
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

TALCOTT PARSONS, 1902-1979

Few who mourn the death of Talcott Parsons, one of our most influential sociologists and grand theorists, realize his interest in the Soviet Union and his encouragement of young sociologists to turn their attention to studies of the USSR. This stemmed from his belief that *all* societies had certain features (or "structures") that enabled them to function and to survive, and that Soviet Russia was, of course, no exception.

Parsons received his bachelor's degree from Amherst College and his Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg. He spent his entire academic career at Harvard University, where he was first appointed in 1927. Parsons was important to the development of American sociology in that he introduced Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, incorporated their insights into his own work, and developed his conceptions which established him as a leading social theoretician. Some of his works have become classics of the literature, as for example, his *Structure of Social Action* (1937), *The Social System* (1951), and several others, and he himself almost became a legend in his own time.

As a professor at Harvard, Parsons was instrumental in establishing the Russian Research Center in 1948 and actively served on its executive committee for a quarter of a century. His presence at the Center and his involvement in its research activities facilitated a close connection with the Department of Social Relations which he helped to create and which he chaired from 1946 to 1956. The department was a bold academic innovation that reflected his synthetic view of the theory of action and brought together under one roof sociology, cultural anthropology, and social and clinical psychology. One of the hopes, when the Center was founded, was that these disciplines could be brought to bear on an analysis of Soviet society, a hope which for a variety of reasons was only partially fulfilled. But every social scientist who was at the Center benefited, directly or indirectly, whether he realized it or not, from Parsons's insatiable curiosity about what could be learned from the Soviet experiment. He participated in the 1958 Arden House Conference on "The Transformation of Russian Society" and contributed the lead article to the conference volume (Harvard University Press, 1960), a paper entitled "Some Principal Characteristics of Industrial Societies." When I organized a symposium, "The Social Consequences of Modernization in Communist Societies" in 1972, he agreed to participate, and he provided a masterful analysis of Soviet society in the perspective of societal evolution from simple to complex and differentiated structures.

Yet few people who knew Parsons only from his admittedly difficult writings can appreciate what a magnificent classroom teacher he was. It was sometimes hard to believe that the same man who had written some of the most complex prose in sociology, and who indeed had developed a vocabulary of his own, could deliver crystal clear, well-organized, and logically presented lectures that were understood by both graduate and undergraduate students. Indeed he "professed" in such a way as to keep his students riveted to their seats. By taking everyday experiences and by showing that social systems could not be taken for granted but were problematic, he was able to make his students see social reality from a different perspective. Why, he would ask, and because of what social mechanisms, did a doctor behave differently from a businessman? He dismissed the simplistic explanation of different psychological orientations, of altruism versus egoism, and gave a more plausible explanation of the "coercive" aspects of values and social systems in shaping the behavior of human

beings in a predictable and orderly fashion, whatever their basic personality. In seminars he shared his excitement in the intellectual pursuit of truth and of understanding, in the discovery of hitherto hidden relationships, in the answer to questions that had eluded him.

Parsons was one of those rare professors, at Harvard or elsewhere, who took his graduate students seriously, listened to what they said and read what they wrote, and then often incorporated these insights into his own lectures and publications, always with due credit. A true intellectual father, he evoked the admiration and the affection of several generations of sociologists. Few would say that they were "Parsonians" and even fewer would boast that they understood all of his theories. But all would admit to being profoundly affected, influenced, and inspired by him, both as a person, a "role model," and an academician. What was perhaps most striking was Parson's complete lack of arrogance, preening, and showmanship. Although he had reached a position of enormous prestige and visibility, he remained essentially a shy Puritan. Parsons was often attacked because his views on what made societies function emphasized the elements of survival, continuity, and integration, reflecting his earlier training and interest in biology. But Parsons was not a conservative any more than he was a radical. He took strong stands both against Nazism and McCarthyism. He was a liberal, a position which of late has acquired a pejorative connotation. It was a position he was comfortable with because it emphasized reason and tolerance.

It may be added, finally, that his relationship to the Russian Research Center was strengthened by the fact that his wife, Helen Walker Parsons, served as its administrative assistant from its inception until 1969, a period of twenty-one years. Thus, in terms to which he gave particular currency, his connection with the Center was both "particularistic" and "universalistic."

He leaves his wife, a son, Charles Dacre Parsons, a daughter, Mrs. Susan Cramer, and four grandchildren.

MARK G. FIELD
Boston University and
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G. WARREN NUTTER, 1923–1979

G. Warren Nutter, Paul Goodloe McIntyre Professor of Economics at the University of Virginia, died on January 15, 1979, two months before his fifty-sixth birthday. In a notice of this length, it is impossible to summarize his contributions as scholar, teacher, and public figure in a career that terminated before it could flower into full maturity.

Readers of *Slavic Review* will be most familiar with his work in Soviet studies, but the many other areas to which he devoted his talents and energies must not be overlooked. He made important theoretical contributions in economics, especially in the theory of consumer demand and the theory of the price system. His work in the theory of economic planning, bridging his interest in economic theory and his analysis of socialist and communist economies, was of lasting importance. His abilities in empirical studies were manifested in his measurement of industrial concentration in the United States, a work that has become a standard reference, as well as in his classical study of the growth of Soviet industrial output.

Professor Nutter's work on Soviet industrialization began when he was asked to direct a massive study of the Soviet economy launched by the National Bureau of Economic Research in the mid-1950s. He accepted the post in 1955. Under his painstaking and insightful direction, a number of important studies were produced by

scholars engaged in the project. None of them, however, aroused as much interest or made such a lasting impact on knowledge about the Soviets as did his own comprehensive work, *Growth of Industrial Production in the Soviet Union*, in which he challenged the then conventional belief that the Soviet economic system was capable of continuously generating industrial growth at rates that were, by existing standards, very high. This belief was founded on the record of Soviet industrial growth (according to official data) during the first three five-year plans and the postwar recovery period. The conventional view was an important element of support for the argument that a centrally planned economy could outperform a market system over the long run. It also lent support to Russian claims that they would soon overtake the United States in economic power.

Using his meticulously constructed sample index of industrial output, Professor Nutter demonstrated that the official index of Soviet industrial output substantially exaggerated its growth. More important, and at the time more controversial, was his discovery that industrial growth was slowing. Based on these findings, he argued that the Soviet record during the 1930s and the postwar period did not form a reliable basis for long-term growth forecasts. A better predictor, he believed, was the record over the entire Communist period, a substantially slower growth rate to which the more recent data showed a tendency to converge. This argument, together with his unconventional, critical attitude toward central economic planning and the nature of the Soviet state, aroused widespread attacks on his work. He had relatively few defenders at that time, despite the scrupulous objectivity and technical unassailability of his work. From today's perspective, there can be no doubt that the positions he took twenty years ago have been thoroughly vindicated.

Although it was undoubtedly his single most important contribution to Soviet studies, his book was not his only contribution. His writings on economic planning in the Communist world, as well as on its theory, were extensive. Throughout his life he remained an astute observer and articulate critic of the Soviet economic and political systems. His concern for freedom was an important motivating factor in these professional interests, and it also played a central role in his less publicly visible efforts to keep open channels of communication between scholars in the Communist countries and in the West. A number of East European intellectuals now in the West are in his debt for his help and encouragement.

As a scholar, Warren Nutter characteristically did not ignore the realities of the world. He was actively involved in public affairs throughout his career. Most notably, he served for four years as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. In this senior post, he carried responsibility on behalf of the Department of Defense for all issues worldwide that related to defense and foreign policy. He accepted the burdens of that office, with its heavy demands and meager rewards, because, he said, he believed that exercising the right to criticize the government carried with it the responsibility to serve when called. That position was typical of Warren Nutter. He was a person of superb character and complete honesty. He was a staunch defender of the principles of a free society, and he was devoted to human dignity and liberty. His untimely death has taken from us a man who gave much to his profession and society, and who would have contributed much more had he lived.

JOHN H. MOORE
University of Miami

C. JAY SMITH, 1921–1979

News of the death of C. Jay Smith elicited surprise and great sorrow from his many friends and associates in Russian and Slavic history. Jay died on February 8, 1979 in a Tallahassee, Florida hospital following a heart attack. He was born in Newnan, Georgia on April 8, 1921 and earned two degrees at the University of Georgia before entering the U.S. Navy as an officer during World War II. In 1953, he received his Ph.D. in Russian history from Harvard University under the direction of Professor Karpovich. His teaching and research career began at the University of Georgia in 1949 where, except for a return to the navy in 1951–53 and an appointment in 1965–66 as Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the Naval War College, he remained on the faculty of the Department of History for the next twenty years. In 1969, he moved to Florida State University in Tallahassee to assume a position in Slavic history.

His most important publications were two monographs, *The Russian Struggle for Power, 1914–1917* and *Finland and the Russian Revolution, 1917–1921*. His excellent research articles appeared in the *American Historical Review*, the *American Slavic and East European Review*, and in several other leading Slavic journals. Recently, he translated and edited N. N. Bolkhovitinov's *Russia and the American Revolution*. At the time of his death, he had just finished a major study of the causes of World War I. His long, impressive record of academic service included the founding and subsequent direction of the honors program at the University of Georgia for many years, chairing of the president's ad hoc committee on restructuring the university at Florida State, and membership on the regional selection committee for Woodrow Wilson fellowships, 1957–72.

He was a popular and respected teacher, a fine gentleman, and a pleasant, enthusiastic colleague. Among his greatest interests was the advancement of Russian and Slavic studies, particularly in the South. At the time of his death at the early age of fifty-seven, he had accomplished a great deal, though not by any means all that he would have wished. But he was always a positive and farsighted thinker. With Jay's passing, Slavists in the South have lost a highly competent, congenial friend, and the field of Slavic studies has lost an earnest, dedicated champion.

RONALD R. RADER
University of Georgia

ANDREI ANATOLIEVICH LOBANOV-ROSTOVSKY, 1892–1979

Andrei Anatolievich Lobanov-Rostovsky, an internationally known scholar of Russian history, died on February 17, 1979, in Washington, D.C. Born a Russian subject in Yokohama, Japan, on May 5, 1892, he received his early education in imperial Russia (St. Petersburg) and France (Nice), fought in the Russian and French armies during the First World War, and graduated in 1923 from L'École des Sciences Politiques in Paris. After a stint as a foreign correspondent for the London-based Baring Brothers and Company, he came to the United States and became a U.S. citizen in 1936. He began teaching at the University of California, Los Angeles, and in 1945 he accepted an appointment at the University of Michigan, where he remained until his retirement in 1962. He is survived by three sons and a daughter.

As a published scholar, Professor Lobanov-Rostovsky achieved wide recognition with such books as *Russia and Asia* (1933), *The Grinding Mill* (1935), and *Russia and Europe, 1789–1825* (1947), along with dozens of articles. As a lecturer, Professor Lobanov-Rostovsky had few peers; his classes often numbered more than three hun-

dred students. He spoke without notes, yet organized his material so well and presented it so dynamically that visitors also attended his lectures and sat spellbound throughout.

Professor Lobanov-Rostovsky's many friends will remember him for his human qualities as well. He held a prince's title and numerous decorations. He bore himself erect and had impeccable manners, yet he never exhibited aloofness or condescension toward anyone. On the contrary, he seemed uninterested in differences in social status. A spry, slightly built gentleman with a splendid sense of humor, he always appeared sensitive to others' needs and glad to help whenever he could. He enjoyed good conversation and made lively contributions to it, whether the topic was a literary work or the housing situation, classical music or poltergeists. Those of us who wrote our doctoral dissertations under his direction cannot forget how supportive he was, how constructive his criticism. His bright, uplifting spirit will be missed by everyone who knew him.

HORACE W. DEWEY
University of Michigan

EUGENE GRINBERGS, 1920–1978

Students and colleagues of Eugene Grinbergs were shocked and saddened last summer to learn of his sudden death of a heart attack. He and his wife, Ilga, were on one of their frequent summer trips to Europe and were visiting old friends in Hamburg on July 3 when he was struck.

Grinbergs was born in Krasnodar on September 5, 1920. He grew up and was educated in Latvia, which he considered to be his homeland. He attended the University of Riga during the worst times of the Second World War. Enduring the all too familiar troubles and dislocations of those years, he managed to continue his education for a short time in Munich and then, much later, at the University of Delaware. He received a master's degree in Slavic and Baltic languages from the University of Pennsylvania in 1961. That same year he came to the University of North Dakota where he was the only professor of Russian until his death. He also taught several summer courses at Colby College.

Grinbergs's scholarly output was not prolific, but his great love for language study and linguistics was always adorned with a scholarly attitude. He was active in the Linguistic Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota, and he taught language as something more than a tool for tourists. He was proud of his association with students, having sponsored many of them into honors and scholarships, and was officially recognized by the student body for his excellence in teaching.

Many of us remember fondly his regular Monday evening gatherings where Eugene's erudition and wit were matched only by Ilga's *zakuski* and bottomless *riumki* of vodka and brandy. He restored the old-fashioned art of scholarly conversation and debate among people from many different academic backgrounds.

His funeral, a Russian Orthodox service, was held in Pinneberg, and his ashes were scattered over the Baltic Sea.

WILLIAM GARD
University of North Dakota