

PAST AND PRESENT IN MIND OF NIZHNIY NOVGOROD CITIZENS: SOCIOANTHROPIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Awareness about the historical past, its evaluation and interpretation by the society has a great scientific significance, since the self-consciousness of any nation begins precisely from the history. Its symbolically significant events mould the semantic basis of the national and civil identity. At the same time, the historical awareness of the nation is subject to a variety of factors: Political, socio-economic, spiritual and moral ones. Life itself is changing and the historical awareness is gradually changing along with it. The purpose of the study, the results of which are presented in this article, is the study of historical perceptions of Nizhniy Novgorod citizens regarding the historical past of our country. A particular emphasis is made on the analysis of intergenerational similarities and differences to various historical moments, as one of the most important tasks of the study was to identify the presence or absence of an intergenerational crisis in the contemporary Russian society on the example of assessment of history and its possible development trajectories.

Keywords: History, Life Itself, Historical Moments, Development Trajectories.

INTRODUCTION

The study incorporated an interdisciplinary approach. The research methodology consists of such trends in sociology as the symbolic interactionism of Garfinkel (1967) and the phenomenological sociology of Schütz (2004) (Garfinkel, 1967; Schütz, 2004). Directly the survey tools were developed by doctor of sociology science, professor of the department of cultural anthropology and ethnic sociology of St. Petersburg State University-Sikevich (2016) (Sikevich, 2016). Processing of the study data included construction of the linear distributions, compiling of conjugacy tables, conduct of correlation analysis using a statistical package of SPSS (Windows, version 21). The study also used a socio-anthropic qualitative methodology for the data estimating. The uniqueness of the study is that a number of questions were related to verification the respondents' attitude to possible trajectories of the development of our country history, i.e., respondents were asked to assess the history in the subjunctive mood. This technique made it possible to identify the preferences of the respondents, their aspirations and hopes.

In the course of the study, it was revealed that there is an expressed awareness about the uniqueness of Russia mission in the past, present and future. The basic nucleus of the Russian mentality, respectful attitude to the strong autocratic rulers is also preserved. The socially

oriented internal policy of the USSR has got approval of the majority of the respondents. No drastic intergenerational disagreements regarding the assessment of the historical past of our country were detected.

METHODOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION

In general, the results of the study allow assess the degree of consolidation and solidarity of Russians regarding the ideas about the historical past of their country and its role and place in the world.

According to Garfinkel (1967), the social life seems coherent and ordered only because members of the society provide it with a certain meaning, thereby they design the social reality (Garfinkel, 1967). When the symbolic integration of the environment is destroyed, the social space inevitably arises in a person a sense of instability and disorder (Sikevich, 2016). The study of perception of the past and present of our history by representatives of different age cohorts, gender, status and education will allow reveal the extent of mutual understanding, presence or absence of intergenerational language of communication.

The Russian history is itself a complex and contradictory phenomenon. Rewriting the historical facts for the sake of the ruling establishment has long traditions. This is especially evident in the newest history of Russia. The history was rewritten at I.V. Stalin, after his death, at N.S. Khrushchev and after his "retirement." A drastic revision of our historical past was subjected during the "perestroika" period in connection with reorientation for the liberal-market course and deideologization of the socio-political space. In this connection, a reasonable question arises: "What kind of history did our compatriots prefer and what assessments do the give to the modern political rulers and their political decisions?"

To answer this question, on the basis of the laboratory on problems of a modern family and family policy of NSPU named after Minin there was conducted a sociological study by questioning different groups of population. The study methodology was developed by the doctor of sociological sciences, the professor of the department of cultural anthropology and ethnic sociology of St. Petersburg State University-Sikevich (2016). The survey was conducted in February 2016 in Nizhny Novgorod (Sikevich, 2016).

The survey involved 150 people. The selection is performed by a quota and was determined by gender (47.3% of men and 52.7% of women), age (18-29 years-26%, 30-39-21.3%, 40-49 16.%, 50-59-17.3%, 60 and older-19.3%) and education: Secondary-13.3%, secondary special-27.3%, incomplete higher (students)-20.0% and higher education-38.7%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to identify the most significant historical epochs in the Russian history, the respondents were offered an open question: "There is an opinion that" history teaches us. "What period of the Russian history do you personally consider the most instructive for the contemporary Russian society?" The answers of the respondents were as follows: 1. Restoration of the national economy after the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 (18.7%), 2. The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 itself (12%), 3. Brezhnev epoch (10%), 4. Reign of Peter I (9.3%), 5. XIX century (8.7%), 6. The era of socialism (8.7%), 7. The time of reign of V.V. Putin (6.7%), 8. The Great October Revolution of 1917 (4%), 8. Rule of the Prince Alexander Nevsky 2.7%, 9. Stolypin reforms (2.4%), etc.

Therefore, the respondents consider the most "bringing up" epochs: The Second World War and restoration of the national economy after the Second World War (in the amount of 30.7%), "Brezhnev era and the era of socialism" (18.7%), the reign of Peter the Great (9.3%) and V.V Putin (6.7%), etc. Thus, the respondents chose those historical periods of the Russian history in which there was a unity of the whole people against an external threat or, when the country was in zenith of its glory, had a significant value on the international arena.

In assessments of historical events there is a high percentage of subjectivity, most often not interfering with an objective assessment of the civilizational processes. The historical memory of the emerging generation "captures" emotionally the impression of certain historical events in the period of socialization, without penetrating into the social essence of an event. For the mass consciousness this is a natural phenomenon. However it is bad that such subjectivism, already at the stage of self-realization, inclusion into the social division of labour of the younger generation, often directs its aspirations along the conservative path and sometimes along the marginal one (Gorshkov, 2010).

It is the marginalized society that breeds tractions for fascism, racism, Nazism, terrorism, etc. And the youth had always been the most perceptive to the leftist radical ideas at all times. According to experts, the modern European society is extremely unstable, highly marginalized. Problems of the modern society, in connection with a significant increase in the precariat as an unprotected social stratum, were considered in detail by the English economist G. Standing (2014), in his monograph "Precariat: A new dangerous class". The growth of the precarious, social stratum with an unstable situation, can lead to the most tragic events in the future. The marginalization and precariatization of the society led to revival of neo-nazi ideas in the modern Europe (Standing, 2014). Sokolyanu (2015), analysing the revival process of fascism in Europe in particular writes: "The most effective cure for the ideology of fascism is the human memory of what fascism is-not on glossy pictures, skilfully produced by the propaganda "office" of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, but in reality, what monstrous crimes he committed against humanity (Sokolyanu, 2015). When this historical memory dies in people's minds, when the false and mean myths about fascism re-enter the people's minds, concealing its true criminal essence, fascism again gets reborn, acquires reality and flesh and again begins to look for its new victims". Fascist ideas now gain incredible popularity in the countries of the former USSR (the Baltic States, Ukraine) and the countries of the European continent (France, Germany, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Austria, etc.).

The study of views of Russians regarding possible historical trajectories represents a considerable interest for sociology. In this case, we rely on the methodology of the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz (2004). Historical insights, interpretation of historical facts are, by the opinion of the classic of sociological thought, a part of the inter-subjective world that existed before the birth of a single individual and was perceived by him in the experience and interpretations of our other predecessors, as an ordered one (Schütz, 2004). All interpretations of the historical past are based on the previous experience of the individual, received from his parents, relatives, teachers and his own perception of reality. It is for this reason that we are interested in views of the respondents regarding possible scenarios of the history development in order to see the vector of preferential relations of Russians to one or other political trends of modern times. For this purpose, the respondents were asked the following question: "How do you think, if the Prince Vladimir, after deciding to "baptize Rus", would have chosen not the Orthodox rite, but the Roman Catholic one, would Russia's future history have developed in some other way?" The answers of respondents distributed as follows: 58.7% of the

respondents believe that the baptism of Rus by the Roman Catholic rite would have changed fate of Russia and only 17.3% believe that even under such circumstances; the Russian history would have kept its original path without any change. In addition to the above question, the respondents were asked to assess the probable consequences of adopting the Roman Catholic rite for the further Russian history.

The data of the answers to possible consequences of baptism of Rus by the Roman Catholic rite show that the respondents are more concerned about Russia loss of its uniqueness and identity (20.0%), as well as loss of mentality (24.7%), which, in fact, is an identical factor. To a lesser extent the respondents are worried about the problem of the world status of Russia (6.7%), economic (3.3%) and geopolitical development (3.3%).

For the question: "How do you think, if at the beginning of the 20th century Russia was ruled by a more authoritative and resolute ruler (for example, the example of Peter the Great), could he or could he not prevent the further course of events, known to us?" The respondents' answers were distributed as follows: 41.3% answered positively, 44.7%, perhaps, 13.3% no. Thus, it can be assumed that the desire to see a strong, intelligent, far-sighted, determined politician as a head of the state is quite large among Russians and, in fact, continues to be in the basic core of the national mentality (Nemova, 2013; Nemova, Svadbina & Pakina, 2016) (Asio & Khorasani, 2015).

The attitude of the respondents to the Soviet era and Soviet legacy was supposed to be clarified through the following question: "Were 70 years of the Soviet power a blessing or a tragedy for Russia?" The respondents were to assess this historical period by a 5-point scale, bearing in mind that 5 is an unconditional benefit and 1 is an unconditional tragedy. This question caused difficulties in majority of the respondents (65.3%). 18% answered that 70 years of the Soviet power were rather a blessing than a tragedy. 6.7% and 2.7% of those who participated in the survey perceive this period in the history of Russia as an "unconditional tragedy" and "rather a tragedy" (Khorasani & Almasifard, 2017).

Affections and antipathies for participants in the civil war in Russia of the early XX century can be seen in the answers to the question: "If you lived in the era of civil war, you would..." Despite the fact that this historical epoch was repeatedly reviewed, a number of cinematographic pictures were created, where, (in contrast to the Soviet cinema pictures), right on contrary, there was glorified decency of the White Guard movement during the Civil War years, the "Reds followers" (36.7%) still almost twice as much as the "Whites" (16.7%). Even more appeared to be those who have not yet decided about the unequivocal correctness of those or others.

Therefore, 46.0% of the respondents preferred a conformist position "would prefer to stay aside" (Table 1).

	18-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 and more	Total
Was on the side of "reds"	19.5	21.0	12.0	3.0	27.0	82.5
Was on the side of "whites"	9.0	7.5	13.5	4.5	3.0	37.5
Would prefer to stay aside	30.0	18.0	10.5	31.5	13.5	103.5

Intergenerational analysis shows that to elderly people (over 60 and older), brought up in conditions of domination of the Marxist ideology, the movement of "reds" (27.0%) is closer against (19.5%) of those who are from 18 to 29 years old. Conformism, the desire to stay away from politics, is also more inherent in youth, that is, to those from 18 to 29 years old (30.0%).

The gender analysis showed that men are more likely to support the "reds" (20.6% versus 16.0%) than the "whites". The supporters of the "white movement" among men and women are approximately the same (8% versus 8.6%). Volunteers to take a neutral position among women are much more than among men (28% versus 18%), which respectively correlates with the theoretical conclusions of the genderists about the less likely inclination to conflicts of women compared to men.

Demonstrative date was those on the desire to preserve the USSR as a single country, despite the communist past, economic and political problems, social and everyday unsettledness. The respondents were asked a question: "If you have participated in the 1991 referendum on preservation of the USSR, you would have voted "For", "Against" or "Abstained"?"

Most respondents belonging to different age cohorts would have participated in the referendum in 1991 for preservation of the USSR. In our opinion, such intergenerational unanimity is not accidental: First, still the competent ideological policy of the modern leadership of the country regarding the careful attitude to the historical memory of the people, termination of the process of "debunking" the heroes and heroic events of the Soviet era did not pass without a trace and in the people's memory mostly there maintained a positive attitude towards the USSR as a great world power. In this case our data correlate with the data obtained by Gorshkov and Sheregi (Gorshkov, 2010; Sheregi, 2002). Secondly, the political vector for restoring the former power and respectful attitude to our state on the part of the world community, chosen by V.V. Putin also affects the responses of Russians. Thus, we see the unspoken support of Russians of the presidential course.

The key event of modern politics is considered the return of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation. It should be noted that this historic step of the modern leadership of the country and personally of the president was enthusiastically received by the overwhelming majority of both Crimeans and Russians. This event greatly increased the rate of V.V. Putin as a successful leader. It is interesting to keep track, how the modern Russians treat similar actions of I.V. Stalin, that is, the territorial acquisitions? For this, the respondents were asked the following question: "There is a point of view that the USSR in the period from 1939 to 1945 (before the war and after the victory) occupied a number of states (regions). Do you agree or disagree?"

In general, the respondents do not believe that the USSR was an occupier, i.e., they consider this process as a natural, fair, historically justified one. Actually, the attitude to I.V. Stalin as a leader is not distinguished by negativism. In general, for all age cohorts, the attitude to I.V. Stalin is as follows: A successful leader who won the war and raised the country from the ruins-66.0%, a tyrant, a destroyer of a million of people-16.7%, another 17.3%.

The Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) is the most important event of the 20th century.

Despite the attempts of some pro-Western politicians, public rulers and historians to blacken the memory of the heroic deed of the Soviet people during the Second World War, the public conscience cherishes the memory of those events as a great unprecedented deed of the Soviet people. The respondents were asked to answer the question: "Today, when talking about the war of 1941-1945 with Hitler's Germany, many Russian journalists and politicians began to call it not the Great Patriotic War, as before, but the Second World War." Do you agree with this?" The overwhelming majority of respondents (76%) believe that it is impossible to change

the name "Great Patriotic War" to "World War II". There is also no discrepancy in the intergenerational plan when answering this question.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the results of this sociological study, we can make the following conclusions:

- There are no significant intergenerational differences in the evaluation of Russia historical past in the respondents' answers. Accordingly, we do not have to talk about the presence in modern Russian society the inter-generational crisis. In the public historical consciousness there is a single image allowing one to find;
- Analysis of the historical consciousness of Russians shows that respect of the respondents is caused by historical epochs (SWW, restoration of the national economy after the Second World War, irregulars of Minin and Pozharsky), when there was a unification of people to solve some external threat or internal socio-economic problems.
- There observed a pronounced conceit about the uniqueness of Russia as a state and its historical past. Serious fears among Russians cause loss of their identity, mental, cultural, spiritual and moral characteristics.
- The basic core of the Russian mentality is preserved. The strong, resolute and authoritarian historical figures whose activity is connected with growth of the prestige of the state in the international arena, such as Catherine II, Peter I, Stalin, Vladimir Putin cause respect and a sense of proud.
- The majority of respondents showed "nostalgia" for the former power of the USSR. The approval is provoked by V. Putin's outward political course for the return of the lost territories. An assessment of the similar actions of his predecessor, I. Stalin, was also assessed positively by the respondents.
- The socially oriented internal policy of the USSR received the mass approval. They would like to return the following achievements of the Soviet government: Free education and medical care, guaranteed employment of graduates of universities.

Summarizing results of the study, it can be said with certainty that in modern society there is no intergenerational rupture with regard to the evaluation of the historical past; on the contrary, there is a unity of opinions and views. However, there are fears that the marginalization and pre-corruption of the society will increase, which, in turn, may adversely affect the social stability in the future. The study of views of Russians on the assessment of the historical past is considered as a topical subject that is urgent and requires the further scientific reflection.

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