

УДК 94

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2018-3-717-730

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The Third Reich Documents on the Évian Conference of 1938: Conniving Indifference of World Powers towards Nazis' Anti-Semitic Policies

Abstract

The year 2018 is the 80th anniversary of the international conference on refugees held on July 5-16, 1938 in a French town of Évian. Despite great significance of the refugee problem in the modern world, the history of the Évian conference remains on the periphery of historical science. There are no studies of the topic in Russian scholarship; the Western historiography on the conniving indifference of the world powers towards Nazi anti-Semitic policies, which resulted in the Holocaust, is scarce. The object of this study is the 1938 international Évian conference on refugees and its reflection in sources and scholarship. The subject of the study is previously

unpublished German documents on the Evian conference stored in the fond of the 'Chief Directorate for Imperial Security' in the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA). The purpose of the article is to give a new interpretation of the role of Germany in the Evian conference drawing on German documents on the Evian conference from the fonds of the RGVA and to show the historical significance of the conference for the Nazis' turn towards the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. The tasks of the article are to use traditional methods of historical research to study new German sources on the topic of the study. The documents have been translated in Russian in order to put them into source and literary context and to provide their scientific interpretation. For the first time in Russian historiography, the article notes that at the Evian conference the German Jews submitted a memorandum with a 4-year plan of emigration of 200,000 Jews from Germany, but their action-oriented proposals were buried in platitudes. The conference participants' speeches demonstrated the unwillingness of the majority of countries to open their borders to refugees from the Third Reich. The study concludes that the failure of the Evian conference opened the door to the Holocaust. The significance of the study is due not just to the 80th anniversary of the Evian conference, but also to the urgency of the refugee problem in Europe and worldwide.

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Keywords

Evian conference of July 5-16, 1938, refugees problem, situation of Jews in Nazi Germany, Jewish emigration, Holocaust, materials from the fond of the 'Chief Directorate for Imperial Security' of Nazi Germany from the Russian State Military Archive.

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Submitted 23.04.2018, published:

KHAVKIN, B. L. Dokumenty Tret'ego reikha po Evianskoi konferentsii 1938 g.: popustitel'stvo mirovykh derzhav yudofobskoj politike natsistov [The Third Reich Documents on the Evian Conference of 1938: Conniving Indifference of World Powers towards Nazis' Anti-Semitic Policies. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2018, no. 3, pp. 717-730. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2018-3-717-730

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