

Boris N. Mironov: *Istoricheskaia sotsiologiia Rossii*. Sankt-Peterburg: Intersocis, 2009, 536 pp.

Historical sociology practically disappeared in Russia during the Soviet period when the official philosophical doctrine of historical materialism was absolutely predominant. While there were some discussions of the relationship between historical materialism and sociology, the leading role of Soviet Marxism could not be questioned. During the *perestroika* period ideological restrictions were gradually abolished. Nevertheless, the process of institutionalization of Russian historical sociology proved to be rather slow. In any case social history was in a better position than historical sociology in Soviet times. So it is not surprising that the growth of interest in historical sociology in the first post-Soviet years could be seen first of all among historians. Some of them began to employ sociological approaches in a more consistent manner in the 1990s.

Boris Mironov is the author of the two-volume book on social history of Russia covering the period from the beginning of the 18th to the early 20th century. The first Russian edition of that work was published in 1999. Soon after that it was translated into English under the title *The social history of imperial Russia, 1700–1917* (2000). The book was discussed widely by historians both in Russia and abroad. Thus, a considerable part of an issue of *Slavic Review* (Vol. 60, no. 3, Fall 2001) was devoted to discussion of Mironov's study. Most reviewers emphasized the impressive achievement of its author who offered a comprehensive interpretation of Russian history of the imperial period.

Mironov's new work *Istoricheskaia sotsiologiia Rossii* (Historical Sociology of

Russia) is a text-book which is largely based on his previous historical study. However, it is presented as a book on historical sociology. In fact, the author focuses on theoretical problems of historical sociology mainly in introduction and the final chapter which is titled 'Russia and the West: Sociological Images and Historical reality'. In the present review special attention is devoted to these more theoretical statements.

On the whole Mironov discusses a wide range of issues. These include territorial expansion of the Russian state and ethnic relations, changes in social structure and patterns of social mobility, urbanization, demographic changes, transformation of the family, serfdom and the peasant commune, evolution of the political institutions and formation of civil society. Mironov focuses on the processes of modernization in imperial Russia. In his view, the essence of modernization consisted in the growth of individual autonomy and also autonomy of the nuclear family, transformation of the estates into professional groups and classes and, finally, evolution of the state based on law.

Mironov offers a detailed analysis of the formation of different estates in Russia in the 18th century. He argues that the estates were at the same time real social strata and imagined communities. In discussion of changes in the social structure of Russian society since 1860s Mironov concentrates on gradual diminution of the differences between the estates. However, transformation of estates into classes was not finished by 1917. The estate paradigm was preserved in real life as well as in the mentality of various social groups. As Mironov argues, the existence of estates was an obstacle to the growth of the Russian nation with a common culture, common values and laws (p. 93).

Mironov devotes considerable attention to the development of elements of civil society in Russia. He describes the emergence and spread of voluntary associations since the end of the 18th century. The role of the public sphere became more conspicuous after the reforms of the 1860s. By the beginning of the 20th century different kinds of associations existed in Russia. At the same time, as Mironov claims, associations contributed to a certain degree to social exclusion and the split between westernized educated strata and the traditionalist majority of the country's population (pp. 420–421). Social and cultural fragmentation in Russian society was further increased on the eve of the revolution of 1917.

According to Mironov, the state institutions of imperial Russia were on the whole developing in the direction of *Rechtstaat*. Elements of the state based on law emerged in the 1860s and 70s. Although during the rule of Alexander III there were attempts to slow down this development, Mironov believes that the Russian state continued to evolve towards constitutional monarchy and Russian society towards civil society. In Mironov's view, after 1905 Russia actually became a constitutional monarchy (pp. 379–381). Apparently he does not accept using Weber's concept of pseudo-constitutionalism for designation of the political regime in post-1905 Russia. But the development of *Rechtstaat*, as Mironov emphasizes, was interrupted by the revolutionary upheaval.

In the last chapter of the book applicability of different sociological approaches to Russian society of the imperial period is considered. First, Mironov discusses Durkheim's scheme of transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. Second, he refers to the civilizational approach. It is noteworthy that Mironov sums up the images of Russia and the West in Russian

civilizational discourse from Nikolai Danilevskii to eurasianism (pp. 445–446) but he never mentions contemporary approaches to civilizational analysis in western historical sociology. So it is not surprising that Mironov does not accept the possibility that the civilizational paradigm can be combined with modernization theory.

In Mironov's view, the most fruitful approach to the study of imperial Russia is modernization theory. However, he generally follows the early functionalist version of that theory. Mironov constantly emphasizes the universal character of changes in different social spheres in the process of modernization. He argues that this process was basically the same in Russia as in the West. For Mironov, imperial Russia was a 'normal' European country. From his viewpoint, Russia was moving in the same direction as other European states. The main difference was that in Russia modernization began later and it was not completed by the first world war.

It should also be noted that in introduction to the book Mironov considers the contribution to historical sociology of such scholars as Barrington Moore, Reinhard Bendix, Randall Collins and Charles Tilly (pp. 13–21) but he does not draw on their approaches. Moreover, Mironov disregards the fact that these scholars often criticized the functionalist modernization theory. However, in western historical sociology the idea of multiple routes to modernity has been discussed since Moore's study of the social origins of dictatorship and democracy. From the viewpoint of Moore's approach, two different modes of modernization were used in Russia – in the pre-revolutionary and the Soviet periods respectively – but both of them differed from the western 'route to the modern world'.

Mironov's position can also be contrasted with other perspectives on Russian

history. The direct opposite to Mironov's view is the approach taken by Richard Pipes (*Russia under the Old Regime*, 1974). This historian who was drawing on Max Weber's concept of patrimonial domination emphasized the difference between western and Russian political institutions. According to Pipes, the rise of the Russian state represented a sustained deviation from the western path of development. Pipes was looking for the sources of totalitarianism not in western ideas but in Russian institutions. In particular, he discussed the continuity between the police-state which emerged in Russia in the 1880s and the totalitarian state that presumably succeeded it.

However, it is not obvious that the West should be considered a reference point in this case. Thus, the British sociologist Teodor Shanin characterizes pre-revolutionary Russia as 'the first developing country' (*Russia as a Developing Society*, 1985). For Shanin, Russia was neither a backward part of Europe nor an absolutely unique society. He argues that by the end of the 19th century Russia became the first state where social conditions emerged that later became common for the Third world. Shanin believes that acknowledging this fact could allow us to place Russia in a more realistic comparative context.

Johann Arnason regards the development of Russian society as a case of imperial modernization (*The Future that Failed*, 1993). From the viewpoint of the multiple modernities approach he argues that the Russian tradition was characterized by a peripheral position in the Western world and some traits of a separate civilization. In his view, the course of modernization in Russia was co-determined by imperial structures and strategies. This situation aggravated the tensions and conflicts of the modernizing process and led to a cri-

sis that differed from other types of modern revolutions. On the other hand, the post-revolutionary power structures were largely influenced by the imperial legacy. According to Arnason, imperial modernization represented an important aspect of the overall modernizing process and it could give rise to a counter-paradigm of modernity as was the case with the Soviet model.

It seems that the above-mentioned approaches should be taken into account in considering the course of modernization in imperial Russia. In that case the development of Russian society can be seen as a more complex process than simply following the presumably universal route of modernization described by functionalist theory. In general Mironov's work represents some common features of today's Russian historical sociology. It was mainly empirically oriented social history rather than theoretically oriented historical sociology that was developing in Russia in the last two decades. At the same time the leading representatives of Russian historical sociology were drawing mostly on functionalist modernization theory but not on contemporary sociological theories. It is characteristic that the multiple modernities approach is hardly ever mentioned in their publications. But it can be assumed that engagement with the multiple modernities perspective will play an essential role in further development of sociology in Russia. The future of Russian historical sociology will be largely defined by its ability to meet the challenge of the multiple modernities theory.

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