

Document publication

УДК

94+929+296.2+296.1+321.021+321.022+321.6+323.2+342.1+342.2+342.71+323.1+329.3+329.8

doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-447-457

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Zionist Eliyahu Munchik and His Letter on Jewish Emigration to Palestine (1917)

Abstract

The article considers historical sources—a letter from Zionist E. Munchik addressed to P.N. Milyukov written on March 30, 1917 regarding emigration of Jews to Palestine and his

memorandum on Russia's policy in the Middle East. The article provides a meaningful analysis of these documents. Documents are being introduced into scientific use for the first time. The article is to characterize and publish documentary sources found in the archival fond of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia P.N. Milyukov (March-May 1917) in the State Archives of the Russian Federation, devoted to the issue of Jewish emigration to Palestine. The correctness of hypotheses about special role of microhistorical plots in objective assessment of key historical events has been verified using traditional methods of historical science: comparative-historical, chronological, problem-chronological, retrospective, and perspective. The biographical approach has helped to recreate the biography of the documents' author and context of their creation, taking into account notions existing in Russian and foreign historiography. The letter and memorandum of Zionist E. Munchik have made it possible to clarify and correct the existing ideas on the role of Russia in solving the Jewish question and creating a Jewish home in Palestine in 1917. The document is of interest as it assesses all main directions of Russian policy in the Middle East through the prism of the Zionist movement interests: the question of the straits, the status of the Holy places of Jerusalem. A separate place in Munchik's memorandum is given to the Caspian project—creation of a water canal from the Caspian to the Red Sea. In his letter to Milyukov, Munchik argued supporting the Zionist movement drawing on stereotypes of Jewish capital and powerful trade influence that Russia could use, which were widespread among the population and elite. The article concludes that E. Munchik did not invite Russia to Palestine or offer the Provisional Government to use Zionists to strengthen its influence in the Holy Land. On the contrary, Munchik offered to trade Russian assistance in Jewish emigration to Palestine for support for any other project of Russian interest at an international conference. The published archival source will be of interest to both Russian and foreign scholars specializing in the history of Zionism and Jewish national movement. It represents another important element of the puzzle of the Russian view of Palestine in the system of international relations at the turn of the 20th century.

Keywords

Historical sources, archival documents, Middle East, Palestine, Zionism, Caspian channel, P.N. Milyukov, E. Munchik.

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Submitted 20.08.2022, published (for citation):

SHAPOVALOV, M. S. Sionist Ehliyakhу Munchik i ego pis'mo ob eh migratsii evreev v Palestinu. 1917 g. [Zionist Eliyahu Munchik and His Letter on Jewish Emigration to Palestine (1917). In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2023, no. 2, pp. 447-457. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2023-2-447-457

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