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**The Sustainable
Development Concept:**

***The Contribution of
Academician V.A. Koptug***



Hannover 2015

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This brochure discusses the contribution of Academician V.A. Koptug to development and promotion of the sustainable development concept. Formation of the sustainable development concept and its key points in the treatment of V.A. Koptug are described. It is demonstrated that V.A. Koptug's relentless activity aimed at development and promotion of the concept of sustainable development has had a marked influence on the modern search for the Russian path to the future.

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The Sustainable Development Concept: The Contribution of Academician V.A. Koptug

... People are like shadows, but their deeds are like rocks.

Academician G.M. Krzyzanowski

This article discusses the contribution of Academician V.A. Koptug to development and promotion of the sustainable development concept. Formation of the sustainable development concept and its key points in the treatment of V.A. Koptug are described. It is demonstrated that V.A. Koptug gave an important role to the moral component of the sustainable development concept and that his environmental ethics theory is based on the teachings of V.I. Vernadsky. V.A. Koptug's position in the question regarding the possibility and need for sustainable development in the globalizing world is outlined. His views on the importance of social order for the implementation of the concept of sustainable development and his belief that this concept is socialist in essence are analyzed. It is demonstrated that V.A. Koptug's relentless activity aimed at development and promotion of the concept of sustainable development has had a marked influence on the modern search for the Russian path to the future.

Key words: sustainable development concept, Brundtland Commission, «Rio Declaration on Environment and Development», «AGENDA 21», ecology, environmental ethics, unity of environmental, social, and economic development components, capitalism, socialism, social justice.

The concept of sustainable development was developed in the process of realizing the causes and working out the measures to resolve the global environmental crisis under the auspices of the UN and international non-governmental organizations (primarily the Club of Rome). An important contribution to examining the issues related to concretization of the sustainable development concept and its implementation in the practice of social life, both at the international level and especially in Russia, was made by Academician Valentin A. Koptug (1931–1997). V.A. Koptug was a world-renowned chemist, President of the International Union of Chemists (1988), Chairman of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and later of the Russian Academy of Sciences (since 1980), and member of the Advisory Council on Sustainable Development under the UN Secretary-General (since 1993). He is also well-known as a social activist and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

Since the late 1980s, V.A. Koptug set a priority before the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences that he headed to study and develop the methodology for addressing environmental problems in the Siberian regions. He also maintained that studying and finding solutions to environmental problems were priority tasks for the Academy of Sciences (ref.: [1], [2]). In Siberia in the 1980s, academic institutions and laboratories, largely owing to the motivating activity of the Chairman of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences, conducted research on sources of emissions and pollution of rivers, cities, industrial and energy facilities, and developed a unified regional environmental monitoring system [3]. Special attention was given to research and protection measures for the unique ecosystem of Lake Baikal [4]. Academician Koptug not only provided the overall guidance to conducting research and developing measures to address environmental problems, but was also directly involved in it (ref., e.g., [5]). In this way, in the 1990s – the time of particular significance for forming the sustainable development concept and approving it as a long-term Program of Action of the international community and national governments recognized by the UN – V.A. Koptug was ready to contribute to the implementation of this historically significant project. By this time he was not only a public figure, a major science organizer, and an outstanding chemist, but also, which is very important, a very competent expert in the field of ecology.

The sustainable development concept: development and key aspects

The concept of sustainable development was formed in the late 1960s to early 1970s with the realization of the global nature of the environmental crisis. The fact that the environmental crisis was global in nature was first demonstrated in the interrelated theoretical studies carried out on behalf of the Club of Rome: in the book *World Dynamics* (1971) by Jay Forrester and in the study «The Limits to Growth» (1972) by Dennis Meadows et al.

These authors came to the conclusion that the global environmental crisis was caused by pressure on the natural environment by the exponential growth of the population («population explosion») and production («capital»). In their view, this growth has natural limits in the form of depleted natural resources and the level of pollution and environmental destruction. Going beyond the growth limits in the foreseeable future (the time period until 2100 was named) would entail global natural disasters and, accordingly, the collapse of the world's population and production. The disaster prevention strategy outlined by the authors of the Club of Rome may seem to be an anticipation of the concept of *sustainable* development, since it contains, in different contexts, the theses on sustainability as a mandatory path for man's existence and his coexistence with the natural environment (ref.: [6, p. 156, 157, 164, 167, 179]). However, the strategy proposed by the authors of the Club of Rome and the sustainable development concept differ substantially, even though the latter was obviously influenced by the former. Stability, according to the Club of Rome's strategy, can only be attained by stopping the growth and establishing an equilibrium between the size of the population and the fixed volume of production [6, p. 156–184]. That is, in the strategy proposed by the Club of Rome, sustainability is a *state*, whereas the sustainable development concept deals with the sustainability of *growth*.

Nevertheless, the authors of «The Limits to Growth» would not like their model of establishing a sustainable society by checking population growth and, most importantly, production growth, to be perceived as a perpetuation of social inequality and injustice. They argue that this model leaves room for moral and social progress and human development, and thus can provide the basis for a society of equality and justice [6, p. 174, 178]. However, this is an ad hoc statement made in haste that cannot

resolve the theory's faults. It is not demonstrated anywhere that checking production at a certain level is at all possible. Or, at least, that checking it would not override all other possibilities of social progress and human development, because industrial activity is, and here we cannot disagree with Marx, the implementation and development of a generic essence of mankind, i.e., the human way of life as such. Also, it is more than doubtful that checking production at a level once achieved can become a stimulus for equitable redistribution of the public wealth. Rather, it will perpetuate the status praesens, for the establishment of an equitable distribution of the social product is impossible without changing the relations of ownership of the means of production, but such relations cannot be affected by checking the growth of production.

In the same year that the «The Limits to Growth» was published, Stockholm (Sweden) hosted the United Nations Conference on the Environment, which became the first step towards forming the actual concept of *sustainable development*. The term «sustainable development» was not yet used, but it was noted that environmental problems were associated with both the processes of industrial and technological development (in industrialized countries), and the lack of such development (in developing countries). To find a solution to environmental problems, it is necessary to regulate social and economic development in order to preserve the environment on a global scale by way of cooperation between all countries in the common interest [7, p. 10–12]. After the Stockholm Conference, documents of the UN and international organizations mention eco-development and development without destruction. In 1980, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) jointly developed a «World Conservation Strategy», which introduced for the first time the term «sustainable development» (ref. the document title: [8]). Seven years later, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also named after the head of the Commission, the Brundtland Commission (Gro Harlem Brundtland is a Norwegian politician, diplomat, doctor and a public figure), provided a definition of the term «sustainable development» in the UN report on «Our Common Future», putting it at the forefront of the strategies to address global environmental problems and thus giving it the status of a concept [9]. Finally, in 1992, in the «Rio Declaration on Environment and Development»

[10] and the «AGENDA 21» [11] adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the sustainable development concept received multi-faceted development and wide international recognition.

The Brundtland Commission's report gave the following brief but concise definition of sustainable development: «Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs» [9, Chapter 2, I, 1]. The authors of the Brundtland Commission's report – without mentioning the Club of Rome – agreed with the Club's view, of which they were of course aware, that it was necessary to impose restrictions on production associated with the exploitation of natural resources [9, I, 27; Chapter 2, 1]. However, the necessary restrictions should not be absolute (i.e., do not require the suspension of production), but there are relative «limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities» [9, I, 27]. In contrast to the standpoint of the Club of Rome, the Brundtland Commission report states: «Growth has no set limits in terms of population or resource use beyond which lies ecological disaster. Different limits hold for the use of energy, materials, water, and land.» And further: «The accumulation of knowledge and the development of technology can enhance the carrying capacity of the resource base» [9, Chapter 2, I, 10]. Sustainable development is by no means a constant state of harmony, «but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs.» At the same time, this process is neither simple nor easy [9, I, 30]. The main difficulty is not of a technical or technological nature, but has a social character. The purpose of the sustainable development concept implies that justice for future generations cannot be attained without achieving social justice within the modern-day generations [9, Chapter 2, 3]. «A world in which poverty and inequity are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crises. Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life» [9, Chapter 2, I, 4]. Accordingly, the Brundtland Commission's report suggests two interrelated objectives as the main means and methods of transition to sustainable development: a) formation of values

corresponding to environmental imperatives (environmental ethics), and b) socio-political transformation of society to achieve social justice [9, I, 28–32, 45, Chapter 2, 1–26, etc.].

In the documents of the Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development, the main points of the Brundtland Commission's report describing the concept of sustainable development were accepted and complemented with some new aspects. As a result, the concept acquired its final form as an officially recognized international project in the documents of the Rio Conference. Shortly after the conference, V.A. Koptug summarized its results, referring to the «Rio Declaration» and highlighting its key points and essential aspects of the sustainable development concept. According to this summary, the concept of sustainable development included: recognition of the fact that it is focused on people, who should have the right to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature (Article 1); that environmental protection should be an integral component of the development process and could not be considered in isolation from it (Article 4); that the right to development should be realized so as to provide equally for needs to develop and for the preservation of the environment both for present and future generations (Article 3); and that it is necessary to reduce the gap in living standards of nations of the world and to eradicate poverty and destitution (Article 5), taking into account the fact that today the share of three-quarters of the world's population accounts for only one-seventh of the world's income [12]. The thesis formulated by V.A. Koptug that in talking about the essence of the sustainable development concept «we must keep in mind three aspects: social development, economic development, and environmental conservation, exactly this triad» [13]¹ can serve as a summary.

¹The adequacy of this summary is particularly clear from the structure of the text of Agenda 21, where Section I is entitled „Social and Economic Dimensions,” and Section II „Conservation and Management of Resources for Development”.

The sustainable development concept and environmental ethics

Environmental ethics as a relevant trend of theoretical thought arises, along with the concept of sustainable development, together with the realization of the global nature that the environmental crisis has acquired in the second half of the XX century.

The German physician Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) and the American ecologist Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) are considered to be the founders of environmental ethics and the persons who stressed the importance of the implementation of those ethics. It should be borne in mind that environmental ethics has two main aspects: the biocentric and the anthropocentric ones. The biocentric approach builds on the theoretical heritage of Leopold and Schweitzer. Disappointingly, the literature dealing with the environmental ethics disregards the contribution of Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky (1863–1945), an outstanding thinker and scientist as well as the founder of the doctrine of the biogeosphere and its evolution into the state of the noosphere. Many people feel that V.I. Vernadsky should be considered as one of the founders of environmental ethics, namely, anthropocentric environmental ethics (ref. [14]). The importance of V.I. Vernadsky's teachings on environmental ethics is not sufficiently recognized owing to poor knowledge in the West of the study of these issues, of Russian theoretical thinking, and of the works written in Russian. A step in the right direction was the publication by James Lovelock (born in 1919) who, while creating his famous Gaia Hypothesis, rediscovered, so to say, Vernadsky's biogeochemical theory and brought to the attention of the scientific community the English translation of Vernadsky's main work, *The Biosphere*, which was made available on Lovelock's initiative to readers by a number of prominent Western experts (ref. [15]).

In the Russian-language literature on environmental ethics, several authors sharing the anthropocentric point of view (V.V. Mantatov, N.N. Moiseev, A.I. Subetto and A.P. Fedotov) trace their standpoint back to the teachings of V.I. Vernadsky. (For further information on the contribution of N.N. Moiseev to the development of environmental ethics, ref. [16]). Russian authors who criticize the anthropocentric approach in environmental ethics from the point of view of biocentrism (V.E. Boreiko, D.R. Weiner, V.A. Kutyrev and F.R. Stillmark) choose Vernadsky as their main target. At the same time,

it is established that V.I. Vernadsky, regardless of the positive or negative evaluation of the values of his ethical teachings on biogeosphere, is in fact recognized as the founder of the theoretical bases of the anthropocentric approach to environmental ethics.

The fundamental flaw of biocentrism in environmental ethics is, in my opinion, the attribution of moral subjectivity to all living beings, and even more so, to all natural objects. This flaw reflects the practical inconsistency of the biocentric approach to ethics. The initial step towards the practical implementation of biocentrism is an attempt to use it as the basis for environmental legislation by proclaiming equal rights of humans and animals (or even wider, of human and natural objects), which is a mistake. More precisely, the mistake of biocentrists, that of not wanting to see the obvious, which is repeated time and time again. Is it not obvious that only human beings can be the subject of moral relations and of any relationship in general? The subject, the actor responsible for legal behavior, can only be human beings and not any other creature or entity, because they have no consciousness and, therefore, are legally incapable.

The teaching of V.I. Vernadsky demonstrated in the twentieth century that humanity, through scientific development and technical progress, is becoming a global force determining the course of processes in the Earth's biogeosphere and capable of giving scientific and philosophical justification to the anthropocentric approach of environmental ethics. This doctrine implies that the global environmental crisis that has been gaining momentum since the second half of the 20th century cannot be overcome by eliminating anthropogenic impact. It is possible and necessary to overcome it by changing the nature of human impact, i.e., by changing the activity of the human society itself. According to Vernadsky, the decisive factors in changing the nature of human activity are (1) establishing a just social order on the planet (scientific socialism) and (2) cultivating humanistic ethics and not misanthropy, as in biocentrism. This includes relations between people in dealing with nature.

V.A. Koptuyug was one of the successors to the tradition of V.I. Vernadsky in environmental ethics. Koptuyug emphasized: «The need to take civilization to a conceptually new path of development was heralded back in the [19] 20s by Academician Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadsky. His concept of the 'noosphere' is in many respects a forerunner of the concept of sustainable development» [17].

V.A. Koptug's contribution in the development of humanistic environmental ethics is associated with the fact that he puts it in the context of the internationally recognized concept of *sustainable development*, thus giving it a universally significant practical and political meaning. I believe that for Koptug the continuity of the concept of sustainable development with the doctrine of noosphere formation was all the more obvious since, as he convincingly shows, this concept, being anthropocentrically oriented, is, in fact, socialist in nature.

Forming a humanistic attitude towards nature, whose maxim is in the effort to preserve the natural diversity for future generations, is seen by Koptug as a prerequisite for an equitable society. Moreover, he believes it necessary to base the environmental ethics on humanization of the society as a whole. «In discussions related to the world's transition to the sustainable development path, emphasized the scientist, the understanding is more and more clear that morality, ethics, and humanization of the society in general are not less important indicators of development (than growth – V.M.)» [18]. He believed that individualism, selfishness, and neglect of public interest, encouraged by the modern bourgeois informational civilization, should be opposed by the restoration of traditional moral values, including morality as cultivated by traditional religions (ref.: [12, p. 17], [13], [17], [18], [19, p. 357], [20, p. 478], [21], [22], [23, p. 331]).

The scientific and political activities and beliefs of V.A. Koptug are a clear example of the real social and practical significance of anthropologically oriented environmental ethics, humanistic morality, and socialist convictions.

Is sustainable development possible?

Meanwhile, the very formulation of the task of developing the sustainable development concept has been severely criticized by authors who believe that sustainable development is impossible in principle. Thus, N.N. Moiseev expressed the opinion that the Russian translation of the English expression «sustainable development» is incorrect, because, if we bear in mind the meaning of the Russian translation, sustainable development is impossible in principle, since the notion of development involves the destabilization of the object of development and of the development conditions. However, since this translation has already been widely adopted, including in the official documents of the Russian Federation, Moiseev believes that it should be kept in circulation as a conditional term. Nevertheless, the scientific concept of sustainable development should assume the true meaning of the English expression «sustainable development,» which, according to N.N. Moiseev, could be expressed by the following formula: «development allowed or agreeing with the conditions of nature and its laws» [24, p. 68–69]. In connection with criticism of the Russian translation of the term «sustainable development,» N.N. Moiseev suggested that inadequate treatment of the meaning of the expression, which forms the basis of the concept addressing global environmental problems, is not only unscientific and does not meet the needs of humankind but, on the contrary, serves the interests of those «who really rule the world and for whom any planetary instabilities are dangerous» [24, p. 69]; in other words, we are talking about those political forces that serve the interests of transnational corporations and global imperialism, or Pax Americana (ref.: [24, p. 148–160]). N.N. Moiseev expressed his criticism of the term and the state concept of sustainable development for the first time at the public hearing in the state Duma in 1995. In this way, it happened during V.A. Koptug's lifetime, and he could hardly fail to notice that criticism.

However, Koptug spoke on the issue of the possibility of sustainable development not in response to criticism by N.N. Moiseev, but in reply to a statement made by S.E. Kurginyan and his associates, obviously because Kurginyan – while sharing Moiseev's idea about the impossibility of development without destabilization and, accordingly, about the use of the concept of sustainable development through its inadequacy to the actual state of affairs in the world in the interests of the imperialist world

order – went even further. Kurginyan's criticism is not directed at correcting the alleged inadequacy of the concept of sustainable development, but at its complete rejection, qualifying it only as an ideological weapon of the world reaction [25]². In addition, V.A. Koptug apparently found it necessary to respond in the first place to S.E. Kurginyan, since they both represented the leftist opposition to the Yeltsin regime: the former as a

² A particularly „revelatory“ publication on the concept of sustainable development in line with S.E. Kurginyan's standpoint appeared after the death of V.A. Koptug. It is the book by V.B. Pavlenko, *The Myths of Sustainable Development* [26], which considers the topic in a conspiratorial manner. The author concludes that the concept of sustainable development is an integral part of the conspiracy by Western civilization against Russian civilization being implemented throughout their existence (i.e., over the centuries!). The implementation of the West's project to impose upon Russia the sustainable development concept (in the context of the Western interpretation of democracy and human rights), according to Pavlenko, played a major role in the collapse of the USSR, and later became a major threat to the existence of the Russian Federation. Being acquainted with the clear and accurate analytics by V.A. Koptug related to development of the concept of sustainable development, we can conclude that he would not take seriously the style of subjectivism and guessing at the connections between events and texts relating to the subject matter that are characteristic of conspiracy theories in general and of Pavlenko's conspiracy theory in particular. The specifics of V.B. Pavlenko's style of thinking at the „Russia and the post-Soviet space: problems and prospects“ (2013) roundtable were pointed out in response to his speech, inter alia, by V.G. Khoros at the same roundtable (ref.: [27]). We can add that V.B. Pavlenko's claim to „rebuke“ the supposedly pernicious effect of the concept of sustainable development on Russia's fate is baseless, certainly not because we have completely to ignore the role of plots and conspiracies in the course of historical events. However, the projects and plots cannot have an epochal and civilizational dimension, since they are inevitably discarded or substantially modified in the fight against conspiracies of the opposing side, and thus localized in time and space. At the same time, the plots are not, of course, the only form of achieving the goals and implementing the projects of the historical process subjects. On the contrary, the projects whose authors openly state social goals may be, unlike conspiracies, a milestone dimension, being addressed not to a small circle of conspirators, but to the broad masses. Let us recall the most famous project of the XIX century, which has not lost its relevance to this day: The Communist Manifesto (1848) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In this way, plots are just one of the subjective components of the objective historical progress. As regards the concept of sustainable development specifically, the attempt to ascribe its origin and content to pro-Western forces hostile to Russia and its implementation in Russia to the collaborationist Yeltsin regime seems quite unsatisfactory. It is enough to point out that, after V.A. Koptug, in Russia in the 1990s this concept was suppressed at the official level, and its development in relation to the Russian conditions was hampered and conducted formally, that is, in fact, torpedoed. This was due to the obvious fact that the government was not planning to really work on the concept, intending to use the authority of eminent experts only as a screen to give the regime a certain respectability in the eyes of the foreign and Russian public, that V.A. Koptug declined the offer to join the work group formed by the government, publicly explaining his refusal [13]. Later, he harshly criticized the draft Concept of Transition of the Russian Federation to the Sustainable Development Model (1994) prepared by this work group and suggested to revise it drastically.

member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and the latter as a political scientist of communist orientation. The statement made by S.E. Kurginyan and his supporters and the response by V.A. Koptug were published in the same issue of the opposition newspaper «Zavtra».

As noted above, it was already emphasized in the Brundtland Commission's report on «Our Common Future» that sustainable development is not a constant state of harmony but an ongoing process of change that is not easy and simple (and, of course, entails a certain destabilization of the state of society and nature). V.A. Koptug understood this perfectly well and focused specifically in a number of papers (ref., e.g.: [13], [18] and [28]) and especially in his response to criticism of the concept of sustainable development by Kurginyan and the members of his Center [29] on analysis of the contradictions and conflicts of social development focused on sustainability. There can be different types of destabilization. Of course, it is strange that Koptug's opponents claimed that the concept of sustainable development ignored the destabilizing nature of the development process, but the statement that the sustainable development agenda serves the global reaction and imperialism is equally strange. Reaction and imperialism are not interested in sustainable *development*. They are interested in sustainability only in the sense of preserving the socio-formational status quo: global (as well as on the scale of individual states, nations, and societies) relations of domination and subordination. For this goal, they are ready to opt deliberately for destabilizing the world by various means, including military activities, constantly putting the world on the brink of disaster. The concept of sustainable development offers an alternative to exactly this type of development, as demonstrated by V.A. Koptug (ref.: [29]). Sustainable development cannot be introduced by declarations. It can and should be used as a development goal of modern mankind, which coincides essentially with the communist ideal, requiring a socialist era of transition. Achieving sustainable development as a goal also requires the implementation of a transition strategy. In his response to opponents, V.A. Koptug wrote the following: «Both Communism and the concept of sustainable development call humankind to a brighter future without going into detail in the present circumstances as to what it would be like. Undoubtedly, the understanding of the 'bright future' and the approaches to achieving it can differ significantly. But in the nearest foreseeable future, the Russian Communist Party sees its main task in the

revival of 'socialism in its updated form, recorded in the future constitution and consistent with the current level of productive forces, environmental safety, and the problems faced by humankind' (quoted from the program of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, ref.: [30, p. 191] – V.M.). Or would you, dear opponents, make a step directly into communism?» [29]. The transition to sustainable development, as any development process, of course, involves destabilization, but the trajectory of such destabilizations is aimed at neutralizing destabilization by the reactionary forces of globalization and imperialism that threaten humankind with social and environmental disaster.

One of the basic conclusions of the UN Conference in Stockholm and Rio de Janeiro, V.A. Koptug emphasized, is that the path to disaster is primarily the development path established in the world – a path involving developing countries' replication of the path of Western capitalist countries that have achieved a high level of well-being. The nature of planet Earth will not stand such a development path of civilization. The concept of sustainable development offers a worthy alternative to this path that is recognized by the international community [29].

Sustainable development and social structure

The conclusion of the UN Conference on the impossibility of developing countries' replication of the path taken by Western countries to well-being is equivalent, according to V.A. Koptug, to stating that there is a need for humankind to transfer to the socialist system and the socialist path of development. He believes that the concept of sustainable development adopted by the UN member states has, in fact, a socialist character, even though this fact is suppressed in the official documents (ref.: [31 etc.]). To express his position more fully, the following should be said: The environmental crisis, as well as other global problems of humankind, can be solved only through the reorganization of social life on a socialist basis. Since the concept of sustainable development adopted by the UN envisages such reorganization, this concept provides an adequate program to resolve the global environmental crisis. On the other hand, an adequate interpretation of the social essence of the sustainable development concept adopted by the UN is recognition of the fact that it is a manifesto of modern socialism.

By defeating Kurginyan and his group's attack on the concept of sustainable development, V.A. Koptug actually defended the correct understanding of its social meaning as a socialist project from a leftist attack. However, attacks from the right are also common.

For example, a well-known social theorist and apologist for capitalism, V. Hösle, in referring to the concept of our interest in his book *Philosophie der ökologischen Krise* (though not to the complete version of the Rio de Janeiro Conference, but to the version of the Brundtland Commission) [32] but saying nothing about his own interpretation of its social meaning, tried, however, to substantiate the possibility of resolving the global environmental crisis through bourgeois reforms. In this way, consciously or unconsciously, he found himself before an ambiguous choice: either to give the concept adopted by the UN a pro-bourgeois orientation, or to provide an alternative project. His arguments in defense of capitalism's ability to solve the global environmental crisis are also ambiguous. Although agreeing with the internationally recognized concept of sustainable development's statement on the impossibility of replicating the Western, i.e., capitalist development path to prosperity through fundamental ecological limitations, he nevertheless links his expectations

for the harmonization of relations between society and nature with capitalism. While recognizing that the well-being of Western countries was achieved at the cost of exploiting the nature of «third world» countries and, therefore, at the cost of further deterioration of the ecological crisis, and that the Western living standards could not be considered moral, he argues, however, that in the choice between socialism and capitalism, the latter is preferable because of its supposedly greater economic and environmental effectiveness. Noting that the capitalist economy is distinguished by the pursuit of profit at any cost and the fact that people are suggested meaningless needs, its apologist argues that taxes can transform the selfish motive of the capitalist economic system so that it motivates to use natural resources with the maximum economy and care. However, the simple question is not asked: do the above-mentioned features of the capitalist economic system belong to its very nature? And would the proposal to get rid of them mean the abolition, rather than improvement, of capitalism and, accordingly, the assertion of socialism?

We are not aware that V.A. Koptug responded specifically to the rightist theorists' attempts to revise or replace the social meaning of the concept of sustainable development adopted by the UN. But, in fact, Koptug's interpretation of its actual social meaning preventively contains a refutation of the arguments focused, as in Hösle's book, on the revision or substitution of the socialist essence of the concept.

V.A. Koptug substantiates his point of view that capitalism is inherently incompatible with the fundamental requirements for sustainable development. The ideologists of the capitalist system, proclaiming the economic and environmental efficiency of the developed capitalist countries, do not want to realize that this efficiency is equivalent to the effect of exploitation of developing countries. The academician emphasized that «the development model used by the developed countries is more unacceptable specifically because it requires first achieving a high economic level and only then using the accumulated capital to significantly improve the attitude to the environment» [12, p. 18].

However, the capital available in the developed countries is not always ready to be used for environmental protection measures. It is not ready for it to the extent that they adversely affect the economic profitability. V.A. Koptug cites the example of the attitude of German business circles to

environmental protection. In 1994, the Federal Service for Environmental Protection published the book *Environmental Protection – an Economic Asset*, representing the views of the business community, which regards the cost of environmental protection as unacceptably reducing profits [13, p. 447]. The scientist also draws attention to the many examples of attempts by Western countries, primarily the United States, to disrupt environmental protection measures adopted by UN Conferences in the framework of the sustainable development concept. These examples include these countries' refusal of adequate quotas for greenhouse gas emissions [13, p. 445], US attempts to modify for their benefit the decisions on biodiversity conservation, reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, and forest conservation [33, 313–314] adopted by the international community at the Conference in Rio de Janeiro, etc.

But it is particularly problematic under conditions of the persistent world domination of capitalism – with its private ownership of the means of production and the consequent pursuit of maximum profit at any cost – for the developing countries to achieve high levels of economic development. For example, when discussing the problems of environmental protection at the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro it was demonstrated that private ownership of high-tech biotechnology, which is an important means of modern economic progress, establishes a monopoly by Western countries on such technologies. Western countries refuse to share biotechnologies with developing countries, despite the fact that the genetic material for these technologies is exported free of charge from the developing countries, making this claim of the developing countries quite legitimate. Western countries, especially the United States, insist on the basis of private property rights to patented products that biotechnology should be transferred on a commercial basis. The US and other Western countries also refuse to transfer a share of profits derived from biotechnology [33, p. 314]. This is understandable, since the maximum profit at any cost is the inherent aspiration of capital (ref.: [12, p. 8], [13, p. 446, 447], [17], [19, p. 357], [29], [34], etc.). As a result, capitalism as a global system realizes a tendency to perpetuate the underdevelopment and dependence of developing countries, which is reflected in the ongoing growth of external debt [29] and, as V.A. Koptug repeated after M. Strong, Secretary-General of the Rio Conference, in the growing inequality between the rich and the poor, making 75% of humankind struggle for survival [33, p. 313].

If, nevertheless, Western capitalist countries have somehow to comply with the joint decisions made by UN member states, including on environmental protection, and a growing number of the developing countries to this day are demonstrating their ability to develop dynamically and to weaken the stranglehold of neocolonial dependence, could this mean that global capitalism is no longer all-powerful and that we are witnessing the prerequisites for the formation of global socialism? It is in the perspective of global socialism that V.A. Koptuyug sees the possibility of resolving the global environmental crisis and attaining the ideal of sustainable development.

The real prerequisites for mankind's possible transition to the socialist path of development and implementation of the ideal of sustainable development was seen by the academician in the convergence of public administration experience gained by the socialist-oriented countries – first and foremost, the Soviet Union – and the experience of market self-regulation playing a significant role in the economies of the developed capitalist countries [28], [34] and [35]. He did not believe that capitalism in Russia was irreversible. On the contrary, he was convinced that Russia would return to the path of socialism, and believed that it was well prepared by the Soviet history to become a leader in the transition to implementation of the sustainable development concept. «I believe,” he said, “in the fact that Russia will revive. It will revive through the introduction of normal state regulation with reasonable elements of market relations.» Turning to the topic of sustainable development, V.A. Koptuyug stated the following: «Today, scientists form a civilizational concept of sustainable development, which is socialist in essence. I have repeatedly pointed out that Russia is better prepared than any other country in the world for this path of development. We have vast resources, and we have huge industrial and agricultural potential. The mentality of the society facilitates the adoption of this development concept and, besides, even though we have made mistakes, we have quite advanced along the socialist path. We need to become world leaders on the new path» [31] (ref. also: [13, p. 451], [29]).

V.A. Koptuyug was quite aware that the transition to this new path «was fraught with many harsh conflicts based on the struggle for resources, ecological reserve, and living space» [29]. Western capitalist countries have lived, live today and, of course, will try to keep living off the rest of the world's resources. First of all, their claims will be addressed to Russia,

which has, as probably no other country, vast natural resources, ecological reserves, and territory. But this is exactly what makes Russia face the alternative: either to continue copying the futureless model of capitalism, in fact getting into deeper neo-colonial dependence on the West, or to adopt a strategy of transition to sustainable development and the relevant social structure. Koptuyug was convinced that Russia cannot fail to accept this second option to save its national existence as such.

Of course, someone might say that this line of reasoning is not convincing, since we are not witnessing a revival of the socialist system in Russia. However, this is only at the first glance. Remarkably, V.A. Koptuyug, who developed his own version of the sustainable development concept in the years of an almost complete triumph of neo-liberal economic policies and the political dictatorship of the capitalist West, was able to foresee the sharp anti-imperialist turn of the Russian foreign policy that took place a few years after his death and continues to this day. It turned out that Russia, despite the implanted capitalism that seemed to be doomed to oppose global socialism, is in fact entering, through the need to defend its national and state independence, an increasingly close alliance with countries on the path of socialism, such as China, Vietnam, Cuba, Venezuela, Syria and other countries in Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. The course of events urges Russia to the internal eradication of the capitalist system alien to its national identity, the system of social inequality, to the revival of socialism, the social system that is relevant to its national ideal of justice.

V.A. Koptuyug also drew attention to the fact that an important factor for the establishment of socialism along with the transition to sustainable development will be the fact that the concept of sustainable development has authority recognized by the international community. The transition to sustainable development, he wrote, «after the stabilization of the economic complex, will allow Russia to restore its geopolitical role, taking the place of an intermediary between the developed and developing countries, based on the requirements of sustainable development that were formally adopted by the international community and are therefore difficult to reject. In the future, Russia will have every opportunity to take a place at the forefront of civilization's path to sustainable development if it considers all of its domestic and international problems through the prism of the sustainable development concept» [29].

His cause lives on

V.A. Koptug, an outstanding chemist and a major organizer of science, left behind a significant legacy for which he gained the recognition of the world, the country, and the Siberian Branch of the RAS. His contribution to promotion and development of the concept of sustainable development should be particularly noted. His cause became his destiny, requiring total scientific, organizational, political, and civil commitment.

Having refused to join the work group for development of the concept for Russia's transition to sustainable development under the Government of the Russian Federation due to the government's lack of preparation to take the case seriously, V.A. Koptug nevertheless could not refuse, as a public officer and Chairman of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to take part in the expert evaluation of documents developed by the work group. In the opinion presented by V.A. Koptug and approved at the meeting of the Presidium of the Siberian Branch of the RAS (February 1995), it was concluded that the draft concept submitted for evaluation dealt only with the environmental aspect, whereas the social and economic aspects of the sustainable development concept were not considered. This was obviously due to ideological reasons: due to the mismatch between the socio-economic policy of «perestroika» (i.e., the neoliberal policy) and the problems of transition to sustainable development. Therefore, the draft was deemed to be unsatisfactory and requiring complete revision [36]. The text of the «Concept of the Russian Federation's Transition to Sustainable Development» introduced later by President Yeltsin's decree (dated 01.04.1996) reflected an attempt to react to experts' criticisms. However, due to the apologetic attitude towards the «perestroika» policy expressed in this document, it could not earn V.A. Koptug's approval. This can be seen from the fact that Koptug did not find it necessary to mention this document even once. V.A. Koptug came to realize the necessity of providing the Russian public with an alternative strategy for Russia's transition to sustainable development that would be adequate to the essence of the internationally recognized concept. The scientist believed that with time such a strategy would be in high demand. The text of the draft developed in collaboration with V.M. Matrosov, V.K. Levashov, and Y.G. Demyanko states, in particular, that the discussion on the ways of transition to sustainable development «coincided with the period

of Russia's radical liberal reforms, making the correct understanding and reflection of the social dimension in the current policies of the sustainable development concept undesirable for their ideologues, since it would have undermined the basis of the changes aimed at the predominance of market relations and private property at any cost, based on the model of peripheral liberal elitism» [20, p. 465–466]. «Meanwhile,» the authors continue, «the systematic approach to this concept as a complex set of mutually determined social, economic, political, spiritual, moral, ethnic, and other processes is the key to the success of future activities at both the national and the civilizational level» [20, p. 466]. From this standpoint, they reveal the nature of the crisis experienced by Russia and suggest ways for the transition to sustainable development associated with the establishment of a just social order.

In an effort to ensure that the sustainable development concept take strong roots in the academic and social life of Russia, surviving the «perestroika» policy and facilitating the transition to a new sustainable path of development, V.A. Koptug initiated the creation of a collective monograph containing a comprehensive study of the problems of the country's transition to sustainable development made on the basis of this draft, and organized an All-Russian scientific conference in Moscow dedicated to these issues. The monograph, entitled *The New Paradigm of Russia's Development (Comprehensive Research of Sustainable Development Problems)*, created by a large group of leading, reputable researchers in various disciplines, was published after V.A. Koptug's death, but, as pointed out in the book, he was the chief editor and the main author of this research. This monograph, as all of Academician Koptug's creative activity, has made an impact on the social thought and life of the country. It goes without saying that thanks largely to V.A. Koptug, the concept of sustainable development was included in the Programme of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. However, the ideas of the concept, as understood by Koptug, became the legacy of not only the Communist Party: Probably one of the most important notions related to interpretation of the sustainable development concept, where the influence of V.A. Koptug is manifest, is the concept of social justice. In contrast to the «perestroika» version of the concept approved by the Decree of President Yeltsin and in which there is no mention of social justice, in the subsequent two documents – the «Basic Provisions of the

Sustainable Development Strategy of Russia,» adopted by the State Duma in 2002, and the white paper «Report on Human Development in the Russian Federation for 2013,» dedicated to the transition to sustainable development – the principle of social justice took a central position in the concept of sustainable development. It must be noted, for example, that at the last presidential election the winning candidate included in his election program the following thesis: «In the coming decade we need to change the situation. Every ruble directed to the social sphere should 'produce justice.' A fair system for society and the economy is the main condition of our sustainable development over these years» [37].

Of course, there is still a great distance from declarations to their implementation. Nevertheless, the turn in foreign policy toward maintaining equal interstate relations made by Russia today and the recognition at the state level of the importance of justice for the social structure of the country represents a real vector in the path toward sustainable development. A significant contribution to the country's search for its path in the future was made by V.A. Koptug, through his tireless efforts to develop and promote the concept of sustainable development based on revised socialism.

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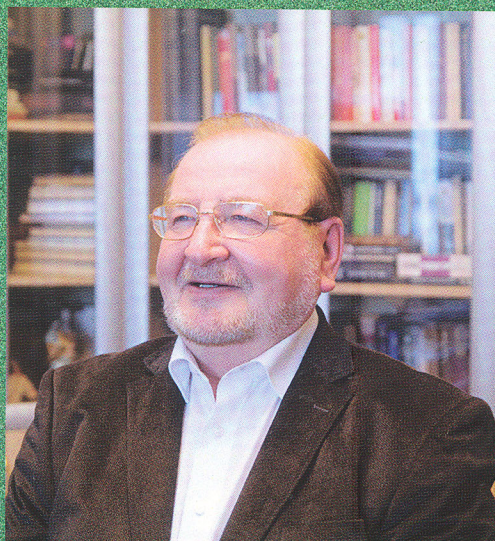
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