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Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in the Days of Great Trials: 1941-1942

Abstract

This paper reviews the work of the Archive of the Soviet Academy of Sciences during the blockade of Leningrad in 1941–42. It is based on the archive series that contains a report detailing the work of the 22 Academy's institutions in Leningrad (11 scientific research institutes, 3 museums, the Archive, the Library, the Geographical Society, etc.) over 7 months of 1942 and prepared for the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences. It lists Archive's staff members who died or were evacuated during this period. It shows that, even in the hardest days under the blockade, the work in the Archive never stopped. An important part of this work was

associated with the activities of the Commission for the History of the USSR Academy of Sciences (KIAN). The paper reviews the history of the KIAN creation under the auspices of the Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad in 1938, soon after forcible liquidation of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology and tragic death of its first director, Academician N.I. Bukharin. A number of outstanding historians-archivists and historians of science – A.I. Andreyev, I.I. Lyubimenko, L.B. Modzalevskii, and others – participated in the work of the KIAN headed by Academician S. I. Vavilov and his deputy, Director of the Archive, G.A. Knyazev. The research and archaeographic work of the Archive's staff was associated with preparation of publications for the "Scientific Heritage" series (it was established in 1940 upon initiative of the President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences V. L. Komarov with active participation of the eminent historian of science T. I. Rainov). During that period, the editorial work on the second volume of the "Reviews of Archive Materials" (*Obozreniya arkhivnykh materialov*) was completed and V.F. Gnucheva completed her unique history-of-science book "The Geographical Department of the 18th century Academy of Sciences." Both books were published after the war, in 1946. The main result of the work of the few Archive's staff members was safeguarding the precious historical materials and searching for, concentrating, and preserving documentation of evacuated institutions and individual scientists, some of whom were killed by the cold, famine, and diseases. The paper contains data from official reports: quantitative data concerning documents taken into the Archive's custody in 1941 and in 1942 and processed and described series; it names institutions and scholars, whose documents ended up in the Archive of the Academy of Sciences. By July 31, 1942, the number of fonds in the Archive reached 740. Reports of such Academy institutions as the Institute of Oriental Studies, the N.Ya. Marr Institute for the History of Material Culture, the Institute of Literature, the All-Union Geographical Society, and others allow the scholars to analyze their work associated with the preservation of books and archival fonds and collections. The paper is based on documentary sources that are being introduced into scientific use for the first time.

Keywords

Archive, sources, history, science, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Commission for the History (KIAN), blockade in Leningrad, G. A. Knyazev, S. I. Vavilov.

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