

# THE SOCIOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN, Ph.D.

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LIPPINCOTT SOCIOLOGICAL SERIES

EDITED BY EDWARD CARY HAYES, PH.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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"L. TOLSTOI AS A PHILOSOPHER," "HUNGER AS A FACTOR," "RUSSIA  
OF TODAY," "LEAVES FROM A RUSSIAN DIARY," ETC.



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## PREFACE

THIS book was written in the Czecho-Slovakian Republic where I found the most hospitable refuge and friendship after my banishment from Russia in October, 1922, by the Soviet Government. Only thanks to the hospitality of the Czecho-Slovakian people and government was I able to accomplish this work. Therefore it is for me not only the greatest pleasure but my social duty to express my deepest gratitude to the most esteemed President of the Czecho-Slovakian Republic, Dr. Th. G. Masaryk; Dr. A. Masaryk; the Czecho-Slovakian Prime Minister, Dr. A. Shwegla; the Ministers of the Foreign Office, Dr. E. Benesh, Dr. J. Girsá; Dr. K. Kramarj, Senator Klofach and to many other representatives of the Czecho-Slovakian Nation.

For the publication of this book I am particularly obliged to Professor E. C. Hayes, who not only gave me this possibility but kindly took upon himself the irksome work of the correction and improvement of my English. I must thank him also for his valuable scientific advice and sympathetic interest in my fate by which he has encouraged and aided me very much. This acknowledgment is only a very imperfect expression of my sincerest thankfulness to him.

In characterizing the effects of the Russian Revolution, I give almost exclusively the Bolshevik figures. I

do so not because the Communist statistics are reliable, but because I want to be objective. Being inaccurate and often quite contradictory, these statistics have one valuable quality: they do not depict the situation worse and do it rather better than it is in reality. In this way they prevent the exaggeration of the negative results of the Revolution by its investigators. For the sake of the same objectivity, I add to the book some notes and recent data which were not available while writing and composing the book.

PITIRIM SOROKIN

December 5, 1924.

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

IN THE case of the present volume there is more than ordinary reason for an editorial introduction in order to acquaint the American and English public with an author who already has an established European reputation. Professor Sorokin was formerly head of the Department of Sociology in the University of Petrograd, and he is the author of an impressive list of books in Russian, some of which have been translated into other European languages, and of many articles on sociology and law.

During the early part of the Russian Revolution he was one of the leaders of the moderate revolutionary party, together with Kerensky, Breshkovskaja—mother of the revolution—and others. He was editor-in-chief of *The Will of the People*, and a member of the first All-Russian Peasants' Soviet, and of the Constitutional Assembly.

Since 1918, however, he has been neither socialist nor revolutionary, but has been active in organizing the Russian peasantry for cultural, moral and indirectly for political purposes, and has been one of the editors of *The Peasants' Russia* and *The Farm*. On account of this change of views and because of these activities he was three times imprisoned and was condemned to death, but instead of being executed was exiled from Russia by the Bolshevik Government and forbidden to return on pain of death.

He found refuge in Czecho-Slovakia, invited by President Masaryk. Later, desiring to study the cultural



and economic organizations of American farmers as well as some other sides of American social life he decided to come to America, where he has been elected as one of the leaders by the Russian workers in this country who are actively engaged in preparing to take part in the reorganization of Russia when it is possible for them to return. Since arriving in the United States he has been engaged in lecturing at a number of American universities.

This book is a powerful arraignment of all revolutions and a defense of the necessity for orderly social control. It is a series of generalizations, based not alone upon experience of the Russian Revolution, but upon the history of revolutions in general, and describing the characteristics pertaining to revolution, whenever and wherever it may occur.

The well-being of society requires a proper proportion between stability and change. Excess of either invites revulsion and reaction toward the other. A society in which the organizers succeed too well in resisting change in the order which they maintain prepares for revolution. While revolution breeds disgust with its own excesses and a yearning for peace, system and control.

The evils of either extreme do not prove the other extreme to be desirable. Indeed neither extreme can be indefinitely prolonged; although rigid order utilizing all the resources of social control can be kept up far longer than revolution can be endured. It can be kept up too long and too completely, so that revolution becomes inevitable. But revolution is in the nature of things a transitory phenomenon. An enlightened society can tolerate neither the palsy of over-successful control, nor the frenzy of revolt. Here as elsewhere the practical demand is for solution of the problem of proportion between opposing

tendencies. A healthy society should have a conservative and a progressive party, both powerful, whose opposition maintains a normal equilibrium.

In the present volume Professor Sorokin by an imposing array of facts accompanied by illuminating interpretation has made an important contribution to social wisdom.

E. C. H.

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## **PART I**

# **THE PERVERSION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN REVOLUTION**



# THE SOCIOLOGY OF REVOLUTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE PERVERSION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN REVOLUTION

AFTER many years of peaceful "organic" evolution the History of Mankind has entered again into a "critical" period. Revolution hated by some people and welcomed by others has come at last. Some societies are burning in its fire already, toward others this danger is approaching. Who can predict how wide this conflagration of revolution will spread? Who can be quite sure that this hurricane will not sooner or later destroy his own house? No one. But if we cannot predict that, we can at least know what revolution is. We live amidst it. Like a naturalist we can observe, analyze and study it.

For five years the author of this book has lived in the circle of the Russian Revolution. Day after day during this time he has watched it. This book is a result of this observation. It represents not an ideographic description of the Russian Revolution, but an essay in sociological analysis of the phenomena typical of all serious and great revolutions. The task of a historian is to portray a strict description of a concrete historical event in all its individuality and unrepeated singularity. The task of a sociologist is considerably different: in all social phenomena only those traits are interesting for him which are general for all facts of the same type whenever and wherever they may have happened. Sombart says quite rightly: "the battle at Tannenberg is the object of historical investigation;

*the battle* at Tannenberg is the object of sociology. The University of Berlin belongs to the sphere of History; *the University* of Berlin to the department of sociology."<sup>1</sup> Similarly the *Russian Revolution* with all its details is the object of a historian. The *Russian Revolution*, as a type of revolution, is the object of the sociologist.

It is true that we are very often told: "The History of Mankind does not repeat itself." But is the history of the earth repeated and that of the solar system and of the accessible part of the world? With all identity organisms, cells and their elements are not repeated either. Does this fact prevent the repetition, in this unrepeated process, of many phenomena which are described in the laws of physics, chemistry and biology? Is it not true that on the earth  $H_2$  and O have given water innumerable times in spite of the unrepeated history of the earth? Have not the phenomena and causal relations described in the laws of Newton, Mendel, Avogadro and Gerard been repeated countless times? By this I want to say that the historical process though unrepeated as a whole is woven out of repeated elements. This is as true of the History of Mankind as it is of the history of organic and inorganic nature. Here also "similar causes under similar conditions produce similar results." War and Peace, Famine and Prosperity, Conquest and Liberation, Growth and Decay of Religion, Government of Minority and Government of Majority, etc.—all these phenomena taken as causes have repeated frequently in different relations of space and time. In spite of all the different conditions in which these processes have taken place, the fundamental similarity of the phenomena of the same type, for example, of war wherever and whenever it has taken place, could not be annihilated absolutely by these different accom-

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<sup>1</sup> Sombart: *Soziologie*, 1923, S. 7.



panying conditions. Therefore the results of these similar causes had to be repeated in a more or less complete degree. The theory of the Book of Ecclesiastes was not far from the truth. The fundamental fault of the many theorists of the philosophy of History has consisted only in that they have looked for "repetition" not where repetitions ought to be sought. The latter are seen not in the complicated and great events of History, but in the elementary, usual and daily facts, from which the former are composed and into which they can be analyzed.<sup>2</sup>

From this point of view it seems that the uninterrupted creation of History is not so endlessly new and inexhaustible as they imagine. History is like an author who, without interruption is writing ever new dramas, tragedies and comedies with new characters and heroes, with new scenery and environment, but . . . with the old subjects which many times in the previous works of this indefatigable author have been repeated before. Like the writer who has written himself out, History, in spite of all its creative forces, has to be repeated.

All of the above may be said of the great tragedy called "revolution." It has been given on the historical scene rather often. Every staging of it is new. The conditions of time and space, scenery and actors, their costumes, monologues, dialogues and the chorus of the crowd, the quantity of the acts and of "striking scenes"—all these are varied. But, nevertheless, in all this dissimilarity a great many similarities are repeated. All these different actors amidst the different scenery act the same play called "revolution."

<sup>2</sup> See about this principle of repetition in my *A System of Sociology*. See also Tarde: *Social Laws*, ch. I. A. Bauer: *Essai sur la Revolution*, 1-8; corresponding pages in *Introduction to the Study of Sociology*, by E. Hayes; and *Foundations of Sociology*, by E. Ross.