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Unpublished Letters Written by A. D. Bilimovich in the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs and Addressed to V. V. Shulgin as a Historical Source (1921–26)

Abstract

While the history of the first wave of Russian emigration remains a significant research topic, many subjects remain poorly studied. It is important to use new sources, among which epistolary heritage of the Russian emigrants occupies an important place. The role of

correspondence as a valuable historical source has been repeatedly assessed in scholarship. For the history of emigration with its limited range of sources, letters are especially valuable. However, in recent years, special attention has been drawn to the analysis not so much of individual letters, but of epistolary complexes with great informational value. The article is to analyze the letters of A. D. Bilimovich, famous economist, professor at the University of Ljubljana (1920s–40s), to his son-in-law, famous politician and journalist V.V. Shulgin. The Shulgin fond in the State Archive of the Russian Federation has preserved 18 letters for January 1921 - April 1926 (fond R-5974, series 1, file 88). Analysis of the letters has showed that they raised three main issues. Firstly, the author informed his addressee in detail about the beginning of his life and work in Slovenian Ljubljana, described how he had learned the Slovenian language and begun teaching at the local university. He characterized the pros and cons of incorporation of the Russian emigrants into the Yugoslavian environment. The second most important subject was Bilimovich's attempt to organize a Russian publishing house in Belgrade undertaken in 1923–24. Among possible organizers-shareholders were the well-known ?migr? scholars E. V. Spektorsky, F. V. Taranovsky, An. D. Bilimovich, and others. The first book, which the publishing house hoped to publish, was Spektorsky's "Christianity and Culture." The book was mentioned as completed in December 1923, which is an important fact in the history of creation of this well-known theological and cultural work of the Russian emigration. Previously, the chronological frameworks for its writing were quite unclear. Further publication of educational and scientific literature and fiction was planned. The publishing plans remained unrealized due to lack of funding. The third subject of the Bilimovich's letters was his organizing of "Russian Matica" – later, one of the most important public organizations of emigration in the Balkans. The emigration of many thousands of the Russians to Europe was an incentive for the organization of the "Russian Matica." It follows from the letters that one of the main reasons for the Matica was Bilimovich's failure in the publishing field. The letters tell about Bilimovich's practical work on organizing the "Russian Matica" activities in 1924–26, on informing the public of this new organization, and on the emergence of its four branches in Yugoslav cities. Thus, the epistolary complex (letters from A. D. Bilimovich to V.V. Shulgin), which the article introduces in the scientific use for the first time, makes it possible to clarify a number of important points in the history of the Russian emigration of the first wave of the 1920s.

Keywords

Historical sources, letters of scientists, Russian emigration in the Balkans, Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, A. D. Bilimovich, E. V. Spektorsky, V. V. Shulgin, "Russian Matica."

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