

Museum Conference of 1926 in Kazan

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Abstract: The article considers the questions of the preservation and research of the historical and cultural heritage of Tatarstan on the example of the First Middle Volga regional museum conference held in September of 1926 in Kazan as well as examples of solutions to these problems in the global community. Based on a research of archival sources and publications, it is concluded that the museum conference help attracted attention authorities and society to the problems of protection of monuments, the development of museums in the regions, popularized the positive experience of the Museum of the Academic center of the People's commissariat of the Tatar Republic in the field of heritage preservation.

Key words: Museum · Cultural heritage · UNESCO · Ideologizing of museum maintenance

INTRODUCTION

In the middle 1920s, due to development of negative tendencies in respect to the country's historical and cultural heritage, intensifying idealization of the humanitarian field in the Russian Federation, the discussion aggravated about the forms and techniques of museum policy, in particular, about the future of museum maintenance. Views on the museum as a scientific, educational center gradually replaced by representations of it as a "beachhead for an organized mass thinking" as an institution is an instrument of party propaganda. The task of intensification of museum work comes into contradiction with the state politized pressure on the sphere of museum activities''.

The priority of museum activities was the route to bring the museum activity and preservation of memorials "to the main tasks of socialist construction". In these conditions, the Department of museum activity of the Main office of management of scientific, artistic and museum institutions of the The main office of science of the Museum of the Academic center of the People's commissariat of the Tatar Republic decides to prepare and hold in December of 1926 the First museum congress in the RSFSR [1]. The same year the International institute of intellectual property sets up the International museum committee. It functioned until 1940, re-inaugurated in 1945 and in 1946 passed its authority to UNESCO [2]. The International museum committee expanded its

intensive activity and, as far back as in 1931, in Athens it convened the Congress of architects and experts of reservation of historical memorials, within its framework the need to create organizations in order to coordinate the restoration of memorials was emphasized [3].

The main purpose of the all-Russian forum of museum workers was to summarize the results of museum construction and preservation of memorials of arts and ancient times before the October revolution; to analyze the state and progress of museum activity; to search for involving museums in socialist construction and to apply the available experience to develop particular measures of further progress of museum activity, to improve the techniques of museum activity and preserve the memorials of arts and ancient periods.

The distributed circulars contained the need by N.I. Trotskaya (Sedova), head of the Museum department of the RSFSR the Museum of the Academic center of the People's commissariat of the Tatar Republic emphasizing the urgency of attracting to discussion of problems the broadest circles of museum workers and personnel of research bodies [1]. To this end, the main office of science rated it expedient to convene during summer and fall of 1926 ten regional conferences, including the Middle Volga region in Kazan.

An organizing committee was set up in august 1926 to convene the Middle Volga conference comprising G.G. Ibragimova (commission leader, chairman of the Tatarkompros academic center), N.I. Vorobjev, director of

the Central museum, employees of the museum P.M. Dulskii (commission secretary) and N.F. Kalinin, workers at the Museum People's Commissariat of Education V.V. Yegerev and P.E. Kornilov. The total number of deputies was 40 representatives of museum bodies and scientific center of Kazan and Volga cities, Moscow and Leningrad [4]. A leading employee Abram Efros of the department of museums and preservation of memorials of arts and ancient period of the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Education, the main office of science and member of the Central bureau, one of the founders of the domestic historical and cultural studies, museum scientist Ivan Grevs, participated in the conference.

The first Middle Volga museum conference convened on the August 26 at the Kazan University. During five days eight sessions were conducted and analyzed the practical activity of domestic's museum institutions, they revealed a severe situation at the domestic museums of the Volga region and in the Tatar republic, in particular [5].

The vast conference program reflected the matters of preservation of items of cultural heritage; it dealt with the situation of protection of monuments of ancient periods, registration and studying of regional archeological memorials. The matter of preservation of cultural valuable was considered also in foreign countries, France, Austria. Already in 1920, France endorsed the law banning export of all objects of arts and history without authorization by the Ministry of public education and fine art. In 1923, Austria endorsed the law banning export of items of historical, artistic and cultural value [6]. The main report "The protection of ancient monuments in the Tatar Republic" was delivered by architect V.V. Yegerev. The speaker dealt with the problems and prospects of preservation of heritage, the need to establish single principles and techniques of preservation.

P.E. Kornilov, the secretary of the Museum department, later expanded the thesis insisting that the «protection of cultural monuments is absolutely new for country, that is why the department [...] has been probing into own effective way and making necessary trials, its entire activity, uninterrupted for decades, is the experimentation: searching for best ways and types of implementation of these tasks» [7].

Though the Museum department had limited personnel, V.V. Yegorov believed the situation of preservation of monumental memorials was stabilized in Kazan, Sviyazhsk, Bulgara and Yelabuga to preserve «historical valuables». In Tatarstan, the opportunities

provided by the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR dated April 19, 1923, were used to the maximum. It provided the right to the People's Commissariat of Education museum bodies to set up special funds. The Museum funds were permitted to spend means received from the economic use of the property they were passed to. The interdepartmental commission set up in Kazan carried out a considerable work of fund formation and transfer to the department of buildings and land plots, registration of lease contracts. It enabled to allocate about 6 thousand rubles annually for restoration. Due to the means in 1924-1926, number of memorials of the Bulgar period was repaired as well as the objects of the Kazan Kremlin and Sviyazhsk [8]. For the first time after the revolution of 1917, the Muslim ancient monuments were researched and restored [9].

During growth of the organization and financial independence development, the task was emphasized to collect artistic valuables and to pass them to the museum fund as they were vacated by eliminated churches, to register the archeological memorials, to elaborate the republican normative acts of preservation of the objects of cultural heritage.

The lack of true encouragement by the Center, the scientific and technical support of the RSFSR the People's Commissariat of Education, helplessness of local bodies in preservation of historical and ancient memorials, were emphasized by P.Ja. Grechkin (Ulyanovsk), E.K. Shtukenberg (Penza), A.F. Terekhov (Samara). For instance, Mrs. Shtukenberg in her report indicated that the Penza province lacked any system of preservation [8].

The participants at the conference posed the problems of accounting, registration and study of the regional archeological memorials. Professor V.F. Smolin made a substantiated analysis "The study of archeological monuments in the Kazan area". The scientist presented the most significant stages of public understanding of the richest historical and cultural heritage and the specific role of the Society of archeology, history and ethnography of the Kazan University. V.F. Smolin remarked with regret that "after the revolution the appeal of archeology diminishes and at present it is fully dying due to the attraction of the modern time. The chair of archeology is closed at the Kazan university" [8]. Later, in 1937, at the Cairo international conference, the Act was endorsed of the compliance according to which the requirement to archeological excavations were introduced, most important principles of archeological heritage preservation were approved [10].

The conference participants saw the way of intensifying preservation and registration of cultural heritage in reinforcing the regional preservation bodies, in the first place, economically. One of the most important results of the conference was the formulation of the problem of coordination in the scope of the whole region of exploration and registration of archeological memorials, development of the integral technique of exploration and registration.

The convention of the Middle Volga regional museum conference attracted the authorities to matter of museum policy pushed the progress of museum development in the region [1]. In 1927, under the pretext of struggle with Trotskyism, the activity of the Museum department of the main scientific office was eliminated at the RSFSR the People's Commissariat of Education and its subordinate regional bodies. Administrative and economic authorities decided the fate of memorials already. The changes underway in the state museum policy were fixed in the Decree of Russian Central Executive committee and the Council of People's Commissars the RSFSR dated August 20, 1928, "Of the museum construction in the RSFSR". It fixed the effort of ideological management over the museum activity [8].

As a result, the First All-Russian congress of museums scheduled for the end of 1926 was convened only in December 1930. This forum conducted in new social political conditions and plunged the progress of museum activity in Russia into the stream of ideological propaganda turning museums into the tool of cultural revolution, launching the campaign of reprisals of museum specialists, scientific explorers and folk culture scientists.

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