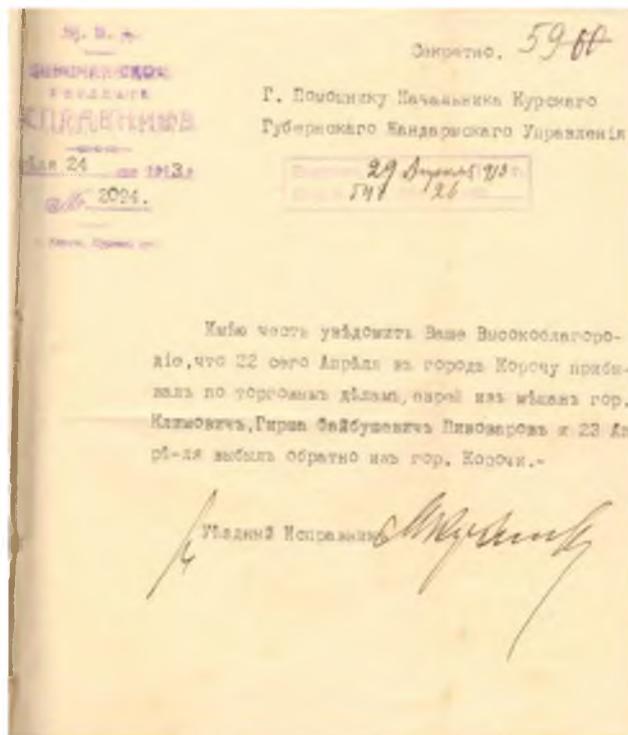
The Jewish population of Belgorodia originates primarily in the nineteenth century, though it was not considerable. It is not difficult to find out how many Jews lived there before World War I, as in the Russian empire the authorities took a note of every Jew, including those coming for a short stay (see documents 1 and 2).

Document 1

Document 2

Cover of the Folder Aide to the Chief of the Kursk Province Zhandarm Department in Belgorod, Graivoron, Korocha, Stary and Novy Oskol districts "About Jews in the Region under Surveillance". 1913-1914¹.

A report about one-day stay of a Jew from the town of Klimovich in the town of Korocha of the Belgorod district. April 24, 1913².



Thus, on the basis of the GABO materials³, it is possible to say definitely that there lived 240 Jews on the eve of the First World War in the bigger part of Belgorodia⁴. This is the last precise estimation in the twentieth century. Then came the Great War, and several occupations. The new, Soviet, regime did not specifically pay attention to Jews, while previous restrictions in the political and social life had been lifted.

According to the pre-war census of 1939, more than three mln. Jews lived in the USSR. At the same time they unevenly populated the territory of the Soviet Union – mostly due to the restrictions in times of the Russian Empire that prohibited Jewish settlement in most of Russia proper. As a result, Ukraine was the most Jewish-populated part of the USSR in 1939. The Soviet annexation of eastern Poland that followed soon added almost two mln. Jewish population⁵.

In the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in the late June 1941 there lived approximately 700 Jews in Belgorodia. The region was considered to be in the deep rear in the first months of the war. However, advances of the German army soon made it almost a frontline. These successful fascist offensives hampered the evacuation of civil population from the region. Belgorod was occupied already in the late October 1941, and the whole Belgorodia – by summer 1942. Belgorodia`s Jewish population practically tripled because of war conditions – due to refugees, evacuees and then foreign Jews brought by occupiers.

¹ The State Archive of the Belgorod Region (henceforth – GABO). F. 101. Op. 1. D. 97.

² GABO. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 97. L. 59.

³ GABO. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 97.

⁴ One should note that these data are accurate for a part of contemporary Belgorodia, as on the eve of WWI the town of Belgorod was of lesser administrative significance and therefore less territory was perceived as Belgorodia.

⁵ Evrei SSSR nakanune voyny. Vostochnye i zapadnye territorii (The Jews of the USSR on the Eve of the War. Eastern and Western Territories). URL: www1.yadvashem.org

A view of Belgorod taken by a German pilot before occupation. 3 October 1941¹



As Juergen Foerster has argued, the German concept of the war in the East included the four components:

- 1) seizure of the territory for German colonization;
- 2) annihilation of the Jewish-Bolshevik ruling class, including its “biological basis”, that is, millions of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe;
- 3) extermination of the considerable Slavic population and governance of the rest with the help of Reichskommissars;
- 4) exploitation of the economic resources of occupied territories².

Adolf Hitler publicly declared in 1939 that the war in the East was not to comply with the rules of war conduct, but would be the one against ideology and its proponents. Here the Jews were the most significant, as they were associated with the “Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia” who ruled the country; their extermination was considered to be an indispensable precondition of “final extermination of Bolshevism”³.

These ideas were shared by Nazi Germany’s allies. For example, the Hungarian authorities who ruled on a part of the occupied Belgorodia together with Germans wrote in the newspaper *Woschod - Aufstieg* addressed to local population on 22 October 1942: “Due to the Hungarian and German armies who set you free from the Jewish-Bolshevik yoke you are granted a possibility to cultivate freely the land...”⁴.

The “new order” included *inter alia* strict rules of the local population registration. Village heads were to compile lists of population specifying loyalty of every person, if he/she local or evacuee (and from where), non-party or Communist (or Komsomol); every adult in bigger settlements were to be registered. The Jews were among the population categories that had to be arrested along with Communists, activists, candidates to the Communist party, and then partisans⁵. The arrest, though, often did not happen right away.

In the beginning the Soviet citizens of Jewish descent were subject to moral humiliation – as one of the Belgorodian survivors of the occupation has noted, the Nazis glued six-point stars to the Jews’ chests and spines⁶. All the Jewish apartments and enterprises usually received the signs “Jewish apartment” and “Jewish enterprise”⁷. Then there came a number of mass and individual killings. I.A. Altman, a renowned scholar of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, has noted that the occupiers carried them out in 1942, that is, later than in neighboring regions⁸. According to some memoirs of the Belgorodians, a number of local Jews did not believe that Holocaust was possible, despite the information about it from refugees. For example, a dentist of Jewish origin, whose surname was Ripp, told Grigory Orel in reply to the

¹ Romanenko D.M. View of Belgorod in 1941. URL: <http://fotki.yandex.ru/users/dm-romanenko/view/359181/?page=0>

² Foerster J. Vermacht protiv SSSR: voina na unichtozhenie (The Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union: the War of Extermination). URL: <http://www.historicus.ru/534/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Okkupatsiya (Belgorodchina v oktyabre 1941 – avguste 1943). Dokumenty i materialy (Occupation (Belgorodia in October 1941 – August 1943). Documents and Materials) / Authors-comp. A.N. Krupenkov, T.I. Utenina, L.B. Khromykh. Belgorod, 2010. P. 32.

⁵ Ibid. P. 9, 54.

⁶ Okkupatsiya (Belgorodchina v oktyabre 1941 – avguste 1943). Dokumenty i materialy.

⁷ Altman I.A. Kholokost i evreiskoe soprotivlenie na okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR (Holocaust and Jewish Resistance on the Occupied Territory of the USSR). Moscow, 2002. URL: http://jhist.org/shoa/hfond_100.htm

⁸ Ibid.



talk of the latter about German atrocities: “I graduated from the Leipzig German University. I know Germans as very civilized people”.¹

It is difficult to give more or less exact population of the Jews who lived on the territory of Belgorodia in the occupation period, because:

- Many Jews were refugees and evacuees from other regions which had been occupied earlier, and quite a few of them did not have recognizable Jewish names².
- Occupiers brought some Jewish population from their home countries (as, for example, some 400 Hungarian Jews were exploited in the Stary Oskol district³).
- Last, but definitely not least – there remained practically no occupiers` documentation dealing with this matter left in the region, while the existing sources are often not accurate.

These are main complications when we try to reveal the number of the Holocaust victims in the region. Right after the final liberation of Belgorod in August 1943 the commissions on fascists` atrocities on its territory were set up. They did not have German documentation at hand and therefore collected information solely on the basis of the local population interviews, examinations of the places where crimes were committed, medical examinations, etc. The results of their work included lists of the people who had fallen victims of occupiers. These lists, available in the GABO collections, include the following ones: *Inhabitants of Belgorod driven away by the German-fascist occupiers in an unknown direction, List of Belgorod inhabitants burnt on the Reed factory in the period of Belgorod`s occupation by German fiends, List of Belgorod inhabitants driven away into the German slavery during the first and the second occupations* (see documents 3 to 6).

One might conclude the following based on these documents:

1. According to the available memoirs of Belgorodians, most of the Jews were burnt on the Reed factory, and they were not necessarily from Belgorod: only a part of them were locals, others included refugees or evacuees⁴. This is confirmed by many Jewish surnames in the *List of Belgorod inhabitants burnt on the Reed factory...* (see document 3).
2. There are practically no matches between the list of Jews living in Belgorodia of 1913-1914 and the lists of victims of the occupiers of 1943, except, probably, two surnames – Yakubovich and Shekhter. However, it is impossible to say if these people were relatives.
3. There are Jewish surnames not only in the lists of the people exterminated by the Nazis and their allies, but also in the lists of those driven away (see documents 4, 5, 6).

Document 3

List of Belgorod inhabitants burnt on the Reed factory in the period of Belgorod`s occupation by German fiends. 1943 (First page)⁵



¹ Belgorod v vospominaniyakh belgorodtsev (Belgorod in reminiscences of Belgorodians) / Comp. by A.N. Krupenkov. Belgorod, 2010. P. 332.
² Ibid. P. 205.
³ 1941-1945: vo imya zhizni (In the Name of Life). Stary Oskol, 2010. P. 72-76.
⁴ See, for example: Belgorod v vospominaniyakh belgorodtsev (Belgorod in reminiscences of Belgorodians). P. 205.
⁵ GABO. F. R-68. Op. 3. D. 1. L. 21.



List of inhabitants of Belgorod driven away by the German-fascist occupiers in an unknown direction (First page). 1943¹

Список

Жителей Белгородской области, вывезенных немцами в неизвестном направлении.

Фамилия имя отчество	Возраст	Улица	Пол	Примечание
Морозов Алексей Антонович	34	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 62.
Сидоров Алексей Иванович	14	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей Иванович	10	"	муж	
Морозов Алексей	25	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 60
Сидоров Алексей	54	Кремль	муж	
Морозов Алексей	1960	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 50
Сидоров Алексей	1705	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	1724	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	1930	Кремль	муж	
Морозов Алексей	46	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 54
Морозов Алексей	47	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 32
Сидоров Алексей	23	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	2	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	55	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 38
Сидоров Алексей	40	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 38
Сидоров Алексей	30	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	25	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	40	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	57	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 16
Сидоров Алексей	55	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 16
Сидоров Алексей	65	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 16
Сидоров Алексей	1301	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 16
Сидоров Алексей	1870	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	1901	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 14
Сидоров Алексей	63	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 10
Сидоров Алексей	1918	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	1936	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	27	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	60	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	90	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 3
Сидоров Алексей	60	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	56	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 21

List of inhabitants of Belgorod driven away by the German-fascist occupiers in an unknown direction. 1943. Nos. 1461-1463 the Zigers²

Сидоров Алексей	28	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 52
Сидоров Алексей	5	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	25	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 7
Сидоров Алексей	40	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	60	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 1
Сидоров Алексей	70	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 1
Сидоров Алексей	63	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 2
Сидоров Алексей	52	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 2
Сидоров Алексей	65	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 4
Сидоров Алексей	59	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 4
Сидоров Алексей	35	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 3
Сидоров Алексей	11	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 3
Сидоров Алексей	60	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 3
Сидоров Алексей	55	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 6
Сидоров Алексей	35	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 6
Сидоров Алексей	4	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 16
Сидоров Алексей	49	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 12
Сидоров Алексей	63	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 1
Сидоров Алексей	40	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 7
Сидоров Алексей	1	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 28
Сидоров Алексей	13	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 28
Сидоров Алексей	57	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 30
Сидоров Алексей	10	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 30
Сидоров Алексей	28	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	11	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	4	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	6	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	64	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	30	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 35
Сидоров Алексей	16	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 66
Сидоров Алексей	50	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 86
Сидоров Алексей	35	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 70
Сидоров Алексей	30	Кремль	муж	Пожилый 34
Сидоров Алексей	3	Кремль	муж	
Сидоров Алексей	6	Кремль	муж	

It is well-known that the Jews were among the population categories to be exterminated first and most cruelly. Despite the widening source base, there are still many difficulties in estimating the scale of the Holocaust and in revealing the peculiarities of the German suppression mechanism – it is also the case concerning Belgorodia. The existing evidence gives some answers, but provokes many more questions. Yet it proves that the mechanism of the Holocaust in the region was complex, and it needs further study. One of the peculiarities of the Holocaust in the region is that most of its victims were Jews from other parts of the Soviet Union who tried to escape the deadly “new order” implanted by the Third Reich. An established approximate figure of the Holocaust victims in Belgorodia is 1750 Jews, mostly of non-local origin³. Meanwhile, this estimate does not include, for example, Hungarian Jews who died of diseases in the region. Some local Jews managed to escape occupation and therefore death due to the information about the Holocaust that came from western regions of the USSR, although the Nazi repressions were so horrendous that some Soviet nationals of Jewish origin could not believe into their possibility until the Nazis or their collaborators came to their homes.

¹ GABO. F. R-68. Op. 3. D. 1. L. 1.

² GABO. F. R-68. Op. 3. D. 1. L. 12.

³ See Altman I.A. Kholokost i evreiskoe soprotivlenie na okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR. URL: http://jhist.org/shoa/hfond_117.htm

List of Belgorod inhabitants driven away into the German slavery during the first and the second occupations (First page). Nos. 49-51 the Litmans¹

The image shows a page from a handwritten document, possibly a list of names and dates. The text is in Cyrillic. At the top right, there are handwritten numbers '22' and '1942'. The list consists of approximately 30 entries, each with a name, a date (mostly 1942), and a number. Some entries have handwritten corrections or additional notes. The document appears to be a list of people, possibly related to the historical context mentioned in the caption.

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¹ GABO. F. R-68. Op. 3. D. 1. L. 22.