International research project “Heritage revealed”

The “Heritage Revealed” project takes on a special place among the international projects carried out by Library for Foreign Literature named after M.I.Rudomino. First of all the project is based on the “Guiding principles of the Washington conference on the Holocaust Period Property in Resolving the issues related to objects of art” signed in Washington in 1998. This document proposed a close international cooperation in search and publication of information on cultural valuables confiscated by the Nazi in different countries including those plundered from the victims of Holocaust.

Thanks to joint efforts of researchers from the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature (founder M.I. Rudomino), Russian State Library, Russian State Military Archives, unique materials have been gathered open another page of the tragic history of looted Jewish book collections belonging to the nation which endured Holocaust.

One task of the project is to bring together information about documents from the Breslau Seminary Library and Vienna Jewish community kept in Russia at present. In our opinion, publication of a full-fledged catalogues clearly shows our aspiration for maximum openness in respect of extremely important, both scientifically and culturally, documents. Besides, the Catalogues provide a more detailed description of the manuscripts – of their present state, shelf marks and owner’s features they bear.
The search and return of looted cultural valuables to the world community is going on. The Catalogues of manuscripts from Breslau (Wroclaw) and Vienna continue, thematically and conceptually, the series of works which putting information about cultural valuables transferred to the USSR after World War II into scientific circulation, and that has been one of the Library’s major activities for quite a long time. But here we for the first time focus our bibliographical research on manuscripts. The important part of this work – identification and archaeographic description of the manuscripts – was accomplished by professional archivists and Hebraists, specialists of RSL and RSMA.

The Library for Foreign Literature took over the task of compiling the Catalogues, of the search for and analysis of archival materials relating to the destiny of the manuscripts in the territory of the Russian Federation, of carefully editing descriptions (since library documents description methods differ from those applied for archival materials description), as well as of selecting materials for publication, translating all materials into English and general coordination of the project.

A great amount of work has been done to put together what used to be odd parts of the Breslau collection. No matter what further fate of the manuscripts described in the Catalogues might be, one more wound inflicted to European culture by World War II has been successfully healed.

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