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V. V. Bedin in Charge of the Central State Historical Archive of the USSR in Leningrad: 1945–52, 1954–64

Abstract

The article is to highlight the little-known pages in the history of the Russian State Historical Archive, one of the largest archives in Russia. Its story is an integral part of the history of archiving in Russia. The article is to show the role of an individual in the history of Russian

archiving in a case-study of the activities of one of its most effective managers. His life is largely characteristic of the generation of archival leaders of the 1940s–60s, while his personal characteristics are unique. The article is based on genuine archival materials preserved in the so-called “Archive of the archive” and also on the memoirs of his contemporaries. It is devoted to the biography of Vasily Vasilyevich Bedin, the longtime head of the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad (now the Russian State Historical Archive). V. V. Bedin was appointed head of the archive at a difficult time. During the war and in the siege of Leningrad, the archive was headed by temporary leaders who replaced one another and did not always cope well with the responsibilities assigned to them. V. V. Bedin became the fifth head of the archive since 1941. Descent from the Novgorod gubernia peasants, a Red Army soldier during the Civil War, a political instructor, he became a party functionary, studied at the Institute of Red Professors. In 1937, he was appointed head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Belarus, and in 1939 became director of the Leningrad branch of the Museum of V. I. Lenin. On December 22, 1945, he was appointed head of the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad. In this position, he did a lot to eliminate the consequences of the war and to put the archive in order; he strove to improve the situation of the archive’s staff. In a difficult political environment of the late 1940s - early 1950s he showed high integrity and much decency. This was the reason for his dismissal in 1952. But with the beginning of the “thaw,” V. V. Bedin was re-appointed head of the archive on July 3, 1954. Under his leadership, the archive became a truly scientific institution. V. V. Bedin created a businesslike atmosphere in the archive, allowing its staff of to show initiative and boldly discuss the fundamental issues of the archival administration development. He did a lot to improve the storage of archival documents. V. V. Bedin initiated the archive’s transition to a more functional structure. He remained in the memory of the Leningrad archivists as an effective and principled, demanding and caring leader.

Keywords

Personal provenance sources, V. V. Bedin, biography, Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad, head, safeguarding of documents, functional structure of the archive.

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