N.S. Sergieva, Roger W. Smith
Syktyvkar, New York (USA)

ABOUT PITIRIM SOROKIN'S ARTICLE “CITY AND COUNTRY (BIO-SOCIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS)” (PRAGUE, 1923)

Citation: Sergieva N.S., Smith R.W. [About Pitirim Sorokin's article «City and country (bio-sociological characteristics)» (Prague, 1923) (from the translators)] // Nasledie [Heritage]. 2021, No. 1 (18). – pp. 170–173.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31119/hrtg.2021.1.10>

Pitirim Sorokin's “return” to his homeland began in the late 1990s and continues to this day. Scholarly research and conferences devoted to the study of his legacy are being carried out, his social scientific works are translated into Russian and published. Russian language works of Sorokin that were previously locked away in special collections in the former USSR are now being republished, and work is underway to publish the complete works in Russian. But while Sorokin's works in English are being translated into and published in Russian sedulously, the reverse process – the translation of Sorokin's Russian works into English – was, and still is, exceedingly rare after the translation and publication in English of Sorokin's *The Sociology of the Revolution* (1925), which he wrote in Russian and translated with the assistance of the University of Illinois professor Edward Cary Hayes.

This can only be regretted, since by the time of his emigration to the United States in 1923 (he had already left his native country a year earlier), Pitirim Sorokin was a well known social scientist and the author of numerous publications, including scholarly articles and books, book reviews, ethnographic essays, and literary works, as well as many newspaper articles. (Sorokin, as is well known, was actively involved in political activities.) Among this array of works can be noted: *Преступление и кара, подвиг и награда. Социологический этюд об основных формах общественного поведения и морали* (Crime and Punishment, Deed and Reward: A Sociological Study of the Major Forms of Social Behavior and Morality; St. Petersburg, 1914), *Система социологии* (A System of Sociology; Petrograd, 1920), and (published in exile) *Современное состояние России* (Contemporary Conditions of Russia, Prague, 1922) and *Популярные очерки социальной педагогики и политики* (Essays on Popular Pedagogy and Politics; Uzhhorod, Czechoslovakia, 1923). The books and articles written and published in Russian by Sorokin remain inaccessible to foreign readers. However, they are of great interest for researchers of his life and work, to his students and followers, and for anyone who is attracted by the scholarly heritage and the very personality of an extraordinary person.

Between the Russian and American periods of Sorokin's life there was a short European period, which he spent mainly in Prague. Here's how Sorokin writes about it in his autobiography, *A Long Journey*: “On the fourth day of our stay in Berlin I received,

through the Czechoslovakian embassy, an invitation from my friend Dr. Masaryk, then President of the Czechoslovakian Republic, to come to Prague as a guest of the Republic".* During this meeting, Sorokin was offered a special scholarship, which allowed him to conduct active scholarly, pedagogical, and social/political activities without having to think about earning money.

Sorokin's Prague period is considered by his biographers to have been extremely productive, which was also due to the favorable circumstances existing in Prague for Russian emigrants.** "Czechoslovakia was one of the few European states where the government on its own initiative launched a programme of assistance to the Russian emigrants. Moreover, this aid programme, which was created in 1921 under the name "Ruská Pomocná Akce" (Russian Relief Action) had Russian academics, students and pupils as its primary target groups".*** The President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, supported this program from its beginnings and during the entire period of its existence. The beneficiaries of Russian Relief Action were primarily three groups of emigrants among whom Russian intellectuals (e.g., scholars and students, teachers, engineers, physicians, writers) occupied the first place.****

In Prague, Sorokin gave lectures at the *Russkii narodnyy universitet* (Russian People's University), delivered a huge number of reports and speeches to various audiences on Russian emigration, was a member of the Board of the Union of Russian Writers and Journalists, wrote books, published articles and reviews in émigré magazines, and participated in the Conradi trial as a witness. At the same time, he was preparing to leave for the United States – and studying English assiduously.

Sorokin's article *Город и деревня (Био-социологическая характеристика)* (City and Country (Bio-Sociological Characteristics))****, which we have selected for translation, was published in 1923 in the collection *Крестьянская Россия IV* under the editorship of A.A. Argunov, A.A. Bem, S.S. Maslov, and P.A. Sorokin. The compilations were published by Sergey Semyonovich Maslov, leader of the Peasant Russia group, which was well known to Sorokin from his joint work in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the members of which group went legally abroad in 1921. In Prague, Maslov received a grant for the publication of periodical collections under the name *Крестьянская Россия. Сборник статей по вопросам общественно-политическим и экономическим* (Peasant Russia. Compilation of Articles on Socio-Political Issues and Economics). After arriving in Prague, Sorokin joined the editorial board, participated on the board until issue VI, and published five articles and several book reviews in *Крестьянская Россия*.*****

* Sorokin Pitirim A. Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1963. – P. 198.

** Дойков Ю.В. Питирим Сорокин в Праге (1922–1923) // Питирим Александрович Сорокин / Под ред. В.В. Сапова. М.: РОССПЭН, 2013. – С.404–405.

*** Mchitarjan I. Prague as the centre of Russian educational emigration: Czechoslovakia's educational policy for Russian emigrants (1918–1938). Paedagogica Historica. Vol. 45, No. 3 (June 2009). – P. 376.

**** Ibid. P. 377.

***** Сорокин П.А. Город и деревня (Биосоциологическая характеристика) // Крестьянская Россия. IV. Прага, 1923. – С. 3–23.

***** Соколов М.В. Политическая и издательская деятельность Сергея Маслова в эмиграции в 1921–24 гг. // Деятели книги: Михаил Николаевич Куфаев (1888–1948): сборник научных трудов по материалам 15-х Смирдинских чтений. СПб.: Изд-во Санкт-Петербургского гос. ун-та культуры и искусств, 2010. – С. 81.

The compilation of publications by Maslov and his colleagues in the mid-twenties actually constituted the strategic program of “Peasant Russia” as a future party. This party was to combine in its program national and governmental problems and the problem of protecting the interests of the most populous social stratum in postrevolutionary Russia – the peasantry.* Together with Maslov, members of the editorial Board of *Крестьянская Россия* and some professors, Sorokin planned to create an Institute of Peasant Culture in Prague.** *City and Country*, not being programmatic in form, contributes to the theoretical justification of the strategic program of the future peasant party. It is by this criterion that it should be considered.

Such is the macro-context that briefly explains the circumstances of the publication of the text of the article *City and Country*, its content, specifics of the language and style, and features of the translation.

Sorokin refers to his article *City and Country* in Chapter XVII (“The Causes of Revolution”) of *The Sociology of Revolution* – his work published (in 1925) in English – in which he states: “The cities are more often shaken by revolutionary fever than the villages; the former begin it whereas the latter usually put an end to it” and cites his article *City and Country* (from which he quotes freely in this chapter) in a footnote.*** Obviously, Sorokin’s ideas on the opposition of urban and rural sociology (the latter on which he published several works during his academic career in the United States) were central to him in formulating his theory of the causes of revolutions. It was this link that sparked our interest in *City and Country*.

Finding the original article of 1923, preparing the 1923 text for publication in Russian, and translating it into English turned out to be difficult. Sorokin has a peculiar, often idiomatic and emotional style. This is not dry sociology.

The text of *City and Country* itself is a bizarre combination of expository prose of a scholarly (social scientific) and journalistic nature, with the latter clearly prevailing. Sorokin’s essay (study) is based upon the juxtaposition of key features of cities and villages based upon a number of biological, psychological and social indicators, revealing their contradictory – indeed, antithetic, in Sorokin’s view – relationship and future prospects. The main method of drafting a text in the case of Sorokin’s article is antithesis – in both the text as a whole and in its component parts, which are based on antithesis (as noted above): the opposition of city and country, of cities and villages, based on their characteristic features (as the author sees them) and their peculiarities. Sorokin, the author, takes a pro-country, “pro-peasant” position, which is not surprising given his rural upbringing and his political views.

Let us dwell on some of the features of the transfer of the content and style of this article, which must be taken into account when translating into English.

Scholarly exposition is featured in the first section of Sorokin’s article. He uses abstract social scientific terms such as *брачность* (marriage), *рождаемость* (fertility), *смертность* (mortality) and provides statistical data buttressed by footnotes comprised of statistical tables and references to sources such as the *Bulletin de l’Institut international*

* Ibid. P. 84.

** Дойков Ю.В. *Op. cit.* P. 405.

*** Sorokin Pitirim A. *The Sociology of Revolution*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1925. – Pp. 396–397.

de statistique. Up to this point, the article appears to exemplify logical if not dispassionate analysis and accuracy of presentation. The conceptual diagram (outline of the basic concepts) of the article is precise and unambiguous.

With respect to the scholarly apparatus, it should be remembered that *Крестьянская Россия* was not a scholarly publication, which may explain the carelessness and inaccuracies in the preparation of the footnotes. Another reason is that Sorokin simply did not have access to his sources, and the ability to verify them. Sorokin – despite the statistics he provides – was not writing here as an empirically oriented scholar, nor as a social scientist engaged in research, but more as a journalist/essayist and polemicist. When preparing the text for publication in Russian and in the process of translation, we tried to be careful with the peculiarities of the author's language and style. Only obvious errors and misprints were corrected.

Another notable peculiarity of the text of *City and Country* is its journalistic nature – and, even more so – rhetorical. With a few abbreviations and edits, Sorokin's article can be read out loud to an audience. The text is rich in rhetorical tropes and figures, and the article uses metaphors, idioms, and various types of citation. It can be assumed that the article was based on the text of a public speech by Sorokin, or that it was written with the expectation of its being used for public speaking practice. The journalistic nature of the text is particularly noticeable in Sections 2 and 3. Undoubtedly, the journalistic experience of Sorokin, the former editor of two major Socialist-Revolutionary newspapers, inclined him (and gave him an aptitude) to write quickly, expressively, and emotionally, in order to have an impact on the reader.

Thus, it can be stated that the text of *City and Country* shows the idiosyncrasies of Sorokin's language and style, an amalgam of scholarly and journalistic prose that was characteristic of many subsequent works of Sorokin in different formats. Objective presentation is combined with the categorical, sweeping statement and rhetoric characteristic of political speeches. Aimed at persuading as much if not more in such instances (i.e., in prose passages of this nature) than scholarship, explication, or analysis. Such features of the author, Sorokin's, content, ideas, and style require not only the accurate transmission of the informational and emotional-stylistic component of the text, but also the ability of the translator to immerse oneself in Sorokin's worldview and his oeuvre as a whole.

Acknowledgments: We wish to thank Natalia Rakhmanchik for her diligence in preparing a complete transcript of the original text of "City and Country" and for updating the Russian orthography. And to Marina Lomonosova for her crucial and invaluable help in finding the text of the original article.