ON BYELORUSSIAN SSR ACTIVITIES IN UNESCO IN THE YEARS OF KHRUSHCHEV “THAW” (1954–1964)

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The article includes a multi-factor analysis of the Byelorussian SSR (BSSR) UNESCO activities for the first ten years. On the basis of the archive documents the conditions of and reasons for the accession, the system of operations management and the decision-making process on membership issues are considered, the two stages of the developments are marked and their content is revealed, the influence of the international situation is reflected, the role and the place of the Byelorussian SSR in the specialization division between the Soviet delegations and the delegations of the socialist countries are found. The peculiarities of the republic’s diplomatic activity as a subject of international relations and international law, the achievements and the results of the cooperation, the problems and the difficulties in the interaction are characterized. UNESCO’s place in the system of interaction with international organizations and in the foreign policy activities of the BSSR in general is defined.

Keywords: international relations; foreign policy; diplomacy; Byelorussian SSR; Belarus; UNESCO; Khrushchev “thaw”; international cooperation in education, science and culture.

By means of the participation in UNESCO Belarus gets integrated in the global educational, scientific and cultural space. The multiannual membership in the Organization and the showdowm of achievements in the fields of its competence contributes to the creation of a positive image of the Republic of Belarus on the global stage being among the most significant channels of study and implementation of the world innovations in culture and a catalyst for the effectiveness increase of the public diplomacy and the foreign policy of the country. It was still the Soviet time when the documentary publications reflecting to a certain degree the Byelorussian SSR UNESCO activities appeared [4; 3; 17; 18]. After the end of the cold war the publications continued [6]. Nevertheless, an enormous array of valuable documents of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the republic that were declassified in the 1990s is out of them [1; 11]. Among the Soviet researchers of the cooperation of the Soviet Union and the Byelorussian SSR with UNESCO one should note Y. Brovko (1961), V. Kolbasin (1963), S. Romanovsky, N. Sisakian, V. Vakhrushev (1966), G. Uranov (1986), L. Yazykovich (1986) [2; 9; 16; 14; 20], but their works were based on a limited source and methodological basis and on the apologetics of the Soviet foreign policy. In 2002 a German-Russian collection of articles that is of interest as a reference book appeared [15]. The interaction of the Soviet Union and UNESCO in the years of the cold war on archive materials for the first time introduced in the scientific circulation is reflected in the publications by J. Hajduk (2008) [7; 8] and S. Svilas (2013) [13]. Among the Western researchers of UNESCO we should mention the works by W. Preston (1989), M. Lacoste (1994), F. Valderrama (1995), and R. Droit (2005) [5; 10; 12; 19]. On the basis of the archive documents and the contemporary historiography the author analyzes comprehensively the activities of the Byelorussian SSR in the Organization for the first ten years of its membership.

CONDITIONS OF AND REASONS FOR THE BYELORUSSIAN SSR UNESCO ACCESSION

The Republic’s UNESCO accession in May 1954, in the eighth year of the existence of the Organization, happened under the conditions of destalinization and the peaceful coexistence principle implementation by the Kremlin. The key goal of the activities in the Organization was defined by the leadership of the Republican propaganda of the educational, scientific and cultural achievements of the Republic in the world as well as the participation in propaganda of the Soviet Union achievements as a whole, its ideology and the advantages of the Soviet socialist system. The BSSR UNESCO membership was significantly influenced by the mentality of the Belarusian society. The participants of the interaction with the UNESCO considered the peaceful coexistence as a condition for
the victory of the socialism on a global scale and for the implementation of the plans of the communist construction whereas the Republic was perceived as the “small Motherland”, a part of the great Soviet Union. It was common for them to share a feeling of pride for the successes of the USSR, to play down the achievements of the Western civilization and the transformation potential of the capitalism, to lack knowledge or understanding of many phenomena of the artistic culture. Endowing the Soviet diplomacy with the “noble features” they regarded the Western diplomacy as an instrument to impose the will of the imperialists on other nations and were suspicious of its connections with the intelligence agencies.

**SYSTEM OF OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT AND PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING ON ACCESSION ISSUES**

The formation of the operations management system of the Byelorussian SSR in UNESCO was underway since 1954. Its central place belonged to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that brought to the cooperation with the Organization the ministries of education and culture, the Belarusian society of friendship and cultural ties with the USSR, and the Academy of Sciences. In October 1956 a special communications body with UNESCO Secretariat was created – the BSSR Commission for UNESCO affairs. Interdepartmental by its composition it was supervised by the Republican Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Through it other ministries and public organizations – the State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the BSSR on the scientific and technical work coordination, the Belarusian society on political and scientific knowledge dissemination, the Belarusian Republican Council of labour unions, the Central Committee of Komsomol, and the artistic unions – joined in the cooperation. The formation of the system was over in May 1962 when the Permanent Representative of the Byelorussian SSR to UNESCO started his work. The Byelorussian SSR UNESCO membership was underway under the conditions of the party and state monopoly in the international affairs and the slightly raised “iron curtain”. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the BSSR was under control of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia and the decisions on the cooperation of the Republic with the Organization were agreed on with the Moscow “Centre” – the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, the USSR Commission for UNESCO affairs and the Central Committee of the CPSS. In 1957 the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers for cultural ties with the foreign countries that formally didn’t have any republican structures subordinate to it was created. Nevertheless, the USSR Commission for UNESCO affairs created in the union Ministry of Culture passed under the control of this body whereas the Chairperson of the Committee was at the same time the Chairperson of the Commission.

**PERIODIZATION OF THE RELATIONS IN 1954–1964, PECULIARITIES AND DETAILS OF THE MAIN STAGES**

In the activities of the Belarusian SSR in UNESCO two periods should be marked: 1954–1960 and 1961–1964. During the first stage the formation of the interaction system was in progress. A communications body between the republican government and UNESCO Secretariat was created, experience of participation in UNESCO forums at the global and regional levels was acquired, the cooperation issues started to be discussed at the meetings of the Collegium of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the first visit to Minsk of the Secretariat official was undertaken. The Byelorussian SSR approved of the primary goals of the organization, voted in favour of the long-lasting UNESCO projects starting to contribute to their implementation, began to participate in the formation of UNESCO regulatory framework and to develop extra-conference cooperation forms (nomination of specialists to the staff of the Organization and through the Program of technical assistance to the economically under-developed countries, scholarship programs, information inquiries and responses to them, publishing activities, exhibitions and tourist trips).

In 1961–1964 under the conditions of the “cold war” globalization and the transformation of the USSR into the superpower, the loss of the Western monopoly in the development of the key UNESCO activities direction due to the accession to the Organization of more than twenty African states the Byelorussian activeness in UNESCO went up. In Minsk the international workshop “Social aspects of industrialization” aimed at convincing of the delegates of the developing nations in the advantages of the Soviet model of socialism was held. The visits of the Secretariat officials became of regular character, the work of the permanent representative of the Byelorussian SSR at the organization started. 1963 Moscow meeting between the Minister of foreign affairs of the republic and the UNESCO Secretary General stimulated the interest of the BSSR authorities in the Organization and contributed to the comprehensive analysis of the state and cooperation perspectives at the meetings of the Collegium of Ministry for foreign affairs. The extra-conference forms of cooperation got significant development, the work of the first official in the Secretariat on the basis of the republican ratio started. The operations management system of the BSSR UNESCO activities and the interaction system with it were formed.

**IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION ON THE MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AND THE POSITION OF THE BYELORUSSIAN DIPLOMACY**

In 1956 the republic opposed the discussion of the Hungarian question, the attempts to strip “Kádár” delegation of powers, and the recruitment of the participants of the Hungarian uprising. At the
same time the Byelorussian delegation condemned the English-French-Israeli aggression and welcomed the decision to allocate financial aid to the children in Egypt and Hungary. The “Powers incident” (1960) caused that the proposals on BSSR participation in the Soviet-US cultural exchange remained on paper. The Byelorussian SSR was an advocate of GDR accession to the organization, opposed the claims of the FRG Commission on UNESCO affairs to represent the whole country, criticized this body for inadequate attention to the youth education for peace and the usage of materials from West Berlin. In view of the Berlin Crisis of 1961 the Byelorussian side cancelled the trip of the labour union group to the West Germany. In the years of the Congo Crisis (1960–1965) the Byelorussian SSR expressed support exclusively to the P. Lumumba supporters and didn’t recognize the credentials of the DR Congo delegation that ruptured diplomatic relations with the USSR. The Byelorussian SSR contested the thesis that the Congolese nation secured the independence too early and opposed the assignment of the Belgian teachers and the ignorance of the specialists from the socialist countries. The Byelorussian SSR supported the proposal of the Soviet Union to replace the position of the Director-General of UNESCO with a body of three officials representing Western, socialist and neutral states. As the culmination of the Caribbean crisis passed the USSR and the USA interacted intensively on a wide range of issues with the participation of the republic (the organization’s budget, the financing of the campaign on Nubia sites preservation, the hydrology, the out-of-school youth education).

**ROLE AND PLACE OF THE BYELORUSSIAN SSR IN THE SPECIALIZATION DIVISION BETWEEN THE SOVIET DELEGATION AND THE DELEGATIONS OF THESOCIALIST COUNTRIES**

Until 1960 the BSSR delegation didn’t come forward with draft resolutions. At the 11th session of the General Conference for the first time the republic initiated two projects — on the convocation of a conference on illiteracy eradication (joint initiative with Hungary) and on the positions distribution in the Secretariat. However, both initiatives were rejected. The 12th session of the General Conference (1962) for the first time approved of the resolution “on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples” initiated by the republic (joint initiative with Romania). In terms of the number of speeches the Byelorussian SSR delegation demonstrated the peak of its activeness at the 9th (1956, New Delhi) and at the 12th (1962, Paris) sessions of the UNESCO General Conferences taking part in the competition between the Soviet Union and the West for the counties that were to choose their development path.

The delegates of the republic participated in the coordination meetings of the representatives of the National Commissions for UNESCO affairs of the socialist countries demonstrating considerable activeness at the meeting in 1962 where UNESCO agreement with the Organization of American states about the cooperation on the “Alliance for progress” program implementation and the decision to use “Peace corps” were interpreted as a neocolonialism encouragement. The Byelorussian SSR didn’t give support to the proposal made by Bulgaria and Romania that emphasized the expedience of the official formation of the socialist countries group at UNESCO. However, under the conditions of the “lesser Détente” that started after the Caribbean crisis the Byelorussian delegation took part in the interaction of the USSR and USA diplomacies upon budget issues and counteraction to the predominance of the French delegates at the Secretariat.

**PECULIARITIES OF THE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVENESS OF THE REPUBLIC AS A SUBJECT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW**

The Byelorussian SSR signed the UN Charter which meant its recognition by the international community a sovereign nation and a subject of international law. However, as a subject of the Soviet federation the republic coordinated its UN activities with the Moscow centre. There were cases of competition with the Centre as the nominations for UNESCO positions were made, complaints about lower salaries and representational expenses, reduction of the composition of the delegations, delays of consultations and rejections of proposals. It took the republic five years to secure the confirmation of the Permanent Representative post by Moscow. However, unofficially he was a counselor on the staff of the Union representation. At the same time the republic became more “recognizable” on the global stage. It was caused by the improvement and the specificity of the content of the information materials, specialization division between the Soviet delegations at the General Conference sessions, the activity of the Permanent Representative of the Byelorussian SSR, the discussion between Minsk and Paris on the candidates to the Secretariat positions and the vacancies of the experts in the developing countries as well as by the translation of the works of the Belarusian literature and the visits of the Secretariat officials to Minsk.

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS OF BSSR COOPERATION WITH THE ORGANIZATION**

UNESCO membership contributed to the formation of a positive image of the Byelorussian SSR on the global stage as a peace-loving country with the high-level education, science and culture. On the other side a positive image of UNESCO
was formed in the BSSR which was facilitated through the republican media, organization editions dissemination, exhibitions, lectures, scholarship programs and study trips. For the ten-year period of UNESCO membership the Republic accumulated valuable experience in what contemporary researchers call “intercultural communication”, “public diplomacy”, “civic diplomacy”, “catalytic diplomacy”, and “soft power”. The delegation’s UNESCO activity facilitated the formation in the republic of the “homo international” who in its conscience went beyond the BSSR and the Soviet Union.

The Byelorussian SSR assumed that the international cooperation in the field of education, science and culture was possible only in peacetime. Thus, the delegations of the republic voted for the resolutions on assisting UNESCO at consolidation of peace and peaceful cooperation between the countries with different socio-political systems that were adopted at every session of the General Conference. These documents looked very much alike and often were not backed by the real activities but they were still initiated by the diplomacies of the socialist and developing countries as a reminder of the main goal of the Organization stipulated in its Charter – consolidation of peace in the conscience of people. As another key priority of its UNESCO activities the republic considered the maximum contribution to the eradication of the remnants and consequences of colonialism. The Byelorussian SSR took part in the debate and the adoption of the Declaration on UNESCO role in granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (1960) initiated by the Soviet Union and the resolutions of similar content. The BSSR welcomed the election results to the Executive Council (1962) that brought the majority of the seats to the developing countries, participated in the preparation of the Hydrological decade program, partly subsidized the Emergency assistance program to Africa, supported the long-lasting campaign on illiteracy eradication, carried out training of the foreign students.

The Byelorussian SSR insisted on the implementation of the UNESCO universality principle. A question of China representation held a particular place. Despite the permanent deterioration of relations between Moscow and Beijing since 1956 the BSSR delegations demanded to strip the representatives of the Republic of China of their powers and to “restore lawful rights” of the People’s Republic of China that didn’t express intention to access UNESCO, criticized the US diplomats who considered the PRC an aggressive and illegitimate state, opposed the concept of “Two Chinas”.

The republic made its contribution to the development and adoption of the international legal acts of the organization – Convention and Protocol for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict as well as the Conventions: on the international exchange of publications, on the international exchange of official publications and government documents, on elimination of discrimination in education, the Protocol instituting a Conciliation and Good Services Commission to be responsible for the settlement of any disputes which may arise between states parties to the Convention against discrimination in education. The republic also supported a number of recommendations (on principles of international regulation of archeological excavations, on international contests in architecture and urban construction, on international standardization of statistical data in education, on measures for museums accessibility, on struggle against discrimination in education, on landscape preservation, on professional and technical education, on international standardization of publishing). The participation in the debate and the adoption of the mentioned regulatory legal acts and their ratification by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR stimulated the republican legislation improvement in the respective spheres.

The cooperation with UNESCO boosted the professionalism of the Belarusian diplomats and its other direct participants. The necessity to disseminate the information about the republic, to set forward proposals as well as the skepticism of the Western colleagues towards the sovereignty of the BSSR contributed to the study of the language, history and culture of the Belarusian people and scientific research. The XIV session of the UN General Assembly (1959) upon the BSSR proposal upheld the prizes for the best research in the field of oncology which was one of the results of the participation in the 8th session of the UNESCO General Conference.

**Problems of difficulties in interaction** were caused by the “cold war”. In 1960 the republic voiced its support to the Soviet Union proposal to replace the Director-General position with a collective executive body of three officials that would represent the interests of the socialist, Western and non-aligned countries and offered to distribute the seats in the Secretariat equally among the three groups of UNESCO member countries. This position was heavily criticized by the West and didn’t meet the sufficient support from the “third world” countries that saw in this proposal a threat of the decrease of the professionalism of the Secretariat and even the self-destruction of the organization. The Byelorussian SSR welcomed only the publishing of the materials about the Soviet foreign policy initiatives, the socialist construction and the realistic culture but not about the successes of the countries with a different social system. The BSSR candidates to UNESCO positions didn’t sustain competition with the Western specialists due to the weak knowledge of the foreign languages and the ineligibility to the qualification requirement. As a matter of fact the positions within the quota (three out of the four positions) given to the republic remained vacant which caused difficulties with the implementation of the scholarships to the people of art and technical intelligentsia. The Byelorussian SSR
PLACE OF UNESCO IN THE SYSTEM OF REPUBLIC’S INTERACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In 1964 the BSSR was party to 13 bodies and agencies of the UN system (General Assembly; Disarmament Commission; European Economic Commission and its committees; Social Commission of the Economic and Social Council; UNESCO; International Organization of Employers; International Atomic Energy Agency; Universal Postal Union; International Council on Archives; International Telecommunication Union; Administrative Council of the Bureau of International Expositions; International Education Bureau). By mid-1960s UNESCO had occupied the leading position in the cooperation of the republic with the institutions of the UN system and turned into one of the priorities in the foreign policy activities of the BSSR. This is proved by the creation of the special communication bodies (National Commission and Permanent Representative), the number of forums and the activeness of the Byelorussian delegations, the frequency and the level of visits of the Secretariat officials to Minsk, the volume and content of the correspondence, the results of the publishing and exhibition activities, the participation in the scholarship programs and study trips, the size of the fees to the Organization’s budget, the activeness at the initiative proposals submission, the systemic discussion of the Collegium of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

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