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Cultural contacts of the Nordic countries with Soviet Russia and the USSR in the 1920s – 1930s

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Abstract

The main characteristics of cultural exchanges between Fennoscandian and Russian peoples in the 1920s—1930s were considered. The methodology of the study contained a combination of different methods of analysis: comparative, institutional, functional, anthropological, as well as socio-cultural, socio-political. These methods were determined by the principle of historicism. Authors considered the topic of research as an integral sphere of holistic intellectual life of humanity, as a form of international cooperation, which is an integral part of the system of international relations in the period between the two world wars. The study was based on material from Russian state archives, as well as on published documents of Soviet foreign policy. The authors concluded that a passive attitude to the joint political struggle against the threat of war by many participants of the cultural cooperation with the USSR was determined by the idea of their national culture as a part of Western civilization. Nevertheless, refusal to cooperate with the Soviet Union was then tantamount to being marginalized in world culture. Cultural contacts with the Soviet Union played an important role in the formation of anti-fascist sentiments in the West. However, in the Nordic countries these sentiments were not widespread. Rather, the common idea was the short-sighted public hope that they would manage to stay away from the military disaster in Europe. As a result, they were among the first victims of German aggression.

Introduction

Cultural exchanges between Fennoscandian and Russian peoples have a long history that has not been interrupted at least since the 9th century. They experienced different, unique, and original periods in their development. The analyzed period had its own characteristics and reflected the peculiarities of the development of international relations in the region of Northern Europe. Through the study of cultural contacts in the region one can identify latent factors of foreign policy making in this difficult period of diplomatic history between the two world wars.

Literature Review

Analysis of the main problems of the historiography of international cultural cooperation allows us to conclude that the research topic is far from being exhausted (Fokin, 2015). First of all, there are no comprehensive works which analyze international cultural exchange in the first

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20–30 years of the twentieth century as an integrated system. Virtually unexplored is the content of international cultural exchange, its correspondence to the main trends of development of culture and intellectual life of human civilization is not revealed. The basic issues of international cooperation in the cultural field of the 1920–1930s are not identified. Often the approach to the choice of the main aspects of the study was not based on the academic relevance, but rather, being dictated by the needs of political practice (Ilyukhina, 1982; Mozhaev, 1959). This affected the content of research, which viewed all the problems of international cooperation through the prism of bloc confrontation (Barghoorn, 1960). Often, the authors went from the essence of the processes that occurred in the prewar years, in particular from the study of intellectual origins of the Second World War (Chubar'yan, 1988). Most studies of international cultural relations of the USSR, for example, were limited to the period of the 1920s (Gak, 1963; Shishkin, 1969). Clearly, this was due to the fact that the authors tried to avoid discussing sensitive issues of social and political life in the countries in the 1930s. The nature of the conclusions and generalizations, the choice of research methodology reflected the political and ideological stereotypes of that time. Of course, even in the framework of a political choice dictated by the realities of a bipolar world, scholars received very significant scientific results, secured by their professional expertise and solid source base (Ioffe, 1969a; Kumanev & Kim, 1987). Therefore, nihilism against Soviet historiography, which is sometimes observed nowadays (Aronova, 2011; Menkouski, Smigel, & Cherkasov, 2015; Mogilner, 2014; Portnov, 2014; Uldricks, 2009), is hardly objective.

Methods

Research of the history of international cultural relations poses a number of problems regarding the source studies. This is primarily due to the fact that the object of study is not only a result of human activity in the form of historical events and phenomena, but also the forms and methods of its realization in time and space. We investigate the human creativity expressed in the emotional and sensual, rational and intellectual perception of the surrounding reality, the inner world in its development. This is the reality that exists only in the human mind, sometimes in an organized form of public opinion. It determines the content of cultural and historical process.

The present state of humanities allows, in spite of the natural subjectivity of any author, including his or her political preferences, to expand the perspective, to diversify the methodological framework, to provide greater complexity of disclosure of the theme and content of the research subject (Shirin, 2005). Today, researchers are focused on such problems as the formation of foreign policy stereotypes in the public consciousness, understanding of the nature of international relations and global development in world public opinion, behavior patterns regarding ethical and legal norms of international law, approved in the society. Problems of international cooperation in the humanitarian and cultural development have become topical issues of research (Bogolubova, Nikolaeva, Fokin, Shirin, & Elts, 2013).

The methodology is based on research methods typical for realist and idealist schools in the theory of international relations. Methods of research were drawn from works of Lappo-Danilevskii, (1909) and Jaspers, (1949). They are widely used in the works of Huntington, (1996), Nye, (2004) and their followers (Nederveen Pieterse, 2015; Sergunin & Karabeshkin, 2015) devoted to the problems of interaction between culture and world politics. The combination of methods of two different directions is due to the complex nature of the problem. On one hand, the diplomacy of the period between the two world wars was aimed at preventing a new world war and was actively looking for ways to form such unions of states that would not allow aggression in Europe on the basis of a balance of power (subject of realists' paradigm). This problem was especially urgent for small states. Such attempts were made in the North of Europe. But the key question for them was the question of the participation of great powers in such alliances. Therefore, the attitude toward them was a significant part of the motives for the behavior of states in the international arena, in particular, the issue of trust of states toward each other (subject of idealists' paradigm) was acute (Baryshnikov & Daudov, 2013). Documents originating from different countries could reflect the same events in different ways. Because of this, the main research method was the comparative analysis of such documents.

Results and Discussion

In the Scandinavian countries, traditionally pacifist sentiments were particularly common. Anti-war orientation of the Russian Revolution was widely supported by many representatives of democratic social and political movements. The pacifist movement was headed by many prominent figures of science and culture. Pacifism was the core of the international cultural exchange, reflecting its humanistic content, throughout the twentieth century.

Compelled isolation of Russian scientists from the academic world of Europe and America adversely affected the development of Russian science. However, many figures in the world culture advocated for the restoration of scientific and cultural contacts with Russia. Among them there was prominent French physicist Paul Langevin who indicated that “from the point of view of the spiritual culture, Europe without Russia ceases to be Europe” (Starosel'skaia-Nikitina, 1966). In 1921, under the initiative of Fridtjof Wedel-Jarlsberg Nansen, contacts were established between Soviet and Norwegian polar explorers in Spitsbergen (Romanovskii, 1966).

In early 1921, the government of the RSFSR sent the Commission of the Russian Academy of Sciences for the resumption of scientific communications and for procurement of scientific publications and instruments. During the biennium 1921–1922, members of the Commission, headed by the Permanent Secretary of Russian Academy of Sciences Sergey Oldenburg, visited several European countries. They began their trip in Scandinavia. Entry to Finland was prohibited for the Commission (Krylov, 1984). In early 1922, the Bureau of International Book Exchange

was organized in the Russian Academy of Sciences (Ioffe, 1969b). The Russian Book Chamber created in 1924 a pool of books, published in the USSR, to provide international book exchange (Kuz'min, 1971). So, one of the simplest but necessary forms of international scientific and technological cooperation was established. By the beginning of 1931, the Soviet Union carried out the book exchange with 70 countries that considerably exceeded the number of countries with which diplomatic relations were established (Kuz'min, 1971).

However, direct contacts of scientists were needed for full-fledged international cooperation, but the opportunities in this area at that time were limited by the official position of the European countries, based on the decisions of the Council of the Entente. The basis of this divide included not only a hostile attitude on the part of the ruling elites of the Nordic countries to the socialist revolution in Russia, but also the perception of the Russian civilization as alien to Western culture. Referring to this occasion to his own observations, the former President of Finland, J. K. Paasikivi said: *"I have no prejudice against the Soviet Union and against the Russians. I lived in Russia as a young man and I know the Russian classical literature and culture"* (Paasikivi, 1958). *But later in his memoirs, he explicitly said: " … 100 years of communication has not left us another impression as a lot of rooted in the culinary field: pancakes, caviar, borshches, soups and some other rare food. On the contrary, we have moved away from Russia for decades and decades. Because there was a completely different world there that we do not accept"* (Paasikivi, 1958).

All that led to the fact that both political and cultural relations of Fennoscandian peoples with the USSR in different periods and in different countries developed very inconsistently. For example, attitude toward relations with the Soviet Russia in Denmark was extremely negative, taking into account the family ties of the royal family with the Romanov dynasty and the death of Nicholas II's family in Yekaterinburg. His mother, the Russian Empress Maria Feodorovna, the Danish Princess Marie Sophie Frederikke Dagmar, after the evacuation from the Crimea found shelter in her homeland. But at the same time in Danish society there was a stable group of intellectuals who sought restoration of relations with Russia; therefore in Denmark earlier than in other Nordic countries was created a special organization for Danish-Russian cooperation, even before the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Russia in 1923. It brought together about 60 representatives of the "left" intellectuals. Active roles in it were played by a prominent Danish writer, Martin Andersen Nexø, and a prominent figure in the Social Democratic Party, Georg Bolgan.

As in most countries in Europe and North America, in Denmark interest in relations with the USSR had increased by the second half of the 1930s. This was prompted by the success of economic development of the country, the growth of its industrial might, as well as the growing threat of Nazi aggression in Europe. A significant part of the European public began viewing the Soviet Union as an important stabilizing factor in international security. This was manifested in the activities of the society "Danish-Russian cooperation" in 1936—1937. The society organized an exhibition and a report on Soviet children's books, which caused numerous responses in the Danish press. Under the umbrella of the society, "Pushkin Days" took place which were dedicated to the centenary of the death of Russian poet A.S. Pushkin. These events were the highest peaks of the development of cultural cooperation between Denmark and the USSR in the prewar period, when for the first time, government officials attended the events. Later, cooperation began to decline. Clearly, the Danish Government did not see the political prospects of strengthening international security without the initiative of the leading countries of Europe, aimed at cooperation with the USSR.

In 1924, at a time when Europe switched to diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, the "Swedish-Russian Rapprochement Society" was formed in Stockholm, which was fairly active until 1930. The beginning of global economic crisis complicated the positions of the ruling Social Democrats in Sweden. At the same time, the popularity of the Peasant Union was increasing. Therefore, in the public opinion of the country, reports of peasant uprisings in the USSR connected with violent collectivization, widely unfolded in the winter and spring of 1930, were received very negatively. Under the influence of the growing indignation in public opinion, "the Swedish-Russian Rapprochement Society" was dissolved and cultural contacts ceased. The global economic crisis with its devastating consequences fell with some delay on the Scandinavian Peninsula. In these circumstances, the possibility of economic cooperation with the Soviet Union, which demonstrated a stable and very high rate of economic growth, became particularly valuable for many industrialized countries. Under the influence of this factor, the attitude to the Soviet Union changed also in Northern Europe, especially in Sweden. Refurbished in 1932, the "Swedish-Russian Rapprochement Society" did not conduct any active job, but the intention was clearly indicated. Further development of the international situation only increased the number of motifs in favor of cooperation with the Soviet Union. Sweden recognized the objective necessity of cooperation with the Soviet Union, whose authority in the fields of science and culture in the world at that time had increased immensely. In addition to the organization of cooperation, the company set itself the task of popularizing the successes of the USSR. Its first activists were Swedish liberal intellectuals: the famous explorer of the Arctic, glaciologist H. Ahlmann, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry T. Svedberg, professor of medicine I. Holmgren, Member of Parliament and lawyer G. Branting, as well as other writers, scientists, and artists. Among the members of the Society, there were representatives of financial and industrial circles. Professor of Chemistry, W. Palmaer, was elected the chairman of the of the society. The trend towards the expansion of cultural relations evolved further in 1936. The "Swedish-Russian Society" successfully held "Pushkin Days". In 1938, the Society organized an exhibition devoted to Maxim Gorky (Deev, Zhukovskiy, Kapitsa, & Sevost, 1977; Dolya et al., 1976). The public of Sweden watched with great interest a Soviet expedition to the North Pole and other achievements of Soviet society. It is significant that when the Swedish-Russian Society organized a presentation by Soviet electrical engineering professor Henry Graftio about Soviet hydropower on September 6, 1937, a very large number of

people came: scientists and technicians, directors of enterprises and public institutions, experts on electrification and hydraulic structures. The great impression made on the audience provided information about the unified energy system of the USSR (Deev et al., 1977; Dolya et al., 1976).

Since the second half of the 1930s, the foreign policy of the Soviet state increasingly attracted the attention of members of the Society of Cultural Rapprochement. The Scandinavian community was deeply sympathetic to the anti-fascist orientation of Soviet art (Dolya et al., 1976).

The improvement of Soviet—Norwegian relations in 1933 contributed to the establishment of the Society of Cultural Rapprochement with the Soviet Union in Norway. Much was done for the formation of the society and its active work by Karin Hansteen who became the Secretary of the of the Society (Houm, 1955). Among the members of the society were the prominent scholar in economics W. Calberson, the writer R. Hagen, talented antifascist painter H. Sørensen, and many members of the group "Mut Doug" which brought together representatives of the left intelligentsia of Norway. An important role in the development of scientific contacts with Soviet scientists was played in those years by the President of the Academy of Sciences of Norway, Halvdan Koht, a prominent researcher of the Middle Ages. As a member of the Society, he said at the rally organized by the Norwegian Labour Party in 1934: *"The bourgeoisie says about the general culture, and tremendous work is being done in Russia in order to culture and art become the property of the people"*.

The Norwegian Society of Cultural Rapprochement represented very significant public circles and possessed considerable capabilities. Immediately after formation, it organized two exhibitions: "15 years of Soviet cinema" and "Satire and humor in the USSR". The great success of these among the exhibition visitors was that they had demonstrations of Soviet films, which were not available in film theaters. The Society established contacts with the Institute for the comparative study of cultures, with academic and student organizations, with large publishing houses and magazines of Norway, and with medical, pedagogical and architectural organizations. The increased cultural ties allowed the Norwegian-Soviet Society in 1934 to hold several high level thematic evenings dedicated to Soviet art and artists, to the position of artists in the Soviet Union, to stories about Soviet women, and to personal impressions of visits to the USSR. The evenings included demonstrations of Soviet films, causing interest among the residents of the Norwegian capital. Organization of screenings of films in the Society was a forced measure. In general, Soviet films were extremely rarely shown in the Nordic countries.

The evening, organized in Oslo in memory of A. Pushkin on February 11, 1937, became an exciting event. In the university library of the capital, an exhibition dedicated to the Russian poet was opened, which operated for 6 weeks and enjoyed popularity among visitors. On February 11 in the evening, an open meeting took place in the Assembly Hall of the University. It was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H. Koht, and figures of science and art. Pushkin was also the topic of a broadcast on Norwegian radio.

In Finland, the process developed differently. By the mid-1920s, in reviews of the international situation of the Finnish Foreign Ministry they noted that "Finland's relations with Soviet Russia developed quite substantively." It was also emphasized that "no significant contradictions and conflicts that have occurred in the past, were present". The first shoots of a possible revival of cultural contacts interrupted earlier began to appear. In 1924, discussion on the exchange of archival materials between the USSR and Finland began, which ended in visit to Leningrad of appropriate specialists to work in Soviet archives (Rupasov, 2001). In addition, in 1925 the Helsinki Library and the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad exchanged large batches of books (Fokin, 2001). But the first concrete evidence of establishing new contacts between the two countries rather referred to scientific and technical cooperation.

Contacts in the field of art were promoted in Finland by the radical, leftist, illustrated weekly magazine "Itä ja Länsi". However, Finnish researchers noted that the publications of the magazine "were not able to have any wide support outside the narrow circle of people supporting the idea of development of relations between the Soviet Union and Finland in the field of culture" (Paasivirta, 1988). Therefore, more or less important events of that time were only the showing of a Soviet film in Finnish cinemas in 1926, and then, the next year, the organization of a series of joint sports events, as well as excursions to Finland for Soviet students (Korhonen, 1971; Rupasov, 2001). These events, in fact, turned out to be the most significant achievements in the development of cooperation in the field of culture for the 1920s.

A characteristic feature of cultural ties at that time was hostility to Soviet culture in Finnish society. Even cooperation based on very low-level contacts in the mid-1920s caused an uncompromising protest on the pages of the student newspaper "Ylioppilas-lehti": "In independent Finland there is no place for anything Russian or Soviet." At the same time in Finland opposing voices were also heard. They indicated that the "extreme nationalism would be fatal for Finland", as "hostile to the Soviet Union could not bring any real benefit" (Paasivirta, 1988). Moreover, in 1928, among the radical left movement, the idea emerged to create a society of friendship with the Soviet Union. However, once these plans became known to the state police, an outright threat of arrest of the initiators of this idea immediately led to the cessation of work in this direction (Viitala, 1969).

According to Professor J. Paasivirta, at that time the idea was especially prevalent in Finland that the implementation of cooperation with its eastern neighbor should be focused on the international approach to relations with the Soviet Union and it was unnecessary to go further than the level which corresponded to the position of Western countries (Paasivirta, 1968). This, of course, was manifested in the behavior of Finnish diplomats and statesmen.

Stability in the relations between the two countries reached on this basis was still not reliable. Suspiciousness and alienation remained. Moreover, at the turn of 1920s—30s, there was already tension in Soviet—Finnish relations. In Finland, by this time hostility to the USSR began

to grow. Professor K. Korhonen wrote that at that time in Finland they had unprecedented hostility towards the eastern neighbor, and this hate was partly a class enmity and partly a historical anti-Russian mood (Korhonen, 1966). Changing public attitudes were largely associated with the intensification of fascist sentiment, like in other Western countries. In Finland, they were associated with clearly anti-Russian manifestations within the nationalist Lapua Movement. A prominent politician V. Voionmaa said: *"The new movement for the great Finland suddenly, like by magic power, changed the national thought and mode of action"* (Vil'mi, 1931).

A TASS representative in Helsinki, N. G. Palgunov, told how in the spring of 1934 a responsible officer of the Finnish MFA expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that in one of the political speeches in the USSR colloquial Russian expression "pig's snout" had been used in connection with the foreign policy of the USSR. Such a statement caused strong discontent by the President of Finland, as he thought that the expression was directed against him, because his surname literally means "pig's head" (Pal'gunov, 1964). It is clear that statements of this nature would hardly be able to be uttered, if, for example, there were strong ties between Finland and the Soviet Union in the field of culture and if there was understanding in Helsinki that the government of the USSR thought not only about Finland.

At that time, some attempts were initiated to revive cooperation with Finland in the field of culture. In April 1934, the Soviet Union was visited by official invitation by a delegation of Finnish journalists, led by the head of the department of Foreign Ministry of Finland, K. H. Rantakari (Ivalo, 1973; Korhonen, 1971; Pal'gunov, 1964). N. G. Palgunov noted: " … After this trip … appreciable increase of information about the Soviet State on the pages of the Finnish newspapers did not happen" (Pal'gunov, 1964).

These trends were also visible in other forms of cultural cooperation, which the USSR tried to develop within the relations with Finland. For example, clearly not enough results brought an exhibition of Finnish artists that opened in November 1934 in Moscow (Ivalo, 1973). It was the reciprocal step to the organization of the Soviet graphic exhibition in Helsinki in February (Fokin, 2005). But the process did not go beyond that episode, although interest in the Soviet school of painting among the Finnish public was great enough. This was evidenced by the fact that the opening of the Soviet exhibition was attended by about three hundred people, and in the opinion of Soviet diplomats, it was a fairly significant number for Helsinki (Deev, Dolya, Krutikov, Popov, & Sevost, 1971). It was clear that Finnish artists and sculptors shied away from participation in joint artistic events, organized in Moscow and Leningrad, when they were invited (Voskresenskaya, 1997). Moreover, the Finnish party in general was clearly not much interested in the development of cultural contacts with the Soviet Union.

In Helsinki at that time, authorities allowed the showing of the Soviet film "The Storm" (based on the play by Alexander Ostrovsky), but it was, in fact, only the second time that films from the Soviet Union were shown in Finland (Korhonen, 1971).

The fact that Finland commenced any new forms of cooperation with great difficulty is evidenced by the very inconclusive attempts to establish the Soviet—Finnish scientific and technical exchange at that time. Moreover, the initiative came mostly from the Finnish public and not from government agencies. In February 1934, the University of Helsinki held a meeting where the university professors and the Soviet Envoy, B. Stein, discussed the issues of scientific cooperation between the two countries. As a result, an *ad hoc* working group was established for implementation of the decisions which were made at the meeting (Deev et al., 1971; Viitala, 1969). A week after the meeting, the Soviet Mission in Helsinki received an entire program of measures that Finnish scientists found necessary to implement. In particular, they talked about the exchange of scientific publications, and about the establishment of personal relationships with researchers from the Soviet Union, about a joint study of the Finno-Ugric tribes, etc (Viitala, 1969). However, the process of stimulation of scientific contacts clearly did not go further, although at that time Soviet scientists occupied leading positions in many international unions of scientists. In the following period, an expedition to the territory of the Leningrad region was organized for Finnish scholars for the study of language and life of the Veps people which is related to the Finns (in summer 1934), and the transfer to Finland of archival material relating to Finnish history of the 18th—the beginning of the 19th century (in 1937) (Deev et al., 1971; Dolya et al., 1976). Clearly, there was a distinct lack of support from government agencies. For instance, the Finnish Minister of Education was against the creation in 1935 of a "Central organization for the establishment of scientific relations with the Soviet Union" (at the initiative of Finnish academics) (Viitala, 1969).

Amid the crisis of dramatic theatrical art that swept Europe, the interest in the Soviet theater had grown during that time according to Finnish researchers. In the autumn of 1936, Moscow was visited by a delegation of Finnish directors and artists who started to perceive "the latest Soviet ideas" very positively, which clearly indicated the growing interest in Soviet drama (Paasivirta, 1988). All this coincided with a visit to Finland of a rather representative delegation of Soviet journalists (Hokkanen, 1986; Suomi, 1973); and although the delegation did not meet with the main "leaders of the major Finnish newspapers," (Dolya et al., 1976) it was clear that a new stage was beginning in cooperation between the two countries in the field of culture.

The tendency of cultural rapprochement between the USSR and Finland caused concern in Germany. H. Goering demanded explanations from the Finnish Minister, A. Vuorimaa,: "Did Holsti sign in Moscow an agreement on cultural rapprochement?" Goering even said that with these actions from Finland, Germany "was stabbed in the head" (Dolya et al., 1976; Korhonen, 1971). In response to these reports from Berlin, R. Holsti reacted very nervously. He immediately sent there a secret telegram, which stated: "All speeches on the agreement with the Soviet Union in the field of culture are mere fantasy. I did not sign any documents in Moscow". Thus, the emerging process of cultural rapprochement between the two countries was

perceived in Berlin extremely painfully. And the Finnish government was then under rather serious pressure because of this issue. This had a result. By the fall of 1937 there was a sharp estrangement in Soviet–Finnish relations, manifested even in the revocation from Helsinki of almost the whole Soviet diplomatic mission and the ensuing resignation of R. Holsti in 1938 (Hokkanen, 1986).

Amidst the ongoing deterioration of the international situation, Soviet authorities decided to begin secret negotiations with the Government of Finland regarding the possibility of concluding a treaty of mutual assistance. Negotiations continued throughout 1938 and the Soviet Union attempted to use the influence of a number of Finnish cultural figures on the leaders of the country with a view to a positive resolution of the issues raised by the Soviet party (Sudoplatov, 1996; Volkovskii, 2000). The most notable was the meeting held in the autumn of 1938 in the embassy of the USSR, where breakfast was arranged for representatives of Finnish scientific and cultural circles, which was attended, along with the leaders of the Finnish creative intelligentsia, officials of the Foreign Ministry of Finland (Deev et al., 1977). During this meeting, the question was raised about the need to create a society for cultural relations between Finland and the USSR, and the design of an initiative group was proposed, which was to start practical work on the establishment of this society (Deev et al., 1977). But only a year later, in the autumn of 1939, the famous Professor Yrjö Ruutu began to make appropriate steps to create the "Finnish-Russian Cultural Society" (Viitala, 1969). But the beginning of the "Winter War", of course, reduced prospects for the formation of such an organization.

Conclusion

For many participants in the cultural cooperation with the USSR, the passive attitude to the joint political struggle against the threat of war was determined by the idea of their national culture as a part of Western civilization. They did not consider it possible to act contrary to the foreign policy of the leading Western European countries, even when they understood its ineffectiveness. They did not consider it possible to break with the falsely understood solidarity of the framework of Western civilization. They did not consider it possible to show independence and withdraw from the foreign policy course paved by the leading states of the world. They were afraid to stay alone. As a result, the will of the peoples to resist the growth of the threat of war was paralyzed. Trusting the policy of the leading countries of Europe, people became hostages of politicians' illusions, that it would be possible to negotiate with Hitler and refrain from war in the framework of Western civilization. However, the attempt to direct Hitler's aggression only to the East failed.

Another limiting factor in the intellectual environment was a common understanding of the need to avoid the two extremes of fascism and socialism and to maintain the charming, liberal, bourgeois world. According to A.M. Kollontai, these views were fueled by anti-Soviet propaganda, which referred to the repressive practices of the Soviet Union and Germany. But an objective analysis shows that it is not anti-communism which was the backbone of alienation of a large part of the intelligentsia of European countries. Fascism was rejected in its very essence: not only practice, but also the philosophy of fascism was rejected. Creative trends, social policy in the USSR, even its revolutionary pressure, and the struggle against fascist aggression were always welcomed, found support and understanding of the intellectuals, but there was a morally insurmountable barrier to political cooperation erected due to the repressive practices of Stalinism. Heated debates were provoked by the issue of the admissibility of an alliance with Stalin's dictatorial regime. Unfortunately, this discussion ended for the creative community only after the Second World War, when the need for an alliance became apparent. The propaganda did not play a significant role in this case, because intellectual circles by then had quite a strong immunity against it.

By the mid 1930s, Soviet scientists had been admitted to the governing bodies of most international scientific associations. Cooperation with them became necessary for maintaining ties not only with Russian but also with the global academic community. Soviet representatives actively worked at the Committee of International Intellectual Cooperation within the League of Nations, which recognized that the Soviet Union was at the forefront in a number of areas of the organization of science, education, and culture. Soviet writers were among the organizers and leaders of the International Association of Writers in Defense of Culture and Peace (Fokin, 1999). Refusal to cooperate with the Soviet Union was then tantamount to being marginalized in world culture. Therefore, cultural contacts with the Soviet Union played an important role in the formation of anti-fascist sentiments in the West, served as the basis for mass public manifestations before the war in favor of the conclusion of the Collective Security Treaty with the USSR. Such manifestations forced Britain and France to negotiate in the summer of 1939, and further anti-fascism became the ideological basis of the anti-Hitler coalition. But in the Nordic countries, these sentiments were not widespread. Rather, the common denominator was the short-sighted public hope that they would manage to stay away from the military disaster in Europe. As a result, they were among the first victims of German aggression.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest regarding the article.

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