

LIBRARY EDUCATION IN BULGARIA 1944-1956**Penka Tsoneva**

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Abstract: The following publication is on a project about: “Library Education in Bulgaria: sources 1944-1989”, funded by the state budget of the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski” regarding scientific research in 2017. The following publication is on a project entitled: “Library Education in Bulgaria: sources 1944-1989” funded by the state budget of the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski” regarding scientific research in 2017. This research is historical-pedagogical and it aims to reconstruct the major trends in the development of self-education of Bulgarian population encompassing its latest history by means of historical sources. The chronological scope of the research has a starting point: the radical social-political and economic change in Bulgaria dating back from 09.09.1944; it includes the so called national democracy (1944-1947) and the imposition of the totalitarianism (1948-1953) and it ends in 1956. The special feature in the development of the state-political system, the economy and the culture typical for that age, influence directly the library educational practices, on the one hand and on the other hand – the logic and the regularities in the evolution of the library work are the main factors concerning the differentiation of this development stage of the phenomenon we research – one transition from autonomous to an ideologised library education (1944-1956), respectively to ideologised self-education of people in libraries.

The research is only a tiny part of the attempt for a whole research of the educational product of the library as an institution in the capacity of a „second Bulgarian School“ which does not teach literacy, scientific knowledge to Bulgarian generations and does not grant them documents for education or diplomas for taking state office. It is a school of a different kind – a large-scale and diverse school which is permanent in time and reformatory in terms of free choice of education form and content. The author’s challenge consists in the search of scientifically based answer to the question why a multitude of furnished and well-built libraries, the amount of books for home reading and mass self-education of population within the sphere of their occupation and areas in the economical, political, cultural and international life is achieved in the conditions of broken library autonomy, state-owned major sources of income and strongly ideologised library education with politically influenced aims. How do the new character, place and social role of the library as a base of the national power for a common and political education, scientific knowledge and amateur art activities inevitably reflect on the form and contents of self-education in libraries?

Keywords: self-education, libraries, book fund

PREFACE

The most large-scale extraschool education – the library education not only preserves but also enlarges its amount parameters (the number of libraries, reading rooms, book fund, handed out books for home reading etc.) in the new social situation. The changes in the amount are combined with high-quality, strongly manifested changes in the character and the forms of self-education in reading rooms and libraries. The research seeks an answer to the question regarding the character and the dynamics of these changes. Its aim is to differentiate the major trends in the development of self-education of population in national libraries encompassing the period between 1944 and 1956. The techniques in use are directly related to the aim and the character of the research – theoretical reconstruction, documentary, archivist’s and analytical-synthetic technique in unity with the problematic-historical and chronological approach.

1. INCREASED AMOUNT OF BOOK POSSESSIONS OF LIBRARIES AND HANDED OUT BOOKS FOR HOME READING

On 9th of September 1944 libraries dispose of 2 000 000 volumes from which 1 000 000 volumes of books remain after selection (8, p. 113). Just within 4 years a considerable growth is achieved – the book fund of 3447 libraries in 1949³² with 2 140 612 volumes and handed out books for home reading 1 982 963 volumes (again there). In 1953 – 3 200 000 volumes of books for home reading and 117 360 volumes. In 1954 the book wealth reaches 3 600 000 volumes which is twice as much as in 1949. The growth reaches its peak. In the next year – 1955 when libraries get richer by 1 100 000 volumes of books as “912 880 volumes are in the villages which is twice as much as the supplied in 1954 books. Libraries with a supply of more than 3000 volumes get three times more in number and their number exceeds 600” (2, p. 5). The trend of permanent and strong

³² Just in 1949 500 libraries are furnished according to the decimal fraction system (5, p. 7).

propaganda of the “good” book amongst the population exceeds even the large number of the handed out books for home reading in 1954 – 9125 115 volumes and 11 053 004 volumes in 1955 (from which 5 119 957 are in the villages) compared to those in 1953 amount in 6 500 000 volumes (2, p. 6, s. 13).

This trend appears more specifically among the rural population which in 1955 amounts to 5 057 638 people, i.e. it represents 66,43 % of the entire population (7 613 709)³³. The libraries in the villages not only enrich their book fund for 1 year by more than 900 000 volumes which is one time and a half more than the supplied books for all the libraries in the previous year but they highlight on the structure of the users and the content of the literature. The library guidance claims that the agricultural books are not enough and the number of readers from the extraschool youth is small as well as those occupied with production i.e the major group of users are from the environment of learners and pensioners (2, p. 8).

The problems about the enrichment of rural libraries with new “progressive” books, the foundation of brigade libraries and their approach to the work site, preparation of librarians etc. are always present in the decisions of library forums which have a clear vision for solving them. When we add the facts – co-ordination of the library policy with the governing party and its funding by the organs of the local state authorities; so we can explain the trend to a gradual and ascending development of self-education in libraries and reading rooms. For example the library guidance takes the enrichment of each rural library with 300 volumes when the population amounts in 5000 residents, 200 volumes – 3 000 residents and less than 100 volumes – 1000 residents into account between both plenary sessions of the Central Council and the Union of National Libraries (July 1949 and 3-4 January 1951).

2. CRITERIA FOR SUPPLYING BOOK FUND REGARDING NATIONAL SELF-EDUCATION

Another new dimension of widened functions of libraries during the researched space of time is manifested through the supplying of the book fund regarding the balancing of the distribution difference in the number of books in libraries in towns and in villages. For example in 1953 “on average 30 % of our book wealth is focused in the town schools which are just 5 % of the entire number of libraries in the country (13).

The greatest innovation related to the contents of the handed out literature is the biggest disadvantage for the library guidance back then. The spreading of scientific and political knowledge by means of a book among working people is ranked unsatisfactory from the point of view of the handed out scientific-Marxist, natural-scientific and agricultural literature: for example in 1953 “3 % of the handed out books are Marx’, Engels’s, Lenin’s and Stalin’s works as well as their associates’ and students’ works. The natural-scientific literature also does not exceed 3% of the total number of the books” and the “handed out agricultural literature in 1953 amounts in 12 % of the total number of the books as in most cases it is 3%. (again there). As we can sum up from these facts, the biggest problem appears with the agricultural literature because 95% of the libraries in the country are located in the villages and the group of the villagers-co-operators in 1957 amounts to 1 500 000 people. The uneven distribution of the book fund has another side – the high relative part of the artistic and children’s literature reaching 90% of the book fund and in some districts – more than 80 ; is a factor which hampers the implementation of one of the major tasks of national self-education in libraries and reading rooms – spreading scientific and political knowledge among the workers by means of a book. This is why the supplying of the book funds aiming to gradually reach the proportion found out in the practices of the Soviet libraries is among the major challenges concerning the content of the library activity and, “in particular, 48 % artistic literature, 20% Marxist and social-political, 14% popular, 18% agricultural and technical literature” (10, s. 9).

The ideologisation of the self-education in libraries through the implemented selection of the book fund and its supplying in terms of constant presence of a certain relative part – Marxist-Lenin literature is based on the library legislation, especially after 1954 when the Statute of the National Libraries Union sets the base for the Socialist education and culture, ideological-political awareness of workers and the popularization of the Soviet experience. These normative situations find their practical usage through their narrowest correlation between the entire activity of national libraries with the “party and the government initiative and tasks such as the spring sowing, the summer agricultural campaign, the celebrations, the fight for peace” and with the popularization of the successes of the socialist construction work and the achievement of economy, culture and art (1, s. 12). Another premise for ideologisation of self-education in libraries is the party guidance of national libraries which enact the “directions of the Party and the Government under the guidance of the Central Council of the National Libraries Union . (1, s. 13-15; 4, p. 32 and p. 35).

At the same time the national self-education in libraries and reading rooms is regulated according to the “age of user” criterion. Children’s sections are created when there are 1 441 national libraries with a total

³³ Comparative tables per years of counting <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/SrTables.htm>

number of 327 637 volumes of books and children's corners in the common reading rooms when there are 1 132 reading rooms in villages and 90 reading rooms in towns. Both special sites are directly related to the new functions of libraries – guidance of pioneers' homes³⁴ and organized conferences with pioneer readers, discussion of group reading, meetings with authors, surveys and other cultural manifestations (10, s. 5). "Age of user" is not the only one criterion. Education forums take place on criteria: "job", "occupation", "international integration" and they are ratified into useful forms of work with readers. Introducing new forms of attracting readers to the book especially mobile libraries built for those who work on sites located far from libraries, themed readers' conferences and evenings, devoted to the leaders in industry and agriculture; turns into a permanent process, organized by local library guidances together with the territorial structures of Ministry of Culture, the Dimitrov National Youth Union and the Fatherland Front (12, s. 3-5).

3. FUNDING SPECIALISTS

15 district library courses are held for the specialist funding in 1949 and in 1950 – 25 seven-day district library courses for preparation of librarians in 20 district cities (6; 5, s. 7). The established positive practice of the "seven-day district and 12-day regional courses for librarians for improving their knowledge and special preparation of an appropriate librarian" in the Resolution of XXIV regular library congress (29-30.01.1950) is a premise not only for the introduction of a paid librarian in the big and the medium libraries (paid by the month) in the small³⁵ libraries, but also for the larger scale of the permanent training (11, p. 7). Only in 1953, almost 347 trainees take part in the organized 13 librarianship courses, most of whom are paid library workers in national libraries (8, s. 6-7). In addition, the Central Council of the National Library Union seeks an opportunity to establish a permanently functioning school for librarians (11, p. 7).

4. CONSTRUCTION AND FURNISHING OF LIBRARIES AND READING ROOMS

The improvement and the extending of the functions of libraries has an entirely new dimension-establishing "separate libraries and reading rooms for the Turkish population or sections with literature in Turkish language in villages with mixed population. The district councils of politicians of workers (Bulgarian: ONSDT) have voted in the budgets for the needed amount of money for the furnishing of the libraries and the reading rooms: books, newspapers, magazines, tables, chairs, shelves etc. as follows: ONSDT Kolarovgrad – BGN 6000, Targovishte-BGN 6200, Omurtag-BGN 4000, Novi Pazar-4000, Popovo-8400, Kardzhali-1000 per library, Haskovo-12800, Kubrat-800, Krumovgrad-8600. Each one of the 81 libraries in settlements with a compact Turkish population, the Central Council of the National Library Union supplies libraries with a complete of 18 books in Turkish (7, s. 218 and s. 220). This specific funding, construction and furnishing is part of a large-scale establishment of library buildings in the country in which the budget funding is combined with the voluntary and free working days, local materials and means of payment of the population. This balance reveals that 485 library buildings are built for almost a century (1856-1944) and 435 library houses are built for 7 years (1944-1951), only 4 of which are in cities (1, s. 21).

CONCLUSION

During the transition from an autonomous to an ideologised library education (1944-1956), the national self-education in libraries and the reading rooms marks a trend **to a dynamic development, one of whose manifestation is the growth of the library possessions as well as the increased number of handed out books for home reading.** Within 10 years, the book fund increases by three and a half times and the book wealth gradually reaches a level of an even distribution between rural and town libraries. The supplying of the book fund in a proportion of 100-200 volumes in rural libraries when there are 1000 books on average in town libraries reaches its goal in 1956 – at least 5000 volumes per library which provide a minimal opportunity for self-education of local population. The opportunity extends by the opened libraries and reading rooms for the Turkish population or by sections with literature in Turkish language. The number of the handed out books for home reading increases by almost 6 times for 6 years.

The second manifestation of the trend consists in the supplying of the books in terms of content. The aim is almost parity ratio – 20% presence of the Marxist and the social-political literature, on the one hand; the agricultural and the technical literature on the other hand i.e the ideology of self-education in libraries **is the third manifestation** of the trend. The process is one-way and it is with the culture management system transformation, related to its centralization and its turning into a means for achieving ideological and propaganda aims which transform libraries into conductors of the party policy and ideology.

³⁴ Such centres in 1954 run libraries in Ruse, Pazardzhik, Plevna, Kolarovgrad, Kardzhali etc (10, s.5).

³⁵ Payment is offered to be possible by the corresponding National Councils (11, p.7).

Librarianship faces two major problems during the researched stage. The progress in the establishment of new libraries in the context of policy about improving the material status of libraries cannot compensate the lack of a suitable room for a library and a reading room for 3375 libraries in 1954³⁶ (6, s. 497; 9, p. 35). On the other hand the lack of qualified librarians seeks a solution in the courses, seminars and trainings, as well as by extending of the extramural education for librarians in the National Library Institute organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Dimitrov National Youth Union.

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³⁶ 964 national libraries out of 4339 have own buildings.