

Historical Sociology in Russia*

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Historická sociologie v Rusku

Abstract: The author of this paper discusses the current state of historical sociology in Russia reflected in the respective section of the Sociological studies journal. After noting the potentialities of the discipline, the author summarizes the overall output of the 20 years' long existence of this section. The basic preoccupation in the initial phase of the section's existence was to get – and convey to readers – a clear understanding of the essence and functions of contemporary historical sociology (HS in the text below), to introduce its potentialities to the Russian sociologist audience. However, even today there are few regular contributors, authors tend to delve into minor issues, and even resort to long surpassed views on the discipline. A most urgent issue for Russian historical sociology today is, according to the author, to draw lessons from Russia's recent centuries to understand the essence of Russia's present as it is penetrated by its past: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under the circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living” (K. Marx). This is the essence of the enigmas to be deciphered by historical sociologists. The author formulates some such enigmas (like the proverbial Russian rake repeatedly stepped-upon) observable in recent (as well as earlier) events in the country.

Keywords: historical sociology; journal's section; Russia's sociology; history of sociology; sociology and history; contemporary Russia; lessons of history

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The new section “Historical Sociology” featured for the first time in the *Sociological Studies* journal in the May 1998 issue (No. 5). Since then, the audience of the journal has had several opportunities a year to read materials on the topic. The section launched under the following circumstances: when joining the staff of the journal in September 1997, I (the author) was entrusted, among other sections, with the “HS” section, along with a pile of texts eventually – according to journal's head editor – to become the first installment of this section. Symptomatically, the contents of the May 1998 section reveal a lack of any uniform understanding of the essence of HS. The introductory text by Zh. T. Toshchenko (head editor) [*Toshchenko 1998*] on historical memory was followed by N. Romanovskiy's text on the definitions of HS as circulated in various sources and historical sociology's uses in the then Western Sovietology [*Romanovskiy 1998*]. E. B. Galkin summarized and discussed data on 83–84 leading personalities of Russia from Rurik († 879) to 1917 [*Galkin 1998*], demonstrating the characteristics of supreme power holders of the country in its past. With hindsight, I see Galkin's material was nearest to the correct notion of HS. The section

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ended with a paper on the politics of grain (bread) pursued by the USSR government [Popov 1998], clearly belonging to social history. In editing the papers for this installment, the question of the essence of HS did emerge, though I failed to find any clear-cut definition.

The HS section of the journal had a pre-history. The Journal's head editor had been firmly motivated to make this step, and competent enough in trends and innovations in the discipline of sociology. He had learned the significance of the impact of the past on human beings, through traditions, arrangements, and memories, from personal experience in researching the social consciousness of USSR citizens. This at a time when the flow of field studies left no time for high-level temporal generalizations or searching for the roots and origins of current events. The significance of HS-studies was also stimulated by the rapidly developing international cooperation with the global sociological community during this period. Russian (post-Soviet) sociologists did know the importance of HS, the "historical turn" in international sociology, the "Renaissance" of HS – though then this was a recent development. The head editor of the Sociological studies journal, Zh. T. Toshchenko (academically busy with such issues as historical memory, historical consciousness, etc.), became a convinced supporter of the idea of introducing such a section in the journal and permitted no delay.

True, in Soviet times there had been no chance for HS to take root in official academia considering the situation with the recognition of sociology's disciplinary status and its place among other social sciences, but there had been attempts to this end. M. N. Gromyko – a student of the West Siberian peasantry – published a paper on the subject advancing some forward-looking ideas. She stated that "the notion of HS is beginning to acquire the right to exist in our literature" [Gromyko 1967: 115]. The development of social history has been accompanied by the growing popularity of sociological methods and application of its concepts. Student textbooks were published for ethnologists and historians by L. P. Lashuk (Moscow State University) *Vvedenie v istoricheskuyu sociologiyu (An introduction to historical sociology)* [Lashuk 1997], L. M. Drobizheva [1971] and B. N. Mironov [1980]. I. D. Kovalchenko's school at the Moscow State University actively developed quantitative history, widely applying sociological methods [Kovalchenko 1987]. The place of HS in historical knowledge was discussed by V. V. Ivanov (Kazan, Republik of Tatarstan), a specialist in the methodology of social sciences [Ivanov 1991].

By the end of 1997, the Journal's editorial portfolio contained some texts (apart from those mentioned above) in what we assumed were HS; this turned out to suffice for 1998 issues only. New texts arrived, among them S. Chuikina's reconstruction of the social traumas and social practices of a family that had to pass through numerous social and political cataclysms in Russia and the world in the first half of the 20th century [Chuikina 1999].¹ The 1998–1999 section also featured the social history of Russia, social demography, etc. Attempts then began to decipher what became a key problem for the section architects: what exactly is HS? In spite of the importance of this topic, I failed for two or three years to find or formulate any response to grasp the essence of contemporary HS (then, to repeat, undergoing a *Renaissance*). This fact prevented me from firmly steering through the practical issues raised by filling the pages of the section with texts disciplinary-wise belonging

¹ The text was not printed in the HS section – the editors did not want to delay the publication; besides, we assumed that papers in HS would continue reaching us regularly enough – alas, we were too optimistic!

to HS. The search for a response to the questions: what should HS do? What are its essence and potentialities? Led me through an international (mainly) and Russian flood of sociological information (at this time the Internet was as good as unavailable to rank-and-file Russian scholars). Handbooks and encyclopedias as a rule simply restated often polarized views and practical approaches.² Even today some scholars trying to work in the field of HS do not know the ins and outs of this array of opinions. Hence, the experiences of our journal might be instructive.

The Key Issue of the “Historical Turn” in Russian Sociology

Scholarly literature contained too many contradictory definitions which do not explain the reasons behind them. Late in the 1980s a scholar from the USSR Academy of Science Institute for academic information in social sciences (a Soviet analogue of the German GESIS) published a review of the then academic output in HS abroad, stating the existence of 3 to 4 practices of working in the HS field as presented by the authors of texts on HS in available Western handbooks and encyclopedias [*Kudinov 2005 (1995)*]. The voluminous literature on history/sociology relationships had nothing to say about the essence of HS. Next, in this search, I took a step that appeared to be flawless: a review of the *International Journal of Historical Sociology* (JHS below in my text; est. 1986), which I entitled the *Visit card of HS* [*Romanovskiy 1999*]. This, I reasoned, must explain the essence of contemporary HS! My head editor, however, was of another opinion: having read my “visitor’s card” text he asked me again: what is HS? There was no reply to this question in the JHS review. This interdisciplinary enterprise at the border of history with sociology often offers its readers social history rather than HS. Its authors do not delve into HS definitions, concentrating instead on specific problems and cases. As a result, I had to add to my paper a few lines stating the practices of JHS editors (p. 106 Russian text).

Meanwhile, the number of different approaches discussed as HS in various sociological sources exceeded a dozen, and I was not certain that the list was close to complete: historical consciousness, historical memory, sociological methods used in studying the past, social history, historical demography, the philosophy of history, the laws of history, the origins of the present, alternatives in history, counter-history, the history of sociology, etc. Later this fact would be stated and discussed in my monograph on HS [*Romanovskiy 2009: 8–15*]. The array of meanings which the authors of works on HS have kept providing this discipline with, called for (as I see the situation now) a historical and sociological (that is researched by sociological tools) investigation of HS’ evolution against a background of the logic of the entire evolution of sociology in the world and in Russia.

Thus, in late 19 – early 20th century Russia (M. Kovalevskiy, V. Kliuchevskiy, N. Kareev, N. Rozhkov e.a.) HS as a discipline was understood as the study of “laws” of historical development. N. I. Kareev’s “historiology” is just a typical example here. V. O. Kliuchevskiy assumed that the “Historical study of specific bodies – in a word, the study of the properties and action of forces creating and guiding human co-existence – forms the task of a special branch in historical science, and of the science of society, which also might be singled out of from universal historical research under the title *historical sociology*” [*Kliuchevskiy*

² This fact I duly mentioned in my first paper on HS [*Romanovskiy 1998: 8–9*].

1993: 5]. In the second half of the 20th century, this search for universal historical laws was already seen as obsolete.

The key to the situation was found in M. Weber's links between Protestantism and modern (in early 20th century) capitalism, as well as in the often cited passage from K. Marx "18th Brumaire": "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under the circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" [*Marx 1976 (1851): 374*]. From this point on, my attention was drawn to the principal function of HS – searching in the social past for sources, or roots, which are helpful for understanding and explaining present phenomena and issues. R. Merton, I learned, wrote his doctoral thesis in the early 1940s on the links between modern capitalism and British science. Popular Foucaultian ideas on the archeology of knowledge [*Foucault 1994 (1969)*] were grounded on the above-mentioned Marxian idea: the past is there in the present, the present is the result of past events and influences. J. Goldthorpe supported my stance with his review of European family evolution [*Goldthorpe 1987*], as did R. Collins with his "Credentials" in education and stratification [*Collins 1979*], and US social psychologist T. Shibutani, in his study of the essence and functions of rumours, extracted from a sum of cases from the Old Testament to Fidel Castro [*Shibutani 1966*]. The sociological community in its time had debated works by F. Braudel, I. Wallerstein, T. Skocpol; the journal *Past and Present* discussed the agrarian roots of early European industrialization and capitalism (1976–1982). In Russia, 1997 was the year a doctoral dissertation defended in the Institute of sociology, RAS, on *Historical Sociology: the making of the social institutions of Soviet Russia (the 1920s)* by A. I. Chernykh [*Chernykh 1998*] with due monograph appearing the following year.

HS was busily gaining momentum. Its "Renaissance" and the "historical turn" in sociology brought about a flow of texts on issues linking history with sociology. The discipline kept on institutionalizing as more and more universities were offering relevant courses, texts on HS multiplied, and HS sections emerged in national sociological associations. However, the definition of historical sociology had yet to be deciphered for architects of HS-section in our journal. The logic of the array of HS definitions, analyzed in parallel to the evolution of sociology, allowed understanding and explanation of the multiple ways to fill in the content of the "HS" discipline offered by various authors in many countries. I interpret this fact as follows: in the eras of Comte, Marx, Spencer or Kliuchevskiy, sociologists mined history to find laws of societal development. Late in the 20th century, HS was understood in the way Marx (18 Brumaire) and Weber (Ethics) had taken it. In mid-1950s sentence was pronounced on this "old" way, i.e., looking for laws of history through HS. A US review of sociology's achievements from the 1950s (published 1958) in a collection of scholarly articles *Contemporary Sociology* stated that HS was dead beyond resurrection. The words were authored by H. Barnes, who earlier had written on theories of social evolution [*Barnes 1958: 266*].

My search for a "correct" definition of HS was spurred on by preparatory efforts by my colleagues to publish a new encyclopedia on sociology: they insisted that I wrote a new entry for it. V. V. Kudinov had done the similar job the dozen years earlier with the obvious goal to inform Russian readers on the then – in the late 1980s – uses and understandings of HS in Western sociology [*Kudinov 1989; 1995*], while the 2002 encyclopaedia needed

an academic definition of HS and a description of its specific practical uses. My formula constructed for this encyclopaedia ran as follows: HS is “a part of sociology ensuring by its methods a unity between the analysis of the past, present and future and the temporal continuum of sociological theorizing and empirical research, by means of embracing the historical past into analysis of a given topic studied by sociologists, thus defining its historically and socially given parameters” [*Romanovskiy 2003: 528*]; it partially coincided with at least one of the formulas found translated from English reference books published by this time in Russia (i.a., [*Abercromby et al.: 175*]). I also happened to more concisely define HS as a *temporal, historical component of sociology*. To enrich sociologists’ research efforts with the historical component at an empirically verified, non-speculative level – this is the main purpose of HS in our days. This is what the “historical turn” demanded which was taking place in sociology then.

Incidentally, this understanding of HS enabled me more clearly to see which texts arriving at the journal’s office were closer to the core of HS, or to its periphery, and which lay outside it and belonged to HS’s past. This helped a lot in selecting materials to be published. In practice, this definition of HS was not strictly adhered to, and we published social history interesting for our readers, or data from historical demography, or views on methods used by sociologists when studying the events of the past, or debates on historical memory and historical consciousness, etc. A “soft” approach to selection was inevitable for we rather regularly ran short of HS-papers in our postbox. Sociologists here rarely turned to the capabilities of HS, while historians almost never studied the past using the sociological tool-box and concepts. Yet we hoped the situation was reversible.

Efforts and Results

Recognition by the top Russian sociological community of the issues of HS was reflected in grants by the Russian Academic Foundation of Humanities (RHAF) between 2003 and 2010 – first for a general review of the field, then for studying the current problems of HS, and finally for the theme of “historicization” (later I shall return to this). Annually, on average, our journal was publishing two to three installments on HS, sometimes resorting to translations of the texts or book reviews of eminent foreign authors’ (unfortunately these were rare) related to HS. I had to write for the section too (in fact, I enjoyed it), for instance with a reconstruction of Stalin’s thinking in the spring of 1941 [*Romanovskiy 2005*], when he suddenly commanded publication of his 1934 notes on a text from F. Engels heritage.

The situation of Russian HS as it looked at this time is documented by a “Round Table” (in correspondence form) in our journal *Historical sociology: experience and outlook* (2004). Again, this was effected under the head editor’s active insistence. It was difficult to find participants for the Roundtable as there were few at hand: the author of a book on HS, M. Ya. Bobrov (1929–2005) [*Bobrov 1998*]; V. V. Afanassiev, who published a booklet on HS in 1995 [*Afanassiev 1995*] – we failed to locate him as he had left his city of Barnaul and only much later emerged at the journal office; Yu. N. Rozhkov – author of a monograph on Soviet youths’ everyday lives in the 1920’s [*Rozhkov 2002*]. J. Alsted of Denmark took part – he had just published a book on HS [*Alsted 2001; 2005*]. A. I. Chernykh was unable to take part; B. N. Mironov willingly agreed – a historian with a name – and also persons known for their insights into the general problems of contemporary sociology such as

I. F. Deviatko and G. E. Zborovskiy. The “Round Table” could not but demonstrate a wide range of understandings of HS among Russian sociologists – from the search for historical laws to providing the sociological toolbox used by historians. The head editor insisted that I, too, take part in the “Table,” closing the discussion by summarizing the views expressed on the subject of HS and reproducing my definition of this sociological discipline [*Romanovskiy 2009*: 52].

While studying contemporary HS, I repeatedly stumbled on the term “historicization” (or “historicism”). As a scholarly problem this induced me to delve into methodology of “historicization” – that is, to research the logic (real or in scholarly mental work) of constructing, as in our case, events, innovations etc where “Historicization” was applied – apart from clarifying the logic of multiple HS understandings – to methodologically similar analysis of the history of sociology and then the development of sociological theory from Comte to J. Alexander and B. Latour. “Historicization,” I argued, was a methodological strategy (research design) to investigate the intricacies and factors of our discipline’s evolution. I even dared to measure these factors via an experts’ poll [*Romanovskiy 2010*].

RHAF eventually supported the publication of my modest book *Istoricheskaya sotsiologiya* (Historical Sociology) [*Romanovskiy 2009*: 294] generalizing my publications partly mentioned above. The book embraced: 1) Problematizing the understanding of HS through 100 years or so in Russia and the world (Chapters 1 to 3); 2) the Methodology of a sociologist’s work in this field (Chapter 4: Four “Ms” of Historical Sociology); 3) Applying HS to a range of science issues (history of knowledge, history of sociology, inter-disciplinarity in sociology); 4) “Patterns” of Russia (pre-Soviet, USSR and post-Soviet Russia): history through the looking glass of HS – here historical sociology was applied to painful problems of our country’s past and present.

This book somehow became a kind of watershed in my infatuation with the “broad” analysis of international and Russian historical sociology. Far greater attention was demanded from me by another section of the journal *Theory and Methodology*.³ The HS section lived a life of its own – not too dynamic; some texts in it looked odd while others were impressive. Thus, the potentialities of HS were well reflected in a paper on the Volga region rural home industries before 1917 – growing immensely under government’s military orders. Some of these had come close to what we might call workshops [*Morozov 1999*: 105] or factory enterprises. The Government was supportive in allowing them not to enlist their workers in the armed forces. This historical episode gave evidence of a gradual “other” strategy of Russia’s industrialization⁴ in contrast to the historically real one.

Historical Turn Unfinished?

The theme of Soviet industrialization found its continuation in the review of S. F. Grebenichenko’s (1962–2017) book on home industries (*promysly* – crafts) in Russia at the time of NEP [*Grebenichenko 2000*], when they yielded up to two thirds of foreign trade incomes, and were seriously weighed up as a starting point for the newly planned industries in the

³ Some persons kept saying – There is no theoretical sociology in Russia.

⁴ The “giant plants” allegedly the essence of socialist industrialization, unviable in 1990s almost without exceptions, began demonstrating their ailments much earlier.

country (in the way, in particular, South Korea went much later). The impressive sociological content analysis was masterfully done of regulatory acts by the authorities of the USSR and the RSFSR in the 1920s, administering the then sphere of rural trade cooperation and artisanal production. 1217 decrees, laws, decisions, clarifications, directives, regulations, circulars, etc. were computer-processed – over 14 thousand pages of typewritten text. The key concepts of this set of documents proved the existence and interplay of four alternatives to the development of Soviet Union economy (as history knows it), including the transformation of crafts, developing handicraft workshops into machine industry enterprises. Stalin's industrialization was something different.

St. Petersburg expert in the social history of XVIII – early XX centuries Russia, B. N. Mironov, employs a filigree method of sociological research of the past. At the beginning of his scientific path (1984), he wrote the monograph *the Historian and Sociology*. In the *Social History of Russia* [Mironov: 2016 (1999, 2001, 2008)], he uses proto-sociological surveys (Imperial Geographic Society, Free Economic Society, etc.), statistics (the weight and growth of draftees for the Russian Empire army over a number of decades), participant observation (a journalist who worked as coachman studying the “*izvozchiki*” group – an early example of such a method), survey questionnaires, *zemstvo* statistics, censuses. Even a document by Ekaterina the Great is shown to have been close to sociology.

A. V. Zhavoronkov, meanwhile, toiled at the base of his monographic research for 25 years [Zhavoronkov, 2007]: the resultant 135 field studies supplied him with 60 million social facts about the dynamics of the mass consciousness of Russians in the spheres of social life – “an independent sociological examination of the processes that took place in our society over the past 40 years” [*ibid.*: 449]. Gaussians, algorithms, clusters, scalar masses, interpolations, matrices, maps, graphs (two-, three- and even four-dimensional), entropy, Spearman's correlation coefficients and Kendall (Leikert) scaling represent the authors' methods of research and data presentation. The result was some constants in the behavior of the upper classes, in their reaction to the demands of the lower classes, and the response pattern of the latter: “Five-sixths of the information field fails to correlate in problematic and topical structure either with intra-apparatus information or with final decision” [*ibid.*: 443]; this fact needs no comment.

Scholars writing for the section under consideration, in fact, represent Russian historical sociology. To add to this, there are also M. V. Maslovskiy and N. S. Rozov. The academic interests of the latter are focused on the philosophy of history or, in his words, historical macro-sociology [Rozov 2016; 2011; 2009; 2002].⁵ M. V. Maslovskiy worked significantly in the HS field for a time [Maslovskiy 2001; 2002; 2011], only later to change the focus of his efforts, and it is yet unclear whether he remains in the field. Historical sociology is a focal point of publications in our journal by the head of the respective department in the Charles University in Prague J. Šubrt [2014; 2015; 2016].

Worth mentioning too are papers on the centuries-long evolution of the terms “right” and “left” in Indo-European languages [Lukitchev – Skorik 2011] – a characteristic aspect of the linguistic turn in sociology and clear-cut demonstration of Russian specifics of legal understanding; contributions to the centenary of the 1917 revolution [Vodolazov 2014a, 2014b; Mironov, 2014], a paper on symbolic capital in the brand *His Majesty's Imperial*

⁵ N. S. Rozov also translated some key R. Collin's works in HS.

court supplier [Grigoriev 2006], historical demographic essays by L. Rybakovskiy [Rybakovskiy 2000a; 2000b] etc. In recent years socially important issues have been raised – in historical terms – in articles on Ivan the Terrible (and Stalin today) among Russian Christian Orthodox marginals – a remarkable trait of societal consciousness [Vorontsov et al. 2017]; in the study of Russia's modernization (“Europeization”) lessons [Nefiodov 2017]; in debates among sociologists and philosophers on “the ruse of the needle”⁶ for making Russia modern [Trubitsyn 2010 e.a.]. Archival data (previously inaccessible for secrecy reasons) permit a view of some social characteristics of Soviet society [Bogdanov – Ostapiuk 2017].

However, the achievements of the section reviewed are but a weak indication of what HS is capable of. In Europe and the USA – the birth-place of HS “Renaissance” – the names of I. Wallerstein, R. Collins, C. Tilly (1929–2008), S. Eisenstadt (1929–2008), T. Skocpol are well known; I translated some of their work. Thus, Tilly – in the pages of our journal – expressly advised those going in for HS to practice social critique, pattern identification, scope extension, and process analyses [Tilly 2009]. In this vein, J. Šubr [Šubr 2014] recently presented his views on Sh. Eisenstadt's HS, on a number of issues related to the field of sociological knowledge. L. Griffin – in a translated paper – reflected on methods of event-structure analysis program application in HS research [Griffin 2010].

Our journal introduced to its readers the *Trajectories* newsletter (formerly – *Footnotes*) of the *Comparative and historical sociology* section of the American Sociological Association. We also published translated debates on whether historical sociology should become even more comparative [Arjomand 2014; Wallerstein 2014; Mahony 2014] to better understand the evolution of human society. We followed the “Global historical sociology” project and even more ambitious [Global Historical ...]⁷ debates among the members of this ASA section as to whether “Comparative HS can save the world,” or “Should do so” [How Comparative ...; Should Comparative ...].

Russian historical sociology does not feature grand designs; it is much more modest in its posture, facing so many unresolved issues. Shifts in the field are slow; it is too early to speak of dynamics or achievements. Typical of it is episodic attention to minor topics. 20 years of HS section activity have failed to change this general situation. Moreover, there occurred an unfortunate setback. T. N. Kremliov [2016] published *Istoricheskaya sotsiologiya: voprosy teorii obshchestvennogo razvitiya* (*Historical sociology (questions of the history of societal development)*). The book was polemically criticized by N. S. Rozov [Rozov 2017] – perhaps not undeservedly – and the author responded. Kremliov's scheme depicts human society as evolving from a primitive stage to agrarian society, replaced by an industrial one, while ahead looms the intellectual society of the future [Kremliov 2016: 5–8]. The 650 page-long large-format text is mostly speculative, and there is no discussion of sociological data,⁸ while the version of societal development it obviously reflects is the *Instmat's* (Historical materialism) remnants of influence in the social thought of our

⁶ “Oil needle” – overdependence of the country on oil and gas exports allegedly preventing Russia's economy and polity modernization.

⁷ The monograph's editors though, modestly speak of a “promise of a truly global historical sociology” URL – <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B074XDW7T> (accessed 14. 11. 17).

⁸ No worse would be a scheme with primitive society replaced by a traditional one, followed by modern, post-modern and – in perspective – informational society. Is this historical sociology?

country. Sociology, however, understood, is expected to operate with empirically verified data; speculative schemes are at best hypotheses to be empirically proven. It is a fact that to empirically ground a theory of human development (evolution) is thus far beyond the abilities of social scholars and their digital tools – however powerful.

Recent developments in Russian historical sociology reflect a degree the state of national sociology, which is largely concentrated on current problems of societal reality. HS might offer a perspective on the contemporary social problems of our country (I shall indicate few of them below) that, taking into consideration its centuries' old institutional and cultural issues, have threatened and still threaten it with serious trials – very much like the proverbial rake repeatedly stepped upon by us or our predecessors, destabilizing society. The state of historical sociology today in Russia depends much on data mined by professional historians. Alas, historical knowledge in our country is passing through “Troubled times” – especially with regard to 20th and early 21st-century history. “Decline” [Chelyshev 2017] apparently affects the whole body of this science in Russia today. The origins of this issue are a specific matter, but often it looks like the Russian situation in the historical profession today is mostly shaped by the demoralization of historians faced with aggressive amateurs with the media behind them.

Without an understanding of the past there is no future: does our attitude to history not illustrate the truth of this rule? There is no place for panic here. Soviet authorities used to pay excessive attention to history, and the result is well known. The sciences of the past have their potentialities. However, these have to be utilized. Here there is a place for historical sociology, too, to assist in the theoretical foundation of our country's vital problems. There are at least two perspectives for HS which historians together with sociologists might research and table for society to have its decisive say: 1) the less obvious lessons of past history that keep negatively affecting contemporary Russian society and polity; 2) an eventual societal agenda to define steps to correct the situation resulting from such negative influences; that is, to offer eventual remedies – by way of discussing, hypothesizing and verifying or falsifying potential corrections.

Group 1), related to lessons of the past, might embrace, for example, the necessity to achieve a) understanding of the USSR's experiences as a globally alternative social post-capitalist order, b) discovering the circumstances, reasons, mechanisms, etc that led to a series of “fatal” decisions resulting in millions of human and billions of (in fact – countless) economic losses for our country and its people. Tsushima and 22 of June 1941 are two polar illustrations of what I am aiming at. In my modest assessment, there were at least 15 such decisive moments in the 20th century alone – a sufficient sample for scholarly analysis to obtain dependable results; c) recognition of the fact that a most crucial curse for Russia is the issue of “throne succession,” etc.

Group 2), related to feasible steps to correct the situation, might concern such diverse issues as the formation of true elites, the training, and re-training of public government officials, overcoming the gap (obvious at present), rift or cleavage between what popular views see as “us” and “them”; the necessity to grasp a really explosive factor of our past and present – the multinational character of our state and society, etc.

To repeat, these are ideas for Russian (and international) experts, to be discussed, refined and defined. But one more aspect should be clarified. The essence of the unlearned lessons of the past – curses and unseen traps – prompts 15) the formulation at the very

outset of ways and means, methods and methodologies of “solving” the above issues. Their historical embeddedness calls for affecting the deepest cultural layer of traditions and peoples’ consciousness, a signal for the government and intelligensia of the country to resort to cultural changes amounting in sum to a cultural revolution. Much has been said about this in the past, yet little, if any, attention has been paid to the decisive issue for our situation – the methods and methodology of correcting trends that grew up in this sphere. The task is to more thoroughly “dig into” the experience of working out and applying the social technologies of cultural revolution. In Russia and abroad, this experience lies, I can say, on the surface.

Considerations about the processes in Russia over recent centuries, suggested by this HS-reading, result from 20 years of work on conceptualizing, fulfilling and criticizing the rubric of HS in our journal. Characteristically, the thoughts of such a plan have kept emerging in recent months in the context of the presidential campaign in the Russian Federation, as attempts to formulate a kind of national agenda for the country and its people. A thinking reader, from this fact, will be able to refine his ideas about HS at its present-day stage of development. It’s a pity, but the communities of professional sociologists and historians find it difficult and are slow to master this problem. The rubric of HS in our magazine has presented only a fraction of the data but is capable nevertheless of influencing ideas prevailing in current public thought effectively. As shown by the recent book from T. Piquetti [2015], science is able to pose and suggest solutions for ambitious tasks with regard to the links between the past, present, and future. There may or may not be demand for them from above and below. A better understanding of the essence and prospects of the situation in the world – this is the price for those in sociology who dare to put “macro issues” on the agenda and find answers to them. Considering the rubric “HS” for 20 years, I conclude with alarm: making no headway is too akin to stagnation, the consequences of which are still not overcome.

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