

Alexey Koehler 2020

As a researcher in the history of the Black Sea Germans, I devote a lot of time to archival searches. 30 years have passed since the archives were opened. Hundreds of thousands of documents have become available and many have been published.

The 2015 Law of Ukraine on Access to the Archives of the Repressive Bodies of the Communist Totalitarian Regime of 1917-1991 removed many restrictions ...

And yet! Each year, studying a particular topic, I had to open up new layers of documents - interesting archival affairs, and sometimes entire funds.

Such “sudden finds” led to the following questions:

- and what do we have in our archives on the history of the Germans in the Soviet period?
- what are these fonds and how many documents do they contain?
- What is the degree of knowledge? ...

With the archives of the USBU and GUNP in this regard, everything is more or less clear - there is a limited number of fonds and the same type of documents. There is only one problem - a large volume of tens of thousands of cases and, accordingly, names, many of which have not been published anywhere else.

There is complete different picture in the State Archives of Odessa Region (hereinafter GAOO). This archive has more than 13 thousand fonds, of which about one and a half thousand pre-Soviet period, and the rest - the Soviet and the period of independent Ukraine. There more than 2.1 million of such units in storage.

In order to answer the questions posed, it would be necessary:

- 1) review all fonds;
- 2) select those that are of interest.

Of course, reviewing everything literally is unrealistic. There are supporting materials for this, namely the Annotated List of Funds.

After studying this document, the result exceeded expectations. Over 500 foundations of interest have been selected. Of these, about 150 are fonds of authorities and other structures of former German settlements or districts. The rest are fonds of authorities or other institutions that unambiguously contain documents about the Germans of the region before their evacuation in 1944.

In order to “localize” the task and complete it in a reasonable time, together with my long-time partner, Peter Goldade, it was decided to select the materials that relate to the Selz colonies and only for 1919-1944.

As a result of the sampling, the “Register of archival affairs in the German settlements of the Selz district (Soviet period 1919-1944)” was obtained.

It included the headings of cases of forty-five “German” fonds, with a total volume of 1,165 units, and another 470 cases (including 10 missing), selected mainly from fonds of higher authorities. In addition, under common names, instructions are given to groups of the same type of case, such as personal files, materials of commissions or reports on the

situation on the ground - another 1694 cases.

The headings collected in the Register provide archival documents on almost all aspects of the life of German settlers in the changing environment. A large number of documents on the redistribution of property, dispossession, eviction, deprivation of the right to vote, etc., including complete family lists of victims of requisition. Of the declassified documents, the reports on the political and economic situation on the ground, the resistance of the peasants to forced collectivization, and the situation during the famine are of great interest. There is evidence of American relief during the famines.

It should be noted that the Selz region is not unique. Similar documents are available in all areas. Of particular note is the large number of documents on the German Gross-Liebental (Spartakovsky), Tsebrikovsky (Hoffnungstal) and Tiligulo-Beresan districts, as well as on the Landau colonies, subsequently united in the German Karl-Liebental district. If you are interested, these documents can be collected in the relevant regional registers.

In this case, I want to express my gratitude for supporting the project to my partner and friend, a descendant of the Selz colonists, and now to the citizen of the United States, Peter Goldade. Thank you so much!

For my part, I can note that already during the work on the registry numerous new documents were revealed about the fate of many people, including his relatives. Thus, this collection even before the release began to give a positive result.

Alexey Koehler,
Director, IT Institute for Ethnic Studies
Odessa, Ukraine, 2020