

# Theoretische beschouwingen

## Contemporary Soviet Sociology

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Analysis of industrial problems has been popular in the Soviet Union. Gvishiani reports that in 1923, 60 monographs on these and related problems were published in the Soviet Union. Moreover, according to him during 1923-1937 about 20 periodicals on industrial-organizational issues were published (1). Reviewing A. M. Birman's book published in 1965, O.V. Kozlova's study of 1966, G. E. Slezinger's *Managerial Work in Industrial Enterprise* of 1967, A. A. Godunov's *Introduction to the Theory of Management* published in 1967, and V. G. Afanas'ev's study of 1968, one has to conclude that these studies are predominantly reflection on some managerial problems with limited empirical references (2). The five above studies are normatively conceived first with some references to actual situation in Soviet organizations.

Could we say that Soviet publications prefer to omit description and analysis of actual managerial phenomena? Since empirical investigation of social phenomena was for many years made difficult if not impossible because of the strong political influences on social science, one would expect this to be so. Fortunately, sociology and empirical investigation has been gaining ground since about ten years ago in the Soviet Union. Though we do not have as yet any sociological journal, sociological articles are published in Russia today. We do also have a Soviet sociological association and lecturing on sociology, however, as stated, it is „Marxist sociology.”

To illustrate the expansion of sociological study of complex organization in the Soviet Union, let me mention the following facts: in the major publication that appeared in two volumes, *Sociology in USSR* (3), of 47 chapters 20 chapters are dedicated to theory or empirical investigation of work activities; thence, the first cross-cultural investigation undertaken by Soviets recently in cooperation with Polish sociologists, was titled *Social*

*Problems of Work and Production* (4). Finally, in six volumes of the American translation of different Soviet sociological articles in *Soviet Sociology* we find that the majority of articles deal with industrial-administrative problems. These indices entitle us to conclude that complex organization and industrial production have been constituting the major thrust of Soviet empirical investigation and theorizing.

Experience with phenomena by necessity introduces other ideas to which ideological assumptions have not been explicitly relevant. I would like first, to report on a Leningrad University study *Man and his Work* that was also published in *Soviet Sociology*. The Russian original was edited by A. G. Zdravomyslov, V. P. Rozhin and V. A. Iadov (5). This work should be praised because of a careful analysis of data, especially its extensive statistical tests. The Study investigated a group of young workers between the ages of 18 to 30 in industrial plants at Leningrad. Among several interesting findings is that wages increase contributed to the increase in motivation if not accompanied by an increase of labor. However, if there was an increase in creative opportunities one also found an increase in motivation regardless if accompanied by or without an increase of wages (6). This finding in fact indicates, as one knows from other evidences, that material reward is not the only cause and in some instances not even the major cause of work achievement.

Another example in which empirical investigation makes more room for new ideas not anticipated by the ideological framework is provided by a study in Novosibirsk and Leningrad. A research of young students in the Novosibirsk region was carried out by V. N. Shubkin, and in Leningrad by V. V. Vodzinskaya. Although 12% of persons would be needed to fill managerial white collar positions, 80% of Soviet youngsters aspired for that type of job. Moreover, young persons desired primarily a creative work activities while income was for them a secondary issue (7).

In a further interesting study from the Osipov-Szczepanski's volume, N. A. Aitov presents an empirical investigation of job mobility. As one would expect most young persons with higher education are occupational mobile, though, a low income is not the most frequent expressed reason for change of the job. Only about 20% leave because of a poor pay. It is of interest to note that the job mobility is viewed by the author in some cases with approval (8).

One of special distinction of the Soviet organizational sociology is relatively a great number of studies dedicated to leisure time activities, reading, and specifically attendance at public events of Soviet workers. Faynburg

and V. M. Likhachev explored happiness and creativity. Those who asserted themselves to be more happy also seemed to be more creative (9). G. T. Zhuravlev searched a chemical plant in Kazan collecting data on what and how much time was spent by workers on reading. It appears in comparison with Polish workers that Russians spent more time on reading while Poles spent more time with their families. Soviet researchers reported mostly on psychological growth or on economic productivity of women while Poles were mostly stressing the role of a woman as a mother and wife (10).

Another topic that attracted attention of Soviet researchers is that of invention. At least two studies should be mentioned here, i.e. that by A. A. Zvorykin, and that by G. M. Dobrov, *et al.* Zvorykin wrote a book called in Russian, *Nauka, obshchestvo chelovek*, and in English translation, *Science, Society and Man*. The book was published in 1969 and covers a report on an investigation of 1000 Soviet scientists (11). The major problem was conditions that promote invention and development of new ideas. Zvorykin reports, e.g. that new ideas emerged for Soviet scientists in 35% instances in work situations, while 22.7% instances were reported in leisure situations. A somewhat similar study was also undertaken by A. I. Prigozhin (12). The study by G. M. Dobrov, *et. al.* was concerned with scientists of the Ukrainian Academy of Science and the book's title in English translation is *Research of Organizational Factors Accounting for Results of Scientific Work* (13). By a 55 question-long interviewing schedule a problem investigated by the Dobrov group for example, was to determine differences between younger men who usually hold a degree of candidate, and more mature men who tend to have a doctorate. Though doctors tended to „waste” more time on organizational problems they nevertheless produced about two times more scientific work than candidates (14). One also can read in this book that Soviets lag one year in publishing new results, and that American Science Citation Index is available in only two libraries in the Soviet Union. However, in volume II of the same publication it is reported that Soviet scientists double their number in 6-7 years while in the United States it takes about 10 years (15). Generally, in Zvorykin, Prigozhin, and Dobrov's books one can notice that the major attention to foreign scientific literature is concentrated on American output. Dobrov's study also indicates that Ukrainian scientists spend 25% of their time reading.

The last book that I would like to bring to our attention is G. V. Osipov, ed., *Social Research*, vol. 3, *Problems of Labor and Personality* published in 1970 in Moscow (16). Interestingly, this time I had not had to translate

the Russian title because one half of the title page is printed in English in this Russian book. This is a publication of the USSR Academy of Science, and Institute of Concrete Social Research, and of Soviet Sociological Association. Among the fifteen chapters (authored by different authors) in this book, probably the most relevant to us are those produced by N. F. Naumova and M. A. Slyuzaryanskiy, and by M. I. Zaytseva. N. F. Naumova and M. A. Slyuzaryanskiy in their study „Work Satisfaction and Personality Characteristics” used two differentiated measurements (17). The first concerns with motives, and the second was concerning values. While the measurement of motives disclosed that respondents were primarily motivated by financial rewards, the value measure indicated that money occupied a close-to-the bottom rank. Interestingly, information concerning parents of respondents showed that those respondents whose parents belonged to the Communist Party expressed also a greatest dissatisfaction with their present work. One can refer in this connection to V. B. Ol’shanskiy who in his chapter *Personality and Social Values* stressed individual differences among his respondents (18). Generally, Soviet sociologists have tended to discover, increasingly, individual differences.

M. I. Zaytseva in the same volume reported on work satisfaction of engineering-technical workers. The chapter is called „Creative Work in Structures of Values of Engineering-Technical Workers” (19). With frankness, it is reported that the men were dissatisfied because of absences of creative work in their jobs. One should also report here that several other studies candidly reported the negative features of industrial work in Soviet factories. For example, N. B. Valentinova in her chapter, „Influence of Mutual Relations in a Production Group and Increase of Interest in Work” (20) compared several work groups whose leaders were successful or unsuccessful. It is a frank discussion of such negative phenomena, and steps which might be taken to improve the work situation.

What kind of conclusion can we draw from this short survey of recent publications on complex organization in Soviet Russia?

First, let me start with the omissions. There are no studies on bargaining, labor organizations, or strikes. Obviously those phenomena are also likely to occur in the Soviet industrial systems though probably not to amounts as in the United States. Political economic and social institutions in Russia have a different structure which make it sometimes difficult for Soviet employees to register their disapprovals or disagreements.

Second, the major concern in Soviet research has been dealing with the increase of output. In the light of this perspective it now appears that Soviet

sociologists have become concerned with a greater variety of variables. For example, the issues involved in the study of values are increasingly studied. Interpersonal relations in a small group of workers, especially the relationship between workers and foreman have become a legitimate topic of investigation. Though Soviet researchers have been increasingly dealing with values and personality variables, self-protective behaviors whether rational or non-rational have not yet been explicitly and overtly discussed by Soviet sociologists.

Third, a special characteristic of Soviet research has been investigation of leisure of Soviet employees. It appears to me that we do not have that much research and data, e.g. on American workers' reading preferences. It is probably due also to a greater amount of time devoted to reading by Soviet workers as compared to American workers.

Fourth, I would like to point out once more the recent Soviet-Polish industrial research *Social Problems of Work and Production*. This research, in terms of geographical areas, number of persons, and time is unprecedented in world sociology, though methodologically these researches in Soviet and Polish factories could be easily criticized. But the dimensions of the study augur an innovation in world sociology.

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