

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Collection of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian émigré periodicals 1918-1945

REF N° 2006-52

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

The collection of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian émigré periodicals (newspapers and journals) preserved by the Slavonic Library represents, in the global context, a unique set of materials originating from the Interwar period. The collection represents the heritage of the members of the so called first wave of Russian emigration, who, following their departure from Bolshevik Russia, settled all over the globe. The size of this emigration and the scale of its activities led to a specific cultural phenomenon called “Russia outside Russia”. A new émigré culture was established, separated from its original roots on the territory of the Russian Empire, yet preserving for long years the original traditions and cultural values. This culture developed as a mirror of the Soviet culture – parallel with it but without the limits imposed on the Soviet cultural elite.

The interwar Czechoslovakia was one of the key world cultural centres of this emigration and due to the financial support of the Czechoslovak government it represented the world main depository of archival collections and published items. The collection of the Slavonic Library thus contains items published in all the important centres of émigré life all over the world reflecting the richness of the cultural tradition of “Russia outside Russia”. Among all the research institutions of the world, the collection offers to the researchers the richest and most comprehensive source for study of this cultural tradition, which is reflected in the strong interest of the scientific community in the collection.

2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

2.1 Name (person or organisation)

Czech Commission for UNESCO
Jaroslava Moserová – Chairperson

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

none

2.3 Contact person (s)

Jaroslava Moserová – Chairperson of the Czech Commission for UNESCO

2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

Czech Commission for UNESCO
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169 00 Prague 6
The Czech Republic

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3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The collection of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian émigré periodicals from the period 1918-1945 in the holdings of the Slavonic Library.

3.2 Description

The collection of Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian émigré periodicals preserved by the Slavonic Library consists of two main parts. The first part comes directly from the Slavonic Library, which was established in 1924 as the library of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The second, larger part of the collection was established as a result of the activity of the Russian Foreign Historical Archives (RZIA). RZIA was established in 1923 by one of the émigré organizations and after several years its management was entrusted also to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission of RZIA was to collect archival materials, books and periodicals related to the revolutionary movement in Russia and to the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian emigration after 1917 all over the world. The holdings of the Slavonic Library grew rapidly in both quantitative and qualitative terms due partly to the generosity of the ministry and partly to the contacts with individual Czechoslovak consulates and embassies. RZIA made good use of the network of voluntary collaborators from the ranks of emigration who established new contacts and purchased archival collections, books and periodicals. These collaborators often belonged to the elite circles of the individual émigré groups. After 1945, the archival part of RZIA was exported to the Soviet Union and the library was transferred to the Slavonic Library. The émigré periodicals collection described consists in total of approximately 2000 titles of journals (approximately 1500 originated in RZIA) and several thousand titles of newspapers (about 2500 coming from RZIA). The journals and newspapers belong topically to the fields of politics, culture and humanities.

Part of the collection originating in RZIA is also formed by a unique world collection of periodicals, which were published in Russia proper in the period of civil war from 1918 to 1920 as well as the collection of Russian and Ukrainian periodicals published during the Second World War in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The whole RZIA periodicals collection is 4700 journal titles and about 4000 newspaper titles.

The entire collection was established because of the unprecedented financial and moral support of the Czechoslovak government.

1. RZIA was one of the projects of the so-called Russian Aid Action: financial support from the Czechoslovak state to the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian emigration. The scope of this support, which included the establishment of secondary schools and universities, where the emigrants could complete their education, various cultural and academic institutions, was at its time unique.

2. The costs of the Slavonic Library were directly covered by the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity

The authenticity of the collection is established by the fact that it consists only of original prints. The few exceptions are copies, which were made by our staff to compensate for missing items.

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability

The uniqueness of the collection is established by the fact that in the Interwar period the Russian Foreign Historical Archives was the only institution in the world, which specialized in collecting materials related to the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian diaspora. Though the émigré periodicals can be found in the deposits of other great world libraries, it is only the Slavonic Library, which preserves them in such a comprehensive way and holds such a large number of titles.

Unique is also the context in which the collection was established, as the financial support of the Czechoslovak state was essential. It was only due to this unique state support that the collection was established and preserved to this day.

4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style.

- a) The collection dates from 1918-1945. The year 1918 was the date the large emigration wave from the Bolshevik-occupied territories of Russia started. The year 1945 marks decline in the vivid life of emigration, due to geopolitical changes in Central and Eastern Europe. Many of the emigrants returned (mostly involuntarily) to the Soviet Union, many of them left Europe and settled in several centres particularly in the United States, Canada and Australia. The decline was also caused by the first large generation shift in the ranks of the diaspora. Many of the second-generation emigrants were losing contact with their roots so that they no longer identified with the traditions of their ancestors. The period 1918-1945 represents the golden era of the first wave of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian emigration and this period correspondingly represents the bulk of the collection.
- b) The location of the collection in Prague is highly symbolic. Prague, together with Berlin and Paris, represented the main centre of the Interwar life of the diaspora. Only in Prague, however, there was substantial support for émigré activities in the framework of the governmental programme of Russian Aid Action. Prague hosted numerous cultural, educational and academic institutions and organizations, numbers of elite members of the diaspora lived in Prague. The term “Prague period” is often used in literature to locate the origins of the scientific and artistic works of the members of the emigration. Many of the descendants of the emigrants see in the fact that the collection is located in Prague a guarantee of freedom of access and research.
- c) Among the authors, published in the periodicals, or among the publishers and editors of these periodicals, there are important and well-known figures. Their importance is not limited to the émigré environment. Often these are personalities who determined world developments in many scientific and cultural fields throughout the entire 20th century (Roman O. Jakobson, Nikodim P. Kondakov, Pitirim A. Sorokin, Nikolay O. Lossky, Georgy V. Vernadsky, Dmitry Chyzhevsky and many others). Their scientific and cultural work encompasses besides Czechoslovakia a number of other countries. The collection is thus a unique field, in which their activities can be discovered, documented and studied.
- d) The Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian emigration represents a recognized and well-known contribution to world culture and science. A great number of writers, musicians, painters, designers, politicians, academicians in both humanities and exact sciences came from its ranks. There can be no doubt about their principal contribution to the advancement of human knowledge and enrichment of the world culture. Many aspects of their professional and private lives can be studied only through the collection of the Slavonic Library.
- e) The collection has a unified style – it is a collection of newspapers and journals. Topically, however, the collection is diverse and varied. Individual items deal with politics, science, literature and other cultural spheres, but also with agriculture, economy or military. The collection covers practically all the important fields, in which the members of the emigration were active, documenting thus the wide spectrum of their interests.

4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

The entire collection is a unique heritage of world importance documenting one of the great chapters of the political development of the 20th century. Though many of the items can be found also in other libraries, it is only the Slavonic Library, which preserves them to such an extent and in such a comprehensive way. The collection represents a rare set of materials with a high level of thematic unity. The overwhelming majority of the items concerns the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian emigration or was published by representatives of this emigration. Like the other paper materials, the newspapers and journals of the collection suffer from wear, ageing and eventual deterioration. The newspapers are a particularly endangered part of the collection. We prevent the destruction of the collection by microfilming and digitizing the most unique part of the collection and by securing appropriate preservation and storage. The Slavonic Library invested considerable amount of resources and energy into the preservation of this rare collection, but a lot of work still needs to be done. In the future we plan to intensify the process of microfilming and digitizing of periodicals. The planned relocation of the entire Slavonic Library to more suitable premises will enable an improvement in storage conditions.

5 LEGAL INFORMATION

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

National Library of the Czech Republic
Statutory organ: Mgr. Vlastimil Ježek – Director General of the National Library of the Czech Republic
Klementinum 190
110 00 Prague 1
The Czech Republic

The collection is part of the holdings of the Slavonic Library (department of the National Library).

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

The Slavonic Library (department of the National Library of the Czech Republic)
PhDr. Lukáš Babka – Director of the Slavonic Library

Klementinum 190
110 00 Prague 1
The Czech Republic
e-mail: lukas.babka@nkp.cz

5.3 Legal status:

(a) Category of ownership

The Collection is owned by a public institution (National Library of the Czech Republic – governmental/state organization)

(b) Accessibility

The Collection is fully (without any restrictions) accessible to the public directly at the Slavonic Library. Copies (microfilms and digital copies) are accessible in accordance with the current copyright legislature.

(c) Copyright status

Copyrights for larger part of the collection are owned by the heritors of the individual authors and publishers. The copyrights to the copies (microfilms and digitized copies) are owned by the National Library of the Czech Republic.

(d) Responsible administration

The collection is property of the National Library of the Czech Republic. It is an integral part of the holdings of the Slavonic Library (now a department of the National Library), which was merged with the National Library in 1958.

(e) Other factors

The items concerned represent a closed, protected collection. Its further storage and use is determined by the rules of the National Library. In accordance with the mission and tasks of the National Library, the collection is considered a permanent part of the library holdings.

6 MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES/NO

The summary Management Plan is attached.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional *Memory of the World* committee

The consultation was carried out with the representatives of the National Library of the Czech Republic and the Slavonic Library. The Scientific Council of the Slavonic Library expressed its support for this initiative, too.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 In the long-term perspective, the collection of periodicals is endangered for the following reasons:

- 1) The low quality of the paper of the newspapers causes the gradual disintegration of individual pages. According to some estimates the life span of the paper is not more than 25 years.
- 2) Due to the lack of storage space the larger part of the collection, particularly the collection of newspapers, is stored in the inappropriate vertical position. This causes warping of the binding of the individual volumes, which in turns leads to a more rapid ageing of the paper.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 We try to avoid the risks stated above by following measures:

Ad 1) In order to preserve the cultural heritage for the further generations, it is necessary to continue the programmes of microfilming and digitization of the further parts of the collection. This is the only way to secure that the content will not disappear before it is safeguarded.

Ad 2) The relocation of the Slavonic Library into new premises, which is planned for next few years, will improve the storage conditions of the entire collection. In the new location, the problem should be solved by optimal use of storage and shelf space.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

(Please print name).....

(Signature)..... (Date).....