

“Scientific Communism” and the Modern Political Science in Ukraine

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The article is devoted to the topic, which for the current generation of both Western and post-Soviet political science communities seems to be “Terra incognita.”

It delivers the detailed analysis of conditions and key determinants of the foundation of such representative for Soviet ideology study course as “scientific communism.” The author also takes into consideration the motivation of the Soviet ruling class (CPSU) and scientific authority of USSR. Article attempts to reveal several following issues on “scientific communism”: a) its theoretical and ideological essence as a meta-narrative in the socialistic countries; b) peculiarities of foundation, functioning, ideological, theoretical and methodological support of the system of professional training in the field of scientific communism in the Soviet Union and the Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv in the period of the 60’s — 80’s.

Key Words: “scientific communism”, social science, political science, USSR, ideology, Ukrainian policy.

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Issues on foundation and development of “scientific communism” in Soviet times

For deep and adequate understanding of the causes of the appearance of such a direction in social science as “scientific communism” and understanding the motivation of its appearance as a compulsory discipline in the system of higher education of the USSR and Ukraine, some significant points must be outlined.

The first. The foundation of a separate study course “Scientific Communism” in higher education structure of the USSR is usually associated with the “Khrushchev thaw” in the early 60’s. Namely, it reflected the necessity, on the one hand, to overcome the major disadvantages in the teaching of the fundamentals of philosophy, history of the CPSU, socio-political knowledge, which usually had a low professional level. On the other hand, it was founded as the response to some crucial tasks, which were following:

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- a) Training of skilled personnel for science and culture;
- b) Formation of Marxist-Leninist worldview and high civilian qualities among the population and especially young people;
- c) Modernization of ideology, its reproduction and dissemination mechanisms under the conditions of confrontation with the “Maoist challenge” of the People’s Republic of China, confrontation with the leading countries of the West, a sharp rise of the anti-colonial and national liberation movement (revolutions) in Asian countries, Africa, Latin America;
- d) Ideological confrontation and argued, ideologically and theoretically grounded critique of “revisionism”, “nationalism”, “anti-radicalism.”

Development and implementation of “scientific communism” as a basic component of the Soviet social science usually associated with Nikita Khrushchev and Mikhail Suslov, as well as with the activity of new generation of philosophers, historians and sociologists Yuriy Francev, Michail Rutkevich, Alexander Kovalov, Peter Fedoseev and Aleksey Rumyantsev. In mentioned scholars opinion, “scientific communism” was equal to the theory of changes in socialist society, social science without sociological factology, but with the forecast of the near future. This, in their opinion, was what we needed to know about Soviet society to participate in its final transformation into a communist one.

To understand the reasons of the emergence of “scientific communism” and why it became compulsory discipline, its necessary to take into account that in the early 60’s “the request for political science in the Soviet Union used to come “from above”, namely from individuals closely connected with the practice of politics (interests of the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, ideas and convictions of young scientists and initiative advisers of the apparatus of the Central Committee of the CPSU and prominent political scientists such as Georgiy Shakhnazarov or Fedor Burlatsky, who took part in the preparation of a Communist party program of 1961). Scientific communism was considered to be a science that can make a “radical change in the state social and political life,” and alter the dictatorial, totalitarian state “of the Stalin era into a” modern civilized, democratic” [Vorobyov, 2004: 170].

Some Western and Russian scholars consider Mykola Suslov’s speech at the All-Union Meeting of Heads of the Departments of Social Sciences on January 30, 1962, to be the initial administrative impulse in the process of the emergence of “scientific communism.” The following statement was proclaimed in this speech: “...the Ministry of Higher Education the institutes of the Academy of Sciences, (philosophy, history, economics), Academy of social sciences under the Central Committee of the CPSU, with the involvement of the departments, is now must be practically engaged in preparation for teaching in the higher educational institutions the course of scientific communism” [Sochnev, 2015].

The final administrative step for implementing of the study course “Scientific Communism” was the order of the Ministry of education on June 27, 1963: “Introduction to higher educational institutions in the USSR the course of fundamentals of scientific communism.” Seventy study hours were planed on this study course in the curriculum.

The second. Despite the commonly spread opinion about totalitarianism of the Soviet system of governance and its political regime, the omnipotence of party structures it would be erroneous to believe that the discipline of “scientific communism” easily, without problems “entered into” the system of higher education and has rapidly gained institutional support for the implementation of its teaching at the philosophical faculties. In fact, during the first years after the introduction of the course as a mandatory discipline, “there was in a volatile situation,

even the possibility of its abolition was discussed.” “The study course was eventually approved and fixed after 1967.” Mentioned fact is evidenced by the decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU “On Measures for the Further Development of Social Sciences and Increasing Their Role in Further Communistic Construction” (1967), which in fact approved in the system of higher education the teaching of the course on “Fundamentals of Scientific Communism.” [Sochnev, 2015].

The third. In Soviet times, the structure of Marxist social science was often explained by quoting the Lenin’s works. Especially the works “Karl Marx” and “The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism” [Lenin, 1977: 21-28], where Lenin formulated the ideological and theoretical origins and basic elements of the Marxist doctrine on the world-historical process, social life and expressed ideas for its further development and conceptual arrangement. And in fact, such a model of the theoretical triad through the introduction and development of “scientific communism” was finally formatted in the middle of 60-ties. I propose to consider a semantic explanation on this issue in one of the guides of the period of “perestroika”:

Marxism-Leninism is a coherent system of ideas and philosophical, economic and socio-political views, that reflect the objective regulations of the development of the world and serves as an effective spiritual weapon of the revolutionary transformation of social life on Communist principles. According to this, it includes three closely interrelated parts, which are: dialectical and historical materialism, Marxist-Leninist political economy and “scientific communism” [Tadevosian, 1986, 12-13].

The fourth. As noted above, “scientific communism” served as a “matrix”, namely, the source and systematic meta-model of social and socio-political cognition. That happened because, firstly, on the basis of the general course or “scientific communism” several separate thematic blocks were formed, and secondly, this study course and research field became a meta-narrative in the Soviet Union and some other countries of the “Communist bloc” (mainly — DDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria).

As it is known, scientific communism is not just a paradigm or the only correct theoretical model, but is a concept that “is claiming universality, domination in culture and “legitimizing” the knowledge, various social institutions, a certain way of thinking, as well as ideology, which imposes a complex of ideas on society and culture, limiting, organizing, controlling and violating a personality” [Korotchenko, 2001, 459].

The fifth. The first (“scientific communism”) stage of the political research formation and its methodology manifests itself by the fact that the curriculum was completely determined centrally, unified and standardized. Mentioned standardization was provided by the Ministry of education of the USSR (under the supervision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) and implemented by the local administrative institutions in order to disseminate the orthodox principles of Marxist philosophy. Undoubtedly, all this significantly influenced the training of professionals in the field of social and political science.

Since 60’s — to the middle of 80’s only normatively-approved, authorized by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the USSR Russian textbooks were published and duplicated. The authors of this textbooks were academicians of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Such textbooks were often translated into the languages of the main Soviet republics or of the countries of the socialist community.

The most striking example is the textbook “Scientific Communism” edited by academician Peter Fedoseev (academician, Director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of CPSU), which obtained the leading position for more than twenty years.

The general tendency in the publishing of social-political literature showed the fact that most of the authors who were able to contribute to the textbooks composition were not allowed to do this until 70’s and even later up to “perestroika” period. The process of the scientific communism textbooks preparation and publication ceased at the 1990-1991 because of the USSR collapse (the collapse of the Soviet economic and political systems (“developed socialism”), constitutional changes (abolition of the 6th article of the Constitution of the USSR), which, in total, were deprived of the CPSU monopoly to “possess state power”, deprived the indisputable status of being “the governing and steering force” in the country and being a judge of all ideological and ideological issues. Under such conditions, the study course “Scientific Communism” was canceled, and replaced firstly by the courses “Political science”, “History of political doctrines”, “The modern theory of socialism,” “Political sociology,” “History of socio-political ideas,” “Theory of the world political process,” “Politics and ideology,” “Political processes and institutions”), and then by a single, standardized course “Political science.”

The sixth. The personnel of the philosophical faculties in the period of 60’s — early 80’s of the did not have the officially approved possibility to make adjustments to the structure, teaching and methodological support of the educational process, to the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the problems of theory and practice of political life and to the interpretation of various aspects of the functioning and development of social systems (first of all, socialist and capitalist).

For example, there are several works’ titles that would serve as auxiliary (with the exception of works of meters on the history of foreign philosophy) literature for teachers and future professionals in social science problems or scientific communism: *Criticism of the ideological foundations of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism* by V. Evdokimenko (Kyiv, 1967); *Political American Sociology: Essays* by A. Dmitriev (Leningrad, 1971); *Criticism of modern bourgeois philosophy. Tutorial* (Moscow, 1973); *Modern Revolutionary Movement and Nationalism* Edited by V. Zagladina and F. Ryzhenko (Moscow, 1973); *Criticism of Modern Bourgeois Concepts in the Course of Scientific Communism* Edited by A. Sheptulina, V. Aleksandrova, N. Dryakhlov, E. Troitsky. *Guide for teachers* (Moscow, 1974); *Criticism of the bourgeois theories of convergence of capitalism and socialism* (Kyiv, 1974); *Non-Marxist conceptions and socialism struggle for a social progress in African and Asian countries* by E. Troickij (Moscow, 1974); *Criticism on bourgeois falsification of the national policy of USSR* (Moscow, 1974); etc.

The structure and peculiarities of “scientific communism” studies

In addition to the mentioned above information, some following statements must be outlined.

1) The general amount of translated literature on political sciences, social and political philosophy, theoretical sociology, and even the world history constituted a small percentage of libraries of different levels of subordination.

2) Most of topics, problems and issues that are now traditionally related to the course on political science were taught within the framework of the “Philosophy” course. Philosophy

was a compulsory course for the whole system of higher education of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR (all faculties of higher education, and for a long time and specialized secondary institutions of the country) and consisted of two parts. The second one was called “Historical Materialism” (in fact — it is the Marxist version of “social philosophy” in addition with the conceptual elements of the theory of politics, philosophy of history, political philosophy).

3) The quantity of state publishing houses which had a social science specialization was extremely limited. At the same time, there were no private publishing houses at all. In Soviet times, the number of scientific journals specialized on philosophy or social science was insufficient to meet the needs.

4) Appropriate evaluation of essence and social role of “scientific communism” course requires a consideration of several key issues.

One of the most important issues is that “scientific communism” was not similar to the Western standard of political sciences. The studies on “scientific communism” and the similar study course were significantly wider than any western theory of politics or universal political theory.

The second of the two above-mentioned strategies for the development of political science (“scientific communism”) in the USSR was implemented, mainly through the system of higher education. Especially for this purpose, additional departments were founded on the philosophical faculties and the institutes of philosophy.

A clear indication of the wideness of the subject field of “scientific communism” is the structure of the course reflected in the curriculum.

The typical scientific communism course consisted of four general sections.

The first section was devoted to: a) theoretical and methodological issues of the course (subject, place in the system of sciences, methods of cognition); b) the history of social and political thought (pre-Marxist “utopian” socialist doctrines, theoretical sociopolitical views of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Leninist stage in the development of socialist and communist ideas and project guidelines for their implementation).

The second section was devoted to a) the overview of the problems of the “socialist revolution theory”; b) the analysis of the present condition of the social revolution; c) the historical logic of formation of the global socialist system and the main contradictions and the causes (economic, social, political, ideological and spiritual) of the crisis of the global capitalism; d) the roles of the revolutionary workers and national liberation movement; e) comprehension of the problems of war and peace.

The third section was focused on the careful consideration and study of the Soviet Marxist-Leninist variant of communism — various aspects of theory and practice.

The fourth section proposed the consideration of Marxist-Leninist theory, with substantial ideological additions of ideas and views of the ruling party on the ideal of the future non-state condition of humanity — namely — Communism. According to party doctrine, it seemed that the Soviet society, the Communist Party and the people have already entered the communist era. The chronological lower boundary of the fourth section was defined as the stage “developed socialism.” The content of this section (manuals, curricula and plans), its topics and the questions, ideas, categorical and conceptual apparatus were completely detached from the reality and ideological. As a result, ideas, which contained the ideological prejudices, were taught by scientific communism teachers were often rejected by citizens and caused unbreakable irony of scholars, colleagues-teachers of humanities and students.

“Scientific communism” and philosophy

The study on the specialization “scientific communism” required a fundamental philosophical education. The system demanded from students an obligatory mastering of philosophical knowledge standardized due to the standards of higher specialized education of the USSR. They were also obliged to carry on an educational, scientific and research activities. The list of study courses in the curriculum for scientific communism was quite similar to the curriculum of philosophy. Here is a list of study courses of “scientific communism” in Taras Shevchenko State University of Kyiv 1988. “The History of Philosophy” (foreign, nations of the USSR, Marxist-Leninist), “Dialectical Materialism,” “Historical Materialism,” “History and Theory of Atheism,” “Ethics,” “Aesthetics,” “Psychology,” “Pedagogy of higher education,” “Statistics,” “Soviet law,” “Foreign language,” “Political economy,” “National economic planning,” “World History,” “Methodology and technique of sociological research.” In addition, the standards of professional education required a completion of “sociological” and “pedagogical” practices, writing and defense of the three course papers (4th, 6th and 8th semesters), and a final thesis, the compilation of two state exams on such subjects as “Marxism-Leninism and “scientific communism.”

The history of political science education in a period of the 70’s-80’s shows that despite the numerous problems, the informational “iron curtain” and ideological prejudgments, scholars who were interested in independent and objective political scientific information had a chance to get it. Traditions of “scientific communism” widely influenced the teaching and research methods in the field of humanities. All social and political sciences were under ideological control and pressure. A lot of information on totalitarian heritage impact on the contemporary condition of those sciences can be found in recent scholarly publications [Fatkhutdinova, 2015; Gomilko et al., 2016; Yosypenko, 2018]. Such impact on the history of philosophy was well described in the paper by Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Vadym Tytarenko and Sergii Rudenko. “The Soviet ideology expansion over Ukrainian intellectual culture caused fundamental changes in the topics and the way of providing of philosophical inquiries and research within all subfields of philosophy. The variety of topics and methods of philosophical research was reduced to Marxist-linked topics and Marxist-Leninist dialectics. Aim and scope of any philosophical research were strictly determined by a general communist party strategy of social development. Moreover, one of the fundamental intentions of the Soviet totalitarian science and philosophy was to destroy a national authenticity and cultural distinction of USSR members and its research in Humanities. Consequently, History of philosophy was not an exception” [Tytarenko & Rudenko, 2018: 109].

The institution that made in the Soviet Union possible to get the latest and high-quality information in the field of all social and political sciences (philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, law, economics, global and regional problems) was the Institute for scientific information on Social Sciences (INION). The highly skilled staff of the institute published abstracts and analytical publications, informational reviews, etc., in which in detail, without bills were covered articles materials or monographs by Western authors.

Nowadays Ukrainian political science is being modernized due to the present strategies for higher education modernization. Denys Svyrydenko basically outlined this strategy in his recent writing. The necessity of such modernizing changes is caused by the modern calls. “The main goal of this process is to transform higher education institutions to make them adequate to the modern stage of social development. The result of this modernization should be a new

form of institutional organization and updated education content at the universities which current state is described as critical” [Svyrydenko, 2014: 259]. Many reforms are already done, nevertheless, there is still a lot to do.

Conclusions

Analysis of the implementation of “scientific communism” study course in USSR that was initiated by the supreme party leaders revealed that its content components became intensively diffused during “perestroika,” particularly on philosophical departments of leading universities. Within the framework of the same standardized program of training the diversity of meanings, ideological pluralism in the interpretation of problems and concepts has intensively raised. First and foremost, through reinterpretation and substitution of Marxist-Leninist dogmas and ideological prescriptions by the ideas, precepts and theoretical constructs propounded by the European and American political science communities.

Such modernization or rather radical reform became an incentive and constructed a bridge in order to fill the gap between the Soviet theoretical and ideological matrix of “scientific communism” and Western, democratically oriented models of knowledge on political processes and phenomena.

Thus, in the history of the theoretical and empirical political studies, a unique tendency emerged: refuse to take a long journey full of own “trials and errors” and throughout several years structurally format a self-sufficient “science on politics.”

Such a modernization of political research, as well as the reorganization of the professional training system, has caused a sharp improvement in the quality and effectiveness of study on political processes and phenomena.

The ideological liberation of political studies (including the education system) provided conditions in each of the post-Soviet countries for the further development of the traditions of their national political science schools. Scientists and real policymakers have become able to provide the following activity: a) analyze and assess the contradictions of their national and world political history; b) to identify the most urgent problems, goals and objectives of the strategy for reforming the economic, political, legal and, especially, state institutions of the socialistic era; c) to understand the trends and prospects for transformations of the world order at regional and global levels.

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