

THE BIRTH OF SOCIOLOGY FROM THE SPIRIT OF [CRITIQUE OF BOURGEOIS] PHILOSOPHY?: THE BELARUSIAN CASE IN THE 1960S THROUGH 1980S

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/// Introduction

This article presents an analysis of the development of sociology in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic¹ in the period of the 1960s through 1980s. The two main goals of the study are to show the close relations and reciprocal influence of sociological and philosophical issues during this period and to explicate the indirect influence of Western sociological and philosophical conceptions on the development of sociology in Belarus in Soviet times. The project is based on interdisciplinary methodology, and involves the techniques used in intellectual history, discourse analysis, and studies of cultural transfer. The empirical data includes texts (books, scientific articles, textbooks) in philosophy and sociology as well as interviews and memoir literature.

First of all, the problem of terminology arises: whether it is more correct to write about “Belarusian sociology” or “sociology in Belarus” (as a variant of the wider Soviet tradition)? To my mind both terms could be used because the sociological tradition in this period combines elements of the two. As an institutionalised form of research, sociology in Belarus appeared in the Soviet period and therefore it could not appeal to other

¹ The Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), or Byelorussia, was one of fifteen constituent Soviet republics in the Soviet Union. It existed for the period of 1920–1991. The republic was ruled by the Communist Party of Byelorussia, a branch within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. On the international stage, Byelorussia (along with Ukraine) was one of only two republics to be separate members of the United Nations. The official languages were Belarusian and Russian.

methodological and conceptual foundations. The institutional and conceptual influence of the Moscow sociologists and party officials was also significant. The sociological tradition in Belarus was dominantly Russian-speaking and there were no linguistic barriers between it and general Soviet sociology. At the same time, sociology was developed as an empirical discipline and was grounded in local Belarusian experience. Therefore we could say that sociology in Belarus in the 1960s through 1980s was developed as a variant of the general Soviet tradition, with significant regional peculiarities. And while the general history of Soviet sociology is presented in a number of publications in English, the Belarusian context is less known.

The history and institutional status of sociology as scientific knowledge in Belarus, as well as in other Soviet republics, changed during various periods of Soviet history. After the October Revolution, Belarusian State University (BSU) opened its doors in 1921 in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic after a period in which there had been no university education in the region.² Courses in Marxist sociology were among the first to be offered in the university at the Faculty of Social Sciences, where the Department of Sociology and Primordial Culture was established. The course reading in Marxist sociology (Katzenbogen 1925) was published, and some research in sociology was done. Later, in the 1930s, sociology was accused of being a “bourgeois pseudo-science” and forbidden in the Soviet Union. The courses in Marxist sociology were renamed courses in historical materialism and became a part of the Marxist-Leninist philosophical canon: “Until Stalin’s death in 1953, social sciences in the Soviet Union continued to be normative and speculative [...] centred on relating the realities of socialist society to the tenets of Marx’s theory and detecting signs of the emerging communist society” (Shalin 1978: 174). Such a close relation between sociology and philosophy existed for the whole Soviet period.

The next period in the development of sociology in the Soviet Union started in the 1950s when various applied sociological research was undertaken. The international factor, with the participation of an official delegation in the Third World Sociological Congress in Amsterdam in 1956, was important for the rebirth of Soviet sociology. “On return from the Congress, the members of the delegation reported to their party patrons that the Soviet ideological machine is lagging behind the Western one and the potential of empirical social research had to be used in competition

² Some discussions about BSU’s date of foundation are still ongoing. While the first students started their studies in 1921, the formal documents to create the University were ready in 1919.

between the two systems and in domestic governance” (Titarenko & Zdravomyslova 2017: 46).

In the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic the Scientific Laboratory of Sociological Research for Special Issues at BSU was created in 1967. The section of social research at the Institute of Philosophy and Law in the Academy of Sciences (AS) of the BSSR was created in 1968. In the 1970s, courses in applied sociology were offered, and in 1974 the Department of Philosophy began to prepare specialists in sociology (and a few years later, Ph.D. students). It must be said that BSU did not have a special philosophy faculty (as did other large Soviet universities such as those in Moscow or Kiev), but a department of philosophy existed at the Faculty of History. Most of the specialists involved in sociological research were philosophers by education and had doctoral degrees in applied sociology (code “09.00.09” in the official Soviet scientific classification was attributed to the category of philosophical sciences).

The late Soviet period was a period in which sociology was institutionalised as a separate scientific discipline in Belarus. A special department of sociology was created at the new philosophy and economics faculty at BSU in 1989. The Institute of Sociology in the Academy of Sciences was created in 1990. The academic degrees of candidate and doctor of sociological sciences were established.

/// Sociology as a Tool for the Self-Criticism of the Soviet System

Sociology in Belarus had very close relations with philosophy from the very beginning. In the 1920s, while the new Soviet disciplines were being institutionalised, the difference between Marxist sociology and philosophy was not very clear and the content of the courses might be rather similar. For example, there were similarities between the courses in Marxist sociology and dialectical materialism at BSU (Dudchik 2015) and the same persons could do research in sociology as well as in philosophy (e.g., Solomon Zakharovich Katzenbogen³). In the 1960s, when sociological research was restored, it was usually done by specialists with a background in philosophy and in a general philosophical framework (specialists in sociology were usually trained in the philosophy departments and dissertations in sociology were attributed to the philosophical sciences).

³ Solomon Zakharovich Katzenbogen (1889–1946) was a Soviet sociologist, philosopher, and party activist, who worked in Belarus and Russia. He worked as a professor at BSU in 1921–1925 and gave a course in Marxist sociology.

Fifty-seven dissertations in applied sociology were defended during the 1977–1989 period. This was 9.9% of all dissertations in the philosophical sciences (for the period of 1972–1990, after introduction of the official classification of scientific specialisations) and it was the fourth most popular specialisation (after “09.00.01 dialectical and historical materialism,” “09.00.02 theory of scientific socialism and communism,” and “09.00.03 history of philosophy,” which had almost the same number of dissertations). All the dissertations were defended for candidate degrees and there were no doctoral dissertations in applied sociology.

The general statistical data about dissertations in sociology is important for understanding the development of sociological research in Belarus. At the same time, the professional trajectories of some significant figures are also of special interest. Three main figures for the institutionalisation of Belarusian sociology in the 1960s through 1980s have been selected for further analysis. Professor Georgii Petrovich Davidyuk (1923) is the founder of the post-war Belarusian sociological tradition; he was director of the section of social research at the Academy of Sciences in the 1960s and of the laboratory of sociological research at BSU in the 1970s. Academician Evgenii Michailovich Babosov (1931) is a Belarusian sociologist and philosopher; he worked as director of the Institute of Philosophy and Law in 1977–1989 and as director of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences in 1990–1998. Professor Albert Nikolaevich Elsuikov (1936–2014) was a Belarusian philosopher and sociologist, dean of the philosophical and economic faculty in the 1990s and head of Belarus’ first department of sociology, at BSU, in 1989–2003.

As mentioned above, the development of sociology in the Soviet Union in the post-war period was difficult. Negative, or at least suspicious, attitudes to sociology were rooted in the experience of the 1920s and 1930s. As Professor Davidyuk recalled:

I got to know about sociology during Ph.D. studies in Moscow at the Academy of Social Sciences under the CC of the CPSU [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – A.D.]. Old professors of our department often said angrily that sociology is a bourgeois science. I knew from the press that it was a directive of the CC of the CPSU. When I worked at the Academy of Sciences I not only got to know, but felt, the hatred, the hos-

tility to sociology from economists, jurists, historians (Davidyuk 2013: 10).⁴

And the title of the article in which he tried to sum up the development of sociology in Belarus in the post-war period is noteworthy: “Belarus: In Tortures and Passions, Sociology Was Born.” And while these terms might be considered too expressive, the general tendency of negativity towards sociology among the official Soviet Marxists would surprise Western readers, for whom Marx himself is well known as a classic writer of sociology. But we should remember that the Soviet canon (“Marxism-Leninism”) was not identical to classical Marxist texts and a too literal study of Marx’s own work was not favoured. Another factor was the critical potential of sociology: Marx criticised capitalist society, but for Soviet sociology, Soviet society was the main subject of critical study. And despite all official criticism and sanctions against sociology, the post-war sociological project was developed under the active influence of party officials: “The party leaders planned to set up a network of sociological centres of the USSR and saw sociology as an effective, science-based instrument of ideological struggle and propaganda” (Titarenko & Zdravomyslova 2017: 46). Therefore sociology could be interpreted (possibly not without reason) by other experts as a tool of party policy.

The variety and importance of procedures of criticism in Soviet society must be remembered. Not only elements of foreign ideologies and theories (such as criticism of bourgeois philosophy and sociology) but also some phenomena of Soviet life could be subjects of active criticism. For example, Oleg Kharkhordin showed the constructing role of processes of self-criticism within a group (a “collective”) for the formation of Soviet individuality (Kharkhordin 1999: 142–163). Soviet sociology presented a more scientific-like variant of external criticism. And sociology’s critical function was proclaimed in textbooks to be among its most important ones (Davidyuk 1977: 26). In his later interview Davidyuk remembered that

The critique existed in the Soviet period. But it had a measure, a certain, marked subject. The gigantic corps of Soviet journalists criticised, and even wrote *feuilletons*. But the journalists knew well whom to criticise and to what extent. The editorial boards of newspapers and journals accepted sociologists’ texts willingly. It was allowed to criticise the heads of enterprises, collective farms for

⁴ All the translations from Russian and Belarusian are my own.

social disorders or for inability to reveal causes of personnel turn-overs, or for non-compliance with labour safety laws (especially for women). But the texts should not contain criticism of the secretaries of the district and regional committees of the CPB [Communist Party of Belarus – A.D.]. Only party officials had the right to criticise. It was allowable to present the findings of research on the efficiency of the party’s propaganda, the work of universities of Marxism-Leninism, or the houses of political education (such issues were researched by the Sociological Laboratory of BSU) only in written form and only to the propaganda department of the Central Committee of the CPB (Davidyuk 2013: 12).

As Liah Greenfeld wrote in 1988, “Soviet sociology is, essentially, purposeful science. It exists in order to achieve certain practical goals. [...] Usually, such an endeavour would be considered a technology. [...] Sociology is seen as a tool for the implementation of party goals, whatever these goals are” (Greenfeld 1988: 111–112). At the same time, criticism was a double-edged weapon and often sociologists were accused of “defamation of the socialist reality” for their findings: “Not everyone liked the results of the research, publications. Complaints to the party organs against the ‘subjectivism’ of sociologists existed; some agreements with the university were terminated; ‘dressing downs’ of sociologists at plenary sessions became almost a norm” (Davidyuk 2008: 97).

Certain conflicts existed not only with the party officials but with other specialists, especially philosophers. As Professor Elsukov remembered about his work at BSU at the Department of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy for the Faculty of the Humanities headed by Georgii Petrovich Davidyuk in 1970s,

a specialty for students in applied sociology was established; there was a special collective of applied sociologists who worked according to special agreements. [...] The department turned abruptly towards sociology. But another task to prepare professional philosophers still remained. [...] Its supporters strengthened their positions. [...] Two centres of influence and various scientific interests were formed and the conflict was inevitable. [...] As a result G.P. Davidyuk left the department (Elsukov 2011b: 40).

It might be supposed that in some aspects the history of sociology in the Soviet Union is rather similar to the Western situation, with the nineteenth-century appearance of sociology as a part of philosophy and the rather long period of its separation and institutionalisation. Davidyuk himself explains this parallel in his memoir article: “The new is always born in struggle. Auguste Comte was blamed for misunderstanding the development of society, for the invention of social laws: the laws of society were supposedly the subjects of history and economical science. Economists in England struggled against sociologists till the second half of the twentieth century” (Davidyuk 2008: 93). It is interesting that the author starts with examples of struggle between sociology and various types of knowledge and disciplines but continues with the description of a conflict between sociological knowledge and the Soviet system as such: “The Soviet political system resisted sociology furiously. The CPSU was afraid of sociological research, knowing that misery, exploitation, and absolute violation of rights⁵ would be explicated and shown” (Davidyuk 2008: 93).

It could be said that such a historical comparison (sociology versus other forms of knowledge, and sociology versus the political system) looks rather asymmetrical and some form of the Soviet ideology or discourse could be specified instead of the Soviet system as such. But perception of the possible contradiction of sociological and philosophical discourses, and attempts to establish a distance from philosophy (at least in its Marxist-Leninist form), are not typical for the older generation and Davidyuk did not make any such in his text. Returning to his historical comparison (sociology versus other forms of knowledge, and sociology versus the political system), we could interpret it in various ways: for example, as equality between the Soviet system and Soviet philosophy (as its ideological correlate). But I would like to refer to the philosophical background of Davidyuk (as well as of the majority of Soviet sociologists of the 1950s through 1970s). For example, in his interview, Davidyuk, in describing one of many conflicts with the authorities, recalled the support of “progressive philosophers,” who in some way were opposed to the officials. This could be described as a double identity of the sociologist and the philosopher at the same time. It might be supposed that such an identity has a split character (and to some extent it could be presented as such) but to my mind the situation is more correctly described as reciprocal influence and

⁵ It is interesting to note that in 2013 the rhetoric presented by professor Davidyuk in reference to criticism of the Soviet system seems rather similar to Soviet rhetorical clichés. It is possible to imagine the same words in a Soviet text criticising capitalist society.

experience of the Soviet philosophical tradition is a very important factor in the formation of sociology in Belarus. Some of the key figures for the development of sociology in Belarus are usually identified in the literature as both “sociologists” and “philosophers”; their works often deal with both disciplines and even their works in sociology sometimes have a significant “philosophical” component.

/// From the “Collection of ‘Little Facts’” to the Study of the “Methodological Problems of Scientific Fact-Formation”: Sociology as an Applied Science

Perhaps the formation of sociology as an applied science seems rather paradoxical when the philosophical background of the key figures in Belarusian sociology is recalled. At the same time this was the general tendency throughout the Soviet Union, and the movement toward the so-called “factory sociologist” played an important role in the development and institutionalisation of sociology (Abramov 2014). Epistemological questions (the relation between theory and practice, the hierarchy of forms of scientific knowledge, the problem of objectivity, etc.) were of primary importance for Belarusian sociology at this period. Because of its applied status, sociology was interpreted as a sub-discipline and its scientific status was questioned. The problem of the status of sociology appears in the texts of the period as well as in memoirs. For example, in *Applied Sociology* Davidyuk wrote that “Applied sociology is supposed not to be a science but is measured only by the limits of historical materialism. Therefore the task of social research is to get the necessary empirical material for scientific works in historical materialism” (Davidyuk 1977: 14). He argued that applied sociology is a separate and sufficient science but a science of a special kind – an applied science. Such an interpretation has some earlier history, involving an understanding of the nature of science. As Davidyuk remembered:

In the spring of 1969 I went to the assistant director of the institute of philosophy of the AS BSSR [...] with a big sheaf of documents to sign about the academic mission – our group was preparing to go do research at the Brest lamp factory. He looked at the documents and asked me: “Are you are going again to collect ‘little facts’? [diminutive form of “facts” – A.D.] Is it really science?” I asked him, “But how science is done?”

He answered, “Real science emerges in the library, by reading books.”

That’s how it was fifty-sixty years ago [the text was published in 2013 – A.D.]. A Soviet specialist in humanities read a tenth of the books in a library and then wrote another one, or a candidate or doctoral dissertation. The academic councils of institutes or departments made decisions about the research themes for the scientific collective or single researcher. The direction of research was assigned by a resolution of the CC of CPSU (Davidyuk 2013: 10–11).

The problem of the status of sociology and its relation with historical materialism was actively discussed in the 1920s in the Soviet Union (and after the polemics, sociology was blamed and forbidden) and Davidyuk made some reference to these discussions. For example, in the chapter on the history of sociology in the Soviet Union he referred to the position of the Soviet sociologist Sergei Alexandrovich Oransky,⁶ whose vision of sociology was “the most acceptable.” The main points of Oransky’s conception were: “1. Marxist sociology as an independent science; 2. The dialectical unity of theory and method in Marxist sociology; and 3. Acceptance of the independence of specific sociological research on social processes” (Davidyuk 1975: 56). Davidyuk described relations between applied sociology and historical materialism as follows: “historical materialism is a general social theory which discovers the main laws of the development of society as a social organism and develops the most general theories of social development” (1977: 16); “the decisive role belongs to historical materialism, because the latter is the methodological and theoretical foundation for applied sociology” (1977: 18). He wrote about the very close and dialectical interaction between them, which led to the mutual enrichment of both, as well as other social disciplines: scientific communism, mathematics, political economy, psychology (especially social psychology), and so forth.

It is not an easy task to separate clearly sociological research from works on historical materialism for the contemporary reader and, in the 1960s and 1970s, even for some specialists themselves the difference looked mainly formal. As professor Elsuikov remembered his work at BSU in the 1970s with Georgii Petrovich Davidyuk, “Davidyuk gathered a group that

⁶ Sergei Alexandrovich Oransky (1895–1939(42)) was a Soviet sociologist; he worked as a professor in Leningrad in the 1930s. He was the author of the book *Main Questions of Marxist Sociology* (1929), and was imprisoned in 1930–1931 and 1938–1939.

formally worked exceptionally in the area of “histmat” [shortened form of ‘historical materialism’ – A.D.] but essentially elaborated sociological research [...]. We did applied sociology, research, participated in conferences, etc.” (Elsukov 2011a: 101). Sociologists in this period provided the results of concrete research. Liah Greenfeld wrote that the concept “concrete” was used actively as the result of “a liberal substitution of the term ‘empirical’ for the euphemism” (Greenfeld 1988: 110) and it must be remembered that the concept “concrete” is rather widespread in Hegelian and Marxist intellectual traditions. At the same time, sociology still did not have its own professional language, and the meta-language for interpreting received data was the vocabulary of historical materialism. Such an understanding of sociology as an applied, concrete science made it dependent on the general discourse of Soviet social philosophy, and Belarusian sociologists tried to change the situation. The main attempts were done in the area of methodology and epistemology. For example, in his textbooks, professor Davidyuk tried to argue for the really scientific character of applied sociology and opposed the generalised vision of the structure of sociological knowledge, which is usually presented as having three main levels: the lowest is the empirical one; the middle is the level of theoretical interpretation; and the highest is the level associated with methodology and the structure of historical materialism, with its laws and categories. For such an understanding, historical materialism is something like “a springboard for sociological research” (Davidyuk 1977: 17). In opposition to this position, Davidyuk proposed another understanding of the structure of scientific sociological knowledge. In his opinion, sociological knowledge should have its foundations not only in general theory (i.e., historical materialism) but in special sociological theory as well. The analogy with Robert Merton’s “middle range theory” is rather obvious for the contemporary reader, but the author did not refer to it in the Soviet textbook for objective reasons). Sociology as applied science should develop theories that could help to discover special areas of social reality. It is interesting to mention that such a form of argumentation, with reference to “special theories” or Merton’s “middle range theory,” was rather popular in the post-Soviet period, when new disciplines (not only sociology but cultural studies – culturology – as well) tried to separate themselves from the general philosophical tradition. In trying to argue the scientific status of applied sociology Davidyuk explicated its functions and categories (as important attributes of an independent scientific discipline). The functions were the following: theoretical, descriptive, informational, prognostic, ideological (i.e., applied sociology is “filled with

ideas, subordinated to political and ideological questions” (Davidyuk 1977: 26)), and critical.

Another strategy for legitimising sociology as a science was to strengthen the role of empirical knowledge. Albert Nikolaevich Elsukov started his career as a professional philosopher with the candidate dissertation “The Problem of Explanation in Social and Historical Cognition.” Later, in 1985, he defended a doctoral dissertation in philosophy: “Methodological Problems of Scientific Fact-Formation,” where he argues the importance of scientific facts and the sophisticated, constructive, and self-sufficient character of the procedures for working with facts. The dissertation combined material from the natural sciences and its findings could be applied to the social sciences and especially sociology.

At the same time, it was an urgent task for sociologists to separate the concepts of “social research” as such from “sociological research.” The first name of their institution within the Academy of Sciences was the “Institute of Concrete Social Research,” which led to misunderstandings and attempts to do research in all areas of the social sciences: the juridical sciences, political economy, ethnography, demography, and so forth.

One of the practical implications of the postulations of a separate scientific status for applied sociology is the further institutionalisation of sociology within the system of education, including entering the specialisation in sociology: “the main point is that it is necessary to prepare sociologists as well as philosophers or, for example, economists, that is, to give them 2,500–3,000 academic hours in sociology. And, finally, the time has come to enter ‘applied sociology’ in the university nomenclature of specialisation and to open sociological departments in the leading universities” (Davidyuk 1977: 5). But the reality was more difficult. As Davidyuk wrote in his article in the 2000s:

We started the course of study for sociologists at BSU. A specialisation in applied sociology was offered; I published the textbooks *Introduction to Applied Sociology* (1975) and *Applied Sociology* (1977) – the first textbooks of their type in the USSR – to help students. In 1977 the first group graduated. They had a specialisation as “applied sociologist” on their diplomas. We started to form the Ph.D. programme. But the good beginnings to training sociologists at the university were stopped by a command “from above.” [...] An inspection [commission] came unexpectedly, recognised the notation on the diplomas to be incorrect, and ordered the notation to

be “lecturer in social sciences.” And we did this till 1988, when sociology was recognised as a science (Davidyuk 2008: 96).

/// The Transfer of Western Knowledge and Its Role in the Development of Soviet Sociology

As was shown in the previous part, there were at least two important elements in the development of sociology in Belarus as well as in the Soviet Union: the findings of empirical research, and Marxist-Leninist discourse as the theoretical form for their interpretation (Soviet philosophy and historical materialism especially). The correlation of the two components differed in various periods and it can be supposed that these uneasy relations between the two elements greatly influenced the development and status of Soviet sociology. At the same time, Soviet sociology, as an applied discipline on its theoretical foundations, was less influenced by official Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Another important source for the development of sociology in the Soviet Union was the indirect influence of Western sociological and philosophical conceptions. The official Soviet philosophical and social science was developed in opposition to Western knowledge (which was usually accused of being “bourgeois”): “in general, the Soviet conception of sociology was inversely related to its views on bourgeois sociology” (Weinberg 2004: 47). At the same time, some Western ideas were rather well known and were presented in academic publications in the form of “criticism of bourgeois science.” Despite such publications’ critical form, they could often provide some real information. Presumably such a situation, where Western knowledge was transferred in different forms, was present in various Soviet sciences, but for sociology, since the period of the 1940s–1950s, it was especially important.

The only permitted genre of academic writing related to sociology was the critique of bourgeois sociology. It was established by the end of the 1940s for ideological aims in the course of the Cold War. This genre presumed a thorough analysis of the foreign literature and intensive reception of Western social theory. A ritual part of this genre was a section with a critique of the hidden bourgeois ideological bias of Western theories from the orthodox Marxist point of view. [...] many writers of this genre belonged to the intellectual elite. They mastered foreign languages and got access to

Western professional books and periodicals (Titarenko & Zdravomyslova 2017: 37–38).

And even later the foreign “bourgeois” sociology was presented as a shadow background for the Soviet one. The “criticism of bourgeois sociology” was the fourth most popular topic in scientific articles in the 1970s–1980s (Greenfeld 1988: 104).

For example, professor Davidiyuk described his development as a sociologist in this way:

I got to know the essence of sociology by often visiting the Institute of Philosophy in Moscow, which in the 1960s already had a sector of social research, led by professor Gennady Osipov.⁷ I listened carefully to the discussions about American and German sociologies while working in Moscow in the Lenin Library. I knew a great deal about it from Gennady Osipov and Galina Andreeva.⁸ My desk books were books by Vladimir Yadov,⁹ *Sociological Research: Methodology, Programme, Methods*, and Andrey Zdravomyslov,¹⁰ *Methodology and Procedure of Sociological Research* (Davidiyuk 2013: 10).

At the same time he emphasised the importance of foreign authors:

I grasped the essence of sociology most deeply in writing my doctoral dissertation “Critique of the Theory of ‘the Single Industrial Society.’” Books on this topic were written by American, German, and Polish sociologists. They were not translated into Russian in the 1960s. I had to read them all in the original. I was amazed by the depth of the authors’ understanding of social reality and by the connection between their theoretical judgments and objective processes. I was especially impressed by the depth of John Gal-

⁷ Gennady Vasilievich Osipov (1929) is a Soviet and Russian sociologist and philosopher: Ph.D., professor, and academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences; director of the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences, honorary president of the Russian Sociological Association. He is one of the founders, and in 1959–1972 the president, of the Soviet Sociological Association.

⁸ Galina Mikhailovna Andreeva (1924–2014) was a Soviet and Russian sociologist and social psychologist, Ph.D., professor, and one of the pioneers of Soviet post-war social psychology and sociology.

⁹ Vladimir Aleksandrovich Yadov (1929–2015) was a Soviet and Russian sociologist and philosopher: Ph.D., professor, specialist in the sociology of labour and economic sociology.

¹⁰ Andrey Grigoryevich Zdravomyslov (1928–2009) was a Soviet and Russian sociologist, Ph.D., professor, and specialist in the theory of interest and the sociology of conflict.

braith's and Daniel Bell's knowledge of American as well as Soviet realities in their books *The New Industrial State* and *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (Davidyuk 2013: 10).

As we can see, except for the intensive contacts with his Soviet colleagues (especially the Moscow ones) Davidyuk spoke of the importance of reading foreign authors for his professional development.

To my mind, this situation of the indirect influence of foreign conceptions on the development of Soviet sociology could be described in terms of a "cultural transfer." This approach is represented in the works of the French researchers Michael Werner and Michel Espagne (Espagne 2003). The approach itself is based on a broad interpretation of culture and therefore the processes of cultural transfer could include various forms of interaction, but the reading and interpretation of the texts is of primary importance for our case. Espagne writes that a special role in the process of cultural transfer belongs to the figure of the mediator, who has connecting functions for various cultures (Espagne 1997). Presumably, the Soviet scientists who read and interpreted foreign texts could be described as such mediators in some way.

It is well known that for political and ideological reasons the Soviet intellectual tradition withdrew into oneself and contacts with foreign ("bourgeois") scientists and their texts were limited and attitudes toward their ideas were critical. At the same time the Soviet social sciences and humanities were not totally hermetic and some contacts and receipt of information from beyond the Iron Curtain occurred. These processes of transferring Western knowledge into the Soviet context were usually presented in the form of criticism of bourgeois knowledge. The Soviet researchers did not simply read foreign authors and use those authors' ideas but presented their texts as critiques from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. Academician Babosov reminisced about this period in relation to philosophy:

Our philosophical thought was not worse than the West's in any connection. The only sad thing was that we were cut off by the Iron Curtain. Towards almost all that was interesting in Western philosophy we had to advance the idea of a critique of bourgeois philosophy. And all the branches of philosophy that we teach today – neo-positivism, hermeneutics, etc. – were discussed in the sense of their contradiction to Marxist-Leninist philosophy and incompatibility with the position of dialectical materialism as the

only true philosophical doctrine. It was dogma we were guided by (Babosov 2011: 318–319).

Russian philosopher Vitaly Kurennoy describes the late Soviet situation as follows: “criticism (polemical evaluation of doctrines from a Marxist-Leninist perspective) in the late Soviet period was often limited to a ritual gesture; the practice of its writing was presented in the immanent reconstruction of certain conceptions” (2004: 9). As Elizabeth A. Weinberg wrote, “in the best instances, the theory of research was presented in detail before it was criticised. [...] Extensive bibliographies may have accompanied the discussions” (2004: 54). Therefore, it could be supposed that knowledge about Western ideas was present among Soviet sociologists and readers of their books.

A good example of the procedure of criticism is presented in Davidyuk’s book *Criticism of the Theory of the “Single Industrial Society,”* published in 1968. While the text itself contained a thorough analysis of Western authors, the criticism as such is represented mainly in the first part and the conclusion. The author analysed social, gnosiological, and methodological foundations of the “single industrial society” theory. He wrote about the necessity for critical analysis, that is, the “exposure of the class essence [...] of the theory” (Davidyuk 1968: 10). The class character of Western sociology prevented it from doing objective research: “Bourgeois sociologists have no other choice than to protect the interests of capitalists. Because of their social state [...] they have to research life not as it is but through the prism of their class interest. They have to choose pragmatically what is ‘profitable,’ ‘useful’ for monopolists and declare it as a ‘truth’” (Davidyuk 1968: 24). The methodology used by Western sociology is characterised as “metaphysical” (as opposed to the dialectical method) and “positivistic”; they “absolutise some changes, ignore objective laws of social development [...] absolutise the role of technique and underestimate the role of the human” (Davidyuk 1968: 35). Their “economic approach is not scientific [...] but vulgar” (Davidyuk 1968: 41). It “ignores productive relations and the operation of external phenomena” (Davidyuk 1968: 43). And while the theory may reflect some social tendencies in general it “does not give a dialectical and materialistic understanding and scientific explanation of social life” (Davidyuk 1968: 226).

It is important to say that the issue of the ideologisation of Soviet texts, especially in philosophy and the social sciences, is well known. They contain a large number of rhetorical figures, with rather intensive critique of

some theses as “bourgeois,” “reactionary,” and so forth. References to certain dogmatic formulas of Marxism-Leninism (e.g., describing the nature of some processes as “dialectical”) are widespread, and quotations from the texts of classic writers (Marx, Engels, Lenin), as well as references to the decisions of Soviet officials, were almost inevitable. Therefore, we should presumably overlook these parts of the texts as merely rhetorical and stereotypical, and should concentrate our attention on the factual information within this ideological frame: names, titles, concepts, and so forth. Such a strategy could be productive and could present at least some information about the content of the texts, despite their rhetorical form. At the same time, it can be assumed that some ideological constructions not only had rhetorical functions but some additional sense added. Anthropologist Alexei Yurchak showed the “normalisation” of official Soviet discourse through interpretation in everyday practices in the late Soviet period. At the same time he tried to escape binary oppositions in understanding Soviet culture and did not tend to present official Soviet rhetoric as something totally false and insincere (Yurchak 2005: 1–125). Therefore, it can be supposed that traditional Soviet rhetorical forms could contain some additional information and at least in some aspects should be taken into account, but this should be a subject of additional analysis.

/// The Formation of a Canon: Books and Textbooks in Sociology

The Soviet books dealing with sociological issues usually had some genre specifics. They often used material from candidate and doctorate dissertations but were written, as a rule, in popular form for a wide audience and combined various approaches and strategies of working with information. They contained Soviet Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, factual material and statistics, summaries of foreign conceptions (the subject of our special interest) and their critique from the Marxist-Leninist position, and sometimes even summaries of Western works of fiction, movies, and so forth.

A number of works that were significant for Belarusian sociology bore the important imprint of foreign ideas. I would like to start with Davidyuk’s work, *Main Features of Contemporary Revisionism* (1961) in which he observed the major trends in Marxism that differed from those accepted in the Soviet Union (and were labelled “revisionist”). He wrote (using the typical discursive elements of the period) about the philosophical foundations of the revisionist movement, the social conditions of its development, its vision of changes in social structure (the role of the proletariat, the

bureaucracy, intellectuals), the evolution of socialist states, the functions of the communist party, the national question, and so forth. Special attention was given to Polish authors (Z. Bauman, L. Kołakowski) and Yugoslav ones (I. Nady). Among the most famous Western authors referred to are H. Lefebvre and H. Bloch. Therefore, it could be supposed that some knowledge of the ideas (not necessary in the explicit form of agreement or rejection) of the “revisionist” authors about the development of modern society (and the socialist ones as a variant of it) would in some way influence further sociological research and visions of sociology in general. The book was published in 1961 and it was based on the material of the candidate dissertation defended in 1959. Thus formally we could state that some basics for the Belarusian sociological project had been developed at least by the end of 1950s. It is important to say that the book influenced Davidyuk’s career significantly and turned him toward sociological research in some way. As he remembered it:

In 1961 my book *Main Features of Contemporary Revisionism* was published. The Yugoslav press, with its entire journalist corps, attacked my book. In the pro-government newspaper *Struggle* I was accused of libel against the Yugoslav leaders, including Josip Broz Tito. In this period I was a lecturer of the CC of the CPB. Around the beginning of 1962 I was called by the head of the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the AS of BSSR Kazimir Buslov¹¹ and invited for a business conversation. [...] He said that I was invited by the secretary of the CC of the CPB, who had said that it would be inconvenient to leave [me] in the apparatus because of Yugoslav’s indignation against [me]. At the end of the conversation he recommended Buslov invite [me] to work at the Institute of Philosophy, especially now it had a good vacancy. After these words of K. Buslov I understood everything (Davidyuk 2013: 9).

The next book is the *Critique of the Theory of “The Single Industrial Society”* (1968). As we mentioned previously, Davidyuk himself called the period of its writing crucial for his own development as a sociologist. In 1970, Davidyuk published a special book about foreign conceptions of ideology

¹¹ Kazimir Pavlovich Buslov (1914–1983) was a Soviet Belarusian philosopher, Ph.D., professor, and academician of the Academy of Sciences of BSSR. He was director of the Institute of Philosophy and Law (AS BSSR) in 1956–1972, and chairman of the Belarusian branch of the Philosophical Society since 1972.

and especially the theory of de-ideologisation: *Marxist Ideology and Bourgeois De-ideologisation*. It is an interesting fact that the book was written in the Belarusian language, while almost all other books were written in Russian. One of the possible explanations for such a linguistic peculiarity is the work's rather popular character: a number of popular books were published in Belarusian while scientific literature was mostly published in Russian. The next book was written by Davidyuk together with Vladimir Sergeevich Bobrovsky¹² and was called *Problems of "Mass Culture" and "Mass Communication"* (1972). An interesting trait of the title and the text itself is that both the terms "mass culture" and "mass communication" are written with quotation marks (as well as the term "the single industrial society" in the previously analysed work) to show that they were taken from foreign, "bourgeois" theories and the Soviet researchers used them with some critical distance. The book contained two chapters: on mass culture and mass communication respectively. The books contained a number of references to foreign authors, mainly English-speaking ones (W. Rostow, M. McLuhan, D. Bell and others) as well as some others, such as the French sociologist R. Aron. The book also covered the texts of authors who wrote about socialist societies: A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, J. Douglas.

According to Davidyuk, Evgenii Mikhailovich Babosov's book *Social Aspects of Scientific-Technical Revolution* was a "guideline" for the work of their sector (Davidyuk 2008: 95). The book was published in 1976 and covered issues of social, moral, educational, and cultural changes caused by the scientific-technical revolution. The author referred repeatedly to foreign authors. He analysed the activity of the Club of Rome thoroughly, especially the works of J. Forrester and D. Meadows. The texts of A. Berle, Z. Brzezinski, A. Toffler, S. Lipset, R. Aron, and especially D. Bell, are also referenced in the book.

Professor Davidyuk published the first Belarusian textbooks in applied sociology in 1975 and 1977. These also contained certain references to foreign authors. Naturally, they did not contain quotations from foreign authors, as that would have been almost impossible in the Soviet Union. At the same time, the textbook *Introduction to Applied Sociology* covered various foreign conceptions rather thoroughly, in the part on the history of sociology. The chapter called "Bourgeois Sociology" is rather long – 89 of the book's 199 pages, more extensive than the part on the history of Marxist sociology. It is important to emphasise the amount of space the

¹² Vladimir Sergeevich Bobrovsky (1936) is a Belarusian philosopher, Ph.D., professor, and specialist in mass society theory and anthropology.

textbook devotes to the history of sociology. It could be supposed that this high number of references to the history of sociology was in some aspects caused by the novelty of the discipline itself and its unclear, and in some aspects, problematic status. To present such a doctrine in the short form of a textbook was, if not a challenge, than at least not a trivial task. And a reference to the history of the discipline as its basis seems to us one of the best and at the same time one of the more logical and obvious decisions in this situation. It was intuitively acceptable to a general reader and allowed the material to be structured according to the logic of its inner development. Such a classification of material (according to the vision of the history of sociology) has some objective (or pretending to be objective) and rather obvious justifications. The appeal to the history of sociology (especially including the Marxist tradition) shows the discipline's old and historically rooted foundations. At the same time, the author did not have to show his own position explicitly (which could be criticised) but could at least hide it under references to other names and traditions.

In general, the rhetorical attitude to foreign conceptions changed significantly. While the first texts (such as *Main Features of Contemporary Revisionism*) were very critical of foreign authors, later we see more moderate attitudes and even some elements of acceptance. For example, in *Marxist Ideology and Bourgeois De-ideologisation* we find the following passage: "a number of books, which contain interesting facts, descriptions of new methods and techniques of concrete sociological research. Especially interesting are generalisations on mechanical data handling, which has been done in the USA for a long time. Such material, in critically remade form, is used by the Soviet sociologist. Bourgeois sociology is older and still has many followers. But Marxist sociology has class and methodological advantage" (Davidyuk 1970: 74). The following process of the transfer and legitimisation of Western sociology involved not only methods but concepts as well. For example, in the textbook *Applied Sociology* the following classification of sociological categories was presented: "social fact, social environment, direct social environment, personality, collective, social actions, connections, relations, systems, classes, institutions, organisations, control, social structures, classes, strata, groups, relations between and within classes, differentiation within classes, differences, family, social progress, social change, mobility" (Davidyuk 1977: 11). It looks rather similar to the Western variants and is less related to the Marxist-Leninist canon than might have been expected. The collective edition of the *Dictionary of Applied Sociology* (Shulga 1984) continued and developed this tendency. The dictionary had a spe-

cial article on “Contemporary Bourgeois Sociology”; the article contained a number of concepts similar to the Western ones, and the texts of articles themselves referred to foreign authors and conceptions. For example, the article “Social Mobility” had the only reference to the collected texts of American sociologists, translated into Russian; the article “Social Status” referred to the conceptions of M. Weber and T. Parsons; the article “Sociology of Mass Communication” referred to the conceptions of R. Merton and P. Lazarsfeld, and so forth. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the 1960s–1980s a slow but permanent and constant process of transferring Western knowledge to Belarusian Soviet sociology took place, in the form of conceptions, ideas, and terms. The explicit use of Western conceptions became ever more normal and legitimated. This transfer influenced sociology’s development significantly, and once various conceptions had been transferred and become known, the American authors acquired some dominance. It can be supposed that this transfer of Western knowledge influenced not only academicians but also – through this academic mediation – Soviet officials. We should not forget the close relation between philosophy and communist institutions and that some researchers (such as the academician Babosov) worked as members of the party apparatus for a certain period. But that is a question for further research.

/// Conclusion

In the beginning I used the term the “sociology of Belarus” instead of “Belarusian sociology” and wrote that in the 1960s–1980s it was developed as a variant of the general Soviet tradition, with significant regional specificities. At the same time, research has shown that a view of Soviet sociology as something very homogeneous could be questioned as being oversimplified in some aspects. Naturally, a very high degree of homogeneity existed (especially in the early periods of sociology’s development) but sociology was significantly formed by external elements, involving the Soviet administrative and institutional divisions, and relations with party officials. But such subordination of sociological research to local party institutions within certain republics made it more variable. In the Belarusian case, the local specificity of sociology was significantly influenced by the dynamics of local administrative and scholarly institutions (mainly the Institute of Philosophy at the AS and the Department of Philosophy at BSU).

One of the specificities of sociology in Belarus was the discipline’s very deep incorporation in the system of philosophical knowledge and,

for a long time, its methodological and disciplinary separation from philosophy has not been explicated. The reciprocal influence of the two disciplines was important for a number of leading figures involved in the institutionalisation of sociology in Belarus. And while sociology was closely integrated into philosophical knowledge, the tension between it and some branches of philosophy was thereby significant. But while the philosophy of science was among the leading disciplines in the BSSR, the question of epistemology, and especially the status of empirical knowledge, was of primary importance for sociology as an applied discipline with a philosophical background. Therefore, arguments about the scientific and theoretical status of sociological knowledge are often used to legitimise sociology as a discipline.

Another important source of sociology's development was the indirect influence of Western sociological and philosophical conceptions. Official Soviet philosophical and social science was developed in opposition to the Western – usually called “bourgeois” – knowledge. At the same time, some Western ideas were rather well known and were presented in academic publications in the form of “criticism of bourgeois science.” Criticism was often presented in rather ritual forms. Nevertheless, the criticism itself could often provide real information about foreign conceptions and ideas. The criticism was supported by the Soviet officials and its subjects were chosen according to current needs and plans. Simultaneously, the planned nature of Soviet criticism made the work of certain researchers more autonomous (according to their specialisation). Analysis of main texts (monographs, textbooks, and dictionaries, as well as memoir literature) shows the main problems, approaches, works, and concepts (with some dominance of the American ones) that were transferred and referred to in Belarusian sociology in the 1960s–1980s. The process of transfer had a slow but constant character and the open use of Western concepts became more and more normal and legitimated: from specialised scientific articles and monographs to textbooks and dictionaries. This study has thus explained the real importance of “Western” knowledge as a “shadow” factor of sociology's development (often in close connection with philosophy) in Soviet Belarus in the 1960s–1980s, as well as some of the forms and mechanisms of intellectual transfers in the post-war period of Soviet history.

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/// Abstract

This article covers the development of sociology as a scientific discipline in Belarus in the period of the 1960s through 1980s. It analyses the close interrelation between sociological and philosophical knowledge. It also looks at the phenomenon of the double identity of the sociologist and the philosopher, leading to their reciprocal influence. The indirect influences of Western sociological and philosophical conceptions are explained as an important source of sociology's development. Analysis shows that some Western ideas were known rather well and were presented in academic publications and textbooks in the form of “criticism of bourgeois science,” which, despite its critical form, could often provide real information. Analysis of the main texts (monographs, textbooks, and dictionaries, as well as memoirs) helps to cover the main problems, approaches, works, and con-

cepts that were transferred to, and referred to, in Belarusian sociology in the period of the 1960s through 1980s. The process of transfer had a slow but permanent and constant character and the usage of Western conceptions became ever more normal and legitimated. The findings reveal the real importance of “Western” knowledge as a “shadow” factor in the development of sociology (often in close connection with philosophy) in Soviet Belarus in the 1960s through 1980s.

Keywords:

criticism of bourgeois science, historical materialism, sociology in Belarus, Soviet sociology, Soviet philosophy, transfer of knowledge

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