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Materials on History of Foreign Prisoners of World War II in the Archives of St. Petersburg

Abstract

The article gives an account of the sources on history of foreign prisoners of World War II deposited in the archives of St. Petersburg and Leningrad region. The author displays the prospects of reconstructing the institutions of military captivity at the regional level and demonstrates the data scope of archival fonds, which throw light on the formation of camps for prisoners of war and their labor in the Socialist construction projects, as well as on everyday life in Russian captivity in the second half of the 1940s. The importance of studying this issue at the regional level is confirmed by the fact that the documents of camps (orders, inquiries, reports, correspondence of prisoners of war, acts of death and burials, the cemetery books, etc.) in some cases are in conflict with the data of the final reports sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. About 75 thousand men passed through the net of prison camps set up in Leningrad and its region. Not only they were under scrutiny of internal affairs organs, party structures also took a genuine interest in prisoners of war being used in numerous post-war refurbishment projects. And yet having provided their input into national economic recovery, prisoners of war were erased from national history and places of their disposition were destroyed throughout the country as soon as the last of the survivors were repatriated. The archives of St. Petersburg preserve data on the foreign prisoners of war not only for the Leningrad region. In a number of fonds there were deposited documents on history of the camps in neighboring Estonia. The fact results from proximity of the Baltic republics, as well as frequent displacement of camp offices, the transfer of prisoners to the objects requiring expansion of the labor front. Introduction into scientific use of the sources described in the article is to help to reconstruct a history of prisoners of war in the Leningrad region that won't be based on emotional resonance and sense of values, but on reliable information deposited in the collections of state and departmental archives.

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Keywords

World War II, the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945., archives of St. Petersburg, POW camps, prisoners of war

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