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Special considerations in translating Pitirim Sorokin's work “City and country” (Prague, 1923)\(^1\)

The scholarly activity, as well as the life, of the Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin (1899–1988) is usually divided into two periods — a Russian and an American period. In September 1922, Sorokin was expelled from Soviet Russia with the prohibition not to return under the threat of death. He became world famous as an American professor and the founder and chairman of the Department of Sociology at Harvard University, and was elected President of the American Sociological Association in 1965.

Sorokin’s “return” to his homeland began in the late 1990s and continues to this day. Research is being undertaken and conferences held on the study of his legacy, his scholarly works translated into and published in Russian, Russian-language works that were previously locked away in special collections are republished, and work is underway to publish the complete works in Russian.

It should be noted that while Sorokin’s works are being translated into and published in Russian sedulously, the reverse process (the translation of Sorokin’s Russian works into English) was (and still is) exceedingly rare (virtually unknown) after the translation and publication into English of Sorokin’s “The Sociology of Revolution” (1925), which he composed in Russian and which he translated with the assistance of Professor Edward Cary Hayes of the University of Illinois. This can only be regretted, since by the time of his emigration to the United States in 1925 (he had already left his native country a year earlier), Sorokin was a well known social scientist and the author of numerous publications, including scholarly articles and books, book reviews, ethnographic essays, and literary works, as well as many newspaper articles — Sorokin, as is well known, was actively involved in political activities. Among this array of works can be noted: “Преступление и кара, подвиги и награда. Социологический этюд об основных формах общественного поведения и морали” (СПб., 1914) (Crime and Punishment, Deed and Reward: A Sociological Study of the Major Forms of Social Behavior and Morality; St. Petersburg, 1914), “Система социологии” (Пг., 1920) (A System of Sociology; Petrograd, 1920), and (published in exile), “Современное состояние России” (Прага, 1922) (Contemporary Conditions of Russia, Prague, 1922), "Популярные очерки социальной педагогики и политики" (Ужгород, 1925) (Essays on Popular Pedagogy and Politics; Uzhhorod, Czechoslovakia, 1925). The books and articles written and published in Russian by Sorokin remain inaccessible to foreign readers. However, they are of great interest for researchers of his life and work, to his students and followers, and for anyone who is attracted by the scholarly heritage and the very personality of an extraordinary person.

Between the Russian and American periods of Sorokin’s life there was a short European period, which he spent mainly in Prague. Here’s how Sorokin writes about it in “A Long Journey”: “On

\(^1\) Особенности перевода произведения Питирима Сорокина «Город и страна» (Прага, 1925).

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6 (2) "2020
the fourth day of our stay in Berlin I received, through the Czechoslovakian embassy, an invitation from my friend Dr. Masaryk, then President of the Czechoslovakian Republic, to come to Prague as a guest of the Republic" [1. P. 198]. During this meeting, Sorokin was offered a special scholarship, as well as other Russian scientists, which allowed him to conduct active scholarly, pedagogical, and social activities without having to think about earning money.

In general, Sorokin's Prague period is considered by his biographers to have been extremely productive, which was also due to the favorable circumstances existing in Prague for Russian emigrants [2. P. 404–405]. "Czechoslovakia was one of the few European states where the government on its own initiative launched a programme of assistance to the Russian emigrants. Moreover, this aid programme, which was created in 1921 under the name "Ruská Pomocná Akce" (Russian Relief Action) had Russian academics, students and pupils as its primary target groups." [3. P. 576]. The President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, supported this program from its beginnings and during the whole period of its existence. The beneficiaries of Russian Relief Action were primarily three groups of emigrants among whom Russian intellectuals (e.g. scientists and students, teachers, engineers, physicians, writers) occupied the first place [Ibid. P. 577].

According to his biographers, Sorokin was active in Prague in scientific, pedagogical, political, and social activities. He gave lectures at the Rusškij narodnyj universitet (Russian People's University), delivered a huge number of reports and speeches to various audiences on Russian emigration, was a member of the Board of the Union of Russian Writers and Journalists, wrote books, published articles and reviews in emigrant magazines, etc. At the same time, he was preparing to leave for the United States — and studying English assiduously.

Sorokin's article «Город и деревня (Биосоциологическая характеристика)» ("City and Country (Bio-Sociological Characteristics)") [4], which we have selected for translation, was published in 1923 in the collection IV «Крестьянская Россия» under the editorship of A.A. Argunov, A.A. Bem, S.S. Maslov, and P.A. Sorokin. The compilations were published by Sergey Semyonovich Maslov, leader of the Peasant Russia group, which was well known to Sorokin from his joint work in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the members of which group went legally to the West in 1921. In Prague, Maslov received a grant for the publication of periodical collections under the name «Крестьянская Россия. Сборник статей по вопросам общественно-политическим и экономическим» ("Peasant Russia. Compilation of Articles on Socio-Political Issues and Economics"). After arriving in Prague, Sorokin joined the editorial board, participated in the board until issue VI, and published five articles and several book reviews in «Крестьянская Россия» [5. P. 81].

The compilation of publications by Maslov and his colleagues in the mid-twenties actually constituted the strategic program of "Peasant Russia" as a future party. This party was to combine in its program national and governmental problems and the problem of protecting the interests of the most populous social stratum in postrevolutionary Russia — the peasantry [Ibid. P. 84]. Together with Maslov, members of the editorial Board of "Peasant Russia" and some professors, Sorokin planned to create an Institute of Peasant Culture in Prague [2. P. 405]. "City and Country," not being programmatic in form, contributes to the theoretical justification of the above-mentioned strategic program of the future peasant party. It is by this criterion that it should be considered.

This macro-context briefly explains the circumstances of the publication of the template article "City and Country," its subject matter and orientation, specifics of language and style, and translation features.

The text of "City and Country" itself is a bizarre combination of expository prose of a scientific and journalistic nature, with the latter clearly prevailing. The essay (study) is based upon the juxtaposition of key features of cities and villages based upon a number of biological, psychological and social indicators, revealing their contradictory (indeed, antithetic, in Sorokin's view) relationship and future prospects.

The main method of drafting a text in the case of Sorokin's article "City and Country" is antithesis — in both the text as a whole and in its component parts, which are based on antithesis (as noted above): the opposition of city and country, of cities and villages based on their characteristic features (as the author sees them) and their peculiarities. Sorokin, the author, takes a
pro-country, “pro-peasant” position, which is not surprising given his rural upbringing and his political views.

Since we are talking about translation, we will focus on some peculiarities of transmitting the content and style of this article in the “medium” of English.

Scholarly exposition is featured in the first section of Sorokin’s article. He uses abstract social scientific terms such as бракность (marriage), рождаемость (fertility), смертность (mortality), and provides statistical data buttressed by footnotes comprised of statistical tables and references to sources such as the Bulletin de l’Institut international de statistique. Up to this point, the article appears to exemplify logical if not dispassionate analysis and accuracy of presentation.

With respect to the scholarly apparatus, it should be remembered that “Peasant Russia” was not a scholarly publication, which may explain the carelessness and inaccuracies in the preparation of the footnotes. Another reason is that Sorokin simply did not have access to his sources and the ability to verify them. Sorokin — despite the statistics he provides — was not writing here as an empirically oriented scholar, nor as a social scientist engaged in research, but more as a journalist/essayist and polemicist.

However, the conceptual schema (outline of basic concepts) of the article is accurate and unambiguous, and the vocabulary, to a certain extent, is “terminological” — even words of common vocabulary are used. This precludes the use of synonyms to express basic concepts.

The general opposition (city versus country) in the original Russian text is transmitted through the grouping of basic words and phrases linked by a common semantic component: Город (“city”) or деревня ("village/country"): город, горожанин, городская среда, рабочий; деревня, село, деревенская среда, сельский житель, "деревенщина", крестьянин, селянин, земледелец.

When translating, it is necessary to choose the same unambiguous lexical equivalent as the one used by the author. At the same time, a number of words acquire a special contextual meaning, and the translator is required to make an informed choice between possible options. For example, in Russian, the word горожанин means “resident of a city,” a large locality, an administrative, industrial and cultural center [6]. The use of the word citizen in a translation is excluded here due to the word’s broad semantics. The basic meaning of citizen is the same as that of the Russian word гражданин, and in the meaning of “city resident,” citizen, requires a reference to a specific city. The most accurate translation in this context is city dweller:

Наконец, из различия той же среды высекает различие горожанина, особенно городского рабочего и земледельца, в их отношении к собственности, к экономическому коллективизму и индивидуализму [4. P. 19].

Finally, the difference between the same environment implies a difference between the city dweller, especially the urban worker and the farmer, in their attitude to property, to economic collectivism and individualism.

To translate горожане as a set of generations of city residents, the word townspeople is used:

В первом поколении они выделяются, главным образом, в нижние слои городского населения: дети их уже в значительной мере входят в средние и высшие слои города, занимая "пустующие места": "горожане"; внучки их поднимаются еще выше [4. P. 7].

In the first generation, they merge mainly with the lower strata of the urban population; their children are already, to a large extent, included in the middle and upper strata of the city, occupying the "empty places" of the extinct "townspeople"; their grandchildren rise even higher.

In Russian, the word деревня can mean a peasant village, in the grammatical form of singulare tantum rural area, and in the collective meaning of rural population, rural residents [6]. In English, these values correspond to different lexemes: village, country, countryside.

Среда (C) города и среда деревни глубоко отличны друг от друга [4. P. 9].

The environment (C) of a city and the environment of a village are profoundly different from one another.

Таков «укрупненно» явлений в жизни городского населения и роль деревни в поддержании его биологического баланса [4. P. 8].
Such is the “cycle” of phenomena in the life of the urban population and the role of the country
in maintaining its biological balance.
Значительно иными являются условия в деревне [4, P. 20].
Conditions in the countryside are significantly different.

In Russian, the word село is synonymous to деревня. A rough translation for both words would
be village. The main difference between them is that село does not mean a rural settlement at
all, but a larger one that has administrative significance. English does not know this differentiation,
so this difference is not taken into account when translating:

Остальные 59,7% «берлинцев» — пришлые, среди них главный % падает на выходцев из деревень и
сел [4, P. 5].
The remaining 59.7 percent of “Berliners” are newcomers, among them the main percentage is comprised
of natives of villages.

When translating the phrases деревенский житель and сельский житель, a villager is used:

А потому не может не быть различий и поведение — рефлекс, акт, поступки и психические пере-
живания — коренного горожанина и сельского жителя, в частности земледельца [4, P. 9].
And therefore, neither can the behavior — reflexes, acts, deeds and mental experiences — of a native city
dweller and a villager, in particular a farmer, be similar either.

В совокупности комплекс раздражителей деревенского жителя. Его страйк и ритм жизни бесконечно
просто [4, P. 10].
A completely different “complex of irritants” of the villager. His structure and rhythm of life are infinitely
simpler.

In the Russian language, the word деревенщина ranks low stylistically — in the dictionary it
is marked “colloquial, dismissive” and defined as “concerning a villager, a simple, rude person” [6].
Sorokin encloses деревенщина in quotation marks in each instance of its use, thus indicating
that the word is used with this colloquial meaning. Possible English translations for деревенщина
include hick, country bumpkin, or redneck. Hick seems like the right choice. In American slang,
hick means a person who lives in the country and is regarded as unintelligent or provincial.

Человек физически сильный, «пылающий здоровьем, румяный» и т. д. у нас ассоциируется не с <<горожа-
ниным», а с <<деревенщиком>> [4, P. 4].
A physically strong person, “in the pink, ruddy,” and so on, we associate not with a “city dweller,” but with
a “hick”.

Объем опыта, умственного <<кругозора» (или на объективном языке <<усовершенствований>>) горожани-
на гораздо шире, чем «деревенщины» [4, P. 11].
The scope of “experience,” of the mental “bait” or in objective language “of the conditioned reflexes”
of a city dweller is much broader than that of a “hick”.

As can be seen from the Russian text, Sorokin uses the word деревенщина in the sense of
native villager. The “lower” (i.e., derisive) stylistic component of its meaning within this context is
reduced, but translation requires the use of the English word hick enclosed (marked stylistically, as it were) within quotation marks.

According to Russian grammar, nouns with the suffix —щина(а) can also have a secondary collective
meaning: “a group of objects or persons characterized by a characteristic” [7, P. 180]. The last
meaning of the word деревенщина is not recorded in dictionaries and is contextual in nature. In English, the contextual meaning or sense of collectivity is not formally expressed, so, in such
cases, the plural form is used:

Контраст сельского и городского населения в этом отношении выступал бы гораздо резче, если бы
мы имели чисто городское население, не пополняемое непрерывно притоком <<деревенщины», а так
сказать предоставленное себе самому [4, P. 5].
The contrast between the rural and urban populations in this regard would have been much more marked if we had a purely urban population, not replenished continuously by the influx of "hicks", but left to their own devices, so to speak.

Прирост населения Петербурга за шесть лет, равный 178 000, был вызван притоком 150 000 ивне, из которых 85% составляют крестьяне, т.е. «деревенщина» [4. P. 6].

The population growth of St. Petersburg over six years, equal to 178,000, was caused by an influx of 150,000 from the outside, of which 85 percent were peasants, i.e. "hicks".

It is in the collective sense that this "low stylistic marking" is even more leveled, and «деревенщина» = "hicks" denotes the totality of native villagers and contextually is an almost "stylistically neutral" word.

Another notable peculiarity of the text of "City and Country" is its journalistic nature — and, even more so — rhetorical. With a few abbreviations and edits, Sorokin’s article can be read out loud to an audience. The text is rich in rhetorical tropes and figures, and the article uses metaphors, idioms, and various types of citation. It can be assumed that the article was based on the text of a public speech by Sorokin, or that it was written with the expectation of its being used for public speaking practice.

The journalistic nature of the text is particularly noticeable in Sections 2 and 3. Undoubtedly, the journalistic experience of Sorokin, the former editor of two major Socialist-Revolutionary newspapers, inclined him (and gave him an aptitude) to write quickly, expressively, and emotionally, in order to have an impact on the reader. We will illustrate these features with an example.

Не естественный ветер обдувают его, а струя вентиляционного воздуха, настоящее солнце ему заменяет электрическая люстра, почву — мостовая, реку — схват в железо и бетон, испачканный нефтью канал, лес и деревья — подстриженный и напудренно-выложеный сквер, чудеса и жизнь природы он видит лишь в «кино», жизнь животных — в «зоологическом саду». Сам он весь «стилизован» и «окультурен», начиная с вставленных зубов, пудры, корсета и конча... нефтью, машинным маслом и колпаком угля... [4. P. 9-10].

It is not a natural wind that blows it, but the stream of ventilated air; the real sun is replaced by an electric chandelier, the soil is pavement, a river is compressed into iron and concrete, a canal stained with oil, a forest and trees are a trimmed and powdered and polished park, the wonders and the life of nature he sees only in the "cinema", the life of animals — in a "zoological garden". He himself is all "stylized" and "cultured", starting with false teeth, powder, a corset, and ending... with oil, engine oil and coal soot...

Sorokin frequently uses punctuation marks to create “emotive space” within the text, especially ellipses and dashes as a means of “expressive” punctuation. When a passage with an ellipsis is translated into English, the ellipsis as a sign creating emotional tension is preserved. The dash as an intonation sign (not as a separator, its usual function in English) may or may not be preserved in English translation, depending on the sense of the passage and English grammatical conventions. To the “eye” of a non-Russian reader, Sorokin’s frequent use of dashes seems excessive (viewed on the printed page):

Ежеминутно и ежечасно тысячи раздражителей (газеты, телефон, почта, начальник, подчиненные, пришельцы, электрические эффекты, витрины магазинов, бомб, газ, дым) воздействуют здесь на индивида и требуют от него быстрых, гибких и ловких реакций — ответных, «критических» актов, Иначе — смерть. Отсюда — искривленная быстрота, усталость, рассчитанность («время — деньги», «всё по часам!») и гибкость поведения горожанина [4. P. 10].

Every minute and hourly thousands of irritants (newspapers, telephone, mail, boss, subordinates, petitioners, electrical effects, shop windows, a continuous crowd on the street, noise, dice, shouts, advertisements, etc.) here affect the individual and demand from him quick, flexible and complex reactions — reciprocal, “adaptive” acts. Otherwise, death. Hence the exceptional speed, the deliberate fussiness (“time is money”, “everything is on the clock”) and the flexibility of the behavior of the city dweller.

Иная картина в деревне... Душа ее свежа. Она не переполнена суетительным. Убождения здесь прочные. Заветы святые... Верования живут долго... Догматизм и вера мощны [4. P. 18].

A different picture in the village... Its soul is fresh. It is not overwhelmed with skepticism. Convictions are strong here. Covenants are holy... Creeds live long... Dogmatism and faith are powerful.
Thus, it can be stated that the text of “City and Country” shows the idiosyncrasies of Sorokin’s language and style, an amalgam of scholarly and journalistic prose that was characteristic of many subsequent works of Sorokin in different formats. Objective presentation is combined with the categorical, sweeping statement and rhetoric characteristic of political speeches. Aimed at persuading as much if not more in such instances (i.e., in prose passages of this nature) than scholarship, exposition, or analysis. Such features of the author, Sorokin’s, content, ideas, and style require not only the accurate transmission of the informational and emotional-stylistic component of the text, but also the ability of the translator to immerse oneself in Sorokin’s worldview and his oeuvre as a whole.

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