Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement, General Directorate of Housing, *Gecekondu*, pp. 15-16. The government surveys reveal that in gecekondu districts average number of rooms per family was 1.67 and average number of persons per room was 3. Nearly one-half of these units had earth floors and more than three quarters of them had inside and outside walls that were plastered with mud. There was no water in 85 per cent of the housing units and 50 per cent of them had neither electricity nor sewage systems. And in Istanbul, 95.5 per cent of the gecekondu did not have sewage systems.


---

2. Sorokin’s Scenario for the West: Implications for Third World Development

MICHEL P. RICHARD

State University College at Geneseo, New York, U.S.A.

Sorokin’s controversial model of social change is re-examined in the light of recent developments which make his work increasingly relevant despite shortcomings in certain areas. These shortcomings include his failure to assess the growth potential of competing religious movements, his sketchy treatment of the actual process of change, and his failure to apply the paradigm to non-Western cultures. Current trends in Western society, however, suggest that Sorokin was generally on the right track. Active and cynical sensate values are becoming weaker, and there is a resurgence of idea-
tional values. At the same time, there is a slowing down of economic growth which coincides with a drive toward economic independence on the part of Third World nations. If the developments goals which they have set for themselves are realized, the West will not continue to dominate the world economy. The resulting shift in the center of the world influence would be consistent with a prediction made by Sorokin twenty years ago.

Pitirim Sorokin was one of the most colorful and controversial figures in the field of sociology.1 His legacy to the discipline includes more than 120 articles and books, but his magnum opus is the four-volume work entitled Social and Cultural Dynamics (1937-1941). This study occupied Sorokin and a team of assistants working in the U.S. and abroad for nearly ten years. It represents an impressive attempt to apply quantitative methods to historical materials, and to generate propositions about Graeco-Roman and Western civilization which have predictive as well as explanatory value.

In Social and Cultural Dynamics, Sorokin distinguishes socio-cultural systems from biological systems. Unlike biological organisms, civilizations are not perfectly integrated, and therefore they do not “decline” or die, as Oswald Spengler would have us believe. Rather, they undergo phase-movements. The most profound changes emanate from the cultural value system, rather than from institutional factors or as a result of the actions of great men. The reason for this is that the cultural system is more fundamental and more encompassing than the social system (on this point Sorokin disagrees sharply with Marx) or the personality system.

Sorokin’s data on Graeco-Roman and Western civilization exhibit a pattern of recurrent fluctuation between what he calls “sensate” and “ideational” value-systems. During a sensate period all aspects of life are dominated by a materialistic world view, and economic and scientific activities flourish, particularly during the “active” sensate phase. During the “passive” phase hedonistic values prevail, and in the final “cynical” stage the sensate mentality negates everything including itself. Ideational periods, in contrast, are spiritually oriented, and social relationships are familialistic rather than contractual. Ideational periods move from the “ascetic” to the “active” (expansionistic) mentality, but finally degenerate into “fideism” (a desperate will to believe).

When civilization shifts from one of these “supersystems” to the other, there is a stormy period of transition marked by increases in the intensity and magnitude of wars and revolutions, and by general social disorganization (increasing rates of crime and mental illness, breakdown in family structure, etc.). Sorokin’s “law of polarization” states that during such periods violence and egoistic behavior increase, but there is a counterbalancing increase in altruistic behavior (love, self-sacrifice, and mutual aid). At the same time, government becomes increasingly coercive during these periods. Sometimes, however, there is a harmonious combination of the best elements of the two supersystems; a blend of faith, reason and empiricism. These “idealistic” periods seem to be of shorter duration than the other two supersystems, but in any case the time frame is variable for all three. History does not repeat itself in detail (as Nietzsche suggested) but only in its general conformations.

But what causes these shifts to take place? Sorokin invokes two principles to account for change. The first is the principle of “immanent determinism”: a socio-cultural system, like a biological system, unfolds according to its inherent potentialities. External factors can only serve to accelerate or retard the system’s growth, but they cannot alter the nature of the system itself. (Sorokin does not give much weight to