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## BELARUSIAN IDEOLOGY: BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM

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## БЕЛОРУССКАЯ ИДЕОЛОГИЯ: МЕЖДУ СОЦИАЛИЗМОМ И КАПИТАЛИЗМОМ

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В статье анализируется положение дел в сфере идеологии. Констатируется, что при всем многообразии написанных в Республике Беларусь работ они все еще недостаточно фундированы философским материалом, зачастую в них четко не прописана авторская позиция, а содержание идеологии сводится к описанию практико-политических действий президентской администрации. Предлагаются рекомендации, направленные на развитие и совершенствование белорусской идеологической модели.

*Ключевые слова:* белорусская идеология, марксизм, социал-консерватизм, солидарность, патернализм и прагматизм в идеологии.

Modern situation in the sphere of ideology is analyzed in the article. Though the articles published in the Republic of Belarus are varied it is stated that they are not supported by any serious philosophical material. The authors' opinion is often not clearly shown. The ideology content is given as a description of practical political steps of the President's administration. The Recommendations concerning the development and improvement of the Belarusian ideology model are suggested.

*Keywords:* Belarusian ideology, Marxism, social conservatism, solidarity, paternalism and pragmatism in ideology.

National ideology formation is one of the most important tasks of the government building. However, we have to state that the results achieved are not impressive. The conclusions of some authors that "Belarus has been able to find the solution of the most complex problem, combining successfully the elements of communist, conservative and social democratic ideologies" [4, p.125–127] are premature. The reform of the higher education system which was implemented several years ago, namely the shortage of the number of hours for humanitarian disciplines, indirectly confirms this. The paradox is that while trying to strengthen the state ideology the hours for studying disciplines that promote this ideology are reduced. Today a modern humanitarian results in gaining a chaotic set of facts not connected with ideology. Any student can fill the gaps in existing knowledge himself because almost everything can be found on the Internet. Thus there is a problem with textbooks on history that are rich in factual information but have a lack of ideology. This may be one of the reasons that made the head of our state to talk

about the necessity to rewrite them. However, will teachers and historians be able to create them? It is hardly possible that it is only "negligence and irresponsibility" as it was stated by the President of Belarus in February 2016 [1]. It is obvious that there are real difficulties in setting of appropriate ideological accents.

If ideology is understood as "a system of ideas, a system that reflects the interests and aims of its carrier" as it is written in one of the textbooks [6, p.19], the structural elements of this system should be studied first and those to be included into the ideology of our country should be determined.

First. The main element of ideology is a book. The Bible of the "left" was "The Capital", the main text for German Nazis was "Mein Kampf". Usually the main book is followed by a number of texts that become classical. The classics of liberalism is the philosophy of Enlightenment, first of all works written by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Adam Smith. It is important that ideology is formed during decades if not centuries. It is enough to count the number of volumes comprising complete

works written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in order to understand the impressive foundation of the Soviet ideology. There are 50 volumes and it took 26 years to publish them: the first volume was published in 1955 and the last one in 1981. Besides these there are complete works written by Lenin and a great variety of other ideological literature.

Thus the question arises: Where is our “epoch of Enlightenment”, that we are so proud of like an American or a Frenchman is proud of? It is a pity but there are no fundamental ideological concepts worked out by modern Belarusian thinkers and as we understand they have never been. The most talented and the most funded models of the Belarusian way were firmly connected with the left movement that paved the way for the October Revolution of 1917. These works became the ideological platform for the Belarusian variant of Marxism-Leninism. It is well seen on the example of Yanka Kupala or Yakub Kolas, praising sincerely communism and believing in the rightness of the left-wing way. It is paradoxical that Belarusian opposition that denies everything Soviet praises all classics of the Soviet epoch from Kupala and Kolas to Vasil Bykov and Svetlana Alexievich.

In one of the textbooks three types of ideology are identified: “liberalism, conservatism, socialism (communism), deideologization and reideologization tendencies, globalism and anti-globalism [6, p.41]. In our opinion this typology is too complicated here (and in other textbooks as well). Obviously there are four fully realized political ideologies: liberalism, communism, monarchism and fascism, but they seem to have been exhausted nowadays. In post-Soviet states Neo-Eurasian movement has the powerful potential. As for conservatism (obviously perspective for our political establishment) it is a value system that can be used fruitfully in any ideology. It is enough to recall British and American conservatives. Conservatism is a key element of today’s Neo-Eurasian movement.

What our textbooks lack is the author’s point of view. It must be clearly determined which components of the abovementioned ideologies should be included in the Belarusian ideology and what must determine its originality and peculiarity. Now it is supported not by the philosophical content but it is just the reflection of political actions of the executive government. In our opinion the concept of social conservatism is preferable to work with. We can use as the theoretical basis ideas of Belarusian

philosophers Alexey Dzermant and Piotr Piatrouski. They appeal to the works of German conservative philosophers first of all Ernst Junger and Carl Schmitt, whose philosophy is aimed at the overcoming of the outdated Enlightenment epoch’s theoretical constructs [2; 8].

Second. Ideology is impersonal and not based on a certain personality. This is a principal point, for the ideological foundation is laid “for centuries” and it is impossible without solution of the authority continuity problem. People are not the object of the ideology, but they are its subject. If it is a different way, the ideology will end in the leader’s end. One of the architects of the Belarusian model Vladimir Melnik points at this and states that the mechanism of the power transfer from one administration to another one has not been worked out [9, p.101]. The Belarusian leader Alexander G. Lukashenko understands this fact. The President of Belarus points out that ideology demands the creation of “a stirring idea that will be accepted by the whole society”. Understanding the problem he admits that the state ideology enthusiastically supported by the Belarusian people has not been created [7]. The Belarusian opposition, having a powerful financial support from the West has not created anything stirring either: its activity is limited to a creation of slogans criticising any activity of the authorities. This is the status quo where the society without ideology seems to satisfy the executive branch. The executive branch has the possibility not to use theoretical concepts and to act immediately reacting quickly to arising challenges.

Third. The ideology concept must suppose integrity: the category which would be the basis of the system and would unite people. For fascists that category was the nation, for communists it was the proletariat. The basis of liberalism is individualism and absolute freedom of the individual, if this freedom is not against the law. The law and the government providing that law unite civil society. Similarly, a religious community determines its affiliation to the Muslim world. Integrity of one’s community is shown in attractive slogans, which are the “brands” of the ideology. It was a slogan “Workers of the world, unite!” that made the communist ideology so viable and promised all people liberation from exploitation and oppression.

Two concepts that comprise Belarusian ideology may be formulated. The first one is “the ideology of a common sense”. But a

common sense and ideology are not identical. The given idea may be developed in the direction of pragmatism and rationalism of the Belarusian model. These ideas are not taken by chance. They have a serious philosophical basis. The abovementioned philosophers Dzermant and Piatrouski use three categories for the description of Belarusians. The first one is the “Gestalt of the worker” from the philosophy of Ernst Junger. It supposes a total mobilization of the society and its involvement into “great constructive activity”. The second one is “a working nation”, under what a unique existential type of Belarusians is understood. Belarusians got through collectivization, industrialization, World War II and rapid urbanization and are ready for the creation of “labor democracy”. The third category is the “partisan phenomenon” described by Schmitt and the ability of the Belarusian people to get organized into one power for the defense of traditional values [2, p.96; 8, p.99]. Corresponding ideas go beyond boring clichés and demand further study. We developed the ideas of these authors in the article “The Partisan and the Worker: the Belarusian National Character”, where the archetype of the Belarusian national character is rooted in the partisan movement during the Great Patriotic War [10].

The second concept is paternalism. Under this term we understand the government leader’s care for his own people. Thus the word “Batska” (Nation’s father) is widely used by the Belarusian people who name the President that way. The idea that people are a family and a leader is a father is very productive. But it presents a certain problem. Citizens begin to live at the expense of the “family” becoming parasites transferring the responsibility to “the father”. The question is how to make citizens be responsible for the whole country and the processes that take place in it. In order to fulfill this it is necessary to reduce paternal expectations of Belarusians and “to bring up a new generation of citizens that will be more self-sufficient” as it was noted by Piatrouski [9, p.102]. Too much care leads to the mistake made by the government of the USSR. A Russian scientist Sergei Kara-Murza writes: “The high security of the social system of the USSR leads to carelessness and negligence to the advantages of this system. All real fears and threats (threat of unemployment, poverty, diseases when you have no money for a doctor and medicines), that made people tough in the West seemed to us funny and imagined [3, p.339].

Fourth. Ideology must be forward-looking. The main component of the Belarusian ideology is the Great Patriotic War (GPW). It is a very strong component. It is necessary to explain to today’s youth that people defended their Motherland not in vain and also to show what it will give them personally in future. That is why the main task is to give a perspective through the heroic past and the tragedy of our people. Otherwise people will get tired to live thinking of 1941–1945 and demand something new. It is perspective to work with the concept of solidarity, which goes back to Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist. According to Durkheim society is an organism, where everyone fulfilling their function, makes their own contribution to stable and reliable functioning of the Whole. When we connect the concept of solidarity with the GPW we have the following sequence.

1. Solidarity, shown by the people during the GPW, allowed Belarusians to withstand the invaders and to win.
2. Solidarity allows to solve successfully the complex tasks of the state development.
3. Solidarity creates a feeling of mutual support and responsibility in people and makes them reveal useful initiative thus involving all individuals of the existing society in beneficial cooperation.
4. Solidarity will create certainty in the wealthy future and the loss of solidarity will be comparable with the fascist invasion of the country.
5. Support of the solidarity relations is a duty of every Belarusian, the function of the government is to give direction to the people.

In this context the GPW is a fundamental event that puts the solidarity relations in the first place changing it from a sleeping archetype into real power.

Going back to the war we should point out the absence of promoted publicistic works and theories created by Belarusian scientists. We have very fundamental science on the history of the war, we know a lot about it, but we must fully use scientific material for ideological purposes. As an example the works of the Russian publicist Yury Mukhin, who wrote a number of books full of ideology, may be mentioned. One of his books “The Lessons of the Great Patriotic War” is written vividly and breathtakingly and can influence the youth [5]. There are no analogous books in Belarus or few people know about them.

Fifth. Ideology cannot be contradictory. It is a very vulnerable point for the architects of Belarusian ideology. The instability of the situation is connected with the fact that the country balances between the concepts of “capitalism” and “socialism”. Appeal to the concept of “socialism” or any other terminology, connected with the USSR, causes the rejection of people, who are strongly against the Soviet system. At the same time people have not learnt to live within the capitalist economy, though they want to make their level of life closer to the Western standards. It is desirable to give up the outdated dichotomy “capitalism- socialism” and make an accent on the structural and functional explanation of the society processes. This allows us to give up the outdated socialist rhetoric (which is connected with the revolutionary spirit of Marx and Lenin) as well as rhetoric of the prophets of liberalism with its individuality, high political correctness and other values that do not correspond to the Belarusian traditional society values.

If elements of the liberal model are introduced it should be done cautiously and thoughtfully. A simple copying of the Western values will inevitably cause fundamental shifts. This theme should be given special attention. The principal difference that separates Marxism from liberalism is the attitude to labour. Marxism in its Soviet variant considered material assets higher than intellectual ones. Engels wrote the following in one of his works: “According to the materialistic conception, the decisive element of history is pre-eminently the production and reproduction of life and its material requirements. This implies, on the one hand, the production of the means of existence (food, clothing, shelter and the necessary tools); on the other hand, the generation of children, the propagation of the species” [11, p.9–10].

As a result the absolute value of “things” took the first place in public conscience. The proletariat was often wealthier than intelligentsia in the Soviet Union. A paradoxical situation was formed when in the USSR foreign things in the mind of an average citizen were valued higher than free education and medicine. A rather despising attitude to intelligentsia was a key feature of the Soviet public conscience. In the West everything is vice versa: everything connected with physical labour is incomparable with what is done with the help of the intellect. Things are cheaper there, physical labour is paid less, education and medical care are expensive. A person from the West does not

understand how an income of the PhD person can be comparable with the income of a waitress or a cashier in a shop. In Belarus it is a norm. And this is one more argument that makes us vigilant about communist rhetoric.

It is not easy to change the situation as “western advisors” want us to believe. If you want an Associate Professor to get more money it is necessary to make higher education more expensive. If we want a kindergarten teacher to earn more, we should make parents pay for all services provided now by the government free, including the salary of the kindergarten teachers, service personnel, payment of rents etc. Analogous measures should be taken to medicine, making free medicine impossible. The authors of similar ideas expect that such measures will lead to high quality service, but in our opinion, it is not obvious at all. The liberal model in its radical form imposed by the West will demand the refusal from the paternalistic policy of the government and will minimize the government care for its citizens. This inevitably leads to taking from government budget expenditures for social services: support of the family and pensioners, maternity leaves, sick leaves, paid leaves etc. We can imagine what will happen if the government suddenly implements these ideas. No politician will make such reforms, otherwise he will be toppled by his own people and the country will be destroyed by “maidans” and social riots.

Sixth. Ideology is spread through mass culture. We should state the weakness of the modern Belarusian mass culture. This is what discourages our youth, attracted by the most advanced and ultramodern forms of mass culture. It is necessary to organize “net ideology”, that must go from the bottom and should penetrate into everyday life of every citizen of the country through the Internet. Introducing the term “net” demands the usage of the philosophy of postmodernism. Why not use concepts worked out by the classics of postmodern philosophy (Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault)? But in our textbooks on ideology even the word “postmodernism” is not used.

The terms “government power”, “stability”, “society of social justice” etc., practiced in ideological discourse, have become worn-out clichés that stopped attracting attention and this means that they are not effective any more. The Internet is a net. Ideas in the net are similar to flashes, that quickly spark in virtual world. The brightest flashes, which content is discussed at

various forums, attract the attention of the World Net users. The ideology promotion demands working out discourse for youth with spreading appropriate materials through the Internet. In other words the ideological discourse must be modern, especially when its aim group is youth and it is necessary to work not only with the content but also with the form.

Thus, today we have to admit a number of unsolved tasks in ideological sphere. As a result we have numerous textbooks with some facts from the history of Belarus that tell us more about statehood than about ideology. The future renewed ideology of the country has various tasks. First of all, we have to find in the baggage

of world culture those ideological concepts that may be effectively used in modern life and that enrich a Belarusian ideological model. In this respect it is perspective to develop the concept of social conservatism and to work with the following categories. They are: 1) solidarity, underlining the unity of the Belarusian people and readiness of every citizen to mutual assistance; 2) responsibility that consists of the combination of personal and public interest; 3) paternalism, aimed at the foundation of the best conditions for personal fulfilment; 4) pragmatism that takes into consideration the skill to solve practical tasks quickly in a dynamically changing world.

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