

David Kohen Giving A Speech At The Bulgarian Academy Of Sciences



On 14th December 1977 I was on the podium reading the report on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the setting up of the scientific archive at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. On the Presidium, the head of the Scientific Information Center, Svobozarya Chajkovska, is sitting the third from the left. The fifth from the left is Mladen Kosev, head of the Central Archives Department at the Council of Ministers.

I started working in the State Archive with great unwillingness. I felt disoriented because I had been fired from my previous job after having proven that I work well. My new director was once my teacher, who was a good pedagogue, and understood my situation very well. He didn't give me any concrete tasks, but only an archivist's guide written by some Russian author. State archivists then had to collect documents whose ten-year validity period had expired, to put aside more valuable papers, that were worthy from a historical point of view, as well as to prepare a protocol, based on which experts had to issue their stance. Day by day I found this documentation very interesting.

I remember the publishing of documentation of the Central Co-operative Union. Their old archive was situated in a basement on Slaveykov Square in Sofia. My colleague and I went there as representatives of the State Archive. The air inside was soaked with steam from a cracked pipe from the central heating utility. Our feet were slapping in the mud on the floor. The committee that was to process these materials on the part of the Central Co-operative Union consisted of six or seven people. We worked with them. The moisture and steam had formed a mould layer of twelve centimeters on the files. We inhaled this poisonous air every day and began to run a temperature. This was one of the hardest situations in my work as an archivist. There were no such things at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. We were encouraged to make science and I had a lot more opportunities to work.

From the State Archive I moved to the archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences [BAS]. I had already received my scientific degree 'Candidate of Historical Sciences' and a career opportunity was open for me at BAS. I became a senior research fellow. I retired from BAS in 1982. The whole atmosphere there was academic. I felt morally encouraged, because I was making science, as opposed to the situation in the State Archive, where the work prevailed.