

УДК 94(100)1914/19+94(470)

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2020-4-1131-1142

Igor K. Bogomolov

Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences,  
Moscow, Russian Federation

The Testimony of the Russian Consul in Koenigsberg Zinovii M. Polyansky about His Stay in  
German Captivity (1914-15)

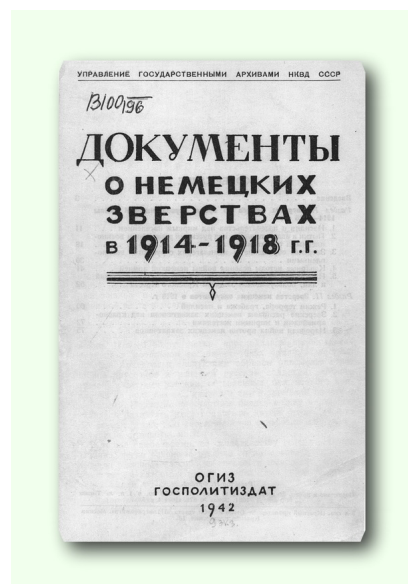
## Abstract

The article brings into circulation the investigatory records of the “Extraordinary Commission for Inquiry into Violations of Laws and Customs of War by the Austro-Hungarian and German Forces” concerning German captivity of the former Russian consul in Koenigsberg Zinovii Mikhailovich Polyansky. With the outbreak of World War I, many Russian citizens who did not have time to leave Germany and Austria-Hungary were detained by local authorities on suspicion of espionage. Z. M. Polyansky, as a Russian diplomat, was their primary goal: he

Written by Igor K. Bogomolov  
Monday, 14 March 2022 05:32

---

was detained on the very first day of the war. German authorities agreed to release Z. M. Polyanovsky only in exchange for their consul in Kovno, Baron G. M. von Lerchenfeld. Initially, the Russian General Staff strongly opposed letting go of a man who knew about the internal state of the Kovno fortress, but after losing Kovno agreed to do the exchange. Z. M. Polyanovsky returned to Petrograd in early October 1915, his arrival attracted the attention of the Petrograd press, and in December 1915 he was invited to the Extraordinary Investigation Commission to testify. The case of Z. M. Polyanovsky is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, it was quite rare for its time: most of the interned Russian tourists and diplomats were released by the end of 1914. The remaining ones were especially valuable prisoners, whom the Germans and Austrians agreed to release only with an equivalent exchange. Secondly, a rare example of documented evidence on the life of Russian subjects in Germany at the beginning of the war has been found: the bulk of such evidence was published in the press and in various propaganda brochures. Thirdly, bringing in and interrogation of Z. M. Polyanovsky demonstrates the mechanism of work of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission: obtaining information on the witness of war crimes from the press, searching for him with the help of the police, and inviting to interrogation. Finally, the investigatory records are one of the few documentary sources on the life of the diplomat Z. M. Polyanovsky after his return from the German captivity.



Written by Igor K. Bogomolov  
Monday, 14 March 2022 05:32

---

## Keywords

Archival document, historical source, Russia, Germany, World War I, consulate, Koenigsberg, Zinovii Mikhailovich Polyanovsky

Download the article: [pdf](#)

## References

BOGOMOLOV, I. K. Russkie poddannye v Avstro–Vengrii i Germanii v iyule–oktyabre 1914 g. [Russian subjects in Austria–Hungary and Germany in July–October 1914. In Russ.]. IN: Rossiya i sovremennyi mir, 2017, no. 2(95), pp. 143–160.

GERNET, M. N. Istoriya tsarskoi tyur'my [History of tsar prison. In Russ.]. In 5 vol. Vol. 4. Moscow, Gosyurizdat publ., 1962, pp. 268–270.

ZVEREV, V. O. Usiliya voennoi kontrrazvedki i politicheskoi politsii v bor'be s germanskimi shpionami pod prikrytiem diplomaticheskoi, Torgovo–promyshlennoi i strakhovoi deyatel'nosti (na primere Rossiiskoi stolitsy) [The efforts of the military counterintelligence and political police in combatting German spies operating under guise of diplomatic, commercial, industrial, and insurance activities (on the example of the Russian capital). In Russ.]. IN: Sibirskii torgovo–ekonomicheskii zhurnal, 2012, no. 8, pp. 119–124.

KOSTYASHOV, Yu. V. Ob uchrezhdenii i nachal'nom etape deyatel'nosti sovetskogo

Written by Igor K. Bogomolov  
Monday, 14 March 2022 05:32

---

konsul'stva v Kenigsberge (1923–1925) [On the establishment of Soviet consulate in Koenigsberg and initial phase of its activities (1923–1925). In Russ.]. IN: Baltiiskii region, 2012, no. 2, pp. 58–68.

KOSTYASHOV, Yu. V. Rossiiskie konsul'skie uchrezhdeniya v Vostochnoi Prussii v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv. [Russian consular offices in East Prussia at the turn of the 20th century. In Russ.]. IN: Kaliningradskie arkhivy, 2000, no. 2, pp. 80–89.

KHOKHLOV, A. N. Diplomatskiy Z. M. Polyanskii: konsul'skaya sluzhba v Koree, Kitae, Yaponii i Germanii [Diplomat sinologist Z. M. Polyansky: His consular service in Korea, China, Japan, and Germany. In Russ.]. IN: Arkhiv rossiiskoi kitaistiki [Archive of Russian Sinology]. Moscow, Nauka-Vostochnaya literatura publ., 2013, pp. 356–375.

## About the authors

Bogomolov Igor Konstantinovich, PhD in History, Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences, researcher, Moscow, Russian Federation, +7-499-124-28-83, boga\_igor@mail.ru

Submitted 6.09.2019, published (for citation):

BOGOMOLOV, I. K. Svidetel'stva russkogo konsula v Kenigsberge Z. M. Polyanskogo o prebyvanii v germanskom plenu. 1914–1915 gg. [The Testimony of the Russian Consul in Koenigsberg Zinovii M. Polyansky about His Stay in German Captivity (1914-15). In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2020, no. 4, pp. 1131-1142. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2020-4-1131-1142

Written by Igor K. Bogomolov  
Monday, 14 March 2022 05:32

---

**You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .**

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