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Ideology: the point of view of Aleksander Zinoviev

Two issues were and remain the main ones for the Likhachevsky Readings, and they are the ideological focus of our international humanitarian forum: a) what is the modern world in terms of cultural development? b) how does the world-creating role of culture itself change? Answers to them that we have come to today, in my opinion, boil down to the following theses: the world has become multipolar; the dialogue of cultures has been supplemented by their conflict. Civilizational and cultural diversity of the contemporary world, which has already transformed from scientific works into real politics and has become the primary social motive for people's activities, has again actualized the role of ideology as a socially significant factor.

It is not by chance that in Russia, which found itself in the ground zero of the new configuration of world events, issues of ideology came almost to the top of the national topical public agenda. This is evidenced, in particular, by growing demands for abolition of the constitutional ban (Article 13 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation) on creation of the state ideology as one of conditions for the patriotic consolidation of Russian society. The proposed report examines topical problems of ideology on the example of how they were developed by the outstanding thinker Aleksander Aleksandrovich Zinoviev, who created the detailed doctrine of ideology, organically integrated into his sociology.

I. Ideology as a component of the social organization of society. According to Zinoviev, it is included in the mental aspect of social life, which organizes consciousness of members of the society and, along with two other (business and

communal) aspects of it, is one of the three fundamental factors, on which the social organization of society rests. Zinoviev draws subtle distinctions and distinguishes the mental aspect of social life from the mental sphere. It is necessary to distinguish the very evidence, according to which the person's social life activity always is of the conscious nature, is characterized by subjective accompaniment and what is its role as a factor organizing their life together in a 'cheloveinik' (in society). This was an important step on his way to scientific sociology: by the mental sphere, he understands a special permanent component of a social organization, which is supported by particular people to be specifically engaged in the mental state of society and living off this activity. It coincides with ideology (ideosphere) at the stage of society.

According to Zinoviev, the social organization of people goes through three stages: pre-society, society, and super-society. Ideology goes through the same stages. However, at the stage of pre-ideology, it has not yet gained independence as an object. In the framework of the society itself, it becomes one of the objects of spiritual life, along with many others (morality, religion, literature, etc.). With the society's transition to the stage of super-society, it rises to the central object level that unites and internally organizes the entire mental (spiritual) aspect in the diversity of its various objects. Super-society, according to Zinoviev, is the stage of social organization of society that was achieved and embodied in the Soviet experience of real communism and in the Westernist experience of Westernized globalism that emerged as the alternative of the communism during the Cold War. The qualitative increase in the role of ideology, its transformation from an ordinary object of the mental (spiritual) aspect into the key, decisive object is one of the signs of a super-society. And only when viewed from the height of this most developed stage, one can understand the real and paramount importance of ideology for social organization.

II. The subject of ideology. In terms of content, ideology is a set of concepts and judgments that cover the entire (although each time with varying extent of completeness) set of phenomena that people have to live and encounter with, as well as reflect on in everyday life. They concern the person, his/her consciousness, attitude to nature and mystic forces, relations between people, wealth and poverty, past and future, domination and subordination, etc. Ideology does not have its own narrow subject of consideration, all the facts of human life, from the smallest and most intimate to the largest, concerning the state, humanity, and the outer space, can become the content of ideological statements. Being diverse in its content, it can also be embodied in a wide variety of forms – in treatises, artistic and visual works, parables, jokes, aphorisms, epigrams, etc. The ideological worldview can form a kind of field, a kind of atmospheric background that does not prevent people from living their ordinary lives, just as, for example, they habitually and imperceptibly live in the field of physical gravity. But nevertheless, it exists and can unexpectedly “reveal itself in just one word and in one phrase ... How many people were killed, burned and imprisoned for such words!” Today, when ideology can suddenly reveal itself in one letter, one sign, it is clear how right Zinoviev was.

III. The function of ideology. Ideology isn't knowledge. The scientific criterion of truth is not applicable to it in principle. Of course, it can use (rely on, hide behind, speculate, etc.) scientific data, even pretend to be scientific, but nevertheless has a completely different nature and purpose. Correlation of ideology with science is comparable to its correlation with religion. It can mimic science, act as scientific one, and willingly does so in the Modern Times, when science has become dominant in the public consciousness, just as in the previous worldview era it mimicked religion and acted as religious. Science and religion are the most frequently used elements of the mentality aspect of society in ideology. The attitude of ideology to its other elements – morality, education, art, literature, etc. – is the same.

“But the specific social role (function) of ideology is not cognition of reality, not education, not entertainment, not informativeness about events, etc. (although all these are not excluded, but assumed), but the formation of people’s certain understanding of the phenomena of their environment and life in this environment. Moreover, such an understanding that significantly affects their behavior”. More specifically, its task is standardizing people’s consciousness, developing an identical way for them to understand the phenomena of their surrounding life. Ideology in the system of social organization of society is responsible for which way, in which direction people’s brains are turned in this society. “Ideology does not just form and organize people’s consciousness, it creates and imposes certain stereotypes (algorithms) of consciousness on people, which appear in stereotypes of behavior”. It affects individuals’ minds not at all for appealing to their independent thinking, but for turning their thinking (their brains) in the right (standard, ideologically set) direction, so that they could perceive predetermined and ideological “truths” hanging in the air as their own. Ideological statements are not correlated with reality by themselves, their goodness (efficiency) is revealed only indirectly, through their impact on human behavior. Only in this case they become a real, sociologically significant force.

IV. Ideology and ideologists. Ideology does not arise spontaneously, it is artificially created and invented. It does not exist without ideologists. “Ideologists invent certain kinds of intellectual (linguistic) schemes, stamps, cliches, labels, tags, images, generalizing examples and samples, parables, catch phrases, slogans, etc., and not as auxiliary means on the way to cognition of being as it is, but as the final and highest result of cognition. They themselves claim to be the ultimate truth. People should assimilate these products of ideologists and look at the phenomena of being only through them”. Ideology is a pure product of thought, it is not determined by any other reality besides thinking itself.

It is interesting to note that the multi-volume work “Elements of Ideology” by Destutt de Tracy, a French nobleman who first coined the very concept of

ideology in its modern meaning, opens with the question “What does it mean to think?”. His doctrine of ideology, which he also called universal grammar and logic, and which he considered as rational organization of the entire intellectual space, was intended to answer this question. F. Engels also wrote about ideology as the result of the inability of thinking to go beyond its own limits, “Ideology is a process to be performed by a so-called thinker, although with consciousness, but with false consciousness. The true driving forces that motivate him to act remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process”.

Ideology is created by ideologists. For this reason alone, not to mention others, it cannot emerge spontaneously, naturally arise in many people’s minds.

V. Particular ideologies and the ideosphere. Society can be characterized (described) as an objective, lawfully ordered reality that generates and simultaneously unites into something whole and integral the existence of a large number of heterogeneous people with their group and private interests. Ideology (ideosphere), along with the economy and the state, is one of the three basic (fundamental) factors to ensure its integrity as a historical subject. It sets as a mental standard a certain life guideline to be the same for the whole society, guiding conscious actions of individuals and groups of people in a single direction. In this sense ideology can be called the society’s self-consciousness developed by its individual outstanding representatives and presented to all its members as their common destiny in the form of the system of unconditional values.

However, society is a complex organism consisting of separate (special, private in relation to society as a whole) groups of people (classes, ethnicities, confessions, professions, amateur associations, etc.), who also have their own group interests and standards of behavior. They form their own goals and behavioral schematics that allow them to assert themselves in society, acting together and ideologically cohesive. Typical forms of such special ideologies are

class, environmental, feminist, etc., ones. Zinoviev calls them particular ideologies: they are ideologies, because they contain all the signs of ideology, except for the one, by virtue of which they are called particular, namely: they do not cover the whole society. Particular ideologies are included in public consciousness (the mental aspect) of a social organization, without inclusion in its ideosphere.

Ideology as an artificial invention is always an author's work, it bears not only traces of its creators' biography, but also the influence of its social environment, political and human passions, has its own intellectual history, in short, considered from the point of view of its content, as a certain set of judgments, it is always specific, vulnerable, can be challenged. But for corresponding to its functional role as a basic factor, it must be recognized as universal and generally binding by the whole society. It must be embedded in the entire society's consciousness and gain material strength as its universal conviction. To do this, it must be supplemented as a second mandatory element, with an appropriate real, very specific controlled mechanism, subject to strict management laws. "The second element of the ideological sphere forms a set of people, organizations, institutions, enterprises and the means they use, one way or another related to the ideology development (in other words, production of ideological goods and services), with its dissemination and bringing it to the consumer, i.e. to individual members of society and their associations. I call it the ideological mechanism".

The real sociological problem lies in the following: how to carry out such brain reversal so that all the individuals in a given society thought the same. This miraculous transformation of the particular into the universal, which constitutes the true alchemy of ideology, carried out by it with the help of then ideological mechanism, is the work of the ideosphere. The unity of ideology and ideological mechanism forms the ideosphere, which in contemporary societies is a huge independent industry, covering, as Zinoviev believed, about 20% of able-bodied

population. The connection of private interest with the universal, which is crucially important for ideology, is carried out in two ways: in one case, it is absolutization of a certain particular ideology by raising it into a universal one, in the second case, it is relativization of a universal ideology by reducing it to the multitude of particular ones. The classic cases of these versions are the Soviet and Westernist ideospheres that developed during the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century.

VI. The Soviet type of ideology. Widespread in Russian literature, and even more instinctively rooted in our public consciousness and everyday speech, is the idea that ideology is a more or less integral, systematized doctrine, the classic example of which was the Marxist-Leninist communist theory, elevated to the rank of the Soviet ideology. Marxism, which, however, is characteristic of all complete philosophical systems, was conscious of itself and openly proclaimed as the only correct doctrine related to man and society, towering above all previous immature and all other modern false doctrines of this kind. In this capacity, it was elevated to the rank of the cementing spiritual foundation of society and consolidated as a state ideology, mandatory for all Soviet citizens. Soviet ideology existed precisely as a certain doctrine intended for a certain society, set forth in certain philosophical and political texts, work with which (their understanding, propaganda, commenting, clarification) was carried out at the state-controlled level and in the generally binding directive form.

Identification of ideology with its specific form in the USSR, namely, with the Soviet ideology, led to the fact that rejection of the latter was perceived in the country as de-ideologization. Hence all the passions of the last years of Perestroika around abolition of the sixth article of the Brezhnev Constitution on the CPSU's leadership, rejection of the monopoly of Marxism-Leninism. Hence Article 13 (considered almost diabolical by certain circles) of the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation, which prohibits state ideology, causing many misunderstandings today. Transition from real communism of the Soviet

period to post-Soviet capitalism was perceived by Russian society as rejection of state ideology in favor of the de-ideologization regime. It is precisely in this way – de-ideologized – that the social life of Western democracies was thought of and is partly thought of to this day.

VII. What is the de-ideologization of society and how possible is it? This question is especially important and relevant in the light of the current domestic discussions about ideology and the battles for it, since they are aimed against ideological carelessness of the previous (new pre-war?) the period of the modern (already post-Soviet) history of Russia. Zinoviev's answer to it, expressed close to the text, can be summarized in the following nine items.

1). De-ideologization is self-consciousness of the modern super-society (“Westernism” in Zinoviev's terminology, or the “collective West”, as it is increasingly called today by domestic journalism), which has developed in the democratic countries of the United States and Western Europe during and in the process of transferring the confrontation with Soviet communism to the Cold War regime. It means that “ideologies... have lost their meaning. Science takes their place... It is believed that the era of ideologies has passed at all”. De-ideologization is considered by its apologists as designation and a real sign of a qualitatively new level in development (progress) of man and society.

2) “Ideologies are associated with social conflicts. These conflicts are considered to be disappearing... Particular ideologies are identified with ideology in general”. It is about the belief that ideology, as false consciousness that expresses and stimulates workers' class struggle for social ideals, has discredited itself. It is being replaced by positive knowledge and the consumer society. De-ideologization itself has become a form of the West's ideological struggle not only against Marxism, but above all against real communism as an ideologically organized society. “The West has struck at the fundamental principles of ideology about advantages of the Soviet system and way of life over the Western one. The West has contributed to shifting people's interests towards purely material needs



and temptations. The West has greatly contributed to flourishing corruption in the ruling strata of society, up to the top ones”.

3) The statement about disappearance or even insignificance of social conflicts does not correspond to reality. Particular ideologies (ideologies of certain social groups, classes) have not gone away. “New ones appear in place of some. Nazi, Fascist and Marxist ideologies have failed. But new ones have appeared, for example, pacifist, feminist, homosexual and others. And the old ones haven’t been completely finished off yet. “Particular ideologies or ideologies in the traditional sense of the word persist not only in the actual meaning, but they cannot disappear by definition either. Social organization cannot exist without a hierarchical structure and the social struggle for dominance that inevitably follows from it and supports it, which is why ideology, in fact, cannot be evaluated in terms of truth and falsity. However, even public thought itself could not remain at the level of the concept of de-ideologization in understanding ideology.

4) Particular ideologies should be distinguished from the ideology of society in general or its ideosphere. “The latter is a component of social organization of society, along with the state and the economy. No society can exist without an ideosphere”. It (at least partly) can be referred to such common (extra-group, supra-class) elements as language, knowledge, legal and other comprehensive institutions that make up the supporting structure of social organization.

5) “The ideology of Westernism is pluralistic in the sense that it consists of many different ideas, doctrines, concepts, and lines of thought. Its parts cannot be mechanically combined into a single logical whole. These parts often contradict each other and are at enmity with each other. Nevertheless, this pluralism can be considered as division of labour within some unity and as expression of individual differences of the authors of the texts. In any case, we mean the Western economy as something unified, although we are well aware of the fierce struggle between its parts. As for the political system of Western countries, we also know about the

struggle of parties and fractions within the parties. So, why can't we talk about the Western ideology in the same sense, even if it is teeming with internal hostility?"

Zinoviev's sociology is original and unique not only in its content, but also in its origin: it was created outside traditions and schools, although, of course, taking into account and knowing all significant names and achievements of European philosophy and science. In particular, it can be found similarities with Hobbes' idea of the state as a force restraining the natural state of the struggle of all against all. The ideosphere, as one of these means, not only presupposes internal hostility in the field of ideology, but it itself is one of ways to support it in a controlled manner. The terrible religious, ethnic, and political orgies known from history can be considered as absolutisations, extreme cases of relevant ideologies, but in no way as distortion of their essence.

6) Pluralism of particular ideologies (ideologies as expressions of interests of the population's various groups in society) is a way of their inclusion in the ideology of Westernism, a kind of marker of their belonging to the latter and awareness of its paramount value. It is a specific ideological mechanism of the Western ideology, most often referred to as liberalism. It can be considered such an expression and the result of a long centuries-long development of the spiritual and cultural development of the peoples of the West, which, as they say, entered into their flesh and blood (or, in fashionable language, constitutes their "cultural code"). In this case the trick of the sociological mind is that the very denial of state ideology becomes a positive ideological factor. The illusion of equality in the struggle for ideological dominance is created and at the same time complete freedom, which extends from the opportunity for "proudly" and "respectably" ignoring the ideological games themselves to legislative guarantees of self-preservation for their participants, since none of them can win.

7) "Ideological pluralism corresponds to democratic society. Here, it is an element of civic democracy. Undemocratic society is characterized by ideological

monism and ideological intolerance”. Under modern conditions this difference in ideological regimes has become not so much a consequence as a cause and is considered as one of decisive criteria for distinguishing democratic and undemocratic social structures.

8) The pluralistic regime of the ideosphere makes it possible to hide particular ideologies in those specific historical contexts and forms (different author’s versions, events, traditions, philosophical, aesthetic and other ideological forms, bright personalities, etc.), in which they exist, thereby creating in society the appearance of an atmosphere of de-ideologized thinking. “The pills of ideology are not so nice in themselves for people to swallow them voluntarily and with pleasure. They are sweetened with more pleasant “substances” and dissolved in them so that people could swallow them without even noticing this. Indoctrinating the population of Western countries is generally built not as a compulsory duty and a compulsory burden, but as an entertainment and an activity useful for consumers of the ideology”. Precisely because ideology is always contextual, invisibly present in all forms of intellectual and humanitarian activity, it does not act as a particular ideology of some class, stratum, party, etc., but as an “universal” cause, the cause of the entire society. This does not mean that it is actually such, “it means that no stratum, no class, no party and no social group declares it as their ideology. It arises, persists and spreads as a special and independent element of the social structure. In this respect, its position is similar to that of the state”.

9) “The ideology of Westernism is the same for everyone. If it could be extracted from its connection with other phenomena in which it is immersed, it would be found that it is intellectually primitive at any level”. And thereby its strength is ensured. As Zinoviev repeatedly emphasized, too high humanistic pathos and intellectual level of Marxism’s ideology was one of the reasons that it lost in the fight against the Western ideology.

“Functions of ideologists in Western countries are performed by philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, historians, political scientists, journalists, writers, politicians, advisers in government institutions and in parties, employees of secret services and propaganda agencies. There are special research institutions, agencies and centres to deal with the problems of ideology in one way or another”. “These people give unity to ideological pluralism, form the coherent ideological environment”. “It is only important not to allow others to introduce any explicit and organized ideology into the ideological chaos – to de-ideologize people in this sense. But at the same time, they tirelessly bring their commonplace ideas into this ideological chaos, which meets the needs of “de-ideologized” fellow citizens. In conditions of the Western ideological field, ideological freedom is a much more powerful method of fooling the masses than ideological compulsion”.