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Research Project Outline

Between Dissent and Conformity, Between Samizdat and Official. The Intelligentsia, Samizdat, and Non-Conformist Discourses in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (1968-1988).

The research project deals with the history of the non-conformist intelligentsia in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). Its timeframe lays between 1968, when the events of the Prague Spring and its violent suppression altered the intellectuals' perception of themselves and of the Socialist order, and 1988, when, on the eve of the Autumn of Nations in Eastern and Central Europe, the intellectual dissent in the BSSR melted into political protest.

Basing on the samizdat and uncensored publications, memoirs, diaries of the intelligentsia, as well as on official periodicals and documents, the dissertation pays particular attention to the ideas determinative for the nonconformist intelligentsia in the BSSR, their interaction, and/or convergence with the official discourse and their relation to other national dissident movements. It considers samizdat (uncensored, self-produced periodical and literature publishing) to be a cross-border activity representing all variety of attitude toward the Soviet actuality from opposition and negation to dialogue, the activity that stretched far beyond the beginning and the end of the Soviet rule.

In the BSSR, frequently labeled as one of the most socialist republics, the organized intellectual movement started to gain its force from the early 1980s, at the very moment when the Solidarity (*Solidarność*) movement in Poland and the right defending activity of Russian dissidents had been detained. In the late 1960 -1970s, the non-conformism is rather associated with the individual protest efforts, which rarely formalized in the organized group activity. In this period, grew and strengthened the influence of such intellectuals as Vasil' Bykaŭ (1924-2003), Ales' Adamovič (1927-1994), Larysa Henijuš (1910-1983), Uladzimir Karatkevič, Mikola Ermalovič (1921-2000) and others.

Which were the conditions of the rise and existence of non-conformism of the intelligentsia in the generally conformist society? How and by which instruments the samizdat publishing was functioning, how and to which extent the exchange of ideas took place? And finally, how the intelligentsia (fulfilling or not fulfilling its function as a representative of the society) responded to the outer challenges of writing and thinking within the Socialist system? These questions are central to the dissertation.