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YUGOSLAV FRIENDS OF A SOVIET HISTORIAN: THE CASE OF MAREN MIKHAILOVICH FREIDENBERG¹

This article examines the international scholarly connections of the Soviet historian and Balkan specialist Maren Mikhailovich Freidenberg (1924–2007) through the prism of his long-standing correspondence with Yugoslav scholars. The source base consists of the epistolary legacy preserved in the historian's personal collection held at the State Archive of Tver Oblast, which makes it possible to reconstruct the dynamics of these contacts, the thematic scope of communication, and the everyday practices of scholarly exchange under conditions of limited mobility characteristic of a "provincial" humanities scholar. The focus is placed on two sustained epistolary dialogues: with Ivan Božić, Professor at the University of Belgrade (1962–1977), and with Dušan Sindik, a researcher at the Institute of History of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (1976–1990). It is demonstrated that these connections were initially established at a distance and only later reinforced through personal meetings. Freidenberg regarded both Yugoslav historians as friends and repeatedly expressed his feelings of personal affection towards them. Communication with each of them had its own distinctive features, shaped by differences in age, professional status, and the prevailing scholarly and everyday circumstances. The central axis of this interaction was the exchange of books and offprints, and later of microfilmed sources, alongside consultations on historiography and discussions of specific research problems, above all those concerning the history of the cities of medieval Dalmatia. An analysis of this correspondence reveals examples of relations based on trust, including requests for the purchase of medicines, consumer goods, and other forms of everyday assistance, which complemented the professional dimension of these contacts and underscored their personal character. The article concludes that a clear divide existed between official, institutional channels of scholarly communication and personal networks. It was the latter that proved more reliable and productive, securing Freidenberg recognition within the Yugoslav scholarly community and contributing to the formation of his status as an expert on Yugoslav historiography.

Keywords: Maren Mikhailovich Freidenberg; Dušan Sindik; Ivan Božić; Soviet-Yugoslav relations; history of the medieval cities of Dalmatia; scholarly communication; Yugoslav historiography; Balkan studies.

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Scholarly contacts between Soviet and foreign researchers in the second half of the 20th century took shape and developed in different ways. In some cases, institutional cooperation evolved into close personal relationships that were not merely professional in nature but also assumed a distinctly friendly character. The history of Soviet scholarship offers examples in which individual scholars succeeded in building extensive networks of communication with colleagues abroad. The paths by which such contacts were established could vary considerably. The broad international connections of Soviet historians crowned with academic honours and working in major research centres are hardly surprising. As a rule, these were scholars based in Moscow, Leningrad, or Kyiv, who had opportunities to travel abroad on official assignments and to host foreign researchers in their own institutions.

Within the hierarchical structure of Soviet scholarship, however, humanities scholars working outside the capitals were far less involved in international scholarly communication than their metropolitan counterparts. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify cases in which non-metropolitan historians managed to create and sustain wide-ranging networks of contacts with foreign colleagues. In this respect, one may recall, for example, the Byzantinist Mikhail Iakovlevich Siuzumov from Sverdlovsk or the specialist in 19th-century Russian history Nikolai Alekseevich Troitskii from Saratov.

Among such non-metropolitan scholars who succeeded in establishing extensive and durable networks of international scholarly communication, a special place is occupied by the Balkan specialist Maren Mikhailovich Freidenberg (1924–2007). His personal papers preserved at the State Archive of Tver Oblast (collection no. 1981) contain an extensive body of correspondence with foreign colleagues, predominantly from socialist countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. It is hardly surprising that the most numerous of Freidenberg's correspondents, given his keen interest in the history of Dalmatian cities, were Yugoslav historians. His case is noteworthy not only for the scale of these contacts but also because long-term, close interaction with scholars from Yugoslavia was a relatively rare phenomenon within Soviet historical scholarship.

M. M. FREIDENBERG: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF AN ERA

Maren Mikhailovich Freidenberg was born on 9 July 1924 to a mathematics teacher and an economist.² His father, who had been involved in the revolutionary movement, chose for his son the rather uncommon name *Maren* (in Russian – *Марэн*), derived from the names of Marx and Engels.³ In his autobiography of 1953, the scholar wrote that until 1930 he had lived together with his parents in Moscow and then, until 1938, in Kuibyshev, where his father allegedly died in 1936 from “angina pectoris”.⁴ Meanwhile, for obvious reasons, the historian concealed certain details of his biography. The Freidenberg family did not leave Moscow of their own free will, nor did this occur in 1930. In 1927 they were exiled to Siberia, to the town of Kamen’. Three years later, they were permitted to move to Kuibyshev. There Mikhail Markovich Freidenberg was arrested and executed.⁵ From that point on, as the historian later recalled in his memoirs, a new life began – the life of a “son of an enemy of the people”, and “its first stage, its first step, was the necessity to conceal one’s true biography, to conceal it for several decades”.⁶ In 1938, Maren and his mother moved to Feodosia, seemingly in an attempt to disappear from the field of vision of the NKVD (the Soviet secret police). From 1938 to 1941 they lived in Crimea, which they left at the beginning of the war. Whether they were evacuated to the Urals, as stated in the autobiography of 1953, or hastily departed on their own initiative in order to move further away from the theatre of military operations, as stated in memoirs penned in the 1990s, remains unclear.⁷ The Freidenbergs eventually found themselves in Sverdlovsk, where in 1942 Maren Mikhailovich completed a Teachers’ Institute training programme by correspondence and took up work as a schoolteacher.

In 1943, Freidenberg was conscripted into the army. From February 1944 until the end of the war he served as a submachine gunner. About his

2 И. Г. ВОРОБЬЁВА, “Марэн Михайлович Фрейденберг (1924–2007)”, *Средние века* 69, no. 1 (2008): 165–167; И. Г. ВОРОБЬЁВА, О. А. АКИМОВА, “Памяти Марэна Михайловича Фрейденберга”, *Славяноведение*, no. 2 (2008): 125–126.

3 М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Я – историк”, in: М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, *Очерки истории балканско-го еврейства. Я – историк* (Тель-Авив: Библиотека Матвея Черного, 1998), 99.

4 *Государственный архив Тверской области* (ГАТО), ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 2, л. 10.

5 The historian’s father was rehabilitated in 1965 (ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 2, л. 11–12).

6 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, Я – историк, 100.

7 *Ibid.*, 102.

wartime experience he left only a brief remark in his memoirs: “Together with my brigade I passed through Moldova, Romania, Vojvodina, and Hungary. On the march near Subotica I heard Serbian speech for the first time. In my flat there still hangs a 17th-century medieval engraving, a reminder of the heavy fighting near Székesfehérvár in January 1945.”⁸ Could the soldier Freidenberg, in those harsh days, have imagined that he would hear Serbian speech many more times – and, moreover, that he himself would one day read and write in that language?

After returning to civilian life, Freidenberg enrolled in the Faculty of History of the V.I. Lenin Moscow State Pedagogical Institute, from which he graduated in 1949. During his student years, Freidenberg defined the field of his scholarly interests, concentrating on the study of Byzantine history. This choice entailed considerable difficulties: Greek was not taught at the Institute, nor was there a course on Byzantine history. As the historian later recalled, “I had to begin everything from scratch and then proceed entirely on my own.”⁹

In 1949, Freidenberg entered postgraduate study at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.¹⁰ His postgraduate years were far from easy, both in everyday and in scholarly terms. He left the following notes about that period: “Three years of intense work (my mother and I rented a room outside Moscow) bore fruit – I prepared the text necessary for the defence of a candidate [...] dissertation. The level of my knowledge was still not very high, foreign literature reached us through the ‘Iron Curtain’ irregularly, but I learned how to work.”¹¹

Freidenberg defended his Candidate of Sciences dissertation, entitled “*Agrarian Relations in Byzantium in the 11th–12th Centuries*”, at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1953. After the defence, it took him half a year to find employment. A suitable position was eventually found at the Pedagogical Institute in Velikiye Luki. At that time, there were several prominent Soviet scholars of Jewish origin working there, scholars for whom the path to Moscow was effectively closed. Among Freidenberg’s colleagues were Sergei Borisovich Kan, a specialist in Modern History, Aleksandr Petrovich Kazhdan, a specialist in Byzantine history, and Yakov Nikolaevich Liubarskii, at that time still a philologist (later a specialist in Byzantine history). Communication with

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid, 103.

10 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 2, л. 10 об.

11 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Я – историк”, 104.

these colleagues, on the one hand alleviated the monotony of provincial life and, on the other, motivated Freidenberg to make up for gaps in his education. The historian remained in Velikiye Luki for thirteen years. In 1966, he obtained a position at the Kalinin Pedagogical Institute, which had become vacant after the medievalist Aron Yakovlevich Gurevich moved to Moscow. Until 1990, Freidenberg's career was connected with this institution, which in 1972 was reorganised into Kalinin State University. In 1978, he became head of the Department of Ancient and Medieval History. The reorganisation of this department took several years. In a letter dated 28 November 1976, Freidenberg wrote to the Byzantinist Siuzyumov, Professor at Sverdlovsk State University: "And how would you look upon it if, during the present academic year, I were to drop by your department in order to gain some experience in administration?"¹²

Freidenberg's first foreign contacts date back to his period in Velikiye Luki. To a considerable extent, these were prompted by the fact that the subject of his studies was the history of Dalmatian city-states. "I felt an acute need to establish contacts with Yugoslav scholars," as Freidenberg himself described his feelings.¹³

It is noteworthy that among Freidenberg's earliest correspondents were two well-known Russian historians who had emigrated from Russia after the Revolution of 1917: the Byzantinists Georgii Aleksandrovich Ostrogorsky (1902–1976) and Vladimir Alekseevich Moshin (1894–1987). The beginning of his epistolary communication with them dates to 1957–1958.¹⁴ This correspondence shows that Freidenberg turned to Moshin, who was working in Zagreb, with a request for assistance in establishing contacts with local scholars. In a letter dated 24 November 1959, he wrote: "I would like, if you would allow me, to take advantage of your assistance and make the acquaintance of Croatian historians, first and foremost N. Klaić. But I myself fully understand that scholarly acquaintance can only be established after an initial exchange of works, and my own works are still lying on my writing desk. Thus, I shall have to wait for better times."¹⁵ These "better times", however, arrived fairly soon. In the early 1960s, Freidenberg's correspondence with Yugoslav scholars intensified sharply. This was facilitated by the warming of Soviet–Yugoslav relations

12 Государственный архив Свердловской области (ГАСО), ф. Р-802, оп. 1, д. 248, л. 7.

13 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, "Я – историк", 108.

14 ГАСО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 429, л. 1 об.; д. 431, л. 1–1 об.

15 ГАСО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 429, л. 10–10 об.

in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁶ Freidenberg's personal papers, which are preserved at the State Archive of Tver Oblast (collection no. 1981), contain extensive correspondence with colleagues from Yugoslavia. In total, there are approximately 90 correspondents.¹⁷ The intensity and closeness of communication, however, varied considerably, ranging from the exchange of a few isolated letters to friendships that lasted several decades. Acknowledging that it is impossible within the framework of a single article to conduct a full analysis of such a massive epistolary corpus, the present study focuses on Freidenberg's communication with two prominent Yugoslav historians – Ivan Božić and Dušan Sindik. In both cases, this was a long-term, multi-year, and intensive correspondence. It is noteworthy that Freidenberg's papers preserve not only letters addressed to him by his Yugoslav colleagues but also copies of his replies, often bearing notes indicating the date of dispatch. Finally, another reason for focusing specifically on these two historians lies in the special attitude Freidenberg held towards each of them. He referred to both Božić and Sindik as his "friends by correspondence".¹⁸ The present article seeks to trace how contacts between these historians were established and developed, and to identify the factors that influenced them.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF LIFE REFLECTED IN THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN IVAN BOŽIĆ AND M. M. FREIDENBERG

A substantive epistolary dialogue connected Ivan Božić (1915–1977), Professor at the University of Belgrade, and the Soviet historian Freidenberg. This correspondence lasted from 1962 until the death of the Yugoslav scholar in 1977. The two historians were brought together by a shared scholarly interest in the medieval history of Dubrovnik. In 1951, Božić had defended his dissertation entitled "Dubrovnik and Turkey in the 14th and

16 А. Б. ЕДЕМСКИЙ, *От конфликта к нормализации. Советско-югославские отношения в 1953–1956 годах* (Москва: Наука, 2008); Б. С. НОВОСЕЛЬЦЕВ, "От нормализации к конфликту: советско-югославские отношения весной – летом 1956 г.", *Новое прошлое*, no. 1 (2017): 45–56.

17 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 393–455.

18 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, "Я – историк", 109.

15th Centuries”.¹⁹ Dubrovnik interested Freidenberg not only in its own right, but also within the broader context of the history of Dalmatia. This interest would later result in his fundamental monograph *Dubrovnik and the Ottoman Empire*.²⁰ Božić was an influential Yugoslav historian. In the first half of the 1930s, he received his education at the University of Belgrade, and his subsequent academic career was likewise closely connected with this institution. In 1953–1954, he taught courses on the language and culture of the South Slavs at the Sorbonne. In 1954–1955, the historian undertook a research fellowship in Venice, working in archives and libraries. In the second half of the 1950s, Božić became Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade. His authority within the scholarly community was considerable, as evidenced not only by his election to the Montenegrin and Serbian Academies of Sciences and Arts, but also by his chairmanship of the Yugoslav National Committee of Historians.

The earliest surviving letter from the Yugoslav historian is dated 13 August 1962, although it is clear from its contents that the correspondence between the two historians had begun earlier.²¹ Božić thanked Freidenberg for the works he had sent on the “*Novigrad Codex*”²² and on the “polysemy of the concept of *servus*”.²³ In addition, the Yugoslav historian informed his colleague about works by the Slovenian scholar Bogo Grafenauer that might be of interest to him. At the end of the letter, he asked whether Freidenberg already possessed these publications and, for the purpose of further contact, provided Grafenauer’s address in Ljubljana.²⁴ In subsequent letters, the exchange of publications and information about new research frequently emerged as a central theme, alongside discussions of scholarly problems. Thus, in a letter dated 21 September 1965, Freidenberg thanked Božić for an article sent from *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis* (1964, no. 1, pp. 3–12) and shared his reflections: “I read it with great interest for two reasons: first, because it addresses the problem of transformations within feudal

19 И. БОЖИЋ, *Дубровник и Турска у XIV и XV веку* (Београд: Научна књига, 1952).

20 М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, *Дубровник и Османская империя* (Москва: Наука, 1984).

21 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 1.

22 М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “‘Новиградский сборник’ как источник по социально-экономической истории Хорватии”, in: *Славянский архив: сборник статей и материалов* (Москва: Изд-во Акад. наук СССР, 1962), 28–58.

23 М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “О многозначности понятия «servus» в Далматинской Хорватии X–XI вв.”, *Ученые записки Великолуцкого педагогического института. Великие Луки*, no. 20 (1962), 93–101.

24 No letters addressed to this historian, nor any replies written by him, have been identified in Freidenberg’s personal papers.

society, and moreover precisely in ‘my’ period; second, because the article contains principled ideas concerning the origin and character of ‘tribes’ and ‘brotherhoods’ in the 14th–16th centuries.”²⁵ Of particular satisfaction to the Soviet historian was the fact that in this study he found confirmation of his “deep conviction that both ‘tribes’ and ‘brotherhoods’ go back to the period of the clan system, and that the bearers of the relations of this system – clan and tribal relations in the Balkans – were semi-nomadic Illyrian-Thracian groups.”²⁶ The article made such a strong impression on Freidenberg that he wrote a review note about it for *Voprosy istorii*.²⁷

In 1965, the possibility of a future trip by Freidenberg to Yugoslavia was discussed in the correspondence for the first time. Thus, on 11 December 1965, he wrote, “I am making efforts to obtain the opportunity to travel to Yugoslavia next year. If this succeeds, I shall, of course, be delighted to visit you. Many thanks for the invitation!”²⁸ However, he was able to take advantage of this invitation only in September 1968. Freidenberg later recalled that he was greatly surprised by this journey: “My request, which had been lying in the passport office for years, was urgently endorsed, and within a few days I found myself on the Moscow–Belgrade train. A month-long (!) journey around the country awaited me.”²⁹ His surprise was prompted by the fact that permission was granted after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of the Warsaw Pact states. The Yugoslav government did not support this intervention, and this once again led to a deterioration in Soviet–Yugoslav relations.³⁰

Despite the tense political climate, Freidenberg’s trip proved successful. He was so deeply impressed by what he saw that many years later he recalled it as a turning point in his relationship “with the country [Yugoslavia – V.G.], its appearance, language, customs, and everyday life”.³¹ On the one hand, he was struck by the cities of Skopje, Peć, Kotor, Split, Trogir, and Dubrovnik. It seemed as though the pages of his scholarly books and the medieval folios

25 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 3.

26 Ibid.

27 М. М. ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Социальные отношения в Сербии перед турецким завоеванием”, *Вопросы истории*, no. 2 (1965): 198–199.

28 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 5.

29 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Я – историк”, 110.

30 Е. Ю. ГУСЬКОВА, “Научное сотрудничество в трудные годы: защита докторской диссертации В. Стругара в Институте славяноведения и балканистики АН СССР в 1968 г.”, in: *Славяне и Россия: славяне в Москве. К 870-летию со дня основания г. Москвы. Сборник статей* (Москва: Институт славяноведения РАН, 2018), 403–412.

31 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Я – историк”, 110.

he studied had come to life. No photograph, even of the highest quality, can replace the magic of the moment when a researcher, long separated from the object of his studies, encounters it in person, hears its breath, and senses its soul. On the other hand, Freidenberg wrote that the “strangling of the Prague Spring” also signified the end of the era of the Soviet “Sixtiers” (shestidesiatniki).³² In practical terms, for him and for those scholars who had tied their fate to Yugoslavia, this meant a transition into the category of the “suspect”.³³ It is therefore unsurprising that Freidenberg’s subsequent visits to Yugoslavia took place only in the 1980s.³⁴

It was precisely in the autumn of 1968 that Freidenberg and Božić met in person, after almost six years of correspondence. From that moment, their relationship developed into a friendship. In October 1968, Maren Mikhailovich’s wife, Lidiia Arkad’evna Kotliarskaia, wrote to Ivan Božić’s wife, Olga, expressing her gratitude for an “unexpected and luxurious gift” and extending an invitation to visit.³⁵ After Lidiia Arkad’evna’s words, Maren Mikhailovich joined the “conversation” in a playful tone: “Dear Olga! The fact that Lida is writing on a typewriter is not a sign of formality. If she were writing to you by hand, you would have to decipher her letter with the help of palaeographers – her handwriting is rather peculiar! In a week I shall be in Moscow and will certainly carry out your second request!”³⁶ The second request concerned the purchase and dispatch to Belgrade of a medicine for Olga Božić’s mother. Over the course of several years, this matter periodically resurfaced in the correspondence, and the

32 Ibid, 110–111.

33 Ibid.

34 It is known that in 1978 Freidenberg attempted to obtain permission to travel abroad. Thus, in a petition dated 17 May 1978 addressed to I. M. Solov’ev, Head of the Directorate of Internal Affairs of the Kalinin Oblast Executive Committee, the scholar asked, by way of exception, that his request for permission to make a private trip to Yugoslavia be considered. The trip was to take place at the invitation of acquaintances and for the purpose of scholarly work. The historian emphasised: “The study of a country is impossible without communication with people and acquaintance with monuments of antiquity and culture. Meanwhile, the last (and only) time when I had the opportunity to visit the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was ten years ago (in 1968)” (ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 2, л. 26 об.). In 1982, Freidenberg visited Yugoslavia to participate in a seminar on the Serbo-Croatian language; in 1983, he travelled there under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of the USSR to take part in a Soviet-Yugoslav symposium; in 1986, he visited Yugoslavia within the framework of a scholarly exchange; and in 1988, for tourist purposes (ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 2, л. 29, 31 об.)

35 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 8.

36 Ibid.

Freidenbergs consistently responded with care and attentiveness to the requests of their Yugoslav friends.

Maren Mikhailovich also informed Božić about certain events in Moscow's scholarly life, while at the same time making no mention of affairs in Kalinin (in contrast to his letters to other colleagues in the 1980s, when departmental life there was more active). In June 1966, the historian wrote that he had just returned from Moscow, where a scholarly session devoted to problems of the genesis of feudalism in the countries of Western Europe had taken place from 30 May to 3 June.³⁷ This information may well have been of interest to Božić, since at that time he was working on problems relating to the history of the Serbian state in the 9th–11th centuries. Freidenberg shared his impressions of the session as follows: "For me it was very interesting, since I began my work on the history of Byzantine, and later Croatian, feudalism with the period of the 10th–11th centuries, that is, with early feudalism. And also because at this meeting in Moscow [...] there was a great deal of discussion about the role of the city, and the city is my 'hobby'."³⁸

In the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s, urban history became one of the major thematic directions in Soviet historiography and attracted the attention of scholars from various research and educational centres. Perhaps the most striking examples are provided by historians from Saratov and Kalinin universities, who published collective volumes and organised scholarly conferences devoted to this theme.³⁹

In the 1960s, Freidenberg was actively working on his doctoral dissertation entitled *The Dalmatian City and Its Rural Hinterland in the 13th–14th Centuries*, which he completed in 1969. In the same year, he approached Yugoslav historians, including Božić, with a request to write an evaluation of the dissertation abstract. At the beginning of January 1970, the Yugoslav scholar sent his review, accompanied by a personal letter. Božić congratulated his Soviet colleague on his outstanding work and wrote that he had greatly appreciated the dissertation. At the same time, he noted with a degree of regret, "If you had had the opportunity

37 З. Г. Самодурова, "Актуальные проблемы ранней истории феодальной формации", *Вопросы истории*, no. 9 (1966): 159–163.

38 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 7.

39 В. С. Груздинская, М. В. Ковалев, "Тема городской жизни стучалась в двери ученых кабинетов": Марэн Михайлович Фрейденберг и изучение истории средневекового города в 1950-е – 1980-е гг. (по материалам переписки)", *Электронный научно-образовательный журнал «История»* 16, no. 9 (155) (2025): <https://doi.org/10.18254/S207987840036560-5>

to work in the archives for a prolonged period, I think you could have improved it.”⁴⁰

Freidenberg was deeply touched by this recognition on the part of such an authoritative specialist. In his reply dated 21 January 1970, he wrote, “I shall perhaps begin with the main point – with my gratitude for the words you wrote in your review. When, in our country, a dissertation on the history of another, not our own, country is defended, the essential thing is to learn what is thought of this work there, in that country. That is why it is so important for me to receive your review (and so quickly, so promptly!). And when I read your flattering assessment of the work itself, I am doubly grateful to you.”⁴¹

Unfortunately, no copy of this review has been preserved in Freidenberg’s personal papers. However, in the same letter he clarified a number of points that had raised questions for Božić. In particular, the two scholars differed in the way they related the concepts of “citizenship” and “citizens” (*cives*). Maren Mikhailovich emphasised that in his research these terms were not synonymous: the right of citizenship “had existed for a very long time (from at least the beginning of the 13th century) with all its privileges [...] – the right to sell goods on the city market, and so forth. Yet there was no specific designation for it; among the terms most frequently used was *terrigena*.” By contrast, the latter concept (the stratum of *cives*), emerged rather late in Split.⁴²

The defence of Freidenberg’s doctoral dissertation was far from easy: the text was discussed for a long time and with considerable difficulty. The defence ultimately took place in 1971 at the Institute of Slavic and Balkan Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Freidenberg did not write to Božić about the difficulties he encountered in this process; nevertheless, on one occasion he hinted in a letter that his career had reached its peak and that election to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR would never be possible for him.⁴³

On the occasion of the Božić couple’s visit to Moscow, Freidenberg invited them to undertake a journey to the Russian North: “You have come up with a splendid idea – to travel together to the Russian North (Vologda, Belozersk, the old monasteries) or to Karelia (Kizhi). For this, it is necessary that I be able to invite both you and Olga to stay with us (‘as guests’). A

40 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 404, л. 24.

41 Ibid, л. 25.

42 Ibid, л. 25 об.

43 Ibid, л. 48.

few years ago, it was possible to invite both relatives and acquaintances freely; now, only relatives are permitted. As soon as the opportunity arises to invite you, I shall write to you – I hope you will agree, and we shall begin to arrange the documents.”⁴⁴ Božić did receive this invitation, but he was unable to take advantage of it. This was prevented by the scholar’s illness, which, incidentally, also affected the frequency of his correspondence with Freidenberg. Communication became significantly less frequent.

Maren Mikhailovich nevertheless continued to share news of his life, including matters of everyday routine. Thus, he wrote about his travels to Lake Baikal, to the Black Sea coast, and to Torzhok, and also mentioned his son. In 1976, Freidenberg visited Bulgaria, and he described this trip in a letter dated 31 October 1976: “We were in Sofia, in Tŭrnovo, and at the seaside as well (and even went swimming, like desperate Germans). What a small world it is: Dimitar Doichinov (the husband of the Ottomanist Bistra Tsvetkova) turned out to be a specialist in the history of the Bay of Kotor (Boka Kotorska).”⁴⁵

The last letter from Ivan Božić arrived in January 1977, in which he wrote about the deterioration of his health.⁴⁶ On 20 August 1977, the scholar passed away. Freidenberg sent a letter of condolence to the University of Belgrade, in which he noted, “I had the opportunity to meet this remarkable man comparatively rarely, but I followed his academic writings closely ~~his works~~ and for fifteen years had been engaged in a friendly correspondence with him. This is a loss not only for Serbian but for European historical scholarship as a whole, including Soviet historiography.”⁴⁷

For several years following Božić’s death, Maren Mikhailovich continued to correspond with his widow, Olga. As a rule, these letters were timed to coincide with the anniversary of her husband’s death. In September 1979, Freidenberg wrote, “I remember 20 August all the time, dear Olga, but it is not customary for us to remind one another of sad anniversaries (unlike in your country, where this is observed), and I did not dare to write to you. It is a pity that you do not decide to come to visit me in response to my invitation: a tourist trip leaves so little time for private meetings!”⁴⁸ Maren Mikhailovich preserved a warm memory of his colleague for the

44 Ibid, п. 49.

45 Ibid, п. 64.

46 Ibid, п. 24.

47 Ibid, п. 68.

48 Ibid, п. 74.

rest of his life. In his memoirs, he left a sketch of Božić as “a connoisseur of Montenegrin and Boka Kotorska themes, gentle, tactful, and a true aristocrat of the spirit.”⁴⁹

DUŠAN SINDIK AND M. M. FREIDENBERG: A BUSINESSLIKE CONVERSATION “FROM THE HEART”

Another of Freidenberg’s “friends by correspondence” was Dušan Sindik (1933–2017). The Yugoslav scholar worked in the field of medieval archaeography and also studied the history of Jews in the Balkans during the Middle Ages. From 1962 until the end of his life, he was employed at the Institute of History of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which had been headed in 1954–1958 by his father, Ilija Sindik (1888–1958).

The circumstances under which Maren Mikhailovich and Dušan Il’ich – this being the form of address frequently used by the Soviet historian in his letters – first became acquainted remain unknown. The earliest surviving letter is dated 9 March 1976. From its contents it is clear that contact between the two scholars had been established earlier, although the exact date is not specified. Thus, on 9 March 1976 Sindik wrote, “Well, I think you remember that you are dealing with a person who is lazy when it comes to picking up a pen.”⁵⁰

Freidenberg replied on 31 March 1976, “I am answering your letter so quickly, on the very same day [evidently the day of receipt – V.G.], not at all out of a desire thereby to hurry you (or, as we say, ‘to needle’ you), but simply because it is pleasant to be assured that neither time nor circumstances have interrupted our relations, that you have responded in such a friendly manner.”⁵¹

This epistolary dialogue was conducted alternately in Russian and in Serbian. As in the case of Ivan Božić, the central theme of this exchange was the circulation of scholarly publications. It is noteworthy that from the beginning of the 1980s the scholars sent each other not only original books and offprints of articles but also microfilms of sources. In particular, Sindik made such a request on 23 March 1981. At that moment, Freidenberg

49 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, “Я – историк”, 109.

50 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 438, л. 1.

51 Ibid, л. 2.

was uncertain how to proceed, since the matter concerned the copying of materials for a foreign scholar, albeit one from socialist Yugoslavia. He therefore sought advice from colleagues. In April 1981, Freidenberg received a letter from Lyudmila Ilyinichna Kiseleva, a palaeographer of the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. She advised him to contact the Library's administration directly, adding specific guidance on what and how to write in such a request.

Following her recommendations, on 20 April Freidenberg wrote to the Library as follows: "I would like to address you with a request to microfilm the manuscript 'Evangelium seu lectioarium ad usum accliesiae Cattarenensis' (11th–12th centuries, Dalmatia, Kotor), described in Lyudmila Ilyinichna Kiseleva's book *Latin Manuscripts of the Library of the Academy of Sciences* (Leningrad, 1978). The manuscript contains documents relating to the history of the Church of St Tryphon in Kotor in the years 1124–1255. These texts are very important for me as a specialist in the history of Dalmatia."⁵² The historian provided his address for the dispatch of the microfilms and guaranteed payment. Significantly, he did not go into detail as to for whom the microfilms were in fact intended. Most likely, Maren Mikhailovich acted in this way in order to avoid both unnecessary explanations and unwarranted suspicions.

In July of the same year, Sindik received the desired sources.⁵³ After working through the materials, the Yugoslav historian asked Freidenberg for permission to publish them. Maren Mikhailovich raised no principled objections; however, in a letter dated 29 January 1982 he noted, "Since the microfilm was made for me, it would be useful if I were also to report in print on the use of this text. Therefore, I have one request for you: please identify in the text yourself two or three passages that could be used for references to the internal history of the city of Kotor [...] and send them to me – preferably in the form of brief quotations and, of course, with page references."⁵⁴ In March of the same year, Sindik replied that he would send suitable materials once he had completed his work with the source.⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that Freidenberg did not discuss his own visits to Yugoslavia with his colleague. On several occasions, however, Sindik's trips to the USSR were mentioned in the correspondence. On one occasion, this discussion even acquired something of a vaudeville tone. On 22 September

52 *Ibid.*, n. 26.

53 *Ibid.*, n. 28.

54 *Ibid.*, n. 32.

55 *Ibid.*, n. 36.

1979, Sindik asked Freidenberg not to mention in future letters that certain Soviet women had been charmed by him. The Yugoslav historian added: “My Nadežda’s first reaction was the same: ‘So that means you must not go to the Union.’ Thus, until the next opportunity arises, I have no domestic permission to travel to the Union!”⁵⁶

The “charmed” Soviet woman in question was most likely Yulia Vladimirovna Ivanova (1922–2006), a researcher at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and a specialist on the Balkans in general and Albania in particular. In September 1979 she was on an official assignment in Belgrade and met with Sindik there. He asked her to deliver a parcel to Freidenberg. Evidently, she not only fulfilled this request but also shared her impressions of her interaction with the Yugoslav historian, which Maren Mikhailovich noted in his letter. An equally intriguing story unfolded around this parcel.

In January 1979, Freidenberg wrote that for several years he had had an “honorarium” pending in Yugoslavia, which was difficult to transfer to the USSR. He therefore wished to make use of these funds and asked one of his Yugoslav friends to purchase a gift for his wife on his behalf, inquiring whether it might be possible to bring the gift to Moscow on an appropriate occasion.⁵⁷ This topic was not pursued further in the correspondence. In the summer of 1979, the Yugoslav historian visited the Soviet Union, and it is possible that during a personal meeting the two scholars agreed that Sindik would make the necessary purchases and pass them on via Ivanova. This is, in fact, what happened. On 8 September, Sindik reported on the “work” he had carried out: “This morning I went to the bank to collect your money. It turned out that the Yugoslav Academy had paid not only 4,500 dinars into my account, as you mentioned in your letter, but 5,500 dinars. So now I must give you a full account: suit 2,100 [dinars] + boots 1,504 [dinars] = 3,604 [dinars]. With me: 5,500 [dinars] – 3,604 [dinars] = 1,896 [dinars].”⁵⁸ Thus, Ivanova brought a suit and a pair of boots for Freidenberg and his wife. At that time, Yugoslav goods were of high quality and enjoyed considerable demand among Soviet consumers.

There were also requests of a rather exotic nature. In particular, at the end of 1981 Sindik asked Freidenberg to help him establish contact with the healer Dzhuna Davitashvili. The Yugoslav scholar’s health had

56 *Ibid.*, n. 17.

57 *Ibid.*, n. 11.

58 *Ibid.*, n. 16.

deteriorated during those years, and for this reason he decided to resort to methods of non-conventional medicine. At that time, the fame of Soviet healers had spread far beyond the borders of the USSR. Maren Mikhailovich took this request seriously. Thus, in a letter dated 29 January he wrote, “Dear Dušan Il’ich, I must report to you with regret that nothing has come of the matter with Dzhuna. And not because I failed to reach her – on the contrary, circumstances developed in the most favourable way possible. I happened to have a very close acquaintance in Tbilisi who is connected with Moscow physicians. One of these Moscow doctors, a reflexologist (incidentally, the daughter-in-law of our famous pilot Valerii Chkalov, well known before the war), works at the Botkin Hospital in Moscow. I went to the hospital, met her, made arrangements on your behalf, and we began to approach Dzhuna repeatedly with requests. But alas – Dzhuna said that she would not risk undertaking the treatment... Perhaps after some time I will be able to meet Dzhuna myself (she works at the Kremlin Polyclinic, and it is not easy to gain access to her); perhaps we shall persuade her yet, but this will take time. For the moment, however, the outcome is less than satisfactory.”⁵⁹ Freidenberg made a second attempt to contact Dzhuna in the spring, about which he immediately wrote to Belgrade: “As for Dzhuna, the news is bad: Dzhuna has fallen seriously ill – she pursued her healing activities too relentlessly and has overexerted herself... Therefore, for the near future one cannot count on her, regrettable as this may be.”⁶⁰

How this story with the healer ultimately ended – whether it proved possible to secure an appointment with her, or whether further attempts were made – remains unknown, as the correspondence makes no further mention of the matter. In letters from 1982, the theme of health arose on several occasions, above all in connection with the purchase and dispatch to Sindik of various medicines and even a hearing aid.⁶¹ Evidently, the Yugoslav historian was experiencing serious health problems. In one of his letters, he reported that he was facing hospitalisation in a clinic in order to undergo a biopsy.⁶² From September 1982 to January 1983, Sindik ceased responding to Freidenberg’s letters. When contact was restored, the Soviet scholar wrote that he had been “thoroughly worried”, adding parenthetically: “We are all in God’s hands.”⁶³

59 Ibid, n. 32.

60 Ibid, n. 37.

61 Ibid, n. 42, 44.

62 Ibid, n. 36.

63 Ibid, n. 46.

In his letters, Freidenberg frequently asked Sindik about how matters stood with their Yugoslav colleagues, especially when he had not received a reply from someone for a long time. The number of scholars mentioned in this context is striking and once again attests to the high degree of Freidenberg's integration into the Yugoslav community of historians. The names of Soviet colleagues appeared in the epistolary exchange extremely rarely. Apart from Ivanova, the correspondence mentions Evgenii Naumov, a medievalist at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, in connection with his sudden death in January 1990. Sindik wrote, "Your letter of 23 January is very sad, distressing, and I simply do not know how else to put it. I was utterly shocked. As recently as 13 January Evgenii Pavlovich had written to me about illnesses in his family, and I received that letter on the 18th, or thereabouts – a day earlier or later – when he had already left us. How terrible!"⁶⁴

Sociopolitical topics were likewise not raised in the correspondence, and for this reason Freidenberg's decision to emigrate to Israel together with his family came as a surprise to Sindik. In the latest of the surviving letters, dated 21 October 1990, the Yugoslav scholar could not conceal his astonishment: "The decision is a very important one and, if I may put it this way, heroic, given your age. Yet it is circumstances and conditions that make heroes. From our side, the very best wishes and warm congratulations go out to you and to Lidiia Arkad'evna. All the best to you in your new – rather, your ancient – homeland. If it is Eretz Israel, then I am already inviting myself to visit you."⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the sources currently at our disposal do not allow us to answer the question of whether correspondence and communication between the two scholars continued thereafter.

In all likelihood, the decision to relocate was not a spontaneous one. In the spring of 1990, Maren Mikhailovich and Lidiia Aleksandrovna travelled to Israel to visit relatives. The historian wrote about this journey to his Czechoslovak friends Zdenka and Rudolf Veselý: "We returned completely overwhelmed. We could not even speak – everything impressed us so profoundly. Thus, we have enough impressions to last us for several weeks."⁶⁶ In his memoirs, however, the account he gives of émigré life is devoid of such enthusiastic sentiments.⁶⁷ The first difficulty they encountered abroad was connected with mastering Hebrew. According to

64 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 438, л. 58.

65 Ibid, л. 60.

66 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 389, л. 29.

67 ФРЕЙДЕНБЕРГ, "Я – историк", 116–119.

Freidenberg, this task ultimately proved insurmountable. In his research work, he was aided by his knowledge of other foreign languages – Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Italian, German, Slovene and English. The historian was fortunate in finding a position in Israel that matched his professional expertise: he received a fellowship at the Institute of the Diaspora and began to study the history of Jews in the Balkans in the 16th–18th centuries. The tragic events in Yugoslavia and the painful disintegration of the federation were recalled by the scholar with bitterness. At the same time, in Israel he was regarded as an expert on Balkan affairs, and the media frequently turned to him for commentary on current developments.

Taken together, the correspondence between Freidenberg and Ivan Božić, on the one hand, and Dušan Sindik on the other, reflects almost thirty years of the Soviet scholar's life. He regarded both Yugoslav historians as friends and repeatedly expressed his feelings of personal attachment to them. Communication with each of them had its own distinctive features, shaped by differences in age, the respective positions of the correspondents, and the prevailing scholarly and everyday circumstances. In both cases, contact was established at a distance and preceded the scholars' personal acquaintance. The emphasis placed in this article on delicate issues of health is not accidental: it points to relationships of trust and genuine friendship. Another common feature of these epistolary dialogues was the mutual assistance provided by colleagues in locating and exchanging scholarly publications. In this respect, personal contacts proved more effective than official, institutional interaction, which, it should be noted, was far from always successful. In particular, Freidenberg made several attempts to establish contacts with the president of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, Grga Novak, who was also a historian and specialist on the history of Split. In six of the seven surviving letters, Freidenberg proposed establishing an exchange of publications, each time informing his addressee of his own new works. Since the collection contains only letters addressed to the president, it is possible that none of them ever received a reply.⁶⁸ Needless to say, not all issues could be discussed in correspondence. Thus, sociopolitical topics in Freidenberg's exchange with Sindik could emerge only during the years of perestroika.

68 ГАТО, ф. 1981, оп. 1, д. 430, л. 1–7.

The case of communication examined here allows for a preliminary and cautious conclusion regarding a “gulf” between official, institutional ties and personal networks. In the mid-1960s to the 1980s, the latter proved to be more stable and reliable, as they were grounded in mutual interest, respect and trust and were free from unnecessary formality. A well-established network of communication, together with a benevolent yet businesslike style of interaction, ensured that Freidenberg – a historian working outside the metropolitan centres – gained recognition within the Yugoslav scholarly community, while the highly unconventional organisation of exchanges of books and articles enabled him to become an expert on contemporary Yugoslav historiography.

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