

SUMMARY

Currently, there is no comprehensive study of the archival heritage of Bulgarian polar scientists and, more broadly, of all Bulgarian polar research. The aim of the project is to search for and to preserve the archival evidence of the contribution and activity of the Bulgarian scientific community in terms of polar research, which has so far been neglected by the Bulgarian archival scholars and is still largely a "blank field". Undoubtedly, the Bulgarian presence on the Antarctic continent is an extremely interesting topic which deserves special interest; especially the many achievements of the Bulgarian scholars and other participants in polar expeditions. Undeniable fact is that the Bulgarian presence at the poles is expanding and is already a significant factor.

The main sources of up-to-date information on the topic of Bulgarian polar expeditions are the official site of Bulgarian Antarctic Institute, as well as the numerous publications in the media, including the online based ones. However, many of the later have a low degree of reliability. Undoubtedly, the most informative and dependable sources are the scientific publications on the subject, i.e., articles, monographs, documentaries, etc. The abovementioned factors represent a serious argument in favor of the search, collection and preservation of the currently not systematized documentary evidence from and for the Bulgarian polar community. It is fully justified to seek and analyze preserved archival documents as they are an extremely valuable resource for current and future research on the topic, as well as prevention against the loss of historical memory, destruction of archives (including the dreaded digital decay) on the achievements of the Bulgarian researchers and on the annual Antarctic expeditions.

Among the immediate tasks of the project are the following:

Search for documentary evidence on the emergence of interest in polar research; for the activities of the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute in the existing archives: the Central State Archives at the Archives State Agency; The Scientific archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NA-BAN) for the scientists who conducted research in the same field; and especially in the archive of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". - for the legacy of the most prominent Bulgarian polar scholars. In this context, special attention will be given to the biographical information on the leading Bulgarian polar scholars. Undoubtedly, the most eminent person among them is prof. Hristo Pimpirev, who is also an acting professor at Sofia University, as well as pioneers such as prof. Borislav Kamenov.

Furthermore, a bibliography of existing scientific publications, related to the Bulgarian polar scholarship will be also collected. The digitization of print publications will allow for a quick and easy access for a much wider audience and will enhance the skills and competencies of all the interested parties; including school pupils and university students.

Another project objective is to carry out additional research in order to enrich the archive fonds on the topic; i.e. to conduct and record research interviews and thus to help fill the existing historical memory gaps and form a basis for the so-called oral history, which will be included in the archival heritage related to the Bulgarian contribution and participation in global polar research.

Within the framework of the project, a survey among pupils and students at different levels of education is also envisioned. This way a valuable feedback about the knowledge of Antarctica and the Bulgarian contributions to the study of the Icy Continent among the younger generation will be received.

In relation to enhancing the expertise and practical skills of the university students for handling specific archival sources, an open seminar (workshop) is envisioned. This event will also contribute to increase of competence among the future History and Geography teachers.

During the final stage of the project, a single volume documentary publication, devoted to the history of Bulgarian contributions to the polar science will be prepared for print.

In order to promote the results achieved and, at the same time, to provide a quick and easy access to the information resources on the subject, the creation of a dedicated website is planned.

The participation of the team members in scientific forums with the aim to promote both the project results and activities is also among the priorities.

All the above motivates the preparation of this project proposal by experienced experts in the humanities. The planned research relies entirely on the capacity of the team members, i.e. tenured lecturers, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students at the Faculty of History at the Sofia University. It is also planned to draw students, school teachers, as well as employees (archivists) from the system of the Bulgarian archives and the Sofia University Archives, to be involved in the respective stages of the project activities.

The project team consists of specialist archivist Ch. Assist. Prof. Dr. Ralitsa Todorova (project coordinator and supervisor), a lecturer on Methodology of History Teaching Ch. Assist. Prof. Dr. Krassimir Krastev, who has additional background in Geography, as well as two young scholars - Dr. Stoyan Shivarov and Ph.D. student Alexander Zlatanov, who both have a solid practical experience in the search, systematization and digitization of archival documents from archival repositories in different countries. The inclusion of the two young scientists is in line with the strategies for developing the scientific potential and increasing the capacity of PhD students and postdoctoral researches and is an investment for the development of science in Bulgaria.