

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF ARCHIVES ON AWARDING HOME FRONT WORKERS IN THE FIRST POST- WAR YEARS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF SMOLENSK REGION (RUSSIA)

PATRIMÔNIO CULTURAL E HISTÓRICO DE ARQUIVOS SOBRE A PREMIAÇÃO DE TRABALHADORES DE FRENTE DOMÉSTICA NOS PRIMEIROS ANOS DO PÓS-GUERRA (AO EXEMPLO DA REGIÃO DE SMOLENSK (RÚSSIA)

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Abstract: The article deals with collecting documents deposited in the State Archive of the Smolensk Region (Russia) on awarding homefront workers in the first post-war years. The authors systemize these documents, evaluate the information given in them, and analyze the possibility of using the documents in further research into the valiant labor of home front workers in the Great Patriotic War. The study aims to develop an approach that allows one to systemize the array of documents in the archive and trace the mechanism of awarding distinguished labor decorations. The source framework primarily consists of documents from the State Archives of the Smolensk Region (fund of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee). As a result, the authors identify the names of 58,298 Soviet citizens who lived in the Smolensk region at the time of being awarded the medal. This approach is proposed to be applied in further studies and used in historical research and regional history work.

Keywords: Great Patriotic War, homefront workers, labor decorations, Smolensk Region, archives.

Resumo: O artigo trata da coleção de documentos depositados no Arquivo Estatal da Região de Smolensk (Rússia) sobre a concessão de trabalhadores do front doméstico nos primeiros anos do pós-guerra. Os autores sistematizam esses documentos, avaliam as informações neles contidas, analisam a possibilidade de usar os documentos em novas pesquisas sobre o valente trabalho dos trabalhadores da frente doméstica na Grande Guerra Patriótica. O objetivo do estudo é desenvolver uma abordagem que permita sistematizar o conjunto de documentos do arquivo e traçar o mecanismo de atribuição de condecorações trabalhistas diferenciadas. A estrutura de origem consiste principalmente nos documentos dos Arquivos Estaduais da Região de Smolensk (fundo do Comitê Executivo Regional de Smolensk). Como resultado, os autores identificam os nomes de 58.298 cidadãos soviéticos que viviam na região de Smolensk no momento da entrega da medalha. Esta abordagem é proposta para ser aplicada em estudos posteriores e utilizada na pesquisa histórica e no trabalho de história regional.

Palavras-chave: Grande Guerra Patriótica, trabalhadores domésticos, condecorações trabalhistas, região de Smolensk, arquivos.

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Introduction

During the Second World War, most participating countries created their unique award system, which was highly complex and differentiated.

The concept of an award system is often found in modern scientific literature. However, in most cases, there is no clear definition of it. It is usually understood as a list of awards or a system of existing awards. Thus, E.V. Trofimov (2006) defines a state award system as a set of state awards established or recognized by the state and used by authorized bodies in the prescribed manner. According to A.L. Demin (2003), an award system is presented as a political and social institution that ensures the implementation of the functions of awards and a system of legal and regulatory documents that confirm its functioning. O.S. Smyslov (2007) also believes that an award system combines state policy, legislative acts, and awards. Some authors believe that the highest state bodies establish award systems and are complex awards interconnected by hierarchical levels and forming joint structural integrity (GONCHAROV, 2009).

Thus, most researchers define award systems as activities of authorized public authorities for establishing and applying awards and guarantees in the award sphere, regulated by legal norms. The award system includes activities for installing and using prizes to ensure awarded persons' contracts and status.

Since the Middle Ages, in many countries, systems of state awards have been formed, awarded for merits in military and civil service and achievements in economic, cultural, and educational activities.

The features of these award systems are directly related to the specifics of the country's historical development, with its social, political, and religious traditions. Large-scale historical events often significantly influence the formation of award systems and the development of the award business. These include the most prominent military conflicts in which the country participates.

The development of award systems in European countries took place over many centuries. The formation of award systems began with establishing orders, the prototypes of which were knightly orders, the largest and most famous of which were created during the Crusades. However, only aristocracy representatives could be awarded such orders, the number of which, as a rule, was strictly limited. Over time, award systems became more extensive and flexible with the transformation of states, their territorial expansion, the growth of mutual influence, and the inclusion of

representatives of other peoples and religions. Orders were awarded to more comprehensive social strata representatives and ethnic and religious groups. New types of awards, such as medals or crosses, were included in award systems. At present, awards play an essential role in the design of state symbols, strengthening ties between the state and citizens. Awards serve as a tool to improve a person's social status and act as a key non-material incentive for achievements in both the civilian and military spheres.

The Soviet award system occupies a unique place in the history of awards. It became the precursor of labor awards – orders, medals, and honorary titles. Labor as such was considered the basis of Soviet ideology and was extolled in every possible way officially. Special awards for homefront work were created, and these were awards approved at the state level. This was because, in the mid-1920s, it was decided to use special awards to encourage people who have achieved success in their work. The state needed visible, material insignia for those Soviet citizens whose work was to become an example for the rest (IVANOV, MININ, 2010: 26-34). That is why in the USSR, after the war's end, a special medal, "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945," was established, the history of which is the subject of the analysis in this article.

The goal is to identify the collection of documents stored in the State Archives of the Smolensk Region related to awarding the region's residents with this medal, following the features of the paperwork for the award process.

Research objectives:

- 1) to identify the range of documents that are relevant to the issues of awarding the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945";
- 2) to propose a methodology for studying award documentation;
- 3) to systemize documents;
- 4) to assess the prospects of the information in the documents for further research.

Methods

The content analysis method of documents was used as the primary research method.

The sources included all the documentation relating to awarding the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" to the residents of the Smolensk Region. We analyzed all the documents stored in the State Archives of the Smolensk

Region in the fund of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee at the time of the study (fond 2361). The total number of cases is 48, and the total number of pages is 13,115.

The scope of the study spans from 1945 (the year the award was established) to 1948 (the year the awards were discontinued).

The following criteria have been proposed for the classification of the documents:

- 1) the time of the award and, accordingly, the creation of the document;
- 2) the place of the document in the "award paperwork";
- 3) the value of the document as a source of information.

The division into cases was carried out according to the districts that existed in the Smolensk region according to the administrative-territorial division at that time. These were the Andreevsky, Baturinsky, Velizhsky, Vskhodsky, Vyazemsky, Gzhatsky (2 cases), Glinkovsky, Demidovsky, Dorogobuzhsky, Dukhovshchinsky, Ekimovichsky, Elninsky, Ershichsky, Znamensky, Izdeshkovsky, Kardymovsky, Karmanovsky, Kasplyansky, Krasninsky, Monastyrshchinsky, Novoduginsky, Ponizovsky, Pochinkovsky (2 cases), Prechistensky, Roslavl, Rudnyansky, Safonovsky, Semlevsky, Slobodskoy, Smolensky (2 cases), Stodolishchensky, Sychevsky, Tyomkinsky, Khislavichsky, Kholm-Zhirkovsky, Shumyachsky, and Yartsevsky districts. Separate cases were created for the largest cities of the Smolensk region at that time – Vyazma, Roslavl, and Yartsevo; as well as three districts of the regional center – Zadneprovsky, Krasnoarmeysky, and Stalinsky. The issue of rewarding employees of regional organizations is also a separate case.

Our study was impeded by the physical condition of the studied archival files due to the need for more material resources for the period after the end of the war. Many of the documents were on paper that was at the disposal of the employees who processed them. This is especially true of the lower levels – collective farms and rural executive committees. Award recommendations for medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" in many areas were printed on cigarettes or wrapping paper, on the back of old posters, wallpapers, and even German documents and maps. Some collective farms represented dozens of their workers, writing down their merits in ordinary student notebooks – for example, the list of persons depicted by the collective farms of the Nikolo-Pogorelovsky village council of the Safonovsky district was drawn up in a lined notebook. A list of persons recommended for medals on the collective farms of the Kamensky village council of the Kardymovsky district was drawn up

similarly but in greater detail. Even if the normal paper was available, the difference in the design of certain documents at the grassroots level is noticeable. Somewhere, these are standard sheets of paper, somewhere large sheets of writing paper folded several times. There was no single approach to text design – somewhere, the documents were filled out by hand (only the forms were pre-printed in printing houses), and in other places, typewriters were used. In the most challenging cases, documents were hand-written.

The use of this approach (analysis of documents and intermediate correspondence) makes it possible to identify the features of the "mundane side" of awarding medals to better understand the features of the paperwork of the process of awarding labor distinctions.

Results

Statute and description of the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945."

Since the Bolsheviks came to power, a specific system of labor distinctions had already been developed that were awarded for merits in various industries, agriculture, and transport: the title of Hero of Socialist Labor (with the "Hammer and Sickle" medal, since 1938), the Order of Lenin (since 1930), the Order of the Red Banner of Labor (since 1928), the "Order of the Badge of Honor" (since 1935), the medals "For Labor Valor" (since 1938) and "For Distinguished Labor" (since 1938), and a number of honorary titles (KOLESNIKOV, ROZHKOVA, 1986: p. 6-8).

The Great Patriotic War not only became the most important event in Soviet and world history but also contributed a unique experience to the world history of awards. For the first time in the entire existence of the award system, it was in the USSR that it became necessary at the state level to give awards not only to direct participants in hostilities but also to those who helped achieve victory with their work at the home front (PROKOFEV, 2018). With the Victory over Nazi Germany and its allies, the Soviet state established two state awards – the medals "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" and "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" (DUROV, 2005).

The medal "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945", established on May 9, 1945, was awarded to military and civilian personnel of the Red Army, the Navy of the USSR, and the People's Commissariat for Internal

Affairs (NKVD) troops, and later expanded to include all employees of the NKVD of the USSR and the People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) of the USSR, regardless of whether they were directly at the front (AKHMANAEV, 2014, p. 286-291).

The medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" was established by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on June 6, 1945 (SMYSLOV, 2007, p. 246-252). According to the Regulations on the procedure for awarding the medal approved by the Secretariat of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 21, 1945, this medal was awarded to persons who worked at an enterprise, institution, transport, state farm, machine tractor station (MTS) for at least one year in the period from June 1941 to May 1945. Accordingly, this medal was awarded to workers, engineering and technical personnel, employees in the fields of industry and transport, collective farmers and agricultural specialists, workers in science, technology, art, and literature, workers in Soviet, party trade unions, and other public organizations – in general, all those categories of citizens who, with their valiant and selfless work, ensured the victory of the Soviet Union over Germany (SMYSLOV, 2007. p.1). Moreover, this medal was awarded to disabled veterans of the Patriotic War if they returned to production, young workers who graduated from vocational and professional technical schools, persons who worked during the war but by the end were discharged due to disability, and women who also performed during the war but then were released from work due to marital status. All the listed categories were awarded this medal if they had worked for at least six months during the specified period. People who had already left work but returned to duty under wartime conditions were awarded a medal even for working less than six months. The medal was awarded to collective farmers on the condition that they exceeded the minimum workdays established on the collective farm and observed labor discipline.

The medal was made of copper and looked similar to the medal "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" (KUZNETSOV, A.A., CHEPURNOV, 1995, p.130-132) (Fig. 1-2.)

Figure 1 — The medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945"



Figure 2 — Medal "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945"



The obverse had a left profile bust of J.V. Stalin in a marshal's uniform, and along the circumference was the inscription: "Our cause is just, we have won" (Collection of legislative acts on state awards of the USSR, 1987, p. 153-155). The medal's reverse contained the medal's name, a hammer and sickle, and a five-pointed

star. The ribbon pattern was three-colored – the primary color was red with a green stripe in the middle and narrow yellow stripes along the edges (IZOTOVA, TSAREVA, 2010, p.488-490). According to the Rules for wearing orders and medals of the USSR, it had to be worn between the awards "For the Liberation of Prague" and "Veteran of Labor" (The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on establishing the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945", 1945).

Awarding procedure in the USSR

The medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" ceased being awarded in 1948. As of January 1, 1987, approximately 16,100,000 people were awarded this medal (SMYSLOV, 2007: 151). Under President S. Gorbachev, a small additional circulation of medals was issued mainly to representatives of the repressed peoples" (SMYSLOV, 2007, p. 151).

There was no similar award in other countries participating in the Second World War. For homefront workers, special awards were established for participation in individual operations in significant individual campaigns. In Britain, for example, there was a strong desire to reward the many acts of civilian courage for those who showed non-operational gallantry (firefighters, military, military factory specialists). The existing awards open to civilians were not judged suitable to meet the new situation; therefore, it was decided to institute the George Cross and the George Medal to recognize civilian gallantry in the face of enemy action and brave deeds more generally (Figure 3, Figure 4).

The George Cross was instituted on 24 September 1940 by King George VI. Announcing the new award, the King said:

In order that they should be worthily and promptly recognised, I have decided to create, at once, a new mark of honour for men and women in all walks of civilian life. I propose to give my name to this new distinction, which will consist of the George Cross, which will rank next to the Victoria Cross, and the George Medal for wider distribution.

The George Cross is a silver straight equilateral cross. In the central medallion of the cross, there is a relief image of Saint George, the Victorious, slaying a serpent with a spear. Around the circumference of the medallion is the motto: "FOR GALLANTRY". Small monograms of King George VI (without crowns) are between

the sides of the cross. The back side of the cross is smooth; the recipient's name and the award's date are engraved on it.

Figure 4 — The George Cross



Figure 4 — The George Medal



The GM is a circular silver medal 36 mm (1.4 in) in diameter, with the ribbon suspended from a ring. It has the following design. The obverse depicts the crowned effigy of the reigning monarch. Nowadays, there are four types. The reverse shows Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon on the coast of England, with the legend THE GEORGE MEDAL around the top edge of the medal. The ribbon is crimson with five narrow blue stripes. The blue color is taken from the George Cross ribbon.

The name of the recipient is engraved on the rim of the medal, although some Army awards have impressed naming.

The George Medal was granted in recognition of "acts of great bravery." The medal is primarily a civilian award, but it may be awarded to military personnel for gallant conduct that is not in the face of the enemy. As the warrant states:

The Medal is intended primarily for civilians, and award in Our military services is to be confined to actions for which purely military Honours are not normally granted.

Separate departments, for example, railways, issued their own medals (PROKOFEV, 2018).

The procedure for recommending and awarding medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" was as follows. The awards department of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR delegated its powers in this area to the People's Commissariats and local executive authorities and executive committees. Awards were presented in the territory where the recipient lived and worked. The city or district executive committee or other authority considered applications for awards received from various organizations. If the consideration of certain applications was beyond its competence, the documents were sent directly to the relevant Ministry. The cases on awarding representatives of the creative and technical intelligentsia were considered by the chairmen of the relevant committees and heads of departments under the Council of People's Commissars – Council of Ministers of the USSR. The Union of Soviet Writers had the right to award its members directly.

After the decision on awarding was made, the relevant documents were transferred to the awards department of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. By order of the Presidium, the medals were sent to the bodies that had the authority to present them. Medals were delivered by state courier. Local executive committees organized solemn awarding ceremonies and protocols of presentation with the numbers of issued attestations for medals were sent to Moscow. At the same time, the awards themselves were not numbered to reduce the production cost.

Research into the procedure for awarding the medal in the Smolensk Region

Based on the general award procedure and the circumstances of the movement of documents and medals in the first post-war years, we concluded that it is possible to characterize and identify the main groups of archival deposits that have been preserved at the regional level, and specifically in the State Archives of the Smolensk Region.

Documents on awarding medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945," which remained in the Smolensk region, are stored in the State Archive of the Smolensk Region, in one of the largest funds – the fund of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee (No. 2361), accounting for almost 10 thousand items combined into 15 inventories. Inventory No. 7 encompasses 48 archival files, which contain the main collection of documents on awarding medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945".

Based on the primary research results, four groups of sources were identified.

The first group includes decisions of the regional executive committee on awarding and is the smallest. The reason for this is that during the first post-war year the flow of awards was still modest. First to be awarded were employees of the party and Soviet bodies, various institutions and departments close to the government. These documents were printed on separate sheets and signed by the chairman of the regional executive committee A.N. Kidin and the secretary of the regional executive committee V.V. Luppov. The paperwork was drawn up as standard decisions of the regional executive committee, with a number containing the postfix "/n" (the decisions of the regional executive committee for 1945-1946 have separate volumes with this postfix but they only duplicate the information available in the cases under consideration). The text contains a reference to the Decree on the establishment of the medal of June 6, 1945, and it directly states that the regional executive committee decided to award medals to the following employees, followed by a list of these people and their positions at the time of presentation in alphabetical order.

Later, around May – early June 1946, the approach to registration changed, and this type of document was no longer used. Since then, the following text was printed on the left edge of the decision by the city or district executive committee: "I APPROVE the awarding of medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" to the ... persons named in this decision"; also dated and signed by A. N. Kidin, and in his absence – by V. V. Luppov. Thus, in the Stalinsky district of Smolensk, the last

document drawn up according to the old model is the decision of the regional executive committee to award medals to 86 employees of institutions and organizations.

Let us move on to the **second group** of documents – the decisions of the district and city executive committees on the recommendation for awards. These are intermediate documents that bring together in a single form all the recommendations that are received in local executive committees from their subordinate structures. Unlike the decisions of the regional executive committee, such documents existed until the medal was no longer awarded, moreover, their role as a source of information increased significantly since Smolensk began to put additional prints directly on them instead of issuing individual decisions.

Such documents were drawn up as separate decisions and included a number and date of issue. The executive committees had to list in the decision the petitions of which structures were the basis for its adoption. The text ended with a request to the regional executive committee to recommend the named people for medals. After that, there was a list of recommended home front workers. In some cases, some unpleasant facts about the recommended ones surfaced, or unreliable information was discovered after filling out the document – such names were deleted from the decision, but, as a rule, the documents were not redone. Sometimes, a separate delisting act was drawn up, which was filed after the decision. A characteristic document is, for example, the note by the regional executive committee to the chairman of the Smolensk district executive committee A.V. Kazakov. The note asked to exclude the deputy chairman of the collective farm "13 years of the Red Army" of the Savinsky village council in the Smolensk region from the lists of those recommended for the medal for not having worked for a year in this farm during the war. This is the most common reason for exclusion, as research practice shows. Sometimes people were excluded from the lists due to errors or inconsistencies in the paperwork. Thus, in a note to the chairman of the Stodolishchensky district executive committee, A.A. Noskov, dated October 22, 1946, three such errors are mentioned at once: the collective farmer from the Peredovik collective farm with the surname Kachalyuk was listed as Evdokia Ilyinichna in one document, and as Maria Martynovna in another; the collective farmer of the Stalin collective farm M.N. Kulashenkova was listed as Nikonovna in one list and Nikonorovna in another; and the collective farmer from the collective farm "6th Congress of Soviets" was under the surname Stepanenkov in one document, and in another – under the surname Semchenkov.

The **third group** of documents, the largest in percentage terms and at the same time the most informative, is the recommendations for medals. Such a document was drawn up at institutions, bureaus, enterprises, departments, and other structures and signed by the director and some designated person – most often the secretary of the party organization or the chairman of the village council, although other positions do occur so there is no unity of the approach in design. The lined tables contain information about the full name, position held, and length of service in the structure during the war years, as well as a performance review describing merits, sometimes very detailed. Optionally, other biographical details may be included, such as party affiliation or year of birth.

Finally, the **fourth group** of documents contains the protocols and acts of awarding medals. The ceremonies were held by the chairmen of the local district executive committees at the place of residence of the recipients, and often the medals were awarded on the basis of several decisions at once. The protocols and acts were a document provided with the date and place of issue and were drawn up on behalf of the Soviet worker who made the delivery, who signed it at the end. It contained information about the names and positions of the awarded, however, sometimes without indicating the place of work, which makes it difficult to identify them, as well as the numbers of certificates for medals. Consider, for example, the act of awarding medals dated January 30, 1947 to the workers of the Znamensky district. Full name and identity document numbers are indicated correctly but the positions are presented as "Head of the commercial dairy farm", "Assistant Accountant", "Groom", "Teacher", etc. Because of this, it is very difficult to identify from which collective farm or school a person is, if necessary, one has to search in recommendations for medals.

The special value of these documents consists in the fact that thanks to them one can name Smolensk home front workers, whose recommendations for medals did not pass through the regional executive committee, which means that the documents were not deposited in the regional archive. For example, this is how we managed to identify the names of more than 4,000 railway workers of the Smolensk region – recipients of the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945", constituting a significant percentage of the total number of home front workers.

In addition to these main document types, there is intermediate correspondence in the files, various instructions on the procedure for recommendation and presentation, acts of state couriers on the delivery and transfer, and acceptance for the safekeeping of medals and the corresponding certificates. For example, the typical interregional

movement of awards is represented by documents for V.I. Gaidukov who lived in evacuation in Kuibyshev (now Samara) and went to the Smolensk region to work in public education institutions – a copy of the summons letter signed by the Deputy People's Commissar of Education, a summons from the Smolensk Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and a characteristic issued for receiving a medal at a new place of residence.

Several decisions of the regional executive committee on the forfeiture of medals previously awarded were also found. Thus, Decision No. 40/n dated May 30, 1947 canceled the previously adopted Decision on rewarding the cashier of the Yartsevsky market V.S. Titova and the chief construction accountant P.N. Krasovsky, since the medals remained unclaimed in the executive committee.

In addition to the considered main collection of documents related to this topic, relevant information can also be found in other cases stored in the State Archives of the Smolensk Region. Thus, the decisions of the regional executive committee of 1945–1948 contain numerous documents characterizing the state of affairs with awarding medals, an assessment is made of the activities of district authorities and heads of various structures in this area, and successes and shortcomings in work are noted. An example is the Decision of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee No. 230 "On the implementation of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of June 6, 1945 on awarding medals "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" in the Izdeshkovsky and Dorogobuzhsky districts.

Discussion

The value of the study lies in the fact that, for the first time, an attempt was made to summarize the data on awarding the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945" to residents of a particular area. As a result of extensive work, in the period from 2014 to 2019, we identified the names of 58,298 Soviet citizens who, at the time of being awarded the medal, lived in the Smolensk region. It is not possible to talk about the complete identification of all the recipients since a significant part of the documents are stored in the central archives and require additional study. However, all available data on documents preserved in the archives of the Smolensk region were combined and systemized.

Attempts are being made to generalize these data, but they are extremely fragmentary. For example, the computer database "Podvig Naroda" [The Act of Valor

of the People] seeks to unite the awarded war veterans and the homefront workers but at present, at best, 10% of the awarded homefront workers are represented there. To some extent, this is understandable since out of the total number of awards, most (96.64%) were awarded for military acts of valor and only 3.36% for labor merits (SHUNYAKOV, 2021).

At the same time, most of the studies of the Soviet award system during the Great Patriotic War are devoted mostly to the problems of phaleristics (military symbols, the production of medals, award rules) and are poorly connected with archiving. As for the statistical recording of the awards issued, one can point out D.V. Shunyakov's work, which is, however, focused solely on military awards. Only one sentence mentions labor-related awards (SHUNYAKOV, 2021).

In other archives of Russia and the countries of the former USSR, as far as we know, such work is carried out only sporadically and consists either in summarizing certificates issued over a certain period on requests for awarding this medal (Perm Archive) (Lists of people who were awarded the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945"..., n.d.) or in special research into individual enterprises (Sverdlovsk region) (DEMINA, 2020). There are practically no works of a systematic nature. We failed to find a complete analysis of *all* award documents contained in any archive for the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945").

As for similar foreign studies, as mentioned above, there were few state awards for "homefront workers" (PROKOFEV, 2018). As a rule, these were departmental awards, and the documentation was stored in departmental archives. This was the case in the UK, where the archival system is significantly decentralized. There are now a lot of document repositories at the local level in the UK, including not only the archives of local authorities and those of private companies. Similar studies are being conducted there at the regional level. Still, in the UK, Germany, and other European countries, no attempts are being made to combine all this information into one database.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the primary study, four types of sources were identified:

- 1) decisions of the regional executive committee on awarding the medal,
- 2) decisions of city executive committees and district executive committees on the recommendation for awarding the medal,
- 3) the recommendations for the award,

4) acts of awarding the medals.

Each source type makes it possible to trace how the procedure for selecting a candidate and awarding the medal differed in different years. An analysis of the first group of documents clearly shows that in the first post-war year, the recipients were mainly employees of the party and Soviet bodies.

The most valuable sources of information were the documents from the second and third groups. Such documents contain the most complete information on the medal recipient.

The fourth group of documents is of special interest from a methodological point of view. Thanks to the analysis of these documents, it is possible to identify the names of the awarded residents of the Smolensk region whose recommendations for medals did not pass through the regional executive committee. As emphasized above, in this way, it was possible to identify the names of more than 4,000 employees of the railways of the Smolensk region – recipients of the medal "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945".

The limitations of the study, which could affect the results of the study, include the system for organizing the document management system in the archive and the quality of the surviving documents. Due to the not-always-high-quality processing of documents, it is not always possible to understand whether a particular person was nominated for a medal and whether the person was removed from the award list before being approved by the regional executive committee. There are also errors traditional for Soviet mass awards in the form of duplicating documents, confusion with surnames, typos, as well as repeated awards that violate the regulations on the medal. The problems that arose were related to the migration of people, incorrect paperwork, errors in document management, and a feature of the document flow of that era.

Nevertheless, these documents, which have not yet been really introduced into scientific circulation, are a very worthy source for studying the history of the feat of the Smolensk people – workers on the home front of the Great Patriotic War. They can provide a solid knowledge base about this little-studied issue, which over time will need to be gradually expanded and supplemented with new information from other archives.

The proposed approach in modern conditions is the most efficient for the study of documents in regional archives; however, it is highly possible that the most accurate information can be obtained after studying documents in the central archives of the Russian Federation.

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