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**Станислава Свианевича (1899-1997) исследования советской
экономики**

**STANISŁAW SWIANIEWICZ (1899-1997) STUDIES
ON THE SOVIET ECONOMY**

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается подход к советской экономике Станислава Свианевича, выдающегося польского ученого (1899-1997). Родился в Динебурге, окончил царскую гимназию в Орле и начал учебу в Университете им. Ломоносова в Москве, чтобы завершить их в Вильнюсе - его личный жизненный опыт подготовил его к сосредоточению на советских исследованиях. В этой статье рассматриваются его ключевые работы: «Ленин как экономист» (на польском языке) и «Принудительный труд и экономическое развитие. Исследование опыта советской индустриализации», а также ряд других научных статей. Неопубликованная работа июня 1967 года (из частного архива его семьи): «Экономическое влияние русской революции в исторической перспективе» также рассматривается.

Ключевые слова: Станислав Свианевич, советские исследования, централизованная экономика.

Abstract: Paper deals with an approach to the Soviet economy of Stanisław Swianiewicz, an outstanding Polish scholar (1899-1997). Born in Dyneburg, completed the tsar gymnasium in Orel and began studies at the Lomonosov University, Moscow to complete them in Vilnius – his personal life experience prepare him to focus on the Soviet studies. His key works: "Lenin as an economist" (in Polish) and "Forced labour and economic development. An enquiry into experiences of the Soviet industrialisation" are examined in this Paper, as well as a number of other scientific articles. Un unpublished work of June 1967 (from a private archive of his family): "Economic impact of the Russian revolution in historical perspective" is also considered.

Keywords: Stanisław Swianiewicz, Soviet Studies, Centrally Planned Economies.

An uneasy life. A biographical outline

Stanisław Swianiewicz life covers almost all 20-th century: the two world's wars, rebirth of Poland after 123 years of the partitions and an era of powerful

totalitarian regimes in Europe. Therefore, he was both a witness of stormy historical events and an outstanding scholar of the Centrally Planned Economies.

Born in Dyneburg (today's Daugavpils, Latvia) in a family of railroad technician, he grew-up in in multicultural environment. In his home three languages were spoken: Polish, German, Russian and – occasionally – French. His mother, graduated at the first St. Petersburg University opened for women (the “Bestużev courses”), was influenced by the liberal attitudes spread at the University – she sympathized with Russian revolutionary socialist movements, the “essers”.

During the 1-st World War, his family was resettled to Orel where he completed the tsar gymnasium and read Russian translations of Karl Marx works. In September 1917, he started his studies at the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences Lomonosov University, Moscow, broken by the Bolshevik's revolution. In 1918, his family returned to Dyneburg. During a German occupation of the city he entered into conspiratory Polish Military Organization (the POW). Then the city was captured by the Boshevik's troops. Threatened by the arrest, he escaped and joined the Polish army [note.1].

As an active soldier, he continued his studies on the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, the Vilnius University to belong to the first group of its graduates in 1924 and to start his academic career there. In 1928, he was awarded a research subsidy to study economic theories of Lenin. Refused a Russian visa, he went to Osteuropa Institut in Breslau (today's Wrocław) – his research resulted in publishing a monograhya “Lenin as an economist”. Another scholarship, at the Institute for Foreign Affairs in Kiel, was summarized in a book “Economic policy of Hitler's Germany”.

One of the most important professional activities of Swianiewicz was his cooperation with, established in 1930, the Scientific and Research Institute for Eastern Europe. For many years – as a publicist – he co-worked with local journals, the “Kurier Wileński” in particular. Many his journalistic articles were focused on the issues of national minorities [note.2]. He often stood up for them in defense of their rights, not always fully respected – he interceded in matters of Belarusians. The crowning of the academic career at the Stefan Batory University was the Professor' nomination, signed by the President of the Republic of Poland Ignacy Mościcki in April 1939.

Mobilized into the army, he left Vilnius last days of August 1939 and never returned to this city. He ended his war campaign 28-th September as a Prisoner of War. He was detained in a former Orthodox monastery in Kozielsk converted into

prison and, in April 1940, he was transported to the Gniezdowo station near Smolensk – he was the only prisoner who escapes death in Katyn, withdrawn by NKVD officers. After retaining in prisons in Smolensk, on Lubyanka and in Butyrki in Moscow, he was transported to a labour camp in the Komi Republic. Released in 1943 under the Sikorski-Majski agreements, he became the head of the Bureau of the Middle East Studies, submitted to the Polish Government in Exile in London.

After the war, he worked at various universities, among others in London and Indonesia. Since 1963, he had been employed at St. Mary University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. For the last years of his life he found a shelter in the Polish senior home "Antokol House" near London [note.3].

On Lenin's philosophical and economic thought

Habilitation dissertation of Swianiewicz "Lenin as an economist" [Swianiewicz 1930] can be a classic example of the artistry of analyzing social, economic and political phenomena at the Institute for Eastern European Studies. The immediate neighborhood of the Soviet Union of the Vilnius Institute gave researchers a deeper perspective on the socio-economic understanding of the doctrine of Communism than their "fellow professionals", living thousands of miles away from the USSR and in a different cultural heritage and historical conditions.

Lenin's approach to the Marx thought was different than Western Marxists of his times. Reflections on "eternal puzzles of universe" attracted him not so much – more interesting for him were practical aspects of his theories. "Lenin's views became the starting point of the pragmatic policy of the Soviets – Swianiewicz notes – economic problems do not exhaust the essence of Leninism ... Leninism is not just an economic system, but a peculiar philosophical system, as well" [Swianiewicz, 1930, 387] [note.4]. It also indicates that they are burdened with the specificity of the Russian soul, its longings and metaphysical dilemmas. Therefore, Marxist philosophy, transplanted into Russian soil, acquired a religious character there – "it has become a revelation revealing hidden secrets for ordinary mortals. [...] Lenin [...] is rather a priest guarding the inviolability of his religion" [Swianiewicz, 1930, 388]. Thus, dialectical materialism was a quasi-religion for Lenin as all deviations from its were marked as a heresies [note.5]. Also, the October Revolution has – argues Swianiewicz – a clear "religious character. The aspirations of its creators are also spreading the new common religion by applying of their power" [Swianiewicz, 1930, 390].

Lenin shared the basic assumption of Marx's economic theories of a fundamental conflict of interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Developing capitalism could enforce forces capable of destroying it in the future. "This Marxist analysis," writes Swianiewicz [1930, 396], "became the starting point of the economic theory of Leninism [...] a huge part of Lenin's activity is devoted to the justification and defense of Marx's position".

One of elements of Lenin's doctrine was critics of narodniks [народники], who believed that Russia could enter the socialist system omitting the stage of capitalism. In her society, there were elements of collectivism, whose development could lead towards the socialist reconstruction. Lenin, therefore, shared Marx's views about hostile but creative power of capitalism as a forerunner of socialism. Consequently, during the initial phase of the enforcement of a new social and economic system a frontal confrontation with the overall class of capitalism would be a mistake. The attack should be limited to such "strongholds of capitalism" as banks, offering some layers of capitalists a tactical compromise, to "make them for useful and creative work under the control of the workers themselves" [Swianiewicz, 1930, 407].

To get a power, Lenin had become a master in destruction but – while holding it – not always he was capable to control. "Masses were fare of being pleased to follow Lenin's recommendation of disciplined cooperation with capitalists" [Swianiewicz, 505]. Recently ended the 1-st World War, lasting years domestic war and ad hoc solutions of a "war communism" led to increasing chaos and poverty of the masses.

Announcement of the NEP [New Economic Policy] was a kind of manifestation of failures during the first period of a construction of the new system – the slogan of learning from capitalists again became vivid, at least for transient purposes, and the market was appreciated to reduce expanded planned rationing system.

The driving idea of the NEP was strengthening the socialist economy by a cooperation and competition with capitalist sector. Furthermore, as a hidden enemy of the revolution were considered a small-scale capitalist units – in Lenin's opinion, larger capitalist enterprises could be useful in combating this petty element. By eliminating a small trader and producer from the market, they would also clean up the foreground for the future socialism victory. The results of the NEP's policy did not meet Lenin's expectations. They turned out to be partial – it was not taken into account that under the conditions of the permanent threat from the Soviet system, including in particular lack of respect for the property rights, the dynamism proper to capitalism could not be revealed [Swianiewicz, 1969, 71].

For Lenin's understanding of the regularity of the changes in the capitalist economy the influence of the Austrian economist Rudolf Hilferding [note.6] was evident, who believed that in the initial period of it dominated the scattered merchant capital and – to a limited extent – usury. Over time, the concentration of wealth has led to the rise of great fortunes. "Old merchants thus turn into industrialists," notes Swianiewicz [Swianiewicz, 431]. That's how close relations between large enterprises and banks are established. Capital concentration has been becoming of increasing importance in the economy – a scope for competitive rivalry is reduced to make a room for more and more efficient control over the markets. Therefore, monopolist practices are supported by banks which “grow together with banks” [Swianiewicz, 1930, 438]. The outlined tendencies influence a policy of the capitalist state. Departure from the role of “a guardian of the market” takes place and different forms of state intervention policy is developed. This is accompanied by the phenomenon of the division of the capitalist world into "centers" and "peripheries", because the export of capital to economically backward countries is usually associated with the pursuit of their political subordination [note.7]. Thus, competition on world markets becomes at the same time a fight for dividing the world into spheres of influence – it adopts sharp forms that favour armed conflicts. Hence one of the Leninist assumptions – one of the first stages of the revolution should be the overtaking of financial markets by it. After the 1-st World War, Hilferding became very skeptical on the chances of forthcoming socialist revolution, being aggressively attacked by communist theorists. For Lenin, the entry of capitalism into the stage of imperialism was therefore synonymous with the beginning of its decaying. This persecution "strengthened his faith in the imminent victory of the proletarian revolution" [Gaziński, 2011, 53], .

On economic significance of forced labour

The idea to write a book about the economic significance of labour camps arose during the stay of Swianiewicz in the Moscow prison on Lubianka, when he had the opportunity of long discussions with fellow prisoners from a wide spectrum of Soviet society, also high rank party and state officials. It was quite a special "permanent Seminar on the issues of revolutionary transformation in the national economy" [Swianiewicz, 1965, p. V].

Work on the book took him a total of about 10 years. With some irony, one can admit that the Soviet authorities themselves contributed to it, providing the author – without asking for his consent – with a peculiar practical study, almost three years in prisons and camps in the Republic of Komi. Already in the first part of the monograph, studying the system determinants of forced labor, the author

points out that it was a radical solution to the overpopulation of the village and to ensure adequate labour supply for the developing industry and undertaken large investment programs.

Coercion as a tool for exercising power is a well-recognized fundamental assumption of Leninist ideology. The use of coercive measures by the authorities, because this is the nature of forced labour, was facilitated by the disintegration of social ties, progressing in the Soviet society. Still in the 1920s, when the camps had not yet fulfilled important tasks in the sphere of the economy, the discrepancy between economic thought in Soviet Union and in the West was – considering the dissimilarity of the political system – quite small. Confirmation can be found in the establishment of the Institute of Economic Situations, whose highly regarded representative in the world was Nikolai Kondratiev.

The fiasco about the expectations combined with the NEP, which did not provide a sufficient flow of foreign capital, forced Soviet Russia to rely on its own resources only. After the death of Lenin (1924), in the conditions of bothering economic difficulties, his successors were confronted by the need of the choice of economic strategy.

Two contradictory concepts have crystallized. The concept of dynamic economic balance was proposed by Nikolai Bukharin, supported, among others, by V. G. Grossman and N. Kondratiev. They advocated that the major investment ventures should be accompanied by strong anti-inflation measures, so that the balance on the market of consumer goods would not be deteriorated and the distribution of goods could take place automatically through a market mechanism. The essence of this concept was therefore a harmonious combination of industrial and agricultural development. Investments should therefore also take into account the needs of the light industries and those ones working for agriculture. Bukharin therefore opposed the imposition of excessive burdens on farmers, including compulsory deliveries. The increase in agricultural production and the resultant affluence of farmers would automatically lead farm surpluses to be directed into the market. Using contemporary terminology, it may be supposed that Bukharin would not be alien to ideas of sustainable rural development.

At that time, wielding power, Stalin made a different choice in favour to an alternative suggested by E. A. Preobrazhensky, a major opponent of Bukharin. The starting point of this concept was the observation, that during the initial period of capitalism, one of the forms of capital accumulation was the exploitation of overseas colonies. The revolutionary Soviet economy also needed this kind of "primary accumulation". However, there was a shortage of colonies – their substitute was to be the "inner colony" – the exploitation of the rural economic

potential. So, burdens of forceful industrialization were to be borne by peasants, forced to provide food without chances of obtaining adequate access to industrial goods. The village was also supposed to be a reservoir of cheap labour. The ideology came with succor – the freedom of managing peasants "on its own" – the very existence of economic entities quite independent from authorities – was a challenge to the logic of a centralized economic system. The socialized farms were directly dependent on the supreme power. Therefore, collectivization created an illusion of the planned covering of food needs. Swianiewicz describes this mechanism figuratively as the "kolhoz pump" [Gaziński, 2010, 69-73].

The resolution in 1928-1929 of the dispute described here can be considered one of the turning points in Soviet economic history. In order to impose a strategy of forceful industrialization with simultaneous collectivization, a machine of terror was harnessed, which throttled any resistance – Bukharin himself later fell victim to it. The teams of young communists were sent to the countryside, spreading terror which quickly brought the assumed results. While in 1927 (1 November) the number of farms absorbed by the collective farm was 195 thousand, then in 1930 (1 March) it was 14 264 300. At the end of the 2-nd Five-year Plan, in 1937, 93% of the farms were overtaken by collective farms and they covered over 99% of the area of agricultural crops [Swianiewicz, 1965, 91-95].

The implemented machine was therefore effective in combating rural resistance, crop control and distribution of produced output, but failed in terms of productivity. The state of food and nutrition of the Soviet society gave way to that before the revolution, and the hardships of food supply were also greater than during the 1-st World War. Hence, labour camps, dynamically developed during the collectivization period, constituted a kind of buffer to alleviate the difficulties in the food market. In an escape from hunger, threatening repression, or in response to the recruitment campaign, crowds of people "voluntarily" left the village. Net migration in the years 1927-1937 could amount to as much as 23 million people. At the same time, another 10-11 million people could go to labour camps. These data are surprisingly coincident with what Stalin himself, disbelievingly admitted in the interview with Churchill that for four years of the collectivization campaign he had to "deal with" ten million peasants. Thus, the labour camps, apart from the obvious function as a tool of terror, had also become a gigantic enterprise, subjected even to a kind of economic planning [Swianiewicz, 1965 p. 113].

Postscriptum

Let us pause further over those texts, written after many years, when he stayed in the West, in which he described his retrospective view to his earlier analyzes, pointing to the international impact of the theory and practice of Soviet socialism. After a few decades, reaching to these texts is interesting because from the perspective of former socialist countries it is easy to express negative assessments and opinions instead of thorough analysis.

It is worth paying special attention to the never as yet published work written on the 50-th anniversary of the October Revolution and to examine its content another 50 years later [Swianiewicz, 1967]. The central idea of Swianiewicz is that, despite the fact that "original objective was purely political: to ignite the flame of the world proletarian revolution, ... the Revolution of October 1917 was certainly a challenge to the capitalist world". At that time, the focus was on two issues:

1. "that economic growth and development might be imposed by the will of a strong centralistic government;
2. it was explicitly announced that only under socialism, and not in the conditions of decaying capitalist system, was a continuous growth possible".

The victory of the revolution initiated "the era of enforced growth", instead of spontaneous process with a very limited possibility to moderate it by a central authority, as was understood earlier. One such example is the German economic program ("Arbeitsbeschaffung") undertaken in 1933-1934 as designed by Dr. H. Schacht, Hitler's economic adviser. The unemployment, of extreme range of 8 million people out of work, was converted to almost full employment. The Soviet economic experiment required theoretical reflection on the part of the West. This was "General theory" by Keynes, published in 1936, in the opinion of Swianiewicz.

The Soviet example "captured the imagination of the leading strata of Asia and Africa and in this way contributed to the process of decolonization". The first decades after the revolution also marked the economic rivalry between the two blocks. In this context, as Swianiewicz believes, in the postwar years the Marshall Plan was announced, as well as the Schuman Plan of European integration was launched.

The Soviet Union, probably unintentionally, caused that "the economic development has acquired an international dimension and has become a constant preoccupation of the United Nations. Today, the sponsoring of economic growth and reduction of the gap between advanced and underdeveloped nations is often looked as an ethical principle sanctioned by the pronouncement of the highest

religious authorities. During the last five years three encyclicals to this effect [note.8] ... were issued by the Pope." – concludes Swianiewicz.

To conclude this article, let us quote two more reflections of Swianiewicz on the present - nowadays they are also worth to be considered: "Contemporary mankind begins to longing for liberation from this primacy of economics over other spheres of life, which has been spontaneously created during the twentieth century. Economic dynamics, the pursuit of a more complete development for productive forces have become, in this period, goals in themselves to which other areas of social life and state policy had to be subordinated" [Swianiewicz, 1936, 172].

“A dramatic contradiction of our time is that, simultaneously with colossal achievements of human mind in the technical sphere, the methods of political government and the methods of supreme directions of the national economy are drifting towards irrationality. Pseudo-scientific doctrines, accepted as a kind of secular religion, lead to a political and social transformation bringing about a totalitarian society. A social myth which becomes a kind of secular religion does not involve those moral and humanitarian restraints which any spiritual religion tries to introduce. . . . Rulers blinded by a suggestive power of social myth may become a danger to the human race” [Swianiewicz, 1965 p. 222].

Notes

¹ In 1990, during his the only one visit to the after-war Poland, he was awarded the Independence Cross for his fighting during the 1919-1920 war.

² They constituted around 1/3 of the total Polish pre-war population but being often a majority on the Eastern Borderlands.

³ The basis of this biographical sketch are the publications: Swianiewicz-Nagięć M, Gaziński B. [2017] and Swianiewicz M. J., Swianiewicz E. [2016]. Oral relations of his daughter M. Swianiewicz-Nagięć were also used.

⁴ All quotations from works of Swianiewicz, published in Polish, are given in the author's own translation.

⁵ The accuracy of this observation may be demonstrated by the exhibition at the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in the mid-1980s, installed in the interior of the monumental Kazan Cathedral (a solid modelled on the Roman basilica of St. Peter). The monument of Lenin was exhibited in the place where the Tsarist Gate was located. It occupied a central place among the multitude of deities and gods of various eras and civilizations, ironically making – probably unintentionally – the impression that he is the central god of a new religion.

⁶ Fundamental work of that author: “Kapitał finansowy. Studium” (translation into Polish), Warszawa 1958.

⁷ That issue had been thoroughly considered, many years later, by Celso Furtado, a Brazilian leftist economist in his small but influential treaty: “Mit rozwoju gospodarczego” (Polish translation), Warszawa, 1982.

⁸ These were: "Mater et Magistra" and "Pacem in Terris" by Pope John XXIII and “Populorum Progressio” by "Paul VI.

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