YANOVSKAYA'S 'GHOST'

IRVING H. ANELLIS

Modern Logic Publishing
2408 $^1/_2$ W. Lincoln Way (Upper Level)
Ames, IA 50014-7217, USA

email: F1.MLP@ISUMVS.IASTATE.EDU

Introductory comments. Sof'ya Aleksandrovna Yanovksaya's influence was exerted more through her teaching and personal contacts than through her research. Many of Yanovskaya's students now have their own students, and of the older generations of those whose academic lives Yanovskaya touched, many have already died — some [Medvedev, Yushkevich] only in the last few years, some [internationally famed historian of logic N. I. Styazhkin] nearly a decade ago. Nevertheless, Yanovskaya's influence can still be felt in the halls of the the Mechanico-Mathematical Faculty of Moscow State University, as I found when I visited in August 1987 to attend the International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science.

I have preserved my reflections, impressions, and experiences of that visit, and with the the reader's indulgence, I will relate those that pertain, either directly or incidentally, to Yanovskaya, as some of them might otherwise find no other suitable opportunity for recording more permanently and may serve as a record of useful historical information that might otherwise be lost.

(A caution: I recorded only a few bare facts on a day-to-day basis during my stay in Moscow, as the opportunity arose. My more sustained notes and recollections were recorded in a personal journal the week after I returned home. Therefore, I would not wish to be held to every specific detail of time and place. Moreover, many of the people whose opinions I recorded in 1987 may have since changed their minds; others who expressed their views or stated facts had done so in an informal, conversational manner, rather than formally, and may not now wish to

be held 100% accountable for what they said on the spur of the moment. In such cases, I shall prefer to record their remarks here as coming, for example, from "One Historian of Logic" rather than mention the person by name. Comments inserted later for the clarification of the reader are enclosed by square brackets, while misspellings and incomplete or incorrect references in the manuscript journal have been silently corrected.)

a. The halls of Mech.-Mat. [On 14 August 1987, the philosopher of mathematics specializing in intuitionism, Mikhail Ivanovich] Panov took me on a tour of the Mechanico-Mathematical Faculty in the main tower of Moscow State University. Everywhere, the halls were studded with photographs and memorials to the students and faculty members who had heroically perished in the Great Patriotic War [World War II]. There were also photographs of past and current faculty members of the various departments. On the top floor, the thirty-sixth storey, was to be found a geneaological chart which someone had drawn of the mathematical descendents of N. N. Luzin. To the left of the door to the classroom where S. A. Yanovskaya had worked, the wall, and indeed the entire corridor, was dominated by a full-length portrait of Sonya Kovalevskaya. Elsewhere on that floor, a portrait of Euler had been found hung on the wall. In fine, the halls of the Faculty were all monuments to Russian and Soviet mathematics and its history, and a living monument to the mathematicians of Moscow State University.

Yanovksaya's classroom may have had enough seating for approximately 30 students. Its walls, too, were decorated with photographs. A small photograph of Yanovskaya herself flanked the entranceway to her classroom. [This is the same photograph that was reproduced as Figure 1 of my paper "The Heritage of S. A. Janovskaja", *History and Philosophy of Logic* **8** (1987), 45–56.]

b. Yanovskaya and Lakatos. [. . .] At one point, in answer to my question concerning the folklore to the effect that Imre Lakatos had been Yanovskaya's student, One Historian of Logic averred that he had in fact been in Moscow and had studied with Yanovskaya at the university. From whence he had this information is obscure; but he was certain, and stated that there is no information about this in the biography of Lakatos because he [Lakatos] had concealed this fact for political reasons.

c. Medvedev on Yanovskaya. . . . He [Medvedev] remembered

Yanovskaya more as an organizer than as an historian — a view which seems to have been typical of the older generation to which he belongs. For Medvedev, the work of Luzin and P.S. Aleksandrov was the most fruitful of the period.
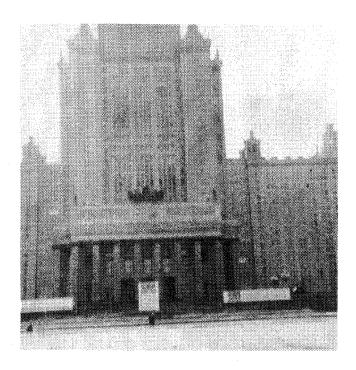
Our discussion of Yanovskaya led me to tell the following true story:

In a paper about Yanovskaya ["S. A. Janovskaja", *Studies in Soviet Thought* **13** (1973), 1–10], I. M. Bocheński wrote in the obscure and privately published *Festgabe an die Schweizer Katholiken* [Freiberg, Universitätsverlag, 1954]; the paper in question, *"Spitzfindigkeit,"* [pp. 334–352] was a sardonic and humorous mocking of classical arguments against formal logic. In the paper on Yanovskaya, Bocheński wrote that no one took this paper seriously, except Yanovskaya, who replied with a scholarly discussion of some 30 or more pages, in her work on Descartes' geometry and mathematical method [*О роли математической строгости в истории творчестского развития математической и специально о «Геометрии» Декарта*, in S.A. Yanovskaya (editor), *Методологические проблемы науки* (Moscow, Izdat. Mysl`), 243–278; reprinted in Вопросы философии, nr. 3 (1966), in Историко-математические исследованния **17** (1966), 151–183, and in P. V. Tavanec (editor), *Исследованнии и системах логики* (Moscow, Nauka, 1970), 13–50], and the "stern reviewer" of the *Journal of Symbolic Logic* [**22** (1957), 382], namely my own teacher, Jean van Heijenoort.

This story, [A. G.] Barabashev [who was present during my conversation with Medvedev] told me, went from him and Medvedev to the rounds of the Muscovite mathematics historians, to S. S. Demidov, who had himself been one of the later students of Yanovskaya, and finally, back to Barabashev from Demidov. [This incident is covered in greater detail and clarity in my *Van Heijenoort: Logic and Its History in the Work and Writings of Jean van Heijenoort* (Ames, MLP Books, Modern Logic Publishing, 1994), 168–170] . . . .

. . . In reply to my query as to whether Schönfinkel and Yanovskaya had known each other in Odessa, both having once been students of [Samuil Osipovich] Shatunovskii at Odessa University, Medvedev told me that, unfortunately, no one had thought to ask Yanovskaya that question while she was still alive. . . .

. . . I learned at this time also that one of Yanovskaya's harshest critics, [V. N.] Molodshii, had recently died. During the 1930s, he had attacked not only Yanovskaya but also, as I later learned from Demidov, even Luzin. [Demidov later told me that the pressures of Molodshii's

attacks contributed to Yanovskaya's ill health and subsequent death.] Also killed in the last year or two was N. I. Styazhkin, one of Yanovskaya's most prominent students and a specialist in history of logic; he had died in an automobile accident in Moscow [*q.v.* Z. A. Kuzicheva, "Nikolai Ivanovich Styazhkin (brief sketch of his life and scientific work)", *Modern Logic* **2** (1991), 153–169. [In Russian]] . . . .