

The Development of Russian Sociology in the Period Between the Second Half of the 19th Century and the Beginning of the 20th Century

Mgr. Zhereb Alexandra

Charles University in Prague,
Faculty of Humanities, Czech Republic

Abstract

The dramatic history of Russia at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century still fascinates historians and sociologists. The problem how one of the biggest, very fast developing capitalistic countries turned to revolution, bloody terror and civil war cannot be solved with the help of just one discipline - history or sociology. It requires complex and interdisciplinary approach for answering the questions about October Revolution 1917, the event which prejudiced the history not just of Russia and Russian nation but the whole World. Changes in the economic system, the social, moral and spiritual spheres and the growth of cultural needs, created new conditions for the development of sociology as a science. The paper elaborates to the development of Russian sociology and the way how the events of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century were reflected in the work of Russian sociologists and philosophers.

Keywords: Russian Empire; History of Sociology; Russian Sociology

Russian Empire in the middle of the 19th century. Czar's Alexander II liberal reforms

The development of sociology as a new science started in early 1860. Generally speaking this period was one of the most significant for the pre-revolutionary Russia and brought various changes to all the aspects of society. This period is characterized by the implementation of important socio-economic and political reforms, especially during the reign of Czar Alexander II. These reforms are considered as the most liberal in the pre-revolutionary history of the Russian Empire. In this study I will mention some of the most significant reforms which will help to understand the situation in the society.

The first reform was the Emancipation ("peasant") reform of 1861, which became a "step from feudalism to capitalism" for the Russian Empire.

Peasants got freed from their feudal obligations and were assigned a piece of land for them to live and work. They were obliged to make redemption payments to their *obshchina* (the village community). Landlords received compensation from the state in the form of Treasury bonds. Many serfs however believed that the land was not distributed justly and the terms of Emancipation had been disregarded by landlords. This situation led to massive protests and riots. The fundamental problem was that there was not enough good quality land available for distribution. Even the nobility failed to benefit from Emancipation, despite the care that the government had taken to protect their economic interests. Nevertheless, Emancipation was certainly an important event for the Russian serf, because as a free peasant he was able to marry without the consent of a third party; he could also hold property in his own name, he was free to take action at law, and he could engage in a trade or business. [Watts, 1998] The Emancipation reform was fundamental; it created a big amount of the new free Russian citizens and necessitated the new range of other changes in society.

The juridical system was corrupt, inefficient. It also was based on a class privilege. Alexander II understood the need of modernization and in 1864 he established the new legal system. It was based partly on English and partly on French juridical models and separated the judiciary from administration, provided to the citizens open trial and equal treatment before the law, created a legal profession [Ziegler, 1991. p 54]. The new system nevertheless suffered from numerous imperfections. There was a lack of proficient lawyers, and interference from the bureaucracy often prevented the law from being applied universally [Watts, 1998]. The most significant failure of a new system was the fact, that peasants, who formed 80% of the population (and as it was mentioned above became free citizens some years before), were excluded from this juridical reform. The existence of special “peasant” court seriously contradicted the essential principle of equality before the law [Ziegler, 1991. p 54].

In 1864, Tsar Alexander II issued the Statutes on Provincial and District Zemstvo Institutions. This act established a new local government institution – the *zemstvo* – in 34 of the 50 provinces of European Russia. The role of Zemstvo was quite wide mainly in 2 domains: health care and education. In the provision of health care the role of Zemstvo was to pass sanitation laws and inspect health conditions in factories and urban areas. Zemstvo spending over the period included both preventative measures, such as vaccinations and monitoring of diseases, and curative efforts in the form of hospitals, traveling doctor networks, and rural fields, or trained medics. Most services were provided for free to the locals– a remarkable innovation at the time. In education, Zemstvos were mainly involved in efforts to expand rural primary education. Mainly they did not run schools directly, but

provided funds to support school construction, to pay for books and supplies, and (especially) to provide teacher salaries. The development of zemstvo-financed primary schooling significantly improved access to schools for the rural population. Between 1877 and 1898, the total population served by a zemstvo school (excluding other types of schools) dropped by approximately 15% [Nafziger, 2008, p 21-26].

The last important reform which partly corresponds with Zemstvo establishment is the wide education reform. From the beginning of the 19th century, when the Ministry of education was created (1802), it started to prepare the reforms which aimed to create the new generation of the comprehensively educated people who will be able to bring technical progress, to support the development of culture, economics and bring changes to the society. The Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Education started the preparations of restructuring the system of public education from early 60s. The outstanding educators and public figures influenced this work. In 1862, the Ministry of Education was headed by liberal professor Alexander Vasilievich Golovnin, who was leading the department until 1866 and was the one who implemented important reforms. In 1864 a new regulation (“*Ustav*”) for high schools was approved. The most significant change of these regulations was the rejection of all class and estate discriminations. A determinative condition for entering the school became the property status, the ability to pay for studies. The administration of the schools was held by district and provincial school councils, which included representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Holy Synod, the local administration and *zemstvo*. Important school reforms of the 60s should also include the establishment of women's secondary schools (from 1870 – women's gymnasiums) and the abolition of corporal punishment. The most significant changes were made at the higher education level (particularly at the universities). The new university regulations were only one step in the educational reforms in Russia and were intended to stop the decline of Russian universities, to create conditions for their development and rise to a new level [Донин, 2003]. The *Ustav* of 1863 is considered as one of the most liberal in the history of Russian Universities. It was a compromise between liberal trends and the existing bureaucracy in the society. According to Regulations from 1863, the University council had the main managerial and controlling function at the university. The council included all professors at university. In general, the educational structure in Russian Universities was similar to the one of the majority of the European Universities with the classical fundamental education. However, the majority of the courses were mostly focused on developing theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills [*The official text of the University Regulations of 1863*]. The new university regulations were one of the many parts of a larger educational

reform that started by the government of Alexander II. The education reform was a necessary link in the chain of reforms that were designed to bring the social and economic changes into the Russian Empire. The consequences of these reforms were fifteen successful years of Russian education and science.

Among the reforms of Alexander II were also ones which brought Russia the significant industrial development and economic growth, military reforms and other. Generally speaking, the reforms that happened in the middle of the 19th century were radical in comparison to the previous years. They brought a lot of desperately needed changes into society. These changes fostered the expression of political and social thoughts and ideas.

The development of Russian sociology. Russian sociologists and their ideas in the second half on the 19th century in Russian Empire

As it is mentioned in the first part, the second half of the 19th century in Russian Empire was the time of the rapid industrialization and formation of the new capitalistic institutions. These changes created some new problems in the society and escalated the existing social conflicts. Traditional philosophical concepts couldn't solve these problems. The Russian social science of the second half of the 19th century is characterized with the strong connection between sociological analysis and philosophical reflection [Баранова, 2010]. However the first sociological ideas appeared around the beginning of the second half of the 19th century and were connected with the names of Peter Lavrov (1823-1901), Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and others.

Same as in Europe, the first sociological ideas in Russia were originated from the positivist doctrine and Kant's philosophical ideas. However, it wouldn't be right to define Russian sociology as a copy of European sociology. Russian sociologists had their own view on the structure and changes in the society and tried to create a new interdisciplinary science which was a combination of history, philosophy, ethnography, juridical science etc.

The first period of the development (1860s-1890s)

The first period of Russian sociology as well as in the West was closely linked with the domination of the positivist ideas. Russian philosophers and sociologists were seeing positivism as an attempt to create a new science about the society actively using the methods of natural science for the analysis of the social processes [Зборовский Г.Е., 2014 p. 168]. On the other hand, during this period among Russian intellectuals some revolutionary ideas started to appear.

One of the first sociologists and populist thinkers of this period was Peter Lavrov (1823-1901). Lavrov was also well-known and one of the most

attractive figures of the 19th century revolutionary movements in Russian Empire. Lavrov viewed history as a process, which develops according to humanity's needs and has directionality and final point. Under the influence of Marx's theory Lavrov paid main attention to the economic factors of the social process [Баранова, 2010]. According to Chapter Two "The History Process" of Lavrov's main work "Historical letters" (1868-1869) the meaningful essence of the historical process is progress, or even "the struggle for progress, real or ideal development of progressive aspirations". Lavrov defined problem of the progress as a crucial point and a final matter of historical and sociological science [Лавров, 2013].

Together with another Russian sociologist Nikolay Mikhailovsky (1842-1904) Lavrov formed the so called "subjective" sociology. Lavrov defined sociology as a science concerned with the solidarity of individuals and describing the concrete forms of cooperation. According to sociologist, "solidarity" is a crucial condition of the social life. He believed that sociology has theoretical as well as practical meaning. It is a tool for investigating social evolution as an objective process but also has a normative role in formulating social ideas and norms and showing how they can be implemented in the society [Walicki, 1979 p. 235].

Another Russian sociologist Lev Mechnikov (1838-1888) also believed that solidarity and need for cooperation is the crucial factors in every society. According to Mechnikov, the reached level of solidarity among people is the main indicator of the society's social progress. However, he believed that due to the fact that solidarity can be created voluntarily or forced. That is why Mechnikov intended that the level of individuals' freedom in this process is the main measure of the progressiveness of the civilization.

These ideas became the basis of the main work of Mechnikov's life - "Civilization and the great historical rivers" ("La civilisation et les Grands Fleuves historiques"). In this book he attempted to analyze the connection between the society's organization and its geographical position. Environment is not just nature but the part of nature which is involved in the process of human labor. Mechnikov believed that the main component of the geographical environment is the so-called hydrological factors (water resources impact to human life). Therefore, in history, there were three main civilizations (periods): river civilization, sea civilization and ocean civilization. According to Mechnikov, this factor together with the solidarity is a prime force of the historical process [Мечников, 2013].

Among many other sociologists and philosophers of that period I would like to highlight the names of two famous theorists, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and Petr Krapotkin (1842-1921). Both of them were representatives of anarchism – a very characteristic product of radical and

socialist thought in Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century [Walicki, 1979 p 268].

Bakunin was a determined revolutionary and did not believe in an amicable adjustment of the existing conflicts within society. For Bakunin, as for every anarchist, the main problem was abolition of the state. He recognized that the ruling classes blindly and stubbornly opposed every possibility for larger social reforms, and accordingly saw the only salvation in an international social revolution. Bakunin believed that revolution would eliminate all institutions of political power and economic exploitation and introduce in their stead a Federation of free Associations of producers and consumers to provide for the requirements of their daily life [Walicki, 1979 p 268; Rocker]. Moreover, Bakunin specifically rejected individualism of any kind and assumed that anarchism was a social doctrine and must be based on the recognition of collective responsibilities (collectivism) [Woodcock, 2014 p.11].

The theory of collectivism was replaced during the 1870s by the anarchist communism that was associated particularly with the name of Petr Kropotkin. In his famous book “Fields, Factories and Workshop” (1899) Kropotkin presented the scheme of a semi utopian decentralized society based on an integration of agriculture and industry, of town life and country life, of education and training [Woodcock, 2014 p.12]. According to Kropotkin’s theory, man is not the creator of society, but society is the creator of man. He proclaimed that the fact remains that even under the worst despotism most of man's personal relations with other members of society are arranged by social habits, free agreement and mutual cooperation, without which social life would not be possible at all. If this was not the case, even the strongest machinery of the state would not be able to maintain the social order for any length of time [Kropotkin, 1913]. Like Bakunin, Kropotkin was also a revolutionary. But he saw in revolution only a special stage of the evolutionary process, which appears when new social aspirations are so restricted in their natural development by authority that they have to shatter the old shell by violence before they can function as new factors in human life [Rudolf Rocker].

The second period of the development (1890s-beginning of 20th century)

At the turn of 19th to 20th century, Russian Empire entered the new stage of the political, economic and social development. During this time crucial changes occurred in the process of forming capitalism institutions, the feudal monarchy crises became deeper and stronger, the development of Marxist ideas got wider, the bourgeois-liberal opposition became more active as well [Голенкова, 1998 p 83-84].

This period of development is characterized by the idea that sociology is equal to many other social sciences; it has its own subject, methodology of research and specific tasks. In this sense sociology became more positively accepted in the scientific, public circles and academic environment. At the same time the sociological approach and methodology started to be widely used in other social disciplines. Also, teaching sociology begins episodically at the high schools and other educational institutions. The number of the publications in sociology also continues to grow. Almost all the works of the famous western sociologists are translated to Russian language.

The structure of the sociological ideas at this time is rather complex. However, the characteristic idea of this period is critics of positivism methodology. Marxists sociology also gets its leading and crucial position during this time. The ideas on neo-positivism appeared in the end of this period together with a specific “religious” sociology.

The critics of positivism and commitment of the scientists to modify their views and make them more practical and logical lead them to neo-positivism (or logical positivism). In terms of content the new movement was characterized by transformation from the study of individuals into the study of social action, interaction, social connections and relationships, social behavior. Neo-positivists believed that the logical positivism created the scientific theory from the knowledge and rationalizes the various techniques that manage social actions and social behavior (economic, social, moral, political) [Зборовский, 2014 p 200]. The most significant representatives of neo-positivism in Russian sociology were: Evgenii de Roberti (1843-1915), Agnessa Zvonickaya (1897-1942) and world-famous Russian sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968).

Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin is one of the most notable Russian scientists, lived and worked in Russia until the year 1922. Sorokin was born in a Russian peasant village in 1889. From there he went to St. Petersburg for his secondary and higher education. In 1913, at the age of only 24, he became co-editor of the *New Ideas in Sociology*, a journal devoted to translations of foreign sociological writings but with original Russian articles as well. In 1916 he became the lecturer at the University of St. Petersburg, continuing until the Revolution in 1917. Sorokin wrote seven books in Russian before he came to this country, including a two-volume *System of Sociology* in 1919. After the October Revolution in 1917 a large part of his activities consisted of organizing resistance to the Bolshevik regime. Finally he was arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced to death; and only through the intervention of friends was he saved from execution and allowed eventually to exile himself from the Soviet Union on pain of execution. He fled to Czechoslovakia where he found friendly asylum under the protection of

Thomas Masaryk and Edouard Benes. Soon after going to Czechoslovakia, Sorokin was invited by Professors E. A. Ross and E. C. Hayes to deliver a series of lectures on the Russian Revolution at the Universities of Illinois and Wisconsin. He accepted this invitation and migrated to the United States. After lecturing for a time at Wisconsin and Illinois, Sorokin moved to the University of Minnesota in 1924. There he established himself rapidly as a leader in American sociology. Sorokin's life can be contingently divided in to two periods – Russian and American. In this paper I would like to concentrate more on his Russian period [Simpson, 1953 p. 120; Зборовский, 2014 p 207].

Sorokin's sociology is original, diverse and comprehensive. Analyzing the structure of sociology Sorokin distinguishes primarily theoretical and practical sociology. He considers the theoretical sociology as social analytics, social mechanics and social genetics. Social analytics studies the structure of social phenomena and its forms in their static condition and considered only in space, not in time, and only in terms of their construction and not functioning. Social mechanics studies social functions and effects, caused by human behavior. The main aim of social genetics is to determine historical trends based on constant development of social life. Practical sociology studies political activities of people. Consequently, this section should be applied sociology. It is related to sociology's role in the implementation of rational social reform, the fight against social conflicts. Practical sociology should - based on the laws formulated by theoretical sociology - give mankind the ability to manage social forces and dispose them according to the goals in society. As a neo-positivist, Sorokin established the principals of social science. Firstly, social science should be constructed and developed the same way as Natural Sciences. Secondly, sociology should study only those phenomena which are possible to observe, examine and measure. Thirdly, it should be based only on facts and in this sense, to abandon all philosophizing. Fourthly, there is a need of pluralism in sociology. The last principal states that sociology should abandon any normativism in social cognition [Jeffries, 2011 p. 108-109; Зборовский, 2014 p 205].

Social Mobility was a major Sorokin's contribution to sociology. According to the author there are two types of mobility: horizontal, or movement from place to place, and vertical, or movement up or down the social ladder. He finds that while there is some vertical mobility in all societies, societies vary widely in the emphasis they place on mobility as a value and in the ease and means of social ascent and descent. Contemporary western society, for example, stresses mobility more and provides more avenues for it than medieval society. Sorokin finds that high mobility has historically been associated with versatility, invention, and discovery; but

also with cynicism, social isolation of the individual, skepticism, moral disintegration, and suicide [Simpson, 1953 p.121].

The Sociology of Revolution (1925) is strongly influenced by Sorokin's revolutionary experiences. He explains revolution as a destruction of the dangerous balance between reason and disorganized antisocial instincts, with uncontrolled impulses coming to the fore. Since revolution results from the victory of man's upset biological drives over civilized reason, violent revolution is a disaster. Sorokin's analysis is essentially psychological rather than sociological or historical. This book bears the imprint of Freud, Pavlov, Pareto, and others who stress the non-rational aspects of behavior. Sorokin's main purpose is to chart the course of internal events in typical revolutions. Every revolution, he says, follows a cycle of warrant, reaction, repression, and new equilibrium [Сорокин, 2005. P. 37-70; 320-360]. The belief seems implicit that no revolution really alters the state of affairs materially; the French Revolution, for example, is treated not as a triumph of democracy or of the bourgeoisie but simply as a temporary outburst of animalism like every other revolution [Simpson, 1953 p.120-122].

The impact of Sorokin's Russian period is unmeasurable. It was the top point of the classical stage of Russian sociology. The ideas he formulated and developed in the works of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s had a significant impact not only to Russian but also worldwide sociology of the 20th century.

The next outstanding personality of that period, and probably one of the most famous Russian and Soviet philosophers, historians and political figures is Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, alias Lenin (1870-1924). Lenin served as head of government of the Russian Republic from 1917 to 1918, of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1918 to 1924, and of the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1924. Under his administration, Russia and then the wider Soviet Union became a one-party communistic state governed by the Russian Communist Party. Ideologically Lenin was a Marxist and his political theories are known as Leninism. For the purposes of this paper I will stress the most important ideas in the field of social and political theory.

Following G. V. Plekhanov, Lenin propagated the combination of the philosophical and sociological ideas of Marx and Engels, that became the center of a doctrinal system called Marxism-Leninism. In many of his works Lenin especially stressed the importance of theory. Marxism, in particular, was for him a scientific system. He believed, that only through true theory can the working class and the Party be united and led to the right praxis [Boeselager, 1975 p. 28-29].

Analyzing the present society, Lenin defined a number of important structures in the development of the capitalistic system in the early 20th

century. In the pamphlet *“Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”* (1916) Lenin presented his analysis of an economic development predicted by Karl Marx: that capitalism would become a global financial system, where advanced industrial countries export financial capital to their colonial countries, to finance the exploitation of their natural resources and the labor of the locals. According to Lenin, Imperialism is a certain stage of capitalism development. On this stage the exploitation of the poor (undeveloped) countries lets the prosperous (developed) countries to sustain some homeland workers politically content with a slightly higher standard of living, and so ensure peaceful labor–capital relations in the capitalistic country. Imperialism is the monopoly phase of capitalism [Ленин В.И. Империализм как высшая стадия капитализма/ Полн. собр. соч.: Т.27. С.299-426.].

A special place in Lenin's sociological views has the socialist revolution theory, its development and implementation in practice. He stated that only poor and undeveloped countries would feature the first proletarian revolution of workers and peasants. Proletarian revolution could not occur in the developed capitalistic countries, while the imperialistic global-finance system remained intact. Lenin proposed that capitalism could eventually only be overthrown with revolution, not with gradual reforms, which would fail because the ruling capitalistic social classes who hold economic power determine the nature of political power in a bourgeois society. According to Lenin's theory in the early 20th century, Imperial Russia was the politically weakest country in the capitalistic global-finance system [Ленин В.И. Государство и революция/ Полн. собр. соч.: Т. 33, С.4-115.].

Moreover, Lenin reflected on the theory of the state: the proportions in the society, the class structure and function of different types of democracies and dictatorships; analysis of the characteristics of the Soviets as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat etc. The dictatorship of the proletariat — i.e. the organization of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of crushing the oppressors. An immense expansion of democracy, which for the first time becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich and suppression by force, i.e. exclusion from democracy, for the exploiters and oppressors of the people — this is the change which democracy undergoes during the ‘transition’ from capitalism to communism [Hill, 2007 p. 86].

The Russian sociological overview of the beginning of the 20th century would not be complete without mentioning the specific “orthodox sociology”. The term "Orthodox sociology" or “Christian sociology” applicable to the works of those Russian philosophers who proposed changing the social life based on the immutable values of the Christian orthodox religion. They supported the transition from positivism and

Marxism to idealism in the Russian theoretical sociology. A major focus of the Russian religious philosophers was the idea of culture as the creative experience of life, and creativity as the spiritual self-determination of personality as means of justifying life.

The main representative of orthodox sociology in Russian was Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). The idea of Berdyaev's "orthodox sociology" is expressed in his work "The meaning of history" (1923), where he analyses the problem of the cultural and historical progress. Berdyaev believed that there is no straight line of progress in the history. There is just development of different cultures. However, not all the later cultures necessarily reach the same level of development, as previous cultures. The doctrine of progress suggests that the human history will reach the highest perfect state one at some moment. At this moment all the contradictions and all the problems of human history will be solved. Berdyaev criticized this idea and contended it had a contradiction with the orthodox morality. According to Berdyaev the world (not only Russia but the whole Europe) came into a catastrophic period of its development, and there comes some new historical epoch, which is marked by the crisis. It is not only a social and economic crisis, but also cultural and spiritual. This spiritual crisis is the consequence of people losing their creativity [Zhukova, 2016 p. 277-286].

Creativity is a central theme of Berdyaev's philosophy. Being an original thinker and an outstanding representative of Russian religious philosophy, Berdyaev presented the theme of creativity in the form of a modern spiritual manifesto. In his numerous works he outlined the forms of a new spirituality, distinguishing in it metaphysical and sociocultural perspectives. Berdyaev sees spirituality as the highest quality, value, and achievement of a person. Berdyaev believed that it was precisely the decrease of spiritual life to the goal of personal recovery that led to the denial of creativity, which was condemned and relegated "to the nonspiritual sphere." This makes creativity a product of secularization, profane spirituality is "merely tolerated," while recovery is possible only within sacred reality. Berdyaev emphatically proclaims: "The new spirituality is the rejection of the salvation of the elite" [Бердяев, 1994 p. 217-227]. The central idea of Berdyaev's philosophy is the idea of saving humanity through creativity, as this is the answer of the created to the Creator.

Conclusion

The period between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was crucial for the Russian society and also for the development of Russian sociology. All the events, social, economic and political changes and also the revolution, had a great impact to the work of Russian sociologists and philosophers. Many of them were inspired by the

Western (mostly European) sociology, but all of them reflected the events happened in Russia in their works in different ways.

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