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On the Genesis of the Soviet Bureaucratic Language of Academic Management during the 1920s

Annotation: The article is devoted to the problem of the evolution of relations between the Soviet authorities and representatives of the academic community. The aim of the article is to prove that these relations developed gradually and were accompanied by attempts of academics to correct the attitude of the authorities to scientists and their merits in the course of interaction with the authorities at the bureaucratic level. At the same time, the main role in this process was played by negotiators - academics, who cooperated with the authorities for the sake of providing academics and members of their families and institutional development of science, as well as preserving the values of the academic community. At the same time, the contradictions between the intentions of the government to preserve the potential of science and the tasks of local authorities to realize radical social transformations of life in the country forced scientists to adjust the ways of speaking about science and influenced their self-consciousness. The article is based on the materials of the archival fund of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics, preserved in the Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine.

Keywords: Soviet Ukraine, academic community, negotiators with authorities, soviet science, bureaucracy.

O genezie radzieckiego języka biurowego w zarządzaniu akademickim w latach dwudziestych XX wieku

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest problemowi ewolucji relacji między władzami sowieckimi a przedstawicielami społeczności akademickiej. Celem artykułu jest udowodnienie, że relacje te rozwijały się stopniowo i towarzyszyły im próby naukowców korygowania stosunku władz do nich i ich zasług w toku interakcji z władzami na szczeblu biurowym. Jednocześnie główną rolę w tym procesie odgrywali negocjatorzy - naukowcy, którzy współpracowali z władzami w celu zapewnienia pomocy naukowcom i członkom ich rodzin oraz podtrzymania instytucjonalnego rozwoju nauki, a także zachowania wartości społeczności

akademickiej. Jednocześnie sprzeczności między intencjami władz dotyczące zachowania potencjału nauki a zadaniami władz lokalnych w zakresie realizacji radykalnych przemian społecznych w życiu kraju zmusiły naukowców do dostosowania sposobów mówienia o nauce i wpłynęły na ich samoświadomość. Artykuł powstał na podstawie materiałów archiwalnych Ogólnoukraińskiego Komitetu Pomocy Naukowcom, zachowanych w Centralnym Państwowym Archiwum Wyższych Władz i Administracji Ukrainy.

Słowa kluczowe: Ukraina sowiecka, społeczność akademicka, negocjatorzy z władzami, nauka radziecka, biurokracja

Problem of the relationship between the Soviet regime and academics

The consolidation of Soviet power in the aftermath of the Civil War was accompanied by a radical reshaping of the old way of life. Academia was no exception. Its reformatting took place in the context of complex interactions with the regime. On the one hand, these interactions were characterized by mutual distrust and even hostility: academics were alien to the new government in terms of worldview, ideology, and class. On the other hand, working together was also inevitable, since progress in research and education required support from the state, and without the cooperation of academics it was impossible to put into practice plans for the economic revival of the devastated country and education of new generations of researchers.

Today, researchers often see the search for compromise during the formation of Soviet academia in the 1920s in terms of temporary tactical concessions to academics by the regime.¹ This view is based on a retrospective analysis of the eventual outcomes of the state's policy in this sphere. Thus, the concept of 'Repressed Academia' has been introduced to characterize the processes unfolding in academia in the first half of the twentieth century; it implied that the targets of repression were not only individual intellectuals and theories, but also "the academic community as a whole, its mentality, its life in all its manifestations."² The Ukrainian intelligentsia of the early Soviet era is referred to by such terms as 'the Executed Renaissance' or 'Repressed Renaissance,' conceptualizing the eventual political and physical reprisals against the people that drove the revival of Ukrainian culture, science, and scholarship during the 1920s.³ In special works concerned with behavioral strategies of the intelligentsia, focusing on repressive policies, terror, and intimidation leads to conclusions about this group's forced total conformism and spiritual opportunism.⁴

However, such interpretations, representing academics as victims of the regime, deprive the intelligentsia of agency and remove from the research agenda questions about the motives driving different types of academics' behavior and

¹ О. Коляструк, *Інтелегенція УСРР у 1920-ті роки: посвядження життя*, Харків 2015, с. 126.

² М.Г. Ярошевский, *Сталинизм и судьбы советской науки*, [in:] *Репрессированная наука*, Ленинград 1991, с. 6-33.

³ See for example: *Репресоване «відродження»*, Київ 1993.

⁴ І. Автушенко, Н. Буглай, *Конформізм і нонконформізм творчої інтелігенції в радянській Україні 1920–1930-х рр.: проблема вибору*, "Український історичний журнал" № 2, 2021, с. 80-92.

the meaning of their actions, as well as about the development of mechanisms of interaction with the regime.

The objective of this article is to show, focusing particularly on the work of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics (VUKSU) as one of the principal bureaucratic structures of academic management in Soviet Ukraine, that the formation of the Soviet bureaucracy and its language was a complex process that was directly influenced by academics, but also, being subject to the logic of bureaucratic development, in turn gradually transformed the consciousness of the intelligentsia.

The All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics was modeled on a similar institution in Soviet Russia and was tasked with “preserving academic talent and particularly valuable workers of the arts and letters necessary for socialist construction and development of the people’s economy and culture, as well as for serving the needs of workers’ and peasants’ defense.”⁵ The committee’s purview covered financial support to academic workers based on establishing a record of academic personnel and evaluating their qualifications, provision of pensions, assistance to widows and orphans of academics, creation of conditions for medical treatment and rehabilitation of academic workers, and protection of the interests of academic workers in the matters of housing, as well as distribution of awards for ‘outstanding academic works’ and financing of research trips abroad. However, in the first years of the committee’s work in the conditions of post-war devastation and famine, the new agency was in fact mostly preoccupied with ensuring the survival of academic intelligentsia, providing for its basic needs, and helping maintain at least some rudimentary conditions for intellectual work. Thus, among the appeals by Kharkiv academics to the committee in 1922-1923, we find requests for the issue of such basic necessities as linens, clothes, and shoes (felt boots).⁶

Several heads of people’s commissariats served on the committee, as did prominent academics and representatives of Ukrainian universities. Thus, V. H. Korolenko was initially appointed as honorary chairman, and the committee’s members included, at various times, D. I. Bahaliy, S. Yu. Semkovsky, I. I. Kavalero, O. O. Alov, D. I. Yavornytsky, L. V. Piszarzhevsky, A. Yu. Krymsky, A. P. Psherborsky, V. Ya. Danylevsky, and D. O. Hrave. As evident from the report on the work of the VUKSU for the period from 1921 to 1923, early on it was its academic members that were responsible for much of the day-to-day operation. The report speaks of a ‘comprehensive support’ from government agencies, but as forces external to the committee.⁷

⁵ Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України (ЦДАВО), ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 5, арк. 1-13в; *Виписка из Собрания узаконений и распоряжений рабоче-крестьянского правительства Украины за 1921 год № 22 ст. 627 Положение о Всеукраинском комитете содействия ученых.*

⁶ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 16, арк. 56, *Обращение Д.И. Багалея в Комитет содействия ученым Украины 2 февраля 1922 г.*; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 10зв., *Обращение В.П. Бузескула в Комитет содействия ученым Украины 22 января 1922 г.*; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 16, арк. 307, *Обращение Е. Кагаров в Комитет содействия ученым, 16 ноября 1921 г.*

⁷ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 4, арк. 8, *Краткий отчет о деятельности Всеукраинского комитета*

Indeed, management of science and education was impossible without the participation of academics in the bureaucratic structures of the new state. Managerial work, in its essence, is the intellectual work of setting goals, and it required additional competencies when it came to the development of academic potential. Academics themselves understood this and took advantage of this fact. Thus, a report by the professor of Kyiv Polytechnic Institute V. D. Koval on the economic and political situation in Ukraine, delivered before members of the emigrant organization Action Center at the Ukrainian embassy in Berlin in November 1921, stated that “one consequence of the Bolshevik policy towards the intelligentsia has been a huge lack in cultural elements, which prompted the government to mobilize them.” It was noted that V. Koval himself held 18 different administrative posts in Kyiv.⁸

Nevertheless, the involvement of academics in Soviet bureaucratic structures has been viewed in historiography with ambivalence. Collaboration with the regime required concessions and compromises – such as, for example, the participation of Bahaliy in the ‘proletarian’ reform of higher education.⁹ Furthermore, bureaucratic work came with certain perks and privileges. Thus, Danylevsky, Krymsky, Bahaliy, Hrave, and P. A. Tutkovsky received a special allowance – “a special out-of-category rate” from the funds of the committee, which was granted “to them and their families” for life even in the event of the loss of ability to work.¹⁰

Still, it was not material benefits that were at the basis of collaboration – these could not compensate for the material losses suffered by academics as a result of the establishment of Soviet power. Thus, in the testimony of Bahaliy, ‘the Bolshevik tempest’ blew away everything he had earned over decades of hard work and deprived him of status, titles, decorations, real estate, state pension, and savings.¹¹ In addition to the task of simple survival, the work of academics in such conditions inevitably had to take on the features of a mission. The innovative drive and considerable originality in research that characterized the 1920s has attracted attention in literature. The impetus for this was given by the threat of the destruction of the familiar social and cultural foundations, the rapid closing of the distance between science and ideology, and rejection by the new generation of historians of the scholarly heritage and virtues of the past. In such conditions, scholars saw their efforts to preserve and further develop their academic heritage as an important part of their struggle for the future of their profession, in which maintaining intergenerational ties and preserving cultural values was necessary for further progress.¹²

содействия ученым с 1 ноября 1921 г. по 1 января 1923 г.

⁸ Е. Ю. Борисенко, «Ненависть к большевизму прежде всего, к великороссам, как таковым, никакой вражды теперь нет...» *Наблюдения агентов эмигрантской организации «Центр действия» о жизни на Советской Украине в начале 1920-х гг.*, “Петербургский исторический журнал” №1, 2019, с.237.

⁹ Д. Черний, *Харьков в годы Первой мировой войны и революции*, [in:] *Города империи в годы Великой войны и революции*, ред. А. Миллер, Д. Черный, Санкт-Петербург 2017, с. 346.

¹⁰ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 33, *Выписка из протокола Бюро Комитета Содействия Ученым Украины от 21 февраля 1922 г.*

¹¹ В.В. Кравченко, Д.І. Багалій в світлі її тині своєї «Автобіографії», [in:] *Багалій Д.І. Вибрані праці*, упоряд., вступ. ст., комент. В.В. Кравченка, т. 1, Харків 1999, с. 18-20.

¹² Ю.А. Кисельова, *Зміна траєкторій історіографічної творчості у добу історичних переломів*

For Ukrainian academics, such as Bahaliy, Krymsky, or Hrave, work towards further development of the institutional framework of national higher education and the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, which they had begun as early as 1918 under the Hetmanate and the Directorate of the UPR, also acquired the weight of a mission.¹³ Indeed, thanks to Ukrainization and the Soviet regime's support for the establishment of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, the first decade of Soviet power is known as a period of intensive institutional growth of Ukrainian academia, which would not have been possible without the administrative labors of the leading Ukrainian intellectuals.

We may call those academics that collaborated with the regime at the level of administration and management *negotiators* with the Soviet government; they acted on behalf of the academic community in defending its interests and its individual members. The term itself stresses the forced compromise inherent in their position. As recalled by N. Polonska-Vasylenko, Ahatanhel Krymsky needed great 'diplomatic talent' to preserve the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences¹⁴. Compromise was all the more necessary because often the subject of negotiations was not only the fate of institutions, but also that of individuals. Ordinary academics and members of their families turned to these intermediaries for help. In the affair of the Kyiv Regional Action Center, it was Krymsky who initiated collective action of the members of the Academy of Sciences on behalf of the convicted.¹⁵ However, the scholar was also forced to publish in the newspaper *Proletarian Truth* a statement of support for the Soviet government in connection with the case.¹⁶

In this article, I would particularly like to draw attention to the fact that the search for compromise with the regime took place not only at the level of specific decisions, privileges, and concessions, but also at the level of developing a language of academic management. The work of negotiators in bureaucratic institutions created a potential for the forging of such a language through interaction between the language of Communist leaders and official decrees and the language of the academic community, members of which in their appeals to the authorities presented ideas about academic merit and the nature of academic labor. It is these ideas that negotiators tried to implement in their bureaucratic activities.

початку ХХ ст. (на прикладі творчості Д. І. Багалія та В. П. Бузескула), [in:] *Історіографічні та джерелознавчі проблеми історії України. Історик на зламах історії: досвід переживання*, відп. ред. О. І. Журба, Дніпро 2017; М.Г. Ярошевский, указ. соч.

¹³ О. Завальнюк, *Дмитро Багалій і творення національної університетської освіти в Україні (1918–1919 роки)*, "Етнічна історія народів Європи" 19, 2005, с. 41.

¹⁴ Н. Полонська-Василенко, *Академік Агатангел Юхимович Кримський, 1871–1941*, "Український історик", 03-04 (31-32), 1971, с. 91.

¹⁵ Н. Полонська-Василенко, указ. соч., с. 92.

¹⁶ *Заява неодмінного секретаря ВУАН А. Ю. Кримського з приводу судового процесу над учасниками КОЦД, "Пролетарская правда", 1924, 11 апреля.*

Ways of speaking about academia in documents of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics

One of the main tasks for members of the academic community in forging new ways of speaking about their profession was to improve the existing perception of academics' role in the new Soviet society and of their accomplishments and professional value *regardless of their political stance*. From the beginning of the Soviet regime, the priority of its policy towards academia was the mobilization of research and education for the needs of socialist construction. However, academics were not understood as allies in this cause; turning to them for help was seen as a forced gesture – hence the ambivalent term ‘bourgeois specialists.’ On the one hand, the term emphasized the professionalism of academics, but on the other, the qualifier ‘bourgeois’ referred to a ‘class’ alien to the proletariat, which induced distrust and suspicion.¹⁷

Petitions and statements received by the Committee for Assistance to Academics throw light on the strategies for fashioning a new image of academics and their work in the eyes of the Soviet regime. Thus, in justifying their requests, academics and members of their families cited first and foremost “services to science,” or “many years of labor for the benefit of science.”¹⁸ Particular stress was laid on the recognition of one’s contribution by specialists in relevant fields,¹⁹ as well as by the academic community as a whole, which was to be evidenced by the election of the applicant as a member of various academies.²⁰ Thus, on the one hand, academics responded to the intention of the regime to support in the first place outstanding researchers and educators, but on the other hand, they in fact pushed forward the idea that expertise in the matters of scholarly merit was the purview of the academic community. Interestingly, appeals to academic merit also helped in defending colleagues who were officially accused of anti-Soviet activities.²¹

Negotiators followed a similar strategy, adding accents emphasizing the importance of the *prospective* accomplishments of academics in the service of *Soviet* science. For example, the Bureau of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics, petitioning the Ukrainian Chief Directorate of Professional Education (Ukr glavprofobr) to grant a special allowance to the well-known folklorist M. F. Sumtsov, asserted that this would be both “an act of justice,” because the scholar

¹⁷ *Суспільство і влада в радянській Україні років непу (1921-1928)*, відп. ред. С. Кульчицький, т. 2, Київ 2015, с. 17.

¹⁸ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 58-59зв, *Обращение в Комитет помощи ученым на Украине вдовы бывшего профессора Харьковского университета по кафедре истории Е.В. Буцинской 23 мая 1922 г.*

¹⁹ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 37, арк. 135зв, *Обращение в Комитет помощи ученым Украины В.П. Бузескула, 3 октября 1922 г.*

²⁰ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 96зв., *В Комитет содействия ученым Гражданки Халанской Елизаветы Александровны; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 306, Обращение профессора Аркадий Павлович Головченко, 15 октября 1922 г.*

²¹ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 17, арк. 16, *В Всеукраинский комитет содействия ученым, И.д. ректора Н. Гольдин 4 ноября 1921 г.; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 37, арк. 135, Обращение в Комитет помощи ученым Украины В.П. Бузескула, 3 октября 1922 г.; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 6, арк. 19-19зв, Обращение профессоров Харьковского университета в Комитет по содействию ученым при Наркомпросе.*

had always fought against “Great Russian nationalism,” and that of pragmatism, because such material support would create the conditions for the scholar to complete a number of works “of importance for scholarship not only in Ukraine, but also in other, especially Slavic, countries.”²²

On the other hand, academics felt pressed to choose from their previous experience facts that, in their view, best fit the socio-political needs of the moment. Thus S. Rayevsky, once the superintendent of the Kharkiv school district, stressed his accomplishments specifically in the field of popular education, which, in his opinion, now gave him the “moral right” to seek support.²³ The widow of Emeritus Professor V. Nadler cited in her appeal the student unrest of 1905 in Kharkiv, during which she continued to work for free in the student canteen, not standing down even after being wounded in the arm.²⁴ The founder of the branch of criminology in forensic medicine M. S. Bokarius, supplementing his petition to the committee with a professional autobiography, begins the latter with an account of his service on the committee for the setting up of rural libraries and reading rooms under the leadership of Danylevsky, now a member of the Committee for Assistance to Academics.²⁵ These documents thus indicate that the development of Soviet bureaucratic criteria for evaluating the social significance of the work of the intelligentsia was a slow process, initially involving characterizations of pre-revolutionary activities and experience of social work for the benefit of the lower classes.

However, sometimes an academic’s professional experience did not fit the current ideological requirements, in which case it was quietly passed over. Both management of educational institutions and negotiators were often complicit in such record cleansing, which potentially strengthened the ties within the academic community.

One such administrator willing to protect those of his colleagues and their family members whose activities in the imperial era fell outside the new canon of serving the dictatorship of the proletariat was historian M. S. Holdin, vice-rector of the Kharkiv Institute of People’s Education (and before the revolution – *privatdozent* of Kharkiv University). In his note on the activities of the late Kharkiv University theology professor M. S. Stelletsy, supplementing a petition by Stelletsy’s widow, Holdin indicates that the deceased taught a course on the history of ethics in 1919,²⁶ but ‘forgets’ to mention that for a decade before that Professor Stelletsy had taught a theology course at Kharkiv University, and that in 1919 he was executed by the Bolsheviks. In support of another petition, submitted by the ex-wife of professor A.

²² ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 21, арк. 272зв, *Копия выписки из протокола Бюро Комитета Содействия Ученым об обеспечении проф. Сумцова, 5 января 1922 г.*

²³ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 6, арк. 18зв. *Заявление С.А. Раевского в Всеукраинский Комитет содействия ученым при Наркомпросе, 26 января 1922 г.*

²⁴ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 104зв., *Прошение вдовы заслуженного профессора В.К. Надлера М.З. Надлер в Комитет содействия ученым на Украине.*

²⁵ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 120-122зв, *Обращение проф. Н. Бокариуса в Комитет содействия ученым УССР.*

²⁶ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 6, арк. 115, *Справка вдове профессора Н.С. Стеллецкого, 17 мая 1922 г.*

S. Vyazihin (a leading figure in the right-wing movement and head of the Kharkiv branch of the monarchist organization Union of the Russian People, executed together with Stelletsy), Holdin wrote that "Professor Vyazihin's services to Russian science are so widely known that there is no need to point them out."²⁷ These documents are not only evidence of Mykola Holdin's civic courage, but also testimony to how, in moments of crisis and conflict, communities are compelled to articulate the ethical principles that guide them.

Thus, appeals to the authorities helped in the important task of establishing continuity between the social merit of the professors of the 'pre-revolutionary' and 'post-revolutionary' eras. Academics focused less on their and their colleagues' loyalty than on scholarly achievements and recognition by specialist colleagues and academies of sciences, thus 'imposing' on the regime the ideals and criteria prevalent within the academic community itself. Our documents are a vivid example of the process of developing a language about academia – a 'cultural orthodoxy' as defined by S. Fitzpatrick, formed on the basis of local professional orthodoxies in the course of interaction between professionals and party administrators in the cultural sphere.²⁸

Academics had yet more opportunities to state and restate the scientific and social importance of their work as they fought to take back their nationalized homes. In August 1918, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee passed a decree "On the Abolition of the Right of Property in Real Estate in Cities," which gave local authorities full control over residential housing.²⁹ The 'housing redistribution' was especially dramatic in Kharkiv. In 1919, the city was proclaimed the capital of Soviet Ukraine, maintaining this status until 1934. Kharkiv was sorely lacking office space for Soviet institutions and residential real estate for the implementation of the Soviet housing policy, which was based on the idea of restoring social justice and redistributing resources in favor of those who had been deprived of privileges under the old regime, especially the proletariat. University professors, whose homes were usually located in the city center and, as a rule, were well equipped with amenities such as electricity, central heating, and running water, were relegated to the category of the 'bourgeoisie' and forced to share their privileges.

Most professors suffered from the so-called 'densification,' when strangers moved into their homes. Professorial petitions also testify to such practices as the taking away of "in-room extra space possessed by residents." Thus, in 1922, in addition to eight members of the family of the already-mentioned professor of

²⁷ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 7, арк. 118, *Прошение вдовы профессора Т.И. Вязиной в Всеукраинский Комитет по содействию ученым, 1 августа 1922 г.*

²⁸ S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca - London 1992, pp. 248-250.

²⁹ This order began to apply to the houses of Kharkiv professors after the final establishment of Soviet power in the city. But difficulties had started even before that. For example, in December 1917 Bolshevik soldiers entered the house of the history professor V. P. Buzeskul at night with the intention of placing a machine gun in the window of his study to fire at armored cars, and only the surrender of the latter saved the "abode of the muse Clio." See: Інститут рукопису Національної бібліотеки України імені В.І. Вернадського (ІР НБУВ), ф. 3, спр. 50730, арк. 19. *Письмо В. Саввы к В.С. Иконникову, 10 декабря 1917 г.*

philology Sumtsov, twelve strangers lived in the professor's eight-room house. Sumtsov's study, in particular, accommodated four people.³⁰ History professor V. I. Veretennykov also wrote in his petition to the committee about living in a passage room with his mother. The irony was that Veretennykov was asking *not* to evict his housemates, who gave him "a complete and calm opportunity to engage in academic work."³¹ In fact, the direct connection between living and working conditions was always cited to give weight to appeals for improvement in the former.

Cases of academics being evicted from their homes were also frequent. Thus, historian V. P. Buzeskul was forced to vacate his townhouse, given for the needs of an orphanage; the house of the surgeon M. P. Trinkler, founder of the Kharkiv University clinic, became a collection facility for 'defective children' (juvenile delinquents); the Book Chamber of Ukraine moved into the house of the Alchevskys, formerly noted philanthropists and organizers of popular education; and four families lived in the house of the chemist V. F. Tymofeyev.³²

The concept of home is archetypal; it has no negative connotations, and the sense of home is a key biocultural adaptation mechanism contributing to the organization of our thought, feeling, and behavior. So, the forced loss of a home not only represents the loss of a place of residence, but also can become a factor in the erosion of personality.³³ Moreover, the campaign to confiscate or 'densify' professorial homes had a powerful social and ideological subtext. Houses of university professors built at their own expense testified to the importance and recognition of their work. As a rule, they were repositories of research libraries and collections and 'sacred loci' in which science was done. They were also 'open' to guests and served as gathering places for members of the university corporation³⁴. Thus, an inventory of items requisitioned from the house of Professor Buzeskul (18 Viennese chairs and 12 dining chairs, 9 tables of various kinds) indicates that this was a true 'professor's home,' open for visitors and friendly dinners with colleagues. According to the testimony of V. I. Savva, for instance, in 1903 Buzeskul (at that time dean of the Faculty of History and Philology of Kharkiv University) hosted the celebration of a round birthday of Professor Marin Drinov at his house. Among those invited were members of the faculty, rector of the university, and superintendent of the Kharkiv school district³⁵. Deprivation of the right to own a home, densification, and eviction were both means and symbols of the stripping of university professors of their social status and devaluation of the professorial lifestyle.

³⁰ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 54, арк. 103зв., *Заявление профессора Н. Сумцова во Всеукр. к-т содейств. ученым, 30 мая 1922 г.*

³¹ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 8, арк. 24зв., *Заявление проф. Веретенникова в Комитет содействия ученым и в Научный Комитет при Наркомпросе, 13 октября 1921 г.*

³² ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 52-53зв., *План реализации постановления ВУЦИКа о квартирах 12-ти научных работников, 13 апреля.*

³³ See: R.K. Papadopoulos, *Involuntary Dislocation: Home, Trauma, Resilience, and Adversity-Activated Development*, London - New York 2021.

³⁴ С.И. Посохов, *Университет и город в Российской империи (вторая половина XVIII - первая половина XIX вв.)*, Харьков 2014, с. 309-314, 353-357.

³⁵ ИР НБУВ, ф. 3, спр. 50792, арк. 178-179. *Письмо В. Саввы к В.С. Иконникову, 16 ноября, 1903 г.*

In 1921, after the passing of the decree "On Improving the Living Conditions of Academics," it became possible to get one's home back. It was this document that academics drew on in their struggle for living space. In their individual and collective petitions, they argued that it was a 'state necessity' to set apart workers of the arts and sciences as a special group, asserted that their homes had been acquired through their personal labor³⁶ and paid for exclusively from their labor earnings,³⁷ and insisted that the specifics of proper and productive academic work required a designated study and a library.³⁸

Academics also employed other strategies, such as investing their living space with additional social significance. For example, Professor Bahaliy opened his personal library, consisting of six thousand volumes, for the use of the Research Department of the History of Ukraine, newly established in Kharkiv. Professor of forensic medicine Bokarius, founder of the Institute of Forensic Expertise in Kharkiv, petitioned for four rooms in his own apartment to be restored to him, stating that he needed his library and study not only for scientific work, but also as a reception room and office for performing the duties of the director of the Saky District Resort Administration.³⁹ These strategies testify to the ingenuity of academics in defending their rights, but also to changes in the cultural value of an academic's work: intellectual labor was losing its intrinsic worth, while awareness of the increased importance of the social benefits generated by it was growing.

However, such stratagems were not always successful. In Kharkiv, the valuation ceiling for homes subject to denationalization was comparatively low – 3,000 rubles (as opposed to, for instance, 20,000 rubles in Kyiv). The townhouses of Kharkiv professors were valued above this amount. The efforts of the negotiators on behalf of the VUKSU to get the City Executive Committee to raise the ceiling to 15,000 rubles, pointing out that academics, when building their houses, had not pursued the goal of capital investment and profit but had tried to create premises convenient for personal life and work,⁴⁰ came to naught.

Only distinguished academics were granted the right to use their homes, in recognition of their "outstanding achievements in the field of arts and sciences."⁴¹ But even then the denationalization of their homes by Kharkiv academics required special official directives and bureaucratic correspondence with both central executive and local authorities. Thus, it was the regime that became the source of the restoration

³⁶ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 2-3, *Всеукраинскому комитету содействия ученых. Петиция от научных работников, 1 дек 1921 – 1 янв 1922 г.*

³⁷ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 21, арк. 224-226зв, *Копия обращения в Харьковский горсовет, 3 июня 1922 г.*

³⁸ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 8, арк. 7зв., *Заявление проф. Е.Г. Кагарова Т. Председателю Комиссии по организации Научно-исследовательских Институтов, 30 сентября 1921 г.*

³⁹ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 123, *Заявление в Комитет содействия ученым профессора Медицинского института Н.С. Бокариуса, 28 декабря 1922 г.*

⁴⁰ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 13, *Обращение ВКСУ в Харьковский Губисполком. 1 января 1922 г.*

⁴¹ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 14, *Список научных работников оказавших особые заслуги в области науки и искусства домовладения которых подлежат денационализации, 1 августа 1922 г.*

and distribution of benefits and status, as well as the *de facto* arbiter in evaluating academic merit.

Importantly, part of the Soviet regime's policy towards academia was the grouping of academics into categories according to their qualifications. However, in the early days of Soviet power this task was also in the hands of those representatives of the academic community whom we have called negotiators – it was one of the functions of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics. In 1922, academics were divided into five categories. The lower categories included young researchers, and the higher – outstanding scientists who had already made significant contributions to research and education. Both the amount of material support ('academic allowance') and the teaching load depended on the category. Despite the obvious practical benefits of this ranking for some, we may note the interesting case of the Kharkiv chemistry professor V. F. Tymofeyev, who wrote to the committee in 1922. He stated that he considered the high estimation of his academic work exaggerated and, for his "peace of mind," made a "categorical request" not to be assigned the top category⁴².

This case exemplifies a contradiction between the recognition of academic merit in the imperial-era tradition, when the professional weight of a researcher and educator was the result of the evaluation of his work through research competitions and the awarding of titles and honors, and the nascent tradition of Soviet bureaucratic ranking, which reflected rather the degree of an academic's usefulness to the regime and the new society. Tymofeyev's ethical stance represented resistance to the emerging trend. Moreover, this case indicates that within the Soviet bureaucratic apparatus it was initially academics themselves that served as the principal agents of this policy while trying to help and protect their colleagues.

At the end of the 1920s, the situation began to change. In 1927, the professional ranking of academics was simplified to three categories. The expert selection changed as well. Thus, the Ukrainian Expert Commission for the Qualification of Academics now included only three representatives of the profession (from the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Marxism and Marx Studies, and the Board of the Section of Academic Workers of the City of Kharkiv). All other members represented bureaucratic agencies (the Scientific Committee of the Main Directorate of Professional Education, Ukrainian Council of the People's Economy, People's Commissariat of Healthcare, People's Commissariat of Agriculture, and Ukrainian Central Bureau of Trade Unions).⁴³

Moreover, the instructions issued to the commission stated that academic titles and positions (professor, assistant, *aspirant*, *prozektor*) did not determine qualifications, and the ranking of academics depended on their productivity, the originality of their work from the point of view of the latest achievements of science and technology, and

⁴² ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 37, арк. 98, *Заявление проф. В. Тимофеева в Научный комитет, 18 июня 1922 г.*

⁴³ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 5, арк. 14, *Положение экспертной комиссии по научной квалификации ученых Украины.*

“the past and present usefulness of an academic’s work to the Republic.”⁴⁴ At first glance, these demands may seem justified in the context of the reform of research and higher education. However, the overall thrust of the reform was that the expert function, which had traditionally belonged to the academic community, was now taken over by the regime, which could ignore academics’ accomplishments and services during the imperial era. This reform, weakening the academic community, had far-reaching consequences for research and education in Ukraine; its effects are still felt today.

Returning to the subject of residential real estate denationalization in Kharkiv, we may note that by a special resolution of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee from 3 March 1923, only twelve outstanding academic and cultural figures out of the ninety-two living in the city, having lost the right of home ownership, were, however, granted the right of lifelong residence in their houses (usually in self-contained apartments set apart from the rest of the house).

Still, even for this very select group, the housing vicissitudes did not end there. A drawn-out confrontation with the local authorities began. Despite the fact that these academics lost the ownership of their homes, their petitions show that in 1923 they were required to pay building fees.⁴⁵ The draft rules on living space allotment for academics were in fact approved only in May 1924.⁴⁶ However, in October 1924 the individuals in question were once again faced with the need to pay rent for the land plots on which their houses stood,⁴⁷ because, according to the decree and instructions from 12 November 1923 on the collection of rents from land plots, land under the houses that contained their apartments was not included in the list of land holdings exempt from taxes and fees, as was explained by the provincial treasury department in response to the VUKSU’s request for clarification.⁴⁸

Thus, the issue of securing perquisites even for a small number of outstanding academic and cultural figures repeatedly came into conflict with the logic of the general housing policy and required constant efforts on the part of the committee in promoting the necessary legislative initiatives and coordinating government decisions at different levels. In doing this, functionaries of the VUKSU invoked directives of party leaders, who considered the duty of “preserving scientific talent, which continues in exceptionally difficult conditions the great work aimed

⁴⁴ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 5, арк. 15, *Инструкция к положению о квалификации научных работников Украины.*

⁴⁵ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 143, *Во Всеукраинский комитет содействия ученым заявление Д.И. Багалей, 7 мая 1923 г.*

⁴⁶ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 161, *Выписка из протокола заседания ВЖК при ВУЦИК от 6 мая 1924 г.*; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 166, *Проект правил о нормах площади, подлежащей закреплению за научными работниками в полезное пользование.*

⁴⁷ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 128зв, *В ВУКСУ заявление академика В.П. Бузескула, 8 октября 1924 г.*; ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 130, *Во Всеукраинский комитет содействия ученым гр. Ю.А. Гиришман.*

⁴⁸ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, спр. 46, арк. 127. *Ответ Губфинотдела во Всеукраинский комитет содействия ученым. 13 ноября 1924 г.*

at reviving the economy and lifting up science and culture... one of the most important duties of local Soviet government agencies."⁴⁹ The committee also stressed the great role of the cultural and educational work done by these figures in the Ukrainian capital, which "has left a notable mark on the activities of a number of Kharkiv institutions." This was in fact recognized by the Kharkiv City Executive Committee, which gave their apartments to the academics "as a gift."⁵⁰

Arguments for academic merit were of great importance in the conditions when the majority of party members, representing the barely literate masses, shared anti-intellectual sentiments and approved of violent methods of interaction with academic and cultural figures.⁵¹ In fact, VUKSU documents testify to the efforts of negotiators at the local level to put into practice the calls of some senior party leaders to work towards preserving the social significance of academic work and promoting the image of the exceptional complexity and importance of intellectual labor in general, ensuring the proper place of "workers of the highest labor"⁵² in the hierarchy of the new society.

But in the matters of housing, as in many others, violations of government decrees and open abuse of power by local Soviet officials were commonplace. The VUKSU received numerous complaints that state-level security warrants and official government orders regarding housing standards for workers of the arts and sciences were often misinterpreted or simply ignored by local authorities.⁵³ Abuses and violations accumulated to such an extent that on 14 May 1923 Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR Christian Rakovsky sent a circular letter to all provincial executive committees clarifying the government's position on housing for the intelligentsia: "According to the information we have been receiving lately, many cities pay no heed at all to the need to support academic workers, who continue to be subject to evictions, fees in amounts that exceed their earnings, densification, confiscation of furniture, etc. Such actions of local bodies and institutions cause significant damage to the Soviet republic and are completely unacceptable." The letter categorically recommended that local authorities "...equate academic workers registered with the VUKSU and its local branches with industrial workers in terms of rents and utility payments, extending to them all the benefits and advantages provided by local councils and executive committees. Cancel all additional fees for the above-mentioned academic workers. Secure for them special rooms (studies) that are in their use, without any additional fees. Under no circumstances allow the densification of academic workers, avoid

⁴⁹ See for instance an address to the Commission on Residential Affairs from April 1924, signed by head of the VUKSU Ya. Ryappo: ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, стр. 46, арк. 171зв. *Записка Всеукраїнського комітета содействия ученых председателю Высшей жилищной комиссии ВУЦИК, апрель 1924.*

⁵⁰ ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, стр. 46, арк. 171зв.

⁵¹ Г.В. Касьянов, *Українська інтелігенція 1920-х - 1930-х років: соціальний портрет та історична доля*, Київ 1992, с. 20–26.

⁵² ЦДАВО, ф. 331, оп. 1, стр. 46, арк. 1. *Всеукраїнському комітету содействия ученых. Петиция от научных работников, 1 дек 1921 - 1 янв 1922 г.*

⁵³ О. Коляструк, *вказ. праця*, с. 281-284.

any kind of evictions, forbid the confiscation of furniture. Equate the widows of academic workers with invalids.”⁵⁴

Thus, the work of negotiators had to be done under difficult conditions of conflict between the logic of local bureaucracies, carrying out a radical transformation of social life, and efforts by the higher authorities to functionally preserve for the country the academic potential inherited from the imperial era without compromising the ideological criteria for evaluating the performance of academics.

Conclusion

Documents of the All-Ukrainian Committee for Assistance to Academics demonstrate that in the first years of Soviet power criteria for assessing the social contribution of the intelligentsia were taking shape slowly, and academics actively participated in the development of a language of academic management and evaluation of academic performance that would take into account the specifics and importance of this form of labor. Researchers and educators tried to secure continuity in evaluating professional accomplishments within their group from the imperial to the Soviet era, adhere to and articulate professional ethical principles, and explain the nature and significance of academic labor.

The success of such efforts could only be ensured through the collaboration of prominent academics with the regime – I have called such academics, serving in bureaucratic roles, *negotiators*. It was to them that their colleagues addressed their appeals, and it was they who then spoke on their colleagues’ behalf before Soviet central executive and local authorities. Negotiators became the agents who formulated the ‘image’ of academia for the regime, trying, after the approval of this ‘image’ at the highest level, to put it into practice at the level of local bureaucratic decision-making.

However, the ideological context and public sentiment affected the ways in which representatives of the academic community spoke about their profession: they were forced to gradually accept new rules for evaluating academic work, based on its social, rather than scientific, usefulness. Importantly, this change was happening as academics were trying to ensure the fulfillment of their most basic needs and regain the right to live in their own homes. The process of reclaiming the right to home even for a small group of academics, accompanied by endless bureaucratic friction, gave rise to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity even for the most distinguished professors, forcing them into life-long correspondence with the authorities, which overall tended to increase their dependence on, and loyalty to, the regime. This should help us appreciate the real-life complexity of repressive policies, woven as they were from the activities of diverse social actors, their clashing interests, available resources, and behavioral practices.

But what I offer here is only an attempt to draw attention to the problem of the academic community’s resistance during the fundamental social changes of the 1920s through influencing the development of the bureaucratic language of academic management, as well as to the role of academic negotiators in this process. These

⁵⁴ Quoted after О. Коляструк, *вказ. праця*, с. 284.

aspects of academic work and life – so far, I believe, underexplored in research literature – provide a promising angle for the study of the relationship between the academic community and state power.

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