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## **ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING WITH THE PAST. TRADITIONALIST CRITICISM OF PITIRIM SOROKIN**

By **MAREK JEDLIŃSKI**

*The article takes up the critical analysis of the Russian revolution carried out by Pitirim Sorokin, a Russian-American sociologist and thinker. From the perspective of a traditionalist ideological position and based on the observation of the events of 1917, he reconstructed an anatomy of the revolution, which mainly exploded within the scope of sensual culture. He paid particular attention to the illusions created by the revolutionaries. The author warned against the deception of the leaders of the revolt and their promises to make progress in all areas of life. The consequence of the revolutionary break with tradition included moral depravity, the collapse of the economy and state structures. According to Sorokin, this proved the illusory nature of a project to break with the past.*

Key words: Sorokin, traditionalism, revolution, Russia, Bolsheviks

The article presents a critical evaluation of the revolution, made by one of the representatives of traditionalist thought: the Russian-American sociologist and philosopher Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin.<sup>1</sup> The events of 1917-1923, which took place in Bolshevik Russia, gave rise to Sorokin's reconstruction of an anatomy of a typical revolution. His reflections are cognitively rich, because they are the result of an eye-to-face confrontation with turbulent historical changes. In the introduction to the monumental 'Sociology of Revolution' (1925) the author said: '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.'<sup>2</sup> In a slightly earlier published book 'Современное состояние России' (1922) he described the experience of the Russians in the following words: 'During the period of eight years we did not live, but we threw ourselves in unrestrained fever, lost ourselves in great drunkenness, burned with wild lechery.'<sup>3</sup> A characteristic feature for Sorokin was going beyond the sociological paradigm, making historiosophic reflections,

<sup>1</sup> This article were published (in a slightly reworded form): *Filosoficheskiye pis'ma. Russko-evropeyskiy dialog*, 2/2019, p. 36-47.

<sup>2</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, (Philadelphia-London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1925), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, (Praga, 1922), p. 3.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

applying value judgments, which led to a negative expression of the revolution: 'For five years I was in its element, for five years I looked exactly in its ... Having seen them, I recognized the faces of the past «deep» revolutions. I understood one thing: it is the face of the beast, not the superman, Antichrist, not God, the vampire, not the liberator...'<sup>4</sup>

## **PENETRATING THE TISSUE OF THE REVOLUTION**

Sorokin was not only an observer of events, but he also interpreted them. He had a well-grounded and emotionally advanced position – uncompromisingly critical of all revolutions, not only the one in Russia. The author expressed the conviction that an expert on revolutions cannot be a dispassionate witness of events, even if equipped with the most perfect research instruments. Nor will historians working on the most reliable sources become an expert as they focus on the analysis of the revolution solely as a phenomenon or a historical event, and are located as somewhat outside it. In order to understand the mechanisms of its functioning and the motivation of revolutionaries, one must be inside it. One should empathize with its atmosphere, observe the moods and statements of its participants and have the ability to understand the mental changes that trigger it and those that are its consequence. Only then can the researcher realize that this is not just one of many accidental historical events, but a real change in the life and way of thinking of the masses.

Every revolution is such a breakthrough phenomenon, extreme, demolishing the current image of the world and the sphere of respected values, that one cannot limit oneself to a simple analysis of facts. Also due to its totality, one should not be indifferent to it – moreover, its global dimension drags nearly everyone into the whirlwind of the events. The standpoint of an impartial observer, a non-involved researcher, seems in this case completely inadequate, and even harmful – or so Sorokin concluded. The science representative faces a dilemma of accepting or rejecting the project of destroying the existing culture. Over time, the revolution embraces all areas of life – including science. In this context, Sorokin did not conceal that he set a specific task for himself, related to the

<sup>4</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 106.

In the book 'Sociology of Revolutions' the author alternately quotes specific statistical data, providing it with expressive comments. Making a historical analysis and describing the results of individual revolutions, he noted: 'The practical deduction of all that has been said above is, that he who desires the extermination of his people, the decrease of the birth rate, the deterioration of the racial fund of the nation, the destruction of its noblest elements, the degradation of the survivors, plague, cholera, typhus, syphilis, psychical illnesses, should prepare a violent revolution and render it deep-rooted and widespread. It is one of the best ways to achieve the abovementioned effects. Those who do not desire them can uphold reforms, not bloodthirsty revolutions.' (Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 228).

## ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING...

defense of the values he shared and that his research was guided by a specific intention: to expose the false premises of illusionist arguments that the pathological phenomena of a particular revolution never scarify the purity of the revolutionary idea itself.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the idea itself contains the element of the total destruction of tradition, cultural heritage, the entire existing world, one built with difficulties by previous generations.

The conviction as to the destructive influence of the revolution will be repeatedly expressed by Sorokin in a very expressive way. On the one hand, the author of 'Sociology of the Revolution' could be accused of axiological entanglement and ideological bias, manifested in the narrative style. On the other hand, one should ask whether, as representatives of a completely different era, enriched with historical knowledge, we have the right to speak on this subject, from the perspective of a safe and comfortable time gap separating us from the said ferment, and whether we are in any way entitled to nonchalantly deprecate the testimonies of those who participated in the events of the time.

### **INHERITED TRADITIONALISM**

While discussing Sorokin's scientific concepts, in order to understand the background of his expressive opinions, it is necessary to take into account the impact of his life experiences and the cultural environment (respected ideas) in which he grew up and what he subsequently inherited. Although the phenomenon of overlapping correspondence between professed values and the conclusions drawn in academic work is well known and concerns almost all researchers, in the case of Sorokin the degree of involvement of the axiological academic achievements was extremely visible and even glaring. Sorokin was a colorful biographer: he was brought up in a spirit of fervent Orthodoxy, he became a revolutionary (SR), he was repeatedly imprisoned after 1905, eventually he was promoted to a post (secretary) in Kerensky's government, and after its fall, the Bolsheviks sentenced him to execution; he waited in the cell for the execution for six weeks, which he eventually avoided after submitting his self-criticism. He devoted the rest of his life to academic work.<sup>6</sup> In 1922, the Bolsheviks sent him to the West<sup>7</sup> where he worked at Harvard since 1930 until he retired.

Sorokin wrote in his autobiography that he came from lands (a small village in the Vologda Guberniya), which was dominated by community thinking, traditional morality,

<sup>5</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> See: Pitirim A. Sorokin, 'Sociology of my Mental Life,' in *Pitirim A. Sorokin in Review*, ed. Philip J. Allen, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), p. 3-30; cf. Barry V. Johnston, *Pitirim A. Sorokin. An Intellectual Biography*, Lawrence, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jerome Davis, *The Russian Immigrant*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 172-173.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

based on Orthodoxy, one shaped over the centuries and the principle of mutual help between members of agrarian communities.<sup>8</sup> He quickly lost the youthful fervor of radical redevelopment of the existing cultural order – his activities in the Socialist Revolutionary Party remained but an episode against the background of Sorokin's whole life.<sup>9</sup> However, for a long time, observing the bloody course of the civil war of 1917-1923, experiencing wandering, and then working academically, he shaped his worldview, which should be called traditionalist.<sup>10</sup> He expressed it fully in a book with the eloquent title *The Crisis of Our Age* (1941), thus joining the ideological current initiated by the French contestants of the French Revolution (such as de Maistre and de Chateaubriand).

### **TRADITIONALIST RETURN TO THE PAST – PROGRAMMATIC ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY**

The overriding slogan which united traditionally-minded thinkers (not forming any school) was the crisis of European culture. Traditionalists did not agree with its current state, rebelled against the present time, intentionally turning to the past, and even demanding the return of the past (among other things, this postulate differed from the conservatives).<sup>11</sup> They believed that man would never find the sense and purpose

<sup>8</sup> See: Pitirim Sorokin, *Dal'nnyaya doroga. Avtobiografiya*, trans. A. V. Lipski, (Moscow: Moskovskiy rabochiy - TERRA, 1992), p. 15, 17.

<sup>9</sup> He did not fail to emphasize that his critical evaluation of the revolution did not result from a failure to lose privileges or assets. On the contrary: he came from the layer of the exploited people (peasantry) and lived in poverty. The course of the revolution made him aware of the fact that its victims were the masses of workers and peasants. See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Wodzyńska-Walicka described Sorokin as the epigone of the Slavophile school, or a retrospective utopist, mentally stuck in the nineteenth century. See: Maria Wodzyńska-Walicka, 'Spóźniony słowianofil. Pitirima Sorokina filozofia kultury', *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej*, 27/1981, p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold Toynbee, described a man who wants to revive past times, is nostalgic and is dissatisfied with the present world, noticing the constant crisis in it, as an archaist. This characteristic could also refer to a traditionalist (see Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. VI, [Oxford University Press, 1956], p. 49-59, 94-97). In this context, Karl Mannheim made an interesting distinction between conservatism and traditionalism, assuming that traditionalism is a life attitude (in contrast to politically understood conservatism) and a general tendency to stick to the patterns of old, proven, vegetative ways of life, perceived as universal values. His 'instinctive' form can be treated as an initial reaction to the introduced changes, all reform initiatives. The conservative can accept the present world and introduced changes under certain conditions, the traditionalist's response to the applied novelties will be violent and contesting in principle; he will demand the restoration of the past, even from the distant past. Cf. Karl Mannheim, 'Conservative Thought', in *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. K. H. Wolff, (New Brunswick-London: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 280-285.

## ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING...

of his own existence in himself, in his temporally limited being and the still-elimination of the present; this sense transcends it, it is embedded in the past, of which religious tradition is an important part. As René Guénon the French traditionalist of the interwar period remarked, this is a mental movement characterized by consistent anti-modernity.<sup>12</sup> Traditionalist philosophers in the era of European modernism, whose beginning dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, recognized destructive skepticism, a sense of being lost and a desire to make constant changes. Meanwhile, the sense of certainty can only originate from something that is permanent, repetitive and which was initiated in ancient times. They warned against a revolutionary, unknown idea and blind belief in the progress of *ad infinitum*. They expressed their opposition to the domination of matter over the spirit, capitalist calculation and technology over the ancient rhythm of life organized through the cultivation of land. They claimed that man should be spiritual, live in accordance with tradition, close to God and in a community. The crisis of European culture was compounded by the increase of human pride, lack of humility and naive faith in the possibilities of human reason, which led to rebellion against the authority sanctioned by the past and community thinking. Traditionalists, such as Guénon in the book *La Crise du Monde moderne*, recognized Cartesianism in the area of philosophy as the symbolic embodiment and the cumulating of these negative tendencies, which consisted in an excess of individualism.<sup>13</sup> His assumptions were in harmony with the religious ferment caused by the Reformation, which then involved the masses, ultimately resulting in social revolutions. From now on, the elites and masses in Western Europe would co-cultivate visions of the reconstruction of the world (including communism), succumbing to a sense of some lack and unrestrained desire to destroy what they find.

### DISOBEDIENCE REFLEX IN SENSUAL CULTURE

Pitirim Sorokin shared the diagnosis made by traditionalist thinkers: the West is in a state of deepening crisis, which is manifested by revolutions.<sup>14</sup> His work would be ordered by the conviction that the greatest increase in history in revolutionary moods in Europe had occurred only at the moment of a total departure from the prior ideational culture and the transition to sensual culture (this took place in the modernism period, reaching its apogee with the outbreak of the French Revolution).<sup>15</sup> According to the

<sup>12</sup> See: René Guénon, *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 284-285.

<sup>13</sup> See: René Guénon, *La Crise du Monde moderne*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), p. 70-71.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Marek Jedliński, 'Wokół kryzysu kultury europejskiej i jej przeobrażeń historycznych (myśl Pitirima Sorokina)', *Sensus historiae*, 4/2016, p. 51-62.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, vol. III, (New York: American Book Company, 1937), p. 535-536.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

author, the history of the world was shaped by these two main types of cultural systems.<sup>16</sup> Representatives of ideational culture perceive reality in a non-sensual (and immaterial) way: what really exists is absolute and immutable, while goals and needs have a spiritual dimension. The representatives of sensual culture recognize as really existing everything they experience with the help of the senses; what really exists is variable and is subject to constant transformations: however, goals and needs are limited to the visible world.<sup>17</sup>

Sorokin, in describing the mechanism of the revolution, often used a rather peculiar methodology, by means of which he tried to show an analogy between cultural (social) transformations and natural phenomena. Biological reductionism appeared in the use of terms such as reflex (reaction) or instinct. The author himself made it quite clear that he was looking for inspiration outside of the humanities, being impressed by the achievements of Russian biologists or medics such as Ivan Pavlov and Vladimir Bekhterev. It should be noted that the terminology used, and through which he described the revolutions, was to explicitly emphasize their sensual character, resulting from the rejection of tradition (mainly the religious), and stressing the spiritual dimension of man. Revolts erupted primarily within the limits of sensory culture – in ideational culture they happened very seldom and had limited range. This did not mean that people of the Middle Ages had no reason for rebellion. Nevertheless, the power relations and status of the hierarchy resulting from tradition were not questioned by them – for fear of the punishment that a supernatural being could have imposed. Only the emancipation of reason and secularization, meaning a moving away from the ideational culture, led to a kind of inflation of the disobedience shown to authority and a contesting of the hierarchical order sanctified by tradition – especially during revolutionary ferment.

Sorokin emphasized that the described phenomenon (called by the researcher the fading of the reflex of obedience) was each time intensified shortly before the outbreak of a revolution: 'As a rule the extinction of the reflexes of subordination begins prior to revolution.'<sup>18</sup> However, already in the course of the revolutionary conflagration, the disappearance of obedience is progressing at a staggering pace – then the edifice of traditional order and hierarchy, erected over the centuries, may be scattered in just a few days. This was shown by events in Russia, when authority suddenly lost its significance: 'The Czar is overthrown. In Russia all other authorities enjoyed but a reflected light; the masses acquired reflexes of subordination to them only as a result of subordination of the Czar. These belonged to a first-rate category of reflexes; the others only to second- and third-rate categories engrafted on the reflexes of subordination to imperial authority.

<sup>16</sup> The author also mentioned the intermediate, idealistic type, possessing both ideological as well as sensual features.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Pitirim Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age. The Social and Cultural Outlook*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1941), p. 19-20, 80-132, 298-308.

<sup>18</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 119.

## ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING...

The annihilation of these was the destruction of the foundation of the complex structure of the reflexes of subordination. Naturally all other authorities would be engulfed in its downfall, and such was the case. After the reflexes of subordination to the Czar were extinguished those of his agents followed suit: the reflexes of subordination of soldiers to officers and generals; workmen to directors of factories and other enterprises; of peasants to landowners to nobles to representatives of city and «Zemsky» self-government; of all subordinates to everybody in authority.<sup>19</sup>

The disobedience of the masses and all destructive activities were suppressed in ideological culture by orders and prohibitions formulated within the transmission of generations – traditions (such was the function of the social regulator, by e.g., the Decalogue). It was cultivated by the community, thus guaranteeing a historical increase in value. The author emphasized that in the ideational culture, higher human spiritual needs were elevated to the pedestal, minimizing those resulting from its natural constitution. Meanwhile, sensual culture allowed for the absolutization of material needs, reducing the human to the ‘function of the stomach’. This implied an increase in expectations and claims. A man without fear of the invisible instance wanted to fight for his own particular interest.

### UNIVERSAL REASONS FOR REVOLUTION

Sorokin, regardless of his axiological involvement, did not forget about the important reasons for the revolution, ones resulting from unfulfilled goals and life needs. As early as in ancient times, had Aristotle in *Politics* explained that rebellion is caused primarily by the hungry masses. In Sorokin’s language, it would simply be the inability to satisfy the superior instinct, that is, the survival of the species through food. In this example, it is easy to recognize the following regularity: ‘In analyzing the causes of revolution it is best to begin with those causes which produce the revolutionary perversion of the behavior of individuals.’<sup>20</sup> Rebellions as a result of hunger even occurred in the Middle Ages, i.e., in a dominant ideational culture. Another important cause of the revolt may refer to a failed war, exhausting material resources. Both circumstances – hunger and unsuccessful war – existed in Russia.<sup>21</sup> The wartime devastation of the economy and the drastic reduction of the standard of living are not a sufficient reason for the outbreak of internal unrest. The masses are able to bear enormous costs, provided that the war turns out to be victorious and they will have a sense of pride. The disaster is caused by a destructive armed conflict,

<sup>19</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 121-122.

<sup>20</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 367.

<sup>21</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 376-377; Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 43-44.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

additionally humiliating the ruled and above all the masses. A man also retains his dignity, possessing something material – therefore, the important reason for the revolt is taking away property and depriving people of the right to possess (Bolshevik policy). Conditions for a violent eruption of social anger also create a growing stratification of material resources: when the rich become even richer and the poor even poorer. At the same time, Sorokin emphasized, citing numerous examples from history, that the violation of the traditional hierarchical order by the masses was often culpable by the aristocracy itself (the ruling classes) – alienated, sluggish, ideologically inertial. The image of the pre-revolutionary elite is sometimes alarming: 'Pre-revolutionary epochs literally strike the observer by the incapacity of the authorities and the degeneracy of the ruling privileged classes.'<sup>22</sup> The rulers usually suffer an atrophy of the will – confronted then with the vitality of the masses, they cannot prevent revolutions.

### **ILLUSION OF PROGRESS**

The author made a positive valorization of ideational culture, assuming that only within its framework can a man achieve the fullness of humanity, understood by Sorokin in spiritual terms. In this sense, sensual culture appeared in his eyes as a regression. Revolutions within this culture are massive and violent – spontaneous.<sup>23</sup> They lead to the involution of the mental abilities of the population and its reduction to the level of creatures guided exclusively by biological needs, caused by collective reflexes (nervous system stimulation). That is why people return to magic then; critical thinking disappears. Instead of creativity (culture), imitation (nature) begins to dominate.<sup>24</sup> There is, therefore, a rejection of not only ideational culture, but even culture as such.<sup>25</sup> A man becomes a prisoner of nature again – that is why the revolution (especially in the first stage) does not bring freedom but pushes man back to the world of necessity. This is its great illusion. It ruins the institutions which are the brakes of human passions: '[...] the revolutionary perversion consists in the biologization of the behavior of the multitude, as a result of this extinction.'<sup>26</sup>

According to Sorokin-the traditionalist, the fraud of the revolution lies in the naive belief in the self-esteem of man and the conviction that liberation from the power of religion will bring about a rapid and independent moral improvement. In this context, according to the author, the Bolshevik struggle against tradition and religion was a continuation of the negative tendencies initiated by the intelligentsia in the pre-revolutionary period:

<sup>22</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 399.

<sup>23</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 32-33.

<sup>24</sup> See: Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 170-176.

<sup>25</sup> See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 35.



ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING...

a long-lasting process of atheism, even among workers and peasants, was the result of the influence of the Enlightenment currents on the Russian higher classes. Then the intensification of the fight against religion after 1917 led to a historically unprecedented moral deprivation of many layers of society. Sorokin, as a traditionalist, believed that the healing of the situation could only take place by returning to the former moral order: 'The more powerful the destructive-biological and bestial role of the revolution is, the stronger the antidote should be applied in the form of religion.'<sup>27</sup>

### DEPRAVITY AND REVOLUTIONARY FRAUD

According to the author, historical analysis shows that the destruction of an order sanctioned by religion brings with it the most moral depravity of all: 'These facts show clearly how completely the restraining moral, legal, and religious habits are wiped out of human consciousness in times of revolution, and this applies not only to the makers of revolution, but to the entire community.'<sup>28</sup> Initially, there is usually a colossal increase in plunder, robbery, thievery, fraud, corruption – Russia, for example, has turned into a 'cloak of crime.'<sup>29</sup> The announced mobilization and increase in discipline or productivity is an illusion; instead, laziness flourishes – the masses pretend to work.<sup>30</sup> Every revolution, as argued by the Russian-American researcher and thinker, deems the most hideous lie, cynicism, hypocrisy as the virtue, and institutionalizes the gap between word and deed. It acts mesmerizingly on its followers, deludes the naive actors and extras of the tragedy of the revolution with catchy slogans, rewarding and advancing the worst of the people, revealing the worst tendencies: 'Revolution usually leads to the development of great cupidity and rapacity. Bribery and corruption blossom as never before. There is a deluge of the basest, most selfish actions [...]. Truly enough some naive people, carried away by the flow of fine revolutionary parlance, mistake words for reality. But it has been said long ago, it is not words that matter, but acts. The deeds of the actors and understudies of the revolutionary dramatic stage are in direct opposition to their words.'<sup>31</sup> From the very first day of the explosion, the revolution creates its legend and myths, which it transmits to subsequent generations, unaware of the devastation it caused. If it were different, the revolt of 1917 would not have happened: 'History has tragically cheated the illusionist believers once more.'<sup>32</sup> According to Sorokin, every revolution is founded on

<sup>27</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 145-146.

<sup>29</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 102-104.

<sup>31</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 19.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

a great, deceitful deception: 'The influence exercised by such Tartuffes is immense and has not been taken enough into consideration as a social factor. So was it in the past, is now, and will be in future times. Never, perhaps, is this so sharply accentuated as during revolutionary epochs. Up to a certain degree revolution can be nicknamed the «Great Tartuffe». Why so? Because no other Tartuffe claims the merit of so many virtues and no other possesses so few. No one is so ready to create false values: crime and brutality and dubbed heroic deeds; pygmies grow into giants; babblers into heroes; persons of lax morality are canonized; parasites looked upon as saviours.'<sup>33</sup>

Sorokin, on the example of the civil war of 1917-23, exposed specific illusions and deceptions of the revolution, citing many figures. The Bolshevik operation resulted in large-scale wastage, degradation of arable land, industry and, as a result, at least 3 million deaths from hunger (already in the first stage of the revolution). Numerous statistical data prove that revolution does not lead to a fight against poverty: 'All these reasons are more than sufficient to explain why revolutions, especially social revolutions, lead to pauperism and famine [...]. Socialists and communists and other adherents of a hypertrophied state intervention would do well to think of this.'<sup>34</sup> The despotic Soviet statism meant the exploitation of the working masses, the Bolshevik slogans of the liberation of workers and peasants were a grim joke as they quickly became victims of terror.<sup>35</sup> The entire economy and the state fell into disrepair due to the implementation of the political management principle which aimed at humiliating the old ruling class by giving (in the first stage) the helm of power to the former subordinates – after a short period, the peasants and workers were also deprived of power.<sup>36</sup> Incompetence and provisional management became a standard: 'It will be easily understood that such an absurd distribution became one of the causes of the economic and industrial disorganisation.'<sup>37</sup> The revolt also concerned education: 'Good pedagogues, students, eminent professors were thrown out if they happened not to be communists, and instead of them were put «red teachers», «red students» and «red professors» who had no knowledge, no experience.'<sup>38</sup>

## CAPITULATION BEFORE TRADITION

Sorokin, in the course of every revolution, recognized the repetitive pattern and tendencies proving that the consistency and prosperity of the revolutionary project is

<sup>33</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 360.

<sup>34</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 333.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 19-21.

<sup>37</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 273.

<sup>38</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 273-274.

ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE ILLUSIONS OF BREAKING...

illusory. The anti-traditionalist edge of the revolution is dulled by history itself. Usually in the second stage of the revolution, unexpected tendencies are revealed: 'On the other hand if during the pre-revolutionary periods, and during the first stages of revolution, the *Ancien Régime*, Religion, Church, the old aristocrats, the old social order and traditions, are abused, we can be sure to find a great liking for the pre-revolutionary *régime*, a religious revival, growing sympathy, towards all that had been mercilessly persecuted, and insulted during the first period.'<sup>39</sup> Dilemmas arise that undermine the maximalism of the revolutionary project: 'And so men are taught by inexorable teachers; hunger, cold, illness, want and death; they stand before a double dilemma: to perish and die, continuing the revolutionary debauch; or to find a new outlet.'<sup>40</sup> According to the researcher, at one point regular fatigue creeps into the world of permanent, revolutionary chaos. This is due to too much disorder. Doubts arise and the question as to whether the relics, anachronisms, old wisdoms from which they wanted to cut themselves off had only a negative role. This means undermining the dogma of the revolution: 'Now the demand for unbridled liberty is superseded by a desire of «order»; the longing for «deliverers» from the *Ancien Régime* is succeeded by a longing for «deliverers» from the revolution; or, in other words, for organizers of order.'<sup>41</sup> The Bolshevik revolution, for example, has proved that the aggressive and artificial application of change brings paradoxical reactions: the international struggle against native culture and tradition has brought an increase in nationalist moods.<sup>42</sup> Sorokin, as a traditionalist, claimed that anarchizing, destructive revolutionary freedom is in contradiction with the secretive desire of man to live in a calm and predictable world. Tradition may bring this predictability. That is why, unexpectedly, the vanguard of the revolution and the masses begin to unknowingly rebuild the institutions that they once despised, whose existence had caused rebellion.

Why is this happening? Well, no social and cultural organism, as Sorokin argued, was created by accident. It is the result of a centuries-old orientation in the world and building predictable interpersonal relationships: 'Social order is never casual, but is the result of centuries of the adjustment of humanity to its environment, and of its individual members to each other; it is the outcome of centuries of efforts, experience and strivings to achieve the best possible forms of social organization and life.'<sup>43</sup> There is no society that could break with the past without painful consequences: 'Only an ignoramus, or a man immersed in the fantasies of his own brain, can imagine that such an order, built up and existing for centuries, can present nothing but an immense nonsense, a misunderstanding,

<sup>39</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 355.

<sup>40</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 409.

<sup>41</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 409.

<sup>42</sup> See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 410-411.

MAREK JEDLIŃSKI

a complete mistake.<sup>44</sup> The consequences of rejecting evolutionary development and all reforms, are very costly and painful, but sometimes the consequences are needed to appreciate the past and to return to the world ordered by tradition: 'Only, if after having paid that contribution it has not perished completely, will it acquire in a certain measure the possibility to exist and live; but not by cutting itself loose from the past, not by brutal mutual struggles; but, on the contrary, by a return to most of its former foundations, institutions, traditions.'<sup>45</sup> According to the author, history mocked the communists, 'forcing them to recreate what they were destroying with their own hands.'<sup>46</sup> He believed that every revolt brings back the past, albeit in a changed form, giving the revolutionaries the illusion of a radical rebuilding or destruction. According to Sorokin, a real (consistent) revolution is illusory. It is not possible because it would mean endless changes, which cannot be carried out on a living social tissue. This Russian-American researcher and thinker believed that the course of the Bolshevik revolution and civil war was, in this context, a *classic* example of a repetitive pattern of revolt, making it an anatomical analysis of a typical revolution.

<sup>44</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 411.

<sup>45</sup> Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 413.

<sup>46</sup> Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 29. Sorokin hoped in this context for the rapid fall of the Bolsheviks. See: Sorokin, *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii*, p. 56-57.