

The Unknown Epistolary Heritage of Professor Petar Dinekov in the Sofia Branch of the Central State Archives of Bulgaria: A Contribution to Our Cultural History

The article is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the death of Prof. Petar Dinekov

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Abstract: Prof. P. Dinekov is one of the most eminent Bulgarian humanities scholars of the twentieth century, who has his own place in Bulgarian science and Bulgarian culture. The discovery of a vast array of unprocessed Polish correspondence in his personal collection – 1987K – in the Central State Archives has become a kind of cultural event. These are letters addressed to P. Dinekov by Polish scholars and intellectuals from various humanitarian fields. The aim of my study is to reveal the intellectual processes that ranked our intellectuals next to the European ones in the recent past, namely from the 30s to the 90s of the 20th century.

Keywords: archival documents, correspondence

Ключови думи: архивни документи, кореспонденция



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For the philologist, archives have always been and will continue to be an attractive space – literally and figuratively. No matter how well described and researched, archives will always give us new knowledge, new fields of interpretation and new perspectives on the things we are familiar with. However, it is not uncommon for us to face the challenge of a raw material. Such was the case with the archival heritage of Prof. Petar Dinekov in the Central State Archives – Sofia¹. The well-known archive fund 1987K is described and available for use. Until a few years ago, however, it was not known that part of it remained unprocessed. This information first appeared in the dissertation of Vasilena Bilyarska:

‘His personal archive [of Prof. Dinekov] was registered in the CSA under № 1987K and consists of one processed inventory, numbering 4441 archival units. There are still unprocessed 7 boxes with documents of Acad. Dinekov submitted additionally to the archive. For the most part, this is a correspondence of the Bulgarian scholar with Russian, Polish, Czech, German, French and other scholars, mainly on personal matters, congratulations on various occasions and also



Petar Dinekov. 80s of the 20th century. Central State Archives of Bulgaria, fund 1987K, inventory 1, archival unit 4173, fot. 37

letters on literary matters. Among them, Polish-language documents predominate².

The materials mentioned by V. Bilyarska are an integral part of Dinekov's archive fund in CSA, but since they remained unprocessed for a long time, it was impossible to study and use them. It is this corpus of materials that I call *the unknown archival heritage of Prof. P. Dinekov*. I was granted access to this part of the archive of P. Dinekov for the first time in the beginning of March 2020³. It turned out that the 7 library boxes mentioned by V. Bilyarska are in fact 12.

THE UNKNOWN ARCHIVAL HERITAGE OF PROF. P. DINEKOV IN CSA

From the very first examination I knew that this is a priceless treasure – and not just because of its large volume. The documents can be distributed as follows:

I. Biographical materials – both early from the pre-war years and later than that.

II. Scientific work of Prof. Dinekov – handwritten and typewritten versions of studies and articles, lectures written in Bulgarian, Polish and French.

III. Correspondence addressed to prof. Dinekov – from institutions and private citizens.

IV. Materials of different persons – articles, studies, dissertations, some of them with dedication to Dinekov.

These materials are currently under archival processing in the Central State Archives, and the aim is to create a second inventory along with the currently available one in fund 1987K⁴.

THE POLISH CORRESPONDENCE AS PART OF THE UNKNOWN ARCHIVAL HERITAGE OF PROF. P. DINEKOV

All his conscious life P. Dinekov kept active correspondence. Today we have the letters addressed to him from the period 1934-1992. Many of them are available in inventory 1 of his fund. But we will get a complete picture if we add to them the letters from the unprocessed part of the fund. My work is dedicated to the letters related to Poland – in fact, they are more numerous than the others. In turn, they can also be classified according to their senders:

1. The main core are letters written in Polish by Poles. I include here the letters of Poles who have settled outside Poland – these are people who over time have been identified as citizens of the respective countries.

2. Letters from people of other nationalities who write to Prof. Dinekov in Polish. These are people with whom he made contact during his specialization in Poland in the 30s of the 20th century, or colleagues with whom he established professional contacts later and who are also graduates of Polish universities. Thus, the Polish language became a common language of communication between them and Dinekov.

¹ Prof. P. Dinekov leaves a rich archival heritage, which in Bulgaria is considered relatively well studied. According to his explicit instructions, his archive, personal library, and diaries were handed over after his death to various institutions: the archive is in the Central State Archives – Sofia and it is processed and classified as fund 1987K, inventory 1; the personal library was donated to the Ivan Vazov National Library in Plovdiv; the diaries are classified as Fund 904 in the Bulgarian Historical Archive of the Cyril and Methodius National Library. In recent years, this archival heritage in turn becomes object of scientific research (*Bilyarska* 2011: 231-278; *Bilyarska* 2015); some historical and literary topics were developed on the base of these archival documents (*Belcheva* 2016; *Belcheva* 2017; *Dinekov* 2020; *Dinekov* 2021); parts of Prof. Dinekov's diaries have also been published so far (*Diaries* 2015).

² *Bilyarska* 2015: 355.

³ I would like to express my great gratitude to the Chairman of the State Agency for Archives, Assoc. Prof. Mihail Gruev, and to the Directorate of CSA – Sofia for their assistance and for the privilege to work with the undescribed materials.

⁴ I take part in the processing of the letters from Poles and of other materials related to Poland.

3. There is a small group of senders who are Poles but write to prof. Dinekov both in Polish and in Bulgarian and from a certain moment the Bulgarian language predominates.

4. Letters from Bulgarians sent to P. Dinekov during his specialization in Poland in the 30s of the 20th century.

5. Letters from Bulgarians written to P. Dinekov during their educational or professional residence in Poland – they date mainly from the 60s up to the 90s of the 20th century.

6. In a separate group I place the institutional letters to Dinekov, sent by Polish universities, cultural institutions, societies, commissions, editorial offices, and publishing houses.

The current project 'Digital Handbook of Cyrillo-Methodian Scientific Heritage' gave me the opportunity to shed light especially on this part of the correspondence addressed to Prof. Dinekov, which for brevity and convenience I call *the Polish correspondence*, and the results of my work will be presented in my handbook 'The Unknown Documentary Heritage of Prof. Petar Dinekov in the Central State Archives: The Correspondence of Polish Intellectuals in the 30s to the 90s of the 20th century'.

The letters of Polish Palaeo-Slavists to P. Dinekov constitute a core inside the preserved correspondence and at the same time they cannot be excerpted and considered independently without grasping the general idea for the wealthiness of the contacts between the Bulgarian scientist and the Polish intellectuals in a wide time range. Considering this very important fact, it must be said that the development of that specific module goes beyond the usual frames of the classical concept of *Cyrillo-Methodian studies* and expands its scope in the direction of general Slavic studies. The reasons for this expansion are the following:

1. The Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center was established on the idea of Prof. P. Dinekov, and he was its first director from 1980 to 1988. Everything related to his personality and professional work is part of the history of my scientific institution.

2. The available correspondence sheds light on our literary history from the recent past and at the same time places it in the context of the international Bulgarian-Polish and Polish-Bulgarian cultural contacts in the twentieth century. The letters testify to decades of continuous contacts between P. Dinekov and Polish intellectuals and colleagues. Among them are university professors working in various fields of philology – literary critics,

linguists, textologists, medievalists, folklorists, historians, writers, poets, translators, editors. Many of the names of the senders are known to the Polish audience (and not so well known in Bulgaria), as they are representatives of cultural institutions such as major Polish universities, various scientific and educational departments of the Polish Academy of Sciences, various editorial and publishing houses with whom Dinekov was in connection. In many cases, through these letters we clarify some issues that are obscure or controversial from a literary point of view; there are many cases in which the letters inform us about forgotten or unfulfilled projects.

3. Starting from the specific letters, the study led me to specific Polish works on Bulgarian topics: textbooks, different types of stories, almanacs, anthologies, etc., in which I discovered most unexpectedly sections dedicated to old Bulgarian literature. These materials are not primary scientific works for medievalists, so in most cases they stayed out of the spotlight of the specialists. But they are undoubtedly an illustration of the knowledge of the old Bulgarian literature, and it is high time for them to be published and systematized. They represent a whole corpus, which should not be missed when talking and writing about the history of Bulgarian Cyrillo-Methodian studies.

4. In its entirety the available unprocessed correspondence undoubtedly represents a cultural heritage. As archivists emphasize: 'The development of the science is inconceivable without knowledge of the documentary sources. The larger the source base, the greater the opportunities of scientists for comprehensive research of a particular problem'⁵.

5. Collected in a separate handbook, the data about the individual correspondents of P. Dinekov and about their letters to him unfold an interesting independent history of intellectual communication. In this aspect they have an informative, educational, and promoting character for various target groups of Bulgarian and Polish users.

6. P. Dinekov is from the generation that uses the classic paper letter as a means of communication, almost as important as the live communication. The conservation of the correspondence addressed to him shows that the Polish contacts were important for the Bulgarian scientist – a statement that is supported by all his activities, as well as by the notes in his diaries and by the books in his personal library. On the other hand, P. Dinekov accepted the letters as historical testimonies. This explains the preservation of such a large documentary epistolary

⁵ Vaptsarova, Ilieva 2014: 18.

array. There are not many such cases in Bulgarian cultural history and that is why the correspondence of the scientist is a kind of phenomenon.

7. In the philological collegium it is known that Dinekov has passed on, along with the professional knowledge, his love for Poland and Polish culture to many of his students, doctoral students, and younger colleagues. The Bulgarian scientist played a similar role for many Poles, guiding them to affiliation to Bulgarian literature and culture. Over the years he has taken a direct or indirect part in the academic education of several Polish Slavists and Bulgarian philologists. In different periods of their professional philological development, he was a lecturer, mentor, and reviewer of their doctoral and / or habilitation theses defended at the universities of Warsaw, Krakow, and Poznan. The contacts with them are a direct consequence of P. Dinekov's contacts with the mentioned Polish universities and testify to an excellent cooperation at academic level.

According to the above-mentioned several signs of classification, I have singled out a total of 125 Polish correspondents, which will be presented in the handbook I am preparing⁶. For each of them there is a separate section structured according to a pre-selected scheme.

STRUCTURE OF THE HANDBOOK

1. Last name and first name of the correspondent in Bulgarian. The names according to the original Polish spelling are given in brackets.

2. Picture of the correspondent.

3. A short section describing the life and the professional activity of the correspondent.

4. The most fundamental (selected) bibliography in two sections: A. Related to the work of the individual, with the emphasis on publications related to Bulgaria and B. Publications on the personality and professional activity of the correspondent.

5. General information about the letters sent

to Dinekov from each correspondent. The letters have identification that will serve for the creation of the new inventory 2 of the 1987K fund: they are listed by their number and chronological order. At this stage, they cannot be entered as specific archival units, as the entire inventory is not complete.

6. Specific information for individual letters is presented chronologically and contains the following data: date (noted by the correspondent in the letter; if it is not written, it is recovered through the postal stamps or indirectly, if possible); place in which the letter was written (or place from which the letter was sent); type of letter: classic letter in an envelope, open postcard, greeting card, business card with or without accompanying text, etc.; handwritten or printed; signed (with full name and surname, only with first name, with handwritten signature, with initial(s), etc.); language (the language is usually Polish, but there are some exceptions, which were mentioned above).

Letters that are interesting from a professional point of view are annotated. If the content is important for Bulgarian and Cyrillo-Methodian studies, I publish the letter in printed form in Polish and / or translated into Bulgarian.

7. As far as possible, the text is illustrated with photographs.

8. In the digital form of the handbook there is an option for easy reference to the names and institutions mentioned in the letters, related to the professional activity of the correspondent or of Dinekov; geographical names; book titles, or different types of publications.

It is clear that the handbook I am preparing will be an informative product with a dictionary-encyclopaedic character. It will contain an introductory study that will make the reader acquainted with the main problems and will reveal the intellectual processes that ranked our intellectuals next to the European ones in the recent past – from the 30s to the 90s of the twentieth century.

⁶ I have classified the Polish institutions (universities, institutes, publishing houses, commissions, societies, etc.) separately and they will not be presented in that handbook.

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Непознатото епистолярно наследство на проф. Петър Динеков в Централния държавен архив в София: принос в културната ни история

Мая Иванова

Проф. П. Динеков един от най-известните български учени хуманитаристи на XX в., който има свое собствено място в българската наука и култура. Архивното му наследство е добре описано и проучено. Затова откриването на голям масив необработена полска кореспонденция в личния му фонд 1987К в ЦДА се превърна в своеобразно културно събитие. Става въпрос за писма, адресирани до П. Динеков от полски учени и интелектуалци от различни хуманитарни направления. С настоящата статия представям работата си по проекта „Дигитален справочник на кирило-методиевското научно наследство“ (в рамките на проекта КИРИЛОМЕТОДИКОН), за който подготвям раздела „Полски филолози, интелектуалци, научни и културни институции в кореспонденция с проф. П. Динеков (30-те – 90-те г. на XX в.)“. Целта на моята работа е да станат видими интелектуалните процеси, причислили нашата интелигенция към европейската в посочените десетилетия.

