

# Weber's and Sorokin's Analytical Treatment of the Russian Revolutions

*Edward Ozhiganov*

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Leading Resear Fellow, Center of Industry Management,  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia  
Address: Miklukho-Maklaya Str., 6, Moscow, Russian Federation 117198  
Email: [imitation2025@gmail.com](mailto:imitation2025@gmail.com)

The roots and dynamics of the Russian collapse of 1917–1918 provide an occasion for considering the question of the lessons that modern sociology can draw from the “sociology of revolution” of Max Weber and Pitirim Sorokin. This paper reviews the relevance of the approaches demonstrated by Weber’s “understanding sociology” and Sorokin’s “sociology of factors” on the testing ground of the emergency and confrontation of various forces of the Russian political scene in 1917–1918. Neither Weber nor Sorokin set forth methodological guidelines for their analysis of the Russian revolutions and this paper does not intend to reconstruct their views on the basis of the comparative taxonomies of their categories and concepts. This paper identifies the reasons for the opposing assessments which Weber and Sorokin gave for the causes of the Russian Disorder of 1917–1918 and the consequences they have for their claims to comprehend the revolutionary situation. The paper highlights the circumstances that prompted them to free themselves from obligations to their own theories and to use the authority of science to promote plans for Westernization, i.e. the proposed reconstruction of the political and state institutions of Russia on the model of the leading Entente states. The paper shows that the limits of the Weberian analytical vision of the Russian political scene were due to his consideration of the events in Russia mainly through the question of Russia’s further participation in the World War I and its consequences for imperial Germany, while Sorokin’s views were constrained by the fact that he represented Russian political positivism and Russian political masonry.

*Keywords:* Russian Disorder, the sociology of the revolution, political ideology, political positivism, political masonry, pseudo-democracy, Bolshevism, political predictions.

## Introduction

The centennial of the Russian political collapse of 1917–1918 provides modern sociologists with the opportunity to once again turn to the analysis of revolutionary utopias and the dynamics of leadership and bureaucracy. On this anniversary, it may seem strange (or indicative) that the “sociologies of revolution” of Max Weber and Pitirim Sorokin are weakly positioned on the pages of sociological and political science journals and publications.

In modern Russia, an appeal to Weber’s “sociology of revolution” is latent or explicitly motivated by the question: is the threat of a new revolution in Russia real? According to Golovin, the main conclusion of “Weberian Russian studies” is that “Russian society has

not yet completed its historical choice. It took Germany more than half a century to do this, from the transition to a political system of the Western type in 1918 and ending with the country's unification in 1990. How long Russia will need is an open question" (Golovin, 2017: 70–88). In the same context, Maslovsky analyzes the "post-Weberian sociology of revolution" and "Soviet modern" in the works of a number of Western sociologists (Breuer, Arnason, David-Fox among others) (Maslovsky, 2017: 1–5).

The appeal to Sorokin's "sociology of revolution" is motivated in the same way: "Is it possible, and how it is possible, that a new revolutionary tide is in our country?" (Kovalev, 2017: 55). The shades of this treatment range from premonition to "whether the Russian government finally pupates in the shell of mercenary interests and is unable to answer the questions that Russian society poses" (Chernysh, 2017: 94) to the announcement, although with reservations, of the arrival of a revolutionary situation in today's Russia (Ivanov, 2017).

Interest in Weber's "sociology of revolution" occurs against the backdrop of the "international reinterpretation industry of Max Weber" (Kaesler, 2015). The essence of this extremely active and persistent "Weber revisionism" Scaff defines as a "part of the struggle for the mastery of Weber, a struggle that is important since Weber is thought to occupy the central terrain in the social sciences. Whoever controls the interpretation of Weber can entertain hopes of also governing scientific activity" (Scaff, 1984: 191).

Without dwelling on the endless discussion of "Weber Studies" about the "correct" and "incorrect" variants of the compositional design of Weber's texts, we assume that his essay "On Some Categories of Understanding Sociology" is a methodological compendium that contains the original guides for all thematic sections of both the initial (1910–1914) and the revised version (1918–1920) of *Economy and Society*. His program essay, published in 1913 in the fourth issue of the international journal of philosophy of culture *Logos* (Weber, 1913: 253–294), was an explication of the title conceptual section of the prepared volume *Economy and Society* for the fundamental publication *Essays on the Social Economy*.

This essay, which has the character of a manifesto, contains the first systematic exposition of the categories of Weber's interpretative approach, regarding sociology as an analysis of structures based on domination. Following the path of scientific sociology, Weber was far from imposing a new classification of concepts: in the words of Kant, he put forward "a guide for creating this science itself." Edited and signed by Weber for publication, the text which became the first chapter of *Economy and Society* — "Basic Concepts of Sociology," is a reworking of, and addition to, the essay "On Some Categories of Understanding Sociology" in the context of its proposed publication of his *magnum opus*. We can only assume that the need for change was motivated by the prospects for the institutionalization of sociology in Germany, and in this article we will not dwell on the circumstances that prompted him to make such a decision. Weber himself noted that "compared to the essay in the fourth edition of *Logos* the terminology was simplified as much as possible and changed several times to be as clear as possible. Of course, the need for unconditional popularization would not always be compatible with the need for

maximum clarity of this terminology, and should, if necessary, yield to it" (Weber, 1913: 253). Here, Weber made it very clear that changes in terminology is the price that has to be paid for fulfilling the requirements of popularization, while potentially such requirements may be detrimental to categorical clarity.

The formula of the invariance of domination is given by Weber in the final part of the essay "On Some Categories of Understanding Sociology":

The rational rules of an association, be it compulsory or voluntary association, are thus imposed or "suggested" by the one group for specific purposes (again perhaps very differently conceived among themselves). By the second group, namely the staff of the association, the rules are — though not necessarily with awareness of those purposes of their creation — more or less evenhandedly subjectively interpreted and actively carried out. A third group subjectively knows the usual application of the rules in varying degrees as far as is absolutely necessary for their private purposes, and the rules become the means of orienting their action (legal or illegal), because the rules give rise to specific expectations about the behavior of others (of the staff as well as of the members). By the fourth group, however, and that is the "mass," an action approximately conforming to the average understood meaning is "traditionally" practiced and usually observed without any knowledge of the purpose and meaning or even of the existence of the rules. (Weber, 1913: 293)

This formula defines the fundamental thesis of the sociology of Weber: "Only one thing is beyond doubt: evaluating any human relationships, regardless of their nature and structure, they should be considered from the point of view which type of people they give in the process of external or internal selection chances for domination" (Weber, 1922b: 479).

Kaesler, reviewing the publication of volume I/22-4 of the canonical collected works of Weber, entitled *Domination* (Weber, 2005), writes the following:

Thus, he without hesitation proceeds from the ancient civilizations to the world of the states of his time, from tribal cultures, which were not yet studied, to the organizational history of remote monastic communities. For his comprehensive search for forms of domination, there are no boundaries, eras, countries, or cultures. It is in these texts that we meet not the "sociological expert" Max Weber, but the almost frightening gestalt of the early 20th century, as editor Hanke formulated in her preface to publication: "Max Weber meets us here as a universally educated scientist which, with systematic interest, confidently proceeds through world history, exploring the central phenomenon of human coexistence: domination. (Kaesler, 2015)

Weber himself used the concept of domination selectively and inconsistently, which raises the problems of whether Weber's analysis should be considered in the context of the German liberal political tradition and what connection between scientific views and political affiliation should be kept in mind. How realistic, for example, was Weber's position during the period when the question was raised about the principles of the political reconstruction of Germany? Turning to his works such as "Parliament and Government in Reordered Germany" (Weber, 1921b: 126–260) and "The Future State Form of Ger-

many” (Weber, 1921c: 341–376), it is difficult to understand whether Weber has in mind the principles that should be, from his point of view, most acceptable for the construction of the post-war state order of Germany, or the facts of political reality, more or less demonstrable and predictable.

“The Sorokin revival” is also marked by a certain dominance — Sorokin is represented as the champion of the “Russian sociological tradition,” which, by definition of Sandstrom, “offers a half-way point between either accepting sociological evolutionism as a law-like generalization describing human social change or as a universal ideology that relies on the excesses of scientism to define our imaginative place in the cosmos” (Sandstrom, 2008: 613). According to Nichols, “the Russian stylistic elements” of Sorokin’s manner of doing sociology includes “four stylistic features, namely, encyclopedism, polemics, a prophetic posture and a popular or public genre” (Nichols, 2012: 378).

Sorokin himself attributed his main works of the Russian period — *The System of Sociology* and *The Sociology of Revolution* — to behaviorism (Sorokin, 1926). The guiding principles of the Sorokin’s variant of behavioral sociology were as follows: sociology can and should be structured as the natural sciences, every normativism should be banished from sociology, it should be an experienced, objective discipline (Sorokin, 1920: IX–XI).

Due to the emphasis on the relationship between stimuli and reactions and on observed behavior, behaviorism was particularly suitable for the various classifications of social interaction offered by Sorokin, giving them the appearance of an exact, objective science. However, such classification systems do not directly explain anything, mainly because they cannot be used to provide problem-oriented explanations in specific areas of sociological analysis. Therefore, it is difficult to detect traces of Sorokin’s classification of forms of social behavior in his *Notes of the Sociologist* and *Sociology of the Revolution*.

In Sorokin’s explanation of the driving forces of revolution is a whole taxonomy of the psychological features of the actors of the revolutionary process, mainly of a negative nature. In a certain sense, Sorokin’s behavioral psychologism resembles the psychological reductionism of Michels, who considered human nature as an organic source of the natural propensities of the masses: the need for leadership, gratitude to leaders, etc. (Michels, 1925: 33).

Sorokin and Michels also proceeded from the ethical formulation of the problem of “ideal democracy,” therefore Weber’s criticism of Michels’s position on this problem may well be attributed to Sorokin. According to Weber, ideal democracy is a historical fiction, and the alleged desire to eliminate the domination of man over man is an intellectual fallacy (Weber, 1908). As Weber wrote to Michels, “the concept of domination [Herrschaft] does not become clear in your work. Your analysis of [this] is too simple” (Weber, 1911). Thus, we can see significant disagreements about the central issues of political sociology: if for Michels it was “democracy,” then for Weber it was “domination.”

Later, in his autobiography, Sorokin wrote: “Already World War I had made some fissures in the positivistic, “scientific,” and humanistic Weltanschauung I had held before the War. The Revolution of 1917 enormously enlarged these fissures and eventually shattered this world-outlook with its positivistic philosophy and sociology, its utilitarian sys-

tem of values, and its conception of historical process as a progressive evolution toward an ever better man, society, and culture” (Sorokin, 1963: 204).

Here the question inevitably arises, which Kovalev asks:

To what extent can one be guided by Sorokin’s practical and scientific experience here? Sorokin, as you know, in his approach to the revolution adhered to the behavioral interpretation: “Revolution is first of all a certain change in the behavior of members of society, on the one hand, and their psyche and ideology, beliefs and beliefs, morality and assessments on the other.” But revolutions have such a feature: in hindsight, they appear to be completely inevitable. But in the current reality they always happen unexpectedly for contemporaries. That is, most often the revolutionary events were not predicted Sorokin. (Kovalev, 2017: 54–76)

The answer to the question of how much one can be guided by Sorokin’s “practical and scientific experience” lies on a different plane: despite the well-known differences between “scientific” forecasting and “practical” foresight, in both cases the utility of political predictions does not depend in principle on their reliability. In other words, they are united by the fact that a political forecast or foresight can be arbitrarily false, but at the same time very effective in terms of the goals of political actions.

Although Sorokin’s efforts to comprehend the laws of Russia’s political development and to make predictions, the prospects of “revolution” were unsuitable from a scientific and prognostic point of view; they may have played an instrumental role, fueling the mood of revenge among Russian immigrants. As such attitudes faded away, the attention to his “sociology of revolution” gradually disappeared.

It should be taken into account that in journalistic and scientific works about the life and activities of Sorokin of the Russian period, information is often unreliable. As Glotov writes in his article, which was the best publication of the journal *Sociological Studies* in 2012, “inconsistencies and discrepancies in the presentation of the biography of the Russian period of Sorokin’s life indicate that in the history of Russian sociology not enough attention is paid to documentary and archival materials. Unfortunately, despite the increased interest in the scientific activity of Sorokin, there are no special works devoted to a reliable description of his biography and a critical analysis of sources” (2012: 138–144).

In this regard, one of the critically important but unexplored aspects of Sorokin’s role in creating the Russian collapse of 1917–1918 is his work in the secretariat of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, although little is known about his real influence on decision-making by the Provisional Government at various stages of its transformation. Researchers made great efforts to uncover the details of Sorokin’s life, but if they mention this aspect of his political activity, then it is only to dismiss it as an unfortunate episode and to be content with very superficial, and sometimes simply unintelligible, explanations as “secretary of science,” “personal secretary,” etc. (Johnston, 1998: 7; Finkel, 2005: 158; Lomonosova, 2006: 56; Kovalev, 2017: 58; Sapov, 2017: 19).

## The Political Worldview of Weber and Sorokin and the Limits of Their Analytical Vision of the Russian Disorder 1917–1918

Anyone who studies the sociological works of Weber, from the very beginning, is faced with the methodological problem mentioned above: should they be considered in the context of the German liberal political tradition, and what connection between scientific views and political affiliation should be kept in mind? German liberalism had its own special destiny, due to the defeat in 1848, the surrender to Bismarck in the 1850s, the emergence of “national liberalism” in the 1870s, and the location between the hammer and the anvil of the imperial political scene — the Marxist social democracy and politically dominant Junkers until the collapse of the empire in 1918. This fate, undoubtedly influenced the character of Weber’s liberalism and determined the boundaries within which the transformation of his political outlook into sociological concepts took place.

Throughout 1916–1917, despite all attempts by Weber to find his place in German politics, he remained an outsider, although he did not dramatize his “political inapplicability” (Weber, 1984: 580–581). In a report at the meeting of the Progressive People’s Party (*Fortschrittliche Volkspartei*) in Munich in 1916, Weber referred to his membership of the nationalist Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*), but only in order to say ironically that he was not involved in the activities of this political organization (Weber, 1988c: 158). “I have always considered politics only from a national point of view,” declared Weber, “not only external, but also any policy in general” (Ibid.).

Weber belonged to the class of the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, which created the world capitalist economy of the 19th century. On both sides his family were the well-known Anglo-German clans of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, which conducted import-export and transport operations throughout the world (Roth, 2002: 509–520).

Since his inaugural professorial speech at the University of Freiburg (1895), Weber professed the conviction that the national long-term interests of Germany are threatened by three main dangers: the preservation of political domination in the hands of the economically dying class of Junkers, the fatal political immaturity of the German bourgeoisie and the strengthening of Russia (Weber, 1988b: 24–26). In 1916, this belief was actualized in the form of a geopolitical theory, according to which “the threat from Russia is the only one that is directed against our existence as a national power (*nationaler Machtstaat*) as such, not only in economic and political, but also in the cultural area” (Weber, 1988c: 168–169).

For Weber, the February coup d’état in Russia was a complete surprise: “Even those who are better informed on the situation than I am had serious doubts as to whether the Tsar would be overthrown during the war” (Weber, 1988f: 197). Considering the hopeless, from the point of view of the overthrow of the tsarist regime, balance of anti-regime and conservative forces in Russia, Weber declared: “For all that, revolution appeared extremely improbable. The fact that revolution has come after all is due, as well as to success of our army, to the purely personal conduct of the Tsar” (Ibid.: 201).



Considering the stakes of the geopolitical game in which Germany and Russia were drawn, one could expect a more consistent analysis from a theorist such as Weber. He relied, in many respects, on biased sources of information and his intuition, while continuing to dream of an alliance with Great Britain based on the “common spiritual interests” (Weber, 1988a: 585–586).

According to Paddock, “in spite of attempts to be “objective,” many of his views reflected vague “Orientalist” prejudices about Russia” (Paddock, 2010: 77). Paddock means the group of historians and publicists of the second wave of Baltic-German immigration (Rohrbach, Schiemann, Haller and others), influential in German society and the ruling circles of Germany, who in their numerous Russophobic works justified the need to weaken or destroy the Russian empire, which allegedly threatened European civilization. According to their theory, Russia was not a historically established single state, but was an unnatural conglomerate of peoples held together by “Tatar” despotism. Only the dismemberment of Russia into its “natural,” historical and ethnographic components could permanently save Germany from the Russian menace (Andreeva, 2015: 101–105). Their recommendations are embodied in the politics of the “revolutionizing” of Russia pursued by the German political and military leadership during the First World War on the basis of the support of social and ethnic opposition forces in order to destroy the Russian political regime.

Like most “orientalists,” Weber did not consider Russia to be part of Europe or even to have participated in the historical development of Western civilization. A comparison of Weber and Baltic German agitators would be fruitful, because their writings display interesting similarities regarding the cliché of “the Russian menace.” Although this paper’s space does not permit further analysis of this, it is necessary to dwell on the controversial Hoetzsch-Haller case (Hellmann, 1975: 442–457) which reveals Weber’s way of selecting political information.

Hoetzsch, who belonged to the most significant and influential specialists in Russian affairs of the period of the late German empire and Weimar republic, demanded the recognition of Russia as a historical-political individuality, which had developed according to its own laws and the needs of its idea of state and its people’s nature. But worst of all for the Baltic German “orientalists” was that Hoetzsch professed an unshakable conviction that pitting German world politics against Russia was dangerous mistake and that the German Reich needed Russia’s support against their Anglo-Saxon rival (Liszkowski, 1986: 215–239).

Haller, who was an ignorant dilettante in matters of Russian history and had never before done any scientific research on Russia, published a passionate political pamphlet accusing Hoetzsch of helping the enemy and calling him “the Russian danger in the German home.” The statements of Haller were supported by Baltic German professors and publicists, but also met Weber’s approval even though Hoetzsch “dismissed Haller’s ignorance of Russian historical literature and numerous errors, exaggerations, distortions and misjudgments, and had ‘executed his opponent with thoughtful thoroughness’” (Ibid.: 236).

As Weber wrote, “the work is an attack on the book by and also on the activities of Prof. Hötzsch for the *Kreuzzeitung*. It is indeed astonishing that a man who has frequently been to Russia, and whose book makes considerable claims for itself, should demonstrate such a complete ignorance of decisive political party groupings as in fact is the case in this book, which is shallow in every respect, and cannot be taken seriously as a source of political information” (Weber, 1921a: 110).

This episode clearly showed that the point was not the absence of reliable information about Russian affairs, as Weber has repeatedly said, but its filtering based on political preferences. In 1917–1918, tectonic changes in the geopolitical landscape of Europe showed how much he was mistaken in this existential question for Germany and Russia.

Partly because of his informational selectivity and partly because of the unavailability of documentary evidence of the intervention of Anglo-American financial and political elites in Russian politics with the conscious intent to create a political regime, which they could then set up as a tool for their world geopolitical interests, Weber erroneously assessed the alignment of political forces on the Russian and world political scene.

This is to say that although the Anglo-American financial and political elites did not create or bring about the two revolutions in Russia, they nonetheless created the conditions under which their two-step scenario could appear. Without such planned support on the part of the Anglo-American elites, along with finance from Imperial Germany, there would have been no Kerensky and no Lenin or Trotsky. The political dynamism of the Bolshevism owed its success to a general state of instability in Russia, which was engineered by the Anglo-American elites.

Whether there were two consecutive scenarios of the Russian collapse here, or the February and October coups of 1917 in Russia were not internally interconnected — the answer to this question illuminates both the ideological and theoretical roots of the “sociology of the revolution” of Weber and Sorokin.

Just like Weber, Sorokin also did not pay the slightest attention to those geopolitical actors who determined the place of Russia and Germany in the “new world order,” although for other reasons. The limits of his political analysis were predetermined by the fact that he represented both Russian political positivism and Russian operational political masonry. The theoretical background of Sorokin in 1917–1918 was a creative mix of the theories of his teachers and mentors Kovalevsky (the theory of factors), de Roberti (bio-social theory) and Petrazhitzky (psychological theory), who were the father-founders and leaders of Russian speculative masonry in 1906–1916.

Political positivism provided the ideological component of Russian political masonry. Sorokin took an active part in the development of the program documents of political masonry, being attracted to this activity by Kerensky, the Secretary General of the masonic “Supreme Council of the Peoples of Russia,” long before the February coup (Norton, 1983: 257). The nomenclature of “pseudo-democracy,” its institutions in various sectors of government and legislation were formed by the shadow organization of Russian political masonry of 1917, whose creditworthiness depended on the decisions of the financiers of the United Kingdom and the United States. The ideology of “democratization,” advocated



by Sorokin, was closely connected with plans for “westernization,” i.e. the alleged formation of political and state institutions in Russia on the model of the leading Entente countries.

Sorokin was more knowledgeable than Weber about the nature of the democratic interlude, since he himself was one of its key actors. Therefore, he did not hesitate to stop his behaviorist sociology from being a “precise and experienced” science as soon as it came to the forces and actors in the unprecedented diplomatic, military and financial campaign of the Anglo-American establishment in Russia.

As noted earlier, for Weber the February coup d'état was a complete surprise. It is unlikely that Weber realized that the British coordinated the preparation and implementation of the coup d'état in Russia by a shadow military-industrial clique and had information on its specific time. Unlike his previous studies on the fate of Russian democracy, this time Weber considered the events in Russia mainly through the prism of the question of Russia's further participation in World War I and its consequences for Germany. As soon as the Provisional Government (11 of its 12 members were political masons) published on March 27 (April 9) 1917 an “Appeal to Citizens” on the objectives of foreign policy, followed by the so-called note by Foreign Minister Milyukov expressing confidence in the victorious end of the present war, Weber suspected fraud in the Russian pseudo-democracy. Since Weber considered the parliamentarization and federalization of the political system to be the key tasks of building democracy, he analyzed from this point of view the entire spectrum of Russian political forces. The methodological basis of this analysis was the well-known scheme of his theoretical sociology: “classes,” “status,” and “parties” are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community (Weber, 1980: 531).

After discussing the prospects of Russian “democratization,” *pro et contra*, Weber wrote: “As long as the situation remains as it is, the Social Democrats and Socialist-Revolutionaries can only play the role of ‘driven’ and in this quality they are tolerated because they mislead the masses about the ‘revolutionary’ nature of the government” (Weber, 1988f: 116). This characteristic — “can only play the role of ‘driven’” — is key: this type of political regime can be kept in the saddle if the relevant performers are found and financial channels for ensuring their activities are created (Weber, 1988f: 120).

Weber, who assessed the “financial channels” for the ensuring political activities in the light of ideas about the investment feasibility based on a sample of the 19th century, was mistaken about the goals of international financial capital at the beginning of the 20th century. He believed that “any well-trained bourgeois organizer, even with a completely empty wallet, will receive credit — and, probably, being a well-paid agent of American capitalists, will inevitably receive it easier than a socialist (i.e. bureaucratic) apparatus” (Weber, 1921c: 351).

The goals of the geopolitical struggle for the “new world order” were shown by his American counterpart Thorstein Veblen, with whose works he was well acquainted. It can be assumed that the main reasons for this originated not only in the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the social theories of Weber and Veblen, but also in their understanding of the causes and consequences of crises between 1914 and 1920, which

was the peak of their intellectual and public activity. It is possible that the work “Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution” (Veblen, 1915) had a negative effect: he argued that the modern German economy in a mature form was imported from England and installed in the German quasi-feudal “dynastic” state system. In this symbiosis of industrial technology and dynastic rule, Veblen saw a particular threat to democracy.

Veblen believed, with grounds, that one should fear this explosive mixture of the German feudal hierarchical order and the highest level of technological development, primarily because the development needs of industrial technologies and industrial production inevitably conflict with the institutional foundations of this system, awakening an aberrant-type worldview, threatening to transform the entire social body of Germany beyond recognition.

The works of Veblen reflected the events of the initial period of the creation of the Anglo-American financial oligarchies of a “new world order” with the use of the routine strategy of identifying and supporting indigenous radical movements, which in the conditions of directed economic collapse are brought to power and using various methods are pushed along the path of internal conflict and military aggression.

The script for the strategists of the Anglo-American establishment for Russia was that when the Provisional Government, under the pretext and with the policy of “democratic modernization,” would plunge Russia into chaos, it would be time to play the Bolshevik card and draw the country into a civil war that would forever bury the fantasy of the Russian plutocracy of “sovereign Russia.” Kerensky, having successfully fulfilled his mission as the “grave-digger of young Russian freedom” (Weber, 1988e: 333), left Russia with the help of British intelligence. Lenin and his clique of “professional revolutionaries” were called onto the political stage as the main performers.

The “political program” of the Provisional Government, the creation of which Sorokin took an active part in, launched the processes of degradation and chaos in all sectors of the economy, public administration, the military sphere and Russia’s foreign policy. The masonic political plan worked with extraordinary destructive force. As the military commissar of the Provisional Government in May-September 1917, Stankevich testified, first of all that the power had fallen apart: “It has disintegrated already a long time ago, right after revolution” (Stankevich, 1920: 115).

The liberal democratic interlude, which ended in the Disorder of 1917–1918, was a reflection of the failed attempts of political masonry to unite the interests of various groups of the large industrial-commercial and financial bourgeoisie, the petty urban and rural bourgeoisie, and the *raznochinstvo* on the ruins of the socio-political system of imperial Russia. The task, risky enough from any point of view, was to cause chaos in the country to prepare the ground for the cultivation of the dictatorship, which the puppet clique of Kerensky tried to undertake in several stages. The fact that the policy of the Provisional Government, or more precisely of the triumvirate of the leaders of Russian political masonry — Kerensky, Nekrasov and Tereshchenko, crashed, and made a steep transition to surrender to the Bolsheviks (Milyukov, 1991: 473), was an obvious fact, regardless of post factum explanations.

Weber's assessment of the accession of Bolshevism in Russia depended entirely on his vision of the prospects for concluding peace "with the one who offers a guarantee of loyal fulfillment of its conditions, by whomsoever he was" (Weber, 1988d: 292). The problem, he believed, was that since Bolshevism would not last more than a few months in power, peace with it gives weak guarantees for the future government of Germany. Weber gave such a prediction because he considered the Bolshevik's rule as "the dictatorship of an insignificant minority relying on an army tired of war, which inevitably is a purely military dictatorship, only a dictatorship not of generals, but corporals" (Weber, 1988d: 292). Contrary to Weber's considerations, the shock force of the Bolsheviks was not a "war-tired army," but the decaying reserve garrisons located in all the major cities of Russia, who first of all secured guarantees not to be sent to the front.

According to Weber, it did not matter which ideology the St. Petersburg leaders of the soldier proletariat (even sincerely) were guided by: "They wait and require only one — salaries and booty" (Weber, 1988d: 292). It is amazing how a theorist of such a high rank as Weber could be satisfied with such superficial and popular explanations, having in his theoretical arsenal such first-class concepts as domination, charismatic leadership, political sect, legitimacy, economic and social order.

Unlike Weber, who was an outsider in relation to the institutions of power, Sorokin was the leader of the right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries and a member of the secretariat of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, in which, apparently, he was in charge of ideology and domestic politics. On the basis of available documents, it is difficult to judge whether Sorokin really played the role of the "second person in Kerensky's short-lived government," as Johnston defined him (Johnston, 1999: 14), but his influence on the course of the Provisional Government in some areas was significant, especially on the question of the continuation of the war.

The style and terminology of the approach of Sorokin to the explanation of political events in Russia 1917–1918 was attributed to his characteristic mixture of scientific logic and fiction, while simultaneously combining schemes of positivism and the speculative history of politics. Sorokin himself insisted that "if party sociology exists, this is only due to the fact that sociology as a science is still poorly developed, it is not established, and therefore each party has to create its own sociology, suggesting that it is at the same time also scientific sociology, i.e. universally binding for all" (Sorokin, 2000: 9). Of all these "sociologies," the "theory of factors" was the most correct for him, serving as a tool to work out the party line of the group of right-wing socialists-revolutionaries close to Kerensky.

The behaviorist theory of the factors of "social life" in the action of Sorokin is one of the clones of the positivist metaphysics of history. Intended to give "genuine keys to mastering the complex mechanics of social phenomena" (Sorokin, 2000: 12), it proved to be unsuitable for forecasting political processes because of its speculative nature and because of its role as an ideology of democratization. In the field of political theory, following his teacher Petrazhitzky, he believed that "the secret of power is in the human psyche" (Sorokin, 2000: 32), and, in accordance with this premise, considered "psychological fac-

tors” as sufficient. On this basis, Sorokin made far-reaching assessments and conclusions, which over and over did not work.

Sorokin’s program of political positivism was the “democratic modernization” of Russia on the basis of the “strictly scientific” construction of the institutions of the rule of law and individual rights. This program had gray areas that Sorokin preferred not to talk about, but which were obvious even from the point of view of his own methodological guidelines of positivist sociology on “fact-finding,” “objectivity” and “de-ideologization.” He did not calculate the possible consequences of the destruction of state, public, cultural, religious structures and the “mechanical” solidarity of the traditional society at the peak of a world war. This was justified by the fact that “the revolutionary government has to hack at once where normal power would solve issues for a number of years. And this courage to cut and cut from the revolutionary government should be found” (Sorokin, 2000: 78–79).

Such “courage to cut” is the first sign of the desire for disorder, and therefore most important here was the analysis of the origin of political and economic interests that Kerensky’s revolutionary government actually implemented. There are no attempts at such an analysis in Sorokin’s practical and scientific experience. “We supported and support the coalition Provisional Government,” Sorokin wrote. “We recognize that, in general, our revolutionary power stands on top” (Sorokin, 2000: 76). At the same time, the economist, Zagorsky, head of the department of the Ministry of Labor of the Provisional Government, stated that “most of the measures taken by the Russian government have never been put into practice. The disorganization of all administrative and economic mechanisms was so great that the very subject of public administration and control disappeared” (Zagorsky, 1928: 269).

In assessing the Bolshevik coup, Sorokin did not go beyond Weber, treating it as “a special case of the phenomenon of praetorian rear, widely spread throughout Russia” (Sorokin, 2000: 173). Such an assessment was both erroneous and inept, as was the conclusion that followed from it: “Even if the Bolsheviks manage to seize power completely, they will not be able to retain it. Their social base is too narrow. It is all exhausted by a handful of Bolshevik fanatics” (Sorokin, 2000: 173). Meanwhile, the political dynamism of Bolshevism was successful thanks to political and economic instability in Russia, planned and executed by the westernizers themselves in accordance with the canonical strategy of the new world order. Taken as a whole, the sociological journalism of Sorokin was the ideological accompaniment of the steady drift of Kerensky’s clique in the direction of the Disorder.

Why did the idea of freedom, a theorist and proponent of which Sorokin considered himself, quickly degrade to a degree of primitive chaos? Sorokin could not answer this question clearly, not only because of his ideological beliefs, which reduce the scientific value of his “sociological notes” to zero. His “sociology of revolution” was built on historical parallels and generalizations which were explicated with the help of the so-called collective categories as the “substances” of history. This helped him, with his outstanding eloquence, to select the necessary cases for his theory and to present narrative material

in the necessary light to promote “democratization.” All this looked like an “explanation,” but only until reality finally made its own amendments.

The significance of the bureaucracy, including the military, that mutated from a professional class to a political class remained outside the scope of Sorokin. The small urban and rural bourgeoisie, to which Sorokin unsuccessfully appealed, could not play an independent role here because of their heterogeneity and different interests. The work of Sorokin *The Current State of Russia*, published in Prague in Russian shortly after his expulsion from Russia (1922), is interesting precisely because it continued with all the same ways of explaining and predicting the events that he used in his sociological publicism in the period of the Disorder 1917–1918.

The ultimatum of history, as Sorokin believed, was that the regime of “communism-statism” had to settle for capitalism and the bourgeois legal system unconditionally for 2–3 years or to forcibly disappear from the historical arena (Sorokin, 1922: 47). The basis for this confidence was a long list of economic, social and political deprivations, supplemented by crime and deviant behavior statistics. According to his prediction, the government was to move to a moderate democratic party expressing the interests of peasant proprietors (Ibid.: 56–57). In his extensive monograph *Sociology of the Revolution* (447 pages), which was published in English in the USA in 1925 (Sorokin, 1925), the list of deprivations was supplemented and illustrated with the help of historical examples selected for the occasion. Terminologically, it differs quite significantly from the Russian-language version (the manuscript of 1923 was republished in Russia in 2004), which gives the impression of two parallel methodologies of the “sociology of revolution” — Russian and American.

The basic principle of analysis of sociological theories can be viewed in the light of key idea of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge that “there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured” (Mannheim, 1954: 2). As Mannheim wrote, “the so-called pre-scientific inexact mode of thought, however (which, paradoxically, the logicians and philosophers also use when they have to make practical decisions), is not to be understood solely by the use of logical analysis. It constitutes a complex which cannot be readily detached either from the psychological roots of the emotional and vital impulses which underlie it or from the situation in which it arises and which it seeks to solve” (Mannheim, 1954: 1–2). We can find a lot of evidence for this idea in the works by Weber and Sorokin devoted to the analysis of the causes of the Russian collapse 1917–1918.

The question of whether the “scientific objectivity” proclaimed by both writers was a latent manifestation of the “vital impulses” or, due to specific political circumstances and whether they neglected the requirement to base assessments and conclusions only on those hypotheses that can be verified, serves as a reason for understanding the limits of the likelihood that sociology can provide political analysis and forecasting.

## Conclusion

Our study of Weber's and Sorokin's approaches to the analysis of the Great Russian Disorder 1917–1918 shows a connection between their political affiliations and scientific views which has determined the boundaries in which their political worldview was transformed into sociological concepts.

The Weberian treatment of “method” should also be borne in mind: Weber considered it a “methodological pestilence” and “plague of frogs” (Adair-Totef, 2014: 245–268). For Weber, social science methodology “is always only an awareness of the means that have justified themselves in practice” (Weber, 1922a: 217). Accordingly, this paper relies on the belief that formal methodological discussions would not only lead essentially away from substantive problems but also create a dangerous illusion that with its help an understanding of the object of analysis may be achieved.

Weber's concept of the invariance of domination set a certain trend in the studies of Russian revolutions, within the boundaries of which the selection and interpretation of information was carried out. This concept is a very effective research tool, however, in the case of Russian Disorder 1917–1918 Weber used the concept inconsistently and contrary to his own attitudes.

Sorokin's “sociology of revolution” adhered to behavioral psychological reductionism, presented by Sorokin in his main theoretical work of the Russian period — *The System of Sociology*, a kind of positivist analogue of Weber's *Economy and Society*. His conception of revolutions was deficient both in its theoretical structure and in its practical consequences. Ways of explaining and predicting the events in the *Notes of the Sociologist*, a sociological journalism of 1917, were continued in his work *The Current State of Russia* (1922) and in his *magnum opus* of this period, *The Sociology of Revolution* (1925).

Claims to comprehend the revolution's roots and causes lead sociologists into a risky zone of the competition of a set of outcomes or “scenarios,” the reliability of which can be confirmed or refuted only by the course of events. Political processes are complex networks of interaction between a multitude of actors and circumstances for which there are no generalizing theories and which cannot be interpreted on the basis of an isolated classification of any groups of factors.

This paper shows that contrary to their insistent demands for scientific objectivity and rigor, Weber and Sorokin failed to account for the goals and actions of key actors on the Russian and world political scene which engineered Russian collapse 1917–1918. As a result, the accuracy of their approaches is in doubt.

## References

- Adair-Totef C. (2014) “Methodological Pestilence”: Max Weber's Devastating Critique of Stammler. *Max Weber Studies*, vol. 14, no 2, pp. 245–268.
- Andreeva N. (2015) V bor'be s “russkoy ugrozoy”: emigratsiya pribaltiyskikh nemtsev v gody Pervoy mirovoy voyny [In a Struggle against “Russian Menace”: Baltic-Germans



- Emigration during the World War I]. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History*, no 4, pp. 100–112. (In Russian)
- Caffery J. P. (2013) *Lord Milner's Second War: The Rhodes-Milner Secret Society; the Origin of World War I; and the Start of the New World Order*, CreateSpace.
- Chernysh M. (2017) Pitirim Sorokin i yego teoriya revolyutsii [Pitirim Sorokin and His Theory of Revolution]. *Universe of Russia*, vol. 26, no 4, pp. 71–96. (In Russian)
- Collins R. (2001) Weber and the Sociology of Revolution. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, vol. 1, no 2, pp. 171–194.
- Collins R. (1989) Sociology: Proscience or Antiscience?. *American Sociological Review*, vol. 54, no 1, pp. 124–139.
- Freud S. (1926) *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse: und Neue Folge*, Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag.
- Glotov M. (2012) O nesoglasovannosti biograficheskikh dannyykh rossiyskogo perioda zhizni P.A. Sorokina: kriticheskiy analiz [On the Inconsistency of the Biographical Data of the Russian Period of the Life of P. Sorokina: A Critical Analysis]. *Sociological Studies*, no 3, pp. 138–144. (In Russian)
- Golovin N. (2017) Maks Weber: “Vse moi simpatii prinadlezhat russkomu osvoboditel'nomu dvizheniyu”: stat'i, pis'ma i ocherki klassika sotsiologii o revolyutsiyakh, voyne i demokratii [Max Weber: “All My Sympathies belong to the Russian Liberation Movement”: Articles, Letters and Essays of the Classic Sociology about Revolutions, War and Democracy]. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, vol. 20, no 4, pp. 70–88. (In Russian)
- Hellmann M. (1975) Der Disput aus heutiger Sicht. *Osteuropa*, vol. 25, no 8/9, pp. A442–A448.
- Ivanov D. (2017) Pitirim Sorokin i russkiye revolyutsii [Pitirim Sorokin and the Russian Revolutions]. Available at: <http://znamlit.ru/publication.php?id=6731> (accessed 15 November 2018). (In Russian)
- Johnston B. (1999) Pitirim Sorokin and sotsiokulturnie tendentsii nashego vremeny [Pitirim Sorokin and Socio-cultural Trends of Our Time]. *Sociological Studies*, no 6, pp. 13–24. (In Russian)
- Kaesler D. (2015) Max Weber 4.0: Wo stehen wir in der Max Weber-Forschung?. Available at: <https://literaturkritik.de/id/20352> (accessed 9 March 2019).
- Kovalev V. (2017) Pitirim Sorokin o sotsiologii revolyutsii: analiz katastroficheskogo opyta — uroki i prognozy dlya sovremennosti [Pitirim Sorokin on the Sociology of Revolution: Analysis of Catastrophic Experience — Lessons and Forecasts for the Present]. *Vestnik of Piritim Sorokin Syktyvkar State University. Humanities Series*, no 1, pp. 54–76. (In Russian)
- Liszkowski U. (1986) “Die russische Gefahr im deutschen Hause”: Otto Hoetzsch als Kritiker der deutschbaltischen Rußlandpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg. *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, vol. 37, no 2, pp. 215–239.

- Lomonosova M. (2006) Pitirim Sorokin v politike Rossii i o politike v Amerike [Pitirim Sorokin in Russian Policy and Politics in America]. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, vol. 9, no 1, pp. 45–60. (In Russian)
- Mannheim K. (1954) *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Maslovsky M. (2017) Postveberianskaya sotsiologiya revolyutsii i analiz sovetskogo moderna [Post-Weberian Sociology of Revolution and Analysis of the Soviet Modernity]. *Neprikosnovenny zapas*, no 5, pp. 1–5. (In Russian)
- Michels R. (1925) *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der Modernen Demokratie*, Leipzig: Alfred Kröner.
- Milyukov P. (1991) *Vospominaniya* [Memories], Moscow: Politizdat. (In Russian)
- Nichols L. (2012) Sorokin as Lifelong Russian Intellectual: The Enactment of an Historically Rooted Sensibility. *American Sociologist*, vol. 43, no 4, pp. 374–405.
- Norton B. T. (1983) Russian Political Masonry and February Revolution of 1917. *International Review of Social History*, vol. 28, no 2, pp. 240–258.
- Paddock T. R. E. (2010) *Creating the Russian Peril: Education, the Public Sphere, and National Identity in Imperial Germany, 1890–1914*, Rochester: Camden House.
- Pareto V. (1978) *Compendio di sociologia generale*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Roth G. (2002) Max Weber: Family History, Economic Policy, Exchange Reform. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 15, no 3, pp. 63–78.
- Sandstrom G. (2008) Global Sociology — Russian Style. *Canadian Journal of Sociology/ Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, vol. 33, no 3, pp. 607–629.
- Sapov V. (2017). Pitirim Sorokin i V. I. Lenin [Pitirim Sorokin and V. Lenin]. *Vestnik of Piritim Sorokin Syktyvkar State University. Humanities Series*, no 1, pp. 10–33. (In Russian)
- Scaff L. (1984) Weber before Weberian Sociology. *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 35, no 2, pp. 190–215.
- Sorokin P. (1920) *Sistema sotsiologii. T. 1: Sotsial'naya analitika. Ch. 1: Ucheniye o stroyenii prosteyshogo (rodovogo) sotsial'nogo yavleniya* [System of Sociology, Vol. 1: Social Analytics, Part 1: The Doctrine of the Structure of the Simplest (Clan) Social Phenomenon], Petrograd: Kolos. (In Russian)
- Sorokin P. (1922) *Sovremennoye sostoyaniye Rossii* [Current State of Russia], Praga. (In Russian)
- Sorokin P. (1925) *The Sociology of Revolution*, Washington: J. B. Lippincott.
- Sorokin P. (1926) Die russische Soziologie im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. *Jahrbuch fur Soziologie*, vol.2. pp. 462–483.
- Sorokin P. (1964) *A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim Sorokin*, New Haven: College and University Press.
- Sorokin P. (2000) *Zametki sotsiologa. Sotsiologicheskaya zhurnalistika* [Notes of the Sociologist. Sociological Journalism], Saint Petersburg: Aleteya. (In Russian)
- Stankevich V. (1920) *Vospominaniya. 1914–1919 gody* [Memories, 1914–1919], Berlin: I. P. Ladyzhnikov. (In Russian)

- Veblen T. (1915) *Imperial Germany and Industrial Revolution*, London: Macmillan & Company.
- Weber M. (1984) *Max Weber: ein Lebensbild*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1908) Lettera 59 a Robert Michels. *Archivio Max Weber, Fondi archivistici Roberto Michels*, Torino: Fondazione Luigi Einaudi.
- Weber M. (1911) Lettera 126 a Robert Michels. *Archivio Max Weber, Fondi archivistici Roberto Michels*, Torino: Fondazione Luigi Einaudi.
- Weber M. (1913) Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie. *Logos: Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, vol. 4, pp. 253–294.
- Weber M. (1921a) Rußlands Übergang zur Scheindemokratie (April 1917). *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, München: Drei Masken, pp. 107–125.
- Weber M. (1921b) Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland (Sommer 1917). *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, München: Drei Masken, pp. 126–260.
- Weber M. (1921c) Deutschlands künftige Staatsform (November 1918). *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, München: Drei Masken, pp. 341–376.
- Weber M. (1922a) Kritische Studien auf dem Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), pp. 215–219.
- Weber M. (1922b) Der Sinn der “Wertfreiheit” der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), pp. 451–502.
- Weber M. (1980) *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988a) Bemerkungen zum Bericht der Kommission der alliierten und assoziierten Regierungen über die Verantwortlichkeit der Urheber des Krieges. *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988b) Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik: Akademische Antrittsrede. *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988c) Deutschland unter den europäischen Weltmächten. *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988d) Innere Lage und Außenpolitik. *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988e) Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland: Zur politischen Kritik des Beamtentums und Parteiwesens. *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (1988f) Rußlands Übergang zur Scheindemokratie (April 1917). *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (ed. J. Winckelmann), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Weber M. (2005) *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte. Nachlass. Teilband 4: Herrschaft*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Zagorsky S. O. (1928) *State Control of Industry in Russia during the War*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

## Аналитика русских революций у М. Вебера и П. Сорокина

*Эдвард Ожиганов*

Доктор философских наук, ведущий научный сотрудник Центра управления отраслями промышленности Российского университета дружбы народов

Адрес: ул. Миклухо-Маклая, д. 6, Москва, Российская Федерация 117198

E-mail: imitation2025@gmail.com

Макс Вебер и Питирим Сорокин дали противоположные оценки причин российской смуты 1917–1918 гг., но оба ошиблись в прогнозировании ее последствий. Сравнивая их подходы, важно понять, где лежат истоки этих расхождений. Настоящая статья раскрывает значение «демократической» интерлюдии, которая проложила путь к господству большевизма в стране. Независимо от того, были ли Февральский и Октябрьский перевороты 1917 года в России внутренне не связаны между собой, или представляли два последовательных сценария российского коллапса — ответ на этот вопрос освещает как идеологические, так и теоретические корни видения российской смуты М. Вебером и П. Сорокиным. И дело здесь не только в дистанции наблюдения, но и в различиях в методологии подходов и даже в стиле политического мышления. «Социология революции» П. Сорокина была методически основана на исторических параллелях и обобщениях, которые были выражены с помощью так называемых коллективных понятий как действующих «сущностей» истории. М. Вебер, напротив, сделал невозможным даже гипотетическое предположение о действии в истории каких-либо «объективных» закономерностей, тем самым блокировав путь к эволюционному, стадийному и формационному теориям. Оба социолога принимали активное участие в политической реконструкции своих стран, однако если политическая карьера М. Вебера детально изучена, мало что известно о реальной роли П. Сорокина в механизме власти Временного правительства на разных этапах его трансформации. М. Вебер рассматривал события в России главным образом сквозь призму вопроса о дальнейшем участии России в войне и ее последствиях для Германии, находясь в сфере иллюзий о союзе с Великобританией на основе «общности духовных интересов». Пределы аналитического видения П. Сорокиным российской политической сцены были ограничены тем, что он представлял в своем лице российский политический позитивизм и российское политическое масонство.

*Ключевые слова:* российская смута, социология революции, политическая идеология, политический позитивизм, политическое масонство, псевдodemократия, большевизм, политические прогнозы